

Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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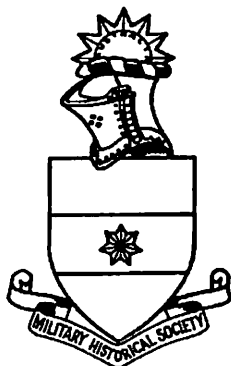
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Contributions in the form of articles, notes, queries or letters are always welcome. Authors of major articles are invited to submit a brief biographical note, and, where possible, submit the text of the article on floppy disk as well as hard copy. See the last page for further guidelines.

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**The Journal and
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SABRETACHE

The Military Historical Society of Australia

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. The annual subscription to the Society is \$30. A membership application is on the back page.

Organisation

The Federal Council of Australia is located in Canberra. The Society has branches in Brisbane, Canberra, Albury-Wodonga, Melbourne, Geelong, Adelaide and Perth. Details of meetings are available from Branch Secretaries whose names appear below.

MHSA Constitution and Rules

The constitution of the Society adopted 1 August 1993 appears in *Sabretache* January-March 1993. The Society's rules adopted on 14 April 1997 appear in *Sabretache* April-June 1997.

Sabretache

The Federal Council is responsible for the publication of the Society Journal, *Sabretache*, which is mailed to each member of the Society quarterly.

Members' notices

Society members may place, at no cost, one notice of approximately 40 words in the 'Members' notices' section of the Journal each financial year.

Queries

The Society's honorary officers cannot undertake research on behalf of members. However, queries from members received by the Secretary will be published in the 'Letters' section of the Journal.

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Commemoration of Sergeant Lewis McGee VC

Anthony Staunton

For nearly eighty years, the grave of 456 Sergeant Lewis McGee of the 40th (Tasmanian) Battalion who was killed in action on 12 October 1917 showed that he had died a day later. Australian publications recorded that he was killed on the 12th but his grave in Belgium showed 13 October 1917. It was only in 1998, after Patricia Downs, a relative of Lewis McGee, noticed the day difference between the Australian records and the date on his grave that the discrepancy was corrected.¹

Lewis McGee (1888-1917)

Lewis McGee was born at Campbell Town, Tasmania on 13 May 1888. His mother died when he was aged seven and the family shortly afterwards moved to a property near Avoca. He became an enthusiastic cyclist and after an apprenticeship was employed as an engine-driver at the nearby Storey's Creek and Royal George mines.² He married Eileen Rose Bailey on 15 November 1914 and they had one daughter, Natasha. He enlisted in the 40th Battalion, a unit of the 3rd Australian Division under Major General John Monash, on 1 March 1916. After initial training at Claremont camp near Hobart he sailed with the 40th to England to finish their training. On 12 January 1917, six weeks after the 40th Battalion moved from England to Armentieres, France, he was promoted Sergeant.

The Victoria Cross

Lewis McGee was awarded the Victoria Cross for most conspicuous bravery on 4 October 1917 during the Battle of Broodseinde Ridge in Belgium. The award was gazetted on 26 November 1917 with the following citation.

For most conspicuous bravery when, in the advance to the final objective, Sergeant McGee led his platoon with great dash and bravery, though strongly opposed, and under heavy shell fire.

His platoon was suffering severely and the advance of the company was stopped by machine-gun fire from a 'pill-box' post. Single-handed, Sergeant McGee rushed the post armed only with a revolver. He shot some of the crew and captured the rest, and thus enabled the advance to proceed. He reorganised the remnants of his platoon and was foremost in the remainder of the advance, and during consolidation of the position he did splendid work.

This non-commissioned officer's coolness and bravery were conspicuous, and contributed largely to the success of the company's operation.

¹ At <http://www.pcug.org.au/~pdownes/dps/mcgee.htm> Patricia Downs has dedicated a page to the memory of her relative, Lewis McGee.

² Lionel Wigmore, *They dared mightily*, Australian War Memorial, 1963, pp.106-108. Spohn, Martin. 'Victoria Cross: Story of a Tasmanian Lewis McGee and his medals', *Arms & Militaria Collector* No.1, pp.47-50. His attestation papers states he did an apprenticeship.

Sergeant McGee was subsequently killed in action.³

Lewis McGee never learnt of his award having being killed eight days later in the 2nd Battle of Passchendaele. He was buried in the Tyne Cot Cemetery.

40th Battalion War Diary

The 40th Battalion War Diary records the Victoria Cross recommendation for Sergeant McGee. That recommendation is worded slightly differently to the citation published in the *London Gazette*. The last line of the citation specifically states that Lewis McGee was killed in action on 12 October 1917.⁴

There is an after action report included in the 40th Battalion War Diary as an appendix to the October 1917 War Diary. The narrative of the operation on 12 October 1917 is written by Lt William Leslie Garrard, OC B Company⁵, and commences as follows:

At 9 pm on 11 October 1917 B Company fell in for the approach march which was completed successfully by 3.30 am, 12 October 1917. On the way the enemy shelled the area lightly with high explosive and gas shells (the latter from the smell I took to be mustard gas). There were no casualties on the approach march.

From 3.10 am to 5.25 am on 12 October 1917 we lay in rear of the platoons of C Company on the sunken road. The enemy shelled our position constantly with high explosive but most of the shells fell behind us about 4 fell short. There were no casualties in the company. At 5.25 am 12 October 1917 our barrage opened and we advanced. Within the first 500 feet the 37th, 38th and 40th Battalions appeared to be telescoped units one another. This was mainly due, in my opinion, (I) to the rear battalions moving off too soon after them (II) one of the leading battalions being held up by enemy machine gun fire.

When we reached the first wood the hostile machine gun fire became very concentrated from our front and I led such of the company as were with me round to the left flank of the wood. A machine-gun then opened on us from the left (apparently on the NZ sector on the other side of Ravebeek). My company sergeant major was shot through the head and three other NCOs were killed, numbers of men fell apparently hit by machine-gun bullets and the remainder of us coming around Augustus Wood and entering it from the west. We captured the pill box and sent back about 20 prisoners.⁶

Lewis McGee was acting Company Sergeant Major on 12 October 1917. This report supports the fact that he was killed shortly after the attack began at 5.25 am on 12 October 1917. The date of 12 October 1917 is also supported by entries in the diary of the Official Historian.

C E W Bean's Diary

The diary of the Official Historian, C E W Bean, general editor and the author of the first six volumes of the Official History, including the 1917 volume, is held by the Australian War

³ *The London Gazette* 26 November 1917, p.12329 reprinted in the *Commonwealth Gazette*, 7 March 1918, p.401. This was the first of two Victoria Crosses awarded to members of the 40th Battalion. The other was to Sgt P C Statton at Amiens, France, on 12 August 1918.

⁴ AWM 4 Roll 76 *War Diary 40th Battalion AIF*.

⁵ Lt Garrard was awarded the Military Cross for his actions on 12/13 October 1917. The award was announced in the *London Gazette* of 18 April 1918 and the citation 'For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He showed great determination and resource when in command of his company under heavy fire, and afterwards in charge of a section of the brigade line of consolidation' was published a week later.

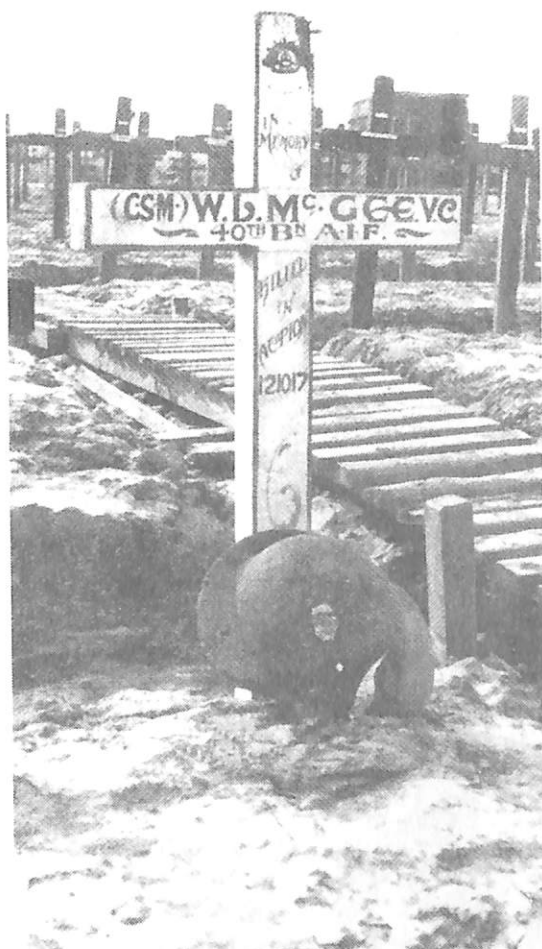
⁶ Op cit *War Diary 40th Battalion AIF*.

Memorial. Bean mentions both the act of valour for which Lewis McGee was awarded the Victoria Cross and the circumstances relating to his death. He records in his diary:

Sgt McGee, B Company

During the advance (probably at Hamburg⁷) finding a machine-gun firing over a concrete structure and holding up the attack walked straight up to the pillbox and shot the machine gunner through the head with his revolver. McGee was on every wiring party B Company ever put out at Armentieres from the very start. He was in every stunt.

He went after and settled another machine-gun by organising a small bombing party and getting the gun. These machine-guns were holding up the advance. He was recommended for VC and commission.



