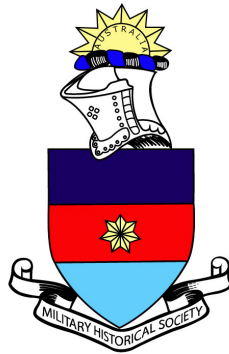


Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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EDITORIAL

At the Federal Council meeting of 26 June 2017, a resolution was passed that from the September 2017 issue of *Sabretache*, a list of Fellows of the Military Historical Society of Australia will be included along with the officers of the Society. Here is that distinguished group of persons, together with their years of appointment and home states:

Mr Tony Harris	1992	SA
Mr Peter Shaw	1992	WA
Mr Peter Epps	2000	WA
Major Ian Barnes OAM ED RFD KStJ (Retd)	2002	VIC
Mr Pat Hall	2008	WA
Mrs Rhonda Grande	2008	WA
Major Paul Rosenzweig OAM JP (Retd)	2009	SA
Mr Don Wright	2011	QLD
Brigadier A.R. 'Tan' Roberts (Retd)		ACT

While on the subject of distinction, two of our members were recipients in the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours List for their work in military history:

Member of the Order of Australia (AM): **Mr Peter John Burness**, renowned historian and curator who retired from the Australian War Memorial in 2016 after 43 years of service. For significant service to the preservation of military history as a researcher, curator, author and guide.

Service includes: Australian War Memorial: Senior Historian and Curator, until 2017. Employee, 1973-2017. Appointed, Inaugural Lambert Gallipoli Fellow, 2010. Appointed Fellow, since 2015. Led the Memorial's annual tours to the battlefields of the Western Front, 'for over 15 years'. Author, *The Nek: The Tragic Charge of the Light Horse at Gallipoli*, 1996, and *Australians at the Great War: 1914-1918*, 2015. Has also contributed to *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, the Department of Veteran's Affairs' *Australians on the Western Front*, the Australian War Memorial's history magazine *Wartime*, and *Sabretache*.

Member, Military Historical Society of Australia since circa 1997. Member, Armed Forces Working Party, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ongoing.

Medal (OAM): **Major Paul Anthony Rosenzweig** (Retd). For service to military history preservation. Service includes:

Military history: Founder, 'Thanks Digger' Virtual Museum and Commemoration Centre, since 2011. Member, Military Historical Society of Australia, since 1983; Member, Orders and Medals Research Society, London, since 2012; Contributing author, *Quarterly Journal*. Member, Historical Society of the Northern Territory, since 1992; Executive Committee, 1993-99; Contributing Author, *Journal of Northern Territory History*. Author of a range of publications.

Community: State Councillor, Royal Association of Justices of South Australia, 2014-2015; Member, since 2008. Member, St John Ambulance Australia, since 2004; past Team Leader, Divisional Support Team; past Group Leader, Support and Welfare Group; past newsletter editor; Member, St John Historical Society, since 2015. Life Member, Angeles City Sub-branch, The Returned and Services League of Australia, Philippines. Life Member, Royal Zoological Society of South Australia.

Paul is the author of many *Sabretache* articles, notably on the Philippines and the Northern Territory.

Congratulations to both on their splendid achievements. Why not celebrate the achievements of the Society generally in this, its 60th Anniversary year, by attending the combined MHSA and Narratives of War Conference in Adelaide this November? Details can be found in the Society Notices, pp.52-53. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible there.

Paul Skrebels

THE SECOND TEAM: THE P CLASS CRUISERS OF THE RAN AND THE EXERCISE OF SEA POWER 1914-1918

Richard Pelvin

In the history of naval warfare battles and campaigns fought to gain or retain command of the seas are emphasised by naval historians. In the case of the First World War the battles of the North Sea, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic submarine war have been studied over and over. However, attaining command of the sea is only part of the story. Exercising that command to forward and protect a nation's strategic interests is also an important consideration in analysing sea power.

By the end of 1914 the *Kaiserliche Marine's* overseas cruiser forces had to all intents and purposes been destroyed and the German overseas colonies in Asia, the Pacific and Africa mostly occupied. However, the German Empire retained a presence in the German colony in East Africa where the cruiser *Königsberg* had holed up in the Rufiji River. German diplomatic and commercial interests remained in neutral countries. These were involved in organising aid to elements in British possessions striving for independence. In the midst of an existential war, the British Government would have found outbreaks of violence an embarrassment and a drain on resources desperately needed elsewhere.

The destruction of raiding cruiser *Königsberg* and the denial of sea passage of aid to revolutionary nationalist forces was an important exercise of sea power. With resources concentrated in European and Atlantic waters, this responsibility was left to those vessels which were obsolescent and of little fighting value in the major theatre. Two obsolete warships involved in these duties – the P or Pelorus Class cruisers of the RAN, HMAS *Pioneer* and *Psyche* – gave valuable service in maintaining Allied strategic interests in the Indian Ocean from 1914 to 1917. This article will recount the valuable if unspectacular contribution these small, obsolete vessels made to the exercise of Allied sea power in waters far removed from the European cockpit.

The Origin of the P Class

The origins of the Pelorus class cruisers can be traced back to earlier sloops, despatch vessels and small cruisers developed by the Royal Navy in the 1880s. A development of the Barham Class,¹ as protected cruisers they were designed with an armoured deck to protect their vitals from plunging fire with their coal bunkers providing a measure of side protection. The ships displaced 2135 tons. Their overall length was 318 feet (95.48m) with a beam of 36 feet 6 inches (11.2m) and a draught of 15 feet (4.6m). They were armed with eight 4-inch quick firing Mk III guns on P1 mountings ranged on either side of the ship, giving a four-gun broadside. Eight 3-pounder guns were mounted four to a side in casemates. There were also three .303 machine guns on cone mountings. Two 14-inch torpedo tubes were mounted above water, one per side. The ship's company was 10 officers and 152 ratings.²

Pioneer was laid down at Chatham Dockyard on 16 December 1897. She was launched on 28 June 1899 and commissioned into the Royal Navy 10 July 1900.³ *Psyche* was built at

¹ Development and design details of the Pelorus Class cruisers can be found in Norman Friedman, *British Cruisers of the Victorian Era*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2012, ch.5.

² http://www.naval-history.net/OWShips-WW1-05-HMS_Psyche.htm accessed 19 Jan 2017. This site contains *Psyche's* log for part of 1913-14.

³ <http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-pioneer>, accessed 2 September 2015.

Devonport Dockyard where she was laid down on 15 November 1897, launched on 19 July 1898 and completed in 1900.⁴ *Psyche*'s first commission was on the North American Station before transferring to Australian waters in 1903. *Pioneer* initially served in the Mediterranean before passing into reserve on 20 December 1904. She recommissioned for service on the Australia Station on 5 September 1905, replacing HMS *Mildura*.

In 1887 the Australian colonies and the British Government agreed to establish an Auxiliary Squadron on the Australia Station. The colonial governments and New Zealand agreed to pay the ships' upkeep and maintenance and pay five per cent of their capital costs. In return, the Admiralty agreed that, unlike the ships normally attached to the station, the ships of the Auxiliary Squadron could not be deployed off-station without the permission of the colonial governments. The agreement was to last for ten years following the arrival of the first ships on the Australia Station.⁵ Five small cruisers and two gunboats were built for the auxiliary squadron and arrived in Australian waters from 1891.

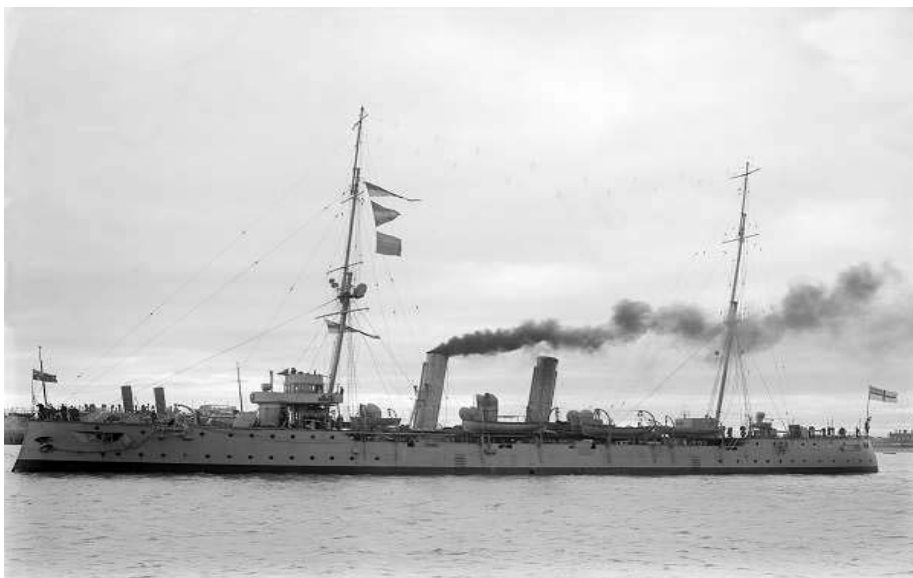


Fig.1: HMAS Pioneer, probably in Port Phillip Bay. (Alan C Green Collection, State Library of Victoria via Kevin O'Neill)

In 1903, following the expiry of the 1887 agreement and the federation of the colonies, a new agreement was reached. The squadron would be

increased in size to nine ships with a corresponding increase in the Australian financial contribution. The deployment restriction was lifted to allow the movement of the ships to the China and East Indies Stations as well as the Australia Station. In return, three of the ships were to be used as drill ships for local personnel.⁶ Sister ships HMS *Psyche*, *Pioneer* and *Pyramus* were deployed to the Australia Station in accordance with this agreement. The ships led uneventful lives on the Australia Station. *Pioneer* sortied from Bluff to rescue survivors from the liner *Waikure* which was wrecked in Dusky Sound in January 1910, taking 270 people to Bluff.⁷ When industrial strife broke out on the Wellington waterfront in October 1913, her arrival had a calming effect and her men drilled on the wharves. The captain offered to land a company supported by a Maxim gun if necessary, but the situation never became this dire.⁸

⁴ <http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-psyche>, accessed 2 September 2015

⁵ Neville Meaney, *The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901-14*, Sydney University Press, pp.25-27; Peter Dennis et al, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn, 2008, pp.27-28.

⁶ Dennis et al, pp.27-28.

⁷ Ian McGibbon (ed) *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand Military History*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.402; T.D. Taylor, *New Zealand: The Naval Story*, Wellington: Reed, 1948, p.283.

⁸ *Ibid*, pp.89-90.

On 29 November 1912 *Pioneer* was decommissioned by the Royal Navy and handed over to the RAN as a training ship for the Naval Reserve. The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board (ACNB) officially took her over on 1 March 1913 and she was commissioned under a nucleus crew as a tender to HMAS *Penguin*. Refitting followed and she commissioned on 1 Jan 1914 with a full crew, operating under the orders of the Director of Reserves.⁹ Her captain was Acting Commander Thomas Biddlecombe RAN, a former Royal Naval Reserve officer who had joined the Commonwealth Naval Forces and had commanded the destroyer *Yarra* on her delivery voyage, before taking command of the Australian Destroyer Flotilla. Immediately prior to the outbreak of war her officers were reported as Lieutenants Nelson-Clover, R.C. Creer and S.C.L. Modgkinson, Engineer-lieutenant P.J.N. Hagan, and Assistant-paymaster R. Negus.¹⁰ *Psyche* spent the months leading up to the outbreak of war cruising in New Zealand and Australian waters. On 22 April 1914 Captain H.J.T. Marshall RN succeeded Commander H.C. Carr RN in command.¹¹

On 4 October 1914 the ships of new Royal Australian Navy entered Sydney Harbour led by the battle cruiser *Australia*. With two modern light cruisers and three destroyers, this force was the most powerful in South Pacific, much stronger than the older armoured cruisers and light cruiser of the German Asiatic Squadron. By this time the P Class cruisers were far too obsolete for fleet work. Their short range and slow speed made them of little use for patrol and anti-raider duties in the wider oceans. They would have been completely overwhelmed by the more modern German light cruisers. The range of the P Class's 4-inch guns was 9600 yards, compared with 13,340 yards for the standard German 10.5cm light cruiser gun.¹² However, they were to play a useful part in early operations.

***Psyche* and the Seizure of German Samoa**

Immediately after the outbreak of war with Germany, the British Government asked the New Zealand Government to occupy the German colony of Samoa. New Zealand raised an expeditionary force, which was to sail in two transports escorted by the French armoured cruiser *Montcalm*, *Psyche*, her sister ship HMS *Pyramus* and the older Pearl Class cruiser HMS *Philomel*. With the whereabouts of the German Asiatic Squadron unknown, the convoy escort was reinforcement by HMAS *Australia* and the light cruiser HMAS *Melbourne*, both of which joined the convoy at Noumea in the French colony of New Caledonia on 21 August. The force came under the command of Rear Admiral Sir George Patey in *Australia*. After coaling, the ships proceeded to Suva, Fiji, and carried out landing rehearsals. In view of Admiralty advice that the German squadron might be near Samoa, Patey drew up the order of sailing with care. The Fleet sailed for Samoa in two columns, led by *Montcalm* and *Australia*, with *Psyche* stationed ahead as scout. In case of attack, *Australia* would lead out, followed by *Montcalm* and *Melbourne* while the three small, obsolete cruisers would shepherd the convoy away.¹³

In the event, the convoy reached Samoa safely. On 30 August, under threat of bombardment by *Australia*'s guns, the Germans capitulated. At 1130 *Psyche* led the transports and *Pyramus*

⁹ <http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-pioneer> accessed 2 September 2015.

¹⁰ *The Telegraph* Brisbane, 17 February 1914,

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/179511511?searchTerm=hmas+pioneer&searchLimits=>, accessed 2 September 2015.

¹¹ http://www.naval-history.net/OWShips-WW1-05-HMS_Psyche.htm, accessed 19 Jan 2017.

¹² http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/WNBR_4-40_mk3.htm;

http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/WNGER_41-40_skc00.php, accessed 19 Dec 2016.

¹³ Arthur W. Jose, *The Royal Australian Navy 1914-1918*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1937, pp.59-61.

into Apia harbour. Landings were carried out without incident and the next morning, at 0800, *Psyche* fired a 21-gun salute as the union flag was broken out over the courthouse. Later, *Psyche* and the transport *Moeraki* were dispatched to inform the administrator of Tonga of Samoa's occupation.¹⁴

By mid-September arrangements had been concluded for a convoy carrying New Zealand troops to sail from Wellington to Western Australia, where it would join the convoy transporting Australian troops to Egypt and eventually Europe. It was to be escorted by *Psyche* and *Philomel*. The sailing was delayed three weeks by New Zealand fears that the escort was insufficient. With the escort reinforced by two Japanese cruisers, the convoy finally sailed on 16 October. It reached Hobart on 21 October where *Pyramus* replaced *Psyche*, the latter proceeding to Melbourne for a much needed refit.¹⁵

***Pioneer* in Western Australian Waters**

When war broke out *Pioneer* was docked in Melbourne for repairs owing to 'condenseritis' – leaking condenser tubes. She was quickly undocked and provisioned in 24 hours. She then sailed west to Fremantle where she was to undertake trade protection and patrol responsibilities, relieving the modern cruiser HMAS *Melbourne* for more pressing duties.¹⁶

In 1914 many merchant ships were not equipped with wireless and were unaware of the outbreak of war. This was true of the German vessel *Neumunster*. On 16 August, 42 days out of Antwerp, she was eight miles off Rottneest Island when intercepted by *Pioneer*. The weather was too rough for boarding so the ship was brought into Fremantle harbour where Lieut Kenneth Dalglish RN and Paymaster Hugh Ramsay, with six ratings, crossed and took possession of her. On arrival in Fremantle *Neumunster* was handed over to the Chief Collector of Customs and her papers were delivered to the Registrar of the Supreme Court, Perth. Proceedings for condemnation of the ship and cargo were taken in accordance with the Naval Prize Manual 1864.¹⁷ Rechristened *Cooe*, the ship saw considerable wartime service before being handed over the Commonwealth Government Line on 1 April 1918.¹⁸

On 28 August *Pioneer*'s patrol off Fremantle again bore results when the North German Lloyd steamer *Thüringen* of 4994 tons, some 40 days out of Antwerp, was intercepted. The weather was too rough to board her on the open sea so she was brought into harbour where Dalglish and Ramsay again took charge. Among the ship's papers was a 'Bord code (confidential)' and confidential instructions to the master as to procedure in time of war. The seizure of these documents was reported to the Commander in Chief, East Indies Station by cable on 29 August.¹⁹ Like *Neumunster*, *Thüringen* was condemned into British service as *Moora* and was lent to the Indian Government in 1915 for the carriage of troops and horses.²⁰ It was, however, a great disappointment to her crew that the Admiralty policy on prize money had changed. Prize money would no longer be paid directly to ship's complements but pooled

¹⁴ Jose, pp.61-62.

¹⁵ Stevens, pp.69-70.

¹⁶ Anonymous, 'HMAS *Pioneer*: The RAN's First Cruiser' in *Naval Historical Review*, vol.4, no.4, December 1982, pp.43-47; Julian S. Corbett, *Naval Operations, Volume One*, (reprint), Uckfield: Naval and Military Press in association with the Imperial War Museum, nd, p.141.

¹⁷ HMAS *Pioneer* to Admiralty, 19 August 1914, AWM36 10/1.

¹⁸ Jose, pp.504, 516-517.

¹⁹ HMAS *Pioneer* to Commander in Chief, East Indies Station, 31 August 1914, AWM36 10/1.

²⁰ Jose, pp.506, 517.

for distribution throughout the Navy after the war.²¹

Fig.2: Bow view of Pioneer at anchor off Port Melbourne, c.1914. HMAS Melbourne in the background. (RAN Sea Power Centre)



Pioneer then conducted patrols along the northwest coast of Australia as far as Darwin, looking for the German raiding light cruiser SMS *Emden*. Fortunately they never met. By October arrangements for conveying the Australian Imperial Force to Suez were well underway and the convoy assem-

bled with its escorts at Albany. *Pioneer* was selected to join the escort as far as the Cocos-Keeling islands. She left Fremantle to join the convoy on 1 November, in company with the Japanese armoured cruiser *Ibuki*.²² *Pioneer*'s obsolete cable gear made her slow in weighing anchor, causing some friction with the Japanese ship.²³ However, on joining the convoy condenser trouble reappeared and she was forced to return to Fremantle for repairs.²⁴ *Emden* was destroyed at Cocos by HMAS *Sydney* on 9 November.

With the destruction of the *Emden* and then the German Asiatic Squadron at the Battle of the Falklands on 8 December 1914, there was little point in the modern vessels of the RAN being employed in a naval backwater, and eventually all but one of these major combatants found themselves fighting in the main theatres of the naval war in the North Sea and the Mediterranean. However, there remained the necessity to maintain a naval presence in the Indian and Pacific Ocean to counter residual German overseas forces and agents. *Pioneer* and *Psyche* would be involved in these operations for the nearly the next three years.

