SABRETACHE

The Journal and Proceedings of the Military Historical Society of Australia (founded 1957)

JUNE 2019

The aims of the Society are the encouragement and pursuit of study and research in military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment and kindred matters; the promotion of public interest and knowledge in these subjects, and the preservation of historical military objects with particular reference to the armed forces of Australia.

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Sabretache

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Editorial

While the last of the World War One centenary celebrations were concluded last year there is one more that will not receive the attention it deserves. On 28 June 1919 the conflict's belligerents signed the Treaty of Versailles, officially concluding the war. While the actual fighting ended in November 1918, the following period was one of busy diplomacy and negotiation.

The culmination of the peace process has been criticised for the last century. Historians have blamed the treaty for the rise of Hitler and the continuation of colonialism and imperialism. But as Margaret MacMillan has argued, the next global war was not a result of Versailles, but rather decisions made in the years after its signing. Australia's role in the conflict was relegation and disturbance. Prime Minister Billy Hughes did his best to represent the 60,000 lost Australians but possibly over-played his hand.

Although Hughes may have made a nuisance of himself, his sentiment was true. He wanted recognition of the part that Australia played in the war. This has certainly been achieved over the last five years during the country's celebrations of World War One. But the centenary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles should also be celebrated, not just for the end of the conflict but also for the peace that ensued.

It is during these periods of peace that the various roles of the Australian military forces should also be celebrated. Australians have a proud history as non-combatants, working in UN peacekeeping forces from Asia to Central America, disaster relief both at home and abroad, and as regional security. The deeds of combatants are an important part of our history, but we should also honour the achievements of those that worked during peacetime.

Justin Chadwick

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Lieutenant Percy Boyle VC DCM MM
The war service record of Prudencio Spain

Paul A Rosenzweig[1]

Buried within a National Australian Archives file is a Military Registration Form for a hotel stay in Birmingham on 18 November 1918.[2] This in itself is of no particular consequence: such a period of recuperation by an AIF officer immediately following the Armistice might seem to be a perfectly natural event. The significance lies in the signed name – 'Lieutenant Percy Boyle VC DCM MM' – a three-times decorated military veteran and holder of the prestigious Victoria Cross, apparently.

In Perth nine months later, a certain 'Percival Vernon Boyle DCM MM' was hospitalised, although he was identified by his claimed alias 'Percy Spain'. This same Boyle again fell ill on 27 September 1919, and that night died in Perth Public Hospital. Among his personal effects were a photograph of a woman and a military brooch bar bearing the ribbons of the Distinguished Conduct Medal (DCM), Military Medal (MM) and 1914-15 Star. The death was reported widely, identifying this veteran as being 'a native of Darwin' – Sergeant Percy Spain DCM MM.

Yet there was no mention of his VC, which post-nominals he had clearly noted in Birmingham. Was there a second, previously unrecorded, Northern Territory VC recipient alongside the notable Bert Borella VC MM? Not to be found in any records, is this highly-decorated name merely the product of a tale of escalating deceit and ultimately death, not in a theatre of war but simply in a theatre?

Prudencio Vidal Puerte Spain (1897-1919)

The photograph found on Boyle was subsequently identified as Mrs Elizabeth Spain from Darwin, confirming Boyle's true identity as her son Prudencio ('Percy') Spain. Prudencio's service record is quite muddled. Various reports claim he was 17 when he enlisted, served at Gallipoli and was highly decorated, both parents died during the war, and all five of his brothers were killed at the Front. The truth is more of an elaborate scheme of misrepresentation.

Prudencio was born on 28 April 1897 in Palmerston (as Darwin was then known), the eighth child of Dionisio Antonio Puerte Spain (1863-1926) from the

1 Major Paul Rosenzweig (ret'd) is a non-professional historian who has documented many aspects of the military history of the Northern Territory. In 2017, he was awarded a 70th anniversary Philippines-Australia Relations Award by the Philippine Ambassador to Australia for his service in researching, recording and preserving the contributions of Filipinos and Filipino-Australians to Australia's military heritage.

2 Court Martial of 17 December 1918, NAA A471/22023/Spain-P.

Philippines, and Elizabeth Massey (1866-1951) from London.[3] Antonio had come to Thursday Island in the late 1870s as a diver, and married Elizabeth in Cooktown on 12 May 1885. In 1894, they moved to Palmerston where Antonio continued as a pearl diver, while Elizabeth opened Darwin's first newsagency and book store. While Darwin's Filipino families were Roman Catholic, uniquely the Spains were Church of England through Elizabeth's influence.

Prudencio had served a year and a half as an apprentice fitter with the Public Works Department when he volunteered for the AIF.[4] Having received his parents' consent, as he was under age, Prudencio joined the Fourth Northern Territory Contingent, accompanied by four other Filipino volunteers. A farewell smoke social was held in the Town Hall the next evening, and a commemorative program printed on silk (see figure 1) recorded the names of each of the contingent members, including his three Filipino mates.[5]


Farewell Smoke Social

TO THE

Fourth Northern Territory Contingent

TENDERED AT THE TOWN HALL, DARWIN, ON

THURSDAY, 7TH DAY OF OCTOBER, 1915

By the inhabitants of the District of Palmerston, under the Presidency of His Excellency the Administrator of the Northern Territory

LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE CONTINGENT

Figure 1: Farewell Smoke Social commemorative program. Source: Author.

3 *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, (henceforth *NTTG*), 23 July 1926, p. 3; *Northern Standard* (Darwin), 23 July 1926, p. 2; 6 April 1951, p. 5; *The Brisbane Courier*, 22 October 1932, p. 22. See also Rosenzweig (2014b).

4 War service records, NAA B2455/SPAIN Prudencio; *NTTG*, 23 September 1915, p .18; *NTTG*, 7 October 1915, pp. 6, 15, 18; *NTTG*, 14 October 1915, pp. 18, 24; See also Rosenzweig (2014b).

5 Manuscript 37 (named as 'Prudentio Spain'), Northern Territory Library, 243112, http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/handle/10070/243112.

His training in Brisbane proved problematic. After several disciplinary hearings for absences and disobedience, Prudencio (giving his name as 'B Carter', aged 17) appeared on remand in the City Police Court in Townsville relating to an incident which had occurred there on 7 February 1916. He was charged by the Queensland Police with intent to defraud while pretending to be a returned soldier, in uniform and 'walking lame', claiming he had been in the second landing at Gallipoli where he had been wounded in the leg by shrapnel.[6] The Adjutant of the 41st Battalion recorded, 'He is an undesirable and his discharge is strongly recommended'. Accordingly, Spain was discharged on 11 May 1916 as 'services no longer required'.[7]

6645 Private Percy Spain

Prudencio then made his way to Perth, enlisting again on 19 December 1916 under the name Percy Spain. Giving his age as 21 (avoiding the need for parental consent), he falsely claimed five years' substantive service as a fitter and turner in the Darwin Government Workshop. Assigned to the 19th Reinforcements to the 28th Battalion AIF, he sailed for England in January 1917.[8] Transferred to the 52nd Battalion AIF on 13 June 1917, he proceeded to France the following month. Later in the year, a letter written to his mother was published in Darwin:

> OUR BOYS AT THE FRONT. I was wounded on 21st August and am in the hospital at present. I am getting on well and will soon be back to the lines again. I was hit in the head, but it is lovely now, except a little deafness. There were ten of us in the trench and the shell got eight of us, 2 being killed and 6 seriously wounded. I am in a good hospital, they are treating me well, and the sisters are very nice. They look after the boys well.[9]

Here his story starts to unravel. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission database shows 16 Australians being killed on 21 August 1917, but none from the 52nd Battalion. The unit war diary shows that on the morning of 21 August the battalion marched from Mt Kemmel to a bivouac area at Neuve Eglise, and that evening they moved to another bivouac area at the foot of Hill 63.[10] Percy Spain's service record does not show him as a battle casualty, however he was seen at the 13th Field Ambulance on 11 September with a cut head (accidental), and he entered the 39th Stationary

6 *Daily Standard* (Brisbane), 5 April 1916, p. 5; *The Telegraph* (Brisbane), 5 April 1916, p. 3; *The Brisbane Courier*, 6 April 1916, p. 4; *The Brisbane Courier*, 11 April 1916, p. 10; *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 11 April 1916, p. 2. Spain was sentenced to 14 days' imprisonment, but the sentence was suspended on his entering into recognisances and making restitution of the monies obtained. The AIF Nominal Roll lists only three men with the name 'B Carter', and none of these served at Gallipoli.

7 War service records, NAA B2455/SPAIN Prudencio.

8 War service records, NAA B2455/SPAIN Percy; First World War Nominal Roll, AWM 133/49/0024; Embarkation Roll, 28th Infantry Battalion, 19th Reinforcements, AWM 8/23/45-4-0134.

9 *NTTG*, 19 January 1918, p. 9.

10 52nd Battalion AIF War Diary, August 1917, AWM 4/23/69/17.

Hospital on 17 September complaining of deafness. He was still in this latter hospital on 24 September when he wrote the letter of bravado to his mother.

On 15 October, he was evacuated to England suffering 'Trench Fever', a disease transmitted by body lice, although Private Spain persisted in claiming he had 'shell-shock'. On 8 November, his father was officially notified of his admission to Lakenham Military Hospital in Norwich. Significantly, the 362nd Official Casualty List released in early December 1917 included 'Percy Spain of Port Darwin' listed under Western Australian casualties, not as a battle casualty but under the heading 'Ill'.[11] Hospitalisation was followed by convalescence during which time he was arrested by being absent without leave (AWL) on 1 July 1918. At this time he was found to be wearing the rank insignia of a Sergeant, and the ribbons of the DCM and MM.[12] He was before authorities again in September when he was found guilty of deception for obtaining goods under false pretences.[13] Spain was arrested again just days after his trial wearing the rank insignia of a Warrant Officer Class II on the lower right sleeve, but had no pay book, identity disc or pass on him.

Percy Spain faced his first court-martial at Fovant on 10 October 1918, for being AWL in June.[14] Pleading 'Not Guilty' on the first charge of AWL ((he claimed he was unable to arrange transport back to Hurdcott), but 'Guilty' to two charges of impersonation, he was found guilty of all charges, and was sentenced to a days' detention.

Lieutenant Percy Boyle VC DCM MM

Transferred to a training brigade after his conviction,[15] Spain went AWL again following leave in November. Apprehended by Military Police in Birmingham, a witness reported seeing him at the Regent Hotel on 15 and 16 November, dressed as an AIF officer and calling himself 'Lieutenant Percy Boyle'. The reception clerk at the Imperial Hotel also in Birmingham recalled seeing Spain there on 18 November, where he signed a Military Registration Form as 'Lieutenant Percy Boyle VC DCM MM'.[16] He was reported to have been wearing a soldier's tunic and Sam Browne Belt. While he was not wearing

11 *Kalgoorlie Miner* (WA), 5 December 1917, p. 3; *The Daily News* (Perth), 4 December 1917, p. 5; *Northern Times* (Carnarvon, WA), 8 December 1917, p. 3; *Western Argus* (Kalgoorlie, WA), 11 December 1917, p. 31.

12 Court Martial of 10 October 1918, NAA A471/13244/Spain-P.

13 He was fined £2 and was required to forfeit 4 days' pay, War service records, NAA B2455/SPAIN Percy.

14 Court Martial of 10 October 1918, NAA A471/13244/Spain-P.

15 Overseas Training Brigade, War Diary, October 1918, AWM 4/23/82/13; 49th Battalion AIF War Diary, AWM 4/23/66.

16 Spain-P, Court Martial of 17 December 1918, NAA A471/22023. All troops of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and below were required to fill in a Military Registration Form upon arrival at a hotel within the command area.

ribbons, the clerk had been shown a bar of three (VC, DCM, MM) that he said he was entitled to wear. On arrest, Spain claimed he had held a commission for 12 months, but later admitted that he was actually Regimental Sergeant-Major Percy Spain. In bed at the time of his arrest, it was noted that when he dressed to be taken away by the MPs, he removed the rank stars (which he later claimed were his brother's) from his Private's tunic before putting it on. He also asked to be given his Sam Browne Belt to wear, as he was entitled to, being an RSM. In the file with his Military Registration Form for the Imperial Hotel is a brooch of three ribbons, but notably the first maroon ribbon of the Victoria Cross is lacking the miniature VC device which would have been appropriate for wear at that time.[17]

Private Spain was added to the list for trial by District Court-Martial sitting at the Overseas Training Brigade on 17 December presided over by Major Mervyn Herbert, Permanent President of Courts-Martial in the United Kingdom.[18] Regarding his charge of AWL, Private Spain wove a complex tale of falling ill and attempting to return to his unit. Spain was also charged with 'conduct to the prejudice of good order and military discipline' by masquerading as an officer, and for wearing ribbons with no entitlement (but this second part was deleted, presumably because no witness could be found who had seen Spain actually wearing the ribbons). Spain was found guilty of masquerading as an officer and was sentenced to 90 days' detention.[19] Incarcerated at Lewes Detention Barracks in Sussex, Spain was released early for repatriation in March 1919.

66 Regimental Sergeant-Major Percy Boyle

Sailing via South Africa, at Durban, Spain failed to re-embark after shore leave at Durban. The day after the boat sailed, he brazenly reported to the General Depot orderly room claiming to be '66 Regimental Sergeant-Major P Boyle of the 45th Battalion'. Enquiries verified that no such person existed in the AIF, and the AIF Nominal Roll and Embarkation Rolls now confirm this.[20] The simplest solution reflects a degree of creativity – Percy Spain's service number was '6645' so he simply used this to create his service number ('66') and battalion ('45th').

Under close arrest he was taken to the AIF Depot in Capetown where he was charged and sentenced to 168 hours' detention and 28 days' forfeiture of pay. He then

17 Spain-P, Court Martial of 17 December 1918, NAA A471/22023; from April 1917, a miniature emblem of the Victoria Cross was authorised to be worn on the service ribbon at all times by Army recipients (Army Order No 114/17).

18 Overseas Training Brigade, War Diary, December 1918; Overseas Training Brigade, Routine Orders for 17 December 1918, AWM 4/23/82/15.

19 Spain-P, Court Martial of 17 December 1918, NAA A471/22023.

20 First World War Nominal Roll Page, AWM 133/05-080. The only close matches are 7200 Private Percival John Boyle who enlisted at the age of 41 and died of wounds in France on 24 September 1918 (War service records, NAA B2455/BOYLE PJ) and 17 Driver Percy Thomas Boyle who enlisted at the age of 41 and served in the 28th Battalion (War service records, NAA B2455/BOYLE PT).

embarked 'in Detention' on HT Commonwealth on 10 May for return to Australia. Whilst at sea, he faced further charges relating to obtaining money under false pretences and was given a further 14 days' detention.

During his discharge medical examination, Spain claimed that scars on his right shoulder were from a gunshot wound received in April 1915, for which he was invalided to Australia and he then re-enlisted. He said another scar was from a gunshot wound received in October 1917 for which he suffered eight months' restricted duties (this was his period of convalescence for trench fever). Private Percy Spain was discharged from the AIF on 4 July 1919.

Sergeant Percival Vernon Boyle DCM MM

In Perth, Percy went by the name of 'Percival Vernon Boyle DCM MM' – his given names being a variation of his true names 'Prudencio Vidal'. He claimed that 'Percy Spain' was in fact an assumed name, both his parents were dead, and he had lost five brothers in the war.[21] Hospitalised in August, Spain was identified by a patient as Percy Spain, but calling himself 'P Boyle DCM MM'. During conversation, 'Boyle' spoke of his brother, Lieutenant N S Boyle of the 26th Battalion AIF who had been killed on war service, and that both his parents were dead. Soon after, a Fremantle solicitor L Soley, appointed executor, drew up a will for 'Boyle' which divided his estate between two young ladies, one in Perth and the other in England. Moss later claimed that he held a letter written by Boyle to 'someone in England' stating that his true name was Percival Vernon Boyle and that he had enlisted under the alias 'Percy Spain'.