Original grave marker with date 12 October 1917

On October 12 he was with Lt Garrard, OC B Company, near Augustine Wood when machine-guns from there got onto them. The whole of headquarters, all signallers and most of the runners, except Garrard who was left alone. It was there that McGee acting Company Sergeant Major was shot through the head and killed.⁸

VC Presentation

The Victoria Cross awarded to Sergeant McGee was presented to his widow, Mrs Eileen Rose McGee by the Governor-General of Australia, Sir R Munro Ferguson, on 4 April 1918. The letter, dated 13 December 1917, that requested he make a formal presentation of the award included a citation. The citation, similar to the citation that appeared in the 40th Battalion War Diary stated that Lewis McGee was killed in action on 12 October 1917.⁹

Australian publications

A number of Australian publications including C E W Bean in *The AIF in*

⁷ According to F C Green the author of *The Fortieth: A record of the 40th battalion AIF* (Hobart 1922) Hamburg Redoubt consisted of a double pill-box partly surrounded by a moat.

⁸ 3 DRL 606 Item 174, pp12-15.

⁹ National Archives of Australia CRS A6661 Item No. 85.

France 1917,¹⁰ Lionel Wigmore in *They dared mightily*¹¹ and Quentin Beresford the author of McGee's *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry state that Lewis McGee was killed on 12 October 1917.¹² A photo of the original grave marker for Sergeant McGee is held by the Australian War Memorial. The photo clearly shows that this states that he was killed in action on 12 October 1917.¹³

13 October 1917

Although published Australian references and the original grave marker of Lewis McGee state that he was killed on 12 October 1917, his permanent grave marker for eighty years showed that his date of death was 13 October 1917.

The date 13 October 1917 appears throughout his Army file which is available from WWI Personnel Records at the National Archives of Australia. Army Form B2090A indicates Lewis



Grave marker with date 13 October 1917 replaced in 1998.

McGee was killed in action in Belgium on 13 October 1917. This form is dated 28 November 1917 and cites as authority Army Form B213 dated 20 October 1917 which was made by the Commanding Officer of the 40th Battalion AIF.¹⁴ Unfortunately Form B213 does not appear to have survived.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

On 14 May 1998, a submission was presented to Air Vice Marshal Beck, Director, Office of Australian War Graves, drawing to his attention that the date of death on the grave of Lewis McGee VC seemed to be incorrect. The submission included a copy of the photo of the grave marker and copies of the original documents from National Archives of Australia and the

¹⁰ C E W Bean. *The AIF in France 1917* at page 865.

¹¹ Op cit Wigmore pp.106-108.

¹² *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, pp.267-268.

¹³ AWM Negative No. P0735/23/05

¹⁴ National Archives of Australia, WWI Personal Records, 456 Sergeant Lewis McGee.

Australian War Memorial. Air Vice Marshal Beck forwarded the submission to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission responded two weeks later with the decision that they would amend Sergeant McGee's date of death to 12 October 1917. They advised that the Commonwealth War Graves database had already been amended and that arrangements would be made to amend the headstone. A new headstone was erected in 1999 which finally showed the correct date of death for Sergeant Lewis McGee VC as 12 October 1917.

In Memory of

LEWIS McGEE VC

**Sergeant
456**

**40th Bn., Australian Infantry, A.I.F
who died on
Friday, 12th October 1917. Age 29.**

- Citation:** An extract from "The London Gazette" No. 30400, dated 23rd Nov., 1917, records the following:- "For most conspicuous bravery when, in the advance to the final objective, Serjt. McGee led his platoon with great dash and bravery, though strongly opposed, and under heavy shell fire. His platoon was suffering severely and the advance of the Company was stopped by machine gun fire from a 'Pill-box' post. Single-handed Serjt. McGee rushed the post armed only with a revolver. He shot some of the crew and captured the rest, and thus enabled the advance to proceed. He re-organised the remnants of his platoon and was foremost in the remainder of the advance, and during consolidation of the position he did splendid work. This Non-commissioned Officer's coolness and bravery were conspicuous and contributed largely to the success of the Company's operations. Serjt McGee was subsequently killed in action."
- Additional Information:** Son of John and Mary McGee, of Ross, Tasmania; husband of Eileen Rose McGee, of Avoca, Tasmania.

Commemorative Information

- Cemetery:** TYNE COT CEMETERY, Zonnebeke, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
- Grave Reference/
Panel Number:** XX. D. I.
- Location:** Tyne Cot Cemetery is located 9 kilometres north east of Ieper town centre, on the Tynecotstraat, a road leading from the Zonnebeekseweg (N332).

The present GWGC database entry showing 12 October 1917

Rupert Lowe, 4th Victorian Mounted Rifles

Peter Nematic

The following is an extract from the memoirs of Rupert Lowe, a gentleman who lived for many years in my hometown of Geelong in Victoria. Rupert Lowe served in the South African War 1899–1902 with the 4th Victorian Mounted Rifles Contingent as a Lance Corporal. He served with 1st King Edwards Horse as a Trooper in World War 1 and enlisted in the Australian Citizen Military Forces in World War 2.

Victoria

On hearing that Captain Chirside was recruiting horsemen for the Boer War, I promptly slipped on my riding breeches and enlisted as a roughrider in the 4th Victorian Imperial Bushmen's Regiment. After some weeks hurried training at Langwarren we rode to Melbourne, survived further elimination tests and embarked in the troopship *Victorian*.

How a splendid horse for South Africa came my way makes a good story. It began seven years earlier, during a finishing year at Geelong College where I foolishly acquired an enlarged great-toe joint by jumping down the stone entrance steps. The toe only needed an osteopath's attention, but in those days I didn't know that such useful people even existed. At Langwarren training camp the Sergeant Major, who was not joining our contingent, noticed that the heavy army boots hurt my foot, so he let me off and acquired the army issue two pairs of No. nine clodhoppers for himself. When we got marching orders he asked in a friendly fashion, "Do you want a good horse?", "Rather", and with no more words he passed over his heavily built bay mare. She must have been half-thoroughbred and distinguished herself by bolting twice on the march into Melbourne and on to Flemington showgrounds. She proved a treasure and carried me gallantly through nine months of tough campaigning, and down to De Aar in Cape Colony where she took the fatal blue-tongue fever. I named her after Lindsay Gordon's equine heroine in his fine poem *The romance of 'Britomarte'*.

South Africa

Three weeks lonely voyage without once sighting land brought us to Beira Bay in East Africa. The heavily laden *Victorian* lay well off shore from this uninviting fever ridden Portuguese settlement. Unavoidable delays in disembarking a mounted regiment kept us in camp nearby at Bamboo Creek for a full fortnight. Jungle melodies new to Australian ears enlivened the night, and hyenas occasionally prowled among the horse lines, but these shy and cowardly carrion eaters molested nobody.

Leaving the Portuguese, the mosquitoes, flies and fevers behind without regret we boarded the famous Beira railway, which had cost hundreds of lives to construct, and halted at Umtali in Northern Rhodesia. The long open road ahead looked inviting and our poor horses badly needed exercise and relief from cramped conditions, so we gladly unloaded them from closed railway trucks securely netted in against the dreaded African tse-tse fly and trekked right through to Salisbury, the Capital. Passing Gwalo town *en route*, where the plains were literally strewn with bones of cattle slain in a single night by rinderpest, we reached Bulawayo. This fine new town had sprung up on a site once occupied by King Lobengula's kraal, that wily old warrior of Matabele War fame. Headquarters orders here directed the regiment eastward to

patrol the Transvaal border lest the Boers – following their old tactics should again trek northward away from trouble. We often marched by night resting till long after midday and thus avoided the direct rays of Africa's ever-torrid sun. It is amazing how much sleep or semi-sleep can be gained on trained horses jogging along in close army formation through the gloriously starlit night.



No 522, L/Cpl Rupert Lowe, 4th VMR, 1920

Big game country this, as we neared the swift Limpopo or crocodile river necessitating double guards and bonfires nightly whenever we pitched camp near the river. Lions sure did roar out in the jungle, but our preventative measures kept them from carrying off horse or mule for their supper. Nothing could persuade nor force our Kaffir camp boys away from the protective fires even if we accompanied them for, said they, 'Simba likes dark meat best.' Doubtless a soldier's hat and uniform arouses these savage brutes suspicion, hence the natives well-proved statement. Just about dark one evening, I was told off to take out a wood-party for cookhouse requirements. Lion yarns had gone around however so I told the

captain that the fatigue party refused going into the jungle without an armed guard. The guard accordingly turned out with fixed bayonets and I kept my loaded revolver at the ready, but the wood came home safely and no-one encountered Simba the terrible, though a little previously Trooper Pike and I sent on ahead to locate a camping ground, had seen a large crouching animal emerge from cover. Looking back Pike yelled, 'Go for your life, it sprang at your horse.' We did go and soon after met an officer from Fort Tuli, who shouted, 'Have you seen the lion – why didn't you shoot it?' Well, in that fading light, with only army rifles and hard nosed bullets to shoot it we were well content to just 'beat it'. Our lady lioness (for the critter had no mane)

might well have had the better of the deal. When no longer sufficiently active to catch antelope, old lions will lie thus in ambush waiting for some toothsome morsel to come along the track.

Charlie Pike, standing six feet in his socks and proportionately built, got rated as hard on horseflesh, so on the long trek south to Cape Colony became a transport driver, his huge wagon usually overloaded being drawn by a dozen Hungarian remount (but more about our friend Pike later). Rhodesia teemed with game; absurdly tame partridges and guinea fowl appeared in great numbers, herds of antelope, startled by our scouts would sometimes rush clean through the marching column causing wild excitement with strict orders not to fire lest a stray bullet should find the wrong target. Big baboons climbed the high rocks and barked defiance at us, lesser monkeys swung from branches beside the river where loathsome crocodiles lay basking on the sandbars, chameleons we often carried on our helmets, where they sat quite still occasionally changing colour and looking both ways at once, fore and aft, in a most uncanny fashion; they terrify the Kaffir boys who think they are spooks and won't handle or come near them.