***Pioneer* in East Africa**

On 31 July 1914 the German light cruiser *Königsberg* anticipated the outbreak of war and sailed from Dar-es-Salaam in German East Africa to operate against Allied shipping in the Indian Ocean. After taking one prize, lack of fuel forced her to sail for a bolthole up the Rufiji River delta to rendezvous with a collier. On 20 September *Königsberg* sortied to Zanzibar where she surprised and sank *Pioneer*'s sister ship, HMS *Pegasus*. *Königsberg* outranged the British ship, demonstrating the inferiority of the P Class cruisers to even the

²¹ David Stevens, *In all Respects Ready, Australia's Navy in World War One*, Melbourne: Oxford, 2014, pp.97-98.

²² Ibid, p.72.

²³ Anonymous, *HMAS Pioneer*, p.98.

²⁴ Stevens, p.98.

earlier German light cruisers. After the action she returned to her refuge. She was discovered up the Rufiji by boats of the cruiser HMS *Chatham*, but shallow waters prevented the British cruiser from engaging *Königsberg* directly, while indirect fire over the land could not be spotted for fall of shot.

The only course was to keep *Königsberg* blockaded until a suitable shallow draught warship could be brought up to destroy her. The nearest suitable ships were two small monitors refitting home waters – HMS *Mersey* and *Severn*. The Rufiji had multiple exits to the Indian Ocean and shifting sandbanks which obviated any attempt to scuttle a blockship to pen the German ship in. To help maintain the blockade the Admiralty requested *Pioneer* be deployed to the to join a heterogeneous assortment of warships off the East African coast to keep *Königsberg* bottled up until the monitors reached the theatre.

Pioneer left Fremantle on 9 January 1915 and crossed the Indian Ocean accompanied by a collier as far as Diego Garcia. She checked the wreck of *Emden* at Cocos Islands along the way. She then proceeded to Mombasa, arriving on 3 February, before moving to Zanzibar where the projecting masts of the wreck of *Pegasus* were a grim reminder of what *Königsberg* could do. *Pioneer*'s guns were cleared away and trained on the threat bearing at night, her gun crews sleeping by their weapons.²⁵ She came under the command of Rear Admiral Herbert King-Hall, Commander in Chief, Cape of Good Hope Station, flying his flag in the battleship HMS *Goliath*.²⁶

The German East African coast was 645km long and was punctuated by twenty rivers and harbours into which a small ship such as a dhow could slip with supplies for the German cruiser. Warships not engaged in blockading *Königsberg* monitored the coastal traffic. A base had been established on Mafia Island, directly off the mouths of the Rufiji Delta, and the coast was divided into the Northern, Rufiji and Southern sectors. Biddlecombe became senior officer of the Northern Section. Apart from *Pioneer*, ships allocated to the section included the armed merchant cruiser *Kinfauns Castle*, the armed tug *Duplex* and the captured German armed whalers *Fly* (ex-*Sturmvogel*) and *Pickle* (ex-*Seeadler*).²⁷

So commenced a period of tedious patrol work. The coastal traffic in dhows, mostly carrying rice, was policed. The German ports were examined and an occasional bombardment of a shore position carried out. On 20 April, the port forward 4-inch was closed up to successfully engage a boat off one of the entrances to the Rufiji. There was little relief for *Pioneer*'s crew as the coastal waters were shallow, allowing no facility for anchoring. It was especially stressful for the Engine Room Department as the ship was badly ventilated and no relief could be provided at night as war precautions meant she could not open scuttles.²⁸ Crew shortages were made up by signing on, in contravention to White Australia policy, twenty native ratings known as Seedies. Others were later added as needed.²⁹ *Pioneer*'s machinery was sadly in need of overhaul, King-Hall reporting to the Admiralty that she was capable of only 12 knots. He saw 'little chance of success' for her should she have to engage *Königsberg*. Most of the other ships on station were in the same condition.³⁰

²⁵ Ibid, p.99.

²⁶ Ibid, p.99.

²⁷ Ibid p.100; Extracts of Reports of Proceedings (ROP), Admiral Commanding Cape of Good Hope Station, 3-21 March 1915, AWM36 26/15 (further cited as 'ROP Extracts').

²⁸ General Letter King-Hall to Admiralty, 17 April 1915, AWM36 26/15.

²⁹ Stevens, pp.106-107.

³⁰ ROP Extracts 18 April to 15 May 1915, AWM36 26/15.



Fig.3: Eighteen of the twenty Africans, known as Seedies, signed on to make up manning shortages on *Pioneer* when operating off Africa. (RAN Sea Power Centre)

On 14 April a German supply ship *Rubens* was driven ashore in Mansa Bay by *Hyacinth* and shelled and burned. On 17 April King-Hall received intelligence from the Admiralty that a German supply ship was expected off Mikindani and *Pioneer* joined the flagship, the light cruiser *Hyacinth*, in a search for her. *Pioneer* was stationed off Mikindani while *Hyacinth* and *Kinfauns Castle* searched further afield but no contact was made. Actually, no such vessel existed. Wireless signals were used by German signallers to give the impression of the presence of another vessel to draw the British warships away from *Rubens* while Mansa Bay was mined and *Rubens* made to appear unsalvageable. In fact, her cargo was salvaged and provided vital assistance to German forces in East Africa through 1915.³¹

It became clear to the Admiralty that the situation on the East African coast could not be allowed to continue indefinitely. The vessels employed in the blockade were required elsewhere. *Goliath* had been withdrawn for service at the Dardanelles, with King-Hall's flag shifted to *Hyacinth*. On 28 April the Admiralty despatched two river monitors to reinforce the East Africa Station. These were HMS *Mersey* and *Severn*, ex-Brazilian vessels taken over at the outbreak of war and currently serving in the Mediterranean. Their shallow draught design made them unfit for open sea navigation and they had to be towed to East Africa by tugs, arriving on 3 June. Additionally, *Kinfauns Castle* was replaced by the armed merchant cruiser HMS *Laurentic* which brought with her four seaplanes.

³¹ Ibid; Stevens, pp.102-03.

On the afternoon of 23 June *Pioneer* weighed anchor to proceed to her night patrol station. At 1715, while proceeding at 10 knots, she grounded on a shoal north west of Niororo Island. No damage was done to the ship and, after awaiting the rising tide, her engines were put full astern and she floated off at 2031. King-Hall was relaxed about the accident, reporting to the Admiralty that no enquiry should be held and that Biddlecombe should be instructed to be more careful. Given the conditions of the local waters, he considered it remarkable that so few cases of stranding had occurred.³²

The monitor's operations against *Königsberg* commenced on 6 July. Naval crews replaced the civilians manning the tugs supporting the monitors, with ten stokers and gunners from *Pioneer* under Lieut Kenneth Dalglish serving the tug *Blackcock*, now armed with two 3-pounder weapons. A three-man gun crew also manned a Maxim machine gun passed to *Mersey* with 2000 rounds of ammunition. As the monitors proceeded up the Rufiji to engage *Königsberg*, *Pioneer* and *Hyacinth* engaged the German shore defences at the Simba Uranga Mouth, the main exit of the estuary. At a range of 5000 yards, *Pioneer* fired about 100 rounds of 4-inch at the German defences. She and *Hyacinth* were engaged by some German guns which were silenced by the bombardment, although the extent of the damage wrought could not be ascertained. The two ships withdrew on the falling tide. Unfortunately the monitors' attack on *Königsberg* had been unsuccessful. Aerial control of their fire had not worked as planned, as the observer became confused by the alternate fire of the two ships. Only when *Mersey* ceased fire after a hit on her forward gun shield did *Severn* hit the target, but confusion returned when *Mersey* rejoined the action. It did not help that *Mersey*'s guns were found to be badly calibrated. After nine hours the two British ships withdrew, their four hits on the German cruiser leaving her fighting capacity unimpaired.³³

The attack was recommenced on 12 July with improved procedures developed in the interval. It was planned that the monitors and the shore bombardment ships would come closer to their targets and the monitors would fire one at a time to avoid confusion by the aerial spotters. While *Pioneer* and *Hyacinth* again engaged the Simba Uranga defences, this time from 2000 yards but without reply, the monitors conducted a successful gun action against *Königsberg*, leaving her on fire with heavy casualties and her captain badly wounded. She was scuttled and blown up by her crew. However, her guns were salvaged and, with ammunition and carriages which had arrived earlier on *Rubens* and *Marie*, another blockade runner, provided useful support to German land forces in East Africa for the remainder of the war.³⁴

By now *Pioneer* had been at sea for six months with only nine days in port and her material condition had become more and more parlous. On one occasion she went to sea on only one engine.³⁵ By the end of July King-Hall described her condition as 'barely seaworthy'.³⁶ He would have liked to detach her from her duties for refit but every ship was needed so, despite her poor condition, *Pioneer* continued on blockade duties throughout July and August. On 29 July she and the cruiser HMS *Challenger* destroyed *Präsident*, a German merchant vessel disabled at Lindi by *Chatham* the previous October.

Finally, on 31 August, *Pioneer* was able to sail for the dockyard at Simonstown for an

³² Biddlecombe to King-Hall, 24 June 1915 and 4 July 1916; King-Hall to Admiralty, 15 July 1915, AWM36, 10/1.

³³ Biddlecombe to ACNB, 2 August 1915, NAA MP1049, 1915/0187; Stevens, pp 103-04; Jose, p.235.

³⁴ Stevens, pp.104-105; Jose, p.235.

³⁵ Jose, p.236.

³⁶ ROP Extracts, 17 June to 26 July 1915, AWM36 26/15.

overdue refit. Over the next month her boilers and auxiliary machinery were repaired and her crew given four days leave in Capetown. In the course of the visit ten men deserted and another 92 contracted venereal disease. *Pioneer* sailed for Zanzibar on 21 October, calling at Durban and ports in Portuguese East Africa to ascertain the extent of German contraband smuggling through the colony and the disposal and movements of any German merchant vessels. Biddlecombe had some success in establishing relations with Portuguese officials. *Pioneer* reached Zanzibar on 8 November.³⁷

On 3 December she attempted to coal at night from the collier *Kendle Castle* off Barakuni Island. *Pioneer*, which had only one engine available for manoeuvring at the time, requested the collier come alongside. *Kendle Castle*'s captain refused, causing Biddlecombe to fire a 4-inch round across her bow. Lieut Dalglish boarded the collier and returned to advise that her captain had agreed to comply but 'through carelessness or incompetence he failed to do so'. *Kendle Castle* was then ordered to anchor for the night. The swell running the next morning caused the whole refuelling to be abandoned. The First Naval Member, Rear Admiral Creswell, on reading Biddlecombe's report of the incident, thought it a series of misunderstandings not much clarified by *Pioneer* firing on the collier.³⁸ The monotony of blockade duties continued, broken on 20 December when a boat was sent ashore at Nazi Bay to acquire fresh provisions. It was fired on by an enemy force and two men were wounded. *Pioneer* fired 50 rounds of 4-inch in support of her men but with unknown result.³⁹

In February 1916 King-Hall was relieved by Rear Admiral Sir Edward Charlton, flying his flag in the battleship HMS *Vengeance*. At the same time the Naval Board, fearing the possibility of raider activity in Australian waters, requested *Pioneer*'s return. The Admiralty agreed but Charlton objected, pointing out that *Challenger* was due for refit and *Pioneer*'s relief would weaken the blockade. As a result the Australian ship's repatriation was postponed, an unpopular decision aboard.⁴⁰

On 17 February, *Pioneer* was sent to the assistance of the Union Castle liner *Comrie Castle*, which had gone aground on Leven Reef outside Mombasa Harbour. Three attempts were made to refloat the ship in the early hours of the 18th using *Pioneer*'s 8½-inch hemp hawser, but each was unsuccessful. *Pioneer* retreated to Mombasa, returning at 1300 and making another attempt using a 5½-inch wire hawser, but this fared no better than the previous efforts. *Challenger* had come up in support and the next day made an unsuccessful attempt to bring *Comrie Castle* off. On the 20th the liner was lightened and *Challenger* brought her off. Divers from *Pioneer* found that she had not been damaged by the grounding. Charlton and the Union Castle Line were appreciative of the efforts of the two cruisers.⁴¹

Biddlecombe left the ship in May. He had not been a success as captain and 'was accused of running his ship on "shine" – that is for show rather than effectiveness ...'. All but one of his officers boycotted a farewell concert for him. He had run his ship aground and, in respect of the *Kendle Castle* incident, had his judgement questioned by the Naval Board for dealing with her captain in a high-handed way. The Naval Board did not feel that his acting rank

³⁷ ROP HMAS *Pioneer*, 20 November 1915, NAA MP 1049 1915/0187; Stevens, p.106.

³⁸ Biddlecombe to ACNB, 28 December 1915, NAA MP 1049 1915/0187.

³⁹ Jose, pp.236-37.

⁴⁰ Senior Naval Officer, Simonstown to Admiralty 8 February 1916, Admiralty to Commander in Chief, Cape 19 February 1916, AWM36 26/15; Jose, p.227; Stevens p.107.

⁴¹ Charlton to Admiralty 27 February 1916, AWM36 10/3

should be confirmed.⁴² Charlton considered that Biddlecombe needed further experience and he sailed for England to serve in the battleship *Benbow* and then in command of the Q-ship HMS *Warner*. He was lost in her sinking on 3 March 1917, the first RAN commanding officer to be killed in action. Biddlecombe's successor in command of *Pioneer* was Lieut Cdr Waldemar Wilkinson, from *Challenger*.⁴³

The last phase of *Pioneer's* deployment was to be more active than previously. British forces in German East Africa under General Jan Smuts were advancing south towards the Tanga region and the navy operated in support. Reconnoitring the port of Tanga on 13 June and coming under machine-gun fire from the shore, *Pioneer*, *Vengeance* and *Challenger* bombarded the town to silence the opposition. On 30 July Dar-es-Salaam's defences were bombarded by *Pioneer*, *Hyacinth* and *Challenger* with spotting from the kite-balloon ship HMS *Manica*. She contributed men to the landing at Bagamoyo on 15 August, Wilkinson acting as beachmaster and performing his duties efficiently while under fire. After the successful conclusion to operations she contributed men to a victory march through Zanzibar. Her final mission on the East African coast was to transport Charlton to Dar-es-Salaam, in the course of which he thanked her men for their services.⁴⁴

Pioneer sailed for home on 22 August. Her limited range forced her to coal at the Seychelles, Colombo, Batavia and Singapore. She did not drop anchor in Watsons Bay until 22 October. The deployment of the old cruiser had been a success and she had contributed well in many different ways to the naval operations off German East Africa. Her service is well summed up by the official historian:

It is surely one of the ironies of war that this small and really obsolete ship, dating from pre-Federation days, should have seen more actual fighting, and probably fired more rounds in the course of actual hostilities, than any other ship of the Australian Squadron.⁴⁵

The ship was paid off for the last time on 7 November and served as an accommodation ship until 1922 when she was stripped at Garden Island and passed to the Commonwealth Shipping Board the next year. The hulk was sold on to H.P. Stacey of Sydney in 1926 and scuttled off Sydney Heads on 18 February 1931. The wreck lies in 67 metres of water approximately 2.5km off Vaucluse.⁴⁶

***Psyche* in Asian Waters**

Through 1915 German activities on the China Station were causing concern to the British. An organisation based in Shanghai with branches throughout Asia was attempting to raise rebellion in British colonial possessions and to smuggle weapons to local dissidents by sea.⁴⁷ A mutiny by Indian troops in Singapore in February 1915 put an edge on British concerns. The Commander-in-Chief, China Station, Vice Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram, had only limited resources to patrol a huge area and sought reinforcements.

In response, *Psyche*, lying decommissioned in Melbourne since her October refit, was recommissioned under acting Commander Henry Feakes for Persian Gulf service. Shortage of personnel forced her company to be raised from partially trained recruits from the

⁴² ACNB to Naval Representative, London, 11 September 1916, NAA MP1049, 1916/058; Stevens, p.108.

⁴³ Admiralty to ACNB, 9 July 1916, NAA MP1049, 1916/058.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp.108-09; Jose p.237.

⁴⁵ Jose, p.238.

⁴⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HMAS_Pioneer, accessed 31 May 2017.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp.208-11.

Williamstown Depot. Jose claims that two of her guns were passed to the sloop HMAS *Fantome*, destined for the same service, but these were more likely spares taken from store.⁴⁸ Feakes proposed to augment her armament by mounting four 4.7-inch guns in the fore and aft 4-inch positions and replacing her 14-inch tubes with 18-inch models, arguing also that ammunition for these weapons would be more readily available on certain foreign stations.⁴⁹ There is no record that this modification was ever made. The ship was recommissioned on 1 July.⁵⁰



Fig.4: *Psyche* at anchor and dressed overall. There is another P Class cruiser behind her – either *Pioneer* or *Pyramus*. (RAN Sea Power Centre)

Feakes was initially instructed to steam to Colombo where he would receive further orders. His orders listed a number of German ships sheltering in neutral ports in the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines, which it was thought might attempt to escape and embark arms to support nationalist movements. He was also advised of the activities of the American ships *Maverick* and *Annie Larsen*, also thought to be running guns and ammunition.⁵¹

Fears of gun-running to support uprisings in India and Burma caused the Admiralty to change *Psyche*'s orders, issuing revised orders on 7 August. Instead of Colombo and the Persian Gulf she was to proceed to Singapore. She sailed on 16 August and arrived at Singapore on 4 September.⁵² On 6 September *Psyche* departed for Rangoon where Feakes was to consult

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.214, General Manager, Garden Island Dockyard to Captain-in-Charge, Sydney, 29 June 1915, AWM50 17/5.

⁴⁹ Feakes to Captain-in-Charge Sydney, 29 June 1915, AWM50 17/5.

⁵⁰ Feakes to ACNB, 1 July 1915, AWM50 17/4.

⁵¹ ACNB to Commanding Officer, HMAS *Psyche*, 9 July 1915, AWM50 17/5.

⁵² ACNB to Commanding Officer, HMAS *Psyche*, 7 August 1915; Captain-in-Charge Sydney to Commanding Officer, HMAS *Psyche*, 15 August 1915; ACNB to Captain-in-Charge Sydney, 5 September 1915, AWM50 17/5; General Report of Proceedings (ROP) HMAS *Psyche*, 23 September 1915, AWM36 12/1.

with the senior Naval and Military Officers, Burma and to prepare a patrol scheme for the coast of Burma for submission to the Officer Commanding the Bengal Patrol in the old cruiser HMS *Diana*.⁵³

Psyche was allotted to the Burma Coast patrol, based in Rangoon with Feakes designated Senior Naval Officer Burma.⁵⁴ The area covered extended from Akyab on Burma's northern frontier south through Bassien, Moulmein, Tavoy and Murgui to Victoria Point.⁵⁵ Feakes described the weather conditions as 'foul' in the monsoon season but fine in the Burma winter. The patrol was maintained by requisitioned steamers, tugs and launches. Amongst these a genuine warship such as *Psyche* was a 'real presence' often referred to in local gossip as a battleship or battle cruiser.⁵⁶ The patrol work was monotonous, lasting 10-12 days at a time, broken by two-to-four day coaling period in Rangoon.⁵⁷ The ship's company was dogged by illness caused by poor working conditions and a sickly climate.⁵⁸ On 7 December, at Rangoon, she embarked 12 'British Indians of the Merchant and Professional classes', 'known to be seditionists', for transport to Kyauk Pyu on the north Arakan coast. Accompanied by a police officer, the prisoners were accommodated in a 'space well lighted and guarded by sentries ... screened off on the upper deck' provided with temporary sanitary and cooking arrangements.⁵⁹

By January 1916 a lack of enemy activity led to the disbanding of the patrol, but *Psyche* was retained on station in case of resumption. The working conditions and poor food led to 30 stokers refusing duty in February. The ship proceeded to Singapore for the courts martial of the recalcitrant stokers, arriving on 15 February. She departed on 7 March after dry-docking and thrust block repairs.⁶⁰ Seven men were court martialled and jailed from 12-24 months, but three of the sentences were reduced by the Admiralty after intercession by the Naval Board.