The Perth *Sunday Times* on 5 October 1919 reported that 'Percy Spain, D.C.M., M.M, collapses and dies in theatre at Perth'.[22] In fact, he was taken ill while attending the theatre on 27 September and died in the Perth Public Hospital the same night. In his personal effects were found a photograph of a woman and a military brooch bar bearing the ribbons of the DCM, MM and 1914-15 Star. Some confusion over his identity then arose, and a coronial inquiry for 'Percy Spain or Boyle' was deferred to 16 October.[23]

Meanwhile, Base Records sought to transmit the personal effects of the late Lieutenant N S Boyle and wrote to Spain under the name 'P Boyle Esq, DCM MM' to confirm that he was the legal next-of-kin. To settle the matter of his identity, on 10 March 1921 Mrs Elizabeth Spain was asked by the OIC Base Records to send a photograph of her son and to forward any letters or other material that would assist with identification. At the same time, the photograph found on Percy Spain/Boyle was forwarded to Mrs Spain. Mrs Spain sent a photograph of her son Percy, which allowed

21 *Sunday Times* (Perth), 5 October 1919, p. 1S; *NTTG*, 25 October 1919, p. 7.

22 *Sunday Times* (Perth), 5 October 1919, p. 20.

23 Surprisingly it seems that his medical records were not consulted for identification. His examination on 21 September 1915 had noted scars on his left collarbone, right shinbone, right foot, two scars on his right leg, and no tattoos. When he was examined on 19 December 1916, he was noted as having distinctive tattoos on his right arm of a butterfly with his mother's name above it (name not stated).

confirmation that the man who had died in the theatre was Percy Spain. Then, on 7 May 1921, the Secretary of the Darwin Returned Soldiers Association advised Base Records that the photograph found on the deceased was of Private Spain's mother, Mrs Elizabeth Spain. He also advised:

> she informs me that she has no knowledge of her son serving under an assumed name. She regrets that she has no letters addressed to her by her son . . . She received many letters from her son but his death was such a blow to her that she destroyed them all.[24]

By mid-1921 there was no doubt that the deceased 'Percival Vernon Boyle' was in fact Prudencio Vidal ('Percy') Spain from Darwin.

Sergeant Percy Spain DCM MM

Although reported in newspapers that he suffered shell shock,[25] nothing in his records suggests this.[26] A colleague under the pen-name of 'Sandfly' wrote to the Perth *Sunday Times*:

> The death of Percy Spain, DCM MM.—it will be remembered he collapsed in His Majesty's Theatre a few days ago—closes one of the many sad chapters in the history of the great war. This young Queensland soldier, (he was in his twenties) had just returned after five years' active service. Whilst at the battle front both his parents died. He also lost five brothers there, all killed in France, and now poor Percy, the last of the brave family, has "gone west." He suffered from the effects of shell shock, and no doubt a grief-stricken heart helped to accelerate his end.[27]

These fictitious stories perpetuated the untruths that had been told by Spain and had been sworn on oath during a court-martial. Perhaps his most telling statement, though, was that tendered in mitigation at his first court-martial, probably referring to his examination at No 3 Command Depot: 'When I went to France I was only seventeen years of age. I have recently lost my parents . . . Since my parents have died I do not know what I have been doing. I have been examined by an M.O. who said that I was mad'.[28]

An inquiry concerning the death of 'Percy Spain or Boyle' was held before

24 Mr S E Cohen, Secretary of the Darwin RSA, Letter dated 7 May 1921, War service records, NAA B2455/SPAIN Percy.

25 *Barrier Miner* (Broken Hill, NSW), 29 September 1919, p. 1; *The Register* (Adelaide), 29 September 1919, p. 3.

26 War service records, NAA B2455/SPAIN Percy.

27 *Sunday Times* (Perth), 5 October 1919, p. 1S. On his attestation form dated 20 October 1915, he stated he was born in 'Port Darwin in the State of Queensland'. This is not completely wrong, at this time the Northern Territory came under the military jurisdiction of the 1st Military District (Queensland).

28 Spain-P, Court Martial of 10 October 1918, NAA A471/13244.

the Deputy Coroner and a jury of three in the Perth City Courthouse on 16 October 1919. Supposedly dying of natural causes, his was in fact asphyxiated, consistent with strychnine poisoning.[29] Evidence was given by Horace Gallop from Fremantle, who stated he had known the deceased by the name of 'Percy Boyle' for two months (was Gallop the correspondent 'Sandfly'?). Gallop said he met Percy at Claremont railway station and they went to Perth and then to His Majesty's Theatre. About ten minutes after arriving, Percy complained of feeling unwell and was taken to the balcony, where he lay down and his head was bathed. Percy then said to Gallop, 'Ring A4437; don't take me to a public hospital'. The number was found to be a private hospital, and the matron not only said that she was unable to take him in but said that she knew Percy to be a shellshock patient from the Kalamunda Military Hospital and he had no right to be in Perth. Percy was taken by ambulance to the Perth Public Hospital, where he died shortly after arrival. He was stated to be about 24 years of age and 'appeared to be of foreign extraction' and 'was wearing the Anzac, the D.C.M., and M.M. ribbons'.[30] A Police Constable said that amongst Percy's papers he had found a letter addressed 'To whom it may concern' and signed 'P. Boyle', 'in which the writer intimated that he had poisoned himself of his own accord'. The jury returned a verdict that Percy Spain, alias Percy Boyle, came to his death from a self-administered dose of strychnine. His 'legend' was perpetuated without question when his funeral was arranged at Karrakatta Cemetery with the Sunday Times writing that, 'the friendless soldier, who had been decorated with the Military Medal and the Distinguished Conduct Medal, was buried with the honor due to a gallant warrior'.[31]

The positive identification that Boyle was actually Percy Spain led to his illegitimate wartime decorations being wrongly ascribed to him within the community, with the assumption that he had earned them under the name 'Boyle'. The Darwin newspaper referred again to his death on 25 October 1919, under the heading 'The Late Sergt. Spain':

> Referring to the death of Sergeant Spain (announced in this paper some weeks ago) the Perth *Sunday Times* says:
> While attending the performance at His Majesty's Theatre last night Sergt. Percy Spain, D.C.M., M.M., collapsed and had to be removed to the public hospital. There unfortunately he died, death being apparently a consequence of shell-shock. The deceased soldier was born at Darwin, and enlisted at the age of 17, serving in the 28th Battalion. His record shows that he was a very brave lad, and he was only 20 when death came with such tragic suddenness.
> (The above extract from the "Sunday Times" serves to remind residents of the Northern Territory of the terrible realities of war, and its aftermath. Of the many recruits who went from Darwin some paid the supreme sacrifice on the field of battle yet the death

29 *The Daily News* (Perth), 16 October 1919, p. 2; *The West Australian* (Perth), 17 October 1919, p. 8.
30 *The West Australian* (Perth), 17 October 1919, p. 8.
31 *Sunday Times* (Perth), 19 October 1919, p. 10S; *Sunday Times* (Perth), 26 October 1919, p. 5S.

of Sergt. Percy Spain from shell-shock after his return home ranks him with those who fell on the fields of France. He was well known in Darwin as an athlete, and his courage evidently won for him the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Military Medal. His brother, Felix, who also saw active service at the front, has not yet returned to Darwin).[32]

CONNECTIONS

It is estimated that perhaps as many as 15,000 soldiers enlisted under an alias[33] but there is no evidence that Percy Spain served at Gallipoli and won his DCM and MM (or even VC) under an assumed nom-de-guerre and then enlisted again in 1916. Equally, there were many military members and civilians who felt the need to wear a uniform, badge or ribbons, whether to impress others, inflate their own ego or to defraud.[34]

There was an AIF officer called Lieutenant Neil Stuart Boyle – coincidentally, he was from Darwin, but his parents lived in New Zealand. This Boyle was an engineer, and perhaps Prudencio Spain knew of him from working in the Darwin Government Workshops. Neil Boyle enlisted in Darwin on 11 March 1915 and joined the 26th Battalion AIF.[35] He was a contemporary in that battalion of Bert Borella VC MM (the most highly decorated Territorian at war's end) and Glamor Garr MM. Neil Boyle and Bert Borella were members of the First Northern Territory Contingent,[36] and went to Gallipoli together at the beginning of September 1915.

The relatively few enlistments from the Northern Territory were reasonably well documented in *The Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, and most of the men from the small Top End community knew each other. Deployed members kept readers informed of the movements and exploits of their own boys, and when in a new operational area or back in the UK they actively sought out fellow Territorians to catch up and share news. The service of the Territorians was followed with interest through letters regularly published under the title 'Our Boys at the Front'. It is not unreasonable to believe that Prudencio Spain was well aware of the service record of fellow Territorians such as Neil Boyle and Bert Borella.

Sergeant McDonald. One such 'war correspondent' was James Michael McDonald

32 *NTTG*, 25 October 1919, p. 7; refers to *Sunday Times* (Perth), 5 October 1919, p. 1S.

33 Smith (1996).

34 For example: Kenneth Falconer was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for false pretences and larceny, pretending to be a wounded soldier (*The Tamworth Daily Observer*, 14 December 1915, p. 2). In the Paddington Police Court, Gordon McDonald (aged 20) was charged with having unlawfully worn the ribbons of the DSO, MC, DCM and Croix de Guerre (*The Bathurst Times*, 7 June 1918, p. 4). In the Adelaide Police Court Walter Reynolds was fined for wearing a military discharge badge (*Port Pirie Recorder and North Western Mail*, 23 October 1917, p. 2).

35 Neil Stewart Boyle, the son of James and Mary Boyle of Wellington, New Zealand, enlisted under the name of 'Neil Stuart Boyle; War service records, NAA B2455/BOYLE NS.

36 This group was designated 'Northern Territory Contingent, Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force'. The Officer Commanding was Captain Robert Lewis, commander of the Darwin Cable Guard. They sailed for Brisbane on SS *Changsha* of the Australian-Oriental Line on 26 April 1915.

from the Public Works Department (PWD).[37] He also enlisted on 11 March 1915 and served as an infantryman with the 9th Battalion AIF almost continuously in Egypt, at Gallipoli and in France until returning home in March 1919. His cheery despatches from the Front kept readers informed not just of his exploits but the movements and medical status of the Territory boys as well, particularly those from Public Works.[38] 'Mac' was promoted to Sergeant in Egypt (battalion Pioneer Sergeant) and was later a Sergeant-Major, and was wounded at Pozières.[39] He could well have been adopted into Percy Spain's assumed persona.

Private Garr. There were fourteen awards of the Military Medal, to thirteen Territorians. Among them were two PWD members – William Henry Keogh (the only Territorian to also receive a Bar to his MM) and Bert Borella.[40] Another recipient was the Filipino-Australian Private Guillermo ('Glamor') Garr who had been wounded at Pozières, and was decorated for exceptional bravery during the 26th Battalion's attack on Villers-Bretonneux on the night of 17/18 July 1918.[41] Notably, Glamor Garr's brothers Palencio and William were PWD employees before enlisting, and Palencio and Matthew were members of the Fourth Northern Territory Contingent with Percy Spain.

Lieutenant Borella. It was in this same action on the night of 17-18 July that Bert Borella of the 26th Battalion won the Victoria Cross when he led a platoon in an attack on Jaffa Trench beyond Villers-Bretonneux.[42] Earlier, as a Sergeant, the Gallipoli veteran Borella had been awarded the Military Medal. His service too may have become part of the fabric of Percy Spain's masquerade.

Lieutenant Boyle. Neil Boyle served at Gallipoli as a 2nd Lieutenant; he was promoted to Lieutenant on 30 June 1916 and was made a platoon commander in 'D' Company, 26th Battalion.

Comparative Analysis. A comparison of service records makes for an interesting

37 Administrator's Annual Report for 1915-16 and 1916-17 dated 30 September 1917; War service records, NAA B2455/MCDONALD JM.

38 See for example: *NTTG*, 12 November 1914, 11 November 1915, 16 March 1916, 13 April 1916, 24 August 1916, 31 August 1916, 23 November 1916, 14 December 1916, 28 December 1916.

39 *NTTG*, 11 May 1916: letter dated 12 March 1916.

40 Administrator's Annual Report for 1915-16 and 1916-17 dated 30 September 1917; NTTG, 13 April 1916, 10 August 1916.

41 AWM 133/19-0028; AWM133/19-0047; 26th Battalion AIF War Diary, July 1918, AWM 4/23/43/36; Army Form W3121 (Recommendation) dated 25 July 1918; *London Gazette,* No 31061, 10 December 1918 and 3rd Supplement, 11 December 1918, p. 14669; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 14 March 1919, p. 426.

42 Bean (1942); *London Gazette*, No 30903, 5th Supplement, 16 September 1918, p. 11075; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No 23, 12 February 1919, p. 262.

timeline. McDonald reported that he 'got through Pozières alright but for a bit of a scratch on the side of the head'.[43] Bert Borella was not at Pozières,[44] but Neil Boyle was wounded there on 5 August, requiring evacuation to England. Glamor Garr received a gunshot wound to the back and chest on 6 August 1916 following the attack on the OG1 and OG2 trenches and was hospitalised in France.[45] As for Percy Spain's 'first wounding', he had enlisted in December 1916 and joined the 7th Training Battalion on 28 March, and was there until 13 June before going to France on 2 July 1917. In June-July 1917, Borella, Spain and Neil Boyle were all in England. The wounding of Boyle and Garr at Pozières could have been known to Spain, becoming the basis of his claim of being wounded on 21 August 1917. Intriguingly, his 'cut head' accords with McDonald's report of receiving a wound to the side of the head, published on 28 December 1916.

'Spain DCM MM'. Sergeant Bert Borella was cited for conspicuous bravery in January 1917 for which he was awarded the Military Medal in May.[46] Commissioned in April, Borella and Glamor Garr were with the 26th Battalion at Bullecourt. Spain and Borella were both on leave in England in June 1917, and again in November 1917 when Borella was with a training brigade and Spain was hsopitalised with trench fever. Later, Spain was at the 1st Command Depot at Sutton Veny when Borella took three weeks' leave in England in January 1918. Spain's episode of wearing the rank insignia of a Sergeant and the ribbons of the DCM and MM in June 1918 perhaps had some basis in Sergeant Borella's MM. And his arrest at Fovant village on 24 September wearing the rank insignia of a WOII might be based on Sergeant-Major 'Mac' McDonald.[47]

'Lieutenant Percy Boyle VC DCM MM'. The next significant events in this timeline were when Borella led an attack in July 1918 for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross. After his investiture at York Cottage in October, Borella embarked for Australia in November, having been in England since September. During these months, Percy Spain was at No 3 Convalescent Depot at Hurdcott – this was the fourth occasion he and Borella were in England at the same time.

Secondly, on the morning of 2 September 1918 Lieutenant Neil Boyle was involved in the Australian attack on Mont St Quentin with 'D' Company, 26th Battalion AIF. Pinned down by machine-guns and barraged with shrapnel shells and gas, Boyle

43 *NTTG*, 28 December 1916; Letter dated 23 September 1916.

44 After being wounded at Fleurbaix on 28 July, he was evacuated to England on 3 August and was admitted to the 3rd Northern General Hospital at Sheffield. After his recovery, Borella spent two months with the 7th Training Battalion at Tidworth until 2 November 1916.

45 26th Battalion AIF, War Diary, August 1916, AWM 4/23/43/13; *NTTG*, 30 November 1916.

46 *London Gazette*, No. 30064, 2nd Supplement, 11 May 1917; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 140, 27 August 1917.