Snakes and lizards abounded; one day the cook spotted an eleven-foot Mamba coiled round a bough above his kitchen, it took a dozen shots to get it down. Black and green mambas are the most dreaded snakes in Africa and on occasion they even stalk and attack both man and beast. Large brown scorpions crawled out from under stones towards evening and enjoyed hiding among boots and blankets, no monotony in camp life by the Crocodile River.

Returning from patrol along the Limpopo and Northern Transvaal (for the Boers had not obliged by trekking north as anticipated) on the long dry road back to Bulawayo, our regiment wit waxed eloquent:

We searched every hill and kopje, aye and all along the spruits,
 But never a Boer we sees at all so divil a wan we shoots,
 And we walked to save our breeches till we wore out all our boots,
 And every now and then we washed our faces.

At one stage, half-rations were necessary when the supply wagons didn't turn up. A few goats roamed the hills above forts Tuli and Manzimya, perforce we turned these into stew, they being too tough for more direct mastication. McConachie's ration — a luxury much talked about but seldom seen — gave place to plain army biscuit, 'hard as brick', but nutritious and satisfying when pounded well with the bayonet handle, simmered with bully beef, if you were lucky — curry powder added to taste. 'Iron rations', though a bit monotonous, kept most men strong and fit. Our Captain [E. Tivey, who became a General in World War 1] paraded his company and requested that every man should drink his rum issue as a fever preventative [a very popular potation and known at sea as 'splicing the main brace']. Our particular brand tasted so awful that I persisted in trading mine for an extra biscuit, quite easy for it took several tots to make an addict feel at all 'happy'. Later I noted that not 'yours truly' but the other fellow had succumbed to the African fever!

Christmas on the march

Christmas Day 25 December, 1900. We camped and organised a sports day, the chief and ever popular item being a boxing competition — light hitting and sparring for points. Well, all morning they banged away till only three stalwarts remained — Charles Moore being the favourite. After rest and refreshment Sergeant Sanderson came into the ring seeking for a knockout. Tall and strong he made it a rushing bout, but never a blow got home. Moore danced nimbly away watching his chance then hooked the Sergeant, just one to the chin, it proved sufficient. Last man in — short thick set and powerful — he tried much the same tactics as

Sanderson, with identical results. He couldn't hit the favourite, who cleverly evaded each attack, waited for an opening, then got one home which knocked the other man right out under the ropes, where he lay wondering just what struck him. Light tapping for points you say. Well the pace may have been a bit merry, but that's how they did it in the army. Poor Charlie Moore, who also aimed at being the regiments crack swimmer, but here he bumped into Frank Felstead — a lighter built man with just the right build for surging through water with little apparent effort, so Corporal Moore had to rest content with second place and he was a bad loser. It is sadly true that army life sometimes mars rather than makes a man. Though university trained, gifted and well fitted to lead men and gain respect from his comrades he failed, got 'too big for his boots', looked upon the wine when it was red, lost his stripes, and later on, down south struck real trouble. One wintry day in Cape Colony when our patrols chased a Boer Commando among the Zoorburg ranges, Moore rode his horse onto the skyline, contrary to orders, and a Boer sniper picked him off. Poor fellow, he only lived for two days. We buried him there in the bitter cold as snow fell, driven by high wind along the mountain pass. That was my first snowy experience, tho' I've seen plenty since — both in old and new worlds — I prefer reading about the beautiful snow.

Southward for action

Back at Bulawayo the regiment received orders to march south and everyone seemed eager for the real active service ahead. The first brush with the enemy occurred at Zeerust where we lost our Colonel. Too eager for the fray, he entered the firing line where a leaden bullet from a Boer elephant gun gave him a 'blighty one' in the thigh and he regretfully learned the doctor's verdict; 'invalided out for the duration.'

We passed through Mafeking, here the only remaining evidence of the long world famous siege was where a Boer 'long tom' shell had pierced the conspicuous white wall of the local convent. Much ado about very little — we thought.

One evening when nearing the Orange River, we crossed the British Yeomanry lines and camped nearby. Early next morning a great stir arose for a high ranking English officer's pet Basuto pony had gone missing and was later spied by 'himself' trotting merrily along in Trooper Pike's wagon team of hungry Hungarian remounts. 'Halt', roared the Brigadier, pointing an accusing finger at the driver:

'What's your name?'

'Pike sir.'

'Pike, it should be shark, that's my horse you've got there.'

Naturally enough, when the fine animal had wandered among his lean Hungarian, Pike commandeered it to strengthen his hard worked team. Basuto ponies were much prized for their speed and endurance. No less a man than Sir Patrick Hastings tells a yarn about riding his Basuto pony seventy miles and winning a race with that untiring animal on the same day, when he served as a private in the Boer War. Though ever too modest about his legal achievements, I fancy Sir Patrick 'drew a long bow' on his marvellous steed that day. He further relates that when the Sergeant Major ran him up to the OC on some trifling charge and he argued himself clear, the irate SM exclaimed, 'Astings you orta be a bloomin' lawyer.' 'Thanks SM I will.' And so he did without fear or favour by nothing more but sheer grit and determination, eventually rising to be the Attorney General of England.

With Colonel Kelly invalided out OC's duties now devolved upon the Major. He unwisely adopted British Officer technique and made himself unpopular. He even went so far as to order

that a trooper be tied up to a cart wheel for some breach of discipline, but ne'er a man could he find to even handle the rope, much less tie up a comrade. When night fell, the whole camp began barracking the major in a manner, which must have made his ears tingle. Calmer thoughts prevailed next morning and by common consent the incident was dropped.

The Old Queen passes

January 1901 found the regiment at De Aar Junction and here we learnt that the Queen had died — dear old Queen Victoria! It was said that grieving for her lost Generals and gallant soldiers had hastened her end, and had she not earlier known much sorrow? Her Prince Consort, Albert the Good, ruling with her both wisely and well a vast Empire, after 21 years had succumbed to the overwhelming burden of State a prematurely worn out man, leaving her disconsolate indeed — none more lonely though a Queen — 'Now I have no one to call me Victoria'.

In unison with every outpost of the far-flung Empire, we did her memory honour that day. The Coldstream Guards and the Black Watch were there and I can never forget their matchless drill — the bowed heads upon reversed arms, the long hush, the regimental bands with muffled drums marching back and forth, back and forth upon that desert parade ground till the bugles sounded out *The Last Post*. A moving tribute to a much loved Queen.

At De Aar too, my gallant mare 'Britomarte' left me, the blue tongue fever proving fatal. Almost her last exploit occurred on a Sunday funeral parade at which a certain trooper must attend. He quietly commandeered my horse for the event, whereon she promptly bolted with him and he no doubt felt particularly foolish at making so unseemly a spectacle on the solemn occasion of a comrade's funeral. A good horse can become a real comrade as mine had done, and many I rode before the campaign ended without ever finding her equal.

One lady horse indeed, though a really handsome chestnut, would kick without any provocation and had so violent a temper that I named her 'Jezebel' and was glad when she knocked up under the strain — sometimes forty miles in a day — and had to be abandoned.

Just when leaving De Aar, Lieutenant McDonald, a canny Scot, had his eye on an upstanding 17 hands high horse, and kindly lent me his choice just to see if he was 'all right'. The march coincided with a Boer concentration upon Phillipstown, a noted Dutch stronghold, and we set out 'at the double' in full battle array. My new, tall horse promptly proved himself all right by tossing me off — rifle, haversack, belt bayonet, bandolier and 100 rounds of ammunition thrown in — and went careering down the straight. They caught him and brought him back to me, I piled the impedimenta onto a wagon, again climbed aboard 'McDonald's Fancy' and succeeded in bringing him into camp a reformed character.

Our forced march upon Phillipstown proved a winner. Spreading out we occupied a range overlooking the whole area, opened fire in the nick of time and had the satisfaction of seeing enemy commandoes break away to the hills beyond. Next morning we entered the town without further resistance. Through an ill-judged decision four patrols were now sent out with the farcical order; 'locate the enemy'. Three patrols located all right, ran into enemy ambush and got badly knocked about, four didn't locate, and including 'yours truly', all got back to camp with whole skins.

The Boers were wonderful scouts and huntsmen, well mounted and knowing every inch of their territory, they skilfully evaded encounter on equal terms preferring to lie in wait among their everlasting rocky kopjes — first a peaked one then a flat topper — each and all a death trap with not a soldier but a cunning hunter hidden behind them. The English Yeomanry in

particular fell a prey to their tactics. In fact English troops on the limitless open veldt, (who were much more at home in Piccadilly) generally felt a bit lost, and quite often did get lost, one Company earning for itself the unwanted nickname 'De Wet's Own'. The Boers were unable to hold or travel fast with prisoners, so took all their arms and equipment and everything else they fancied and let them go with the warning not to return or they would fare worse and might even go home in pink!

Cape Colony Boers, now in full retreat and led by De Wet, Milan, and Scheepers were heading north for the Orange Free State with Australian Bushmen in hot pursuit, supported by other columns under General Methuen and Colonel Plumber. We overtook them at Orange River and captured their guns and munitions toiling through the river sand drifts. De Wet we never caught; he had a trick of leaving his ragged forces and making off in the night, giving rise to the quip; 'Why did Kruger wear galoshes?' ... 'To keep De Wet from defeat.'