Psyche escorted Russian military transports bound for Europe through her area between 31 March and 4 April.⁶¹ The ACNB suggested that *Psyche* might be given a change of climate but found the Admiralty unsympathetic – the conditions under which *Psyche* worked were no worse than those faced by RN ships. But the ACNB had a case. In July, when *Psyche* reached the more temperate climate of Hong Kong for maintenance, six officers and over 70 ratings were hospitalised, one of whom died and a further 41 aboard ship were on the sick list.⁶² At Hong Kong her boiler tubes were found to be 'badly corroded internally and slightly corroded externally' and this was successfully corrected.⁶³

While the cruiser underwent her refit, 36 members of her company under Lieut Teale RN, with a medical officer, manned the river gunboat HMS *Moorhen* to assist in the evacuation of

⁵³ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 23 September 1915, AWM36 12/1.

⁵⁴ ACNB to Captain-in-Charge Sydney, 7 September 1915, AWM50 17/5; Stevens, pp.180-81.

⁵⁵ Full details of the Burma Coast Patrol may be found at 'Details of Organisation and Orders, Burma Coast Patrol', 1 November 1915, AWM36 12/1.

⁵⁶ Henry James Feakes, *White Ensign - Southern Cross*, Sydney, Ure Smith, 1951, pp.194-95.

⁵⁷ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 4 November 1915, AWM36 12/1.

⁵⁸ Stevens, p.181.

⁵⁹ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 31 December 1915, AWM36 12/1.

⁶⁰ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 3 April 1916, AWM36 12/1.

⁶¹ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 21 May 1916, AWM36 12/1.

⁶² Stevens, p.191; Jose p.219.

⁶³ AWM50 17/4.

Europeans after a rebellion in the Chinese hinterland.⁶⁴ At the completion of her maintenance *Psyche* was based on Hong Kong and spent two months patrolling off the Chinese port of Amoy in the course of which a German citizen from was taken from an examined vessel. The ship's Medical Officer reported that the crew's health was improved by working in cooler conditions.⁶⁵ The cruiser departed for Singapore on 14 October and the remainder of the year was spent patrolling the Bay of Bengal.⁶⁶ In early 1917 she patrolled Malayan waters and escorted ships in the Bay of Bengal, in the course of which she was required to maintain 14.5 to 15.5 knots, which she was able to with 40 per cent of her unit without difficulty.⁶⁷

An attempt by the Naval Board to have the ship returned to Australian waters was resisted by the Commander in Chief, China Station as he had nothing to replace her and the German raider *Wolf* (*Kapitän* Nerger) was now known to be operating in the Indian Ocean.⁶⁸ However, her replacement, the cruiser HMS *Suffolk*, was on the way to the station. On 16 July *Psyche* arrived at Singapore and remained there except for escorting the merchant ship *Tantalus* in local waters on 31 July-1 August. She was relieved by *Suffolk* on 11 August and was used to conduct courts martial on the 22nd. She departed for Australia on the 31st.⁶⁹

On the night of 2 September 1917 *Wolf* was laying mines in the Karimata Strait, between Sumatra and Borneo, when she sighted a poorly blacked-out cruiser which answered *Psyche*'s description. Despite the pleadings of his torpedo crew, *Kapitän* Nerger decided not to engage the ship as this would compromise his minelaying operation. He was also concerned for the vulnerability of the raider's mine cargo. It was a fortunate decision for the Australian ship – she was outgunned by *Wolf*'s 15cm weapons and torpedo tubes and, with a top speed now reduced to 7.5 knots due to a foul bottom, could not escape. The outcome of the action may well have presaged that between *Sydney* and *Kormoran* twenty-four years later.⁷⁰ Refuelling and conducting repairs at Dili, and delayed to conduct a court martial at Thursday Island, *Psyche* finally arrived at Sydney on 28 September and 'passed out of active service'.⁷¹

Psyche was recommissioned for 'temporary special service' on the Queensland coast on 20 November with a reduced crew including volunteers from the Royal Australian Naval Brigade. Her captain was the 57-year old Captain George Curtis, who retained his duties as District Naval Officer, Brisbane.⁷² Her patrols were uneventful. She decommissioned for the last time on 26 March 1918 and was stripped of useful equipment.⁷³ She remained in Sydney Harbour until being sold for service as a timber lighter on 21 July 1922. She eventually sank in 1940 in Salamander Bay, Port Stephens. Her wreck was used for exercises by RAN Clearance Divers between 1950 and 1973.⁷⁴

⁶⁴ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 12 July 1916, AWM36 12/1.

⁶⁵ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 4 October 1916, AWM36 12/1.

⁶⁶ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 19 December 1916, AWM36 12/1.

⁶⁷ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, 31 March 1917, AWM36 12/1.

⁶⁸ Stevens, pp.191, 274; Jose p.220.

⁶⁹ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, [nd] September 1917, AWM36 12/1.

⁷⁰ Richard Guilliart and Peter Hohnen *The Wolf*, North Sydney: Random House Australia, 2009, pp.147-49; Stevens, p.280; speed from ROP HMAS *Psyche*, [nd] September 1917, AWM36 12/1.

⁷¹ ROP HMAS *Psyche*, [nd] September 1917, AWM36 12/1; Jose pp 220-21.

⁷² Stevens, p.290.

⁷³ Captain-in-Charge Sydney Memorandum to Commanding Officer HMAS *Psyche* et al, 20 March 1918, AWM50 17/4.

⁷⁴ <http://www.navy.gov.au/hmas-psyche>; <http://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?51613>, both accessed 16 Feb 2017.

Despite their age and often decrepit condition, the two small cruisers had played a valuable role in the maritime backwaters of the First World War. Between them they had at one time or another intercepted enemy merchant ships, supported operations to destroy a German commerce raider and checked the flow of enemy supplies and influence into parts of the Empire which might have caused disruption to British rule. Importantly, they provided security by providing a naval presence which impressed locals and was a symbol of British power. In so doing they had helped maintain maritime security and exercise that of command of the sea ensured by the Grand Fleet based in Europe.

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PAGE AND SCREEN

Resources for Researchers and Collectors

New AWM Website

The decision by the Australian War Memorial to replace its website with a new version has kicked up quite a storm of protest by avid users within the Society. Some claim that the new website is 'unusable' and even that it threatens to jeopardise their own research projects. Member **Katrina Kittel** offers this advice which 'may be a good test run if anyone is having trouble':

- I wanted to look for a photo I had been shown of a workmate's ancestor, which she said was donated to AWM. It was easy to locate, only a few steps:
 1. I went to the Collection tab and typed his name, 'Charles Frederick Smith', into the search box, then clicked the Advanced Search box next to it.
 2. It brings up the results (155). I know I want a photo so I scroll down the page and see that under 'Photographs' it has 118 results.
 3. Under that results comment, I see 'View all photographs'. I did not have to look far, as his photo was result 2.

The latest word from the AWM is: 'Our Digital Experience team have reviewed and assessed the feedback particularly with regard to access to rolls and databases via the Advanced Search, along with content and image links. In addressing the feedback, further work will take place over a five week timeframe. ... Given this program of work, we have revised the closure date of the past site, to allow time for this further transition and familiarity on the new website. The revised date for this closure of the past site is 31 October 2017' (this information courtesy of **John Meyers**).

Inaccurate War Films

A friend sent me this link, which is not only good for a laugh, but can also sharpen one's knowledge of a particular conflict as well as the powers of observation:

<https://m.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/11-most-truly-inaccurate-war-films.html>

I reckon I can probably add a dozen titles of my own to that list!

Paul Skrebels

Digitisation of *Sabretache*

Moves are afoot to digitise the back catalogue of the journal, which should greatly improve its status as a resource for researchers; more details in due course as they come to hand.

Rohan Goyne and Paul Skrebels

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‘WITHOUT ANY SUPPORT WHATSOEVER’: 75 YEARS ON FROM ALAMEIN, JULY 1942

Katrina Kittel

In the late days of June 1942, a long convoy of 9th Division AIF returned to the Western Desert, the country in which it had learned to fight.¹ The war in North Africa was becoming more critical for the British Eighth Army. On 26 June 1942, the Australians began moving south, through Syria and Palestine to Egypt. With their rushed transfer to the Alamein ‘box’ commencing in secrecy, the men had initially hoped the movement meant that they were now heading out of the desert, and home. As they approached the Suez Canal ports, the convoy’s destination became clearer. They were heading back to the desert. By the end of June, the battered Eighth Army was holding a new line running south of El Alamein, a forlorn railway station near the coast about seventy miles from Alexandria. Insignificant on the map, Tel el Eisa and El Alamein, humble railway sidings, were to become place names of significance.

On 10 July 1942, two companies of the 2/48th Battalion focused on an objective to capture Tel el Eisa station area. In 1944, South Australian Syd Kinsman summarised the events in his Statement by a Repatriated Prisoner of War:

During a Coy attack we captured Tel el Eisa railway station ... consolidated and held off German counter attacks until evening when the enemy launched a counter attack with tanks, mobile infantry and artillery. The remainder of the Coy withdrew without informing the two forward sections, of which I was a member. We held off until mobile infantry attacked us from the rear while tanks and infantry attacked in front of flanks making it impossible for us to hold out any longer, when we had no alternative but to surrender.²

On 14-15 July New Zealand and Indian brigades, poorly supported by British armour, tried to seize Ruweisat Ridge, a long low rise running east-west and straddling the two armies’ lines. The New Zealanders lost 1,400 men in one day, much more than Australians suffered in one day in July. On 17 July, the Australian 2/32nd Bn advanced towards the low rise of Trig 22. It was the battalion’s first operation since its withdrawal from Tobruk.³ West Australian Private Len Marchesi of the 2/32nd described the utter frustration of being taken prisoner on 17 July: ‘Surrounded by armour and a tank of Germans; surrendered after reaching and passing objective. We had no time to prepare position. At 0800 hrs counter attacked and having no support of any kind, was forced to surrender.’⁴

An Aboriginal soldier from Winton, Pte Frank Page of the 2/32nd Bn, was captured on 22 July 1942 at Alamein: ‘My position was overrun by tanks and infantry in a counter attack’ reported Frank in 1944.⁵ With Frank was another 2/32nd private, Syd Shaw from Wagin in Western Australia, who referred to being ‘mauled on 17 July but snatched on 22 July 1942’. Syd wrote that his unit had successfully attacked enemy hill positions at Alamein but owing to lack of air and tank support, 54 men of B Coy were surrounded by enemy armoured forces and were compelled to surrender on 22 July.⁶

On 25 July 1942, General Auchinleck issued an order: ‘You have done much’, commending the men for halting Rommel’s army, ‘... but I ask you for more ... If we can stick to it, we

¹ Mark Johnston and Peter Stanley, *Alamein: the Australian Story*, Oxford University Press, 2006, p.47.

² Sydney Kinsman, NAA B883: SX8953.

³ Johnston and Stanley, pp.82-83.

⁴ Len Marchesi, NAA B883: WX2122.

⁵ 1944 POW Report by Frank Page QX1639 held in UK Archives, sourced by Brian Sims.

⁶ Sydney Shaw, NAA B2458: WX12267; and interview with author.

will break him'.⁷ An attack on 'Ruin Ridge' (Sanyet el Miteiriya) was part of this extra demand, and it involved a night attack through minefields. The demand came at short notice, sounding fairly straightforward. On Sunday 26 July 1942, the wind in the west blew the fine sand over the battlefield, but the heat of the day gave way to a chilly night under clear skies. The night attack started as a brigade attack by crossing the start line at midnight, in bright moonlight. Ruin Ridge was successfully seized by the 2/28th Battalion and support troops, including the 12th Battery of 2/3rd Anti-Tank Regiment.

The West Australian 2/28th Bn had 'gone up the guts' to make the main attack, with support by the anti-tank guns carried on the trucks of the 2/3rd Anti-Tank. Once the objective was reached, they began to dig in. The whole battalion area was under heavy fire, and to site the anti-tank guns in the dark was difficult, despite the bright moonlight. The fiasco on 22 July had left a stigma that had to be eradicated. Wrecked tanks from the 22 July engagement were lit up by the moonlight, as if to forebode a repeat defeat. At Ruin Ridge, the best-laid plans of the 9th Division would go horribly wrong. Vehicles that should have brought forward ammunition were blown to pieces. Amongst the 2/28th men, the strain of fourteen days of warfare was displayed in desert sores, diarrhoea and sandfly fever.⁸ Captain Vernon Northwood's account sets the scene and sounds of Ruin Ridge in the early hours of Sunday 27 July: 'Suddenly the stillness was gone – gun flashes lit the sky to the rear of us ... a space of seconds and we heard the *boong boong boong* of our guns ... mortar bombs exploded with a *whoo-oosh* behind us ... the *brr brr* of our tommy-guns and the *rat-tat-tat* of our bren-guns ... the *whoomp whoomp whoomp* as our shells crashed on to the ridge.'⁹

In the early morning light of 27 July, the counter-attack was back on. The ridge hotted up quickly with continuous shelling and mortar bombing. At 0905 hrs, suddenly, miraculously (or as near to a miracle as a clever signaller can achieve with a nail file) the wireless set on Ruin Ridge came back to life, and a message read, 'We are in trouble'.¹⁰ The Australians battled enemy tanks from three directions. Tanks carrying big black German crosses fanned out on entering the wadi, picking off infantry units one by one. As the men waited for the expected tank and artillery support, they were left with one portable wireless in operation. Most signal trucks had been knocked out on the minefield. Ammunition was running out. Fremantle's Alan Neave, a private in the 2/28th, stated that 'promised support failed to appear'.¹¹ His battalion colleague Joe Neil added, 'C.O. capitulated.'¹²

The report by Warrant Officer Allan Potter of 2/28th demonstrated that another debacle at Alamein had taken place:

At midnight on 26 July, battalion advanced 3,000 yards to capture Ruin Ridge, to be held until support arrive at 0330 hrs. Without any support whatsoever, our isolated and surrounded Btn kept fighting until 1100 hrs when its fire became ineffective against tanks which were moving into the Btn area. Threatened at point-blank range by 2-pounder firing German tanks, we were compelled to surrender. The Acting Coy Commander gave orders to this effect.¹³

Sapper Bill Rudd wrote on his POW Report that he was 'captured with 2/28 Bn.

⁷ Johnston and Stanley, pp.82-83.

⁸ Philip Masel, *The Second 28th: the Story of the 2/28 Australian Infantry Battalion in World War II*, 3rd edn, PK Print WA, 2017, p.115.

⁹ Capt Vernon Northwood WX3405, cited in Masel, pp.127-28.

¹⁰ Masel, p.122.

¹¹ Alan Neave, NAA B883: WX12688.

¹² Joseph Neil, NAA B883: WX12709.

¹³ Allan Potter, NAA B883: WX6879.

Commanding Officer Lt Col. McCarter gave the order to surrender'.¹⁴

By 10am on 27 July, the gunners and bombardiers of 12th Battery who supported their 2/28th Bn counterparts knew that their days as combatants was over, whether they liked it or not. Their Commanding Officer also accepted the inevitable, and surrendered to prevent the wounding of more of his men. Gunner and Driver Col Booth, 2/3rd Anti-Tank, reported that 'we were in support to the 2/28th, we were spearhead of attack, cut off and overrun'.¹⁵ When the dust settled on this late July battle of Alamein, casualties were counted, and stragglers were collected. For the 12th Battery, 44 men were missing, mostly wounded, including several officers, and 14 had been killed or died of wounds.¹⁶



Fig.1: 2/3rd Anti-Tank Regiment troops relax in a field in Palestine in 1941 or early 1942. (Author's collection)

The defence by 2/28th Bn, the 12th Battery gunners and other support troops on Ruin Ridge was over. Hundreds of men were marched out in sixes amid whirling shrapnel in a heavy barrage coming from their own side. The battalion's history records that on 27 July 1942, approximately 500 men of the 2/28th Bn were taken prisoner, and 65 were dead.¹⁷ Others from support troop units added to the total number of men captured that day, destined for Italian prison camps.

You can quite imagine how we felt as we were herded into 3 tonners, packed like cattle ... We almost died that night, because we were so overcome.¹⁸

I got out and put my hands up and the old expression is, 'For you, the war is finished'. What a lot of crap. This was just the beginning.¹⁹

Prior to the of 26-27 July 1942 night attack on Ruin Ridge, 2/28th's Capt Northwood was informed that this attack was to be the curtain-raiser for 'a big show'. Presumably, the big show was the October battle at Alamein. Australian troops were also involved in this show, 'the costly but victorious battle fought on the same battlefield three months later.'²⁰

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¹⁴ POW Report for Bill Rudd, provided by Bill Rudd.

¹⁵ 1944 POW Report by Colin Booth NX60337 held in UK Archives, sourced by Brian Sims.

¹⁶ Col J.N.L. Argent, *Target Tank: The History of the 2/3rd Australian Anti-Tank Regiment, 9th Division, AIF*, Parramatta, 1957, pp.188-89.

¹⁷ Nominal rolls in Masel, *op cit*.

¹⁸ Phil Loffman, interviewed by Brian Wall for the Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of *Australia in the War of 1939-45*, S00557, transcript of oral recording, AWM, p.9.

¹⁹ Lloyd Moule, *The Australians at War Film Archive*, Transcript 1285:

<http://australiansatwarfilmarchive.unsw.edu.au/archive/1285-lloyd-moule>.

²⁰ Peter Stanley, *Remembering 1942: Ruin Ridge, 26-27 July 1942*, presentation beside the Roll of Honour, AWM, 28 July 2002: <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/blog/1942-ruin-ridge>.

