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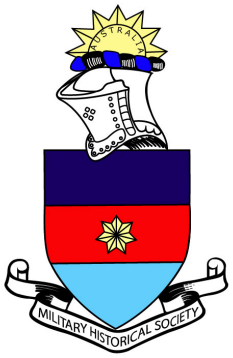

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EDITORIAL

In October I had the privilege of attending a talk by local Adelaide artist Andrea Malone, dealing with her exhibition titled *Before and After*. It was advertised on the Veterans SA website, www.anzaccentenary.sa.gov.au, which by the way is well worth subscribing to or just visiting from time to time, both for information about events as well as for its purpose-written 'think pieces' appearing at regular intervals. I had some time to spare, so I went along to the Praxis Artspace in Bowden. I was as interested to see what was developing in this near-CBD suburb – which is undergoing a process of urban renewal from the very working-class area of my younger days to a community centre with the focus on sustainable living – as to hear the talk. As things transpired, the event proved worthwhile in its own right, and for at least one reason I certainly didn't expect.

The exhibition itself centred around six oil portraits of Vietnam veterans as they are now, together with a series of impressionistic prints of images from the Vietnam War and a couple of installation pieces by which the artist attempted to interpret the experiences of the Vietnamese people. It was accompanied by an audio-visual presentation combining photos and quotations supplied by the veterans portrayed in the paintings, with a commentary by an authority on post-traumatic stress disorder. The portraits were very striking, effectively capturing the complex inner feelings the men have been carrying around with them in the decades following their return to civilian life.

Andrea explained how the project had emanated from her discovery of a veterans' self-help group operating in suburban Adelaide. She approached them with the idea of painting their portraits; some demurred, but six accepted. Here, in the artist's own words, 'are six Vietnam veterans who had their lives forever altered by the war and they stand as representatives of the 60,000 men deployed'. The portraits, she explains, 'are dominated by the eyes which all display the veterans' thousand-yard stare. But looking closer we see the mouths clamped shut, or camouflage colours seemingly ingrained in the skin and the unfinished aspects of the work signifying what otherwise might have been.'

As I wandered around the exhibition, one of the paintings leapt straight out at me. It could almost have been the face of my own late father. The serendipity was accentuated by the name on the label: 'Val'. That, too, was the shortened form of my dad's name. When I pointed this out to Andrea, she told me that her Val was a Polish migrant who had made his way to Australia with his parents after WW2, under very trying circumstances. His fate was to become embroiled in the Vietnam War and all its consequences. This only made the connection even deeper.

My father, a Latvian migrant, had been caught up in the horrors of both Soviet and Nazi occupations of his country in WW2. Having to accept some form of military service – he wisely opted for the *Kriegsmarine* when there were no more ships to be posted to – he found his unit transformed into an almost defenceless building battalion in the face of encroaching Russian forces. Surrendering to the British near the Danish border, he spent time going hungry in a Belgian POW camp before joining the French occupation army in their zone of Germany. Given the opportunity to emigrate, he could have ended up in Canada but by chance found himself in 1947 on board the USS *General Stuart Heintzelman* bound for Fremantle.

As a displaced person who after 1944 never saw his homeland again, dad was always grateful to Australia for taking him in and giving him a new chance. His was a hail-fellow-well-met approach to life; he was always ready to regale us with tales of his time in Europe, and I learnt a lot from them. But seeing that portrait of the other Val made me stop and wonder what else my father might have been carrying around with him all those years, and to appreciate just how well he had dealt with it. Such is the power of art, and I left the exhibition grateful to Andrea Malone for providing me with another perspective on a life about which I had taken too much for granted.

Paul Skrebels

CONSCRIPTION, CONSCIENCE AND CONFLICT: A CENTENARY REFLECTION ON THE 1916 REFERENDUM

Tom Frame[1]

Introduction

1916 was one of Australia's bleakest years as a sovereign nation. The parliament and the people were enduring conflict at home and abroad. While fighting on the Western Front was producing unprecedented casualties, the extent of the nation's contribution to the Great War had become a contentious issue that was dividing the population. The recruitment of military manpower had become a political issue with ethical implications. Would Australian men be required to render military service overseas? Would they be obliged to fight and possibly die in a conflict to which they may have been opposed?

The conscription referendum held on 28 October 1916 should not be considered in isolation. The questions asked and the issues raised have, in one sense, never been settled satisfactorily. Indeed, the disagreements that emerged and the controversy that followed cast a long shadow over public life. Recruiting military manpower and recognising conscientious objection were matters of national significance again in 1943, 1968, 1990 and 2003. In sum, the 1916 referendum is essentially the first instalment of an evolving public debate drawing on an expanding case study focused on the character of government authority and the limits of the state's coercive powers. I will show that the causes and consequences of the 1916 referendum have continuing relevance to the Australian people and parliament.

Conscription

Prior to the twentieth century, most European states obliged their citizens to render some form of military service. Prior to Federation, service in the Australian colonial forces was entirely voluntary. Those who participated in the Maori Wars in the 1850s and 1860s, the Sudan War in 1885, the Anglo-South African War in 1899 and the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 chose to enlist and elected to serve overseas. The supply of volunteers usually exceeded demand. In 1901 the newly formed Commonwealth Government assumed sole responsibility for national defence and was empowered by the Constitution to raise and maintain naval and military forces. The 1903 *Defence Act* determined that uniformed service would be voluntary, except in times of war, when men could be conscripted for home defence. A bill for universal (meaning compulsory) military training for Australian men aged 18 to 60 was introduced by the Deakin Government in 1909. Lord Kitchener, the most famous soldier in the British Empire, recommended its introduction during his 1910 visit Australia. The legislation passed into law with bipartisan support shortly afterwards.

When the war that began in August 1914 continued beyond Christmas of that year and showed every sign of being a protracted conflict, when the list of Australians injured or killed in combat

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exceeded tens of thousands, when enthusiasm for the war waned and recruitment declined, when more men were needed to maintain the existing strength of the first Australian Imperial Force (AIF) than were volunteering, the Labor Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, decided to act. As an additional 5,500 men per month were required to ensure the AIF remained operationally viable, Hughes resolved to send men undergoing universal military training to the AIF for service overseas. But the necessary legislation would not pass the Senate where Hughes faced strong opposition, particularly from members of his own party. He could, however, introduce a bill to enable a referendum to be held, a bill that would pass with the support of the Commonwealth Liberal Party headed by Joseph Cook. As an indicator of what was to come, the bill was only just passed. It was the first time in the new nation's history when a question was put to the people for their judgment.

The *Military Service Referendum Act 1916* provided for a non-binding plebiscite. It was not strictly a referendum because the Commonwealth already had the necessary power to conscript men for overseas service, but a referendum is what the act provided. But why was the referendum needed? Prime Minister Hughes had two reasons. The first was the need to secure a symbolic popular mandate that would allow him to transcend deep political division. The second acknowledged that in 1916 conscription was a life and death matter. Was this an early instance of 'wedge' politics? It was. But the wedge was applied to Hughes' own party rather than the Opposition. On 28 October 1916, the people would be asked in tortuous prose:

> Are you in favour of the Government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this War, *outside* the Commonwealth, as it now has in regard to military service *within* the Commonwealth? [*emphasis added*]

The 'yes' case in 1916 was largely pragmatic. It stressed the urgent need for more fighting men, the increased prospects of victory with an enlarged AIF, and the duty Australia owed to the Empire. The 'yes' case was popular among conservatives and the middle classes. The 'no' case sought to highlight issues of governance and principles of conscience. *The Australian Worker* summed up the main 'no' argument:

> Society may say to the individual: 'you must love this; you must hate that'. But unless the individual feels love or hatred springing from his own convictions and his own feelings, society commands him in vain. He cannot love to order. He cannot hate to order. These passions must find their source within his soul.

It was wrong to force men to fight against their will; to act in ways that might violate their conscience; to oblige them to risk their lives when those at home were safe and secure. There were also doubts about whether the additional men would make a difference to the war's outcome and there were protests that Australia had already committed as much as it was able.

Confident that the 'yes' case would easily prevail, three weeks before the plebiscite Hughes directed all eligible men aged between 21 and 35 to report to their local military authorities where they would be medically examined and enrolled in a unit. Because it was difficult to prove personal identity and there was a lively trade in fraudulent exemption certificates, the men called up in October 1916 were fingerprinted. This highly unpopular measure, when added to resentment at Hughes' presumption that the plebiscite's outcome, worked decisively against the 'yes' vote. It was also a mini poll on the Government's popularity. Hughes' personal standing as a strong leader heading a unified team was being slowly eroded by the gradual collapse of his Cabinet through resignation and defection.

The referendum was defeated with 1,160,033 responding 'no' and 1,087,557 answering 'yes'.[2] The turnout was 82.75 per cent of eligible voters (voting in the referendum was only compulsory for those living within five miles of a polling station) while 97.36 per cent of the votes cast were valid. The referendum was lost in New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia and passed in Western Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and the Federal Territories. But the result turned on just 72,476 votes. The narrow margin meant that the issue was far from dead. When Australia was asked to provide a sixth division for the Western Front in 1917 and the need could not be met by volunteers, Hughes, now leader of the newly formed National Labor Party, went back to the people on 20 December 1917 with the question: 'Are you in favour of the proposal of the Commonwealth Government for reinforcing the Commonwealth Forces overseas?'. Hughes' plan was to have any shortfall in volunteer recruitment met by compulsory reinforcements of single men, widowers, and divorcees without dependents aged between 20 and 44 years who would be called up by ballot. The referendum was defeated with 1,015,159 in favour and 1,181,747 against. It was a larger defeat than 1916 and left Australia to stand with South Africa and India as the only participating countries not to introduce conscription for the Great War.

In thinking about what was at stake in 1916 and 1917, it is important to separate opposition to conscription with recognition of conscientious objection. Opposition to conscription was (and is) based on political, procedural and practical considerations. For instance, opponents might argue that the case for compelling a section of the population to render military service is poorly conceived or wholly unconvincing. Opponents might take exception to the method by which men are selected (such as a ballot based on date of birth) or the exemption of certain classes of the population from obligatory service (such as the clergy). There might also be opposition to deploying unsuitable or inexperienced amateur soldiers for tasks better undertaken by trained and experienced professionals. Opposition to conscription can take many forms and may not involve any dimension of conscience.

Conscientious objection is focused on the objective of conscription – involuntary or compulsory military service during wartime – and the possibility that someone rendering such service might be required to kill another human being. Then (and now), possessing certain religious convictions and professing particular philosophical beliefs precludes the taking of human life under any circumstances, including armed conflict. Most societies respect these convictions and beliefs, exempting those professing them from compulsory military service in wartime. During the nineteenth century in Britain, for instance, Quakers were excluded from the operation of the 1803 *Militia Act* while Russia allowed Mennonite Christians to pay a special tax in lieu of military service. Objection of this kind usually comes from pacifists (those opposed to all uses of physical force) who usually represent a dissenting opinion held by relatively few people. That pacifists comprise a small minority may explain why many governments have agreed to a compromise with those sincerely holding such convictions. This has generally been the attitude of Australian governments.

The 1903 *Defence Act* defined 'conscientious belief' as 'requiring a fundamental conviction of what is morally right and wrong, which is so compelling that the person is duty-bound to follow that belief'. The Act recognised the validity of conscientious belief for 'those who could prove that the doctrines of their religion forbade them to bear arms or perform military service' (section 60). Australia was the first nation to grant exemption on these grounds. Exemption

[2] A breakdown of the vote against conscription was published in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1917-19, vol.IV, p.1469.

was limited to combatant duties and was restricted to individuals demonstrating membership of an organisation formally professing pacifism. Notably, no specific religious test was required after 1910. But there were no such grounds for exemption from compulsory military training. Conscientious objection was, of course, always available to volunteers during peacetime through the process of administrative discharge.

The 1916 conscription debate highlighted two contentious issues that were to have continuing significance. The first was the difficulty of reconciling the state's authority to compel individuals to render military service with the entitlement of individuals to seek exemption based on conscience. The second concerned the state's willingness to concede that it did not have an independent existence over and above serving the individuals comprising it, the individuals who remained the source of its authority.[3] The referendum also demonstrated that compulsion and conscience are ethical issues with political dimensions. This meant that conscription stood apart from other government activities. Acknowledging the moral gravity of obliging someone to take a human life and accepting that some citizens might be morally constrained from doing so, is the mark of a mature democracy and a tolerant society.

The argument *then*, and the argument that might be mounted against the reintroduction of conscription *now or in the future*, is that the political case for increased military manpower ought to be improved rather than the state's coercive powers exercised more vigorously. It is better to have willing volunteers than resentful conscripts. In 1916, Australian parliamentarians realised the gravity of the issues and resolved to share the burden with the public – directly and personally. They would not stand alone in accepting responsibility for sending men to their deaths. The people could never abrogate their own collective responsibility if they voted 'yes'. Notably, the vast majority of serving soldiers voted against conscription. They had seen the horrors of war and would not insist that others share the experience. Nor did they want to fight alongside reluctant comrades with whom they might not be able to trust their own lives.

The churches, as the chief guardian of the nation's moral conscience, generally accepted the justness of the Great War and the necessity of conscription for overseas service. Although there was no officially endorsed Anglican position on military service or conscientious objection,[4] Francis James noted 'the striking fact that between May 1916 and January 1918, no Anglican voice appears to have been raised against conscription in the Church press or in any other Synod'.[5] As the largest denomination, leading Anglican Churchmen strongly urged a vote in favour of conscription and conducted their own campaigns in support of the 'yes' vote. As Michael McKernan has shown in *The Australian People and the Great War*, clergy who were inclined to pacifism or who were troubled by the community's general enthusiasm for the war

[3] It is difficult to assess the extent to which Australians have supported conscription because most opinion polls refer to compulsory military training or national service. Other than during the closing stages of the Vietnam War, more than 60 per cent of the adult population of Australia has purportedly supported either the introduction or continuation of national service. See Peter Sekuless, 'A comparison of RSL policies on major national issues with prevailing public opinion', Australian War Memorial history conference, 13 February 1985, p.6. It is noteworthy that Sekuless makes no mention of any poll canvassing opinion on the recognition of conscientious objection. For a broader discussion of the politics of conscription see H.S. Albinski, *Politics and Foreign Policy in Australia: The Impact of Vietnam and Conscription*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1970, pp.193-202.

[4] Alan D Gilbert, 'Protestants, Catholics and loyalty: an aspect of the conscription controversies, 1916-17', *Politics*, vol.VI, no.1, May 1971, pp.15-25.

[5] Francis James in Forward and Reece (eds), *Conscription in Australia*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1966, p. 265.

were often hounded from their parishes and accused of disloyalty and even cowardice.[6] The most notable public opponent was the Roman Catholic Coadjutor Bishop and, from May 1917, Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, who referred to the fighting in 1914-18 as 'just an ordinary trade war'.[7] He was the only Australian Roman Catholic leader to respond positively to the 1917 'Peace Proposals' of Pope Benedict XV who advocated the complete abolition of obligatory military service.

The failure of the conscription referenda was not lost on politicians during the Second World War. Although compulsory military training was resumed in October 1939 (war with Germany having been declared the previous month),[8] general conscription did not begin until hostilities commenced against Japan at the end of 1941. By January 1943 and with the Labor Party in power, military manpower again became a pressing issue and one that could have divided the Party a second time.[9] Prime Minister John Curtin prevailed and his party's policy platform was changed. In February 1943, legislation was introduced to define Australia in a manner that included the Territory of Papua New Guinea and the Islands of Indonesia and British Borneo (New Guinea then being a League of Nation's protectorate administrated by Australia). *All* troops, including the Citizen Military Forces (CMF), were liable for service in a special 'South-West Pacific Zone'. But this policy created two armies: a volunteer army that could be sent anywhere and a conscript army that could only be deployed to the Pacific zone. This naturally complicated defence planning because some units were an amalgam of 2nd AIF volunteers and CMF conscripts and volunteers.

Complications aside, John Curtin's decision reflected the acute Japanese threat, acknowledged that American conscripts were now defending Australia and embodied a compromise with Australian reluctance to make overseas military service compulsory.[10] Of the two, historians have judged the latter to be the stronger impetus for the policy change.[11] In the post-Second World War period, Australian forces consisting entirely of volunteers deployed to the Korean War (1950-53), the Malayan Emergency (1948-60) and the Indonesian 'Confrontation' (1964-66),[12] although compulsory military training was re-introduced in 1951 as part of national service scheme[13] that continued until 1959.[14]

Fifty years on: the debate renewed

Conscription was reintroduced using provisions contained in the *National Service Act* (1951) without parliamentary debate (not that it was technically required) on 10 November 1964.[15] It is important to note that national service was reintroduced in anticipation of possible armed conflict with Indonesia rather than as part of an escalating commitment to South Vietnam. The

[6] The experiences of two clergyman, one Methodist (the Reverend B. Linden Webb) and the other Presbyterian (the Reverend James Gibson), are described in detail in Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches, 1914-18*, Catholic Theological Faculty, Sydney, 1980, pp.30-1.
[7] *Argus*, 18 September 1916 and *Catholic Press* (Sydney), 29 November 1917, p.20.
[8] A statement by Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies giving his reasons for introducing conscription for home defence was published in the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 21 October 1939.
[9] P. Love, 'Curtin, MacArthur and Conscription, 1942-43', *Historical Studies*, vol.17, October 1977, pp.505-11.
[10] 'Conscription and Conscience', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol. 40, no.5, July 1967, p.69.
[11] *CPD* (Reps), 3 February 1943, pp. 265, 269.
[12] Compulsory military training during peacetime was conducted in the period 1911-29 and 1950-60.
[13] *CPD* (Reps), 21 November 1950, pp.2723-4, 2728.
[14] *CPD* (Reps), 26 November 1959, pp.3185-86. In 1957, the scheme was reduced with the introduction of a ballot which would restrict the number of young Australian men 'selected' to undergo compulsory training, *CPD* (Reps), 1 May 1957, pp.950-2.
[15] *CPD* (Reps), 10 November 1964, p.2715, pp.2717-18.

Act exempted conscientious objectors on the grounds of religious and non-religious beliefs from either all military service or from combative military service, the distinction reflecting the beliefs held. Total exemption was granted on the basis of 'deep seated and compelling' conscientious objection. Ministers of Religion and theological students were specifically exempted.

National service had not been a divisive political issue in the 1950s and did not generate immediate controversy when reintroduced in late 1964. In fact, a Gallup poll showed that 71 per cent were in favour of the scheme at that time and 25 per cent were against. Attitudes changed little after 29 April 1965 when Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies advised Federal Parliament that an infantry battalion would be deployed to South Vietnam for combat operations. The 1 RAR deployment was an all-volunteer force. The following month the *Defence Act* was amended to allow national servicemen to deploy overseas with the first Holt Government deciding in March 1966 that 'nashos' would serve in South Vietnam from mid-1966. Support for national service was now 63 per cent in favour and 33 per cent against. By October 1970, 58 per cent still agreed with national service and 34 per cent were against with 8 per cent curiously undecided. In September 1971, 53 per cent of 16-20 year olds supported the continuation of conscription with the proportion in favour increasing with the age of respondents. The notable difference was in attitudes to *where* national servicemen ought to be sent. In December 1965, 37 per cent were in favour of them being sent to Vietnam and 52 per cent wanted them to remain in Australia. Surprisingly by August of 1967 and after the first national serviceman, Errol Noack, had been killed in mid-1966, the percentage of those polled showed 42 per cent believing they should be sent to Vietnam (up 5 per cent) and 49 per cent for remaining in Australia (down 3 per cent).