One evening I learnt that the Queensland Contingent would camp nearby. Father had told me to look out for his friend Shadforth from Lawn Hill; accordingly I set off for their horse lines and there in the first tent was Shadforth himself, so by this happy chance meeting, we had a good yarn together. Our fellows seldom slept in tents, the wagons being far outdistanced. Camping procedure was simplicity itself; hitch your horse to the long rope-lines, give him a rub down and a nose bag of oats for supper, dump the saddle upright on the veldt first kicking aside all loose gibber stones to make a smooth patch for water-proof sheet and blanket, eat your tucker, then jam your head between the saddle flaps to keep the wind off your whiskers and sleep till morning, unless you are unluckily called upon for guard duty. Night guard never troubled me unduly; any lover of nature and wide-open spaces need not unwittingly slumber, the heavenly hosts are grand company. Stars seen through the African high-veldt atmosphere sparkle with extraordinary brilliance. In my limited experience the only air equalling its quality hovers over the Arizona plateau and Grand Canyon.

When leaving Phillipstown, strange to relate, I was still astride 'Mac's fancy'; for reasons undisclosed the bold Lieutenant no longer seemed favourably impressed by his good looks; but the tall horse, green, quite untrained and unused to chasing Boer Commandos couldn't stand soldiering, eventually stood still and had to be abandoned to scratch his living off the land. It is hungry looking country at best, grows stunted bushes resembling Australian salt bush and raises only Angora goats and Ostriches. Their snowy plumes being still prized by sweethearts and wives, our hardier spirits occasionally captured a handsome cock bird and commandeered his fine feathers for export.

Forced marches are cruel on horseflesh; if your faithful steed can carry you and your load no further, off comes the saddle and you cast around for another mount. One day I rode five and reached camp rather late on a mule. Cruelty? True, but all war is cruel and this was at least a sporting go with the better side the winner and no 'birds of prey' dropping deadly eggs upon you from the skies, nor poison gas in H E shells demonstrating man's utter inhumanity to brother man.

Nearing The Finish

Winter being now at hand and no further resistance in force by the enemy, we chased their elusive bands among the hills with varying success, and later drove off marauding Boers from around Graf Reinets and Grahamstown much to the citizen's relief. Grahamstown is a quiet, lovely old town, an ancient seat of learning, College students marched through our lines and feted the troopers with good fare including two cartfuls of pineapples, which made a great impression.

However the treeless land is unfavourable to the average Australian mind; you may ride for a week in Transvaal or Orange Free State and not pick up sufficient sticks to cook a decent meal. The flat topped rock bound hills give the landscape a gloomy, sinister look. Boer farmers never burn wood, their domestic animals and farm stock are all kraaled at night against attack from wild beasts. This leaves an ever-increasing crust of well-tramped manure, which hardens, into peat and burns without flame but with a pungent odour. Aloes or century plants often grow around their houses, which are flat roofed, with stone steps jutting out in front. The soil is



Rupert Lowe in his 80s

fertile enough to grow fine vegetables, and fruit often of unfamiliar species, but why no nice trees for shade or shelter? It seems rather sad and rather stupid omission. The inhabitants are a backward looking lot anyhow, and opposed to change or progress, women massive in build without visible waistlines. And so, when the regiment again turns coastward we leave Africa with no vain regrets; through East London and Port Elizabeth we embark on the mail liner *Orient* and held out across the Indian Ocean for Australia and home. The old *Orient* being no troop ship we were simply squeezed into triple mess decks mostly below the water line with insufficient ventilation. Many men preferred sleeping on deck in the wintry seas, and some went down with pleuropneumonia, our two MOs being seemingly 'too busy' for full medical duty now the war was over. Result: three months Melbourne General Hospital for me and a tediously long recovery.



After his recovery Rupert spent many years travelling the world and settled down for a few years in Geelong prior to enlisting in World War 1. He married in the 1920s, and apart from his service in the Citizen Forces in World War 2, in his own words he 'stayed put.' Rupert Lowe died in Melbourne on the 22nd July 1965 aged 86 years.

The Anzacs' Drum Major—Will Darwin

Wendy Rankine

I 'met' William Darwin initially on the pages of the *Everylady's Journal* of 6 February 1918. It was the story he told of the little black cat he had rescued and cared for in the trenches in France and managed to bring back to Melbourne when he was hospitalized home at the end of 1916. I next came across a William Darwin some months later when I found him organizing a tour of Canada for the Footscray Yarraville City Band in 1978. The band came second in the World Band Championships in Toronto. Then I found a William Darwin pushing a fellow bandsman to Sydney in a common wheelbarrow — one without rubber tires — taking only 7 weeks to do the 640 miles up the Hume Highway in 1935. It was the same William Darwin who had been injured at Gallipoli and who took the band to Canada.

William Darwin was born in Bendigo in 1895 where he developed his life long passion for bands. He became the Drum Major of both the Hopetoun and the Bendigo Highland Pipe Bands at an early age and never having had any specific lessons on twirling the heavy batten, Darwin gradually perfected his skills to the degree where he became world famous. Dressed in his kilt Darwin became part of the act, twirling and tossing the baton high in the air at 1000s of public performances during his long lifetime.

When war was declared in 1914, Darwin was a member of the Bendigo Highland Pipe Band, the Kangaroo Flat Fire Brigade and the local Bendigo militia while working at the Bendigo Hospital. Darwin rushed to enlist immediately, claiming to be the very first to enlist in Bendigo — and he may well have been. The band certainly gave him a rousing farewell. They paraded to the Bendigo Hospital where he was employed, piped Darwin to the Rifle Brigade Hotel where a toast was proposed and a presentation made. Will Darwin never smoked nor drank throughout his long life.

As a member of the Bendigo Volunteers, under Captain Hunter and Lt De Ravin, Private William Darwin, No 780, left by train for the Broadmeadows Camp and joined the 7th Battalion. Darwin and like-minded musical men soon formed a band which was to become the 'Band of the 7th Battalion'. He sailed for Egypt in HMAT *Hororata* on 19 October 1914. By the time the 7th Battalion arrived in Egypt Darwin was the Drum Major of the band and was nominated as a stretcher-bearer — traditionally the role of bandmen.

In February, according to Darwin, he and his unit had their first taste of battle with a skirmish along the Suez Canal with the Turks at Ishmalia. It was here that Darwin began his collection of war souvenirs: a Turkish bandoleer and a piece of shell. Back in camp, band rehearsals took up all his spare time. A receipt dated 12 March 1915 on a Melbourne YMCA letterhead was made out to Darwin for the sum of 120 piastres for two brass drumheads — signed both in Egyptian and English. He bought them out of his own pocket.

Due to the climate and conditions in Egypt many men suffered greatly through exhaustion, Darwin included. He developed influenza which put him in the No 2 Australian General Hospital in Mena House in Cairo for a couple of weeks just before embarking on the troopship Galeka from Alexandria on the 5 April. They sailed for Lemnos in preparation for landing at Gallipoli on the 25 April. Darwin really was an 'Original Anzac'.

The horrific experience of seeing some of his friends die, caught up in the barbed wire entanglements under the water even before they got to the shore was to haunt him forever. He was one of the lucky ones and made it to shore safely. Darwin served at Achi Baba, Cape Hellas, where Captain Hunter of Bendigo was killed in action,¹ Lone Pine and Quin's Post. All the while Darwin continued to add to his collection of mementoes. A pine cone from Lone Pine and a cap of a Turkish 18lb shell and a silver watchcase. According to Darwin, the watchcase had belonged to a NSW recruit of the 1st Battalion and had saved the Australian's life — but only for a moment. The Turk plunged again and the bayonet went into the Australian's neck and this time there was nothing to save him.

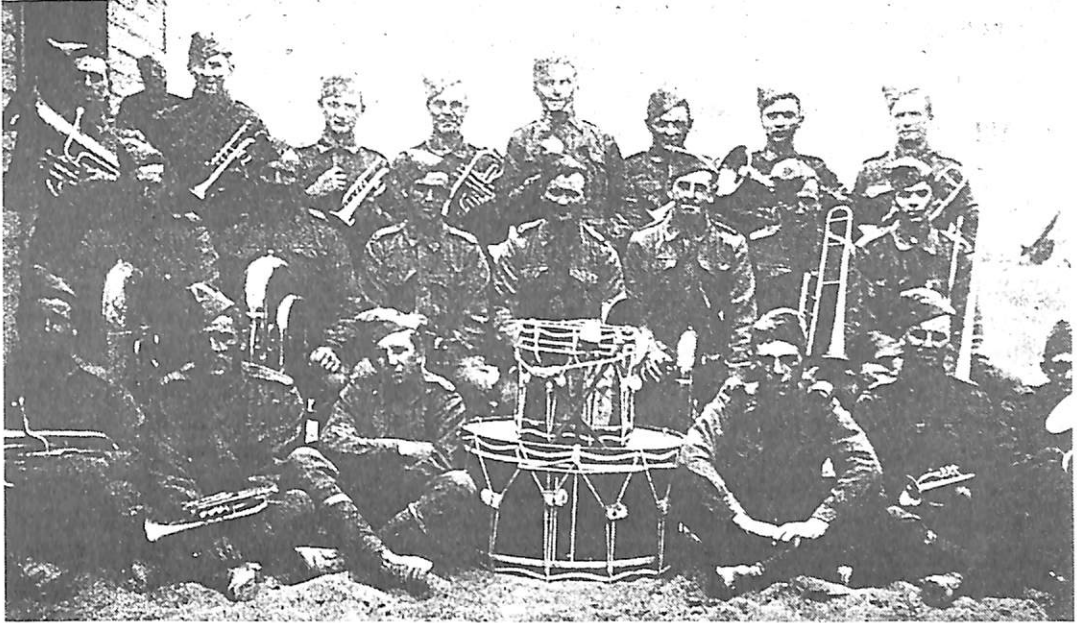
Darwin survived physically unscathed almost until the end of the Dardenelles Campaign. He was promoted to Acting Sergeant on 28 August 1915, less than one month before he too was seriously wounded. On 18 September 1915 in the course of his duty as a stretcher-bearer, Darwin was buried by a shell explosion for more than four hours. When he was finally dug out he was unconscious and was admitted to the No 3 Australian General Hospital at Mudros where he regained consciousness after three days. His medical report says he was operated on and bones were removed from his nose.