HOW WAR SHAPED AN AERO CLUB, PART 2

Michael Nelmes

The insistent demands of modern war call for the mass production of airmen.¹

In Part 1 we left Lt Bowden Fletcher as he returned to his hometown of Stanthorpe, Qld, in December 1918. His air experience did not leave him, and he soon began drumming up interest in forming a Queensland branch of the Australian Aero Club. In September 1919 he convened a meeting in Brisbane of former fellow flying corps men, and out of this was born the club's Queensland section (from 1935, the Royal Queensland Aero Club) which counted among its members Bert Hinkler and Charles Kingsford Smith. In June 1920 he was at Government House in Sydney to receive his Distinguished Flying Cross from the Prince of Wales. A fellow recipient that day was Fletcher's pilot in the air action for which he earned the award, Lt Paul 'Ginty' McGinness DFC DCM. A few months after the investiture, on 16 November 1920, McGinness and his usual observer, Lt Hudson Fysh DFC, met at the outback Queensland town of Winton and founded Qantas.

When the RAAF was formed in 1921, Fletcher was placed on its reserve list and offered a position, but declined; he was, he later said, still suffering from the effects of war. The next year he married Vera, and on 19 June 1925, the day the Citizen Air Force (CAF) came into being, he was among the dozen or so reservist officers to be called up to serve part-time. The two initial RAAF squadrons consisted of both reservist (CAF) and permanent personnel, and Fletcher became a photographer with 3 Squadron at Richmond near Sydney. He held this position for four years, although his service mainly consisted of an annual camp of a few weeks. For his 1927 service he was posted as messing officer to Canberra for the visit of the Duke and Duchess of York (the future king and queen of England) to open Parliament House on 9 May.² At the end of his 3 Sqn service in July 1930, he remained on the reserve list.

It was perhaps his time in Sydney which gave him the opportunity to work with E.J. Hart, founder of *Aircraft* magazine, in fostering the growth of the Australian Aero Club. He became active in its New South Wales section, making or renewing many contacts who were to prove valuable in his future efforts. When in December 1927 the Fletchers moved to Narromine, Bowden for the second time, he partnered with George Wheeler in establishing the stock and station agency Wheeler & Fletcher. In between work, his spare time went into aviation and developing his vision of how it could serve rural NSW. 'I am a bit of a crank on aviation', he later said. He could foresee a time when every town would have an aerodrome. The far reaches of the country would be connected by hours rather than days, and all would benefit from the savings in time and money that this would mean for business and travel. An aerodrome, he declared boldly in the face of the powerful rail industry, would in the future be more important than a railway station. He pushed for Narromine to be included in Australia-wide air routes, and to this end he secured the ear of the town council. But while his passion extended to all forms of aviation including private, commercial and recreational, his war service had given him a particular focus for his vision for Narromine: that a RAAF flying training school should eventually be established there. As secretary of the local sub-branch of the RSSILA (the present RSL), he shared this vision with other ex-servicemen.

¹ *Narromine News*, 6 August 1940.

² J.T. Harrison, 'Practical idealists stage two-day pageant', *Aircraft* magazine, 1 November 1935, p.6; *Narromine News*, 28 May 1940.

The town's interest in aviation had remained strong after the Vimy's 1920 visit, and the people welcomed airmen as they landed on the polo ground or on Mack's field. Fletcher's return to town boosted this interest. When a Narromine scout hall building project began at the instigation of landowner and benefactor Tom Perry, Fletcher's fundraising activities included giving a public lecture and slide show in December 1928, entitled 'Armageddon from the air', marking a decade since his return from war. The venue was the town's Southern Cross theatre, the images his own wartime photographs including the glass sides he had taken from the air. While Narromine was becoming familiar with the name Bowden Fletcher, so too were the post office staff at Darwin: unfailingly, he would telegram incoming flyers from England with an invitation to visit on their way to Sydney or Melbourne. On 8 March 1928, the new by-line 'Recco' began heading a weekly aviation column in *Narromine News*. With this pseudonym, Fletcher was harking back to his wartime reconnaissance flying days. He called his column 'On the wing: Flying notes of the week', after the 'On the land' column, and it eventually spread to ten newspapers as well as being broadcast from 15 radio stations in the state's west.

An Aerodrome and a Club

In July 1928 Narromine's mayor, Arthur Dundas, received a circular from the Department of Defence. The department was looking at establishing country landing grounds for occasional use on exercises by RAAF aircraft flying out of Richmond, Point Cook and Laverton, and asking for assistance from Narromine to provide one there. At the next council meeting, Dundas undertook to ask the opinion of Fletcher, the obvious person to approach regarding anything aeronautical. Fletcher, in turn, sounded out Tom Perry on the matter of providing the land required. Some background to the Defence circular is contained in a 1985 letter to Canadian military historian Professor Jonathan Vance. Its author was Bruce Davies of Coonabarabran, who in the 1920s had jackarooed at Hector Black's 'Myola' station. Davies wrote:

Some years before the war the air force was locating aerodromes around NSW, Victoria and Queensland. I was asked to locate one near Narromine. Hope Kierath, 'the toast of the town', her younger brother Reg and I found one of the best. Hope asked Mr Perry to move his sheep, and Reg lit the smoke fire [to determine the prevailing wind direction] ... My boyhood friend Sturt Griffith had contacted me on behalf of the 'top brass,' and there it is – one of the best in Australia.³

Davies' reference to Hope Kierath dates these events to within a few months after the Defence circular, as she married solicitor Fred Dodds and moved to Gundagai, NSW, at the end of 1928. Her brother Reg, a boy of 13 at the time, then moved to Sydney to continue his schooling and went on to join the RAAF in 1940 after Hope had died in childbirth.⁴ Bruce Davies, too, went on to see war service, as a sergeant with the Volunteer Defence Corps. FO Sturt Griffith (1905-1979), a Citizen Air Force pilot with 3 Sqn RAAF at Richmond, may have known the Kierath family through their mutual *alma mater*, Sydney Church of England Grammar School ('Shore'). The years 1927-28 were eventful for him: after surviving two 'perilous landings' in DH.9A bombers during the RAAF flypasts for the parliamentary ceremonies in Canberra,⁵ he survived a forced-ditching in Sydney Harbour while escorting the RAF Far Eastern Flight in to Sydney. He later became more widely known as the new

³ Letter from B.L. Davies to Prof J. Vance, University of Western Ontario, 1985 (courtesy Prof Vance).

⁴ Kierath became a fighter pilot with 450 Sqn RAAF in North Africa, and was shot down and captured by the Germans. Involved in the 1944 'great escape' from Stalag Luft III, he was recaptured and killed by the Gestapo.

⁵ Australian Dictionary of Biography (adb.anu.edu.au). Another of the 21 RAAF aircraft participating, an SE.5a fighter, crashed and its pilot was killed.

commander of RAAF Station Darwin at the time the town and airfield were attacked by the Japanese on 19 February 1942.

Tom Perry, agreeing to the request made by Dundas through Fletcher, allocated a paddock adjoining the golf links he had recently established. The land was officially designated as the town aerodrome in January 1929, and any further landings elsewhere were then banned. Perry offered his land at a ‘peppercorn’ lease of one shilling per annum to the municipal council. Although it would cost him an estimated £100 per annum in lost income from grazing land in order to reserve the land needed, he had taken an interest in aviation and believed the benefits to the town and region would be worth the investment. Fletcher, in his 31 May 1929 newspaper column, then proposed establishing an aero club for the town, writing that ‘the aeroplane will prove one of the greatest blessings to the western country and it is up to Narromine to lead the way’. Within a few weeks seven local men had expressed interest, several of them returned servicemen. Fourteen attended the inaugural meeting in the town hall on 13 September and Tom Perry agreed to be club president, Bruce Irvine vice-president, and Fletcher secretary. ‘Three cheers for Mr. Perry’, reported *Narromine News* in a glowing front-page article a week later, ‘three more for Mr. Fletcher and while we’re on the job, another three for all the progressive citizens who attended the meeting and helped to form the Club.’

Air Force Visits 1929-39

Once the aerodrome was declared in use, the Air Force maintained an occasional transitory presence as it did at a number of other regional aerodromes around the state and country. The aircraft passing through were usually on liaison flights or navigational and wireless training exercises. The first known RAAF visit was by a DH.9A bomber, which was photographed at Narromine presumably around 1929, as this aircraft type was retired the following year. Thereafter its replacement, the Westland Wapiti, visited occasionally from Richmond-based 3 Sqn and Laverton-based 1 Sqn, though on interstate flights they often staged through Cootamundra and Bourke instead. In May, June and October 1931 single aircraft or pairs landed at Narromine during wireless training flights. In June 1934, for example, a flight led by the new commander of 1 Sqn, S/Ldr Frank Bladin,⁶ visited during a week-long cross-country ‘air pilotage’ and signals exercise. Aimed at assessing wireless procedures and equipment, it revealed ‘most serious deficiencies’ in the sets which had been used in the squadron’s DH.9As since the re-formation of 1 and 3 Sqns in 1925. A six-ton wireless lorry which had been driven up from Laverton did somewhat better, although the heavy vehicle with its steel tyres was slow and unsuitable for much of the terrain encountered. One of Bladin’s recommendations resulting from the exercise was that, for bombing operations, each aircraft would need to be fitted with a combined long-wave and radio/telegraphy set. The exercise also included some oblique aerial photography of Narromine and Nyngan aerodromes, and the two flights overnighted at Narromine before returning to Laverton.

As the Air Force bolstered its meagre air strength in the latter part of the 1930s, visits continued. *Narromine News* reported, indeed, that the aerodrome was ‘continually used’ during exercises. The RAAF also sent contingents to town air pageants when requested, and at three of the four pageants staged by Narromine Aero Club in 1930, 1931, 1935 and 1938, several Air Force aircraft were sent: initially examples of the Wapiti, and at the latter two

⁶ Later AVM Frank Bladin CB CBE. Commanding both RAAF and USAAF forces in Australia’s North-Western Area from 1942, he was one of the RAAF’s outstanding area commanders. He later served as deputy chief of the air staff.

events Hawker Demon fighter-bombers (thrilling the crowds with aerobatic displays while tied together with ribbon). An Avro Anson appeared at the 1938 pageant, fascinating old and young alike with its sleek lines and the novelty of a defensive gun turret. Perhaps the most unusual aircraft seen there, in June 1938, was a Seagull V, an amphibious biplane a long way from its usual aquatic environment. Two months after the 1938 pageant, three RAAF Ansons landed during a round-Australia training exercise from Point Cook, their observers training for the first-class air navigator's licence qualification. At the time only one RAAF officer held this licence, their instructor F/Lt W.H. Garing – later Air Cdre 'Bull' Garing CBE DFC DSC(US), soon to become one of the most famous wartime RAAF pilots. To give the students a diverse grounding in their art, all navigational aids were used including civil radio direction finding (RDF) beacons.

Around 1938 the Associated Central Western Aero Clubs (ACWAC) was formed, with the Narromine club a prominent player. It was agreed among the clubs that they should work towards an increase in pilot training: it was clear that the next war in Europe, which was becoming more and more likely, would be fought largely in the air. Large numbers of trained aircrew from the British Dominions would be needed, and the most efficient means by which to train them, at least initially, would be government-subsidised aero clubs. The Dept of Defence was already subsidising rifle clubs. At the November 1938 ACWAC conference at Parkes, it was decided to turn the association into a company so that it could apply for government subsidies for the purchase of training aircraft and the employment of flying instructors. It may have been partly ACWAC's legacy that during the early war period, aero clubs were to play an important role as feeders of trained pilots for the RAAF, at least until the service had amassed sufficient facilities, aerodromes and aircraft to instruct the numbers of personnel required to fuel the huge commonwealth-wide training enterprise known as the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS).

The Air Force Comes to Town

As early as October 1928, Bowden Fletcher had written a prescient warning in his 'Flying notes' newspaper column. In Germany, he noted, aviation was a compulsory subject in the school curriculum; and Australia would do well to follow suit. At Germany's *Wasserkuppe* a gliding school had by then been operating for five years (powered aviation having been restricted by the Treaty of Versailles). He continued:

It is the most important thing, from our national standpoint, that we should become a nation of airmen as we are now a nation of horsemen. Our very safety in the next generation will depend upon the number of pilots we can put in the air at short notice.

Five years later, the Nazi Party began using gliding schools to train young pilots for the military. As the 'clouds of war' began building in Europe, their effects were felt throughout the British Empire. Two developments in Australia's air defence were of relevance to Narromine. In mid-1935 it was announced that a chain of aerodromes was being planned for construction around the country within the next two years, and crucially, inland centres were to be included. This was of great interest to Fletcher, who was already lobbying the air force to establish a flight or even a squadron of the Citizen Air Force at Narromine. Secondly, the following year Britain proposed an air training scheme for its young men, and by extension, those of the Commonwealth nations. Fletcher had made sure the air board was aware of the aerodrome's attributes. With his ear for aviation news always to the ground, he learned of a RAAF proposal to establish pilot training schools in country regions. This could have only one acceptable outcome for Narromine. The town and aerodrome were well known to the air

force, both through visits to its air pageants and Civil Aviation Branch and RAAF surveys, exercises and liaison flights even before the aerodrome's designation in 1928.

In April 1937 two Air Force 'brass' undertook to pay a visit and make a preliminary assessment. These were Chief of the Air Staff AVM Richard Williams (later AM Sir Richard Williams KBE CB DSO), and G/Capt Adrian Cole (later AVM Adrian Cole CBE DSO MC DFC), who had recently resumed command of RAAF Station Laverton (replacing the officer who in 1919 had been the second pilot to visit Narromine, G/Capt Henry Wrigley). Williams had earlier been invited to Narromine's air pageants, and although declining, he had likely visited the aerodrome. Both officers would have gained some familiarity with it while organising the 1934 MacRobertson Air Race, Williams as a member of the London sub-committee and Cole as honorary deputy chairman in Melbourne. There is no record that a visit actually occurred in 1937, but in August Fletcher reported that he was 'unofficially given to understand' that Narromine topped the list of country centres being considered for RAAF pilot training.⁷ He suggested to the council that it telegram the Minister for Defence to formally offer the aerodrome for Air Force use, pointing out its history of receiving visiting RAAF aircraft.

Nearly a year later, in July 1938, the Dept of Defence notified Narromine Municipal Council that the aerodrome was to be inspected for its suitability to host a RAAF flying training school.⁸ At this time, apparently only one such school was being proposed for the state. No inspection had been made by March 1939 when it was announced that Forest Hill, just east of Wagga Wagga, had been chosen. The news was confirmed in writing by the Minister for Defence, Geoffrey Street MC. Narromine, as well as Junee and other towns which believed they had better claims, were indignant as no other inspections being made there. Fletcher and the municipal council immediately wired the minister to ask again that the aerodrome be inspected, and summarised Narromine's claims as the ideal location for the school:

The aerodrome needs nothing spending on it to enable flying in any weather, it has permanent water and electricity supplies, it is 200 miles from Canberra and Sydney, it has ideal weather for the whole year and is as free from fog as any town in the Commonwealth. An official inspection is all we ask and the final decision is a certainty. There is not one logical objection against Narromine as a training centre.⁹

In June, however, he discovered that the advice received had in fact been premature, as no decision had yet been made.

Fearing that Narromine may lose its opportunity, Mayor Duffy called a public meeting for 20 April 'to make representations regarding the establishment of the RAAF training school at Narromine'. The air board, Fletcher noted for the meeting, had written to the council stating that it was aware of both the advantages and disadvantages of Narromine as a proposed site. He suggested that a delegation to visit the board in Melbourne might help clear up the 'disadvantage', which he later discovered was that flying conditions might be *too* ideal for pilot training. (Many later trainees might have disagreed when they encountered the local wind and dust storms, though these were not prevalent year-round). He summarised the economic benefits of an air school to the town: an estimated expenditure of £250,000 on building work, and an estimated staff population of 200 earning at least £1,000 per week, for whom food would be sourced locally. Another benefit, though perhaps not anticipated, was

⁷ *The Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill), 3 August 1937.

⁸ Narromine Municipal Council minutes for meeting 2 August 1938.

⁹ *Narromine News*, 31 March 1939, p.7.

later revealed: the government would be paying for infrastructure which would benefit not just the aerodrome but the town itself, such as the sewerage filtration plant and river weir which the council was planning at the time. An interim committee was appointed to interview locals and report back, and on the 28th Duffy chaired a public meeting of 60 locals in the town hall. It was resolved to form a local air force training school development league, its eight committee members mostly those of the aero club including Fletcher as honorary secretary. Its aim was to promote the aerodrome to the air board as a logical site for a RAAF training school, including sending a plan of the site to the board, and also to ask that the municipal council offer to purchase the land from Perry and gift it to the government. The council responded that a lease was in effect until 1942, but that it would see about securing the land; it may have been unaware of the commonwealth's power to commandeer land in time of war.¹⁰

Not all locals were 'air-minded' or had seen the value in the council's expenditure over the years in leasing the aerodrome. In December 1939, for example, an anonymous ratepayer, unaware of the impending influx of aircraft which was just months away, wrote to *Narromine News* with the complaint that for an expenditure that would be better put towards a public park, 'about half a dozen planes a year land there'.¹¹ The council and aero club were aware that if the aerodrome were to be federally funded to help the war effort, as well as providing local employment for construction and trade workers, such views would be largely appeased. The aero club and council continued to work towards that end. In June 1939 they invited Minister for Civil Aviation and Assistant Minister for Defence The Hon James Fairbairn to visit during a tour he was to make of the civil aerodromes being considered for RAAF use. Fairbairn, himself a pilot who had been shot down and imprisoned by the Germans in 1917 and had continued flying post-war, had landed his Gipsy Moth there more than once, such as in 1935 while en route from Melbourne to Glen Innes. He also had the rare distinction, during 1935-36, of having flown both around Australia and from England to Australia. He declined Narromine's invitation as he was travelling on commercial airlines, but said he hoped to visit at a later date.

Fletcher's sights in mid-1939 were also on an even bigger fish. A British air mission was visiting Australia to look into the feasibility of local production of the Bristol Beaufort bomber, and he convinced Mayor Duffy to invite the mission to Narromine with a view to establishing an aircraft factory there. It does not appear that the mission accepted the invitation, and the Beaufort Division of the Department of Aircraft Production, which eventually produced 700 of the bombers, was established in Melbourne.

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Two days after war was declared on 3 September 1939, at Fletcher's urging Mayor Duffy wired Fairbairn to formally offer the use of Narromine Aerodrome to the Commonwealth for the duration of the war. Fairbairn was soon leaving for Canada to head the Australian delegation to the Empire conference in Ottawa to formulate Australia's contribution to the EATS, and while there he was also sworn in as Australia's first Minister for Air. But the mayor's communication was not ignored, and indeed later, at Fletcher's public send-off at the town hall in May 1940, Duffy opined that this message had clinched Narromine's selection as a RAAF aerodrome. With Australia now at war, more country NSW aerodromes would be needed for training than just the one at Forest Hill, and in Fairbairn's absence several visits to Narromine were made by other officials. On 17 November a RAAF visit, described as 'semi-

¹⁰ *Narromine News*, 24 April 1940.