PM Holt explained that the United States was sending its conscripts to Vietnam and Australia was obliged to do likewise. To avoid the accusation that conscripts were carrying a disproportionate burden of the war-fighting effort, later legislation limited deploying units to less than 50 per cent national servicemen. Between 1964 and 1972, nearly 64,000 men were conscripted. Of that number 19,450 national servicemen would serve in Vietnam with around 200 killed. Of the Regular Army, 21,132 personnel deployed to Vietnam with 242 killed. Notably, early in their training many national servicemen were quietly 'invited' to express their interest in serving in South Vietnam or some other destination. Three out of four conscripts fulfilled their obligations within Australia, Malaysia or in PNG. National service could be avoided by enlistment in the CMF, deferment on the basis of particular circumstances (such as education) or exemption through conscientious objection.[16]

Opinion was divided on whether the war in South Vietnam had a direct bearing on Australia's security and whether it justified the deployment of conscripts. Disagreement on these two points led to calls for the recognition of 'selective objection' also known as 'objection to particular wars' in 1966. Commentary focused on what were considered two unsubstantiated assertions in the *National Service Act*: first, that it focused on 'war' rather than 'wars' and assumed that all armed conflicts possessed comparable moral status; and second, that disagreeing with an elected government's decisions could be a matter of conscience. While critics of the Act conceded that a minority submits to the decision of the majority in a democracy, the decision to wage war raises moral issues so serious that compelling someone to render military service may reasonably be regarded as a matter of conscience and, therefore, an exception to the rule.

[16] All figures for recruitment and conscription in the Vietnam War from National Archives of Australia Fact Sheet no.161 (www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs161.aspx).

It was not until late 1968 that the courts clarified the scope of conscientious belief. In *Thompson's Case* heard before the High Court, Bruce Thompson claimed that the phrase 'any form of military service' in section 29A(1) of the *National Service Act*, meant that exemption was possible if an individual objected to 'any form of military service' including a particular war. The court was split. Chief Justice Barwick disagreed. The case was lost. The Department of Labour and National Service used Barwick's judgment to point out that:

> it is open to a national service registrant, whose objection to military service is of a selective nature in that he holds a belief against participation in a particular conflict, to opt for part-time service in the Citizen Forces at the time for registration as an alternative to call-up for the full-time National Service.[17]

Furthermore, there were fears that legal recognition of selective objection could open doors to a general theory of selective obedience to law. The distinction between a person conscientiously opposed to participation in a particular war and one conscientiously opposed to the payment of a particular tax, for instance, was apparently rather slight. Such recognition had the potential to erode public authority and destroy the fabric of government. There was also the additional complicating factor of distinguishing between political beliefs and party loyalties. The latter could involve all of the members of a political party seeking exemption from military service on the grounds that their party opposed a war. Those defending a right of selective objection note that it applies in the sole area where the Executive Government can compel personal service (which is different from paying taxes and obeying the speed limit). Personal service can also be compelled by the judiciary in the form of jury service and by the legislature in the form of compulsory voting. Both of these obligations are, of course, also accompanied by opt out provisions.

75 years on: a new debate

Disagreements about selective objection continued until the end of Australian involvement in the Vietnam War and the proclamation of the *National Service Termination Act* (1973). Provisions relating to national servicemen were removed from the *Defence Act* in 1975.[18] The debate was moribund until Michael Tate, a Labor Senator from Tasmania, proposed legislation to recognise a right to selective conscientious objection.[19] He later introduced a Private Members Bill into the Senate proposing changes to the *National Service Act* (1951). The matter languished until 1990 when Senator Tate, by now the Justice Minister, circulated the first draft of a *Defence Legislation Amendments Bill*. It included recognition of selected conscientious objection (SCO) for conscripts although the last national service trainee had been discharged from the Army in 1973. The Service Chiefs were mortified by the prospect of SCO being offered even to conscripted personnel because they contended that some of the principles that applied to conscript service could (and would) be applied to volunteer service or create unhelpful confusion. These fears soon materialised when Leading Seaman Terrence Jones failed to report to HMAS *Adelaide* before the ship deployed to the Gulf of Oman in August 1990 to enforce United Nations' sanctions against Iraq after its invasion of Kuwait.

Leading Seaman Jones defended his action by saying (while he was absent without leave): 'I

[17] DLNS to Secretary, Prime Minister's Department, 11 December 1968, DLNS file 72/557.
[18] Conscription could also take place under section 60 of the *Defence Act* (1903) which allows the Governor General, by means of a proclamation, to call upon certain male persons to serve in the Defence Force at a time when there is a real or apprehended attack on or invasion of Australia. This Act does not recognise any right of conscientious objection.
[19] *CPD* (Senate), 23 August 1978.

am not a coward and I would be prepared to fight for my country, but I am taking a *political stand* because this is not our war, we are just following the Americans. I am prepared to die to defend my country but not to protect the United States' oil lines' [*emphasis added*]. He implied that it was moral to be political in this instance. Although the *Defence Legislation Amendments Bill* was still in draft form when Jones was declared absent without leave, the Independent (former Nuclear Disarmament Party) Senator for Western Australian, Jo Vallentine, introduced a private bill into the Senate for *An Act relating to conscientious objection to certain Defence service*. She praised Leading Seaman Jones for being 'aware, informed and intelligent'. Jones was taking a political stand that Vallentine sought to protect as a matter of conscience. The inference was that a person's political beliefs were part of their moral conscience and therefore worthy of protection.

At his subsequent court martial, Jones was found guilty of being absent from his lawful place of duty without approved leave. He was sentenced to 21 days' detention, reduction in rank to able seaman and forfeiture of four days' pay. Jones then sought 'discharge at own request'. His court martial prompted an inquiry from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commissioner, Brian Burdekin, who was concerned that the absence of any right of selective conscientious objection offended against the spirit of his Commission's act of parliament and was contrary to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) which was incorporated into Australian law by the *HREOC Act*. In reply, the ADF insisted that

> an expectation that all *lawful* orders will be obeyed is fundamental to the maintenance of discipline ... Concomitant with this expectation there must exist a right ... to take disciplinary action where breaches of this fundamental obligation occur. In other words the right to enforce the obligation to serve is reasonable and not discriminatory. Accordingly, so far as volunteers are concerned, there is no scope for allowing for conscientious objection with respect to specified operations, or indeed combat generally, unless the matter is raised as a ground for discharge at own request.

Recognition of conscience became a 'hot issue' again with the planned invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. Both operations provoked a great deal of discussion about the justification of Australian participation given the absence of any clear, unambiguous, immediate or direct threat to the Australian people and the national interest from either Afghanistan or Iraq. There were laments and complaints about both operations and many previously apolitical servicemen and women felt that they and their skills had been used for domestic political advantage and international-alliance leverage. This was very far removed from defending Australia and its national interests, some privately contended. Matters of conscience and the nature of obligation (a slight variation to compulsion) were again at the forefront of conversation. Based on my observations then and now, I would contend that the vast majority of ADF members have not actually thought much about the difference between moral objections and political dissent, the majority do not know how to differentiate between them, and even fewer have thought about what they would do if confronted by a moral objection within their service.

Objection to military service always implies some degree of conflict in values between the state and the person who objects. But when the objector is not a pacifist, but selectively objects to military service because of the alleged immorality of the purpose or the legality of the methods used in combat, the conflict of values becomes much more acute and the resolution much more problematic. This is particularly so when objectors contend that the state's actions violate international law. No democratic government concerned about public opinion would be prepared to entertain such an admission by recognising such an objection. Yet, the recognition of a right to *selective* conscientious objection is a crucial one because it establishes the principle that wars and conflicts can be just and unjust and that agreement to serve in the armed forces ought to be conditional. This debate needs to continue. In the current absence of conscription,

national service and universal military training, it is a favourable time for a new consensus to be sought.

The Shadows of 1916

The 1916 conscription referendum highlighted and worsened sectarian tensions within Australia – tensions which have since dissipated. But it has left a positive lasting legacy in the form of respect for conscience. Since joining the Royal Australian Navy as a 16-year-old cadet midshipmen in January 1979, I have noticed a very substantial shift towards respect for the personal convictions of uniformed men and women. This is a welcome development. But conceptual challenges remain. I would contend that the two most pressing challenges are explaining the distinction between objection and opposition, and ensuring that moral conversation is not proscribed as incitement to mutiny within or beyond the ADF. Trying to pursue mission objectives with both effectiveness and efficiency while giving conscience due regard is not easy. I realise that there is impatience with suspected or declared conscientious objection among volunteers, impatience reflected in the retort: 'if they don't approve they are free to leave'. But I would respond in two ways. First, what if their objection is valid because a planned action is morally objectionable? The presence of conscientious reflection in a unit may be crucial to preventing immoral and potentially illegal behavior. Second, should a career be ended because a person thinks that their participation in one activity is incompatible with their moral conscience and seeks an alternative form of military service?

Differentiating morals from politics to the extent that such a distinction is ever possible remains a difficult task. I have met many people claiming to profess a moral objection when their position is no more than political dissent. They think that something is bad (by which they mean a poor option) rather than wrong (by which they mean defying a principle). The present approach – to deal quietly and confidentially with individual cases of conscientious objection – is workable but unsustainable. It is presently workable because these cases are few in number while those involved usually prefer privacy and anonymity. I am not sure that this approach will be adequate given the evolving weapons, tactics, scenarios and corporate risk aversion associated with current and likely future operations.

For the nation to host a mature discussion that deals with both the principles and pragmatics of balancing the nation's military manpower needs with respect for individual conscience, a good grasp of history is needed. The 1916 conscription referendum has been the subject of much ill-informed polemical commentary based on an imperfect grasp of what happened and why. Although it is difficult to assess the tumultuous events of 1916 without an element of personal bias because an evaluation of conscription touches on one's own political philosophy and the importance placed on conscience draws on individual ethical commitments, the cause of objectivity will be served by focusing primarily on the applicable legislation and the duties and responsibilities it imposes on governments, and secondarily on the connection made between operational inputs and outputs in the conduct of the Great War.

The 1916 referendum is an episode in Australian history that obliges historians to take a personal stand and to reveal something of their political sympathies and their ethical sensibilities. As someone suspicious of disembodied history – the kind of history in which the historian (as observer) is notably absent – I am reassured when a historian discloses their preferences and their prejudices, especially in relation to issues involving compulsion and conscience. Such disclosures are usually a sign of honesty and very welcome when dealing with a subject such as conscription, which often attracts an element of hubris.

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LUMINOUS AND NIGHT SIGHTS FOR THE VICKERS MACHINE GUN

Kevin Driscoll

When what was to become known as the Great War commenced in 1914, the British army was primarily armed with the Rifle Short Magazine Lee Enfield No.1. Mk III. Maxim and Vickers machine guns were in service and the British were in the process of introducing the new air cooled Lewis machine gun followed soon after by the Hotchkiss machine gun. The conflict in Europe quickly settled into the pattern of trench warfare that would continue for the duration of the war. Maxim and Vickers guns were used by the allies for direct fire in both defence and attack. Firing from fixed prepared positions, often with overlapping fields of fire, clearly the purpose of the machine gun was to kill and maim as many of the enemy as possible.

Vickers guns were also employed for indirect firing tasks where some of the principles applicable to artillery are applied to the heavy machine guns. The guns were positioned and sighted with the benefit of mechanical aids including clinometers, range tables, aiming lamps, the deflection bar foresight, and others, to rain indirect fire on known and probable concentration or choke points of the enemy. Areas behind the enemy trenches where transport may be being unloaded, where troops are concentrating to enter or leave the trenches are examples of desirable targets.

Trench warfare was not restricted to daylight hours so a need was identified for a suitable night sight for both rifles and machine guns. The sight would ideally give the allied soldier the advantage of being able to aim accurately at night or in low light conditions, however, the sight must not glow or emit light that could give away the firer's position. A series of sights were developed for rifles and machine guns, the common thread being the use of Radium illuminant filling. Radium, discovered by Marie Curie and her husband Pierre in 1898, is a silvery-white metal, highly radioactive that glows in the dark. A common use for Radium was the luminous points on watch dials and hands.

Fig.1: Sights, Luminous, Fore

Luminous sights containing Radium filled tubes for the Vickers gun were officially introduced on 1 March 1916.[1] The initial sights comprised two components, a foresight that is attached to the foresight protector of the Vickers gun and a back sight that clipped onto the tangent sight slide. The foresight comprises a steel block with a vertical recess in which is seated a glass tube containing Radium illuminant. The glass tube is set into a base of plasticine or similar material and secured in place by a brass plate and two screws. Two spring clips, one attached to each side of the foresight block, hold the foresight in position.

[1] List of Changes (LOC) 17677 dated 1 March 1916.

The back sight is manufactured from steel and has a rectangular aperture. Adjacent to each vertical side of the aperture a horizontal illuminant tube is embedded in plasticine or similar material. In both sights, the illuminant tubes are retained in place by a brass plate and securing screws. The back sight is assembled to the gun by being sprung on to the blade on the on the left side of the tangent sight blade, in which the 'U' is cut.[2]

When not in use the sights were stored and carried in a tin box specifically designed for the task. 'The box is made of tin plate; the lid is hinged to the body and the internal metal fitting is provided in the body in order to position the sights. The inside of the lid and the bottom of the fitting are padded to prevent movement. The dimensions are about 1⅞-in. by 1¼-in. by 1-in.'[3]

Fig.2 (left): Sights, Luminous, Back

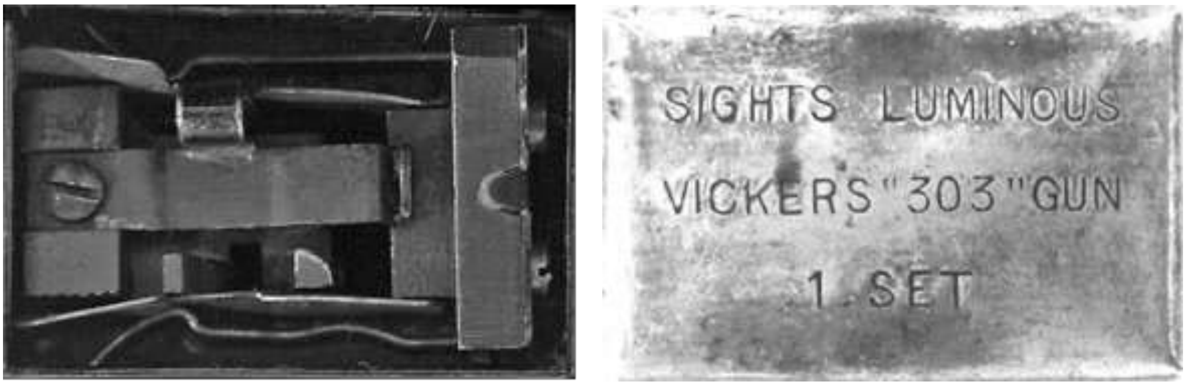
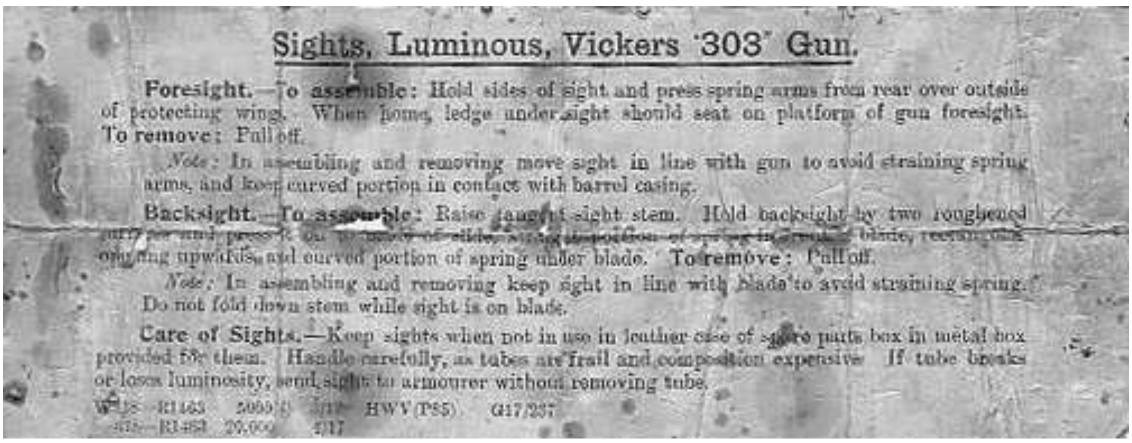


Fig.3: Box, Tin, Luminous Sights (Sights inserted). The lid of the box is stamped to indicate the contents

Accompanying each set of luminous sights is an instruction sheet advising how to fit, remove and store the luminous sights.



Sights, Luminous, Vickers '303' Gun.

Foresight.—To **assemble:** Hold sides of sight and press spring arms from rear over outside of protecting wings. When home, ledge under sight should seat on platform of gun foresight. **To remove:** Pull off.

Note: In assembling and removing move sight in line with gun to avoid straining spring arms, and keep curved portion in contact with barrel casing.

Backsight.—To **assemble:** Raise tangent sight stem. Hold backsight by two roughened [illegible] blade, rectangular [illegible] upwards, and curved portion of spring under blade. **To remove:** Pull off.

Note: In assembling and removing keep sight in line with blade to avoid straining spring. Do not fold down stem while sight is on blade.

Care of Sights.—Keep sights when not in use in leather case of spare parts box in metal box provided for them. Handle carefully, as tubes are frail and composition expensive. If tube breaks or loses luminosity, send sight to armourer without removing tube.

W[illegible] R1463 5000 [illegible] HWV (P55) G17/237
[illegible] R1463 20,000 [illegible]

Fig.4: Instruction Sheet — Sights, Luminous .303" Guns

[2] Handbook for the .303-inch Vickers Machine Gun. 1918.
[3] LOC 18581 dated 15 March 1917.

Manufacture

A War Office order was placed with British L.M. Ericsson Manufacturing Company Limited[4] during June 1916 for 11,000 luminous foresights. Delivery was required at a rate of 600 per week, commencing 19 July 1916. A second order was placed with Ericsson on 16 November 1916 for a further 8,000 foresights initially at a delivery rate of 400 per week, but this rate was reduced to 350 per week later that month. The above orders were supplemented by orders for spare parts also placed during November 1916.

Luminous backsight assemblies for the Vickers gun were supplied by Raleigh Cycle Company in Nottingham. Equivalent orders to those placed with Ericsson were placed during June and November 1916 along with an order for spare parts during November 1916. Issue was made of one set of sights per gun as supplies became available.[5]

Luminous sight repairs

The delicate glass tubes of the luminous sights were easily damaged or the radium gas lost its 'glow' over time. Rather than remove the sights from the trenches, Radium-filled replacement tubes and a suitable bedding material such as plasticine was made available to facilitate repairs.[6]

To facilitate changing the tubes in the field, during May 1917 the War Office issued a double-page document providing instruction to armourers or artificers for the replacement of broken or defective glass tubes containing radioactive composition in rifle and machine gun sights.[7]

Indirect fire

Indirect fire was more commonly conducted at night. A Vickers gun could be positioned during the day to cover the front against attack and to apply direct fire against the enemy's trenches and any target of opportunity that appeared. When opportunity presented itself, the machine gun could be relocated to an indirect fire position, often back from the front lines, and used to deliver harassing fire against targets that had been identified and recorded on range cards. Typically, a range card recorded distance and bearing to the target from the firing position.

The Vickers gun was married to the Mk 4 tripod. The tripod provided a solid firing base with the ability to traverse the gun left and right of centre and had an adjustment wheel to raise and lower the muzzle of the weapon thereby affecting range. When mounted on the Mk 4 tripod the gun could be locked in any position. Consistent positioning of the gun was achieved either by the use of a wooden 'T' base that supported the legs of the tripod on other than hard ground, or by the use of a peg driven into the ground to mark the gun's location. The 'T' base could be positioned and left in place and the gun and tripod moved to the 'T' base for indirect fire missions.