When he recovered consciousness Darwin could not use his left arm or leg, he vomited frequently, slept badly and had some difficulty in hearing. Fortunately there was nothing wrong with his speech nor his vision but the doctors suspecting he may also have typhoid or enteric fever, transferred him to England in the *Aquitania*. He was sent at first to the Australian Hospital at Weymouth and then to the Edinburgh War Hospital at Bangor on the 28 October to recuperate.

His jovial personality made him a popular patient and gained him many friends including a couple who, after he was discharged mid March 1916, took him into their home to convalesce. When his health improved his new friends took him on motor tours around the country. Darwin continued to add to his war collectibles — a large silver shoulder broach supposedly worn by a piper at the battle of Bannockburn, a pen handle fashioned from oak from the Brig o'Ayr in 1252 and an old brass model of Robert Burns at the plough. Like most Australians on leave in Britain, Darwin made the most of his time to visit as much of the 'old country' as possible.

¹ At some later date Darwin wrote a poem in honour of the late Captain H H Hunter who was killed on 8 May 1915 aged 33 years. This was possibly Darwin's first attempt at writing in verse; certainly there is nothing previously recorded:

In barracks or camp, in battle or trench,
 Half clothed, half starved or even half dead,
 In the thick of the fight or the minutes of rest
 There was one old Captain the boys loved best.
 Good Captain Hunter, a man with a will
 He'd loose all his money, or kit but still
 He'd hang like grim death to Australian boys
 He's met since he'd left his Bendigo joys.
 In the strife, day or night he would treat them all right
 When we were ... ours would be game fight
 Should one get knocked out when the bullets did rain
 He'd throw down his rifle and help us again.
 With us he would stay till assistance came
 His nerves they were steady his head he kept calm.
 So we must not forget his noble deeds
 Or the time he spent attending our needs
 He fought and fell. He'd played the game
 Leaving behind him a glorious fame.



The 7th Battalion Band, in 1915 in Egypt:

Back row—R Burns, C Rushton, H Jenkinson, Wallace, **Darwin**, Pollard, Staley, Saxton

Middle row—B Carroll, G Slow, D Rennie, R Scott, Burton, A Scott, H Weatherhead

Front row—R Lehming, B Smith, W Joy, Simpson, S Elliott, J Streaten. (Source: *Bendigonian*)

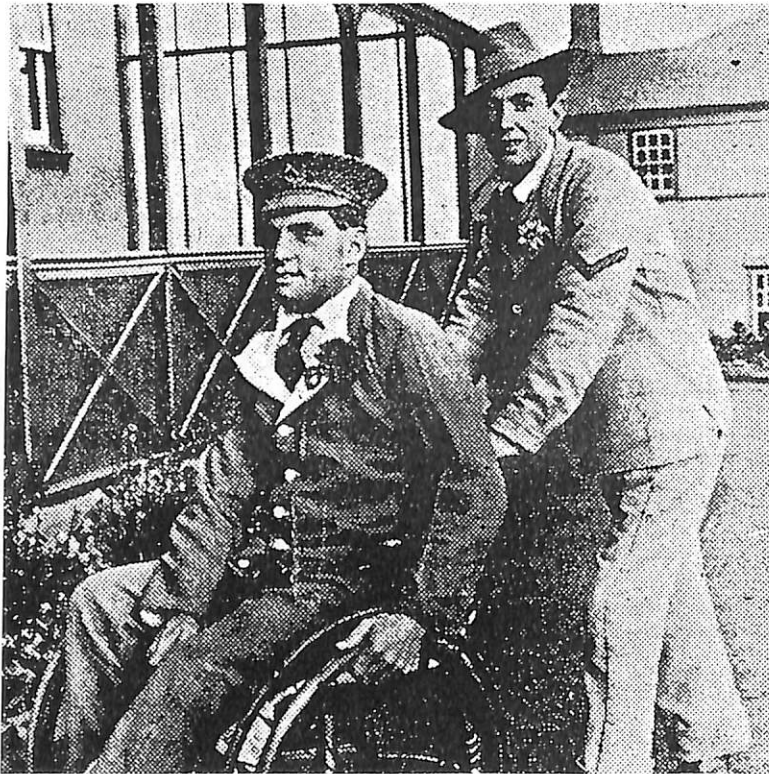


Four members of the 7th Battalion Band. Darwin is seated in front. Bandmaster R Scott is seated immediately behind him.

On 2 May 1916, back in England, he was sent from Abbey Wood to rejoin the AIF at Monte Video Camp, 2½ miles outside Weymouth where he was attached to the No 1 Company depot. On 3 June Darwin was again admitted to hospital, this time the Queen Alexandra Military Hospital Extension where he spent twenty days until 17 June when he returned to Monte Video. On 28 June he was transferred to No 3 Camp Pelham Downes, Salisbury.

This is where Darwin's account differs greatly from his official war record. According to Darwin he was seen fit enough to rejoin his unit back in the trenches — this time in France — while his medical report notes he never rejoined his unit and never left England until he was returned to Australia. Army records of this era are notorious for their inaccuracies and Darwin claimed that from July 1 1916 he found himself in the forward trenches at Fleurbaix near Armentieres with the 5th Division.

According to Darwin, his Australian mates there had adopted a little black cat which gave birth to a litter of kittens — the last being a little black tomcat which Darwin adopted. Darwin named the kitten 'Henry the Eighth' — being the eighth kitten to be born of the litter. Darwin cared for the little orphan in the trenches feeding it the juice from cans of tinned fish and watered down condensed milk from his own rations. Darwin began to suffer again from the effects of the German guns which he claimed were far worse than the Turkish guns at the Dardenelles. On 7 July during the battle of Albert on the Somme, Darwin was finally evacuated from the trench unconscious. The little cat went too — along with a bomb nose cap dropped from a British plane and a finger ring fashioned by a Frenchman from fragments of a German shell from the fields of Verdun. Darwin and the cat both ended up in Millbank Hospital in London where the nurses cared for the cat until Darwin's health had improved.



Sergeant William Darwin (seated) and Corporal D Hall DCM (Fifth Royal Scots) at the Edinburgh War Hospital.

Darwin was diagnosed as suffering from Neurasthenia [Shell Shock] on the 14 September 1916 by the Australian Medical Board. He was found to be permanently unfit for general service and temporarily unfit for home service so permission for his repatriation to Melbourne was granted on the 2 October. When Darwin was invalided home, 'Henry the Eighth' accompanied his master on board the hospital ship, the Ajana, which sailed from Portland on the 17 October 1916. Everything went well until they reached Fremantle. The Customs Officials didn't quite know what to do with 'Henry the Eighth', but as Darwin wasn't going ashore there they felt the problem could be best dealt with at the next port of call. At Adelaide the officials there thought the Melbourne authorities could deal with it and warned Darwin he 'wouldn't get away with it there!'

When they reached Melbourne on 8 December 'Henry the Eighth' really did cause an upset. The Customs Officials insisted the cat must stay aboard until the ship's Captain and the Colonel signed papers verifying the cats' antecedents.² While Darwin was taken ashore and admitted to No 11 Australian General Hospital that day, the cat was detained on board for two days while Customs, the Navy and the Army completed all relevant paper work. Darwin took leave from the hospital and went straight to the Ajana and 'Henry the Eighth' was allowed to come ashore on his master's shoulder — and was added to his master's impressive collection of war mementoes. For his service to his country Darwin was awarded the 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal, the Victory Medal, and the Returned from Active Service Badge. It was some 58 years later that he received a French Medal as a memento for his part in the war in France.

Despite official records now seeming to contradict the events as related by Darwin at the time, Sergeant Darwin on Friday 15 December 1916, returned to his old school in Bendigo to address the students about his war experiences. The 'old boy' had with him a fine collection of curios including a little black cat born in the trenches of France to show the students.

Darwin was discharged from the Australian Army on 31 January 1917 on a pension of £3 per fortnight. He and 'Henry the Eighth' went to live in Carlton where Darwin had a little store opposite the Prince's Hill State School. Here Darwin divided what free time he had between the three loves of his life — 'Henry the Eighth', his music and his re-established involvement with pipe bands as role as the Chief of the Carlton Caledonian Society.

It was in Carlton that Darwin, forever the patriotic Australian, wrote the words to a rather stirring march composed by Ambrose Gregory in 1917. Sgt William Darwin No 780, dressed in his army uniform, was featured in a photograph on the front cover of the sheet music of *Anzacs, Well Done!* This song became very popular at the time — the chorus which went

We were fighting for our freedom
 To uphold a nation's right
 To crush that ruthless tyrant
 Who would question Britain's might.
 And when the war is over
 And Victory is won
 We'll then return to Australia
 And hear 'Anzacs, Well done!'