¹¹ *ibid.*

official',¹² was made by FO Dale to conduct a survey. The aerodrome was officially identified by its latitude and longitude of 32.12 degrees south, 148.14 degrees east, and defined at this time by a 1,100 x 660 metre area. At only 73 hectares, this area represented just a fraction of the land it was to occupy by 1942. Soon after Dale's visit G/Capt 'King' Cole, now in command of 2 Group RAAF which controlled air force units in NSW, and W/Cdr Wilson arrived from Sydney by air. Mayor Duffy later recalled that it was Cole who concluded that Narromine's aerodrome was suitable and in the right location for a training school. The same day, Mr Reynolds of the Department of the Interior, which would oversee construction, arrived by rail from Melbourne. It was Reynolds' job to determine the extent of facilities, materials and services available locally for the building and construction work, including road making, and then organise tenders. He noted that the low river level at the time had implications for water access, but this was considered to be temporary. When he was satisfied, surveyors arrived and began work on the adjacent golf links; some locals feared, incorrectly, that these would be sacrificed for an aerodrome extension.

Final Selection

On 31 January 1940 came the first official indication that Narromine was to be selected, when the RAAF development program included it among the first five aircrew training schools to be built for the EATS:

- 1 Initial training School (Somers, Vic)
- 2 Initial training School (Bradfield Park, Sydney)
- 1 Air Observers School (Cootamundra, NSW)
- 1 Wireless Air Gunners School (Ballarat, Vic)
- 5 Elementary Flying Training School (Narromine, NSW)

In addition, Central Flying School at Camden near Sydney trained flying instructors. Narromine's was to be the first elementary flying training school built, as the first four used pre-existing city airports:

- 1 EFTS Parafield (Adelaide), formerly 2 FTS
- 2 EFTS Archerfield (Brisbane), formerly 3 EFTS
- 3 EFTS Essendon (Melbourne)
- 4 EFTS Mascot (Sydney)

The training at these city schools was initially handled by civil organisations: at Mascot these were the Royal Aero Club of NSW, the Kingsford Smith flying school, and Newcastle Aero Club. The reasons for Narromine Aerodrome's selection would have included the points on which Fletcher and the aero club had focused in their lobbying. They described it as ideal for flying: fog was rare, and the aerodrome's natural drainage properties made it one of the few airfields in the region that would allow all-weather operation. It had a favourable climate and generally predictable inland weather (the occasional dust-storm notwithstanding), good for flying as well as for general health. Fletcher disagreed with the view that good flying conditions were not conducive to good training, saying that the challenges of bad weather should come in the second stage of a pilot's training, not the first. Navigational landmarks, such as the railway line and the Macquarie River, helped with cross-country exercises, and the flat countryside reduced flying hazards. A big advantage was the aerodrome's proximity to town: all the infrastructure, amenities, sport and recreation, and social opportunities of a town of 1,800 people were within half an hour's walk. Most importantly from a logistical viewpoint, the town had a railway station and the line ran past the aerodrome.

¹² *Narromine News*, 1 March 1940.

Narromine's location also presented some strategic advantages for a training school. Southern Australia was out of range of enemy air bases, and so was unlikely to be subjected to attacks unless the country was invaded. If such attacks did occur, widely distributed aerodromes would not present 'clustered' targets to enemy aircraft (which would, it was by now assumed, be Japanese), and Narromine was nearly 400km from the nearest RAAF-occupied airfield at Sydney. For elementary flying training there was also some advantage in being away from civil air routes, and Narromine satisfied that criterion as well. Indeed, after the first four EFT schools the remaining eight would be in regional areas. Though far enough from Sydney to meet these criteria, Narromine was still within a day's rail travel for supply and logistics, as well as for airmen's recreation leave.

On 28 February, FO Dowling representing the air board in Melbourne visited for a final inspection, and the local papers declared 'Narromine selected for flying training school'.¹³ Dowling wrote up preliminary cost estimates using the survey data, and based on these the board's air member for organisation and equipment recommended the project to Minister Fairbairn. The estimated cost of the construction of buildings and engineering services totalled £53,700, and a further £86,000 was allocated for overall infrastructure.¹⁴ Dowling met with Tom Perry and the trustees of the O'Neill estate on whose land the work was to take place, informing them of the extent to which the existing aerodrome would need to be extended. On 2 April, in an internal memo labelled 'very urgent', Fairbairn gave his approval for work to begin and then formally notified the municipal council. His official announcement came on the 14th. Time was of the essence: training was to begin as early as 1 June, allowing less than two months to establish the school.

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Narromine's detailed wartime story is beyond the scope of this article, but a brief summary is of relevance. The RAAF elementary flying training school, 5 EFTS, was the fifth of a dozen formed during the war (and the first outside the cities). Its buildings and infrastructure were still being assembled when the first of an eventual 45 courses began, in primitive conditions, in June 1940. In four years the unit trained over 2,800 pilots on Tiger Moths, before each course left for more advanced training and, ultimately, operational postings. Nearly a third subsequently died on operational service in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East and in the Pacific war.¹⁵ In 1942, the aerodrome was upgraded with sealed runways capable of handling heavy bombers should Australia be invaded.

The EFTS was wound up in mid-1944 when a surplus of pilots had been produced, and was replaced with 8 Operational Training Unit which gave pilots more advanced training on Wirraways. When 8 OTU moved to nearby Parkes, it was replaced in January 1945 by 618 Squadron RAF, its top secret Mosquito bombers equipped for delivering Barnes Wallis *Highball* mines against Japanese shipping (a mission which never eventuated). The last RAAF unit at Narromine, 93 Squadron, flew its Beaufighters to Japan as escort for the Mustangs of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF).

Twenty-five years after the Great War, its legacy lived on at Narromine. Bowden Fletcher, as we will see, was posted there, and at least two of the school's commanding officers had flown with the AFC over France: W/Cdr Tom Baillieu DFC, an RE.8 reconnaissance pilot with 3

¹³ E.g. *The Gilgandra Weekly and Castlereagh*, 7 March 1940, p.6.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Figures are determined from course graduate listings in Narromine Aerodrome Logbook held by Narromine Aero Club; deaths determined from AWM Roll of Honour, www.awm.gov.au.

Sqn, and W/Cdr E. Roy King DSO DFC, a noted fighter ace with 4 Sqn.

Bowden Fletcher's Second World War Service

A distinguished figure invariably sporting his Australian Light Horse leggings, Fletcher was outspoken (though not overbearing) and, without doubt, the most active advocate for aviation in the state's west, being described at one stage in 1935 as the live wire of the district. Not long beforehand, however, he had suffered a nervous breakdown, perhaps in part due to the stress of controlling the last leg of the 1934 London to Melbourne air race, but it is likely that his wartime experiences still played on his mind. Through four years of war service, from Gallipoli to the air battles over Sinai-Palestine, he had seen more than his share of life-threatening situations and had lost friends in action – making his contributions in many arenas, not least aviation, all the more remarkable.

The day after Germany invaded Poland, 2 September 1939, Fletcher was recalled to the RAAF active list and thus became one of the few Narromine residents to have served in both world wars. Much too old at 49 to return to aircrew service, the positions he held were administrative. His first posting was as head of RAAF recruitment for New South Wales, stationed again at Richmond. In March 1940 he transferred as adjutant to 6 Sqn, which was conducting anti-submarine patrols off Australia's east coast with Anson and later Hudson bombers. At Narromine Aero Club's last annual general meeting before its wartime hiatus, held at the School of Arts the next month, the committee gave tribute to his service.

As notice of his departure from Narromine had been too short for a proper send-off to be arranged, when he returned on leave in May he was treated to dinner at the Court House Hotel by 35 members of the aero club. Tom Perry rose to speak of Fletcher's Great War flying exploits and the part he was now playing in the present war. Club vice presidents Bruce Irvine and Roy Barlow spoke of his role in bringing Narromine into aviation prominence by forming the aero club, before Perry presented him with a silver hot water jug suitably inscribed and adorned with the club badge. Fletcher no doubt also felt some satisfaction in the fact that it was at least partly due to his efforts that Narromine now hosted the RAAF's first regional pilot training school.

Fletcher's RAAF recruitment posting ended in early 1941 when he was transferred to 2 Aircraft Depot, still at Richmond, on 'administrative and special duties'. After promotion to squadron leader, in 1942 he went to 1 Air Observer School at Cootamundra, which he briefly commanded in June. Presumably at his own request, he returned to Narromine in May 1943, serving for nine months there as senior administrative officer (or chief ground instructor, according to one source) with 5 EFTS. He spent most of 1944 in Canada, the United States and England, escorting RAAF officers who were overseas attending conferences and meetings. In New York his portrait was painted by a noted American artist, Gertrude Whiting (see Fig.1, p.32). Returning to Australia aboard the *Queen Mary*, and meeting Fred Astaire en route, in February 1945 he received his last wartime posting, to Canberra. Following his discharge at war's end, he and Vera moved to the Sydney suburb of Punchbowl. He returned to freelance journalism, an occupation allowing him to work from home, and continued writing his aviation column in *Narromine News* until 1950.

In 1948 he was again listed the RAAF Reserve, and received an air efficiency award in 1950. In 1966, the aviation bug having never left him, he wrote to his former fellow air observer with 1 Sqn AFC, Sir Hudson Fysh, to congratulate him on his recently published autobiography, *Qantas Rising*. Fysh replied with humility that this was high praise indeed

coming from one with his knowledge. Perhaps more than anyone, Fletcher lived for the cause of advocating for aviation west of the Blue Mountains. Through his own experiences he could appreciate the great strides made during his lifetime: from his first ‘flip’ in the air in Egypt during 1917, to a flight in Qantas’ first Constellation luxury airliner *Ross Smith* in 1947, and into the age of the Boeing 707 jetliner. Today, the road leading off Warren Road to Narromine Aerodrome’s residential estate, Skypark, bears his name. As for tangible legacies, the aero club still holds two documents he compiled: a scrapbook of 1930s articles, letters and photos, and an aerodrome logbook, a specially-printed blank journal with handwritten entries recording many of the flights in and out of Narromine between the wars, as well as the names of the graduate pilots of the wartime RAAF training school he administered.



Fig.2: Founding committee of Narromine Aero Club, 1930: (Standing) R.D. Barnett, F. Ballhausen, H. Thrall, G.B. Irvine, H.B. Fletcher, T.E. Perry, R. Perry, A.E. McWilliam. (Front) G.H.R. Barlow, W. Downey, V.C.S. Hall, W.W. Stockham, H.W. Kierath. At least half of these men were Great War veterans, and 17-year-old Dick Perry was to serve as a pilot in the next war. (Narromine Aero Club)

A postscript to Fletcher’s story came in 2015 when his great nephew, Ewen Simpson, decided to donate his surviving memorabilia to two institutions for posterity. To the State Library of NSW went his First World War diaries, while the Narromine Aviation Museum received a record of his life in a treasure trove of artefacts. Letters written to his parents from Gallipoli and the Middle East are especially poignant. The typewriter on which he wrote his ‘flying notes’ from 1928 to 1950, and probably dozens of other articles for newspapers and aviation journals, was well preserved. The flying goggles he wore in his old ‘Brisfit’ (Bristol Fighter), and a box of glass photographic plates of Palestine taken from it in 1918, are graphic mementos of his flying days. It is sobering to speculate that had the piece of shrapnel at Gaza followed a trajectory just millimetres either way, then Narromine Aero Club (assuming someone else decided to form it), and perhaps aviation in regional New South Wales more generally, might have followed a very different and probably less interesting course. That piece of shrapnel, now the clapper for a small ‘tench art’ bell, is displayed in the museum along with his other memorabilia. Another gem, from his Second World War service, is a printer’s block for a 1940 Jack Lusby cartoon caricature published in *The Bulletin*. Portrayed is Flying Officer Fletcher, as head of NSW recruitment for the RAAF, trademark pipe in mouth. In his hands is a net with which he is scooping up miniature air force recruits, angel-

like wings sprouting from their shoulders.

Bruce Irvine in Later Life

When we left Bruce Irvine in Part 1, it was 1926 and he had bought a property at Dandaloo near Narromine. In November that year he joined Ballhausen & Smith stock and station agents, soon to become Ballhausen & Irvine – a partnership which was to last almost half a century. A year later he would have met Bowden Fletcher when Fletcher moved to town in the same line of business. Irvine was also a Church of England vestryman, and like Fletcher, a patron of the local boy scouts troop. In 1929 he and Fred Ballhausen joined the founding committee of Narromine Aero Club (see Fig.2), and as well as playing his part in the organisation of the air pageants, Irvine conducted many of the club formalities such as dinner speeches and greeting aviators when Tom Perry was absent. He also worked towards the establishment of Narromine's United Services Memorial Club, donating large sums to it.

During the Second World War, too old for aircrew duties, he served concurrently as a captain in the Volunteer Defence Corps, commanding B Company, 25th Battalion, and as a flying officer commanding Narromine Flight of the Air Training Corps. It was at his instigation that Narromine Aero Club re-formed in 1947 after its wartime hiatus, starting the club's second life which has lasted to this day. Irvine remained an active flying member of the club, and one of those who in the 1950s helped the town and region with flood relief work. In another local landmark event of 1947, Ballhausen & Irvine were the government agents for the sale of the RAAF buildings and equipment at Narromine Aerodrome, and for the 30 Mosquito bombers left behind by the British. One of the enduring memories among locals from that era is of the removal of the aircraft. Farmers, purchasing the bombers for £15 pounds, or £30 including engines, towed them off behind their tractors or trucks, sometimes up to 100km to their properties. There the 'Mossies' sat as they were stripped of useful parts, the farm children using them as novelty cubby houses.

*

Narromine Aero Club, along with its aerodrome, had arisen from the desire of a few local Great War veterans to be part of the air revolution which was captivating the nation. They had seen the capabilities of aircraft first-hand, and knew that aviation would be still more important in the next war, as well as in civil transportation. It was at least partly through the club's tireless promotion of its aerodrome that the government saw fit to develop the site into the air force's first regional elementary flying school.

Both the club and the aerodrome are still in operation. In 2002 the Narromine Aviation Museum was opened with the charter of preserving local aviation heritage, which at that time consisted of club-sourced memorabilia. Bruce Irvine's souvenirs, as well as Fletcher's mentioned previously, have an important place in its collection. The piece of aircraft fabric (see Fig.3, p.30) and compass mentioned in Part 1 were not all that Irvine brought back: in company with these on display in the museum are his leather flying helmet and gloves, kit bag and sleeping bag, a pair of propeller blades, and his flying logbook. A third collection of priceless Great War memorabilia, that of W/Cdr Tom Baillieu, joins them. Included are his DFC and campaign medals, the serial number and entire four-bladed propeller from his RE.8 (the latter complete with a bullet hole from the day of one of his forced landings), his AFC dress uniform (see Fig.4, p.33), Sidcot fur-lined flying suit, logbook, a small piece of fabric he souvenired from the Red Baron's downed Triplane, and his Second World War uniform with AFC wings brevet. Together, these collections graphically illustrate the war experiences of the men who founded one of Australia's most progressive and vibrant regional aero clubs.

Errata Part 1:

- p.40: Fig.2 caption should read 13 Feb 1920, not 1 Feb
- p.44: Lt Col Oswald Watt OBE was not awarded the DSO but the *Légion d'honneur* and the *Croix de Guerre*

*



Fig.1 (left): S/Ldr H. Bowden Fletcher DFC in a 1944 portrait by New York artist Gertrude Whiting. Note the AFC two-winged observer's brevet. (Ewen Simpson)

Fig.3 (below): Aircraft fabric souvenirs from France, 1918, by Lt Bruce Irvine. It is from a Fokker D.VII, the best of Germany's fighting scouts, and shows the aircraft's serial number, manufacturer (Albatros), and the distinctively printed 'lozenge' camouflage pattern. It was stored folded, and its identity hidden, until 2004. (Narromine Aviation Museum)





*Fig.4: Uniform worn by Lt (later W/Cdr) Tom Baillieu in the Australian Flying Corps.
(Narromine Aviation Museum)*

COLLECTORS CORNER

WHO WAS HAROLD GALLEHAWKE?

Rohan Goyne MHV

I am always on the lookout for World War One militaria as in my experience many incorrectly suggest that it is hard to find these days. I recently acquired a Mercantile Marine War Medal 1914-18 which had been awarded to a Harold Gallehawke. The history attached to a piece of militaria enhances it, and the naming on such medals certainly helps.

The Mercantile Marine War Medal 1914-18 was awarded by the Board of Trade of the United Kingdom to merchant seamen who had been on one or more voyages in a conflict zone. In all around 133,000 were issued to merchant seamen who crewed ships between 1914 and 1918.¹



Fig.1: An image of both sides of the Mercantile Marine War Medal 1914-18. (Wikipedia site https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercantile_Marine_War_Medal accessed 6 Aug 17)

A web search confirmed that Gallehawke's medal was auctioned in Britain in February this year, 2017. I recently acquired it from one of my local antique centres in which one dealer has a number of cabinets, one of which includes some militaria.

In an effort to find more about Harold Gallehawke's career in the merchant navy during the First World War, I searched the UK National Archives collection through its website and discovered Gallehawke's medal card, which unfortunately was only available in a digital

¹ E.C. Joslin, *The Observer's Book of British Awards and Medals*, Warne, London, 1974, pp.147-48.

format for a fee. The existing digital image of his medal card on the website indicated that it may have been previously available free of charge, however, following the decision of the then Cameron Government to introduce user charges, the image was now predominantly distorted in order to encourage researchers to pay for access.

The limited amount of information available such as his age (26) and place of birth (Essex) allowed me to continue the search on other free access web based sources. This soon led me to the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum, whose collection includes the digitisation of the merchant navy crew lists for 1915. A search under Gallehawke's uncommon surname produced four results, and when combined with the limited information available on his medal card identified that in 1915 he was the fourth engineer officer on the SS *Nubian*. A further web search produced the image of the *Nubian*, which was launched in 1912 and broken up in 1935.



Fig.2: The SS *Nubian* (Tyne Built Ships <http://www.tynebuiltships.co.uk/N-Ships/nubian1912.html> accessed 16 Aug 17)

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AS YOU WERE ...