47 McDonald was one of only two Territorians awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, but this was not gazetted until after the war: *London Gazette*, 3 September 1919, p. 11187; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 11 December 1919, p. 2375. McDonald was also Mentioned in despatches (*London Gazette*, 1 June 1917, p. 5421).

was mortally wounded in the head and died of his wounds three days later.[48] Given the way the deployed Territorians collected and shared news within their network, it is not unreasonable to believe that Percy Spain became aware of these significant events in the life and death of his fellow Territorians Borella and Boyle.

Spain's first court-martial, related to the events of June and September 1918, were, perhaps, simple acts of misrepresentation. But the second related to him masquerading as an officer. By this time he would have been well aware of Borella's VC and Boyle's death. When arrested he claimed to have held a commission for 12 months (which roughly accords with Borella being appointed from the rank of Sergeant, and Boyle being promoted from Second Lieutenant). Yet he also admitted to being a Regimental Sergeant-Major, perhaps drawing on the record of 'Mac' Macdonald. Following his incarceration, perhaps he realised that impersonating an officer and VC recipient was too audacious, and reverted to being a Regimental Sergeant-Major, and then simply Sergeant after his discharge. And he must have seen some advantage in aligning himself as a 'brother' to the late Lieutenant Boyle. By claiming both parents were dead, perhaps he thought nobody would bother to check.

In late 1919, three cases containing the personal effects of the late Lieutenant Neil Stuart Boyle were shipped from AIF Headquarters in London to the Department of Defence in Melbourne, for on-shipping to Boyle's mother in Wellington. Surprisingly though, a friend of Lieutenant Boyle, Miss Tigue of Paddington, London, had advised AIF Headquarters that Mr Percy Boyle DCM MM, 'has recently become the next-of-kin of his late brother (Lieutenant Boyle) as both his parents and his other brothers are now deceased'.[49] Miss Tigue could be the young lady in England who was nominated to be a co-recipient of Spain's estate in the will prepared in Perth.

In November 1919, Base Records wrote to 'P Boyle Esq, DCM MM' care of Mr Coley [sic] of North Fremantle, and again in February 1920, on the basis that Lieutenant Boyle's parents were both believed to be dead and Percy Boyle was his only surviving brother. This letter asked Boyle (Spain) to furnish a Statutory Declaration giving the dates and details of his parents' deaths, and to declare that he was the legal next-of-kin. Because Spain had died on 27 September 1919, neither of these letters were answered. However, Soley replied on 17 December 1920 that 'The only news that I can possibly give you is that he took ill at His Majesties Theatre and was removed to a hospital but which one I don't know. I tried to find out myself but couldn't'.

The brother of Lieutenant Boyle advised Base Records in March 1921 that, 'the parents of Lieut N.S. Boyle 26th Battalion are not deceased', and requested that the war medals be sent to his father.[50] On 23 March, Base Records received a reply from Lieutenant Boyle's father confirming that he was still living at the recorded address in

48 Died of wounds at 8th General Hospital, Rouen, 5 September 1918, aged 32, buried in St Sever Cemetery in Rouen, France (grave 'Officers C-3-2'), http://www.nzwargraves.org.nz/casualties/neil-stuart-boyle.

49 Administrative Headquarters AIF, Letter to the Secretary, Department of Defence, dated 13 September 1919, NAA B2455/BOYLE NS.

50 Letter from ML Boyle to Base Records, dated 15 March 1921, NAA B2455/BOYLE NS.

Wellington.

CCC COMMEMORATION

Public Works Department.[51] On 13 May 1916, a provisional PWD Honour Roll was unveiled by the Administrator Dr Gilruth. As the first form of public recognition of Darwin's volunteers for war service, this roll rightly carried the name of Prudencio Spain (apprentice fitter), as well as his brother Felix (fireman) and fellow Filipino-Australians Palencio Garr (labourer) and his eldest brother William (labourer).

Karrakatta Cemetery.[52] The police made arrangements for a pauper's funeral for 'Private Percy Spain, of the 49th Battalion, AIF, returned', but Colonel Tilney who managed the convalescent farm at Kalamunda made other arrangements, believing Spain to have been 'on weekend leave' at the time. The grave is in the Anglican portion of the Karrakatta Cemetery, where he is listed as 'Percy Spain, also known as Percy Boyle', aged 22.

National commemoration. The names of William and Matthew Garr are recorded on the Rolls of Honour at the Australian War Memorial, panels 174[53] and 143[54] respectively – the only Filipino-Australians killed on active service during the Great War. Percy Spain's name is not listed (under Spain or Boyle), and neither did the family receive a Memorial Plaque in his name, presumably because he did not die 'during or as a result of service'.

Local commemoration.[55] A Soldiers' Monument was officially unveiled near Government House Darwin on 24 April 1921. The granite panels included the names of three Filipino-Australians from Darwin: Matthew Garr [56] and his brother

51 *NTTG*, 18 May 1916, p. 12; *NTTG*, 25 May 1916, p. 16; Administrator's Annual Report for 1915-16 & 1916-17, dated 30 September 1917. Palencio Gar was listed as 'D Garr' on this list and also the Soldiers Monument Committee list of volunteers.

52 *The West Australian* (Perth), 1 October 1919, p. 1; *Sunday Times* (Perth), 19 October 1919, p. 10S; 26 October 1919, p. 5S; Grave reference 'Anglican, MC, 0296' – http://www2.mcb.wa.gov.au/Name-Search/details.php?id=KB00022084

53 Roll of Honour – William Gar (correctly named as 'Gar'), http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/person.asp?p=578422

54 Roll of Honour - Matthew Garr, http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/roll_of_honour/person.asp?p=578215

55 *NTTG*, 18 May 1916, p. 12; *NTTG*, 23 April 1921, p. 6; *NTTG*, 26 April 1921 p. 2; *NTTG*, 28 April 1921 p. 4; *NTTG*, 25 October 1919, p. 7; *NTTG*, 19 May 1921, p. 1; *NTTG*, 26 May 1921, p. 1; *NTTG*, 23 June 1921, p. 1; *NTTG*, 25 April 1922, p 2. The Darwin Cenotaph was relocated to the Civic Centre near the Darwin City Council offices in 1970, and in 1992 it was moved to its present location in Bicentennial Park.

56 Martien Mateo Ga (1889-1917) gave his name as 'Mathew Gar' when he enlisted in the AIF, but from the time he arrived in Brisbane all Army records gave his name as 'Matthew Garr'; 428 Private Matthew Garr served with the 47th Battalion AIF, and on 29 September 1917 was killed in action on Anzac Ridge in Flanders, aged 28.

Figures 2 and 3: Memorials featuring Spain. Source: Author.

William,[57] and Percy Spain (see figure 2). In more recent years, in its present location in Bicentennial Park, brass tablets have been added to the red granite base listing all Territorians who lost their lives in the war – surprisingly, the name of Percy Spain was again included (see figure 3).

Of note, Lieutenant Neil Boyle is one of five Northern Territory officers listed on the Cenotaph; he is also listed at the Australian War Memorial (Panel 107) and is commemorated by Boyle Street in the Darwin suburb of Moil.[58]

Awards. There were less than 1,800 Distinguished Conduct Medals awarded to Australians during the Great War[59] and the DCM-MM combination was quite rare. Yet Spain's supposed post-nominals were freely used in the press without question and without any specific details regarding the circumstances of the awards: in October 1919, even the local Darwin newspaper cited his assumed decorations.[60] But at least

57 William Ga (1891-1916) was the first Filipino from Darwin to apply for the Australian Imperial Force – using the name 'William Gar'; 3051 Private William Gar served in Egypt and France with the 4th Pioneer Battalion AIF, and was killed by a high explosive shell on the Somme on 30 November 1916, just four days after his 25th birthday.

58 *Northern Territory Gazette*, 42, dated 25 September 1968.

59 Williams (1990) p.19; Johnson (2014) p. 130.

60 *NTTG*, 25 October 1919, p 7.

following his period of incarceration he no longer claimed to have a Victoria Cross, and this seems not to have been mentioned again. Percy Spain's service record now confirms his entitlement as the standard pair. The British War Medal was sent to Antonio Spain by Base Records Melbourne on 12 August 1921. It was received by Mrs Spain on 30 November, and she received the Victory Medal on 12 June 1923. One night in October 1927, Elizabeth Spain's residence in Wood Street was forcibly entered and one of Percy's medals and a sum of money were stolen. The crime, according to the Darwin newspaper, was 'a particularly mean one in as much as the thief was obviously aware that he was robbing from a lonely woman who was absent at work and the war medal the only remembrance left to her of a lost son'.[61]

Figure 4: Prudencio Spain as a boy. Source: Author.

CONCLUSION

To paraphrase the Duke of Newcastle, Secretary of State for War, during the deliberations surrounding the creation of the Victoria Cross in January 1855, the perceived status of wearing a little bit of ribbon was clearly to some of such value as to render light any potential risk of denigration or punishment. But as has been suggested for many such imposters, was Spain impersonating a hero or was he just delusional?[62]

Regardless, the belief in Spain's decorations persisted. In November 1920,

61 *NTTG*, 4 October 1927, p 2.
62 See Stanley (2010).

a Soldiers Monument Committee announced its intention to erect a monument in Darwin honouring those who died on war service and published a list of names – including Percy Spain (presumably believed to have died as a result of shell-shock). Any proposed amendments needed to be advised promptly so the monument could be engraved before it left Sydney on 1 January 1921.[63] Clearly there was no proposal to remove the name of the convicted imposter Percy Spain, so without advice to the contrary his name was included on the memorial.

Next, the committee published a tentative list of all known volunteers, which would 'be perpetuated in a manner not yet decided upon'.[64] The first lists published in May 1921 included Felix and Percy Spain as volunteers, but the list published in June was updated to note Percy Spain as 'killed' – presumably to accord with his listing on the cenotaph.[65]

At the unveiling of the Soldiers' Monument on 24 April 1921, the honorary secretary of the Soldiers' Monument Committee, Percy Kelsey, had said that monuments such as these serve to 'keep green the memory' of the men and also 'those who have been left to mourn them'.[66] Among the many wreaths laid at the foot of the monument that day were ones by Elizabeth and Antonio Spain and family, and Mr and Mrs Felix Spain.[67] Even though Elizabeth had burnt all of Percy's letters, his name did appear on the cenotaph and paying their respects was no doubt the proper thing to do.

Despite the circumstances of his death, the Spain family still mourned his loss each year, though with no mention of his claimed rank, decorations or military service.[68] Antonio Spain died of bowel cancer in Darwin on 21 July 1926, aged 64, after having lived in Australia for at least 50 years.[69] An obituary, published in July 1926, perpetuated the myth of Percy Spain, 'And his son Sergeant Percy Spain died as a result of wounds at the war'.[70] Similarly, when Mrs Elizabeth Spain died in Brisbane on 3 April 1951, aged 85, one newspaper, calling her the 'Queen of Darwin', wrongly stated: 'One son, Percy, died on active service in World War I'.[71]

The decision to include Percy Spain on the Darwin Cenotaph was made within a constrained timeframe, based on media reporting which simply repeated untruths without any fact-checking, assuming his 'shell-shock' to be real and without knowledge of his imprisonment. Equally, while his fanciful tally of decorations might have been

63 *NTTG*, 9 November 1920, p. 2.
64 *NTTG*, 19 May 1921, p. 1; *NTTG*, 26 May 1921, p. 1.
65 *NTTG*, 23 June 1921, p. 1.
66 *NTTG*, 28 April 1921, p. 4.
67 *NTTG*, 26 April 1921, p. 3.
68 *Northern Standard* (Darwin), 27 September 1921, p. 2; *Northern Standard* (Darwin), 28 September 1923, p. 2; *Northern Standard* (Darwin), 29 September 1923, p. 6.
69 Antonio was buried in Garden Road Cemetery, in an unmarked grave in row 708. He was honoured in 1962 with the naming of 'Spain Place' off Cavenagh Street in Darwin city in his honour (*NTG*, 46, dated 3 October 1962).
70 *NTTG*, 23 July 1926, p 3.
71 *Northern Standard* (Darwin), 6 April 1951, p 5.

believable to some in 1919, today each can be easily refuted. Any effort a century later to create some form of simulacrum or memorial to Percy Spain's valour would be misplaced.

This perpetuation of Percy Spain's charade to the very end and beyond could almost make a researcher believe that some vital piece of information had been missed, but the exchange of photographs had put to rest any doubt regarding the identity of the deceased. The escalating pattern of fraud and deception reached a zenith which led to his imprisonment, and the archived records (not previously available) are unequivocal regarding this. And he still persisted afterwards, albeit at a level which might not attract as much attention, as an officer with a VC.

There is no doubt his aptitude for defrauding developed early, and perhaps his identity was becoming an amalgam of people he had met or heard of – he was not initially impersonating a hero per se, he was seeking the adulation due a hero. But there is a very clear pattern in the timeline suggesting that Neil Boyle, Bert Borella and others were drawn in to that persona.

Antonio and Elizabeth's children had attended Darwin Public School and were active participants in community activities such as the regular 'Juvenile Fancy Dress Ball'. In one such ball held in the Town Hall in June 1905, Felix Spain (aged 13) was dressed as a 'Quartermaster', his brother Hignio was a 'Spanish Bullfighter' and Prudencio (aged 8) was a 'Schoolboy'.[72] In September 1911, Prudencio (aged 14) was a 'Spanish Bullfighter', his brother Joseph was 'His Majesty's Servant' and their sister Lizzie was the 'Duchess of Fife'.[73] A pre-war photo of a teenaged Prudencio, perhaps from one of these balls, shows him wearing a form of uniform (see figure 4). For his siblings and others, these were typical childhood activities, simply a phase in their adolescence. Prudencio Spain however seems to have taken the idea to heart, and perhaps this was the basis of his predilection for impersonation.

72 *NTTG*, 23 June 1905, p. 3.

73 *NTTG*, 15 September 1911, p. 3; On 11 November 1924, Elizabeth Louisa Puerte Spain married Mounted Constable Joseph Edwards Green of Maranboy, a decorated Gallipoli veteran who had been awarded the Romanian *Medaille Barbatie si Credinta* ('Valour & Loyalty Medal') 1st Class.

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The Art of Deck Landing in the Old Straight Deck Days

Norman Lee

In the old straight deck days, two people worked in unison to get an aircraft safely down on the deck; the pilot and the batsman, the latter was essential because the pilot could not see the flight deck over the aircraft's nose.

There were good batsmen and some less so. The epitome of the good batsman to me was Teddy Genge, one of our two batsmen on loan from the RN during the Korean War. Teddy stood rock solid on the batting platform and if he gave you a signal you knew that you had to respond quickly otherwise you would soon be in trouble. The other batsman was Sid Richardson. Sid was a little generous with his correction messages, but nevertheless would get you down OK.

The drill was to aim to be at a steady 90 knots (in the case of the Firefly) at the 90 degree, being careful not to trail which was caused by turning in too late. The result was that the batsman would disappear under the nose of the aircraft. If you waited until it looked right to turn in from the downward leg, as per an airfield landing, it was too late as the ship had advanced by the time you got to the ninety.

You hoped to receive a steady 'roger' as you reached that point, which meant that your height, turn rate and speed were all correct. In the final stage of the approach, as you were close to the roundown, you would get a small flick of the bats to straighten

Photograph 1: Fairey Firefly landing. Source: Author.

up. With experience, you would reduce the power you were carrying to maintain the turn; just a tad to prevent a small climb developing, waiting for the cut.

The signals were the high, the low, too fast, too slow and two others, the high dip which called for a small drop in height, and the low dip which required power to regain the correct height. The dreaded signal was the 'come on' which meant that you were low and slow which required a power increase and attitude adjustment. (I got a 'come on' when doing my initial training in HMS *Illustrious* in the Irish Sea when my pitch lever slipped back, and I began to settle down towards the sea as the Griffon failed to respond to the demand for more power, a very exciting moment).