[4] Firms and Factories List; Orders for Machine Guns, Small Arms, Small Arms Ammunition. April 1917.
[5] LOC 17677 dated 1 March 1916.
[6] Plasticine was available in the trenches. It was issued as part of the water jacket first-aid kit which enabled minor repairs to be carried out to the water jacket of the gun, to keep the gun in service until a full repair could carried out.
[7] WO Document. 77.6.4721 Replacement Locally of Broken Tubes in Sights, Luminous.

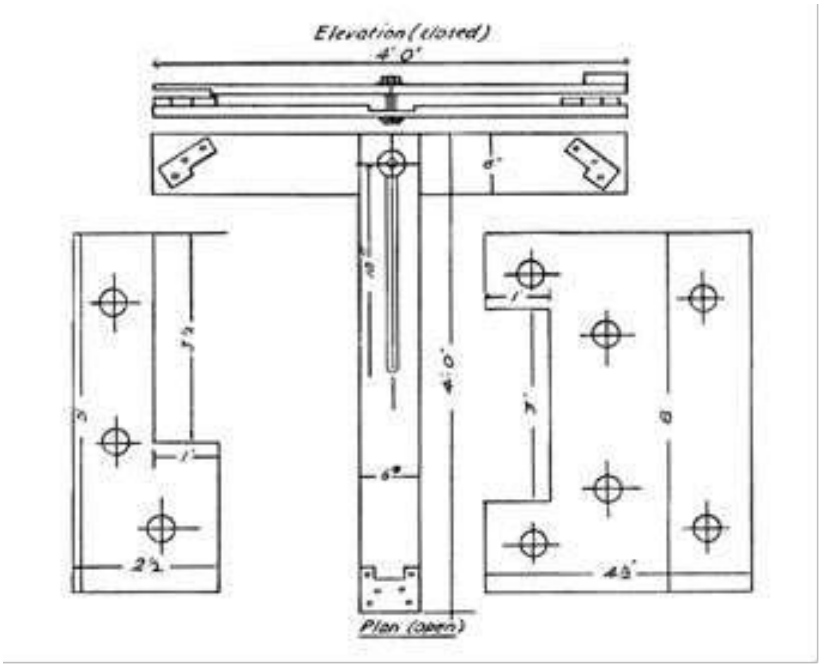


Fig.5 (left): Design of a 'T' Base for the Vickers gun

When fitted with the deflection bar foresight the Vickers gun could be laid off up to seven degrees either side of centre by simply adjusting the sight using the degree and minute measurements engraved on the sight.[8] The deflection bar foresight is fixed to the foresight protector of the Vickers Gun and the sliding foresight can be clamped in any predetermined position along the deflection bar. To use the deflection bar foresight, the firer ensures the sighting point on the deflection bar is set to zero for both degrees and minutes. The firer then lays the zeroed sights on the centre of the aiming point. The gun controller specifies the deflection, left or right, to be applied in degrees and minutes. The gun's No.2 then sets the deflection.

Range to the target was calculated by using a rangefinder, map reading, if a suitable map was available, or by observation. Range tables were introduced to guide machine gun officers of the muzzle elevation required to achieve a certain range. A clinometer that measured angles in degrees and minutes of both elevation and depression was placed on the top body of the machine gun and the muzzle elevation was set by adjusting the elevation wheel of the tripod.

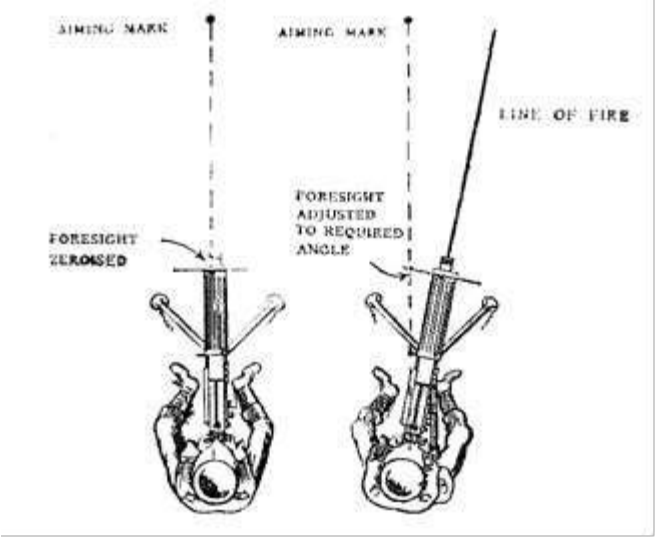


Fig.6: Use of the Deflection Bar Foresight

When the sights are set and the command given to fire, the firer sets the adjusted sights squarely on the aiming point or aiming lamp and commences fire. The luminous foresight can be fitted to the deflection bar foresight in the same manner as it is fitted to the foresight of the Vickers gun.

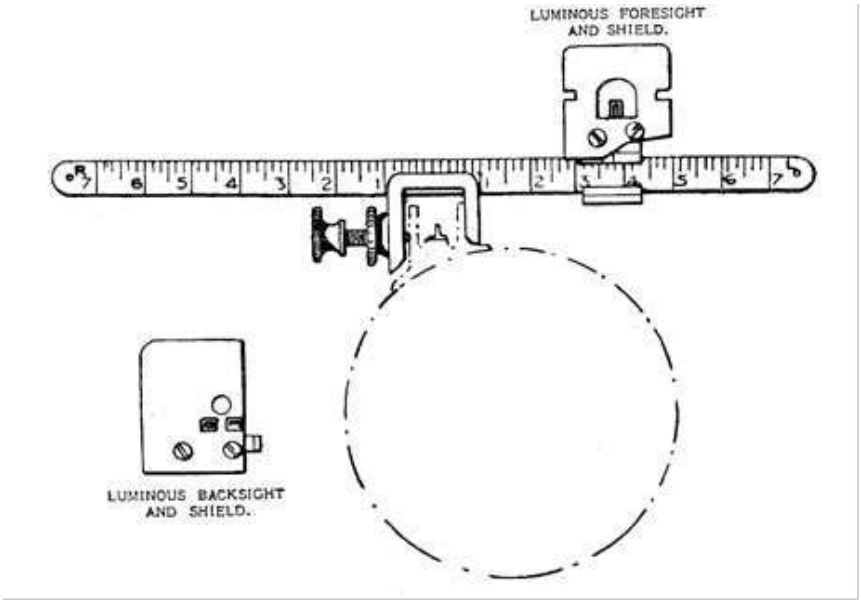
Introduced with the deflection bar foresight were metal shields to be fitted to the fore and rear luminous sights. The foresight shield is described as being about 1 11/32-inches wide and 1 7/16-inches high; it has a large aperture, semi-circular in form at the top, in which the blade of the luminous night sight is exposed, and a notch in each side to indicate normal limits of

[8] LOC 23095 dated 28 June 1919.

traverse, the spacing being equal to about one degree of angle in each direction. The shield is shaped on its lower edge to coincide with the underside of the sight.

The back sight shield is about 1 3/16-inches wide by 1 3/16-inches high; it has two small rectangular slots, coinciding with those on the sight, to expose the glass tubes, and above and between these slots a circular sighting aperture for use with the night firing lamp. The shields had two purposes: first to assist the firer acquire the aiming lamp, and second to assist the firer to search the target area. The notch on either side of the forward shield represents approximately one degree of traverse. To improve the chances of hitting the target the machine gun was adjusted laterally and vertically to 'search' the target area. Lateral movement was accomplished by tapping the rear of the gun right or left. Machine gunners were taught how to tap the weapon by hand to achieve an approximate half-degree lateral movement. Range can be adjusted by movement of the elevation wheel of the tripod. Depending on range, a one-degree change in direction or range will significantly increase the size of the beaten zone and the possibility of impacting upon the enemy.

Fig.7: Deflection Bar Foresight, Luminous Sights with Shields



The fitting of shields to the sights required the introduction of a new tin box for the storage of the fore and back No.2 Sights, luminous.[9] The box is larger than that introduced with the luminous sights, contains fittings to secure the sight and measures about 1⅞ by 1⅝ by 1⅝ inches.

Minute 534 of the Small Arms Committee dated 2 May 1923, initiates discussions between the Commandant of the Machine Gun School and Department of the Army proposing a new form of foresight shield for the Vickers Gun. The new design was forwarded for consideration on the basis that the existing shield was 'never truly satisfactory for the reason that it was never possible to make full use of those sights in conjunction with various unsatisfactory lamps and lanterns issued during the war to machine gun units in the field'.[10]

The new foresight shield was designed for use with the 'new' electric aiming lamp and the Minute indicates the sight and lamp should be considered together. Discussion within the Minute highlighted 'the illumination of radium treated sites is unsatisfactory. The eye being so to the backsight, the illumination can be seen, but the foresight can be seen with great difficulty with some sights and not at all with others.' It continued:

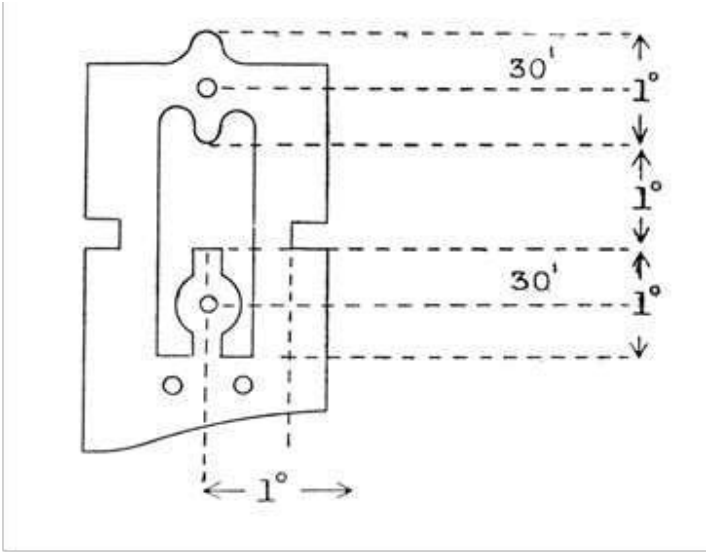
[9] LOC 23095 dated 28 June 1919.
[10] Small Arms Committee Minutes 534, 592 and 627.

> Owing to the unsatisfactory light given, and possibilities of producing a 'lasting' light the question of discarding this illumination has received careful consideration after trial. The value of the illuminated sight lies in the ability of the machine gunner to find the rough direction and elevation of the gun in relation to the lamp when the gun has to be freshly laid or when for one reason or another the sights get off the lamp.[11]

Introduced by LOC A 682 dated 20 August 1924, the LOC describes the new foresight shield as being 1 7/16 inches by 2¾ inches, shaped and pierced to form sighting features. The shield replaced the earlier model shield on the foresight block and formally removed the Radium-filled tubes from both the fore and rear sights. After the removal of the Radium illuminant tubes and the fitting of the new design of shield, the nomenclature was changed from Luminous Sight to Night Sights. The night sights from that point onwards were stored in the aiming lamp box when not in use.

The sighting features of the new shield consist of a barleycorn formed centrally on the upper edge; below this an aperture, then a rectangular opening having an inverted barleycorn projection from its upper edge, and a combined aperture and blade from its lower edge, while a notch is cut in each side to indicate normal limits of traverse, the spacing being equal to about one degree of angle in each direction.

Fig.8: Foresight, Night Firing Shield



The sighting features permitted the firer to 'search' more easily for the target to overcome errors of direction and range. For instance, if the tip of the bottom sighting feature is the point of aim. training the barrel of the weapon by one degree, i.e. bringing the target to the base of the lower sighting feature, will raise the barrel of the gun and shift the point of aim behind the target. In a similar way the aiming features permit the direction to be accurately changed by up to one degree.

The British concept after the Great War was that future wars would be fought on similar lines, i.e. utilising trench warfare. Therefore, ongoing development and refinement of Vickers gun indirect fire accessories continued up until World War 2. After World War 2 the rate of development of indirect fire accessories for the Vickers Gun tapered off. The introduction of the optical sight with its ability to be used both day and night reduced or even eliminated the requirement for night sights, although the night sights remained in service until the Vickers gun was withdrawn during 1968, after nearly 60 years of faithful service.[12]

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Inspectorate of Armaments Notification W/1231 and M/581 dated 7 March 1968.

OUR OTHER ANZACS: TASMANIAN NURSES IN WORLD WAR I

Shane Roberts[1]

On 4 August 1914, Great Britain declared war on Germany. As a member of the British Empire, Australia joined the war, without the necessity of issuing any declaration. For the next four years, the opposing armies fought for supremacy, with the Allied forces eventually winning the war, but at a great cost. Amongst those heading off to war were members of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS), amongst whom were nurses from Tasmania. Whilst nurses from Tasmania had gone to South Africa to tend soldiers during the Boer War, the experiences gained during the conflict would not have been of use in preparing for the events which took place in World War I. Even though they came from the smallest state in the country, these women proved, not only to themselves but to other people, that they were capable of working effectively amid the conditions of this first mechanised war.

Nurses from Tasmania had already been to a war to tend the wounded. During the latter stages of the Second Boer War, colonial nurses had travelled to South Africa to provide whatever assistance possible. Previous experience in a war, however, was not of any use to nurses heading overseas during World War I. The conditions faced by the nurses at Gallipoli, in Egypt, and on the Western Front were unlike those known by their predecessors.

The nurses in South Africa were, for the most part, safe from danger. One exception was an unnamed nurse stationed at Kroonstad, in Orange Free State. In a letter dated 6 July 1900, she described the situation in that part of the country. An attack was expected from men led by the Boer Commander Christian de Wet, and in consequence 'our men are all armed, and are lying down in their boots and fully dressed.' There were about 1,400 armed men in the town, with an additional 5,000 travelling from Bloemfontein. Her only concern appeared to be the possibility the Boers might have big guns, in which case she believed 'we shall stand a slender chance.'[2] While there would have been genuine fear on the part of the nursing staff in this town, unlike those involved in World War I with the AANS, those involved with the war effort in South Africa were rarely in direct threat to their safety, as the British policy only allowed men to travel to the front line.[3]

Even with the problems they faced at the Hobart General Hospital,[4] the conditions faced by these women during their time at the front were far different from those they had known through their work at home. These conditions came in three forms. First, there was the number of patients tended by each nurse. Brought about by the decision of the Australian Government to send so few medical personnel to the front, a ramification was a far higher nurse-patient ratios than any Australian nurse would have experienced in peacetime, and certainly did not help nurses such as Sisters Gibson and Tucker from the smaller establishments such as the Hobart General Hospital. The effects of the oversight began at Gallipoli, where the number of patients to be taken on board the hospital ships was underestimated. When she went on board the HMHS *Gascon*, Elsie Gibson noted there was bedding for 113 patients.[5] Once the injured began to be taken on board the ship at 9am on 25 April, this proved to be inadequate. In the

[1] Adjunct Researcher, School of Humanities, University of Tasmania.
[2] *Mercury*, 26 July 1900, p.3.
[3] Wendy Timon, 'Tasmanian women and the Boer War', unpublished honours thesis, University of Tasmania, 2002, p.31.
[4] W.G, Rimmer, *Portrait of a hospital: the Royal Hobart*, Hobart, Royal Hobart Hospital, 1981, p.206.
[5] Diary of Elsie Gibson, 23 April 1915. Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (TAHO).

end, Gibson had 118 in her ward alone, including one member of the Turkish forces.[6] In one intake, Gibson gained as many patients as the Hobart General Hospital would admit in ten days, or two-thirds of the Launceston General Hospital.[7] Ella Tucker, a fellow Tasmanian Nurse on the *Gascon*, was in a similar position, being responsible for the tending of seventy-six injured personnel, forty of whom were placed on beds on the fore deck.[8]

The situation was not any better on the Western Front. With the level of casualties, there was going to be a regular influx of men. In May 1917, Launceston General Hospital trained Sister May Tilton was stationed with the No.4 British General Hospital at Camiers, a little north of Étaples. She noted in her book the hospital housed 2,000 patients, deemed heavy cases, and each ward had 50-60 beds. She was given a ward of 60 men, with only one VAD, and sometimes two Orderlies.[9] Later in the year, she rejoined the No.3 Australian Casualty Clearing Station (ACCS), where the emphasis was on getting patients away from the front as quickly as possible. Even under these trying conditions, in which she and her colleagues were close enough to the fighting to hear the sound of battle,[10] she coped with the constant arrival and departure of large numbers of men.[11] These were far from unique circumstances for nurses in the war. There are numerous examples available of Australian Sisters having to cope with such conditions.[12] This shows that nurses from hospitals, even those as relatively small as the Hobart and Launceston General Hospitals, were able to deal with a nurse-to-patient ratio considerably larger than they would have known in peacetime.

Secondly, owing to the large number of patients arriving, there was the issue of the number of hours worked, which were far more than the workload in a civilian hospital. This regimen began at Gallipoli, and continued for the remainder of the war. Both Sisters Gibson and Tucker noted in their respective diaries the hours they kept. For both, 25 April 1915 was busy. Gibson was at work by the time the first of the injured men arrived at 9am, and remained at her post until she had finished after 2am the following day,[13] and returned to work at 6am.[14] Tucker worked a similar day, being ordered to bed at 2.30am, only to return to work three hours later, and not to finish the day until 10.30pm.[15]

This level of work became all too regular during the war. In the period 14-18 May 1917, Elsie Tranter assisted in seventy-three operations, finished work before midnight once, and was recalled to work five times to assist in extra work.[16] Other reports show the nurses working anything from sixteen hours without a break, to three days straight, irrespective of the

[6] Diary of Elsie Gibson, 25 April 1915. TAHO.
[7] Rimmer, *Portrait of a hospital*, p.319; the Launceston General Hospital had 160 beds, plus 20 balcony beds, and 12 in a Convalescent House in Perth. 'Launceston General Hospital Annual Report for 1914-15'. *Journal and Parliamentary Papers of the Parliament of Tasmania*, volume LXXIII, 1915-16.
[8] Ruth Rae, *Veiled lives: threading Australian nursing history into the fabric of the first world war*, Burwood, N.S.W., The College of Nursing, 2009, p.131; Marianne Barker, *Nightingales in the mud*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1989, p.31.
[9] May Tilton, *The Grey Battalion*, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1933, p.198.
[10] *The Grey Battalion*, p.238.
[11] *The Grey Battalion*, p.228.
[12] Barker, *Nightingales in the mud*, pp.30, 115, 129, 130; Jan Bassett, *Guns and brooches*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.73; Kirsty Harris, 'In the 'Grey Battalion': Launceston General Hospital nurses on active service in World War I', *Health & History*, vol.10, no.1, 2008, pp.26, 30; *Diary of Alice Gordon King*, NS669, TAHO; Rae, *Veiled Lives*, pp.131-33.
[13] Diary of Elsie Gibson, 25 April 1915.TAHO.
[14] Diary of Elsie Gibson, 26 April 1915. TAHO.
[15] Rae, *Veiled lives*, p.131.
[16] Elsie Tranter, *In all those lines*, Newstead: J. Richards, 2008, p.55.

conditions at the time. There are numerous entries in diaries, when time permitted, stating how tired was the writer.[17]

Thirdly, there was the environment in which the nurses worked. The nurses, in their peacetime employment, worked in modern hospitals. This was not the case for those working at the front. Circumstances necessitated using whatever facilities were available as hospitals, no matter how unsuitable. The difficulties began during the Gallipoli campaign. The injured men were removed from Anzac Cove and taken to Lemnos, Malta or Egypt. The Allied commanders had clearly not thought through the details of the Gallipoli Campaign, and were not prepared for the number of men being evacuated from Anzac Cove. One such example was No.3 Australian General Hospital (AGH). The early history of this unit was beset by problems, not least the War Office sending their equipment three weeks after the hospital arrived in East Mudros, and placing it on the wrong ship.[18]

Even permanent places were not without difficulties. In seeking places to convert to hospitals, the Allies commandeered a funfair at Heliopolis, Egypt. The hospital did not possess specialist facilities for sterilising instruments, and the structure of the building did not help with the work being done. Having a galvanised roof, Luna Park was especially susceptible to heat in the Egyptian summer. Alice Gordon King noted the temperature inside the hospital peaked at 49°C for five hours each day for a period of eight to nine days, and rarely went below 39°C at night,[19] a temperature far higher than she would have experienced in Tasmania. King was not alone in her views on Luna Park. The Principal Director of Medical Services made his views clear. In his inspection of the facilities in June 1915, he stated: 'Luna Park is not suitable for hospital purposes and is to be given up, or, failing that, made a separate institution.'[20]

The facilities on the Western Front were no less congenial at times, making the work of the nurses more difficult. Rather than being able to acquire standing buildings as had been the case in Egypt, the hospital facilities on the Western Front were placed in tents. Such arrangements were fine in the warmer months, but not so in winter, in a region where the temperature often fell below zero. This led to problems such as the lack of thermometers, the difficulty of sterilising equipment, and the general tending of the patients. 'One had to be careful not to wet their head,' noted Melbourne Hospital trained nurse Hope Weatherhead whilst stationed at No.2 AGH, Boulogne, 'because before one could get it dry it turned to ice on their hair.'[21] The lack of natural light and warmth added to the problems faced by the nurses in tending the wounded.