Feedback from Readers and Contributors

John Steel writes:

Who was the unfortunate AIF Sgt W.C. Groves, captured by the Germans, as described in Aaron Pegram's excellent paper on Australian POWs on the Western Front, 1917 (*Sabretache*, June 2016)? Evidence shows Groves to be a former Director of Education (1946-58) in the Australia Administration of Territory of Papua New Guinea (TPNG). He grew up in Ballarat and at the outbreak of WW1 became an underage recruit in the 14th Battalion, a Victorian unit which served in Gallipoli and France. It was common knowledge in the TPNG Education Department that Director Groves had been captured at 1st Bullecourt in 1917 and was prisoner for the remainder of the war. During his period of captivity, Groves became fluent in the German language.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE POST-FEDERATION AUSTRALIAN ARMY, 1901-10

Benjamin James Morgan¹

Introduction

This article examines the structure of the Australian Army that developed between 1901-10. This was the period following Federation in 1901, which saw the amalgamation of the military forces of the six Australian colonies into a single national force, and prior to the widespread organisational changes resulting from the introduction of compulsory service in 1911, which significantly altered its size and structure. Although a relatively young organisation, the Australian Army has a complex lineage, having undergone a number of periods of change and reorganisation in response to the nation's shifting strategic circumstances. Examples of this have included the start of universal training in 1911, but also the raising of the AIF in 1914 and the Second AIF in 1939, as well as the formation of the Regular Army in 1947, among many others. While arguably this has demonstrated its flexibility as an institution to adapt when required, it has also complicated the heritage of many of its units, creating a legacy of discontinuity. The short period between the formation of the Australian Army in 1901 and the start of the First World War was one such period of almost constant change. For instance, some of the major developments which effected the organisation of the infantry alone during this period included the formation of the first Australian Infantry Regiments from their colonial antecedents in 1903, the reorganisation of the regiments into separate battalions in 1908, and the formation of new territorially based units in 1911 due to the requirements of conscription.²

These years were turbulent for the Army, as many former colonial units were reshaped to fit the requirements of the new national force, while others were disbanded and new units raised, with significant reorganisations in 1903 and 1906.³ When finally complete, the process had changed many existing units to the point of no longer being recognisable, which often impacted on unit morale and recruitment and retention, as well as ending long-standing links between many communities and their local units.⁴ From then until 1909 the structure of the Australian Army remained relatively unchanged.⁵ Yet despite such developments, the force-in-being increasingly came to be viewed by the public and politicians as dysfunctional and inadequate, suffering from perceived institutional shortcomings in its structure, command, administration, training and equipment. In time the government decided to adopt an entirely new military system, with compulsory military service being introduced in 1911.⁶

The peacetime organisation that eventually emerged formed the basis of the all-volunteer AIF raised following the outbreak of war in 1914, and which subsequently contributed significantly to Allied victory in 1918.⁷ As such, the formative period in the decade following Federation represents an important part of the history of the Australian Army, even if it has

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² Stanley 2001, pp.1-2; Vazenry 1963, pp.32-43.

³ Stockings 2007, p.7.

⁴ Stockings 2007, p.16.

⁵ Stockings 2007, p.25.

⁶ Stockings 2007, pp.75-95.

⁷ Indeed a majority of the officers and senior NCOs who led the AIF had previously served in the Post-Federation Army; see Stockings 2007, p.74.

been largely neglected until recently, with relatively few detailed studies available. Indeed, even despite a number of works becoming available on the topic, no accessible list of the units that existed during this period appears to have been published.⁸ This article is an attempt to remedy this situation.⁹

Raising the Federal Army

The Australian Army was formed on 1 March 1901. On this day the military forces of the six separate colonies were amalgamated with the transfer of 1,544 professional soldiers, 16,105 paid militia, and 11,361 unpaid volunteers to the new Commonwealth of Australia.¹⁰ In reality though this process took a number of years to implement, being hampered by a delay in passing the necessary legislation and the limited financial resources of the new Federal Government, among other factors.¹¹ Prior to Federation the standard of development and efficiency of the military forces of each of the Australian colonies had been uneven at best, but had generally not been high. New South Wales and Victoria had been the largest, while those of the other states were much smaller. They were poorly equipped for the most part and inconsistently trained, while there had been little standardisation between them.¹²

The *Defence Act 1903* finally brought all of the existing state units under one legislative instrument, having previously continued to function under six different state acts in the interim. Significantly, the new legislation prevented the raising of regular infantry units, only allowing permanent administrative and instructional staff for headquarters, garrison artillery, fortress engineers, submarine mining, and service, medical and ordnance units.¹³ As a result, the forces of the Commonwealth were to be made up largely of a part-time militia of citizen soldiers instead of professional regular soldiers, and would essentially remain that way until after the Second World War.¹⁴ The force which had been inherited at Federation was eventually reorganised under a mostly unified command. The state-based mounted units were reformed into light horse regiments which were supplemented by men from a number of surplus infantry units, while the remaining militia infantry were organised into battalions of the Australian Infantry Regiment. The engineers were formed into field companies, and the artillery into field and garrison batteries, in addition to supporting arms including service and medical units.¹⁵

In December 1901 a British Army officer, Maj Gen Sir Edward Hutton, was appointed General Officer Commanding (GOC) the Commonwealth Military Forces. The GOC was

⁸ Stockings 2007 is probably the most comprehensive of the recent works; however, both Grey 2001 and Palazzo 2001 include fairly detailed chapters on this period, while Haken 2014 provides a concise summary of some of the key developments. A number of earlier works also include useful overviews, including Wilcox 1998, Grey 1999, Mordike 1992 and Coulthard-Clark 1988. Other recent publications covering aspects of this period are Bou 2010, Stockings & Connor 2013 and Stockings 2015.

⁹ As Peter Stanley has observed, the lack of a term for this period is perhaps indicative of its neglect. The term 'Post-Federation Army' has been used by Stockings 2007. Stanley 2001 and Horner 1995 both use the term 'Federal Army', as do several other works (or some close variation of it).

¹⁰ Palazzo 2001, pp.14-16; Kuring 2004, p.30. These figures do not include units raised for service in South Africa, nor do they include members of the rifle clubs and cadets. The latter two were not officially part of the Army at Federation, although they would be included as part of its establishment under the provisions of the *Defence Act 1903*, see Palazzo 2001, p.16.

¹¹ Grey 1999, pp.63-65.

¹² Grey 1999, p.64; Grey 2001, pp.6-8; Palazzo 2001, p.60.

¹³ Kuring 2004, p.31.

¹⁴ Grey 1999, pp.136-139 & 195-196; Palazzo 2001, p.26.

¹⁵ Grey 1999, pp.68-69.

responsible to the Minister for Defence, while under him the State Commandants continued to command the forces in their geographic areas of responsibility as they had prior to Federation. Army Headquarters was subsequently established in Melbourne on 1 March 1902, while the nation was divided into six Military Districts that mostly corresponded with the states.¹⁶ Hutton planned an army consisting of both static and mobile components. The Garrison Force would provide local defence of strategic centres, and would be made up primarily of unpaid volunteers. Their role would be to bring the static defences to war establishment when required, man coastal defences, and provide a reaction force to enemy landings, and would be raised by absorbing the pre-existing garrison forces of each state.

The Field Force was intended to be mobile and would comprise six light horse brigades and three infantry brigades with supporting arms. Two light horse brigades would be formed in New South Wales, while another two would be raised in Victoria, one of which would include units from Tasmania, while another brigade would be formed in Queensland, and South Australia and Western Australia would combine to raise one between them. One infantry brigade would be raised in New South Wales and another in Victoria, while the third would consist of units from each of the remaining states.¹⁷ They would be manned by paid militia and permanent troops able to be employed anywhere in Australia in response to a military threat or social unrest.

Meanwhile, a small Permanent Force would carry out administrative, technical and instructional roles (including specialist artillery and engineers).¹⁸ It would be tasked with manning coastal guns, forts, and submarine mine defences, maintenance of stores and equipment, and to garrison strategic outposts (such as Thursday Island and King George Sound).¹⁹

Restructuring the Force

Restructuring began in 1903, with the aim of standardising the organisation of the Army from the units inherited from the colonial forces. The allocation of units to the Garrison Force in each state was done on the basis of the fortifications to be manned in each area, with units formed from existing volunteer infantry formations subsequently renamed along state lines (e.g. the Australian Scottish Rifles became the New South Wales Scottish Rifles). Typically they consisted of between one and three squadrons of mounted infantry, two to seven infantry regiments, one or two field artillery batteries, three to eight companies of garrison artillery, as well as an engineer field company, an electric company, a submarine mining company, and various service and medical units.

In the Field Force each light horse brigade consisted of three mounted regiments (numbered 1 to 18 and retaining the historic names of their colonial predecessors), as well as a field artillery battery, a section of engineers, a supply column, field hospital, stretcher bearer company, and a veterinary department. Mounted regiments were each comprised of four squadrons. Each infantry brigade was made up of four infantry regiments (numbered 1 to 12, also keeping the names of the colonial units they succeeded), as well as three field artillery batteries, an engineer field company, supply column, field hospital, stretcher bearer company,

¹⁶ Stockings 2007, pp.11 & 31.

¹⁷ Kuring 2004, p.39.

¹⁸ Stockings 2007, pp.16-18; Kuring 2004, p.31; Palazzo 2001, pp.28-29.

¹⁹ Palazzo 2001, pp.31-32.

and a veterinary department. Infantry regiments each consisted of eight rifle companies.²⁰ Although formed from existing units, major reorganisation had sometimes been required, with some units changing both in name and role (for instance, some infantry units were used to raise light horse regiments due to the emphasis placed on mounted units under the scheme), while others were disbanded altogether, often resulting in considerable resentment among affected units.²¹ The Permanent Force included the Administrative and Instructional Staff, Royal Australian Artillery, Corps of Australian Engineers (Permanent),²² and detachments of the Australian Army Medical Corps, Australian Army Service Corps, and other specialists.²³

Yet despite the government approving the scheme, it was never fully implemented, due in part to political unwillingness to fund it in light of the limited funds available to the government, in addition to various unit concerns, manpower shortages, and suspicion in some quarters regarding the imperialist motives that may have been behind it.²⁴ As a result of significant funding shortfalls, recruitment was halted and the strength of the permanent artillery and staff significantly reduced, while many of the units that were planned to be raised had to be deferred. This included service corps and engineer units which had not been formed in a number of colonies prior to Federation, and although it was planned to do so under the new scheme, many were initially unable to be provided for.²⁵

The Field Force in particular remained little more than a plan only. The rest of Hutton's tenure as GOC was marked by fiscal constraint, which took precedence over capability development, and this, along with his arrogant attitude towards civilian authority, sometimes resulted in friction with the minister. Hutton resigned prior to the end of his contract following a series of disagreements with the government, and returned to England in November 1904.²⁶ Meanwhile another British officer, Brig Gen Henry Finn (later Maj Gen), took over as acting GOC.²⁷ Hutton's plans had only been partially realised, yet he had been largely successfully in merging the forces of the six colonies into a single national force available for service anywhere on the continent, operating with a common system of administration, finance, organisation, and training.²⁸ In this regard, although at times controversial, he played a major role in the development of the Australian Army.²⁹

Continued Evolution and Change

Further change was delayed until 1906. At this time the Field Force was reorganised into five light horse brigades, two infantry brigades and four mixed brigades. In New South Wales and Victoria, which both retained their light horse and infantry brigades, there was little change. However, in the smaller states of Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Western

²⁰ The structure of eight rifle companies in a battalion was retained until January 1915, when the four-rifle company structure was adopted by the AIF to conform to changes made by the British; see Kuring 2004, p.47.

²¹ Bou 2010, p.71; Kuring 2004, p.33; Stockings 2007, pp.17-18. A summary of the new Federal volunteer, militia and permanent units and their corresponding titles in the respective colonial militaries prior to re-organisation under the Commonwealth is provided in the Military List 1907, pp.13-16.

²² The Corps of Engineers (Permanent) was renamed the Royal Australian Engineers in 1907; see McNicoll 1977, p.8.

²³ Palazzo 2001, pp.31-32.

²⁴ Stockings 2007, pp.20-21; Grey 1999, p.68.

²⁵ Stockings 2007, pp.22-23; Lindsay 1992, pp.20-21; Palazzo 2001, p.18.

²⁶ Stockings 2007, pp.23-24 & 39; Palazzo 2001, p.39; Grey 1999, p.68.

²⁷ Wood 2006, p.77.

²⁸ Grey 1999, p.68.

²⁹ Stockings 2007, p.11.

Australia – which were unable to support light horse or infantry brigades on their own – the force was remodelled into mixed brigades which included both light horse and infantry units with support arms and services (although in Queensland separate light horse and infantry brigades were re-established in 1908). These brigades were raised with the purpose of joining the units of those states together in an independent formation for ease of concentration for training and mobilisation. A number of volunteer infantry units in several states were also transferred from the Garrison Force to the Field Force as part of this process. From then until 1909 the structure of the Army remained fairly stable.³⁰

The organisation did continue to evolve though, with the establishment of a nascent ‘reserve’ force consisting of retired officers and members of the rifle clubs, the formation of the Corps of Signals in 1907, as well as the raising of the Australian Volunteer Automobile Corps, Australian Intelligence Corps, Australian Army Nursing Service, and Chaplains’ Department in 1908, and the Australian Army Veterinary Corps in 1909.³¹ Meanwhile, the fixed defences also continued to develop following a decision in 1906 to re-arm Adelaide, Hobart, Port Phillip, Sydney, Newcastle, Lytton and Thursday Island, as well as to construct new defences in Fremantle, with progress on these continuing over the next few years.³² However, such changes were relatively minor, and the basic organisation endured. The state garrisons remained mostly the same, with only minor changes due to the size of each state’s fortifications and the forces needed to man them, while the structure of the Field Force was also retained.³³

However, there were changes at unit level, with some being renamed, and others being raised or disbanded. Some changes to the volunteer infantry included the removal of the Civil Service Rifles from the order of battle in New South Wales during 1907-08, followed by the 2nd Battalion, 1st New South Wales Scottish Rifle Regiment the next year.³⁴ In 1908 the designation of infantry units was changed from regiment to battalion, with each being retitled as the first battalion of their respective regiment (e.g. the 2nd Australian Infantry Regiment became the 1st Battalion, 2nd Australian Infantry Regiment). Meanwhile, the Melbourne University Rifles were raised in 1910.³⁵ Several light horse units were redesignated in 1907, with the 4th Light Horse Regiment (New South Wales Lancers) becoming the Hunter River Lancers, the 5th Light Horse Regiment (New South Wales Mounted Rifles) renamed the Northern River Lancers, and the 6th Light Horse Regiment (Australian Horse) retitled the New England Light Horse.³⁶ A number of engineer units were also renamed during this time, including several field companies which were converted to fortress companies. The submarine mining defences at Newcastle, Lytton, Albany and West Channel in Port Phillip were dismantled over this period due to the difficulty of maintaining them, while No.3 Submarine Mining Company in Queensland disbanded in 1908. Three field troops of mounted engineers were formed in 1908 for attachment to the light horse brigades. Initially, there were no engineer units in Western Australia or South Australia; however, a militia engineer regiment was raised in Western Australia in 1909 as part of the Fremantle

³⁰ Stockings 2007, pp.24-25; Commonwealth Gazette, No.52, 5 October 1907, p.1231.

³¹ Stockings 2007, pp.25-26. Sections of the Automobile Corps were raised in all states except Western Australia before being amalgamated with AASC in 1915; see Lindsay 1992, pp.25-26. The Corps of Signals was subsumed into RAE in 1912, and was not reformed until 1925. The Australian Intelligence Corps was disbanded in 1914, but was reformed again in 1939. See Dennis et al 2008, pp.65 & 463.

³² Horner 1995, p.66.

³³ Stockings 2007, pp.25-26; McNicoll 1977, p.8.

³⁴ Military Forces List 1907, p.15; Military Forces List 1908, p.11; Military Forces List 1909, p.14.

³⁵ Kuring 2004, p.39.

³⁶ Stockings 2007, p.24; Commonwealth Gazette, No.12, 23 February 1907, p.515.

Fortress.³⁷ Prior to the raising of the field ambulances and light horse field ambulances in 1907, the medical corps had also gone through a number of iterations, with these units replacing several similarly numbered infantry and mounted bearer companies and field hospitals.³⁸

The system of command and administration also developed during this time. A Military Board was formed in 1905 to take over the administration and control of the military forces, effectively removing the executive power previously centralised in the GOC. At this time the position itself was abolished and was replaced by an Inspector-General, with Finn appointed to the post on promotion. At inception the Military Board comprised the minister, a finance member, and three military members, while a fourth military member and a civil member would be added later.³⁹ Initially it had been a committee of equals with no hierarchy and was primarily concerned with administration, while the Inspector-General, the most senior military officer, was a position of audit, not command. Meanwhile, the commandants of the military districts were responsible for the executive control (i.e. command, training and administration) of the forces in their state, effectively introducing an element of decentralisation, even though they were still be subject to the Military Board, although not so much subordinate as they had been to the GOC.

In September 1906 Brig Gen John Hoad (later Maj Gen), an Australian, took over from Finn. During 1908 the Military Board was reformed along the lines of a general staff, while similar changes also occurred at the state headquarters level. In January 1909 the position of Chief of the General Staff (CGS) was created with Brig Gen William Bridges initially filling the post. As a consequence the Military Board essentially evolved into a functional headquarters which was effectively controlled by the CGS. Hoad replaced Bridges as CGS in July 1909. He also filled the position of head of the Australian Section of the Imperial General Staff, a planning body formed the same year to coordinate military cooperation between Britain and the Dominions.⁴⁰

Training was primarily undertaken at unit level as part of parades or annual camps, as well as through a system of schools of instruction, which were separately established for the infantry, light horse, field and garrison artillery, engineers, medical and service corps.⁴¹ Permanent Force members of the Instructional Staff organised training schools in each state, with the Royal Australian Artillery providing the majority of instructors for the infantry and light horse, in addition to the field and garrison artillery, while the remaining corps did so for their own specialisations.⁴² This system suffered from a number of weaknesses, not least of which was the difficulty experienced by part-time soldiers with work commitments to find time to

³⁷ McNicoll 1977, pp.7-8.

³⁸ Stockings 2007, pp.18-19. For initial medical ORBAT see Commonwealth Gazette, No.61, 31 October 1903, p.760. According to Stockings 2007, p.26, the light horse field ambulances had been raised in 1908; however, the various field ambulances and light horse field ambulances appear in the Military List 1907, pp.60-61. Their redesignation was gazetted in Commonwealth Gazette, No.52, 5 October 1907, p.1229.

³⁹ The composition of the Military Board changed a number of times during this period. In 1905 the three military positions on the board were held by the Chief of Ordnance, Chief of Intelligence, and Deputy Adjutant-General, while a fourth position was later added for the Deputy Quartermaster-General. However, by 1909 the four military positions were held by the Chief of the General Staff, Adjutant-General, Quartermaster-General, and Chief of Ordnance. See Palazzo 2001, pp.34-37 and Stockings 2007, p.42.

⁴⁰ Wood 2006, pp. 50-73; Palazzo 2001, pp.34-48; Stockings 2007, pp.39-53; Grey 1999, pp.76-78; Grey 2001, p.21; Coulthard-Clark 1988, p.126.

⁴¹ Stockings 2007, p.64.