Photograph 2: HMAS *Sydney (III),* Korea 1951. Source: AWM 301418.

The batsman's aim was to get you into an imaginary box from which a landing could be safely achieved. He would make the cut appropriate to where you were in the box. A little high and fast would trigger an early cut, the converse would mean a late cut.

Two signals were compulsory, the cut and the wave off. The cut was given by the right bat being rapidly crossed over the batsman's chest; the wave off by both bats being waved together over the batsman's head. One of our batsmen, having given you every signal in the book, and possibly twice over, would decide to curtail the approach and wave you off. Unfortunately, he caught me out twice by advancing his right bat much quicker than the left which looked like a cut. My poor Observer almost had a heart attack as the power was cut and then immediately poured on again.

Having received the cut, the drill was to let the nose drop, which it did with

the reduction in power, this gave you an instant view of the deck, enabling you to make minor adjustments in lining up, and to assess your height. This was the critical point of the whole of process of achieving a successful landing, the aim being to flare the aircraft into the three-point attitude, just over the deck, with zero vertical velocity. Done properly, the result would ensure you hooked a wire.

The most common error was to fail to fully flare, with remaining residual downward velocity resulting in a bounce and missed wires. Over-flaring could result in a climb and a possible float over the wires. If the speed was a little high this could result in a small climb on flaring, again causing the aircraft to float over the wires and into the barrier This in colloquial terms was known as a 'full toss'.

Photograph 3: Fairey Firefly on final approach for landing on HMS *Glory,* Korea 1951. Source: AWM 044275.

Should the aircraft fail to hook a wire, or the hook bounce (an initial problem with Fireflies), it was into the barrier. The bounce problem was subsequently corrected with a modification which also made the hook lower much further. We had a few RN aircraft on loan with this modification which was apparent when forming up after a bombing mission, as you looked to see who were the lucky ones!

There were two barriers which were raised and lowered hydraulically to enable aircraft to taxy forward into the forward deck park.

The Firefly was fitted with a belly hook and the Fury with a sting. This meant that the Firefly could catch one of the later wires and stop short of the barriers (except 10 wire), but the Fury was not so lucky.

As experience was developed, a good barrier operator could make a quick assessment that a wire had been caught, albeit a late one and drop the barrier. This saved a few pilots from embarrassment.

My course mate and I did our initial deck landing in HMS *Illustrious* (of WWII fame) in the Irish sea. My first attempt resulted in a bounce, but fortunately I hooked a wire. This caused the aircraft to slam down on the deck resulting in slight stressing of the centre section.

Photograph 4: Hawker Sea Fury landing on HMAS *Sydney*. Note the fully extended arrestor wire in the landing hook. Source: AWM 305450.

My mate, Blue got the cut and immediately flared with the result that he went full tilt into the barriers shedding his flaps, undercarriage, and airscrew. He proceeded up the deck, skidding on the fuselage, stopping just short of the port forward 4.5-gun mount. To my, and his surprise, he received an above average for deck landing. It was the first barrier I witnessed and, as outlined, it was a full bottle effort; the noise was remarkable!

There was no doubt that constant practise was essential to maintain a high standard of deck landing. This was proved during the Korean War when the work up was a disaster, but the subsequent two operations a day resulted in few accidents.
When we moved to the angle deck, life became a little less stressful. At least if you missed the wires you only hurt your pride as you bolted.

I deck landed the Gannet in HMS *Bulwark* and HMAS *Melbourne*, and the Sea Hawk in HMS *Centaur*, but unfortunately not the Sea Venom and hence cannot comment on it as a deck lander.

Straight deck landing was an art requiring very fine tuning of height and speed control. Once learnt it resulted in a successful landing every time, as 255 accident free arrivals attested. Although I must confess that I had the odd hairy arrival in the early days.

The Compassionate Captor
The Story of Dr Mitsufuji and Private Gus Bell

Tracy Bell[1]

In 1943, in a Prisoner of War (POW) camp in Java, its commandant, Dr Yasuteru Mitsufuji, saved the life of an Australian soldier, Private Gordon 'Gus' Bell. It became a war story that Gus was comfortable to share with his family and was clearly an important memory. While he dismissed reconciliation reunions between prisoners and guards he said that he would like to see Dr Mitsufuji again. Attempts to find him began in 1989 and continued after Gus passed away in 2001. In 2016, after an unsuccessful search of Japanese Government records, the Embassy of Japan in Canberra contacted the POW Research Network Japan, a non-government organisation established in 2002 to promote peace by educating Japanese about Japan's actions in World War II. By chance a network member had translated a book by a Dutch internee who wrote of the kindness of her camp commandant, Dr Mitsufuji. Although Dr Mitsufuji had passed away in 1995 the translator had met his wife Masako Mitsufuji. With the Network's assistance, letters and photos were exchanged between the two families. In April 2018 I travelled to Mrs Mitsufuji's home in Fukuyama, Japan, to share Gus's story with her, and in hope of better understanding her husband, a man who retained his humanity at a time when so many of his compatriots lost theirs.

Officially Gus Bell's war began when he enlisted in Goulburn, New South Wales, on 22 July 1940 at the age of 20.[2] In reality it began on 10 January 1942 aboard a Qantas flying boat when Gus was assigned to a machine gun mounted at an open door and advised to shoot any planes he saw with red circles on the wings. On board, he the rest of 'A' Company of the 2/12th Field Ambulance learned that they were headed for Timor to join the unit detachment under Captain Les Poidevin that had been providing medical support to Sparrow Force since 7 December 1941. When tropical diseases and other illnesses seriously affected Sparrow Force's strength, 'A' Company was flown in to provide additional assistance.[3] Sparrow Force's objective was, as part of the Malay Barrier Strategy, to prevent invasion of Australia by holding Timor against the Japanese.[4]

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1 Tracy Bell is the daughter of Gordon 'Gus' Bell. This article is based on her father's recollections and her search for Dr Yasuteru Mitsufuji. Tracy taught English in Japan for six years and speaks Japanese.

2 War service records, NAA B883 NX60484.

3 GH Bell interview; 2/12th Field Ambulance, War Diary, January and February 1942, AWM 11/12/21; Effect of illness on Force strength, www.sparrowforce.com/2_12th.htm.

4 Douglas Gillison, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (1962), pp. 141-172; Christopher CH Wray, *Timor 1942*, Hutchinson, Melbourne (1987), pp. 1-21.

The Japanese invasion began in the early hours of 20 February 1942 and though the men of Sparrow Force fought bravely, overwhelmed by the superior numbers and experience of the Japanese forces, Lieutenant Colonel William Leggatt surrendered on 23 February.[5] Medical staff were asked to stay with the sick and wounded rather than retreat to the hills to fight. Gus questioned the wisdom of staying during the long tense day with machine guns trained upon them while the Japanese debated their fate. Finally, the Japanese announced that they would not be killed and were now their prisoners. Six weeks after leaving Australia, Gus was 'in the bag'.[6]

Photograph 1: Group portait 'A' Company, 2/12th Field Ambulance (Bell is second row, third from left). Source: Author.

The Australians remained on Timor at Oesapa Besar until relocations began in July 1942. On 23 September 1942 Gus and the last men of Sparrow Force descended into the filthy, over-crowded hold of the hell ship, Dainichi Maru. Despite being bombed by Allied planes and stalked by an American submarine, the ship made it and the prisoners entered the camp at Tanjung Priok on 1 October 1942.[7] From there Gus

5 Wray, *Timor*, pp. 33-58; 'The odds were hopeless. Not only was it a type of warfare that our troops had not been trained for, but the Nips had much experience in it already, in their progress down the Pacific', Cpt (Dr) Lesley 'Les' Poidevin, 2/12th Field Ambulance, AWM PR00826/5/15.

6 GH Bell interview.

7 GH Bell interview, Gus later suffered extreme claustrophobia from being locked in the ship's hold while it was bombed; Dr Poidevin describes the journey in a document written during the war (AWM PROO826/3/15). He identifies the ship as Dainichi Maru although his memoirs refer to the Daiichi Maru. Dr EH 'Harry Medlin, also of Sparrow Force, uses the name, Dainichi Maru, (www.pows-of-japan.net/articles/51.htm).For further information about the ship see www.britain-at-war.org.uk/WW2/Hell_Ships/html/names.htm.

Photograph 2: Private Bell enroute to Darwin. Source: Author.

was transferred between camps in Java and while there were marginal differences in the quality of the food and sanitation, conditions were universally very poor. Deterioration of POW health that had begun on Timor now accelerated. Camps bore a wintry aspect as prisoners stripped the vegetation around them in search of vitamins. Gus ate snake and dog, but drew the line at 'alley rabbit', the nickname for disease-carrying rats.

Having destroyed identification papers before capture, Gus and other medical orderlies were expected to go on work parties like Other Ranks. These opportunities to scrounge outside the camp for supplies and information and to earn money to buy food were welcomed by the men, however work parties placed an additional strain on their health as they continued to work regular shifts at camp hospitals. The routine was only sustainable because mates took shifts for those too exhausted or sick to work. Conditions worsened with increased mental and physical abuse by Korean guards who replaced Japanese regular soldiers as they redeployed to combat zones. The Koreans took out their resentments of the Japanese on the prisoners.[8]

Although appeals for medical aid from Australian medical staff to Japanese camp authorities seemed to fall on deaf ears, in early 1943, a Japanese doctor visited camps looking for medical orderlies.[9] On 31 March when Australian personnel returned to Tandjung Priok from Makasura Captain Poidevin wrote that

8 GH Bell interview; Dr Poidevin confirms that a 'misguided officer' ordered some orderlies to erase their unit from their paybooks, AWM PR00826/6/15. He also notes that they had not received official Red Cross identification cards before departure for Timor, AWM PR00826/2/15.

9 The account of the establishment of the St Vincentius and Mater Dolorosa hospitals is based on a detailed report written by Dr Poidevin on 21 February 1944, supported by information in the same wallet (footnoted below) rather than the 2010 article where he wrote that, on his suggestion, Lt Col CW 'Pete' Maisey made successful representations to the Japanese for their establishment (www.pows-of-japan.net/articles/51.htm). He may actually have been thinking of the occasion when he needed to convince Maisey allow him to establish his own operating theatre at Tandjung Priok. The later account also suggests the hospital was open from August 1943 rather than April, the date supported by his 1944 account and Dutch archival records. See www.indischekamparchieven.nl/en/search?mivast=963&miadt=968&miahd=1258889987&miaet=14&micode=kampen&miview=ika2.

> several Fd./Amb (sic) personnel were detailed by the Nips to move to two new outside hospitals which were being formed at this stage. The actual arrangements, of course, were vague and not known to us but rumour had it that the old Batavia hosp. was being closed and new ones opened – a surgical - and an infectious hosp.[10]

He identified ten orderlies as being sent to the hospitals, with Gus among them. Gus had been one of the men who built hospitals and assisted sappers and pioneer units when training in Darwin, earning the unit its nickname, 'the Pioneers'.[11] This experience, as well as his training and work as a theatre orderly, may have counted favourably towards selection for the detail at the surgical hospital at St Vincentius.[12]

Along with the surgical hospital at St Vincentius, a hospital for infectious diseases was established at Mater Dolorosa Convent. St Vincentius was previously an orphanage and boarding school and the dormitories and communal areas of both sites were easily adapted to create wards. An operating theatre with a ceiling electric light and an area with cold-water facilities to scrub up was added to St Vincentius.

With no Australian officers as point of contact it was possible for a particular rapport and respect to develop between Dr Mitsufuji and the small group of prisoners who arrived in April. Certainly mutual goodwill was demonstrated on an occasion when Gus and Dr Mitsufuji, meeting by chance, bowed to each other. As Gus rose he saw that Dr Mitsufuji was still bowing and hurriedly bowed again. As Dr Mitsufuji straightened, he found Gus still bowing and also bowed again. There were a few awkward moments before the two were able to be on their way without causing insult.[13]

When Captain Poidevin and other men of the 2/12th Field Ambulance arrived at the hospital on 23 August 1943 they found seven of the ten orderlies previously taken by the Japanese in April, including Gus. The other three orderlies may have been at Mater Dolorosa but are not accounted for.[14]

Thought qualified as a GP and not a surgeon, Captain Poidevin had become the 'potong' doctor, (meaning 'to cut' in Malay) and performed many operations under the most challenging circumstances. Getting to know Dr Mitsufuji at St Vincentius he described him as 'the most sympathetic of all the Japanese [he] encountered. Although he spoke little English, he tried to learn and usually had an interpreter'. He was sure he was ashamed of the treatment of POWs and tried his utmost to help them. Captain

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10 Dr L Poidevin, Further Progress Report of Remainder Following Draft at 4/1/43, AWM PR00826/2/15.

11 G Mackenzie-Smith, 'The Unluckiest Unit in the Second AIF? 2/12th Field Ambulance AAMC', *Sabretache*, 60 (2010): 17-20; Photograph of GH Bell with AASC attachment personnel (2nd row, 3rd from right), *The First Aider, 2/12th Field Ambulance Souvenir Magazine,* (1941), Argus Print, Parramatta, p. 40, AWM AN PR00826/4/15.

12 Poidevin records, AWM PR00826/6/15.

13 GH Bell interview.

14 Poidevin records, Further Progress Report, AWM PR00826/2/15.

Poidevin found him 'kind and persistent in his efforts to obtain supplies [for them] even though it was contrary to Japanese policy'.[15]

These efforts included providing the hospital with a 'beautiful' large electric steriliser, and a small X-ray machine. Dr Mitsufuji delighted in producing unprocurable catgut but while Novocaine crystals for anaesthesia were liberally provided, requests for ether were unsuccessful. Captain Poidevin was never able to find out if it was because there was not any ether or because it was too risky to obtain.

In January 1944, Dr Mitsufuji approached Senior Medical Officer Lieutenant Colonel C W 'Pete' Maisey, about how best to spend money to benefit the prisoners. On Maisey's advice he arranged for medicines, food, clothing, books and even gramophone records. Captain Poidevin wrote that Dr Mitsufuji put himself at great personal risk by these actions as the Kempeitai, the Japanese secret police, were watching POWs and internment camps closely for suspected collaboration.[16]

Photograph 3: Dr Mitsufuji (with pup) and unidentified camp guard. Source: Author.

Nevertheless, Captain Poidevin also wrote that Dr Mitsufuji 'did not appear to be a strong character'.[17] The assessment is not explained and at odds with Dr Mitsufuji's willingness to put himself at personal risk for people held in contempt by his peers. It is probably the result of linguistic or cultural misunderstanding. The East Indies Camp Archives state that 'camp commandant Mitsufuji was not a match for his underlings' and, although Captain Poidevin found the guards at St Vincentius slightly better than other camps, he may have felt the same.[18] This would be to overestimate Dr Mitsufuji's ability to control his environment. The pressure in Japanese society to conform to group thinking, particularly at that time, cannot be underestimated. Dr Mitsufuji's ability to hold to a personal moral compass in the face of his countrymen's hostility to POWs is highly unusual. The ability to positively influence others

15 Poidevin records, AWM PR00826/6/15. (The word 'kind' did not make his memoirs).
16 Dr L Poidevin, *Samurais and Circumcisions*, Gillingham Printers, Adelaide (1985) pp. 95, 96, 98, 100.
17 Poidevin, *Samurais*, p. 100.
18 Poidevin, *Samurais*, pp. 93, 102; Dutch statement www.indischekamparchieven.nl/en/search?mivast=963&miadt=968&miahd=1258889987&miaet=14&micode=kampen&miview=ika2.
19 Senior journalist for newspaper, The Asahi Shimbun, Ms Maki Okubo, has interviewed a number of Japanese returned soldiers. She stressed that Dr Mitsufuji's behaviour was unusual and unique in her experience, interview with Mrs Masako Mitsufuji, 26 March 2018.
20 GH Bell interview; Poidevin, *Samurais*, pp. 101-102.

deeply, if he tried, would have been very difficult, if not impossible.[19]

From early 1943, drafts of Sparrow Force were taken to Singapore, Thailand, Sumatra and Japan. Although the situation in Java was bad, POWs were aware that conditions were worse elsewhere. Gus nursed survivors of work parties from Haroekoe, Flores and Ambon whose conditions were so shocking that the Japanese themselves openly expressed horror. Rumours of a deadly railway project on the Burma-Thailand border, eventually the destination of most of Sparrow Force, were circulating.[20]

Photograph 4: Dr Mitsufuji, taken after enlistment and prior to overseas departure.
Source: Author.