Darwin, never one to miss an opportunity, sent a copy of his song to General Birdwood and to Sir Harry Lauder both of whom replied with thanks in personal letters. The story of Darwin's

² In February 1918 a cat named 'Pansy' belonging to the children of the new Governor of NSW, Lord Davidson, was refused permission to land with the family because it had been born in Newfoundland. Had 'Pansy' been born in the UK or NZ she would have been allowed to land.

'Henry the Eighth' appeared in the *Everylady's Journal* of February 1918. While the story of the kitten may well have been a means to an end to supplement his meagre pension, story telling and song writing were only two of William Darwin's extraordinary talents. While 'Henry the Eighth' and Darwin's song *Anzacs, Well Done!* both soon faded into obscurity — William Darwin did not.

Less than 12 months after the Armistice, Darwin with his friend Private F J Williams from Burnie, Tasmania, made plans to travel to England via America with the money made from the sale of his song. The Carlton Caledonian Society gave their Chief, Sergeant Darwin, a rousing farewell at the North Melbourne Town Hall. The evening's printed programme included a photograph of Darwin in his Chieftains kilt and a poem written in his honour. Darwin certainly inspired great trust and friendship wherever he went.

Having travelled by boat from Australia via New Zealand, Hawaii and San Francisco, the night of 21 June 1920 found Darwin in Vancouver. Tragically, the Balmoral Hotel, over the road from where Darwin was staying, burned down at 7.30 p.m. It was a huge fire and seven lost their lives. Because of his previous fire training with the volunteer fire brigade in Bendigo, Darwin ran over and managed to climb hand over hand up the fire escape to the top floor as others scrambled down. He carried four people down before the police forbade him to make a fifth attempt. However, Darwin had promised a woman still up there he would be back for her and he felt he had to keep his promise — and he did and got to her just as the wall collapsed. He was the hero of the moment when he appeared carrying her out and got her safely down the fire escape. He was not only awarded a medal for bravery, but also given \$500 cash and the freedom of the city. The medal was inscribed 'For Bravery 20.6.20. Saved three woman and a boy.' And on the reverse side 'Presented by the people of Canada to William Darwin Australia for saving lives at Balmoral fire Vancouver B.C.' Thus another medal was added to Darwin's collection.

Once in the UK Darwin and Williams went straight to Scotland and stayed with his friends from the war days just outside Edinburgh. It was at this time — just after the Treaty of Versailles — that the French attempted to claim the Ruhr Valley by military force as compensation for the lack of remuneration owed them by Germany. France was subsequently compelled by the British and Americans to withdraw — but not before Darwin had written to the French Minister of Defence on 8 March 1921 offering his services as an 'Australian soldier to fight side by side with your gallant French troops.' His offer was not taken up.

In March 1922 Darwin and his friend Williams were still in Scotland where Darwin began composing more songs. Darwin was gaining quite a reputation as an orator and he was invited to speak on various subjects ranging from his travels to Fiji and Hawaii to the exploits of Ned Kelly and his gang. He had such an engaging and entertaining manner he became known in the British press either as 'The Napoleon from Down Under' or 'The Australian Orator'. He also charmed his audiences with renditions of several songs he had composed himself, thus promoting sales of his songs which were available for sale. Darwin sent copies of *Our Glorious Dead* with music by Guy Mitchell, to the King, Princess Mary and the Duke of Windsor, all of whom acknowledged the gift with thanks. Darwin wrote other songs; *Dawn of the Glad Tomorrow*, *Just a Sprig o' Golden Wattle* and *Australia: Our Native Land* but it seems these never won the public recognition nor the success of his first composition, *Anzacs Well Done*.

In between lectures Williams and Darwin were seeing as much of the country as possible. They even took a plane flight over Elgin in North Scotland — Darwin was seeing the world from the air, land and sea. Notes of his travel experiences were to form the basis of a book to be called *The World at a Glance, by Air, Land and Sea*. He did write the manuscript but it was never

published. However the manuscript was the inspiration for him to not only gain admittance to Marshall's College in Aberdeen but also to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society on 12th June 1922.

On his return to Australia Darwin spent a short time in New Zealand. His friends at a local fire brigade there decided to honour him with a picnic at the beach at Raglan, near Hamilton, where a group of swimmers got into difficulties. Darwin, a non-swimmer, raced into the water and saved two young sisters but their three companions were never found. Darwin thus earned himself yet another medal.

Back in Melbourne by February 1924 William Darwin FRGS, went on to become totally involved with Australian Pipe Bands, arranging performances for them both at home and abroad. The Newcastle Steelworks Band which was the first band to leave Australia for an engagement in England where they won a gold trophy at Manchester and came 3rd at the Empire Championships held at the Crystal Palace in September 1924. This inspired Darwin set about to organise a tour to Britain of the Australian Scottish Ladies Pipe Band. It took Darwin year to raise the funds and organise tour before they were ready to leave. At Cowal, Dunoon on 28 August 1926 the Australian Scottish Ladies Pipe Band won the Angus Murray Cup for Discipline, as well as many individual medals. Darwin was thrilled the band was enthusiastically received everywhere they went and they played before their majesties the King and Queen at Braemar. (On several occasions while on tour with Australian Pipe Bands in Scotland Darwin not only played before but also met members of the Royal Family.) The Australian Scottish Ladies Pipe Band finally arrived back in Melbourne 18th February 1927. Their first engagement back in Melbourne was playing on the ABC radio station 3LO for one week. Here Darwin again met up with Major Conder under whose command he had served with the 7th Battalion in Gallipoli and France.

Darwin was elected a Brighton (Melbourne) City Councillor in 1933. He still retained his great interest in the bands both as Drum Major of the Brighton City Band and as liaison officer with the council. It was during this time he undertook the challenge to wheel a fellow bandsman to Sydney in an ordinary wheelbarrow. It was an incredible achievement of physical endurance and determination on Darwin's part as he did the race in only seven weeks rather than the ten as challenged.

Too old to participate actively in World War 2, Darwin, then working at the Maribyrnong munitions factory where he was a Voluntary Defence Warden he helped form the Legion of Anzac's Band in Melbourne. Darwin had written to his old wartime commander, General Birdwood, asking him to be the band's Patron. The General responded to his 'dear old comrade of the 7th Battalion' that he would be delighted to accept the honour.

During the war, Darwin turned his hand to organizing fund raising events which incorporated the Legion of Anzac's Band and many of the local pipe bands. One of the first of his organisational efforts was the Allied Thanksgiving Pageant on 14 November 1943 at Como Park in South Yarra. The following year the pageant came under the patronage of 'Officials and Consuls of Allied Nations' — India being represented by a 'Herd of Stately Elephants' borrowed from Wirth's Circus. The 1945 Thanksgiving Festival and Armistice Day Celebrations was an even more multicultural event with the Young Chinese League and a Russian Dancing Group included in the program.

Having tried his hand at organising outdoor events Darwin also organised more sedate entertainment such as Empire Night Entertainment and the Grand Mannequin Parade to raise money for The Cottages By The Sea — one of Darwin's favourite charities. Darwin,

meanwhile, was still writing stirring marching songs. He presented copies of his latest march *Welcome Tommy Atkins*, with music by Vincent Laraia, to the captains of several Royal Naval vessels visiting Australia in 1947.

Darwin then had the idea to take the Australian Highland Pipe Band on a goodwill tour of New Zealand in 1948 but it required considerable funds. Never one to be stumped for an idea, this time Darwin excelled himself. He devised an idea to hold what he termed a 'Mardi Gras Wedding' in several cities. Young couples could apply to be selected to be married in a public arena as the culmination of an evening spectacular — which included bicycle riding and highland dancing. While Darwin claims to have had such a wedding in Melbourne no record of one could be found but such weddings certainly took place in Adelaide in January 1947 and Perth in November of the same year. The chosen couples received a free wedding breakfast for 60 guests and a free two-week honeymoon — and the band did get to New Zealand.

With the introduction of the Miss Victoria Quests, Darwin was able to throw himself into efforts closer to home. He ran several fund raising productions for Miss Essendon 1949 and was the organiser for the Crowning Ceremony at the St Kilda Cricket Ground — again for funds for the Cottages by The Sea. In 1949 Darwin also had a book published using an anagram of Darwin — *Niwrad*. It was a book of children's stories, beautifully illustrated, called *Major Bill's A Prince of Pups and eleven other stories* and dedicated to his two daughters.

The following year Darwin organised his biggest event yet — The 20th Century Mechanical Exhibition at Melbourne's Exhibition Building. As the only non-engineer on the organising committee it took Darwin 7 months of detailed planning. Field Marshal Lord Birdwood, still an old Anzac mate of Darwin's opened the exhibition. Via a technical innovation, speaking from the House of Lords by radio, Lord Birdwood pressed a button in London to officially open the exhibition in Melbourne on the 12 October 1950 — along to the music of the Veterans' & Ex-servicemen's Band.

After another Australian Highland Pipe Band tour of England, Scotland, Europe, USA and Canada in 1951, and with a reputation as a successful fund raising organiser, Darwin was asked to co-ordinate the Back to Sale Celebrations to raise funds for the Gippsland Base Hospital. Then came the Australian and International Food, Floral, Industrial Exhibition and Fair at Wirth's Park and Skating Rink in 1955, followed by the 100 Years of Progress Exhibition again at Wirth's Olympia.