⁴² Palazzo 2001, p.32.

attend. The limited number of days citizen soldiers were obliged to attend each year also often precluded anything other than basic unit training activities, while issues associated with the dual system of paid militia and unpaid volunteers serving alongside each other resulted in uneven levels of proficiency. As such, standards among the soldiers were generally low. Arrangements for training officers were also limited, consisting mainly of a system of examinations, staff rides and some overseas exchanges which resulted in the quality of many of officers being considered to be equally poor.⁴³ Regardless, more formal arrangements would not be instituted until later, with for instance the School of Musketry at Randwick and the Royal Military College, Duntroon both opening in 1911.⁴⁴ One exception though was the School of Gunnery which had been in existence since 1885, operating initially from Middle Head in Sydney.⁴⁵

Demise of the Post-Federation Army

In December 1909 the strength of the Australian Army included 1,448 permanent soldiers, 16,819 militiamen, and 5,094 volunteers.⁴⁶ The structure had been fundamentally reorganised twice in the previous decade, going through three distinct phases of development: the first from Federation to the initial reorganisation in 1903, the second which proved to be transitory until the next major reorganisation in 1906, and the third from then to the end of 1909.⁴⁷ Some progress had been made in its development from a fairly low starting point, with the reforms of the previous years having provided the new nation with the foundation of a modern military.⁴⁸ Yet for all that had been achieved, the efficiency of the force remained limited and it was beset by a range of problems, both actual and perceived. The strength of the force was at a relatively low ebb, being smaller than the force inherited at Federation, and approximately 1,500 men under its authorised peacetime establishment. Thus even at the end of the decade the manpower problems of the early years remained, while much of the Army's equipment was obsolete, and its training was considered to be poor.⁴⁹

These shortcomings were not aided by the low priority afforded to defence issues during this period, and the limited funding allocated to the Army as a result. Nor were they helped by the almost continual state of structural change that occurred – even if much of it had been positive – and the frequent personality clashes and disagreements which characterised its administration.⁵⁰ At any rate the force structure finally in place would last less than a year before being abandoned altogether in favour of a completely new system based on peacetime conscription.⁵¹ Meanwhile, at this time Australia and the other Dominions had agreed to standardise their forces on the British pattern in terms of formations, training, administrative and staff procedures, ammunition, and equipment, and when implemented this would also result in significant structural changes at unit and formation level.⁵²

By this time it was widely recognised that the Army was inadequate to meet Australia's strategic circumstances. Military planners were increasingly concerned about Japan's

⁴³ Stockings 2007, pp.58-63.

⁴⁴ Kuring 2004, p.34; Stockings 2007, pp.58-63.

⁴⁵ Horner 1995, pp.28-30.

⁴⁶ Stockings 2007, p.75.

⁴⁷ Stockings 2007, p.7.

⁴⁸ Palazzo 2001, p.39.

⁴⁹ Stockings 2007, pp.25-27 & 99.

⁵⁰ Stockings 2007, p.95.

⁵¹ Stockings 2007, p.27.

⁵² Palazzo 2001, pp.47-48.

growing military and naval capabilities, as well as the relative decline of British naval power and the possibility the Royal Navy might be unable to defend Australia in the event of war. In light of these concerns the force-in-being was seen as being too small and inefficient to meet potential threats.⁵³ There was growing dissatisfaction with the Army among the public, politicians, and in the military, and although organisational dysfunction played a part in this, the limitations inherent in a voluntary system were thought to be primarily to blame for its perceived shortcomings. Ultimately the government decided to dismantle the force completely, replacing it with a radically different system based on compulsory training. This coincided with an inspection tour by Lord Kitchener commencing in December 1909, whose subsequent report in 1910 on the state of the Commonwealth Military Forces provided further impetus to such a change.⁵⁴

The Post-Federation Army officially ceased to exist on 1 January 1911 with the proclamation of the new universal training scheme.⁵⁵ The division of the non-permanent forces into the separate categories of militia and volunteers also came to an end, with both being merged into the Citizen Forces.⁵⁶ These changes were part of a process of raising a large civilian militia which was planned to consist of a peacetime force of around 80,000 citizen soldiers, with a wartime establishment of 135,000, and was intended to be complete by 1920.⁵⁷ Yet the outbreak of war in 1914 interrupted these plans, with many units still to form at this time. Ultimately no direct threat to Australia materialised, and the Citizen Forces were only partially mobilised for short periods of training and minor security tasks. Meanwhile, an expeditionary force of volunteers was formed for service overseas. The Citizen Forces was heavily impacted by the raising of the AIF, which received priority for manpower and equipment, and by the end of the war it was close to collapse.⁵⁸ It was reorganised again in 1921.⁵⁹

Order of Battle (as at c.June 1910)⁶⁰

The order of battle provided here is intended to summarise the force structure that developed during this time, as well as providing an overview of its administrative and command arrangements. The structure as it would have looked in 1910 has been selected, as this would have been indicative of the final form taken prior to being completely restructured. Locations given are for unit headquarters.⁶¹

⁵³ Stockings 2007, pp.73 & 95; Palazzo 2001, pp.39-40.

⁵⁴ Stockings 2007, pp.27 & 73-74.

⁵⁵ Stockings 2007, p.95.

⁵⁶ Palazzo 2001, p.49.

⁵⁷ Palazzo 2001, pp.50-54; Grey 1999, p.75; Coulthard-Clark 1988, p.121.

⁵⁸ Palazzo 2001, pp.71-79.

⁵⁹ At this time it inherited the organisation, titles, distinctions and battle honours of the AIF, many of which are perpetuated to this day by units of the Army Reserve; see Stanley 2001, p.47.

⁶⁰ Military Forces List 1908, pp.1-72; Military Forces List 1909, pp.1-83; Military Forces List 1910, pp.1-94; Commonwealth Gazette, No.52, 5 October 1907, pp.1230-1231; Horner 1995, pp.54-67; Kuring 2004, p.39; Fairclough 1962, pp.6-7; Hall 1968, pp.66-67; McNicoll 1977, pp.6-7. Rifle club and cadet forces have not been included. In 1910, the senior cadet organisation included 16 battalions and nine mounted squadrons, with a total membership of approximately 10,600; see Palazzo 2001, p.56.

⁶¹ It is intended that the ORBAT presented here be comprehensive but it is unlikely to be definitive as a level of synthesis of sometimes contradictory references has been required. Due to the number of organisational changes that occurred during this period (for instance with units being renamed or disbanded), it is possible some units have been omitted or misidentified, or incorrectly allocated. One challenge has been determining the exact allocation of units between the Field Force and the Garrison Force. Whilst the Military List 1908 includes a detailed breakdown of each, the format adopted in the Military List 1909 and 1910 does not. Detailed lists of the

<p>Military Board – Minister for Defence (Melbourne)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of the Chief of the General Staff • Department of the Adjutant-General • Department of the Quartermaster-General • Department of the Chief of Ordnance • Department of the Finance Member • Department of the Civil Member • Department of the Inspector-General 		
<p>Queensland – District Commandant (Brisbane)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Headquarters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Staff • Instructional Staff 		
<p>Garrison Force: Defended ports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lytton Defences Infantry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Battalion, Wide Bay Infantry Regiment (Maryborough) • 1st Battalion, Kennedy Infantry Regiment (Charters Towers) • Queensland Rifles (Brisbane) Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 1 Qld Company, AGA (Brisbane) • No. 2 Qld Company, AGA (Townsville) • No. 3 Qld Company, AGA (Thursday Island) • No. 8 Company, RAA (Brisbane-Townsville) • No. 9 Company, RAA (Thursday Island) Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 3 Field Company, CAE (part) (Brisbane) • No. 3 Electric Company, CAE (Brisbane) Service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Garrison Details, AASC (Brisbane) Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Garrison Ambulance, AAMC (Brisbane-Rockhampton-Townsville) </p>	<p>Field Force: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland Infantry Brigade: Infantry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Battalion, 9th AIR (Moreton Regiment) (Brisbane) • 1st Battalion, Port Curtis Infantry Regiment (Rockhampton) Light Horse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 5 Squadron, 15th ALHR (Bowen-Ingham) • No. 6 Squadron, 15th ALHR (Townsville) Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 2 Qld Battery, AFA (Brisbane) Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 3 Field Company, CAE (part) (Brisbane) Signals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half company from either No. 5 Company, ACS (Brisbane) or No. 6 Company, ACS (Rockhampton) Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 3 Field Ambulance, AAMC (Brisbane-Maryborough) • 5th Light Horse Brigade (Qld) (Brisbane): Light Horse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13thALHR (Queensland Mounted Infantry) (Brisbane) • 14thALHR (Queensland Mounted Infantry) (Toowoomba) • 15thALHR (Queensland Mounted Infantry) (Rockhampton) </p>	<p>Field Force: (cont.) Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 1 Qld Battery, AFA (Brisbane) Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 5 Field Troop, CAE (Brisbane) Signals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half company from either No. 5 Company, ACS (Brisbane) or No. 6 Company, ACS (Rockhampton) Service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 5 Light Horse Transport and Supply Column, AASC (Brisbane) Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 5 Light Horse Field Ambulance, AAMC (Gympie) Unallotted: Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, RAA (Brisbane) • ‘B’ Instructional Cadre, RAA (Brisbane) Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details, RAE Intelligence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queensland District, AIC (Brisbane) Signals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details, ACS Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, AAMC </p>

units allocated to each are also available in Commonwealth Gazette, No.61, 31 October 1903 and Commonwealth Gazette, No.52, 5 October 1907 for their respective years.

<p>New South Wales – District Commandant (Sydney)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Headquarters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Staff Instructional Staff 		
<p>Garrison Force: Defended Ports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sydney Fortress Newcastle Defences <p>Infantry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, New South Wales Scottish Rifle Regiment (Sydney) 1st Battalion, Australian Rifle Regiment (Sydney) 1st Battalion, St George's English Rifle Regiment (Sydney) 1st Battalion, New South Wales Irish Rifle Regiment (Sydney) Sydney University Scouts (Sydney) <p>Light Horse:ⁱ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 5 Squadron, 1st ALHR (Albion Park) No. 5 Squadron, 2nd ALHR (Canterbury) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 NSW Company, AGA (Sydney) No. 2 NSW Company, AGA (Sydney) No. 3 NSW Company, AGA (Newcastle) No. 4 NSW Company, AGA (Wollongong) No. 1 Company, RAA (Sydney) No. 2 Company, RAA (Sydney) No. 3 Company, RAA (Sydney) No. 4 Company, RAA (Newcastle) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 Fortress Company, CAE (Sydney) No. 1 Electric Company, CAE (Sydney) No. 1 Submarine 	<p>Field Force:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Infantry Brigade (NSW) (Sydney): <p>Infantry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, 1st AIR (Sydney) 1st Battalion, 2nd AIR (Sydney) 1st Battalion, 3rd AIR (Richmond) 1st Battalion, 4th AIR (Newcastle) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 NSW Battery, AFA (Sydney) No. 2 NSW Battery, AFA (Sydney) No. 5 NSW Battery, AFA (Sydney) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No.1 Field Company, CAE (Sydney) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half company from either No. 1 Company, ACS (Sydney) or No. 2 Company, ACS (Newcastle) <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 Infantry Transport and Supply Column, AASC (Sydney) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 Field Ambulance, AAMC (Sydney) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Light Horse Brigade (NSW) (Sydney): <p>Light Horse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st ALHR (New South Wales Lancers) (Parramatta) 2nd ALHR (New South Wales Mounted Infantry) (Sydney) 3rd ALHR (Australian Horse) (Goulburn) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 3 NSW Battery, AFA (Wagga Wagga) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 Field Troop, CAE (Sydney) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half company from either No. 	<p>Field Force: (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2nd Light Horse Brigade (NSW) (Sydney): <p>Light Horse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4th ALHR (Hunter River Lancers) (West Maitland) 5th ALHR (Northern Rivers Lancers) (Lismore) 6th ALHR (New England Light Horse) (Armidale) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 4 NSW Battery, AFA (Sydney) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half company from either No. 1 Company, ACS (Sydney) or No. 2 Company, ACS (Newcastle) <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 2 Light Horse Transport and Supply Column, AASC (Sydney) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 2 Light Horse Field Ambulance, AAMC (Newcastle) <p>Unallotted:</p> <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, RAA (Sydney) 'A' Instructional Cadre, RAA (Sydney) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details, RAE No. 1 Telegraph Company, CAE (Sydney) <p>Intelligence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New South Wales District, AIC (Sydney) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACS (part) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent Section, AAMC (Sydney) Staff, AAMC

ⁱ No.6 Squadron 1st ALHR was also allocated to the Garrison Force in New South Wales according to the Military Forces List 1908; however, while it still appears in the Military Forces List 1909 it seems to have been reallocated to the Field Force.

<p>Mining Company, CAE (Sydney)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submarine Mining Section, RAE (Sydney) • Electric Light Section, RAE <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New South Wales Garrison Company, AASC (Sydney-Newcastle) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New South Wales Garrison Ambulance, AAMC (Sydney) 	<p>1 Company, ACS (Sydney) or No. 2 Company, ACS (Newcastle)</p> <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 1 Light Horse Transport and Supply Column, AASC (Sydney) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 1 Light Horse Field Ambulance, AAMC (Richmond) 	
<p>Victoria – District Commandant (Melbourne)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Headquarters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Staff • Instructional Staff 		
<p>Garrison Force: Defended Ports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port Phillip Fortress <p>Infantry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Battalion, Victorian Scottish Regiment (Melbourne) • 1st Battalion, Victorian Rangers (Melbourne) • Victorian Rifles (Melbourne) • Melbourne University Rifles (Melbourne) <p>Light Horse:ⁱⁱ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 6 Squadron, 10th ALHR (Melbourne) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 1 Vic Company, AGA (Geelong) • No. 2 Vic Company, AGA (Geelong) • No. 3 Vic Company, AGA (North Melbourne) • No. 4 Vic Company, AGA (North Melbourne) • No. 5 Vic Company, AGA (Williamstown) • No. 6 Vic Company, AGA (Melbourne) • No. 7 Vic Company, AGA (Melbourne) 	<p>Field Force:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd Infantry Brigade (Vic) (Ballarat): <p>Infantry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Battalion, 5th AIR (Melbourne) • 1st Battalion, 6th AIR (Melbourne) • 1st Battalion, 7th AIR (Ballarat) • 1st Battalion, 8th AIR (Castlemaine) • 2nd Battalion, 8th AIR (Bendigo) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 1 Vic Battery, AFA (Melbourne) • No. 3 Vic Battery, AFA (Melbourne) • No. 4 Vic Battery, AFA (Warrnambool) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 2 Field Company, CAE (Melbourne) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half company from either No. 3 Company, ACS (Melbourne) or No. 4 Company, ACS <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 2 Infantry Transport and Supply Column, AASC (Melbourne) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 2 Field Ambulance, AAMC (Melbourne) 	<p>Field Force: (cont.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th Light Horse Brigade (Vic): <p>Light Horse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10th ALHR (Victorian Mounted Rifles) (Sale) • 11th ALHR (Victorian Mounted Rifles) (Warrnambool) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 5 Vic Battery, AFA (Melbourne) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half company from either No. 3 Company, ACS (Melbourne) or No. 4 Company, ACS <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. 4 Light Horse Field Ambulance, AAMC (Melbourne) <p>Unallotted:</p> <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, RAA • ‘C’ Instructional Cadre, RAA (Melbourne) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details, RAE <p>Intelligence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victorian District, AIC (Melbourne)

ⁱⁱ No.5 Squadron 10th ALHR was also allocated to the Garrison Force in Victoria according to the Military Forces List 1908; however, although it still appears in the Military Forces List 1909 it seems to have been reallocated to the Field Force.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 5 Company, RAA (Port Phillip Heads) No. 6 Company, RAA (Port Phillip Heads) No. 7 Company, RAA (Port Phillip Heads) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 2 Fortress Company, CAE (Melbourne) No. 2 Electric Company, CAE (Melbourne) No. 2 Submarine Mining Company, CAE (Melbourne) Submarine Mining Section, RAE Electric Light Section, RAE <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian Garrison Company, AASC (Melbourne) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victorian Garrison Ambulance, AAMC (Melbourne) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3rd Light Horse Brigade (Vic): Light Horse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7th ALHR (Victorian Mounted Rifles) (Yea) 8th ALHR (Victorian Mounted Rifles) (Benalla) 9th ALHR (Victorian Mounted Rifles) (Ballarat) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 2 Vic Battery, AFA (Melbourne) <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 3 Field Troop, CAE (Melbourne) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half company from either No. 3 Company, ACS (Melbourne) or No. 4 Company, ACS <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 3 Light Horse Field Ambulance, AAMC (Ballarat) 	<p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACS (part) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Permanent Section, AAMC Staff, AAMC
<p>South Australia – District Commandant (Adelaide)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Headquarters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Staff Instructional Staff 		
<p>Garrison Force:</p> <p>Defended Ports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Port Adelaide Defences <p>Infantry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, South Australian Infantry Regiment (Adelaide) South Australian Scottish Infantry (Adelaide) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 SA Company, AGA (Adelaide) No. 10 Company, RAA (part) (Adelaide) <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Australian Garrison Details, AASC (Adelaide) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SA Garrison Ambulance, AAMC (Adelaide) 	<p>Field Force:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Australian Brigade: Infantry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, 10th AIR (Adelaide Rifles) (Adelaide) Light Horse:ⁱⁱⁱ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16th ALHR (South Australian Mounted Rifles) (Adelaide) 17th ALHR (South Australian Mounted Rifles) (Adelaide) <p>Artillery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 SA Battery, AFA (Adelaide) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half company from No. 7 Company, ACS (Adelaide) <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 6 Light Horse Transport and Supply Column, AASC (Adelaide) 	<p>Unallotted:</p> <p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail, RAE <p>Intelligence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Australian District, AIC (Adelaide) <p>Signals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACS (part) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, AAMC

ⁱⁱⁱ No.5 Squadron 16th ALHR was allocated to the Garrison Force in South Australia according to the Military Forces List 1908; however, it does not appear in the Military Forces List 1909 and as such seems to have been removed from the ORBAT.