Sometime in 1943 Dr Mitsufuji oversaw a selection of POWs from the hospital camps for transfer off Java. By this time Gus was suffering malnutrition and its side effects, including the skin condition pellagra, the nerve disorder causing 'happy feet', beriberi and loss of vision. His strength was further diminished by bouts of malaria and dengue fever, tropical ulcers and tuberculosis contracted while nursing tubercular patients. At the time of the selection he was also suffering from dysentery. These were the standard illnesses of captivity and had become normalised and unremarkable. As everyone else was in the same condition, Gus saw no reason that he would not be selected. He expected the move off Java to be his death sentence.

On the day of the selection, the prisoners lined up before Dr Mitsufuji with a stool specimen on a banana leaf. Gus nervously stepped forward but the doctor told his assistant that 'this man is too sick and had better stay'. Greatly relieved, he was convinced that the decision was influenced by Dr Mitsufuji's acquaintance with him, rather than his health. He was grateful for his life and given the horrific death toll on the Railway, his gratitude was not misplaced.[21]

In April 1945 the hospital camps were closed and became internment camps, still commanded by Dr Mitsufuji. The prisoners were sent to Bandung and then to the Bicycle Camp where they remained until the end of the war. The Australian Government moved slowly on repatriating Australian prisoners so Lady Edwina Mountbatten, Countess Mountbatten of Burma, intervened to commandeer a plane to take the worst twenty medical cases back to Australia. Gus was selected by Captain Poidevin for the flight.[22]

Gus went home and put the war behind him. He married and raised three

21 GH Bell interview.

22 GH Bell interview; Poidevin, *Samurais*, pp. 117-130,

daughters and his hostility to the Japanese evolved to focus on those who mistreated him rather than all Japanese people. He was frustrated that Japanese was not taught at schools when Japan was Australia's major trading partner and after many years of owning British-made cars, he bought a Toyota. Discussions of his war experiences were sporadic and focussed more on happy times with mates than the beatings that eventually disabled him, forcing him to retire at 58 years of age.

Dr Mitsufuji returned to Japan. He also married happily and raised three daughters. Masako Mitsufuji, now 90, says that while her husband did not speak a great deal about his war experiences, she was aware that he had often received reprimands from his superiors for soft treatment of POWs, and had received 'bad reports' from the army. Ironically, when he was detained in Java by the Allies at the end of the war, he feared greatly that he would hang for war crimes but his fears disappeared with two documents. A Buddhist priest-soldier gave him a sutra, a Buddhist text affirming forgiveness where there is true penitence; and he received a testimonial from Dutch internees from St Vincentius thanking him for his care and assistance to them. On the strength of the letter from the internees, Dr Mitsufuji was repatriated to Japan without trial, according to Mrs Mitsufuji, the only Japanese doctor not executed for war crimes. She believed that with these spiritual and material supports, Dr Mitsufuji was able to return to Japan, put the war behind him and get on with his life.

Photograph 5: Dr Mitsufuji in retirement. Source: Author.

Mrs Mitsufuji believed her husband's family background fostered a different way of thinking from that of most Japanese soldiers, enabling him to risk the disapproval of his people and punishment by the Kempeitai for helping POWs. He grew up in an environment that fostered independent thinking. Despite society's disapproval his father divorced his first wife and married again. Also unusual for the times, Dr Mitsufuji was allowed to keep in contact with his mother and did so for the rest of his life. He also came from a long line of doctors who were accustomed to take responsibility for others, something that even many Japanese today find onerous unless related to their 'in' group, such as family, friends or co-workers. His wife stressed that he treated everybody equally. He did not act differently to family or strangers. This enabled him to care for captives without diminished commitment to Emperor and country, although it seems that the Japanese Army did not agree with his thinking.

23 Interview with Mrs Masako Mitsufuji, 26 March 2018.

While Gus believed Dr Mitsufuji saved his life, Mrs Mitsufuji said that her husband was equally convinced that the captives in the camps saved him. This was, she thought, an enso, the Buddhist circle of life which marks the beginning and end of all things and the connectedness of our existence.[23]

Photograph 6: Studio portrait of Private Bell.
Source: Author.

Photograph 7: Mrs Mitsufuji with author.
Source: Author.

'Climbing the long road to Marshalls of the Royal Air Force'

Steve Dyer (Ed)

'Men… criticis[ed] the fact that the Empire Air agreement made them sergeants on graduation but made no provision for subsequent promotion'.[1]

Fred Dyer joined the RAAF on 18 July 1942 after nearly ten months in the Army awaiting his Air Force call-up. Scattered through his more than 200 letters home are occasional reflections on the prospects for promotion. For a newly married man, with a wife to provide for, a family to plan for, and survival uncertain, timely promotion was important. This article will show Fred Dyer's promotion experience through his letters home. Italics will be used to indicate editorial intrusion.

Fred Dyer's sporadic accounts of his promotion in the RAAF reveal that, for those aspiring to officer rank, the popular song was all too true:

> 'You'll get no promotion this side of the ocean'![2]

In January 1943, as a Leading Aircraftman (LAC) at No 2 Bombing and Gunnery School, Port Pirie, he cheerfully wrote to his wife, Martha:

> You will be, I am sure, delighted to know I was promoted to A.C.W. yesterday, half the course went swimming, and the other half were Air Craft Washers.

A genuine promotion, from LAC to Sergeant, came in April:

> at the end of the ANS [No 2 Air Navigation School, Mt Gambier] Course we were promoted to Sgt or P/O. Our stay at ANS, only a month, was too short to influence the deal - it must have been decided soon after we left BAGS [No 2 Bombing and Gunnery School, Pt Pirie], in order to get through the "System" in time before we left ANS.

The sergeant's stripes took longer to arrive, so Fred had to chalk his onto his uniform.

At the end of their Australian training many aircrew were sent to Canada for further training.[3] By mid-1943 Fred had been posted to No 1 General Reconnaissance School, Summerside, Prince Edward Island, as a qualified Observer (navigator) and still a Sergeant.

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1 John Herington, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945: Air War Against Germany and Italy, 1939–1943*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra (1954), p.126.

2 A Stillman, F Lake, J Hughes, *Bless 'em All*.

There is quite a lot of writing going on… many of the Sgts. are overdue for their W[arrant]. O[fficer]. promotion, and are putting in applications about same.

The RCAF [Royal Canadian Air Force] believe in plenty of commissions, it is not unusual for pilots to have 100% commissions per [training] course, the Navigators nearly all the same. When we see Sgt Pilots or Navs we immediately think, "Oh yes, RAF".

When we first came here, we were already a wake up to Canadian 100% or so Commissions for Pilots and Navs. On the first morning, when things were being organised, a bloke (Flt. Lieut.), said to group "Are there any officers among you?" Promptly came the reply "No, we're all Australians here".

On 3 October, at No 31 Operational Training Unit, Debert, Fred noted that:

> 'My Flight Sergeant Promotion was due yesterday, but I don't expect it for a few months at least. However, when I get it, it is effective from yesterday, with pay, 6d a day extra.

Fred's courses concluded in mid-October and he left Canada on the RMS Mauretania *for Liverpool on 23 November 1943, still a Sergeant.*

In February 1944, at No 1 Ferry Crew Pool, Doncaster he wrote home:

> Our "Flight Sgts" were through about 3 weeks ago at our first station [Wigtown] but it hasn't caught up with us yet.

Then, last Saturday… saw our F/SGT promotion in PROs (Personal Occurrence Reports), so we put our crowns up last Sunday, we'd bought them the day before.[4]

> While in London we got our F/SGTs and the back-pay to the date we left Canada. They tell us that the balance of pay will be credited to our deferred pay.

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3 Numbers involved are elusive. In *Air War Against German and Italy 1939-1943*, John Herington writes that trainees 'passed from their initial training schools [ITS] to elementary and then service flying training schools or to bombing and gunnery or navigation schools either in Australia or Canada'. Australia sent LACs (i.e. completed only Initial Training School) trainees to Canada to finish training. It also sent fully trained aircrew (like Fred) to Canada for advanced training. It is not clear whether these qualified aircrew were counted in the published Empire Air Training Scheme data as some of the 27,000 Australia-trained RAAF aircrew, or as some of the 9,000 Canadian-trained RAAF aircrew, or in both groups (p. 107).

4 The rank of Flight Sergeant was indicated by the addition of a crown sewn above the three chevrons of a Sergeant's insignia.

In Fred's crew his two RAF pilots had recently been elevated, and he wrote that he was

> going to apply for a commission. Lloyd's WO II is at last official… Mike is now an F/O, so you see we are all slowly climbing the long road to Marshalls of the Royal Air Force.

Under arrangements hammered out with the RAF, Commanding Officers with Australians in their units were meant to forward recommendations for promotion to RAAF Overseas Headquarters every month.[5] *However, as Fred wrote,*

> the CO won't pass on our applications for commissions, as we won't be here long enough for him to get to know us… Altogether, we've had it, on this station anyway.

A fortnight later, still at Doncaster,

> my (and the other 2 Aussie's and Lloyd's) applications for a commission have been handed to the CO again, we wonder what the verdict will be this time.

Then, a week later,

> we interview the CO on Wednesday for Commissions, so here's hoping.
>
> All aircrew are entitled to apply for a commission as soon as they start productive flying. The first commissioned rank is P/O, followed in six months by F/O and that is followed in a year (or 18 months I can't think which, probably 18 month) by F/LT.

At the end of May, now at 107 Operational Training Unit Leicester East, Fred lamented:

> I'd probably have got mine if I'd been available for the interview at the beginning of the month.

Then, another missed opportunity because, in mid-June:

> I was supposed to go to Group[6] yesterday for interview, but I was up here [107 OTU] so hope to go next week sometime.

Although Fred did not record what was discussed at the promotion interview on 20 June, he did write,

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5 Air Ministry Order A/1087, in Herington, *Air War Against Germany and Italy, 1939–1943*, p. 542.
6 Possibly 46 Group Head Quarters at Bushey near Watford.

> The man said that it will go through, so you can assume that it will come through about the end of July…. My commission should be backdated to about April 25th, the date of my interview with the CO. If you start to address sea mail to P/O Dyer now and A.G.s [Airgrams] from about August 1st it will be OK.

However, come 1 August, at 233 (RAF) Squadron, Blakehill Farm:

> Chaps who went for… interview long after us have got their commissions, it looks as if ours is delayed due to having to go to our last station for endorsement. I don't care if it doesn't come through for another couple of months as long as we get the right seniority i.e. backdated to April. Our F/Os will be due in October!

Still un-promoted at the end of the month, he concluded:

> It looks like mine has fallen down behind a cupboard or something!! I am worrying the Adjudant [sic] about it.

But a week later, on 7 September, he sent a joyful telegram:

> Have received commission.
>
> Commissioning Leave… is six days. We never get that much on our squadron [233], they usually give us 48 hours to go down to London and get our uniforms, but due to certain events which will be obvious to you in a few weeks time when you get some more mail, I won't be going down for a month at least.[7]
>
> Meanwhile I have my P/O braid on my first uniform, the one I married you in. Also a couple of strips of braid on the epaulette of my Battle dress…. I got a letter from Aust. Liaison officer at HQ Transport Command congratulating me on my promotion, it arrived yesterday.

Newly promoted Pilot Officer Fred Dyer. Source: Author.

And what a difference one ring of braid on the sleeve made, as Fred recounted in:

7 Letter, 9 September 1944, possibly a guarded reference to Operation Comet, delayed until 9 September and cancelled on 10 September. This plan morphed into Operation Market Garden. K Margry (Ed), *Operation Market Garden: Then and Now*, Battle of Britain International, 2002, pp. 16-22.

A story in two chapters

My last day as Senior NCO

The NCO gets a bed, and 1 table and 2 forms between 10-12 men (in a Nissen hut). We have a table, but the globe above it is always replaced by an iron cord plug, said iron rocking said table. The mess is too noisy to write in and too cold if no fires are going.

Wally wakes me up at 8.15 and I rise, half dress, go up to the ablutions, shave, return and dress, fold the blankets and sheets to a pile at the top of the bed in regulation fashion, clean my boots, and generally tidy up.

Breakfast goes off by 9, and at 8.59 I go into the servery and get rashers of bacon and a rock-like half slice of fried bread, and porridge sans sugar or milk, usually too bitter to eat. Sometimes there is bread marg and jam or marmalade of the table. I go round to the tables and find somebody who has finished with his cup, take it out, get it washed, and have a cup of tea.

Dinner is 12.30-13.30, usually three course, the meat overshadowed by a mound of roast and boiled potatoes. The pudding or rolypoly or something like that follows, and the usual search for a cup.

Tea at 5.30-6.30 is cheese flan, or perhaps bacon and chips and usually a cake.

Supper at 9.00 is self made sandwiches of cheese and jam, and, after the usual search, a cup of tea.

My First Day as a Commissioned Officer

The lights are switched on at 7.30 by the batwoman, and she collects the water jugs and fills them, giving us the glad (?) tidings that there is no hot water because the boiler has broken down.

The working shoes are collected and taken away to be cleaned, returned at 8am, and the first body stirs into life and gets itself washed and dressed. By 8.30 everybody is out of bed and in various stages of dressing. Their brass buttons are not cleaned in the mornings, as we wear battle dress in duty hours.

Breakfast goes off at 9 am, and by 8.50 I have collected my porridge and bacon and fried chips, a slice or more of toast, helped myself to sweetened milk for

porridge, and sat down at the table. Margarine and marmalade are on the table.

After breakfast, I go into the Anteroom and sit some distance from the hearth fire which is blazing one end of the room. A quiet half-hour's reading of the morning papers, and back to the sleeping hut, a Nissen with 8 men.

Each man has a spring wire bed, a chest of drawers, a steamer chair, a small clothes-horse for towels etc, a stand with wash bowl on top and jug on a shelf. We should also have individual reading lamps, and three central lights. Also a mat by each bed and a green baize top trestle table 18" x 20" each.

Dinner at 12.30 is a three course tasty meal, followed by a pear or two and bread and cheese. Soup is followed by a meat dish of fairly tender meat and not dominated by potatoes. Cherry tart and custard followed. There is water on the table, and you help yourself to a cup of milk. Help yourself to coffee in the anteroom.

Afternoon tea is served at 4-4.30, tea and sandwiches and cake.

Dinner at 7.00 is another three course meal.

During the morning the batwoman pressed my battledress, and cleaned best shoes, made beds, did sewing, and cleaned the hut out.

A hot fish course is followed by a cold meat and salad course, and a dessert. Coffee is served in the anteroom.

A certain amount of decorum is observed in the anteroom, for instance the billiards, table tennis, and darts are in a separate room.

His comparative luxury lasted just 12 days: no arrangement survives contact with the enemy. At nightfall on 21 September he was concealed in a Dutch hay barn behind enemy lines after being shot down resupplying the troops at Arnhem. The Valckx family hid him until the British army arrived on 3 October.[8] By the end of the month he was back in England.

I've bought more odd pieces of uniform… I also bought my F/O braid, as it is due on Dec 20, although I don't expect to get it for quite awhile after that date.

It came through on time, but by then Fred was in transit back to Australia, where he was transferred to the RAAF Reserve in August 1945.