Throughout the years, Darwin remained in touch with his old Anzac friends. After writing to the Minister of Defence in 1966 several times on behalf of some eight old mates regarding the promised Anzac Medals, Darwin signed off in frustration 'I hope this Medallion will be out before we all pass on. We are all on the old list now...'. He was still writing the following year 'If this does not come soon you will have no need to get anything to give to the Anzacs as there will be none left ...' The medals were eventually issued.

By 1970, at the age of 75 Darwin had begun to slow down and he began to be involved in more sedentary pursuits. He renewed his interest in the Fire Authority in 1972 by donating a Fire Hydrant and gold watch for a fire hydrant race at the annual Fire Authority's sports day. He donated the first prize each year until his death (and this was carried on by his daughter until her death in 1997.) In the same year he joined the Society of St George and the Footscray Yarraville City Band of which he became patron.

Early in 1974, instinctively confident of his knowledge and appreciation of bands after a life time association, the old Anzac urged the Footscray and Yarraville Band — the Australian Band champions for the past 3 years — to go to Canada to compete in the World Band Competition

in Toronto. He was certain that there were only a couple of other bands in the whole world which could perform as well as the Footscray and Yarraville Band. Initially, as in 1924, there had been a lot of ridicule that a band from Footscray and Yarraville could hold its own in a world competition. However, Darwin had such faith in the band's ability he and other members worked tirelessly to help raise funds for the trip — even travelling to Canada himself to pre-travel the bands route, make contacts and help formulate the itinerary.

At a farewell concert at the Dallas Brookes Hall given by the band, William Darwin heard a march which was especially composed in his honour by Mr George Dobson and conducted by Merv Simpson — *The Drum Major Will Darwin*. It was the second march written in his honour. Darwin was presented with a copy of a pipe march especially written for him — *Welcome to Drum Major William Darwin*, a march written by J Scott Skinner during his 1925 tour of the UK with the Australian Scottish Ladies Pipe Band.

The band confirmed Darwin's faith in them. On 14 October 1974 the Footscray and Yarraville Band were announced the Winners of the Toronto International Band Championships 1975 — they won all three competitions they had entered! Darwin was elated. In 1978 the Footscray and Yarraville City Band again went to Canada where this time they were Runners-up in the World Championships.

Darwin was almost naive in his unerring belief in himself and his abilities. He would innocently jump in where most angels feared to tread which resulted in him becoming a regular one-man band as far as time and effort were concerned. His organisational skills sometimes let him down but in the end he managed to overcome most problems.

Darwin never reneged on a challenge and it will never be known who all the beneficiaries of his generosity were. While a truly larger than life character — sometimes over bearing — his manner was motivated entirely by goodwill for his current undertaking. His efforts were never for personal gain for William Darwin was never a rich man in a financial sense. While a few folk accused him of boasting and exaggerating, others either openly, or surreptitiously, admired him for his talents, his thoughtfulness and his determination. His tenacity for a cause was heroic. Darwin was awarded the British Empire Medal on 28 February 1977 for Community Services after a lifetime devoted to the community at large.

Four years after his much beloved wife and tolerant partner of over 50 years, Dolly, had died, Darwin suffered a stroke. He died at his home in Melbourne on 1 December 1981. While few, apart from his family, now remember this amazing man, records of Darwin's deeds and exploits can still be found in the yellowing pages of newspapers and journals from Melbourne to Manchester. Letters he wrote are in various archives around the city while his legacy to the pipe bands, brass bands is immeasurable. William Darwin — the Anzacs' Drum Major.

Australian and Canadian Colour Patches of World War 1—A Comparison

Graham, Wilson

There is a tendency in Australia to regard the colour patch system of the First World War Australian Imperial Force as unique. While such patriotic devotion is laudable it is not entirely correct. The AIF's great Dominion counterpart in the First World War, the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), also wore a system of unit colour patches which consisted of combinations of specifically coloured geometric shapes. It is of interest to note, in light of the above comments about Australian views of the AIF colour patch system, that I have read at least one Canadian source which refers to the CEF's colour patch system as 'unique.' Not only is this not true, an examination of the CEF system and comparison with the AIF system reveals that the Canadian system was nowhere near as extensive and all encompassing as the Australian system.

The aim of this short article is to introduce readers to the CEF colour patch system and to compare the Canadian system to the AIF system.

The Australian System

The AIF wore a common hat/cap and collar badge as an almost universal standard, the only variations being general officers, chaplains, members of the RAN Bridging Train and members of the Siege Brigade (who were Permanent Military Force soldiers and wore the cap badge of the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery). All others wore the AMF badge, the so called 'Rising Sun' badge.

The earliest method of unit identification was metal shoulder titles and numbers. For example, in the early days of the war, members of the 1st Australian Infantry Battalion wore a straight oxidised title 'INF' on the epaulette with the numeral '1' above. Other titles which existed were 'LH' (light horse), 'ENGR' (engineers), 'RAE' (Royal Australian Engineers), 'ASC' (Army Service Corps) and 'AAMC' (Australian Army Medical Corps).

This system was not very satisfactory as the oxidised brass titles and numerals did not show up well against the drab coloured Australian uniforms and were not in any case popular with the troops. During the early days of the forming and training of the AIF in Egypt, a system of coloured flags was adopted to denote the lines of the brigades and battalions of the force. In 1915, orders were issued directing that miniature versions of these flags should be worn on the upper sleeve as battalion, unit or brigade identification. It was from this that the AIF's colour patch system evolved.

The AIF system was based on a variety of geometric shapes combined with identifying colours. The basic shapes were triangle for corps and army troops, rectangle for 1st Australian Division, diamond for 2nd Division, horizontal oval for 3rd Division, circle for 4th Division and upright rectangle for 5th Division. Various other shapes eventually came to be used but these were the basis.

The shapes were in various colours to denote specific formations or units. Black and white were the colours for corps and division patches, the patches consisting of a smaller white version of

the unit shape superimposed on a larger black version — for example, the patch of the 1st Australian Division was a black rectangle with a smaller white rectangle superimposed on it.

At the next level down, that is brigade, patches were in the shape of the division with the brigade's position within the division denoted by its colour — the colour for the 1st brigade of each division was, theoretically, green, the 2nd brigade red and the 3rd brigade light blue. Thus, the patch of the 1st Australian Infantry Brigade, 1st Australian Division was a green rectangle while the patch of the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade, 2nd Australian Infantry Division was a green diamond. For battalions, again theoretically, the colour patch was divided in two, the lower half being the brigade colour and the upper half being either black, purple, brown or white for the first, second, third and fourth battalion of the brigade respectively. Brigade Light Trench Mortar Batteries wore the brigade patch with a small blue grenade beneath it.

This was the theory of course and, unfortunately, it did not take the system long to break down. The reasons for this break down are largely beyond the scope of this article but, suffice it to say, from the creation of the 4th Australian Division onwards, brigade and battalion colour patches paid little heed to the theory.

Divisional troops wore patches of the divisional shape in corps or service colours. For example, 1st Australian Division medical units wore a beech brown rectangle while medical units of the 4th Division wore a beech brown circle. Beyond the infantry divisions, the various fighting and support units wore a bewildering array of shapes and colour combinations for their shoulder patches.

The Canadian System

The CEF differed markedly from the AIF in the field of insignia in that each of the battalions and regiments of the CEF had its own cap and collar badges and, in some instances, their own unique shoulder titles (metal or cloth). Many cap badges, especially those of the 260 infantry battalions raised by the CEF, were based on a common maple leaf pattern with unit identity shown by the unit number on the badge. Just as many, however, if not more, wore specifically designed and totally unique badges. Collar badges, on the other hand, at least for the infantry battalions and later on in the war, were largely of a common pattern, made of brass and consisting of the letter 'C' over the battalion/unit number.

As a result of the above, in the earlier years of the war, the CEF saw no need for colour patches as units were immediately identified by the cap and collar badges. As the war progressed, however, Canadian soldiers began to remove their shiny cap and collar badges when in the front line as they were seen as being just another means of attracting the unwanted attentions of German snipers. In addition, from early 1916, the Canadians began to be issued with the new steel helmets which of course made cap badges redundant. With no cap or collar badges, it became necessary to devise another method of identifying units. The method devised was the so-called 'battle patches', the CEF's colour patches.

The system was in some ways simpler than the Australian system but at the same time more complicated. The basic patch, worn at the top of each sleeve, was a coloured rectangle 3 inches long by 2 inches high to identify the division. The 1st Canadian Division wore red patches, the 2nd blue, the 3rd turquoise (French grey) and the 4th green. These patches were worn by all Divisional HQ staff and by all other troops serving with or attached to the division who did not have their own patch. Variants of the basic patch were those for the divisional MG battalion which had a beech brown arrow placed horizontally in the centre of the patch with the arrow point forward; divisional medium and heavy trench mortar batteries who wore the divisional

patch with a blue cloth bursting grenade placed above the patch; and the divisional engineers who had the letters 'CE' in purple on the centre of the patch surrounded by a purple frame. Apart from the infantry brigades and battalions, the only other patch worn was that of the divisional labour company who wore a small triangle in the divisional colour at the top of each sleeve and, in the 1st, 2nd and 4th Canadian Divisions, a special patch for officers on the divisional HQ. For the 1st Division, this consisted of the red divisional patch with a white rectangle set on it; for the 2nd Division it consisted of the dark blue divisional patch with large gold letter 'C' on it with the Roman numeral 'II' in the curve of the C; while for the 4th Division the patch consisted of the green rectangle with (surprise, surprise) a gold maple leaf on it. One additional oddity was the patch worn by champion platoons, sections, etc of the 3rd Division. This patch consisted of the divisional turquoise rectangle with what appears to be a dark blue 'dumbbell' or hand weight placed diagonally upon it; the higher end of the weight is to the viewer's right. The 3rd Division does not appear to have had an 'officer's patch'.