Being so close to the front, the nurses faced dangers not experienced by their predecessors. Theoretically they should have been safe from being targets of enemy action. Under international law, hospitals on land were to be safeguarded against enemy action, although those on the water were not as lucky, and were to enter war zones at their own risk.[22] This manifested itself in the actions against the medical staff on both fronts throughout the war. The

[17] Diary of Elsie Gibson, 28 April 1915; Diary of Alice Ross-King, 17 March 1915, 9 May 1915, 11 May 1915, 22 May 1915; Tilton, pp.241, 270.
[18] A.G. Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, (3 volumes), Melbourne: Australian War Memorial, 1930-43, vol.1, pp.252, 335.
[19] Diary of Alice Gordon King. NS669. TAHO.
[20] Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services*, vol.1, p.257.
[21] Kirsty Harris, *More than bombs and bandages: Australian Army nurses at work in World War I*, Newport, Big Sky Publishing, 2011, p.69.
[22] Geneva Convention 1864, articles 1, 2, additional article 3; Hague Conventions 1899 and 1907, articles 1 and 2; Hague Conventions, 1899 and 1907, article 4.

nurses tending the wounded at Gallipoli were among the first medical personnel to be placed in a dangerous situation. Alice Gordon King noted in her diary an unexpected danger in doing this work. As an Allied Hospital Ship, being fired on by the enemy is to be expected. Owing to the placement of the Allied warships in the cove, the Hospital Ship was in danger of being hit by shells from her own side. There was, wrote King, a 'Constant vibration of our ship caused by the … guns firing from the war ships surrounding us'.[23] An additional problem facing the nurses on board the ships was the timing of the shells. With a steady stream of wounded being placed on board the ships, the Turkish military had plenty of targets to hit. Lydia Kate King noted in her diary for 27 April 1915 the Hospital Ships in the cove were being targeted with gun fire at 3am.[24] This action had the additional consequence of not enabling the nurses to rest fully when not on duty.

The situation on the Western Front was not any easier. Rather than having to transport the wounded by boat, they were sent by road to Casualty Clearing Stations (CCSs), only six miles from the fighting,[25] staffed by medical officers, nurses, and orderlies, enabling the speedy treatment of wounded personnel. With the introduction of planes, the nurses became the targets in bombing raids, despite being protected by the Geneva and Hague conventions. The Germans showed little regard for the safety of the medical staff tending the wounded, and dropped their bombs at any target within range. 'Hun hate', wrote Alice Gordon King, 'was dealt out to us in the shape of shells one of which fell in the centre of the hosp. grounds', close to the ambulances. On that occasion there were not any deaths, with the bomb being a dud. In an understatement, King described life at a CCS as being erratic.[26]

The Germans took full advantage of those nights with a clear sky and full moon to augment the use of the large guns. One case was the bombing of a CCS. On the occasion of the visit of Evelyn Conyers, Matron-in-Chief of the AIF, in addition to the usual 9pm 'visit', the Germans returned at midnight and 4am the next day. Among the casualties on that occasion were ten Germans being tended by Allied Nursing staff.[27] This was by no means the only example of multiple attacks on a CCS. On 30 June 1918, No.34 CCS was attacked at 11pm, around midnight, and between 2 and 3am. The German squadrons, wrote Beatrice Butler, had 'a good many planes in each', dropping a large number of bombs on the camp, but by some miracle not causing any deaths.[28]

The medical staff did have limited means to defend themselves. Under Article 8 of the Geneva Convention of 1906, hospitals had the right to possess some type of gun, so long as it was used for defensive actions. May Tilton recounts at the time of the third battle of Ypres they had 15-inch guns, known as 'Big Bobs'. Covered in canvas, and painted to resemble autumn leaves, they were moved on a regular basis, so as not to be spotted by the Germans. Rather than being seen as a means of defence, the nurses felt relieved when the guns were moved away from their tents.[29] Some safeguards were also taken on board ships transporting passengers to England. The ship taking Beatrice Butler to England picked up a 4.7-inch gun at Port Said, along with two naval gunners. She recounted, 'passengers are keeping watch … Volunteers were called

[23] Diary of Alice Gordon King, NS 669, TAHO.
[24] Catherine McCullagh (ed), *Willingly into the fray: one hundred years of Australian Army Nursing*, Newport, Big Sky Publishing, 2010, p.29.
[25] 'Red Lane of Death', *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston), 23 January 1917, p.2; 'Royal Red Cross', *Mercury*, 8 February 1919, p.10.
[26] Diary of Alice Gordon King, NS669, TAHO.
[27] McCullagh, *Willingly into the fray*, p.42.
[28] Beatrice Butler to her mother, 27 June 1918. NS2098/1/2. TAHO.
[29] Tilton, *The grey battalion*, p.217.

for sporadically[.] Everyone put down their names.' Their means of detection was simply to look out using glasses, and to report to the bridge any suspicious items they saw.[30]

This first mechanised war not only introduced new armaments, but also brought back the use of chemical weapons. Chemical weapons have been in use for the last 4000 years,[31] but since the early seventeenth century, there had been attempts to prohibit their use. With the signing of the Hague Convention (IV, 2) in 1899, and the Hague Convention IV in 1907, the world powers were expressing their opposition to the use of such armaments. This latter convention was promulgated at a time when technology existed to produce such weaponry on a large scale. Such feelings of optimism would be sufficient to persuade the governing bodies of nurse education of the need to not include any lessons on how to deal with chemical weapons.

The sentiment evident on the use of chemical weapons in the latter stages of the nineteenth century lasted only the first eight months of the war. From 1915, the nurses had to deal with symptoms emanating from gas weapons of increasing strength. The Germans, and soon after the Allies, showed little reluctance to use weapons deliberately which were capable of inflicting horrendous levels of pain on their enemies. First used by the Germans on 22 April 1915, chlorine gas stripped the lining of the bronchial tubes and lungs, by being mixed at the rate of one part of chlorine to 1000 parts of air. This resulted in the soldiers drowning in their own fluids.[32]

Later in the same year, phosgene, discovered by the British chemist John Davy in 1812,[33] was used against the Allied troops. With little colour or odour, and with symptoms known to have taken up to 48 hours to appear, the soldiers could continue unaware they had been affected. Additionally, with a decreased level of coughing, they were liable to inhale a larger amount of the gas.[34] Having learned from the use of phosgene, mustard gas was also without much odour. First used on 12-13 July 1917 at Ypres, again the affects came later, but when they did, they affected the eyes, throat and lungs.[35] With the gap between the bombardment and the first signs of illness being so long, it is little wonder some people had to question whether the soldier was genuinely ill, or a malingerer.[36] As an indication as to the level of toxicity of the weapons, French people in the early years of this century were 'still occasionally suffering chemical burns from stumbling across ancient shells ploughed up on old battlefields'.[37]

The lack of preparation meant the nurses had to learn in a war zone how to treat the effects of chemical warfare. They managed to treat the injuries caused by gas attacks by adapting the skills gained from the lessons taught on anatomy and physiology. Once the soldiers arrived in the hospital, often a CCS, the nurses acted on the available symptoms. Added to the problem of uncertain symptoms was the methods to be used in solving the problem. The nurses learned early not to supply water to the soldiers, as such an act proved fatal: 'to drink water', wrote Lance-Sergeant Elmer Cotton, 'is instant death'.[38] Instead of water, the nurses used air. A tube

[30] Beatrice Butler to her father, 29 August 1916, on board the S.S. Malwa. NS2098/1/2. TAHO.
[31] Kim Coleman, *A History of Chemical Warfare*, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, p.5.
[32] Robert Harris and Jeremy Paxman, *The higher form of killing*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1982, p.2; Coleman, *History of chemical warfare*, pp.17-18.
[33] L.F. Haber, *The Poisonous Cloud*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986, p.16.
[34] Harris and Paxman, *Higher form of killing*, p. 18; Coleman, *History of chemical warfare*, p.24.
[35] Harris and Paxman, *Higher form of killing*, p. 24; Coleman, *History of chemical warfare*, p.24.
[36] A. G. Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, volume II, p.42.
[37] Coleman, *History of chemical warfare*, p.25.
[38] Coleman, *History of chemical warfare*, p.18.

was placed in the nose, with a gentle pressure to allow a regular supply of air.[39] After the lungs, the next important organs for treatment were the eyes. A blind soldier, even with working lungs, would have been a loss to the fight against the Central Powers.

By treating the causes of the condition, the nurses were able to send as many of the patients as possible back to the front line. There is some slight difference in stating how this was achieved. In his history of the Australian Army Medical Corps in the First World War, A.G. Butler states that eyes were cleansed using a solution of soda bicarb.[40] About the same time, Elsie Tranter noted in her diary for 9 April 1918 drops of cocaine and soda bicarb were placed in the eyes of the patients, with a strip of gauze wrung in the solution placed across their eyes.[41] This difference in the method used to clear the problem is probably due to the prohibition of cocaine soon after the war.

In addition to the existing work, the nurses were to confront an enemy not faced for a long time. For the nurses, Armistice Day did not mean an automatic end to military life. While 11 November 1918 marked the end of one form of hostilities, another had been in progress for the final six months of the war, and continued into the following year. At least fifty-two Tasmanian nurses continued working in the AANS in an effort to stem the flow of Spanish influenza, a disease responsible for the deaths of almost twice as many people worldwide as died in the armed conflict.[42] Indeed, nurses were among the early casualties, including Matron Jean Miles-Walker, a graduate of the Hobart General Hospital.[43] Between March and November 1918, 11 other Tasmanian nurses were diagnosed with influenza,[44] but unlike Miles-Walker, they survived and were able to return home.

Even with the knowledge gained from their training courses, the nurses were to have difficulties in dealing with this issue. In normal cases of influenza, the patient is usually ill for only a matter of days, and usually made a full recovery. In this case, it was of a new variety,[45] and of an origin still being debated nearly one hundred years on.[46] As with so many other diseases, this variety of influenza was highly infectious.[47] Even though it was a new strain, the nurses continued to work solidly in an endeavour to save as many lives as possible. There was little choice in this matter. Soon after the appearance of the first wave, it had become the single largest disease being fought by the medical staff of the Australian Army. By the summer of 1918, it was responsible for 34 per cent of all admissions in both the CCSs and General Hospitals.[48] The work of the nurses was recognised in a report on the efforts being done to

[39] Kirsty Harris, *More than bombs and bandages*, p.762; Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, vol.2, p.43.
[40] Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, vol.2, p.677.
[41] Tranter, *In all those lines*, p.101.
[42] Butler sets down the figure as being 15 million, whereas David Stevenson has the figure as 30 million, and Les Carlyon simply claims more people died of the influenza than were killed in the war. Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914*-1918, vol.3, p.190; David Stevenson, *1914-1918 The history of the First World War*, London, Allen Lane, 2004, p.498; Les Carlyon, *The Great War*, Sydney, Pan Macmillan, 2006, p.756.
[43] NAA: B2455, MILES-WALKER JN.
[44] These women were Sisters Burbury, Edwards, MacDougall, McKendrick, Pitman, Regan, Rudge, Shepherd, Terry, Watson, and Yeaman. NAA: B2455, BURBURY MG, EDWARDS IYM, MACDOUGALL AA, MCKENDRICK MD, PITMAN LUCY MAY, REGAN ELIZABETH, RUDGE DORIS AMY, SHEPHERD MURIEL HELEN, TERRY OLIVE ISABEL, WATSON L, YEAMAN EW.
[45] Mark Osborne Humphries, 'Paths of infection: the First World War and the origins of the 1918 influenza pandemic', *War in history*, vol.21, no.1, 2013, p.58.
[46] Humphries, 'Paths of infection', p.55.
[47] Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, vol.3, p.193.
[48] Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, vol.3, pp.200-201.

combat the disease. Major F.B. Lawton of No.3 AGH noted: 'When the epidemic was at its height the whole staff had to work hard, the Sisters hardest of all'.[49] Among the staff at this hospital were Tasmanian Sisters Muriel Burbury, Helen Lawrence, Ruth Taylor, and Grace Treblico.

Their success in the work can be measured, in part, by the views and opinions of those with whom they interacted. These men did not have reason to state their views on the work of the nurses, other than to express their honest opinion on the work done by these women. One such example was a wounded soldier returning to Tasmania, who stated, 'I have seen them sobbing with fatigue.'[50] Another was a soldier from Queensland. Writing to his mother soon after the storming of the beaches at Anzac Cove, Private Geoffrey Preston of the 9th Battalion AIF, writing from No.2 AGH at Mena House in Cairo, informed her of the hard work of the nurses on board the hospital ship: 'The nurses on the hospital ship were splendid.' Extolling the virtues of Hobart General Hospital trained Nurse Elsie Gibson, Preston told his mother, 'There was not a man in the ward who would not have done anything for her.'[51] Similarly, RQMS Newland, in a letter home, stated that no praise could be high enough for the work done by the nurses,[52] a sentiment which prevailed throughout the war.[53]

The AIF recognised the nurses as Anzacs owing to their proximity to the action.[54] Such was the level of respect shown by members of the army, they would salute nurses in the street, rather than simply tipping their hats as was the custom.[55] With the nurses being so close to the action, rather than many miles away as had been the case in previous conflicts, the men of the AIF felt an affinity with the them, as both groups were facing the same dangers from the Central Powers.

Even though they came from the smallest state in the Commonwealth, the Tasmanian nurses tending the wounded during World War I coped with the extraordinary conditions. These women took part in a new type of war, and as such would not have been able to gain any advice from those who had gone to South Africa during the Boer War. There was not just the introduction of mechanisation, but also the return of chemical warfare, a situation for which there had not been any training. Despite these difficulties, the nurses had managed to cope remarkably with the conditions faced.

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[49] Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, vol.3, p.201.
[50] 'Returned man's tribute', *Daily Post*, 14 October 1916, p.11; 'Public Meeting', *Examiner*, 10 November 1916, p.3; 'In the House of Commons', *North West Advertiser and Emu Bay Times*, 29 July 1916, p.8; 'Red Lane of Death', *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston), 23 January 1917, p.2; 'Tasmanian volunteers', *Examiner*, 26 April 1917, p.5.
[51] 'With our boys', *Brisbane Courier*, 23 June 1915, p.7.
[52] 'Australians in action', *Examiner*, 23 June 1915, p.2.
[53] 'Roll of honor', *North West Advertiser and Emu Bay Times*, 12 June 1918, p.3.
[54] Harris, *More than bombs and bandages*, p.81.
[55] 'Ladies' letter', *Huon Times*, 30 March 1917, p.3.

GAVIN LONG AND THE REAL AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

Garry Hills

There is a 'picturesque legend … that dies hard' about Australian soldiers, wrote Gavin Long in his 1943 *Infantry Journal* essay 'The Real Australian Soldier'.[1] Long was referring to the myth of the Aussie soldier as a 'wild, undisciplined fighting man', a 'six-footer, standing in torn and dirty uniform, rifle in one hand and bottle of beer in the other, cussing a blue streak and beating hell out of anything that comes along'.[2] Long makes no attempt here to investigate the origins of this legend; although he does briefly trace its history in his 1942 newspaper piece 'The Comic-Paper Digger'.[3] There, he notes that 'for some inscrutable reason', the image had been clinging to the Australian Army for more than 20 years; having taken root and flourished in the minds of the generation that lived between the wars – a generation with little knowledge of the reality. By 1939, aspects of this legend had even infected officers who believed that 'Australian soldiers had to be cajoled not commanded'. It only took a campaign or two for it to become obvious that 'those who approximate the comic-paper Digger invariably made bad soldiers' and that 'a battle demanded an entirely different kind of courage to that which was needed in a bar-room brawl'.[4]

Having spent 1939 and 1940 as an Australian war correspondent with the British Army, then with the Australian 6th Division in North Africa, Long, who was soon to be appointed General Editor of Australia's Official War History, was often at pains to put paid to the legend. And one can only imagine that there were many 'real' Australians in uniform who were grateful to him for it. Consider the following two examples.

On 12 July, 1941, the Vichy French in Syria surrendered to the Allies. Generals Wilson and Lavarack received the surrender along with Free-French General Catroux. During the signing ceremony, Catroux's gold-leafed kepi was stolen from his car by an unidentified souvenir-hunter and afterwards, Catroux wrote a genial account of the incident of the kepi:

> An amusing mishap occurred after my arrival at the St Jean d'Acre barracks where our meeting was to be held. The camp was occupied by Australians who, *as is well known*, besides being fine fighters have an instinctive belief in freedom of action. They are keen on bringing back souvenirs to their distant native land from their travels or military campaigns. I was imprudent enough to leave in my motor car my 'oak leaf kepi', the gold embroidery on which fascinated some son of Australia. It was a fine 'souvenir' to carry off. I reassured [the Camp Commander] by dissuading him from attempting a search …. The incident delighted Wilson, and made Lavarack smile. Lavarack was commander of the Australians and well knew what his soldiers were likely to get up to. When the incident became known to the Vichy delegation the whisper went round that I was a deserving victim of the bad company I kept. [*italics added*][5]

Gavin Long, ever the fact-checker, notes: 'In fact only four Australians were present and it is

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[1] The essay was republished as a pamphlet in 1943 by the Australian News and Information Bureau. The pamphlet complements and illustrates the essay with excerpted vignettes about Australians fighting in Tobruk, Greece, Syria, Malaya, El Alamein, Timor and Papua, and photographs of Australian troops in action in various theatres.
[2] Here, Long is quoting in his essay from 'a recent issue' of the US Army weekly, *Yank*.
[3] The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June, 1924, p.6. Long's prose is delightful: 'A generation of Australians, for some inscrutable reason, were taught that the typical Australian soldier was a concave, tipsy lounger with a cigarette drooping from his hawk-like face, who called the colonel by his Christian name, charged furiously with the bayonet in battle, and spent the rest of his time breaking and boozing.'
[4] ibid.
[5] Gavin Long, *Greece, Crete and Syria*, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, AWM, Canberra, 1953, p.514. AWM Digitised Collection http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG1070045/ (accessed 1 Oct 2016).

most improbable that any of them took General Catroux's kepi.'[6] The relevant point here is the assumption on the part of all concerned that such larcenous tendencies in Australian soldiers were 'well known'.