8 Details of Fred's evasion are at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/93/a8428593.shtml. Accessed 19 January 2019.

Has the Mailed Fist lost its Worth?

Michael Firth

This article is taken from a lecture presented in September 2016 to the WA branch of the Military Historical Society of Australia.

On 15 September 2016 it had been 100 years since the first tracked armoured fighting vehicle crossed the mud of no-man's land to cause havoc among the enemy trenches. It was in World War One, during the third phase of the Somme campaigns, when the world saw the combat debut of one of the most intimidating weapons of land warfare. This action occurred in an area near Courcelette north of Pozieres and east of Guillemont. On this day the first tanks moved out from the British lines to confront the German infantry in the opposing trenches.

Since this opening sortie armoured vehicles have appeared in every major conflict since and their cost of manufacture has increased dramatically. This now raises the question, whether the Army's armoured mail fist has become too expensive for it to be used or does it still retain a tactical role in today's range of combat situations?
Although the gains on that first morning on the Somme front were impressive, the operation could have been considered a miserable failure. Allocated to the push were 49 Mk 1 tanks of which only 39 vehicles crossed the starting line. Of these five tanks sank into craters, nine broke down, and another nine were left floundering in no-man's land lagging behind the advancing infantry. The remaining nine tanks made it to the enemy trenches as planned just in front of the following infantry. Over the next 18 months the other main combatants on the Western Front fielded their first tanks.
French tanks took the field on 16 April 1917 near Chermin des Dames, and the attack consisted of 132 Schneider tanks which was an armoured structure mounted on a pair of tracks. On 21 March 1918 the Germans launched an attack using armoured vehicles for the first time, near the St Quentin Canal. The attack consisted of four A7V's and five captured British tanks.

The first tank versus tank encounter took place 24 April 1918 near Villes-Bretonneax, where three groups of A7V's came up against British tanks. One group of three A7V's attached three Mk IV's (one male and two female), while the other two groups of A7V's ran into seven British Whippet light tanks. The encounter ended with the British losing less tanks. Since then we have seen armoured vehicles used in most regional conflicts, including the Spanish Civil War. This particular conflict was considered by some commentators as the training ground for tank and combined forces tactics used in later conflicts.

World War Two saw the rise of massed tank battles. Early battles, such as Arras in May 1940, saw the better tactics and training of the German tank forces defeat greater numbers of Allied tanks. In July 1943 we saw the fiery blind brute force used in

the clash of tank armies during the Kursk battle, where some Soviet tank commanders would use their tanks as battering rams to defeat German tanks. The final major armour engagement of the war, the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes, was decided by logistics rather than the tactics used.

Tanks continued to be used during postwar conflicts. The Korean War commenced with the surprise attack of North Korean tanks against thinner armoured vehicles of the forces in the South who were less prepared. By the end of the conflict tanks were occasionally being used in a static fire role. Massed tank battles returned during the Israeli–Arab wars with confrontations on the Golan Heights and in the Sinai Desert.

The Indo-Pakistan conflicts against saw tanks designed in the late WW2 and early post-World War Two periods thrown against each other. In this conflict, tanks designed mainly by the British and United States fought each other. More recently we saw the armoured battles of the Gulf War in which massed tank groups were deployed against entrenched vehicles. This conflict showed off the increase in tank armour, technology, weapon and ammunition capabilities of the latest generation of armoured vehicles.

Outside of these conflicts, most other military actions tend to be civil wars, revolts, rebellions or peacekeeping missions. During the conflicts of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, it appears the role of the Main Battle Tank (MBT) is slowly being surpassed by the up-armoured Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC), Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFV) or Infantry Combat Vehicles (ICV). This now asks the question: is the MBT a single task vehicle which has limited adaptability to the changes occurring on the modern battle field?

In post-World War Two there has been a new type of conflict. UN peacekeeping missions, which can be called a low level conflict type relying on the use of unarmoured wheeled vehicles or IFVs. It has been very rare to see a MBT deployed on a UN peacekeeping mission, with exceptions being Bosnia and Kosovo. In the current range of conflicts the MBT tends only to be used by the more affluent nations of the world who do not tend be the instigators of these incidents. The instigators tend to be lesser affluent nations who rely on IFVs, locally designed armoured vehicles, modified civilian vehicles or captured armoured vehicles, including MBT's.

The role of the MBT has appeared to have changed over the last hundred years with its main role now considered as an offensive weapon designed to engage an enemy by direct fire or frontal assault. It has a high level of firepower and mobility while carrying the heaviest type of armour for its protection. The tank is highly valued for its psychological abilities of instilling fear into its enemy just by the sound of its approach as well as it shock action and survivability.

On the other hand, an IFV is designed to be able to carry infantry into a conflict zone and provide direct fire support. While the IFV is less heavily armoured with a smaller calibre main weapon than a tank, it does have the ability to engage tanks with a variety of anti-tank weapons. The basic IFV can also be used as the basis for a

family of vehicles filling a variety of roles including personnel carrier, recovery, missile platform, ambulance, self-propelled gun, command and logistic variants. This helps to simplify the logistic and maintenance support required to run these vehicles.

In terms of cost, in 1918 the United States was committed to building the Independent tank, in conjunction with the United Kingdom, at a cost $35,000 USD per unit. The Independent tank design was near the end of the development line for rhomboidal shaped tanks which started with Mother and the Mk 1. The current range of third generation MBTs have manufacturing costs in the multi-million dollar range. Looking at the estimated prices in 2009, the current US MBT, the Abrams M1A2, is priced between $10 to $18 million, the Russian T-90S is approximately $4 million, the British Challenger between $10 to $16 million, the French Leclerc about $10 million, the Chinese Type 99A2 is estimated to be around $6 million and the Indian Arjun MBT approximately $10 million.

In comparison, the IFVs cost considerably less. The Australian ASLAV is priced at $2.5 million, the United States LAV III IFV is about $3.5 million, the Russian BMP-3M IFV is approximately $3.5 million, the British Warrior is about $4 million and the Chinese ZBD2000 IFV is about $2.5 million. While MBTs are tracked, IFVs can be either tracked or wheeled, which greatly affects the vehicles' price.

The cost of destroying armoured vehicles is very low in comparison. Most anti-tank missiles are priced around $50,000 to $60,000, while RPG-style launchers cost significantly less. In 2014 it was reported the Challenger 2 could be the last British built MBT to be built in the United Kingdom and to be used by the British Army. This was cited to be due to financial reasons.

In the majority on the conflicts in which MBTs have been used, it has been seen as an armoured fist to punch through an enemy held area or, a clash of massed vehicles against an enemy of a similar size force or dug in defensive position. The MBT has been highly successful in open areas, such as large fields or deserts, but less successful in more confined areas, such as hedge-lined lanes or urban settings. In these more confined areas it has been shown infantry with small portable anti-tank weapons can make the attacking tanks suffer greater losses than would normally be anticipated in open country warfare.

When examining the costs of designing, building, maintaining, transporting and upgrading the MBT in relation to its current battlefield use, it is easy to question its viability. Most third generation MBTs are not being used in current areas of world conflict, but limited numbers are, however, being extensively used for training or the product of extensive upgrading programs. A point of interest is that in the last ten years there have been about half a dozen new MBTs announced to be in production or development, the number of IFVs is over triple that number. One must not forget the cost and method of moving the MBT to an area of conflict, especially if it is overseas. The rise of cheap anti-tank weapons being delivered by a variety ways has seen the adding of different types of upgraded armour packages or methods of protection to tanks. This includes explosive or spaced armour around the turrets and the chassis of the MBT. With the rise of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) it is becoming easier

to disable or destroy the MBT, regardless of the any added protection. Alternatively, there is a greater chance of crew survivability in a MBT than an IFV, but the design of the current IFVs are now taking into account the effect of explosives blast patterns. Designs now try to divert or channel the force of the blast away from the IFVs interior, thus protecting the personnel inside the vehicle.

Looking at the above comments and the question of the viability of the MBT in today's range of conflicts, is the MBT still worth having in today's military inventory or is it slowly being replaced by cheaper IFVs? In contemporary military conflicts, the MBT can be considered too costly to deploy due to its initial cost, the cost of getting it to the theatre of conflict, maintaining it in the field and the variety of anti-tank weapons that can be used against it. It seems nations today tend to refrain from deploying MBTs in most conflict situations and are looking at less expensive ways of providing armoured support to their ground forces as well as trying to rein in escalating defence budgets.

Based on this, it appears the MBT may have reached its use by date and it is not considered suitable or cost effective to deploy in areas of current conflicts, but this does not take into account the tactical roles of an MBT. Maybe the value of the MBT today is not in the ability to deploy it into today's conflicts but in its tactical and deterrent value to stop the massed battles of the past occurring again, or at least allowing countries to be prepared for them.

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Colonel Francis MaxwellL de Frayer Lorenzo DSO, Order of Danilo 4th Class with Swords, MID

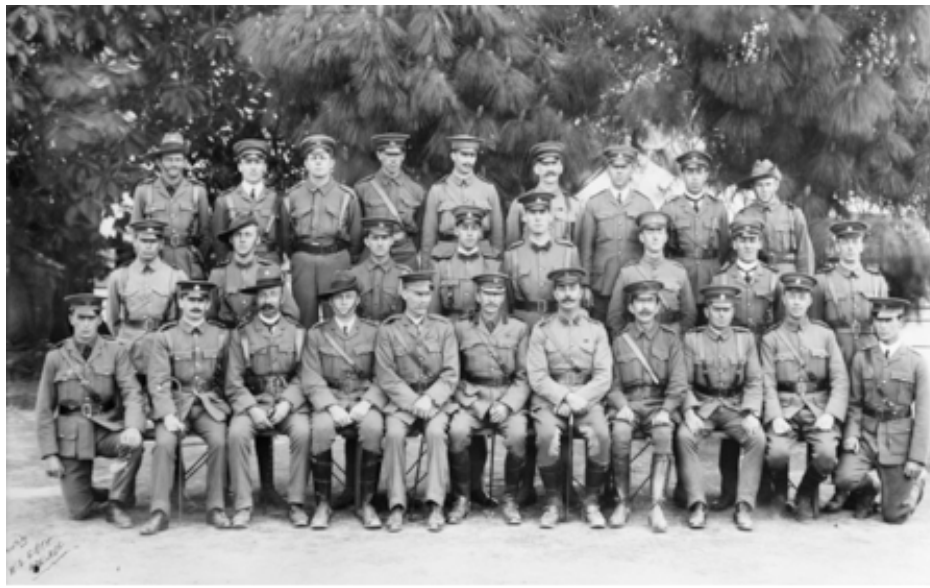
Robert Simpson

One of five children to Anthony and Agnes, Francis Maxwell de Frayer Lorenzo was born on 7 March 1880 in Balmain, Sydney. He attended the local Christian Brothers School and volunteered for the 1st Australian Commonwealth Horse for service in South Africa. The contingent arrived at Durban in March 1902. Under the command of Colonel de Lisle, they were used to clear the district north of Klerksdorp, and were involved in a drive that started on 7 May. Pushing westward to the Kimberley-Mafeking railway blockhouse line, they captured prisoners, equipment and a large quantity of stock. Afterwards, they returned to Klerksdorp on 21 May and remained there until the declaration of peace. They returned to Durban on 9 July, for embarkation and return to Australia.

For his service, Lorenzo, who by the end of hostilities had been promoted to sergeant major, was awarded the Queens South Africa medal with Cape Colony, Transvaal and South Africa 1902 clasps. In Murray's book, he is listed as 169 Sergeant Frank Lorenzo in 'B' Squadron in the 1st Australian Commonwealth Horse.

On his return to Australia, Lorenzo joined the permanent forces receiving his commission in June 1907. Following a number of staff appointments around Australia he was promoted captain in October 1911. At the outbreak of war in 1914, Lorenzo, who was posted to Keswick Barracks in Adelaide, volunteered for service. On 20 August he was appointed Captain and Adjutant of the 10th Battalion, embarking for Egypt in October.[1]

1 War service record, NAA B2455.



Group portrait of the original officers of the 10th Battalion prior to leaving Adelaide for Egypt. Front row 7th from left: Captain Francis Maxwell de Frayer Lorenzo (Adjutant) from Westbourne Park, South Australia. Source: AWM P01224.003.

On 25 April 1915, the Battalion landed on Gallipoli at 4.30 am. Reaching the 400 Plateau, they dug in, with the 9th Battalion doing likewise beside them. At 11.30 am, it was reported that troops on the plateau were under accurate fire from the north-east. Colonel Weir and Captain Lorenzo thought they could see the 'flash' of a Turkish battery in the afternoon, near Scrubby Knoll. Unfortunately, the naval ships could not return fire, for fear of hitting their own men.

Outdoor group portrait of officers of the 10th Infantry Battalion using a wagon as a grandstand to watch a battalion sports carnival at Mena Camp, Egypt, Christmas 1914. (Note wrong year on both photos). Lorenzo is 7th from the left. Source: AWM P02321.004.

The day after the landing Lorenzo was promoted to Major and given command of 'A' Company. He spent the next few days reorganising units and supporting the front line, for which he was mentioned in despatches.[2] A brief hospitalisation for a 'nervous breakdown' in July was followed by dysentery sever enough for his evacuation to Malta in August. Returning to Gallipoli on 8 November, Lorenzo was appointed second-in-command of the battalion.[3] Between 30 November and 4 December he temporarily commanded the 11th Battalion.[4] Soon after his return to his battalion Lorenzo was awarded the DSO.[5]

Informal outdoors group portrait of several officers from the 10th Infantry Battalion at Mena Camp, Egypt on Christmas Day 1914. Sixth from the left is Captain Francis Maxwell de Frayer Lorenzo. Source: AWM P02321.005.

Returning to Egypt in January 1916, Lorenzo was given command of the newly raised 49th Battalion as part of the doubling of the AIF. While training, the battalion received a consignment of sandbags made by children of Heathfield School in South Australia. Used in Suez Canal defences, Lorenzo had a photograph taken of the sandbags being filled, which he sent with a letter to the school children. The battalion moved to France in June and had suffered badly during the battle at Mouquet Farm in August and early September. For the rest of the year they alternated between front-line duty, training and labouring behind the line.

For his service during Pozieres, Lorenzo was awarded the Order of Danilo 4th Class by HM the King of Montenegro. Only two of these awards were given to officers in the AIF. He was Mentioned in Despatches again on 13 November 1916.

2 *London Gazette*, 5 November 1915, p. 11002.
3 War service record, NAA B2455.
4 11th Australian Infantry Battalion War Diary entry 30 October 1915, AWM 4/23/28/8.
5 'Major F. M. de F. Lorenzo', *Chronicle* (Adelaide), 13 November 1915, p. 41.

A group of officers and two 'other rank' soldiers of the 10th Infantry Battalion at their mess table at Battalion Headquarters (BHQ) in Victoria Gully, Anzac Cove, Gallipoli. Fourth from left is Captain Francis Maxwell de Frayer Lorenzo. Source: AWM P02321.009.