	<p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 6 Light Horse Field Ambulance, AAMC (Adelaide) 	
<p>Western Australia – District Commandant (Perth)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Headquarters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Staff Instructional Staff 		
<p>Garrison Force: Defended Ports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fremantle Defences Infantry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, Western Australian Infantry Regiment (Perth) Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 WA Company, AGA (Albany) No. 2 WA Company, AGA (Fremantle) No. 10 Company, RAA (part) (Albany) Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 4 Electric Company, CAE (Perth) Service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Australian Garrison Details, AASC (Perth) Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Australian Garrison Ambulance, AAMC (part) (Perth-Fremantle) </p>	<p>Field Force: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Australian Brigade: Infantry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, 11th AIR (Perth Regiment) (Perth) 1st Battalion, Goldfields Infantry Regiment (Kalgoorlie) Light Horse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18th ALHR (Western Australian Mounted Infantry) (Perth) Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 WA Battery, AFA (Perth) Signals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Half company from No. 8 Company, ACS (Perth-Fremantle) Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 4 Field Ambulance, AAMC (Perth) </p>	<p>Unallotted: Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail, RAE Intelligence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Australian District, AIC (Perth) Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, AAMC </p>
<p>Tasmania – District Commandant (Hobart)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Headquarters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Staff Instructional Staff 		
<p>Garrison Force: Defended Ports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hobart Defences Infantry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, Derwent Infantry Regiment (Hobart) 1st Battalion, Tasmanian Rangers (Zeehan) Light Horse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 5 Squadron, 12th ALHR (Hobart) Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 Tas Company, AGA (Hobart) No. 2 Tas Company, AFA (Hobart) No. 10 Company, RAA (part) (Hobart) </p>	<p>Field Force: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasmanian Brigade: Infantry: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st Battalion, 12th AIR (Launceston Regiment) (Launceston) Light Horse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12th ALHR (Tasmanian Mounted Infantry) (Launceston) Artillery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 1 Tas Battery, AFA (Launceston) Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 5 Field Company, CAE (Hobart) Signals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 9 Company, ACS (Launceston-Hobart) </p>	<p>Unallotted: Engineers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detail, RAE Intelligence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasmanian District, AIC (Hobart) Signals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACS (part) Medical: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, AAMC </p>

<p>Engineers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 5 Electric Company, CAE (Hobart) <p>Service:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasmanian Garrison Details, AASC (Hobart) <p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasmanian Garrison Ambulance, AAMC (part) 	<p>Medical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. 5 Field Ambulance, AAMC (Launceston) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative and Instructional Staff Ordnance Department Australian Volunteer Automobile Corps Australian Army Nursing Service Australian Army Medical Corps Reserve Australian Army Veterinary Corps Pay Department and Rifle Ranges Chaplains' Department School of Gunnery 		

Abbreviations

AAMC: Australian Army Medical Corps

AASC: Australian Army Service Corps

ACS: Australian Corps of Signals

AFA: Australian Field Artillery

AGA: Australian Garrison Artillery

AIC: Australian Intelligence Corps

AIR: Australian Infantry Regiment

ALHR: Australian Light Horse Regiment

CAE: Corps of Australian Engineers

RAA: Royal Australian Artillery

RAE: Royal Australian Engineers

Conclusion

The Post-Federation Army only existed for a short period, yet in this time it laid the foundation of the organisation that would follow.^{iv} Although it has now largely been all but forgotten, its legacy is as much a part of the institutional heritage of the Australian Army as the more celebrated formations that came after it, even if by circumstance it fought no battles and won no acclaim (something which would only come later at terrible human cost). While the Australian Army went through many significant changes in the century that followed, there are still units on the current order of battle that can trace their lineage – even if that is a feat in itself given the complexity sometimes involved – to units which existed during this period. Others still can do so to a much earlier period, with some unit histories going back to elements of the various colonial military forces.^v In a nation with a short history and precious few traditions, this seems something worthy of being preserved.

^{iv} Indeed, contrary to popular perception the history of the Australian Army does not begin with the raising of the AIF in 1914, but instead with the force that developed following the merging of the military forces of six Australian colonies after Federation in 1901 and during the decade which followed.

^v This is true of a number of units mostly of the Army Reserve, but also applies to some units of the Regular Army. Examples of the former include the 4th/3rd Battalion, The Royal New South Wales Regiment and of the latter the 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry). See Festberg 1972, Stanley 2001, and Shaw 2010.

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SOCIETY NOTICES

The Combined MHSA Conference / NOW Symposium, Adelaide 2017

Registrations for the 2017 Conference – *Generations of War* are now open.

The Conference represents a blending of the Military Historical Society of Australia (MHSA) biennial event with the Narratives of War's symposium, to produce a weekend of stimulating presentations and discussion around the conference theme, *Generations of War*. Each new generation experiences conflict – and especially war – in a new and different context. The technological aspects of today's conflicts, for example, require knowledge and skills that would have been unthinkable in the Great War. Yet some things are common to all wars – people die, science advances and acts noble and ignoble are produced. *The Generations of War* Conference gives voice to narratives new and old and in so doing, we hope, adds to our understanding of the human condition.

The Conference is being held at the University of South Australia City West Campus, Adelaide on 17-19 November 2017.

Registration: The Conference registration is \$60 and includes morning and afternoon tea on Saturday and Sunday and the Conference Welcome Reception. **Please register by Friday 3 November.**

Conference Welcome Reception: Friday, 17 November 2017, 5:30pm in the Bradley Forum, Level 5, Hawke Building, North Terrace, Adelaide.

Conference Dinner: The conference dinner will be held in the beautiful dining room at the Naval, Military and Air Force Club of South Australia. The venue is located in the south-east corner of the Central Business District, a five-minute taxi or 20-minute walk from the conference and easily accessible via multiple modes of transport. Please come along and meet colleagues and new acquaintances while indulging in a three-course dinner, \$75 (drinks not included). Saturday 18 November 2017, 7:00 pm.

Location and Accommodation: The City West venue is conveniently located, allowing conference delegates to select from a large number of accommodation options, from 5 star hotels to backpacking hostels. There are several hotels that neighbour the campus on West Terrace and Hindley Street,

TO WAR ON A HORSE AND IN A CAMEL: CAPTAIN E.F. ‘TAB’ PFLAUM, AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS

Peter Harvey

March 21, 1918 on the Western Front. At about 8am, ten Sopwith Camels of No.4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps (AFC), took off from their aerodrome at Bruay in northern France on an offensive patrol. They were in two flights led by Lt A.H. ‘Harry’ Cobby. The weather was good but visibility in the air was bad due to fog and mist. After about an hour the formation was flying north when three enemy aircraft, Albatrosses painted red, appeared through the mist. They were followed by a string of other enemy scouts, all coloured red except for a black and yellow one. Being on a parallel course but a little higher, the AFC aircraft attacked. The fight was brief and not all the AFC aircraft took part. Cobby was credited with two Albatrosses destroyed and Lt E.F. ‘Tab’ Pflaum another. No AFC aircraft was lost.

In his autobiography *High Adventure*, Cobby wrote that ‘It was undoubtedly the Richthofen Circus, but the leaders had got into another layer of fog and missed what was going on.’¹ Cobby went on to be the highest scoring AFC pilot in World War 1, being credited with 29 victories (24 destroyed, 5 out of control) and awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Distinguished Flying Cross with two bars. He served in the RAAF during World War 2, reaching the rank of Air Commodore, being appointed a CBE and was awarded a George



Medal for bravery. While Cobby became famous for his service in the two wars, who was ‘Tab’ Pflaum – and were the enemy aircraft attacked on that day in March 1918 part of the Red Baron’s Circus? And were any shot down as claimed?

Fig.1: Theodor Pflaum, seated, with his sons, from left to right, Theodor Milton (Theo), Raymond Holstein (Ray) – both 32nd Bn AIF – and Elliott Frederick (Tab), 9th Light Horse, prior to embarkation. Tab was the only son to survive service. (Author’s collection)

Elliott Frederick Pflaum, known to his family as Tab, was born on 5 January 1892 at Blumberg (renamed Birdwood during WW1) not far from Adelaide. His father and uncle, emigrants from Denmark, operated the flour mill which is now part of the site of the

¹ A.H. Cobby, *High Adventure*, Kookaburra Technical Publications, Melbourne, 1981, p.48.

National Motor Museum at Birdwood. Plaum was the eldest son in a family of 13 children, eight being his sisters. He was educated at Blumberg and then Prince Alfred College (PAC) in Adelaide for three years (1905-7). While at college, he served in the Junior Cadets.

On 24 August 1915, aged 23, Pflaum enlisted in the AIF. His Attestation Paper states that he was a clerk, 5 feet 8 inches in height, and was a Baptist. Given the service number 1591, after training he joined the 12th Reinforcements of the 9th Australian Light Horse (ALH) Regiment. His two younger brothers, Theodor Milton ('Theo') and Raymond Holstein ('Ray'), had enlisted earlier on 21 July 1915 and been posted to the 32nd Battalion AIF, Ray as a gunner in the Machine Gun Section. On 18 November 1915, all three brothers left Australia for overseas service in the same ship, HMAT *Geelong*. Pflaum joined the 9th ALH in Egypt on 28 December 1915 and after a spell in hospital with mumps, joined the regiment on 28 December 1915. In August 1916 the regiment took part in the Battle of Romani which finally stopped the Turkish threat to the Suez Canal. Later that year Pflaum successfully applied to be transferred to the AFC rather than be posted to the Camel Corps.

Fig.2: E.F. 'Tab' Pflaum, No.4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps. (Author's collection)

In December 1916, having passed a trade test, Pflaum joined No.68 (Australian) Sqn, Royal Flying Corps (RFC) as a 2nd Class Air Mechanic (2AM). He left Egypt on 13 January 1917, arriving in the UK on 30 January. After six months with No.68 Sqn, he was accepted for training as a pilot. He spent time at Oxford University undergoing officer training and then with Nos 29 and 30 Australian Training Sqns. His flying training started on 14 August 1917 and he first flew solo on 4 September. In October 1917 he graduated as a pilot, was appointed 2nd Lieutenant and was posted to No.4 Sqn AFC. The four Australian RFC squadrons, Nos 68, 69, 70 and 71 were renumbered 1, 2, 3 and 4 Sqns AFC respectively, and the four training squadron became Nos 5, 6, 7 and 8 Sqns AFC.



No.4 Sqn, which had been formed in 1917 as the last of the four fighting units of the AFC, was a scout (fighter) squadron equipped with Sopwith Camels. The Camel was the most successful British aircraft of the war. However, the aircraft needed to be handled carefully, being inherently unstable because all its weight was packed into the first seven feet of the fuselage. Nevertheless, when controlled by an adept pilot, it was extremely manoeuvrable and could reach 112 miles per hour at 15,000 feet with a ceiling of 20,000 feet. Standard armament was two fixed Vickers machine guns mounted side-by-side on the top of the fuselage and firing through the airscrew arc.

Pflaum joined the squadron with a large group of other pilots in late November 1917. He was known to his fellow pilots by his nickname Tab. At that time he had flown solo for just over 41 hours in six different types of aircraft, including nearly 21 hours in that famous training aircraft the Avro 504K, and five hours in Camels. This group made up the full complement of

24 pilots and Pflaum was posted to 'A' Flight with Cobby. On 18 December 1917, after competing training, the squadron of 18 aircraft in three flights left the UK to fly to France. Despite some heavy fog, all eventually arrived at Bruay, northern France safely. Just prior to leaving for France, Pflaum wrote a letter to his sister Lillie and her husband Jim. It is headed '71st Squadron AFC, Castle Bromwich 14.12.17'.² The following are extracts from that letter:

My Dearest Lil and Jim,

It is some time since I wrote to you people but expect that you have been receiving the news through home.

Well I have got four more days in Blighty and then overseas. I have been fortunate in having such a long spell over here and think it is up to me to go back and do a bit. This will certainly be a different experience to the fighting I have seen before and there will be tons and tons to learn.

We have got some very fine scouts and hope to do alright in France. Have got all the machines just about ready and now they look very nice with each pilot's special crest or design and we have named all of them. One goes out as Charlie Chaplin with Charles plastered on both sides. The pilot is a hard case and has two plates on the side of his machine which he pinched from a railway carriage reading 'It is dangerous to lean out of windows'.

Another bus goes out as 'The City of Adelaide' presented by Mr Harry Bickford. A presentation aircraft from Sydney Kidman goes out with his name. I have got the PAC badge on both sides of my machine and the name 'Halstone' on the nose. It seems quite a pity that the Huns will take pleasure in trying to pot our good looking buses but I guess they will get a fairly warm reception in their attempt.

I was hoping to get back to the old 68th but am going out with this squadron. It is certainly much better going out with a fresh squadron than as replacement and there are a very decent lot of fellows in this crowd. My flight commander is an Adelaidean late of the Adelaide Steamship Co and our squadron commander Major McCloughry is from North Adelaide. There is another pilot from Adelaide and self so SA is pretty well represented in this squadron.

Well, tons of luck to you all and may I be spared by 'The Almighty' to return to you all again. After 3 months flying over the lines we get a fortnight's Blighty and after the second three months we get three months home service, so you can see we get some consideration if we can stick out six months, Best love to you all.

Yours lovingly, Tab

By way of commentary on some of the references made by Pflaum in the letter: 'the fighting I have seen before' refers to his involvement in the Battle of Romani with the 9th ALH; the 'Charlie Chaplin' aircraft was Cobby's, the 'hard case' referred to; 'Halstone' was the name of the Pflaums' family home; and the flight commander from Adelaide was Capt G.C. Matthews.

No.4 Sqn spent the first fortnight in France in war-flying practice and familiarisation with their sector of the front. Then they commenced offensive patrols (OPs). Pflaum flew his first patrol on 9 January 1918, the entry in his flying log book reading 'Archie fairly close'. On 3 February, their flight commander Capt A. O'Hara Wood took Pflaum and Cobby on an offensive patrol, 'looking for a scrap' as Cobby wrote in his book. Well over the lines, they jumped some enemy two-seaters and each scored a victory. In the confusion of combat, Pflaum lost formation and had to land away from Bruay, having spent nearly three hours in the air. In his log book there is no mention of the combat, the entry for the day reading 'OP.

² Original letter held by Pflaum's son-in-law Mr Frank Bourne; used with permission.

Lost formation. Landed at Kandos'. Pflaum made very few entries under Remarks in his logbook, mainly just 'OP'.³

Despite bad weather, the squadron kept up its patrolling but, in Pflaum's case, without any further combat until 21 March, as mentioned above. Again his log book does not contain any reference to the encounter with the enemy. The entry simply reads 'OP' with flying time of one hour 40 minutes. The Squadron Record Book (War Diary) for that day has the following under 'Remarks':

Cobby – Two decisive combats. See report

Pflaum – Decisive combat. See report.

Unfortunately, while the Record Book contains reports of pilots for successes later in 1918, Cobby's and Pflaum's reports are missing.⁴

After the encounter with the enemy on 21 March,⁵ Pflaum spent the next few days on offensive patrols and an escort and reconnaissance trip on 26 March. Then he received orders to return to the UK (Home Establishment) for duty as an instructor. After graduating from the special instructors course at Gosport in Hampshire, which ran for two weeks, Pflaum served with Nos 5 and 8 AFC training squadrons and in July was appointed temporary Captain.



Fig.3: Pflaum's Avro 504K with his nickname 'TAB' prominently displayed, as ordered by his CO, Lt Col Oswald Watt. (Author's collection)

Time spent instructing cadet pilots varied from day to day, e.g. on 8 June 1918 he spent over three hours instructing seven cadets. Time in the air with a cadet in a dual seat Avro 504K ranged from 10 to 45 minutes on that day. He also spent 25 minutes testing a Camel – or

³ Pflaum's original flying log held by his son-in-law Mr Frank Bourne; used with permission.

⁴ No.4 Squadron AFC War Diary, AWM 8/7/13 March 1918, <https://oldsite.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG1006297/?image=1>.

⁵ Cobby's account in *High Adventure* (p.48) gives the date of the encounter with the supposed Richthofen's Circus as 20 March. However, it is clearly shown in the War Diary as occurring on 21 March. The relevant page shows mid-afternoon patrols on 20 March but then under the heading 21 March are details of the patrol of the 10 aircraft led by Cobby, commencing at 8am.

perhaps he felt like ‘going for a spin’. His first flight on that day started at 6.15am and the last, in the Camel, at 7.40pm. Instructing could be dangerous and over 20 AFC instructors or cadets were killed in crashes during the war.

All instructors personalised their aircraft, with Australian animals being popular. Pflaum sported a leather kangaroo mascot, a joey, on the fuselage of his trainer. He was a bit of a practical joker and once buzzed the commanding officer of the AFC training units, Lt Col Oswald Watt, in his billet. Although he didn’t identify the pilot, Watt ordered Pflaum’s nickname ‘Tab’ to be painted in big capital letters on his aircraft for easy identification.

Then on 11 November 1918, the Armistice was signed and the war ended. On 21 December Pflaum was confirmed as Captain and posted back to No.4 Sqn as a flight commander. By that time the squadron had been equipped with Sopwith Snipes. He served with the squadron as part of the Army of Occupation in Germany, based at Cologne, and then on 6 May 1919 with most of the squadron he left the UK to return home to Australia. Their troopship the *Kaisar-i-Hind* arrived at Outer Harbour in South Australia on 14 June 1919.

But back to that misty morning of 21 March in 1918. It was not Richthofen’s Circus which Cobby claimed to have attacked. Richthofen’s Circus was the popular name for *Jagdgeschwader 1* (JG1) of the German Air Service. JG1, or JG Richthofen as it was named, was formed on 23 June 1917 from *Jagdstaffeln* (*Jastas*) 4, 6, 10 and 11. Prior to that time *Jagdstaffeln*, each of about 12 to 14 aircraft, operated individually. *Rittmeister* (Cavalry Captain) *Freiherr* (Baron) Manfred von Richthofen, who was the commanding officer of *Jasta 11*, was given command of the newly created JG 1.

Oberleutnant Karl Bodenschatz was Richthofen’s adjutant and responsible for the writing of the JG’s War Journal. The daily entries are contained in a book written by Bodenschatz, ‘*Jadg in Flanderns Himmel*’ in 1935 and translated by Jan Hayzlett in his book *Hunting with Richthofen* published in 1996. Included in the War Journal entry for 21 March 1918 is the following sentence: ‘On account of heavy ground fog, flight operations were not possible until 12 noon’.⁶ By that time the AFC aircraft had completed their patrol and returned to Bruay. They did not encounter any of Richthofen’s Circus.

In his book *Fire in the Sky*, the story of the Australian Flying Corps in the First World War, the Australian military historian, Michael Molkentin writes:

The ‘fog of war’ was literally clouding the facts, though. German records indicate the enemy unit [encountered by the 4 Sqn AFC aircraft] was actually *Jasta 35*, which in fact reported no casualties that day.

The enemy aircraft claimed by Cobby and Pflaum ‘probably spun through the clouds to escape’ while giving the impression of being shot down.⁷ Whereas Pflaum understood that he had had two successes, during his service in France, his actual score was one, the two-seater shot down on 3 February 1918.

Having survived the war in two theatres and returned to Australia, Pflaum’s appointment as an officer in the AFC was terminated on 6 August 1919. In June 1920 he married Clara

⁶ Jan Hayzlett, (trans.), *Hunting with Richthofen: the Bodenschatz Diaries: Sixteen Months of Battle with JG Freiherr von Richthofen. No.1*, Grub Street, London, 1998, p.170.

⁷ Michael Molkentin, *Fire in the Sky: The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest NSW, 2010, p.237.

Drabsch in Adelaide and spent many years in Loxton as the local manager of Goldsbrough, Mort and Co, stock and station agents. Active in the local community, he was Chairman of the Loxton District Council for a period after being the Council's auditor, and was President of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society for many years and also President of the local RSL Branch. His daughter Helen and son John were born during that time. On 10 June 1940, he enlisted in the Australian Military Forces, his service number being S213557.

Having lost two brothers in World War 1, he lost his son as result of World War 2. No.442529 Flight Sergeant John Elliott Pflaum RAAF was killed when his Kittyhawk crashed at Zamboanga in the Philippines on 11 November 1945. After retiring, Pflaum lived his last few years in the Adelaide suburb of Hawthorn and died in 1977, aged 84.

'Tab' Pflaum, the son of a Danish migrant, served his country Australia well in two World Wars and made valuable contributions to his local community during his civilian life. He was one of the 410 pilots of the AFC, of whom 179 were either killed or wounded in action or prisoners of war.



Fig.4: Tab Pflaum's visiting card and original AFC pilot's wings. (Author's collection)

LEST WE FORGET

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