The second example is more serious and consequential and demonstrates that reported incidents that conflate legend and reality can result in injustice to all concerned. Following the armistice in Syria, there was an outbreak of complaints about Australian indiscipline. Ten days after the cease-fire, General Spears reported the following to Auckinleck: 'The Australians are already greatly feared by the natives. Their behaviour, with the exception of some specialised units which are well disciplined, would be a disgrace to any Army.'[7] He went on to detail examples of theft and vandalism. The allegations were investigated by Colonel Rogers, the senior liaison officer of I Australian Corps. Rogers made a careful inquiry and reached the conclusion that the accusations were unfounded, grossly libellous, mischievous and irresponsible. He added that 'false rumours about Australian indiscipline had been numerous'.[8]

A couple of months later, General Wilson complained to General Blamey of many cases of brutal assaults by Australian soldiers, either against other soldiers (British or French) , police (military or civil) or civilians, and strongly urged General Courts Martial and exemplary punishments. Blamey replied, recalling how earlier accusations against Australians had been proved baseless and adding: 'It is a very convenient form of excuse for any happening to lay it on to broad Australian shoulders. But when it is not in accordance with fact it does an immense amount of harm to the relations between the various Empire forces.'[9] This is not to say that there were no proven occasions of reprehensible behaviour on the part of the Australians in Syria. Long writes: 'A report which Blamey obtained from Corps headquarters stated that since the end of the operations in Syria, two months before, the following charges had been made against men of the Corps and its two divisions: assaults on other troops, 17; on police, 4; on civilians, 27. In 15 cases the guilt of an Australian had been established; 33 cases were awaiting investigation or decision.'[10]

Gavin Long writes as one who believes that Australian service personnel had earned the right to be judged for the reality; rather than revered (or maligned) for the legend. We can imagine that he would agree with the philosopher, Aniekee Tochukwu, who wrote: 'Legends are covertly gallant; enthusiasm covers their sweats'.[11] For Long, the legend too easily masks and belittles reality. He wants us to acknowledge and appreciate the 'sweats' of the Australian troops.

Typical of Long's writing, the 'Real Australian Soldier' essay contains few flights of rhetorical fancy. The tone is measured and authoritative, and the reader senses the writer's genuine admiration and affection for his subject. He draws favourable comparisons between Australia's citizen army and the British forces he observed in both general deportment and presence ('drill, dress and bearing'[12]), but goes on to note the special emphasis that was placed on training, 'the

[6] ibid, p.514, n.1.
[7] ibid, p.545.
[8] ibid, p.546.
[9] ibid, p.546.
[10] ibid, p.547.
[11] Aniekee Tochukwu, *Own Quotes*, http://ownquotes.com/profile/tochicard/ (accessed 21 Sept 2016).
[12] And not just on parade. In his volume *The Final Campaigns* (*Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, AWM, Canberra, 1963), Long notes the habit of Australian troops in forward jungle areas: 'In the front line the Americans (to Australian eyes) merely existed, often postponing shaving, washing and comfortable messing until they returned to the showers, laundries and mess huts at the base. The Australians in the front line shaved, bathed and

first great commandment', 'the simple and useful doctrine' of Australia's armed forces. He cites the fruits of this training in the battle record of Australian troops in Greece and Crete, where 'companies, platoons, and even squads' fought on as organised units even 'after brigades and battalions had been surrounded or fragmented'.[13] The training regime Australians perfected in the Middle East was exemplary, providing thereafter the model for recruit training of all Allied troops in the Middle East.

And whence came the motivation for this rigorous, no-nonsense approach to training? Philosophy? Pride? Patriotism? In Long's observation, it was common-sense pragmatism. Australian leaders simply believed that training paid. 'The man who could move fast, though carrying a load of gear that would worry a mule, who could get his weapons into action in split seconds, was less likely to get killed'. And that man's unit, if competent, efficient and well-led would come though with fewer casualties and more prisoners. It was not some mythical 'demonic courage of natural-born fighting men' that won the day; though, of courage, there was plenty. It was the fact that raw replacements from Australia who fancied themselves in the mould of the mythical 'rifle in one hand and bottle of beer in the other' were not at all desirable to the fighting units they were destined to join. Consequently, 'blooded battalions sent their best officers and sergeants to knock the new arrivals … into shape'. And those training officers, to prevent them becoming soft, were returned to their units from the training division after they had spent six months there teaching recruits.

The lessons learned from this were then applied when the time came to prepare to fight the Japanese. Schools of jungle warfare, commando fighting and unarmed combat were established. Here, Long lauds the 'experimental, self-critical, intensely practical' approach of Australian forces to jungle warfare, which yielded textbooks on jungle fighting and prepared troops for successful campaigns against the Japanese at Milne Bay and in the Owen Stanley Range. By way of example, he refers to, 'one jungle warfare school in a patch of rainforest north of Sydney, [where] a young soldier who fought in Libya and Greece teaches the men to fight, and one of Australia's leading naturalists teaches them how to keep alive by eating the things that grow and the animals that run and creep in the jungle'.

Consider Long's descriptors: 'experimental, self-critical and intensely practical'. By what standard 'self-critical' and 'practical'? Long observed that 'they judge themselves and the men they meet by their ability to do their jobs and their determination not to let their mates down'.[14] So why should we consider Gavin Long an authority on the 'real' Australian soldier? Why give credence to his words? While just a man, bearing his own blend of insights and blind spots, Gavin Long nevertheless is a credible voice. He earned the right to opine on such matters as a serious-minded and well-respected journalist, as a diligent war correspondent in the early years of the war, and as the choice of C.E.W. Bean and the War Cabinet for appointment as Official Historian. He was a man of steady temperament, literary talent and professional discipline.[15]

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washed their clothing every day if possible. Carpentry and the engineering devices by which they provided themselves in remote places with reticulated water, efficient kitchens, washing places and all sorts of furniture had become more ingenious as the years passed.' ch.5, 'The Bougainville Campaign Takes Shape', p.96.

[13] Long, 'The Real Australian Soldier'.

[14] ibid.

[15] Long laboured for almost two decades over the official history, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, marshalling resources, providing advice and encouragement to authors and, himself authoring three of the 22 volumes of the series, as well as a lively biography of General Douglas MacArthur and a very accessible single volume, *The Six Years War*.

Gavin Merrick Long was born in Foster, Victoria in 1901.[16] He began a career as a schoolteacher, then left that in 1924 to try his hand as a jackaroo. The following year he travelled to England, where he worked at Australia House in the Migration Office. There he married, returning to Australia in 1926 to pursue a career as a journalist. After a stint at the Sydney *Daily Guardian* and the Melbourne *Argus*, he accepted the job of senior reporter at the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1931, a testament to his reputation as an accurate and objective reporter. By 1938, now a sub-editor, he was posted to the London branch of the *Herald*, and from there travelled as that paper's war correspondent with the British Expeditionary Force to France. Following the evacuation, he reported on the British Navy, and then to Egypt to cover Australian operations in the Middle East. He returned to Australia in mid-1941, continuing to write and report on defence, visiting Port Moresby and Darwin. After his appointment as general editor of the Official History in 1943, he travelled extensively, visiting troops in the field, interviewing service personnel, filling more than 100 notebooks and diaries.

Left: Gavin Long in 1943 (AWM photo 052009)

All of us see the world from the perspective of our unique time and place, and Long was no exception. His perspective was shaped by a conservative, relatively comfortable upbringing in country New South Wales: a father who was the Anglican Bishop of Bathurst, and wore the uniform of Chaplain-General to the original AIF; schooling that was typical of early 20th century Australia; the attainment of a BA and DipEd in Sydney (not so typical in 1920s Australia); and many visits as a correspondent to forward battle zones, observing and interviewing the soldiers of many nations, gathering and reporting their stories. The disparity between the cartoonish mythical Australian soldier and the real brothers, sons and fathers, bank clerks, teachers and rail yard workers who had volunteered to face the terrors of battle clearly irked him.

Long may have been drawing something of a long bow when he predicted that 'the standards of the AIF are now being implanted throughout Australia as a whole';[17] nevertheless, he was an Australian observing Australians, and in his case, this proved to be a strength. As a serious-minded journalist, he brought practical good sense and genuine fellow-feeling to his observations of the 2nd AIF in action. G.R. Odgers, Director of Public Relations for the RAAF, wrote in a tribute at the time of Long's death in 1968, 'Gavin Long knew more about the story of the Australian fighting man in the Second World War than anyone else'.[18]

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[16] To date, the only published biography of Long is by his colleague, A.J. Sweeting in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/long-gavin-merrick-10856).
[17] *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 June, 1924, p.6.
[18] *The Canberra Times*, Oct. 11, 1968, p.3.

THE GERMAN AV7 'MEPHISTO' ONE HUNDRED YEARS ON

Rohan Goyne

The AV7 German tank 'Mephisto' is currently on loan from the Queensland Museum and is displayed in the ANZAC Hall at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra (see Fig.2). The actual vehicle was abandoned near Villers Bretonneux in April 1918, recovered by British and Australian troops, and brought to Australia in 1919.

This article is predominately a photographic essay to provide a record of the AV7, which is the only complete example of this tank in the world and thus of importance to military historians and students of military technology. Next year will also be the 100th anniversary of the AV7's introduction in 1917, hence the further significance of the subject of this article. The photos are shown on the following four pages.

The A7V Tank

The German War Ministry responded to the appearance of British tanks on the Western Front by ordering the General War Department 7, Traffic Section to design a *Sturmpanzerwagen*. The designation AV7 came from the abbreviated name of the department. The first operational AV7 left the Daimler-Benz factory in October 1917. Fig.1 is a photograph showing a company of AV7s training over broken ground as would be experienced in France on the Western Front.

The AV7 weighs around 30 tonnes and had a top speed of 9-10km/h on good roads, which was reduced to 4km/h on broken ground. The armour plating on the AV7 had various thicknesses, with 30mm on the front, 20mm on the sides, and 15mm on the cupola. 'Mephisto' was one the first batch of AV7s produced by the Daimler-Benz plant.[1]

The accompanying images of Mephisto should allow for the accurate representation of the camouflage pattern used by the Germans in 1917-18, which has been inaccurately represented elsewhere. They can also provide the basis for further analysis of the origins of German camouflage for subsequent armoured vehicles.

The cover art of the devil holding a British tank is also one of the first examples of this form of conflict art which survives, so it is also of significance to military and conflict art historians. There is evidence of attempted demolition damage shown in Fig.4 around the gun mount.

'Mephisto', the AV7 currently on display at the Australian War Memorial, without question occupies a unique place in military history.

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[1] Czecchura, G and Hopkins-Weise J, *AV7 Mephisto, The Last German First World War Tank*, Queensland Museum, 2008, pp.10-17.

Fig.1 (above): A company of A7V tanks during a training exercise, c.1918
(Australian War Memorial photo H13452)

Fig.2 (above): A7V tank 'Mephisto' on display at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra
(author's photo)

Fig.3 (above):A side view of 'Mephisto' showing the track and suspension and the riveted construction of the armoured plating (author's photo)

Fig.4 (left): A view of the bow or front end of 'Mephisto' showing the gun mount and some of the tank's markings. Note the damage to the mount from some attempt at demolition (author's photo)

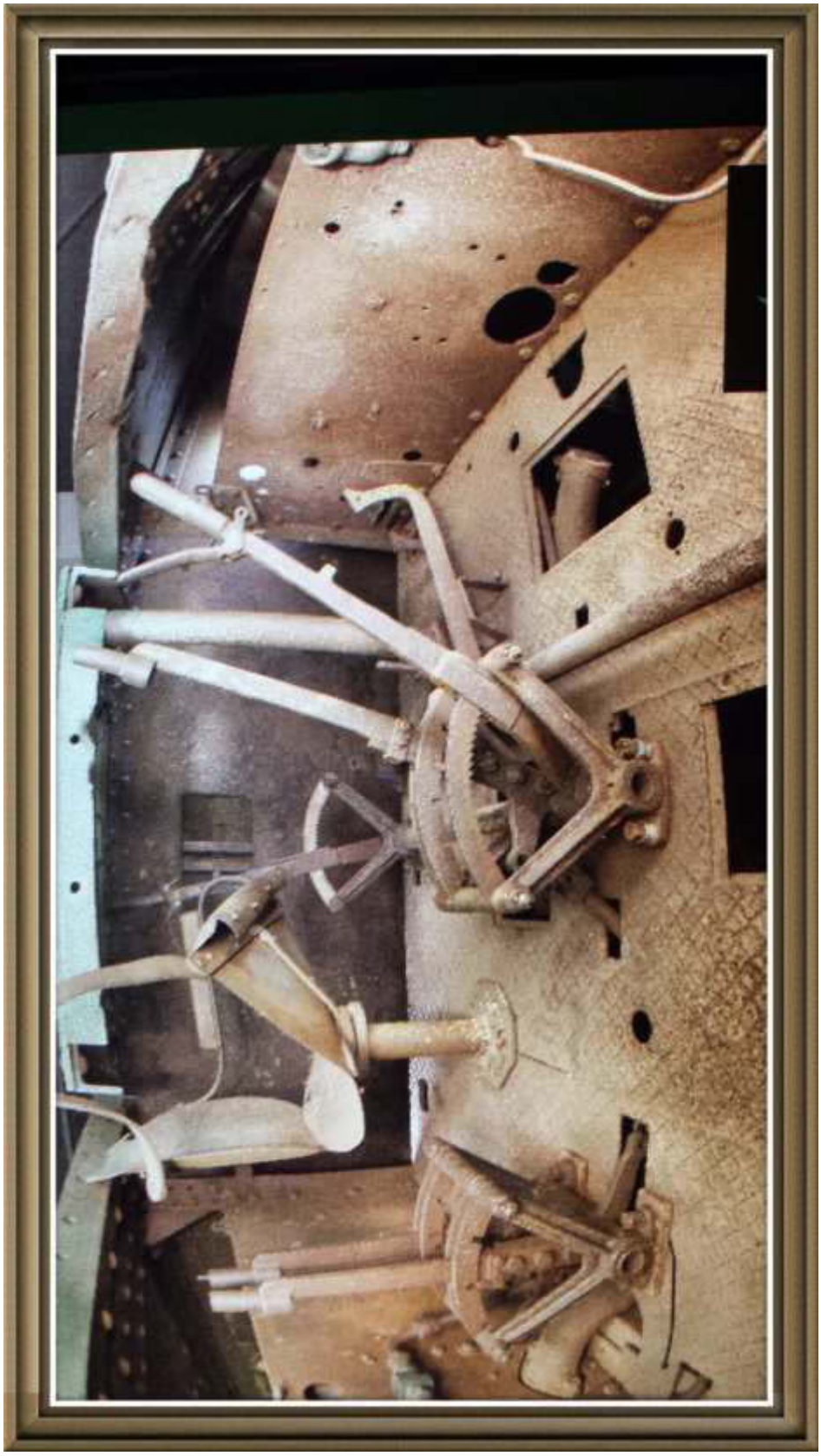

Fig.5: A view of the driver's section of the interior of 'Mephisto'. As with the contemporary British Mark V tank, only a single driver was required (author's photo)

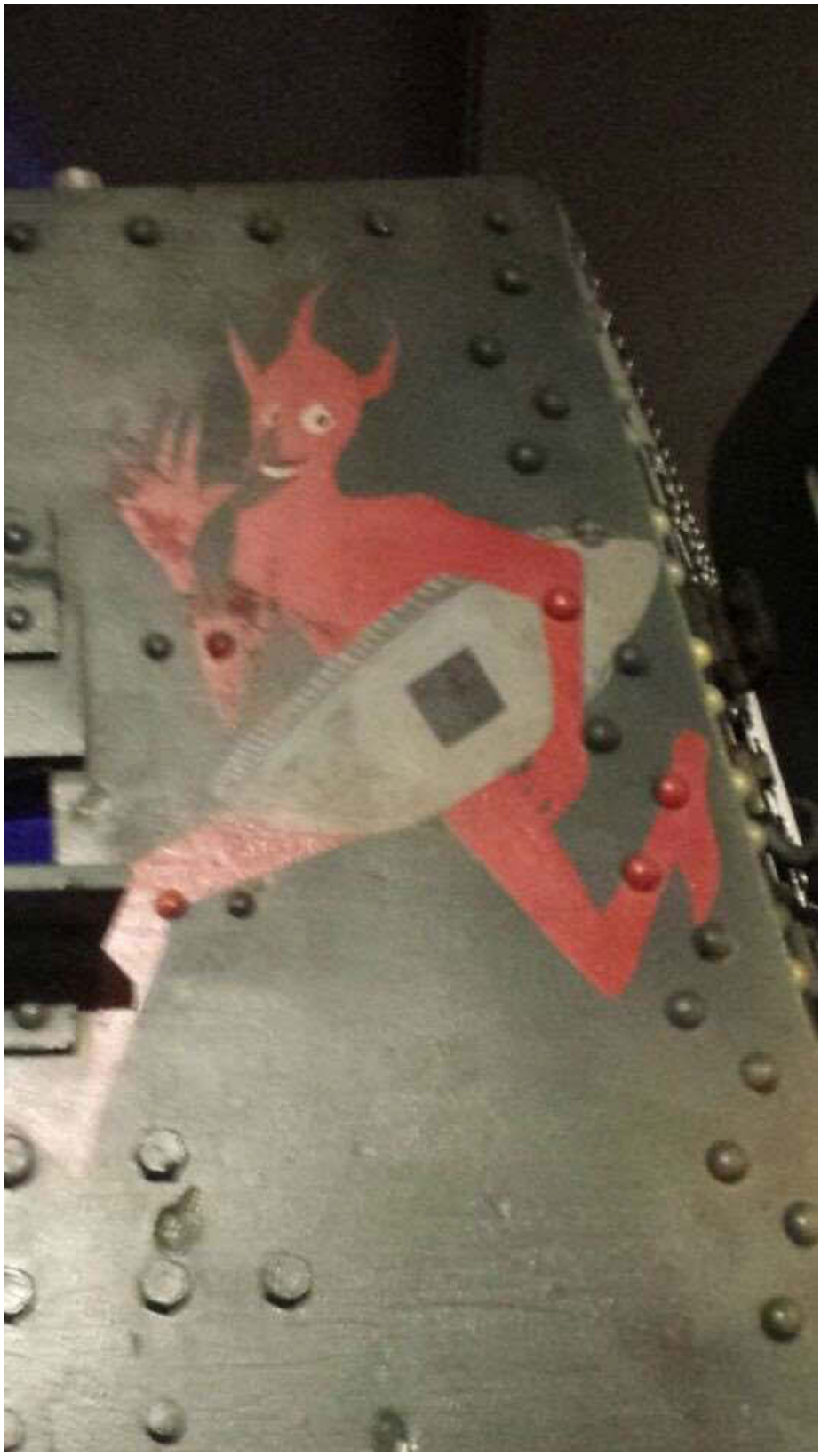

Fig.6: A close-up of the original item of individualised 'conflict art' on the bow of 'Mephisto', a laughing devil running off with a stylised British tank under its arm (author's photo)

CALL SIGN 11 ALPHA: AN FO (ACK) IN VIETNAM

Mark Jamieson

Growing up in Western Australia, John Harms left school in 1960 and started working as a jackaroo on a 1.25 million acre cattle station. Although this was a job that he enjoyed, something was missing, and in 1963 John joined the Australian Army. After the initial recruit training at Kapooka, and Artillery training at North Head NSW, John was posted to 1 Field Regiment RAA. In 1965, he was posted to Malaya with A Battery RAA, and in 1968 with the war in Vietnam at its height, he transferred to 102 Field Battery RAA in preparation for deployment to South Vietnam.[1]

John's first operational experience began about a week or so after landing 'in country', i.e. Vietnam. As the Battery Commander's Driver/Operator he went out on operations with the Seventh Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (7RAR). John recalls:

> It was a rude awakening as on our first night a 'flock' – I'll call them that name, they were from memory three American Huey gunships – decided the hill we had harboured up on for the night looked easier than the one that they were supposed to strafe and rocket. After some frantic radio calls somebody got through to them that they were strafing the wrong hill obviously, to everyone's immense relief. That was my introduction to operations in Vietnam.[2]

The biggest battle that 102 Field Battery was involved in during their twelve-month deployment to South Vietnam was the Battle for Fire Support Patrol Base (FSPB) Coral,[3] yet John's recollection of his involvement in that battle remains hazy. John remarks:

> As far as what I did, I have no idea. All I remember was the first night, then when the bodies were buried, eating a can of ham and lima beans. In regard to what I did, I cannot remember. Everything is just a blank.[4]

After FSPB Coral, John decided to become more involved, and as it turned out a Forward Observer assistant position (FO ack) became available with the First Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), A Company (Coy), and as John recalls:

> I immediately applied and as fate had it the Battery Commander who was my boss agreed. I quickly packed up my gear and off to A Coy lines which were on the perimeter wire at the back gate to Nui Dat.[5]

One of the first things John learnt was that, due to the type of terrain in which he would now be operating, what he had previously been taught no longer applied. John was now the eyes at the sharp end of operations, and his communications back to 102 Field Battery needed to be clear and precise to avoid dropping a round short or off target, which could have disastrous results for himself and those around him. The role of the FO ack could be difficult at times, as the FOs were generally unable to see where the supporting artillery rounds landed, or the exact location of the enemy. This caused some headaches, and a cool head was needed for the fire

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[1] I have used '102 Field Battery' for this article as this was its title at that time. In 2008 at the 40th Anniversary of the battle for FSPB Coral, 102 Field Battery was awarded the honour title, and is now recognised as 102 Coral Battery.