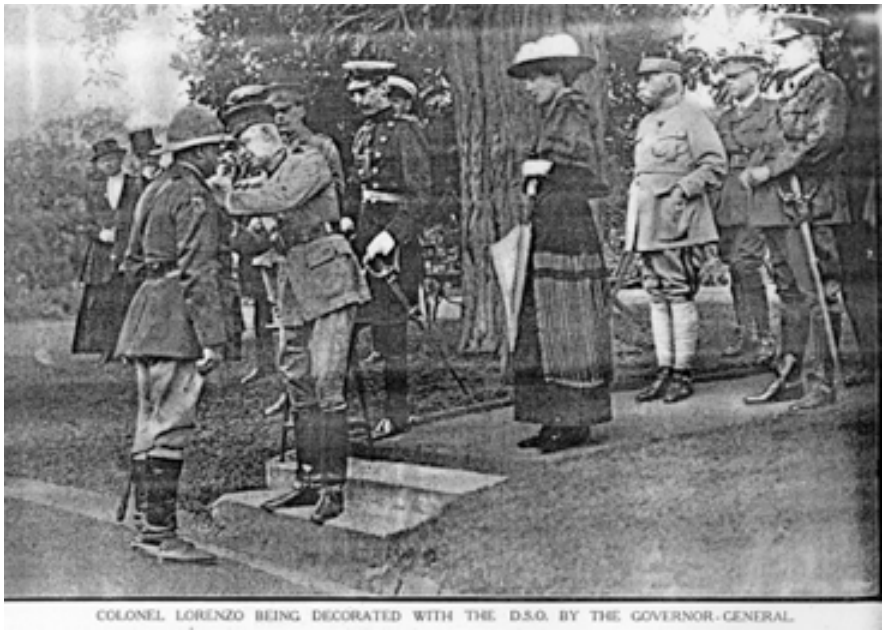
In January 1917 Lorenzo was hospitalised in London from a riding accident with a fractured pelvis. The Adelaide *Register* records that Lorenzo's wife, now living in Mosman,, New South Wales, was informed that the injury was caused when Lorenzo's horse was blown from under him by a shell.[6] The injury was such that he returned to Australia in May and his AIF appointment was terminated in October.[7]

The first 10th Battalion Headquarters at Anzac, taken soon after the landing. From left to right the Officers are - Captain Harry Carew Nott (RMO) Capt. Francis Maxwell Lorenzo, Major Frederick William Hurcombe, and Lieut-Col S Price Weir. Source: AWM A00714.

6 'Personal Notes', *Register* (Adelaide), 23 February 1917, p. 8.

7 War service record, NAA B2455.

Lorenzo returned to his permanent staff appointment. During the lean interwar years he held a number of staff positions and was promoted lieutenant colonel in 1923.[8] From 1926 he was posted to Queensland and then Sydney from 1935 by which time he had been promoted colonel and Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General. By 1939 Lorenzo had reached the prescribed retirement age and became the New South Wales Director of the National Emergency Services. This service was established to



COLONEL LORENZO BEING DECORATED WITH THE D.S.O. BY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

'Vice-Regal Garden Party in Honour of the French Mission', *Sydney Mail*, 18 December 1918, p. 14.

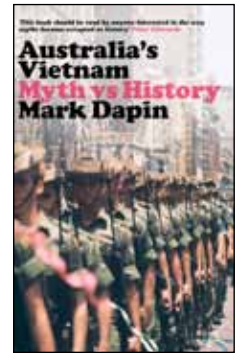
protect the populace against national emergencies and calamities, such as bush fires and floods.[9] He held the position until 1941 before he retired. Lorenzo, a resident of Canberra, passed away on 28 January 1947 at his daughter's residence in North Bondi and was cremated.[10]

Francis Lorenzo, nicknamed 'The Bull', had a full and rewarding career as a permanent forces officer. Although he war service was cut short he had established a reputation for a gallant and daring officer. He was the only 10th Battalion officer to receive a gallantry award for Gallipoli and he was the first Commanding Officer of the 49th Battalion AIF. His British War Medal has his Battalion impressed on it, which is rare for an AIF officer.

8 *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No. 75, 25 October 1923, p. 2039.
9 'National Emergency Services', *Daily Examiner* (Grafton), 1 June 1939, p. 4.
10 Death Notices, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 January 1917, p. 24.

Reviews

Australia's Vietnam: Myth vs History
Mark Dapin
A$32.99
New South Publishing, Sydney, 2019
Paperback, 272 pp
ISBN 9781742236360

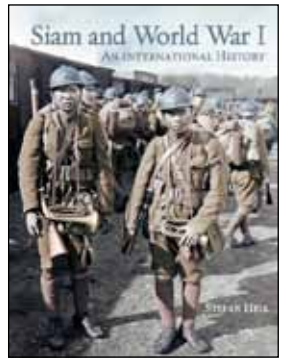


Being a Vietnam Veteran I was interested in Mark Dapin's *Australia's Vietnam: Myth vs History*, as there have been various stories and tales that have emerged from the Australian's involvement in Vietnam. The author has researched many of the myths that came out of the Vietnam War. The book should be well received by Vietnam Veterans who are interested in the truths or half-truths that seem to come out every time Veterans get together. I have heard many of the stories over the past years and it seems to me that the they always get better with the telling. The book is easy to read, well researched and set out in an ordered manner. It is interesting to now understand that the origins of the stories and how they developed over the years, no matter how true they seemed at the time. I often wonder if the old adage of 'Why let the truth get in the way of a good story' is behind many of the myths. Personally, my unit did have a welcome parade through the streets of Adelaide and I along with my mates were well received by the watching public and we felt proud of what we had achieved. Where the stories that there were no homecoming parades came from in the first place is anyone's guess.

The nine chapters take the reader through the most common myths as the author explains where and why the story may or may not have originated from. Each chapter will takes the reader from the welcome marches to the conscription issues and to the issue of atrocities that were rumoured to have been undertaken by the Australians. In his research Mark Dapin has indicated that the Australians were not involved in such activities. In all aspects the Australians can be proud of their conduct in South Vietnam and this book supports that view.

I was able to readily identify with this book, and understood where the author was coming from. Dapin has provided an evenly balanced and very readable book. I would recommend *Australia's Vietnam: Myth vs History* to anyone interested in Australia's involvement in Vietnam. The author just wanted to get to the truth and in no way was he trying to disparage Vietnam Veterans. At the end of the day I still like the old adage 'Why let the truth get in the way of a good story'.

Mike English



Siam and World War I: An International History
Stefan Hell
1200 THB/A$54
River Books, Bangkok, 2017
Paperback, 320 pp
ISBN 9786167339924 (English ed.)

The centenary of the First World War has witnessed a flourishing popular interest in the conflict, and a flurry of scholarship. This interest is not limited to the major personalities and campaigns, but also, in light of the zeitgeist of subalternism and 'diversity', investigation into the war's effects on non-western peoples, both the imperialist (Japan), the colonised (India, Africa, the Middle East), and the in-between (China). But somewhat surprisingly omitted from even the major studies, is mention of Siam, the only Asian country to send troops to Europe. This long-overdue study provides a detailed yet accessible analysis of Siamese participation in the war.

On 22 July 1917, the Oxford-educated King Vajiravudh (Rama VI) of Siam declared war on the Central Powers. Immediately almost 300 Germans and Austrians employed by the Siamese government were interned, along with businessmen and their families, and even five Austrian and Hungarian prostitutes. All assets of the new enemies were confiscated, including 23 German vessels riding out the war in the port of Bangkok. Germany responded by seizing £1.6 million in Siamese assets in Germany, and interning ten Siamese students – sons of the political elite – studying there. An eleventh student, Prince Nikhorn, son of Siam's foreign minister, was captured in a Crimean hospital during the German occupation of the Ukraine in 1918. Then in June 1918, a Siamese Expeditionary Force (SEF) set sail for France: 1300 men comprising a 900-strong Motor Transport Corps (MTC), and three aviation squadrons of about 140 men each. The war ended before the aviation units had completed their training in France, but the MTC served to deliver supplies to the front, and then to supply the French army of occupation in Germany until well into 1919. The SEF recorded a total of 19 deaths, all due to accident or disease, not combat, surely a record among belligerent nations?

The SEF was only a token reinforcement for the Allies, of no real military value; but it had much greater political implications, as the king had always intended it should. It demonstrated Siam's willingness to shoulder its duties on the international stage, while the mechanised nature of its troops (aviators, mechanics and drivers, not infantry or labourers) demonstrated Siam's modernity and its equality with the European powers. This was in stark contrast to the labour battalions of Chinese and colonial Indochinese, or even the Senegalese troops the French deliberately used to humiliate the German populace during the post-war occupation. As a practical manifestation of friendship with France, the UK and the US, the SEF also gave Siam leverage in the 1920s to negotiate an end to the soi-disant 'unequal' treaties it had signed with

the western powers in the mid-19th century, and which increasingly curtailed Siam's aspirations to economic and juridical independence.

If, as our popular and political myths have it, ANZAC nationhood and 'independence' were forged at Gallipoli, in blood (and toil, tears and sweat if I may anticipate Churchill), through a literal human sacrifice, how much more cheaply, efficiently and humanely – if somewhat less nobly and disinterestedly – did Siam forge its own.

Stefan Hell, a Jakarta-based consultant, has previously published books on the Sino-Japanese conflict of 1931-33 and Siam's involvement with the League of Nations. This new book, published on the centenary of Siam's declaration of war, in both Thai and English editions, and launched in Bangkok by Thailand's Princess Sirindhorn, brings together for the first time in English, a wealth of information from British, French, German and Thai archives, theses and secondary sources.

The book is divided into three sections. The first introduces Siam's situation in the 1910s, as an Asian monarchy that escaped western colonisation, a buffer state carefully playing off its British and French neighbours. King Vajiravudh was strongly Anglophile – he had served in the Durham Light Infantry and had translated several of Shakespeare's plays into Thai. The heir apparent, Vajiravudh's younger brother Prince Chakrabongse, had been educated in both England and Russia, had somewhat scandalously married a Russian lady, served as chief of the general staff of the Siamese army 1910-20, and created the Siamese Flying Corps in 1913. Three of the king's half-brothers, Princes Paribatra, Mahidol and Rangsit had all studied and received military training in Germany. Paribatra was a captain in the Prussian army, and had preceded Chakrabongse as chief of the general staff of the Siamese army. So the king had to negotiate not only the delicate international situation, his country literally squeezed between British Burma and French Indochina, but also the politics of his own extended family, where his ministers, diplomats and officials – mostly his own relations, and many also older and more experienced than he – often had divergent political sympathies. This goes some way to explain the king's initial declaration of neutrality, and the subsequent evolution of his policy under pressure of internal and external events, into the eventual declaration of war.

The second section covers the effect of the declaration on Siamese and Europeans in Siam (the Siamese treated the interned enemy aliens remarkably well, and received British approval to ship the interned men of military age to Australia, but finally negotiated to ship all internees, regardless of age or gender, to India in February 1918), and on Siamese in Europe (particularly the individual personal tragedies of the Siamese students imprisoned in Celle castle, and two princes returning home from studies at Oxford, who drowned when the Hirano Maru was torpedoed off the Irish coast on 4 October 1918 – amazingly a third Siamese student, a commoner, was one of only 25 survivors rescued). This is followed by a description of the formation and dispatch of the all-volunteer SEF, its reception in France where it was often mistaken for Indochinese labourers, or subject to not-unexpected racism, at least from French

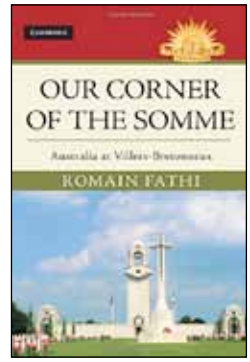
officers. Siamese students in Europe, and former French missionaries in Siam, were engaged as interpreters. The SEF's roles in post-war Europe are also detailed: involvement in victory parades in London, Paris and Brussels, and the post-war occupation of Germany, before its staggered return to Siam in 1919. It is notable that in arranging both the outward and homeward voyages, the Siamese government had to insist on dedicated shipping, to avoid the SEF being shovelled onto passing French vessels carrying Indochinese labour battalions.

The third and final section analyses Siam's involvement in the Peace Conference and Treaty of Versailles, to which end the king had had his eye since at least early 1917. The legacy of the war is also covered: the impact of the return of so many trained aviators and mechanics on aviation in Thailand, the formation of veterans associations (the last veteran, Yod Sangrungruang, died in 2003 aged 104), and the symbolisation and memory of the SEF today.

Siam and World War I is written for a general audience, and does not pre-suppose knowledge of early 20th-century Thai history. Nevertheless, source material is fully referenced, with 16 pages of endnotes, a very useful ten-page glossary of the persons mentioned in the text, and a six-page bibliography, divided into Thai and western language sections – although all the Thai listings are transliterated, rather than in Thai script. However, the crowning feature is the extensive use of previously-unpublished photographs of the SEF, many from royal Thai collections. Working on a related project some years earlier, I had sourced a number of these photographs myself from the Thai army museum in Bangkok, but many, taken in Europe, were uncaptioned and I was unable to identify the locations they depicted; so I am delighted that Dr. Hell has since been able to make the necessary identifications.

The decision to simultaneously publish otherwise-identical Thai and English editions to ensure that Dr. Hells' research is available to Thais, as well as the international audience, is to be highly commended. Likewise, the production quality of the book is excellent, with no more than half a dozen minor typographic and translational infelicities. I have only two criticisms: one, the chosen sans-serif font is both small and light, and has been compacted a little too much in places – presumably to fit around the copious illustrations – so that the punctuation is too easily missed by the reader; two, and more importantly, the lack of any maps identifying the French and German locations mentioned in the text, the front lines and the occupation zones. Overall, the book is very accessible, informative, beautifully packaged, and excellent value for money. I now hope Dr. Hell can bring us complete English translations of the several diaries and memoirs of the student prisoners and SEF members he references, to add international perspective to the flood of similar material from British Empire and American servicemen.

Brendan Whyte



Our Corner of the Somme: Australia at Villers-Bretonneux
Romain Fathi
A$59.95
Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2019
Hardcover, 288 pp
ISBN 9781108471497

The conclusion of the centenary of World War One celebrations in Australia has raised many questions amongst historians, particularly the expense. Australia has outspent the rest of the world combined on commemoration for the conflict. According to the *Honest History* website in 2015, Australia was to spend $552 million, of which $80 million was from the private sector.[1] David Stephens, writing for the website Pearls and Irritations, compared the spend per country, highlighting Australia's spend and that of Germany's at $6 million, France at $90 million and Britain at $110 million.[2] The apogee of these celebrations was the opening of the $100 million Sir John Monash Centre at Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day 2018.

Central to Romain Fathi's new book, *Our Corner of the Somme*, is the establishment of Villers-Bretonneux as a site of Australian commemoration. The military part of the book is minimal, dealt with at the outset and highlights the role of other combatants beside Australians, particularly Moroccan troops. Fathi argues that the action at Villers-Bretonneux was minor and has been over represented by Australian historians. The result is a 'biased account that has done little to increase overall understanding of the Great War' (p. 28). Fathi cites the impact of Bean's official history, Monash's self-aggrandising memoir and jingoistic newspaper accounts and popular histories. But *Our Corner of the Somme* is not a military history, rather an examination of the changing nature of Australian war commemoration, specifically at Villers-Bretonneux.

Fathi takes the reader through a chronological progression of the Australian and Villers-Bretonneux relationship. He discusses the role of local government in France, uses the Victoria School as a case study of Australian commemoration rather than a philanthropic gesture, and the changing nature of Anzac celebration from the opening of the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux in 1938 to its resurgence in the 1980s and 1990s. Of particular interest is the role of politicians to use the concept of Anzac for their own purposes (p. 117), which has grown to such a degree that it can be ignored at their own peril (p. 158).

1 'Budget 2015: Honest History Factsheet: centenary spending $551.8 million', http://honesthistory.net.au/wp/budget-2015-honest-history-factsheet-centenary-spending-551-8-million/. Accessed 15 April 2019.

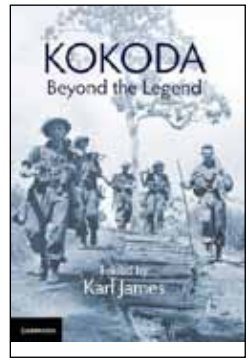
2 David Stephens, 'Why is Australia spending so much more on the Great War centenary than any other country?' http://johnmenadue.com/david-stephens-why-is-australia-spending-so-much-more-on-the-great-war-centenary-than-any-other-country/. Accessed 15 April 2019.