[2] John Harms, interview conducted 30 October 2015, p.1.

[3] Mark Jamieson, 'Our guys were very good. We were a very capable battery, in fact we were an arrogant bunch. We were good: Fire Support Patrol Base Coral 12 May to 6 June 1968, South Vietnam', (Bachelor of Arts Honours dissertation, School of Humanities and Social Enquiry, University of Wollongong, 2014).

[4] Harms, interview conducted 1 February 2016, p.1.

[5] Harms, interview conducted 30 October 2015, p.1.

missions to be successful. For John, his method was to rely primarily on the sound of impacting artillery and adjust fire accordingly. In addition to this, he was also required to travel with the forward platoon, while the boss stayed behind at company headquarters (CHQ). As a consequence, John was conducting the fire missions, a situation which never occurred in the training back home. This job was generally that of the FO Officer, usually a captain, who would conduct the shoot.

Fire Orders are complicated, with specific words having specific meanings. The ultimate aim being to not make a mistake, either in the transmission of the orders over the radio, or the transmission of a 'different' set of orders to the guns. 'Different', because the orders from the Forward Observer (FO) relate to grid references and bearings, FO to Target, and this must be converted, by the Command Post (CP), into a bearing gun-target, an elevation (for range) and so on. Finally, the orders from FO to CP are repeated back, verbatim, so the orders would go, for example, '10 this is 12, Fire Mission Battery, over'; '12 this is 10, Fire Mission Battery, out'; where 12 is the FO and 10 is the CP.

Generally 102 Field Battery could be anywhere from five to eight kilometres away and they would fire and drop rounds where indicated. For simplicity, the following does not include the repeated orders, but provides the FO's set of orders.

Forward Observer's Sequence of Orders: (orders in bold were mandatory)

1. **Observer's Identification**: 11 Alpha (John's call sign in Vietnam).

2. **Warning Order**: 'Fire Mission x', where 'x' can be one, two, three, four, five guns, or Fire Mission Battery: all six guns). Larger missions would be Fire Mission Regiment, Fire Mission Division, and so on.

3. **Location of Target:** normally a grid reference.

4. Direction: the line, along which the FO will order corrections to the fall of shot.

5. Description of Target: ridgeline, bunker, etc.

6. Method of Engagement: may include trajectory, ammunition, distribution of fire, etc.

7. At My Command: the Command Post (CP) must report 'Ready' when the guns are ready to fire.

8. **Method of Adjustment or Method of Fire For Effect:** one gun is normally adjusted onto the target, the remainder of the guns 'follow' the orders but do not fire; or the FO can use all six guns (Bty Adjust) which was the norm in Vietnam when Australian infantry were in contact with the enemy. Adjustment was followed by Fire for Effect, e.g. 'Five Rounds Fire for Effect' when all guns fire five rounds.

9. Report Time of Flight/Splash: the CP informs the FO of the Time of Flight, so that the FO can calculate when to observe, or Splash is reported to the FO five seconds before the round(s) is expected to hit the target.These details are available from Range Tables for the gun in use.

A full set of Orders, for a simple fire mission, might look something like this, without the Command Post (CP) repeating back the orders:

Forward Observer (FO) to the Command Post (CP):

'10 this is 12, Fire Mission Battery, over.' (FO wants all six guns.)

'Grid 123456, Direction 1600, over.' (At that grid reference, and I will adjust fire along the

1600mil line, 90 degrees.)

'Enemy Bunkers, over.' (This is what we are shooting at.)

'Adjust Fire, over.' (You select a gun and commence firing as soon as you are ready.)

The fire orders are then transformed from Command Post (CP) to guns. When the guns receive and understand the orders, they acknowledge the orders by activating a 'light on the Tannoy'.

The orders would then go:

Command Post (CP) to the guns:

'Fire Mission Battery.' (As ordered by the FO.)

'HE M51 Quick, Charge 4, No.3 Load.' (Ammunition to be used, the fuse setting, and nomination of the gun which will adjust fire.)

'Bearing 5650.' (Bearing gun-target.)

'Elevation 327.' (Elevation required, with Charge 4, in order to hit the target.)

'No 3, Adjust Fire.' (No.3 can fire when the gun is laid.)

As soon as No.3 fires, the Signaller in the CP will report 'Shot, over' to the FO, to warn him that the projectile is on its way.

With both of these sets of orders (FO to CP and CP to guns) there are a multitude of variations and almost no two sets of orders would be the same. The important part of the fire mission is the sequence of orders; this is something that is critical, especially when the artillery is firing their guns in support of the infantry. The worst-case scenario is a round falling among their troops, creating a blue-on-blue. To prevent a blue-on-blue from occurring, the sequence of fire is known by all so that if an order is missed, the receiver of the order can ask for verification of what is missing.[6]

Operational Involvement

John was involved in many operations with the battery, and as an FO ack with A Coy 1RAR in South Vietnam during his twelve-month deployment in 1968. It was during Op Capitol that John was wounded in action (WIA). His involvement included:

- Op Toan Thang II: 12 May-6 June
- Coy Operations: 6 July-21 July
- Op Elwood: 23 July
- Op Platypus: 29 July-6 August
- Op Nowra: 8 August-6 September
- Op Hawkesbury: 12 September-24 September
- Op Windsor: 29 September-11 October
- Op Capitol: 28 October-24 November

An operation John clearly remembers was his first contact with the enemy which occurred as they were making a river crossing. Just as John and his radio operator were starting to make their way up the river bank, intense small arms fire erupted to their front, shredding a large clump of bamboo and making it quite hazardous getting over. While this was happening the

[6] Mark Jamieson, *365 and a Wakey: As Told by Sergeant Larry D'Arcy*, Bepress, NSW, 2013, http://works.bepress.com/mark_jamieson/2/, pp.92-5.

Coy Commander was bellowing for rounds on the ground right now, and this was John's first real fire mission. He recalls:

> To say it was daunting was an understatement bearing in mind that we did not have GPS, excellent maps and so on to determine our exact position on the ground, relative to the target, in fact all we had by today's standard were rudimentary maps, counting our steps and a prismatic compass.[7]

All this happened through John's radio operator contacting 102 Field Battery's 105mm howitzer guns and sending the grid reference of the target, the direction from him to the target, the height of the target, the number of rounds required and a description of the target. The guns would then acknowledge the orders and give him the time of flight of the rounds. Despite the long process, John still managed to get the rounds on the ground exactly where they were needed and in a very short period of time.

> I have to admit, I was extremely worried until the first rounds whistled in and hit the ground where I wanted them and then very relieved knowing they were where required.[8]

Fig.1: John Harms requiring some assistance to get out of the mud while on operations. (J. Harms personal collection, used with permission)

Operations are a combination of patrolling, contacts with the enemy and setting up an ambush. The first one that John was involved in was an overnight affair that started in a high state of alert, but as the night went on the level of alertness decreased and it finished up a dry run, with everyone returning to Nui Dat in the morning. One of the worst was lying in the one ambush position for five days and nights – though it seemed more like five months – and became worse with each passing moment. It was on a large enemy bunker system and when they finally moved out and called in artillery fire, it was a huge relief for all involved.

Contacts with the enemy soon became familiar and John's confidence in his navigational skills sharpened. It was just after one particular contact that John found, due to the extremely dense vegetation, that trying to direct the rounds was somewhat haphazard, and more than likely not as effective as they should be. John recalls:

> After that operation I spoke to my boss about the accuracy of our mission and he suggested we use white phosphorous (WP) as ranging rounds until we had them on target zone then switch to

[7] Harms, interview conducted 30 October 2015, p.2.
[8] ibid.

> high explosive (HE).[9]

It sounded like a good plan and was adopted and proved to be highly successful most of the time, but John still felt that despite the use of WP it was still difficult to put the rounds where they would cause maximum damage to the enemy. His decision was to get closer to the contact area and to move with the forward section, i.e. up the very front. Captain Jacobs agreed with the idea and on the next operation, John and his radio operator Gunner Barry did just that. John recalls: 'silly me'.

On a few occasions when it was necessary, rounds were brought in very close, and the order was given to the guns 'DANGER CLOSE'. This call was sometimes required as the enemy had developed a tactic of getting as close as possible to the Australian positions so as not to be caught by the Australian artillery. By employing the 'danger close' tactic John was able to get rounds in amongst the enemy positons. This tactic was only used when the guns where to the rear so the rounds were coming in over his head, and when hitting the ground and exploding the most dangerous shrapnel would fan out in a forward pattern. Some were not always happy, as John remembers:

> The only problem was the grunts [sic] would loudly complain and strongly question if I knew what I was doing, as what was known as dead shrapnel would be landing in and around us.[10]

John continues:

> The danger was in fact minimal and the effect on the enemy was as expected; I think they may have been somewhat displeased.[11]

On another occasion they were operating behind a feature known as the Wolverten Mountains in a Coy operation when the Coy OC dispatched a section to investigate enemy tracks leading up the slope. John went ahead with his radio operator and as they progressed up the slope they began to encounter massive boulders with the track winding through them. This sent alarm bells ringing in John's head. John recalls:

> If we have a contact we would be in serious trouble because it would have been extremely risky using artillery which was to our front, and the danger to the troops was very real with HE rounds exploding and ricocheting off these huge boulders.[12]

As luck would have it, or more like bad luck, the forward scout frantically signalled back 'enemy ahead'. The section moved forward to the scout, and then made a quick and courageous decision and pulled the section back and away. If they had gone ahead, John is adamant that it would have been a disaster. They got back to the Coy, and as far as John knows, nobody said a word about it.

While on patrol during another operation they entered an old overgrown enemy bunker system. The platoon commander ordered the M60 machine gun on top of a bunker that was covered in old ammunition made up of small arms rounds, some American grenades, and a couple of rocket propelled grenades. This was a very dangerous position to place the men and the gun crew argued with the platoon commander that the ammunition could well be booby-trapped. The platoon commander disagreed with their arguments and would have none of it, and again ordered the gun crew on top of the bunker. John recalls:

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[9] Harms, interview 30 October 2015, p.3.
[10] ibid, pp.3-4.
[11] ibid, p.4.
[12] ibid.

> By this stage tempers were starting to flare and the gun crew ignored the order and set the gun up on a nearby bunker, and thank goodness as having obeyed the platoon commander could well have been a disaster.[13]

Sometimes it is not just the contacts the soldiers are involved in that they vividly remember; it can often be small and seemingly innocuous things. One occurred on a search and destroy mission. As they were sneaking through the scrub and keeping their spacing between the man in front, John needed to increase this distance so he sat astride a fallen tree. While seated he casually lifted the dead bark between his legs only to find a nest of scorpions scuttling in all directions:

> Carl Lewis would not have reacted or moved as fast as I did in his efforts to escape, and talking about scorpions, another one was found on a fire trail that was the size of a crayfish and it was jet black. Let's just say that this one was also given a very wide berth.[14]

Fig.2: John (second from left) with gunner Black at far right (standing). This photo was taken while on operations in the Phuoc Tuy province sometime after May 1968. It clearly shows a Centurion tank in the background and M113 Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) in foreground. (J. Harms personal collection, used with permission)

On operations and when a contact occurred with the enemy, John felt that it was quite exciting, and acknowledges that at 23 years of age you feel bullet proof and it never occurs to you that you could be next. That wonderful feeling of invulnerability during a contact was to disappear on John's last fire mission while on Op Capitol. They came upon a large enemy bunker system/training area and very soon came under enemy fire. On moving into the complex John was greeted by a very strange sight:

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[13] ibid.
[14] ibid., p.5.

> There was this small monkey sitting in the dust and dirt obviously terrified with huge eyes, and with six or so scrawny chickens at his/her feet. As a chicken wandered nearly out of the monkey's reach it would stretch out grasp it and pull it back closer to itself; it must have been comforting for it, and it was a very strange sight.[15]

As was the practice, the ranging rounds were WP and because of John's haste he failed to check if there were any tall trees in the vicinity. Consequently, of the first rounds all landed where they were supposed to except one, which managed to clip the treetops and explode, showering WP in a big fan forward with some dropping straight down. It was extremely lucky that nobody was hit by this very dangerous chemical.

John continued into the bunker system with the lead section. They had only moved a short distance into some particularly thick scrub when a mighty explosion of dark red with black smoke was followed by a huge cloud of dust. John found himself winded and flat on his back. Not sure of what just happened, he sat up and reached for his weapon, only to find that it was not in sight and must have been blown out of his hands. John vividly recalls this moment:

> I then went to stand and my left leg wouldn't function properly and the pain started to set in. I looked down expecting the worst as there was quiet a lot of blood around my leg.[16]

Re-gaining his hearing, John was then aware of incoming small-arms rounds that were quite close and cracking in and around his position. With very little cover, John made his way to a small depression in the ground that was able to provide him with some cover. At least 15 to 20 minutes had passed until the platoon Sgt R. Towns and Gunner Black were able to reach John and stretcher him back to a relatively quieter area where those killed in action (KIA) and wounded in action (WIA) were placed. This position, John thinks, was A Coy CHQ:

> I later found out the source of my discomfort was in fact a Chinese Communist supplied anti-personnel command-detonated mine.[17]

On the way into CHQ, John recalls seeing a 'grunt' sitting up against a tree trying to light a cigarette with great difficulty due to the shakes, and being helped by his mates. Many years later John found out that the soldier was actually under the tree that was hit by a WP round called in by John. Years later at a reunion John was talking with some of the men from A Coy and the conversation turned to that particular operation. John mentioned the WP incident and the man trying to light his cigarette. It was upon mentioning this that one of the men in the room yelled across to another, 'Mick, here's the bloke that tried to kill you'. Mick came over and when he discovered what it was about he cracked the biggest grin and said, 'In future let me know if you're around and I will make sure I am not under a tree'. A good laugh was had by all and to this day Mike and John exchange Christmas cards with some quip about tall trees.

Due to the trees in the area, the Dust-off helicopters were unable to land. They had to hover above the treetops to enable extraction of the KIAs and WIAs. Some time had passed before a RAAF helicopter arrived on the scene only to leave, presumably as it was being shot at; this as John recalls was very disappointing. A short time later another helicopter was hovering above them; this time it was the American pilots who quickly lowered the extraction equipment and commenced winching up the WIAs. John was the lucky last to go and as he was being winched up, above the noise of the helicopter he could hear small-arms fire cracking and ripping through the canopy presumably directed at the chopper. Next thing, John felt himself moving not only straight up, but also swinging forward through the trees as the helicopter quickly moved out of

[15] Harms, interview conducted 30 October 2015, p. 6.
[16] ibid.
[17] ibid.

the contact area. To his immense relief, he was finally winched up, reached the skids of the helicopter and was pulled in. The helicopter then continued to the port of Vung Tau and to the Australian military hospital where he was to spend the next four weeks in recovery.

Fig.3: Last drinks at Nui Dat. Left to right: John Harms, David Thomas, Ian Warren and Larry D'Arcy. (J. Harms personal collection, used with permission)

The mine incident was John's last fire mission in South Vietnam, and after being released from hospital he rejoined 102 Field Battery on operations until their return home in 1969. Upon returning home to Australia, he was promoted to sergeant and posted to 16 Air Defence Regt RAA, then to 1 Recruit Training Bn at Kapooka. John married in 1969, and took his discharge in 1971. He spent a short period of time working with his father-in-law's spray painting business before joining the NSW Corrective Services in 1978. After a successful sixteen-year career, John retired as an A/Superintendent.

John's mates remember him as always being immaculately dressed. The award of 'Stick picquet' was given to those who were best presented, i.e. 'best dressed and polished', and John won more than his fair share of stick picquets. This came with added benefits, and at times John would either sell his position, or hire his uniform out for a few extra dollars, resulting in the night off guard duty; but those stories are best left for another time.

Interviews (conducted by author):

Harms, John, 30 October 2015, transcript pp.1-6
1 February 2016, transcript pp.1-2

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‘WE MAKE ’EM AND WE BREAK ’EM’: UNDERSTANDING THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Graham McKenzie-Smith

Introduction

The role of Army Engineers is similar to that of civil engineers, ie water supply and essential services, surveys, road construction and maintenance, bridges and buildings, as well as specific army requirements of fortifications, mines and defensive positions. The brief covers construction or repair all of these to support an advancing or static army or destroying them if the army is in retreat. More succinctly, they assist the army to live, move and fight and to deny these capacities to the enemy.

Field units of the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) in the Second World War carried their own hand tools and light mobile equipment with heavier equipment, such as bridges, tractors and bulldozers being carried by Corps units who brought them forward as required. *Field Park* units had the role to manufacture engineering equipment and stores in their workshops and to distribute these stores as needed. Specialist engineers were grouped into units and detached where necessary for such roles as railway construction, sawmilling, bomb disposal, camouflage, drilling or oil tank construction, just to name a few. With the fighting in the undeveloped islands, the RAE found themselves building and operating ports, landing craft and small ships, adding further operational skills to the engineers. By the end of the war engineers were over nine percent of the Australian Army.

Engineer Headquarters

The senior formations of the Australian Army (Corps and Armies) had a Chief Engineer (CE) who was the advisor to the formation commander on all RAE matters and also exercised administrative and technical control over all RAE units assigned to the formation. The CE was usually a Colonel or Brigadier and his headquarters was usually referred to as CE (name of formation). The CE rarely commanded units directly as they were usually assigned to the lower level headquarters. The term CE was used both for the person fulfilling the role and for the headquarters group that he worked with.

Following the traditions of the Royal Engineers the senior RAE officer within a division was the Commander Royal Engineers (CRE) and this title was usually used for both the position and the HQ which the CRE used to control the RAE units assigned to the division. At times this unit may have been referred to as HQ RAE. The CRE at each division was a Lt Col and the CRE title was also applied to other engineer headquarters commanded by a Lt Col (eg CRE (Works) or CRE Forestry Gp). As well as the CRE for each division or equivalent sised headquarters, a separate group of RAE units were directly available to a Corps or Army Commander, headed by CRE xxx Corps Troops.