What ordinary Australians think of all this is summarised in Fathi's analysis of comments from the Villers-Bretonneux cemetery visitors' book. Comments are categorised into topics such as remembrance, family ties and patriotism. Fathi concludes that rather than jingoism, Australian visitors believe in Villers-Bretonneux as a place of remembrance and pride, both of individual soldiers and the nation (p. 194). What he does point out, though, is the singular lack of non-Anglo names in the visitors' book.

Fathi's central argument in *Our Corner of the Somme*, that Australian war commemoration tends to be overinflated, will not be readily accepted by many Australians. This is to be expected but should not deter other historians to expand on Fathi's work into other areas of war commemoration and exploitation. Overall, *Our Corner of the Somme*, while a little heavy going at times, is an important contribution to the historiography of Australia's involvement in World War One. The only problem is that too few people will read it and question war commemoration and the rise of 'Anzackery'.

Justin Chadwick

Kokoda: Beyond the Legend
Karl James (ed.)
A$71.95
Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2017
Hardcover, 374 pp
ISBN 9781107189713



This attractive book contains sixteen papers presented at a conference of the same name held at the Australian War Memorial in 2012. The contents cover all the Second World War campaigns in Papua except the Wau-Salamaua battle.

Dr Karl James establishes the context with a very good analysis of the Kokoda Campaign marred only by a few judgements about the historical accuracy of several papers in this book. James endorses, for example, the 'definitive' argument of Dr Peter Stanley in 2008 that Japan 'did not seriously plan or intend to invade Australia'. This statement brings no credit on James who ought to have been aware that the argument from Stanley was inconsistent with Japanese sources and with the fact that Papua was part of Australia. (It has been credibly argued, and there has been no rebuttal from the Australian War Memorial, that the Japanese Army invasion of Papua was, under international law, an invasion of Australia.)

The highly-awarded historian Antony Beevor supports the majority opinion that the geo-political turning point of the Second World War came in December 1941. He argues that the military turning point was October 1942 and asserts that the

psychological turning point was November 1942. With the United States declaration of war on Japan, he observes, the war had become a global conflict.

Beevor is scathing about English strategy in Asia, North Africa and the Mediterranean during the early years of the war. He outlines the course of the war in Europe and Asia including the changing Allied strategy. Beevor describes the crushing Japanese victories, despite their command blind spots, and the side-lining of the Australian Government from English-American military strategy and decisions. He uses his customary deep research to provide telling insights into Winston Churchill and other war leaders. Beevor's authoritative summary and his revelations are the highlight of this book.

Former politician Charlie Lynn presents his strong opinions on the recent Kokoda policies of various governments and statutory authorities. He surveys the 'Track' versus 'Trail' debate before (undiplomatically) advising the Australian Government to 'transfer responsibility for the development of the wartime heritage of the Trail to DVA'. Lynn provides the reader with his personal views on modern Kokoda trekkers, based on his experience of leading many commercial treks across the Track while, at the same time, arguing for a 'sustainable trekking industry'.

Robyn Kienzle offers the reader some of her family research to reveal personal information about her father-in-law and key Kokoda operative, Bert Kienzle. She fleshes out the war-time and post-war role which Bert played and his working relationships with several senior war-time commanders. The author provides her personal reasons for earlier publishing Bert's biography and she advocates here for more recognition of his 'contribution to Kokoda and Papua New Guinea'.

Rowan Tracey, a former Army officer, reviews critically the 1942 withdrawals from Isurava and Ioribaiwa and offers his assessments of the decisions made by the commanders involved. He concludes that these two withdrawals were 'botched' and he directs criticism at the feet of Major General Allen, Brigadier Potts and Brigadier Eather. On the positive side, Tracey outlines the 'often-overlooked role played by the Papuan Infantry Battalion' on the Kokoda Track. He praises their distinguished commander, Major Watson, the brave Sergeant Major Katue, and the war-time record of the amalgamated Pacific Islands Regiment.

The well-known historian, and former Army officer, Professor David Horner sums up the epic significance of the Kokoda Campaign in this book's final paper. His article is in five parts. After a brief introduction about Prime Minister Keating's 1992 visit to Papua New Guinea, Horner provides an unconvincing assessment of the significance of the campaign. His next part, reviewing the claims about the achievements of the campaign, is contradictory and disregards the status of Papua as Australian territory in 1942. But Horner then provides strong arguments for the military importance of this campaign and its lasting status in Australian society. Finally, Horner asks how the Kokoda battle ranks compared to other Australian battles of the Second World War. Unfortunately, Horner digresses into the First World War and into party politics, so his conclusion is unsatisfactory. He mentions sanguinely the conservative

Prime Ministers who declared war in 1914 and 1939 yet he writes critically of the labor Prime Minister who inherited the Second World War (and the Kokoda Campaign). For example, Horner justifies Robert Menzies' declaration of war against Germany in 1939 on the basis of the 'global nature' of that war. Yet, as Antony Beevor explains earlier in this book, that war did not become global until December 1941.

This book is a collection of somewhat old conference papers of contrasting quality. The responsibility for this appears to lie with the editor and conference organiser (Dr Karl James) and the publishers (AWM and Cambridge). In my view, one or two papers are outstanding, some are of great merit, and some are a waste of book space. It is therefore difficult to recommend this book, despite the gems.

Gregory J Ivey

Technology

Apollo 11 Moon Landing and the RAAF Reservist The John Colvin Story[1]

Rohan Goyne

At the Tidbinbilla Deep Space Tracking there is a small display placed in a corner that briefly marks the contribution of RAAF Reservist Dr John Colvin to the Apollo Space Program. John Colvin's significant contribution to the pioneering years of the Apollo Space Program has largely been forgotten, but with the pending 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon Landing it is fitting to restate his contribution to the first successful landing on the Moon.

This article will provide a summary of Colvin's early life, then look at his invention and his interaction with NASA, which was ultimately crucial to the Moon Landing in 1969.

1 This article is based on Rohan Goyne's lecture series 'Australian's in Space 1962-72', which featured as part of the ACT Heritage Festival 2019.

Who was John Colvin?

Born on 14 January 1929 in Hobart, Colvin graduated in medicine at the University of Queensland in 1953. Subsequently he spent five years in England specialising in ophthalmology. On his return to Melbourne in 1961, he entered private practice and joined the staff of the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital. At the hospital on Saturday mornings he lectured medical students gratis. Although attendance was entirely voluntary, Colvin gave 1000 lectures to 12,000 students over a 37-year period. The hospital's management committee, in recognition of his outstanding service, named the John Colvin Clinical School in his honour.[2]

Colvin's association with the military began in 1950 when he joined the University of Queensland Air Squadron. He received his pilot's licence in 1954, and as a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) reservist, became consultant ophthalmologist

Image 1: Colvin's Apollo Space Program Anti-Glare Glasses. Courtesy of NASA-CSIRO Tidbinbilla Deep Space Tracking.

2 Derek Myers, 'John Llewellyn Colvin', Medical Journal of Australia, 184 (2006), 184.

to the RAAF. During his time in the RAAF Colvin designed spectacles that allowed RAAF and airline pilots with presbyopia (long sightedness) to read instruments above their line of sight, thus enabling them to continue to meet visual standards.

John Colvin and NASA

From his private memoir, Colvin described his initial contact with the Apollo Space Program:

> I was invited to the Princess Theatre where astronauts Wally Schirra and Wally Borman were lecturing on their space missions. They happened to mention problems docking the command module with the service module due to excessive glare.

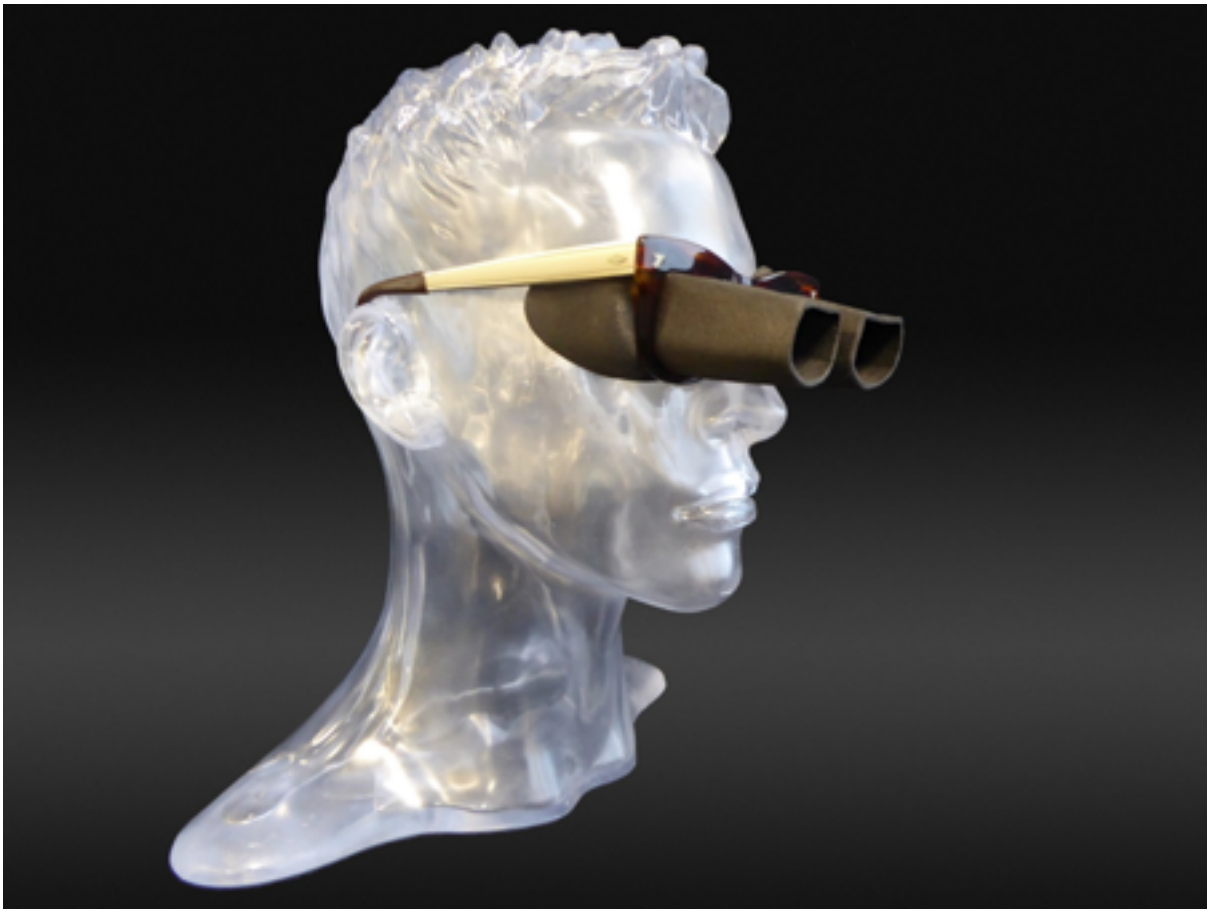


Image 2: Colvin's Apollo Space Program Anti-Glare Glasses. Courtesy of NASA-CSIRO Tidbinbilla Deep Space Tracking.

> I waited in line to speak with them after their lecture and I indicated that I thought I had a solution to their problem. They were rather surprised as no one in the United States had come up with any solution.
>
> They asked me to meet with them at the Southern Cross Hotel the next day. I showed them the model used by RAAF pilots and they immediately saw the potential for its use on space missions. They invited me to Houston in one month's time to test fly the model With my co-designers we modified the model by coating the lenses with two microns of gold which did not interfere with any colour values of the lights used in docking. I delivered the modified lenses which were used on Apollo 7 and subsequent missions.[3]

Colvin utilised his experience through inventing anti-glare glasses for the RAAF jet pilots to invent anti-glare glasses (see images 1 and 2) for the Apollo Space Program. Colvin's anti-glare glasses were known as the Apollo glasses by RAAF personnel.

His anti-glare glasses, made with polycarbonate lenses that were able to withstand high gravitational forces, and an anti-glare docking aid, were used by NASA astronauts.

After successfully applying for a patent, Colvin received an official cable from NASA on 18 October 1966 which advised him 'that the spectacles designed by Dr Colvin are being used on…. Apollo 7'. Indeed, Apollo 7 astronauts, Wally Schirra and Walter Cunningham stated in personal correspondence to John the following about his invention that 'The only way we can thank you for your help is with the recognition of when we make note of the fact that we were aided by not only by Australia on the ground but in flight also'.

Outside the military Colvin lectured, served with the Royal Flying Doctor Service and travelled around South-east Asia and the South Pacific as a visiting speaker. A dedicated Hawthorn supporter, Colvin was the club's honorary ophthalmologist and received the Club's Service Award.

After suffering a stroke in 1995, he entered a period of ill-health until he died on 7 August 2005. Describing his father, his son Alan, said 'Dad did his work and then quietly went out the back door without seeking recognition or glory'.

Indeed, John Colvin's quiet but never the less significant contribution to the Apollo Space Program is best summed up by John himself who stated that he never received any money from his efforts rather the thanks of those involved.

3 John Colvin, *Personal Memoir*, (unpublished), Melbourne, 2004.
4 Interview with author.

The 9.2-Inch Howitzer
Australia's Heavy On The Western Front

Rohan Goyne

The 9.2-inch howitzer was the largest field artillery piece used by the Australian Imperial Force on the Western Front in France during 1916-18.

Photograph 1: Side view of the 5.9" Howitzer at the AWM, Canberra.
Source: Author.

The example at the AWM is one of six hundred and forty-two made by Vickers and Sons, who produced the barrel, and Bethlehem Steel who manufactured the breach. The 9.2-inch howitzer was the largest piece of mobile artillery used by the British and US armies in the field on the Western Front. With a range of 9,200 metres and it fired a shell that weighed 130 kilograms, with a muzzle velocity of 362 metres per second.

The 9.2-inch howitzer was used firstly by the 55th Siege Battery which became the 2nd Australian Siege Battery under the 36th Australian Heavy Artillery Brigade. The battery operated six guns at any time.

Photograph 2: Front view of the 5.9" Howitzer at the AWM, Canberra.
Source: Author.

The howitzer at the AWM is missing the large steel earth box which would contain nine tonnes of soil to assist with the recoil of the weapon. Photograph 4 shows a 9.2-inch howitzer in use by the British with the large steel earth box attached.

The weapon had to be broken down into three loads to move it. Firstly the barrel was detached, then the carriage and cradle, and finally the platform. When emplacing the weapon, it had to be attached to the large steel earth box.

Photograph 3: A howitzer being reloaded in the field by Australian crew.
Source: AWM EZ0147.

The 9.2-inch howitzer was one of the largest pieces of military technology used by the AIF on the Western Front. Through the conflict the 9.2-inch howitzer provided support to the infantry until the armistice in November 1918.

Photograph 4: The 9.2" Howitzer with earth box. Source: AWM EO4801.

Photograph 5: A 9.2 inch Howitzer gun in action near Hargicourt, October 1918.
Source: AWM E03405.

Society Matters

After many years of service, Federal Membership Officer, John Meyers, has stepped down from this role and has been replaced by David Kemp. John is confident that the new MO will look after members very well.
You can contact David at members@mhsa.org,au.

Membership renewals are due at the end of June. Please contact your local branch treasurer for more information.

Readers will notice the slight changes to the formatting of this edition with the addition of new fonts and a modified layout. A new section at the back of the journal will deal with technology (dependent on contributions).
For those with an interest in fonts, the header is Copperplate, sans-serif headings are in Avenir and serif text is in Baskerville.

MHSA BRANCH OFFICE BEARERS

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

President	Ian Stagoll 165 Belconnen Way Hawker ACT 2614 ian.stagoll@gmail.com 02 6254 0199	2.00pm, last Thursday of the month, Jan to Nov Canberra Southern Cross Club, Jamison
Secretary/Treasurer	James Smith canberrabomber@gmail.com 0414 946 909	

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