Pre-war, engineer stores and the district’s works program were managed by the Engineer Services Branch with a Works Section and Stores Section in the headquarters of each command or military district, under the District CRE. Most work was carried out for them by contractors, although they had access to some works troops. In the first phase of the war these sections increased rapidly and by September 1942 the changing workloads in each area led to the adoption of a more flexible arrangement. The CREs at the L of C Areas were reorganised as a series of Works Headquarters that could be more easily moved around to follow the workflow.

The Chief Engineer (Works) units that were formed in Queensland, NSW, Victoria, WA and NT were designed to be relatively static, while the twelve Commander Royal Engineers (Works) which were formed in the L of C Sub Areas could be transferred as required. Most of the projects were done by a number of smaller works HQs, commanded by a Major which were named after the OC, the Deputy Commander Royal Engineers or (DCRE). Each of these HQs could be moved to match the workload in the different regions and had a design and supervision role with projects to be done by the units under command from time to time or by contractors.

Specialist Headquarters were formed as required for groups such as Docks, Forestry, Water Transport, Chemical Warfare and Bomb Disposal units and are covered later with their units.

Field Engineers

The 'normal' allocation of field engineers to each division at the start of the war was three field companies to allow one to be closely aligned with each brigade, although they remained under command of the *CRE* who could centrally manage the companies to achieve optimal use of his resources.

The basic RAE unit was a FieldCompany, about 250 men commanded by a Major and containing a small CoyHQ and three sections (later called platoons), each of which had four sub sections of 12 men. Each company had its share of tradesmen and often the sub sections would specialise, although all could undertake the full range of engineer tasks, or fight as infantry if necessary. Each section was self contained with a cook and water cart and could be detached for lengthy periods from the CoyHQ which had the full range of admin and support personnel as well as some of the heavier equipment to assist the sections. Later in the war more mechanical and earthmoving equipment became available to the field companies

Pre-war field companies were formed for each of the fifteen militia brigades and they took the brigade numbers. An Army Field Company had a similar structure to a Fd Coy but these were formed after 1940 to work on projects in the base area and the distinction was removed later in the war when they were renamed as Fd Coys. When the Second AIF was formed the Fd Coys named with the prefix 2/ to distinguish them from the similarly numbered Fd Coys of the prewar militia. Army Fd Coys were also formed to come under control of CRE 1 Aust Corps Tps.

A single Field Squadron was formed for each of the pre-war cavalry divisions and was smaller but more mobile than the Fd Coy associated with the infantry division, also including a small stores section. One was also formed for each of the armoured brigades in 1 Armd Div, but without the stores role which was now undertaken by the new Fd Pk Sqn. With the formation of the light armoured divisions in late 1942 one Fd Sqn was attached to each brigade and a separate Fd Pk Sqn was formed for each new armoured division.

An Army Troops Company was formed in each Military District in 1940 to give them a capacity to undertake limited works programs and as they were intended to concentrate on construction projects in rear areas they had a higher proportion of tradesmen. Each company had three construction sections which could work independently, along with two electrical and mechanical sections who could operate water and power supply systems and man a workshop. They later saw service developing and running the bases in forward areas of the Pacific.

Workshop and Stores Engineers

RAE was responsible for supplying its own and other units with a range of engineer stores, for the manufacture of some of these items and the repair of engineer equipment. These roles were carried out by various workshop and stores engineer units.

In the infantry divisions the Field Park Company had the role of providing engineering support. The workshop section had a capacity to manufacture a wide range of engineer items and the field stores section handled most RAE stores from a series of field dumps. The bridging section had a range of bridging types and the trucks of the section were also available for other transport tasks. Later these sections became platoons and a mechanical equipment platoon was added.

The Field Park Squadron was essentially similar to the Fd Pk Coy in the infantry division but smaller and more mobile for attachment to the armoured division. The workshop section had a capacity to manufacture a range of engineer items and the field stores section handled the RAE stores that were relevant to the division's mobile role. The bridging section had a range of relevant bridging types and the trucks of the section were also available for other transport tasks. Pre-war the cavalry divisions only had a single Fd Sqn which included a stores section but the increased engineering tasks associated with motor and armoured divisions required a Fd Sqn for each brigade and the formation of a separate Fd Pk Sqn to manufacture and manage engineer stores.

A Corps Field Park Company was also similar to the Fd Pk Coy in each division but larger and less mobile. The workshop section had a capacity to manufacture a wider range of engineer items and the field stores section handled the full inventory of RAE stores from a series of field dumps. As each corps was to have an AASC Bridging Park attached, the bridging section was replaced by an electrical and mechanical section which could construct and operate the power and water supply system for the CorpsHQ. A Corps Fd Pk Coy was allocated to each CRE Corps Tps and CRE Army Tps.

The Workshop & Park Company filled a similar role to the Fd Pk Coy but was static to be attached to base formations. The large workshop section was relatively immobile and had a capacity to manufacture a wider range of engineer items. The expanded field stores section handled the full inventory of RAE stores for the base area and was usually the senior stores accounting unit in the region with a series of reserve field dumps.

In 1944, Beach Groups were formed to support landing operations and an Engineer Stores Platoon was attached to each to provide a range of stores until a Fd Pk Coy could be established. As the more mobile stores units left the rear areas in southern Australia they were replaced in the main centres by an Engineer Stores Depot and by an Engineer Stores Section (Base) in the smaller states.

Fortress Engineers

Pre-war the engineers required to operate the searchlights and engine rooms at the coast batteries defending the ports were part of a permanent Fortress Company which were backed up by militia companies. These were merged to form location-based units (in various combinations) until standardised into fortress companies in December 1942 with state-based fortress engineer headquarters in Qld, NSW, Vic, WA and NG. In May 1943, some RAE functions were transferred to RAA and absorbed into the coast batteries with the remaining

RAE sections were collected into an Anti Aircraft & Fortress Company with an emphasis on works. With the rundown of coast defences these units moved out of the fortresses and became general engineer works units.

Specialist sections in each fortress company included Coast Artillery Searchlight Sections controlling the fighting and observation lights to allow the guns to fight at night; Shore Defence Sections providing engine hands for the operation of coast artillery radars; 9.2" Gun Sections running the engine rooms of the 9.2" counter-bombardment batteries; Water Transport Sections servicing isolated batteries and towing targets; Depot Sections controlling stores, Works Sections undertaking construction projects as required and Electrical & Mechanical Sections which operated workshops and ran the power and water supply systems. The Wks Secs later became Fortress Works Sections while Anti Aircraft Works Sections were formed in 1943 as part of the AA & Frt Coys.

Docks and Water Transport Engineers

In the Middle East the AIF was supported by docks and water transport units of the Royal Engineers but for the Pacific Campaigns these units were formed in the RAE. Docks Operating Companies were formed to work the wharves in forward areas, not only in New Guinea but also in northern Australia and each was capable of fully working a port. The military interests in the civilian ports in southern Australia were supervised by Docks Control Detachments. These docks units were transferred to the new Corps of Transport in mid 1945. The military ports also needed to be maintained so RAE formed Port Maintenance Companies and with the final campaigns moving to undeveloped areas Port Construction Companies were also raised.

Much of the fighting in New Guinea relied upon water transport in small ships and landing craft which became a RAE responsibility. After some previous ad hoc arrangements, Water Transport Groups were formed, each with a Water Transport Operating Company (Small Craft) and a Water Transport Maintenance Company (Small Craft). AEME took over the latter while the former became either Small Ships Companies, Landing Craft Companies or Port Craft Companies, while specialist Sea Ambulance Transport units and Refrigeration Lighter Sections were also formed. Landing Ship Detachments were formed to operate the cranes and other equipment on the RAN's landing ships and Water Craft Holding Companies joined the mix late in the war. The water transport units also transferred to Corps of Transport in mid 1945.

Specialist Engineers

Initially the AIF in the Middle East were supported by the many specialist units of the Royal Engineers so only front line engineer units were formed. However, when the focus switched to the Pacific the RAE formed many such specialist units to support the Australian Army and its allies. A Railway Maintenance Group was formed in 1940 to repair and maintain the lines of communications in France but they changed to a construction role when they arrived in the Middle East. The three Railway Construction Companies had a HQ (include workshop) and four field sections and they were supported by the Railway Survey Company. When they returned from the Middle East in 1943 they were converted to mechanical equipment companies but they retained their original titles to become Railway Construction Companies (Mechanical Equipment).

At the start of the war the Australian Army had little in the way of mechanical equipment and most heavy plant work was done by civilian contractors. The first Mechanical Equipment Company was formed in late 1941 and in mid-1942 mechanical equipment sections were added

to some Fd Pk Coys. With the return from the Middle East of the Rlwy Const Coys they were converted to Mech Eqpt Coys and in 1944 several Fd Coys were also converted as mechanical equipment became more available. Initially a Mech Eqpt Coy had a HQ (including a workshop) and four field sections and later the HQ was expanded to include a section for holding and issuing plant items. In 1944 this function (along with second line repairs) was devolved to a number of separate Mechanical Equipment Park Companies and the Mech Eqpt Coy now had a HQ (including a small workshop), three plant operating platoons and a tip truck platoon. Several independent Mechanical Equipment Platoons were also formed for the Beach Gps and for work in NT when the workload could not justify a full company. To overcome a chronic spare parts availability problem in 1944 a number of specialised Mechanical Equipment Spare Parts Sections were formed along with a Spare Parts Depot in 1945.

Early in the war the British requested Australia to supply companies of trained foresters to avoid the wastage of timber resources that had occurred in the First World War and Australia raised two Forestry Companies in March 1940. This became a group of three companies under 1 CRE (Forestry) which operated sawmills in UK until they returned to Australia in late 1943. The companies operated independently in New Guinea and two Forest Survey Companies were also formed in 1944 to assess and allocate the forest resources of New Guinea. Along with CRE (NG Forests) this developed into the post war civilian PNG Forestry Department.

In the early part of the war, field engineer units were located in most areas and were able to carry out the maintenance of camps and facilities as required. As the field troops moved north, Camp Staffs in southern states incorporated Engineer Services Sections to undertake this role. By April 1943 these Camp Staffs were being reduced and it was decided to form a series of Maintenance Platoons. Each unit had one officer and 47 men, with a mix of construction and maintenance trades. Later specific Hospital Maintenance Platoons were formed to maintain the larger hospitals. Camouflage Training Units were small units (1 officer/5 other ranks) whose role was to train operational units in the art of camouflage. Except for some formed in the Middle East, they were generally formed in 1942 with one unit per corps, division or L of C Sub Area. They were renamed as Camouflage Units in July 1943 and disbanded as separate units in June 1944, when camouflage activities were either curtailed or undertaken by RAE headquarters.

By mid-1943 Milne Bay was being developed as the major transhipment port to support the advance along the north coast of New Guinea by Australian and American troops and the need arose for specialist engineers to build oil storage tanks and for associated works, especially large scale welding. Five Oil Tank Construction Platoons were formed and these later became Welding Platoons when they returned from New Guinea. Two specialist Boring Sections were formed in Palestine in late 1941 from experienced hard rock miners to be used to develop water supplies and for drilling to support the railway construction group with foundations for bridges. When they returned from the Middle East they converted to drilling for water supply in WA and NT, being renamed Boring Platoons.

Bomb Disposal Companies were proposed in the Mobilisation Plan for each state under local command but these were brought under command of a single bomb disposal group in July 1942, which then became a single bomb disposal company in February 1943. The sections of this company became Independent Bomb Disposal Platoons in October 1943 with the platoons rotated through the more active areas of operations. As well as bomb disposal the units handled unexploded ordnance and some demolitions. Although no chemical warfare weapons were used in the Second World War, a range of chemical warfare (CW) units were raised and

maintained. Defence against CW is the responsibility of all units, with the Chemical Warfare Companies training for offensive use of gas. A company was initially raised in each state but these were amalgamated in 1942 and later the unit evolved into a heavy mortar company. CW units continued in the form of laboratory and experimental units that maintained a CW analysis capacity until the end of the war.

Engineer Training

RAE Training Depots were established in each of the Military Districts in 1940 and these were centralised at Kapooka (NSW) in 1942 as the RAE Training Centre, where all RAE recruits were trained and where RAE units were sent to be reorganised, retrained and reassigned. Higher engineer training was at the School of Military Engineering at Casula, although specialist training schools were retained at Meadowbank (Docks), Chowder Bay and Toorbul Point (Water Transport).

Follow the Sapper

From a small beginning in 1939, the RAE was built during the war to a corps of 28,000 sappers in the 660 engineer units that served in all theatres where Australia was involved. The Corps history is expertly covered by Maj Gen R.R. McNicoll in the three-volume set, with World War Two in the third volume, *The Royal Australian Engineers 1919 to 1945, Teeth & Tail*, published by the Corps Committee in 1982. No arm or service experienced such rapid development of appliances and equipment, or such an increase in the variety and complexity of their functions in such a short period. Without these dedicated professionals the rest of the Army would not be able to move, live or fight.

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CONFERENCE REPORT

The Australian Labour History Society ACT Branch: 100th Anniversary of the 1916 Conscription Referendum Symposium

The ACT Branch of the Australian Labour History Society and ANU co-hosted a symposium to mark the 100th Anniversary of the 1916 Conscription Referendum on 29 October 2016, at the Headley Bull Centre at the Australian National University (ANU). The symposium was free to attend and consisted of two panel sessions together with the Canberra launch of the ALH Society's new book *Conscription 1916 – 100 years on*.

The panel sessions included talks by noted historians including Humphrey McQueen, Dr Robin Fisher (Cambridge University) Dr Frank Bongiorno (ANU) and Professor Joan Beaumont (ANU). They covered the most up-to-date research and academic thought on the Conscription referendum in 1916 and its impact on Australian society and on the conduct of the First World War at home and abroad. During the intermission, Prof Beaumont launched the book, *Conscription 1916*, published by Monash University Press, which is the most comprehensive and recent revisiting of all aspects of the conscription debate and referendum. It is sure to become another classic in Australian military/social history for future generations, the equivalent of Prof Beaumont's own book, *Broken Nation.*

The ACT Branch of the Australian Labour History Society and ANU is to be applauded for their efforts in bringing together the symposium on this important moment in Australia's history.

Rohan Goyne, Federal President

SOCIETY NOTICES

Report on Accessed Articles in *Sabretache*

Federal Council requested its second annual activity report from the Informit electronic database for *Sabretache*, which confirmed that for the period November 2015 to November 2016, 231 articles from *Sabretache* had been accessed for a total of 580 views. These usage figures reinforce one of the strategic focuses of Federal Council, which is to enhance the quality of *Sabretache* as a military history journal and hence its useability by historians.

Rohan Goyne, Federal President

MHSA Membership List Overhaul

The Membership Secretary is carrying out a major overhaul of the membership list of the Society and as a result some members may not receive their next journal. If that does occur, please contact the Secretary directly at mbhmus@bigpond.net.au and you will forwarded a copy if you are financial. Also, let him know if you have had a change of contact details.

Another request is that corresponding members forward their email address (if applicable) so that they can be contacted if necessary. Please note that this request does not apply to members who already belong to one of the branches. It was agreed with the Editor that we give everybody the extra time to advise of their intentions, so in August a letter with renewal form was posted to every corresponding member who had not renewed membership for the new financial year. They were asked to respond by the end of August. As part of the membership update, those who have not responded will be deleted from the register.

John Meyers, Membership Secretary

MHSA Conference 2017 – Dates and Venue

Members will no doubt be aware by now that the next Society Conference will be held next year, and will be a combined effort between the SA Branch and the University of South Australia's Narratives of War research group, which has held its own biennial conferences for the last ten years. Regular planning meetings are underway, and it can be confirmed that the Conference dates are now set for 17-19 November 2017, with the venue the Bradley Forum, City West Campus, University of SA, located in the Adelaide CBD.

The concept of a combined conference has been warmly received by Veterans SA and other organisations willing to lend their support. It should also be noted that 2017 will be the 60th anniversary of the Society; the MHSA element of the conference will be able to mark that anniversary not only by its participation in and contributions to the conference, but by events such as the launch of its Battle Series book consisting of a compilation of articles celebrating the centenary of WW1.

A call for papers and more details regarding the program will be published in the Society Notices of the March issue of the journal. The SA Branch and the Narratives of War group are excited by the prospect of working together on what promises to be a full and fascinating conference. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Adelaide next November.

The South Australian Branch, MHSA

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'BRAVE HEARTS AND LOYAL': THE NEW SOUTH WALES NAVAL ARTILLERY VOLUNTEERS 1882-1902

Trevor Turner

Brave hearts and loyal,
Come and join the Royal
Naval Volunteer Artillery,
Out upon the wavy
Deep; a better Navy
Than our volunteers will never be.
Then come, come, come,
For British hearts are loyal,
We volunteer to fight upon the sea;
Brave hearts and loyal,
Come and Join the Royal
Naval Volunteer Artillery.
Pom! Pom! Pom!

(The song of the Royal Naval Artillery Volunteers, adopted by the NSW Naval Artillery Volunteers)

Introduction

The New South Wales Naval Artillery Volunteers (NAV) was formed primarily as a citizen's auxiliary in 1882 to operate the guns on board any warship or gunboat of the colony of NSW when required. It was initially drilled and exercised on board the HMCS *Wolverine*; but the demands on this ship and its eventual disposal in 1892 caused the NAV to become regarded as a unit of naval infantry volunteers rather than naval gunners. Onshore they took the part of a landing party, similar to the Naval Brigade. They were trained in the working, manning and arming of boats, and all the details of boat drill. They were, at times, equipped with a launch, mounting a 9-pounder boat-gun, a cutter mounting a 7-pounder boat-gun, a cutter mounting Hales rockets, two whalers, and a galley.

At its peak in 1887 the NAV was commanded by Lieutenant Commander J.H.A. Lee and Senior-Lieutenant M.J. Keating; (both appointed in March 1884). It comprised two lieutenants, four sub-lieutenants, a paymaster, an assistant paymaster, a senior surgeon, a junior surgeon, an instructor, ten petty officers, an armourer, eight leading seamen, two buglers, 176 able-bodied seamen, and an ambulance corps of 16 men.

The NAV was established as a purely volunteer body and formed an association. Officers and men provided their own uniform, while the government provided arms and facilities and an annual sum for paying instructors, repair of arms and the keeping of accounts. In July 1892 they were included in the partially-paid forces of the colony. They were later trained in the use of torpedos. In 1897 the strength of the corps was 250, and was divided into starboard and port watches, each watch consisting of a lieutenant, two sub-lieutenants, a chief petty officer, two first-class and two second-class petty officers, and four leading seamen and, when, at strength, contained 113 other ranks.

Formation

In July, 1882, a letter by Mr Frederick Cavill, of the saltwater baths at Lavender Bay, Sydney, was published in the metropolitan newspapers, where he urged the formation of a corps of Naval Artillery Volunteers for the defence of Sydney and its harbour to be based on the same corps in England. 'Professor' Fred Cavill was a prominent member of Sydney society and became a celebrated world champion swimmer and author on the swimming art. However, Cavill was not without some expertise in matters on Naval Artillery. He had served several years in the Royal Navy, having joined HM Yacht *Fairy*, tender to Royal Yacht HMS *Victoria and Albert*, in 1851 as a 15-year-old Boy Class Two. On the commencement of the Crimean War in 1854 he volunteered for HMS *Penelope*, 16 guns, serving in the Baltic and present at the taking of Bomarsund. On leaving the Navy he joined the First Sussex Artillery Volunteers, until the formation of the Royal Navy Artillery Volunteers (RNAV) in London, which he joined and served until leaving for Australia.

As a result of Cavill's letter, public meetings were held in Sydney at which the proposal was thoroughly discussed and considered. Dr W.D.C. Williams, (later Surgeon-Major, NSW Sudan Contingent; NSW Staff-Surgeon and Australian Surgeon-General, KCMG, CB) had served briefly in the London RNAV and, with several others familiar with the RNAV in England, took a prominent part in these meetings. Late in August 1882 a deputation, including Mr Henry Dangar MLA, Sir Edward Strickland, F. Cavill, J.M. Curtis, A.W. Walsh, C. Fenwick, Captain R. Sadlier, and Dr W. Williams met with Sir Henry Parkes, Premier of NSW. The services of the Naval Artillery Volunteers were offered to the colony on condition that the corps was allowed to remain on a purely volunteer basis, each man paying for his own uniform and giving his services gratuitously. The Government would furnish them with a drill instructor, the necessary arms and equipment, and the opportunity of gun-drill on HMCS *Wolverine*. The premier agreed in principle as the matter would have to be submitted to Cabinet. Of the deputation Curtis, Walsh and Cavill would later became officers of the NAV.

At a public meeting at Sydney Town Hall on 28 November 1882, presided over by Napoleonic War veteran and former NSW MP, Capt Richard Sadleir RN, JP the following formal resolution was moved by Dr Williams that:

> A Naval Volunteer Artillery force be formed for the defence of the harbour of Port Jackson, and that it be termed the New South Wales Volunteer Artillery Corps.

The motion to form a corps in NSW was seconded by Mr Fenwick, supported by Mr Dangar and Capt W.J. Symonds, HMCS *Wolverine*, and carried by the majority in attendance. It was agreed that the corps would be partly self-supporting, the government of the day having now agreed to place the sum of £500 on the parliamentary estimates to support the force in engaging an officer-instructor and drill-instructors. It was expected that when the corps was formed the citizen members of the NAV would make themselves proficient in manual exercise, musketry, sword-bayonet drill, battalion drill, heavy gun drill, cutlass exercise, revolver practice, boat exercise in cutters, gigs, whalers, and practical seamanship.

At the close of the meeting several of those present formed themselves into a body charged with carrying the resolution into effect, and the existence of the NSW Naval Artillery Volunteers had commenced. Mr A.W. Walsh, later Petty Officer and Lieutenant, was elected secretary of the NAV Association until his resignation in September 1883. Mr Ebenezer Thomas, late RN and paymaster HMCS *Wolverine*, was secretary from 1888 to July 1896.

First cruise at sea

On Saturday 9 December 1882, with permission of the Colonial Secretary, 35 members of the newly formed NAV, under the temporary command of Mr Cavell and Mr Fenwick, put to sea as a unit for the first time on a two-day cruise. Embarking on *Wolverine*, they sailed outside the Heads for a voyage to familiarise the men with their new duties. Navigating-Lieutenant Symonds of the *Wolverine*, and First-Lieutenant Francis Taylor RN assisted the volunteers by providing a practical insight into life on board a warship.

On 18 July 1883 the services of the NAV were formerly accepted by the government. Meanwhile the NAV had been placed under the command of the captain of the *Wolverine*. The government then purchased a shed from the Sydney Amateur Sailing Club for the Volunteers as their drill-hall where Lieut Walton Drake and Gunner-Instructor Edwin Jones of the *Wolverine* initially drilled the men. Heavy gun-drill with the 64-pounders was carried out on board the *Wolverine* at regular intervals.

Appointment of officers

When the NAV were placed under the command of Lieut Taylor, now captain of the *Wolverine*, he and Lieut Drake soon concluded that it was now necessary to have their own officers appointed from the NAV. A general meeting of the NAV Association was held at which candidates for promotion were nominated. Twelve men were elected and were required to pass a competitive examination, it being agreed that six of those who obtained the best results were to receive commissions in the corps; two lieutenants and four sub-lieutenants, with the remaining six to be petty officers in the order in which they passed at the examinations.

At this time, 1884, the total strength of the corps was 80 men. The successful officer candidates appointed were Lieut John Lee and Lieut Kenneth Stuart, Sub-Lieuts Maurice Keating, W. Bell, S.A. Newsham and H.W. Newman, and Paymaster John Inglis. The following promotions were also made: Mr. F.F. Cheffins, Chief Petty Officer (later captain, 3rd NSW Regiment, Volunteer Infantry), Messrs A.W. Walsh and V.W. Williams, First Class Petty Officers, (all later Lieutenants) and Mr Arthur Dunn, a Sydney gunsmith, as armourer, with rank of First Class Petty-Officer. These new officers commenced their duties on 29 March 1884. Lieut Drake was appointed officer-instructor and the NAV.

In 1884 the regulations for the uniform of the officers of the NAV were also published:

> Navy-blue cloth, with distinction stripes, same as Royal Navy, only silver; cap same as Royal Naval Volunteer Artillery, with distinguishing letters of corps; sword and belt same as Royal Naval Volunteer Artillery, with distinguishing letters on buckle; buttons same as Royal Naval Volunteer Artillery, with distinguishing letters of the corps.

The NAV received little instruction from Lieut Drake, as he departed for Queensland in July 1884, where he formed a Naval Artillery Volunteer corps for the defence of Brisbane and Moreton Bay. After the departure of Drake the command of the men on shore devolved upon the senior officer of the NAV, Lieut Lee.

Lieut John Lee was, in 1889, second-in-command of the NAV. He had joined HMS *Worcester* in 1867 and served till June 1870. He then joined the Merchant Navy until 1877. He came to NSW in early 1878 and was employed in the Surveyor General's Department. He joined the NAV at its commencement in July 1882 and passed the prescribed examination for lieutenant in March 1884. Lee commanded the NAV from September 1884 to March 1885, when Lieut William Arnold RN was appointed as Officer-Instructor and Lieutenant commanding the NAV.

In April 1885 a very successful Easter encampment was conducted under Lieut Arnold at the Sydney Quarantine Ground, where progress in the various duties devolving upon the NAV was made by the volunteers. It was during this encampment that the NSW colonial navy, consisting of the *Wolverine* and the hopper barges *Neptune* and *Juno*, made a night attack on the batteries at the Heads.

Lieut Arnold had joined the Royal Navy in 1869, and served as cadet on HMS *Britannia* until 1871, then HMS *Trafalgar*, and shortly after to the *Endymion* until July 1874, when appointed to HMS *Sappho*. He served on the Australian Station until 1877, when he returned to England to undertake a gunnery course. In October 1878 he joined the East Indian station, returning to England in 1880. After completing a further course of gunnery and torpedo instruction, he joined HMS *Diamond* and sailed for Australia, arriving in Sydney in April 1882. From then until January 1889 he served as lieutenant on board the *Diamond*, until that ship was paid off at Sydney. The position of commander and naval instructor-gunnery and torpedos to the NAV was then offered to Lieut Arnold, which he accepted. When Arnold's term of service expired Lieut Lee was instructed to resume the command of the corps. William Arnold was later killed on the West Coast of Africa in February 1894, when First Lieutenant of HMS *Raleigh*.

The Sudan and Russian scare-1885

The character of the 'citizen blue-jackets' of the NAV was further displayed when an offer was made by the Premier of NSW to send a contingent to the Sudan in 1885. Almost every officer and man belonging to the NAV volunteered to serve. Lieut Lee even volunteered to muster 100 men, armed with the Martini-Henry rifles and cutlasses, to go as a unit, but the offer was not accepted. However, one officer, Lieut Keating, and 30 percent of the entire NAV force were actually enlisted and embarked for the Sudan as part of the infantry of the NSW Sudan Contingent. Most of the NAV served with B Company, as did Lieut Keating.

The Russian 'scare' of April 1885 saw the strength of the corps increase to over 200 men. The Acting-Premier instructed Lieut Lee to drill the men every night, instead of once a week, as was normally done. When Lee informed the volunteers of the request, the men responded to the call, and continued their drills every night for a period of three months, the number present on each occasion being between 70 and 80 per cent of the total available strength.

Drill on the *Wolverine*

Under Lieut-Commander Lee the NAV continued their drill on the *Wolverine*, and occasionally went to sea. During these cruises the NAV went essentially as marine artillery; but in addition to exercising at and manning the guns, they performed most of the work of the ship, being engaged in making and shortening sail and other basic seamanship skills.

During the cruise of Easter 1886 the NAV went to sea for six days. They were required to scrub decks, cook, clean brass-work, polish the guns, engage in heavy gun drill, musket and rocket drill, boat drill, cutlass drill, ambulance drill, make and shorten sail, keep guard, etc; Lieut Taylor, in command of the ship, was so pleased with the general behaviour of the corps that he stated:

> if the Naval Artillery Volunteers are disbanded we have no body of men who could take their place; … it would be a suicidal policy on the part of the Government to do away with the corps.

The NAV were fortunate in November 1884 when Mr John Rolfe was appointed as gunner's mate and drill-instructor. Having a thorough knowledge of gunnery and torpedo warfare, he

had taken his discharge from the Royal Navy as 'time expired' in May 1884 to join HMCS *Wolverine*. Rolfe had served for a considerable period in the different vessels of the fleet, and possessed numerous certificates of competency. After being with the NAV only a few months Rolfe was directed to come ashore to devote his time exclusively to drilling and instructing the NAV. In January, 1887 he was appointed Warrant Officer Instructor.

Training NAV recruits

On joining the NAV recruits were drilled by the drill-instructor in all aspects of naval routine before they could be classed as efficient. They were instructed in the care of arms and accoutrements, and the drills as laid down for seamen of the Royal Navy. As there was only the 64-pounder MLR guns to drill with, the instructor could only explain the other drills necessary for working the larger guns in use at the time.

These recruits were also exercised in the use of the smaller guns employed in the ship's boats, and the various types of machine guns, such as the Gatling and Nordenfeldt, and the 24-pounder rockets, together with the different varieties of shot, shell, gunpowder and fuzes. They were also instructed in the storage of munitions on a war-ship and magazines. Exercises with the cutlass, singlestick (cudgel) and pistol were taught, after which the recruit practised in firing and sword-bayonet exercises. The men also taught the management of boats under sail. In addition there was instruction in seamanship and in the use of the equipment and devices employed in rigging a ship, including knotting and splicing. NAV recruits were required to drill continuously for three months, until examined by the commanding officer and the drill instructor, and, if successful, passed into the ranks of the NAV.

After passing through the many difficulties which beset any volunteer organisation, the NAV developed into a creditable military force for the colony. The physique of the men was also admirable, and their discipline commendable. This was due principally to Chief Petty Officer Gymnast Harry Cansdell.

Visit of Lord Brassey

The driving force behind Britain's RNAV, Lord Brassey, visited Sydney in 1887and was received with enthusiasm by the NAV. Lord Brassey was recognised as the head of the Naval Artillery Volunteer movement in England, and the New South Wales NAV determined to accord him a fitting reception. On the afternoon of Sunday 3 July 1887, Lord Brassey arrived at Farm Cove and was met by the NAV in their boats, forming two divisions. Brassey inspected the corps at their drill shed, and congratulated the officer commanding upon the smart and serviceable appearance of the men. During his brief stay in Sydney, the NAV entertained his lordship at a banquet at the Town Hall. Brassey later became Governor of Victoria.

An on-going struggle for the NAV was the need of a suitable war-vessel on which to drill and train. In 1887 there were no facilities for training the NAV on the water other than with the two torpedo boats the *Acheron* and the *Avernus* and from 1888 the NAV were assigned principally to these boats. The hopper-barge *Neptune*, which had a 64-pounder gun mounted in her bows, and the aging *Wolverine* were also used, when the latter vessel was not in use by the Naval Brigade. In 1889 the *Neptune*, which was still doing duty as an improvised gunboat, was now almost exclusively manned the NAV. It had originally been at the suggestion of the officer commanding the NAV that the *Neptune* be fitted as an impromptu gunboat. The *Wolverine* had become old and unsafe; as a consequence she was paid-off in 1892.

By 1889 the NAV had undergone significant changes. Being a Volunteer force, many of the original men and officers had left. Commander Lee was now a captain, later major, of the Permanent Australian Engineers with the Submarine Miners branch of the New South Wales defence force. Lieut Stuart and Sub-Lieuts Newsham and Newman had also left the NAV. Paymaster John Inglis had resigned in August 1884, being replaced by Fred Cavill. Lieut George Bosanquet RN was appointed on 20 September 1888 to the command of the NAV upon Commander Lee's departure.

The new officer in charge, Commander Bosanquet, continually struggled to overcome these difficulties. He and his men were out on the torpedo boats as often as they were able, going outside the Heads at intervals in order to practise with the heavy guns. George Bosanquet became commander of these boats throughout the 1890s, and they were eventually manned exclusively by the NAV as gun, deck and engine-room staff. A Depot Section was also established for the mechanical work required for torpedoes under Staff-Engineer William Ames.

NAV critics

Still the NAV had its critics, such as an anonymous letter writer who stated in December 1889:

> The Naval Artillery Volunteers are composed principally of clerks and employees in different offices in Sydney who have had no sea-training, with the exception perhaps of two or three, and their wearing the uniform of the Royal Navy is both out of place and absurd, although I admit it is very becoming, and as long as their services are honest no serious objection can be made; but is it likely that any Government would pay a corps of lands-men to do the work of seamen when there is already in existence a force of qualified seafaring men specially organised for the naval defence of the colony. As infantry no doubt the Naval Artillery would shine, or even in shore batteries, but to suppose that they are competent to, undertake duties afloat, simply because they are dressed like Jack tars, is amusing. I am, &c.

The last 10 years

During the ten years from 1890, under the leadership of George Bosanquet, the NAV continued to flourish with the usual high and low periods. In 1892 it had a strength of 229 all ranks, and 215 in 1894. Parades were well attended. They were also prominent in all military carnivals, parades and encampments during this time and were successful in taking many of the prizes for competition at the various military and naval tournaments in NSW and other colonies. They attended the annual Easter Encampment with great enthusiasm. The NAV Rifle Club, led by Lieut Keating, an outstanding marksman, was also very prominent in competitive shooting and developed a fine reputation.

They regularly attended the Annual General Meetings of the NAV Association and held an annual banquet and ball. Commander Bosanquet also considered that if the men freely gave their time it was only fair that they should be at no monetary loss by doing so, and recommended that the NAV be placed on the partial-pay system. In July 1892 it was included in the partially-paid forces of the colony. An amount of £8 per annum for Able Seamen (ABs) was voted in, but was later reduced to £6.

Also in 1892 a Royal Commission sat to inquire into the military forces of the colony. One of its recommendations was that the NAV should be disbanded and reformed for garrison duties on the coastal batteries. The various recommendations were not pursued. A long-serving member, First-Lieut William Bell, resigned on 17 September 1894.

Boxer Rebellion and Boer War

In 1900 the NSW Naval Contingent to the Boxer Rebellion in China enrolled 221 men for service; 203 were blue-jackets and 18 stretcher-bearers. The Naval Brigade was represented by 110 and the NAV provided 60 men. The only NAV officer accepted was Lieut Melnotte Robertson, a Sydney bank manager and officer of the NAV since 1889. Commander Bosanquet was considered too old and lacking in recent experience to receive a command with this Contingent.

Many others also served during the Boer War 1899-1902. Notable from the NAV was Chief Petty Officer George Griffin who would become the first New South Welshman killed in South Africa in February 1900 at Slingersfontein, when sergeant-major of the 1st Australian Horse. Also Private John Biddle, late AB of D Company NAV, was killed in action at Palmietfontein on 19 July1900 with 1st NSW Mounted Rifles.

Federation and disbandment

However, with Federation in 1901 came the reorganisation of the former colonial military forces and the eventual demise of the NSW Naval Artillery Volunteers. There were many retrenchments of long-serving members of all ranks of the NSW Naval and Military forces due to the new age restrictions (officers and men aged 50 years and over) and reductions. Commander Bosanquet was compulsorily retired on 30 June 1902. Warrant Officer John Rolfe was retired, as an Honorary Master Gunner, to become a 'junior clerk' with the State Audit Office. The remaining members of the NAV who so desired could apply for positions with the new Naval Brigade. Of the applicants, 15 men were selected from each of the NAV's five former companies as well as those with service in China; a total of 107 were accepted, while many more were disappointed. The new Naval Brigade was initially brought to a new strength of 361, providing a total reduction of 200 men.

The torpedo boats were also abandoned and placed for disposal. Other officers of the NAV to retire by retrenchment included Lieuts Arthur Walsh, Vivian Williams, Ernest Falk, Chief-Engineer William Ames; late RN, Sub-Lieuts Joseph Wood, Stanley White and G.P. Williamson. Officers who gained positions with the new Naval Brigade were Lieut-Commander Frederick Brownlow, Lieut M.A. Roberts, and Sub-Lieuts Walter Alcock, Charles Coggins, Albert Stephens and S.T. Wilson

On 16 July 1902 the NSW Naval Volunteer Artillery, with a strength of 297, gathered at the drill shed at Rushcutter's Bay for their last parade and to hand in their arms and equipment. They were permitted to keep their uniforms. Many wore the ribbons for service in the Sudan or more recent service in China. It wasn't until 1910 that calls were made for application for the new naval reservists' Long Service and Good Conduct medal. These medals were issued in 1913 and many former NAV members attended.

Upon disbandment, Senior-Lieut Walsh was the only original officer still serving with the NAV since its formation. Lieut Williams had only 12 months' less service. Lieut Brownlow had active service in the ranks in the Sudan, and had been selected for the Naval Brigade. Other officers had service from 10 to 18 years, as did many of the men and petty officers. And so the NSW Naval Volunteer Artillery – 'Brave Hearts and Loyal' – after twenty years' of service, faded into colonial Australian history.

Epilogue

Commander George Bosanquet was the longest serving commander of NAV. He entered the Royal Navy as a cadet in 1865, and was midshipman in 1867, sub-lieutenant 1871, and lieutenant 1876. In 1886 he successfully completed an examination in torpedo warfare. He had seen service on the East African coast, and was first lieutenant on the *Wolverine*. Under his command the NAV was greatly improved. He died at his home at Moorebank, Sydney in August 1902, aged 51. Lieut-Commander Maurice Keating was a member of the NSW Volunteer forces before joining the NAV. He had active service as an officer of the NSW Sudan Contingent in 1885 and was a successful competitive shooter in Australia and overseas. He operated a plumbing business in Elizabeth Street, Sydney. He retired due to ill health and died at Bathurst in March 1900. He was 44.

That stalwart of the NAV, Frederick Cavill, was elected Warrant Officer in 1884 and Paymaster in 1885, and went on to world fame with his swimming as did members of his family. He also received awards from the Royal Humane Society for saving life at sea. As already stated, he served in the Baltic during the Crimean war, receiving the medal for that service. He retired from the NAV in 1894 and was granted the honorary rank of Staff-Paymaster. He died in Sydney in 1927. Commander John Henry Alexander Lee later became a lieutenant colonel of the Australian Engineers and, as a major, commanded the NSW Permanent Submarine Miners. In 1902 he served in South Africa as second-in-command of the 1st Battalion, Commonwealth Horse. He was later military commandant of South Australia. He retired in 1911. As Honorary Colonel he was appointed embarkation officer in Sydney in 1914 until retired again in 1918. He died at his daughter's home in Auckland, New Zealand in 1927, aged 74.

Lieut-Commander Frederick Brownlow arrived in Australia in 1881. He joined the NAV shortly after its formation, and gradually rose to petty officer and boatswain's mate. He served with the New South Wales Sudan Contingent as a private in B Company. He obtained his commission as second lieutenant in the NAV in 1889 and was promoted to first lieutenant in 1892. Lieut Brownlow rendered invaluable service in the organising and equipping of the China Naval Contingent in 1900. On disbandment of the NAV he was selected for the Naval Brigade, and was employed by the NSW Mines Department. Appointed District Naval Officer in 1911, he was promoted captain in 1913 and was also awarded the OBE. He retired in 1921 and died in 1931, aged 71 years.

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