Brigades wore the basic divisional patch with a coloured strip of cloth 1/2 inch high and 3 inches wide placed just above the patch (approximately 1/4 inch above). The strips were green for the 1st Brigade, red for the 2nd Brigade and blue for the 3rd Brigade. Brigade light trench mortar batteries wore a blue cloth grenade above the patch with the ball of the grenade centred on the brigade coloured strip.

As with the AIF and indeed the British Army, the brigades of the CEF contained four infantry battalions. These battalions wore a geometrical shape at the top of the basic brigade/division patch to identify their order of precedence in the brigade. The 1st battalion in each brigade wore a circle, the 2nd battalion a semicircle, the 3rd battalion a triangle and the 4th battalion a square. These shapes were in brigade colours — thus the 1st Battalion (which happened to be the 1st Western Ontario Battalion, CEF) of the 1st Brigade of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division wore as its 'battle patch' the red rectangular patch of the 1st Canadian.

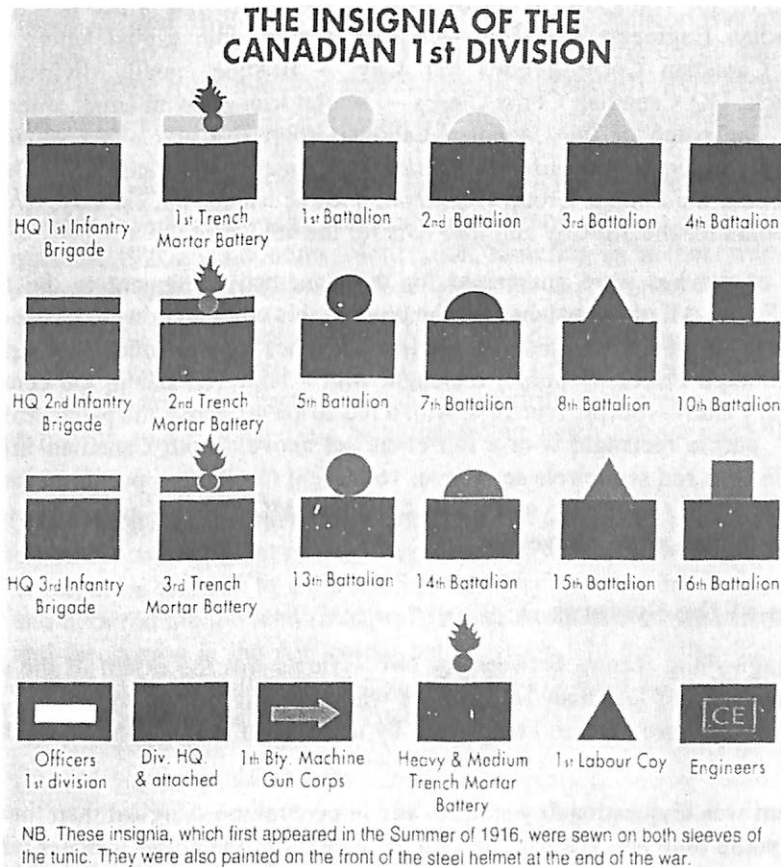
Division with a green circle above. For comparison, the first Battalion (18th Western Ontario Battalion, CEF) of the 1st Brigade (4th Canadian Infantry Brigade) of the 2nd Canadian Division wore the blue rectangular patch of the 2nd Division with the green circle of the 1st battalion/1st brigade. Besides wearing cloth patches on their sleeves, in the last two years of the war, it became common practice within the CEF for battle patches to be painted onto the steel helmet.¹

From this it is obvious that, unlike the AIF system, the CEF system, for the infantry at least, was designed to denote a unit's place in a formation rather than to identify the unit itself. Theoretically, a battalion could be transferred from one brigade to another or even from one division to another and would not take its colour patch with it. In practice of course, this did not often occur but the point is there.

One formation where individuality of expression occurred in regard to patches was the Canadian Cavalry Brigade. Each of the major units of the brigade wore a distinctive patch as follows: the Royal Canadian Dragoons — dark blue four sided lozenge with a red horizontal bar at the top and bottom and gold horizontal bar through the middle; Lord Strathcona's Horse — red over green diamond; Fort Garry Horse — dark blue diamond with smaller gold diamond

¹ A majority of the photographs of troops of the CEF in the field that I have viewed supports the concept that the CEF preferred to wear the steel helmet uncovered. This is in direct contrast with the Australians who always covered the helmet with hessian and where the sight of an AIF member wearing an uncovered steel helmet in a contemporary photograph is the exception, rather than the rule. I have theorised that this may have resulted from the Australians learning very early on in the war the value of camouflage and concealment while fighting the Turks at Gallipoli — but this is only a theory and totally unsubstantiated.

superimposed; Royal Canadian Horse Artillery — four sided lozenge, scarlet over dark blue; brigade MG squadron — four sided lozenge, dark blue over white; 7th Field Ambulance — beech brown diamond (apparently identical to the colour patch for 2nd Australian Division medical units).



Other patches were worn by lines of communications, Army and Corps troops as follows: Canadian Light Horse (Corps cavalry regiment) — four sided lozenge, light blue over dark blue, separated by a central horizontal red bar; Canadian Corps Cyclist Battalion — triangle divided equally into three smaller triangles, dark blue (top left), light blue (top right), red (bottom); Army Troops units Canadian Engineers (Army Troops Company (Coy) CE, 1st and 2nd Tramway Coy CE, Anti-Aircraft Searchlight Coy CE) — red rectangle with narrow dark blue horizontal bar in the centre, placed on the centre of the bar a small dark blue rectangle with the letters 'CE' in red; Canadian Corps Heavy Artillery — dark blue rectangle with a jagged, horizontal red stripe across the centre (apparently identical to the patch of the Australian Corps' 36th Heavy Artillery Group); Canadian Garrison Artillery Brigades — identical to the Heavy Artillery Group with a brigade identifying bar set above (green for 1st Bde, red for 2nd Bde, dark blue for 3rd Bde); Canadian Corps Survey Section — as for the Heavy Artillery Group but with a large capital letter 'O' superimposed; Canadian Corps Siege Park — black triangle with an upright artillery shell in red with a black driving band, a small letter 'C' in white in each corner of the triangle; Motor Machine Gun (MMG) Brigades — a narrow rectangle, red for 1st MMG Bde, dark blue for 2nd MMG Bde, with a beech brown arrow set just above the patch;

1st Tunnelling Coy — red square with a large black capital letter 'T' set on it; 2nd and 3rd Tunnelling Coy — both wore a large red capital letter 'T'; Railway Troops — red square with a small white triangle in the centre; 58th (Canadian) Broad Gauge Operating Coy — red triangle with smaller purple triangle superimposed with the base of the smaller triangle level with the base of the larger; 8th Army Bde Canadian Field Artillery Park Section — light brown triangle; Canadian MMG Motor Transport (MT) Coy — beech brown triangle with a beech brown arrow above it; Canadian Engineers MT Coy — scarlet triangle with capital letters 'CE' in gold superimposed; Canadian Corps Troops MT Coy — triangle equally divided horizontally black/white/black; HQ Canadian Corps Clerks — scarlet triangle with small letter 'C' in white in each point. The patch of the Canadian Labour Group HQ was a red square with three horizontal white bars on it. The Infantry Works Companies were identified by horizontal red bars placed beneath the Labour Group HQ patch, one red bar for the 1st Coy, two bars for the 2nd Coy, three bars for the 3rd Coy and four bars for the 4th Coy.

A final group of patches were authorised for the Canadian contingent to the North Russia Expeditionary Force. All of the patches for the units of this contingent were based on the purple rectangle of the never raised 5th Canadian Division. Patches were as follows: B Squadron Royal North West Mounted Police — purple rectangle with a large red star in the centre; HQ 16th Canadian Infantry Bde — purple rectangle with a red stripe set above the patch; 259th Canadian Infantry Bn — purple rectangle with a red circle set above; 260th Canadian Infantry Bn — purple rectangle with red semicircle set above; 16th Field Coy CE — purple rectangle with the red capital letters 'CE' set on it; and, 20th Canadian MG Coy — purple rectangle with a horizontal beech brown arrow above it.

Comparison of the Systems

The main distinguishing feature between the two systems was the extent of the systems. The CEF system consisted of less than 140 patches while the AIF system eventually totalled over 300 patches with far more patches being worn by units down to company equivalent size than in the CEF.

The CEF system was unquestionably simpler and in general more logical than the AIF system. While it takes some time and effort to become an expert on AIF colour patches, anyone with a reasonably good memory could master the CEF divisional patches system in less than half an hour.²

The major difference between the two systems, however, is the underlying philosophy behind the systems. The CEF system was designed simply to identify what position a unit occupied within the CEF rather than the unit itself. On the other hand, for the AIF, the colour patches became closely identified with individual units and jealously guarded as the very symbol of unit pride and cohesion. The strength of attachment to the colour patches can be judged from the reaction of the various battalions identified for disbandment in the last year of the war. One of the reasons for the so-called 'mutiny' of these battalions was the fear that the men would lose their colour patches. To counter this fear, the Australian authorities were required to guarantee to the men that they would be permitted to continue wearing their old patches.

A further proof of the difference in the philosophies behind the Australian and Canadian systems was what became of the colour patches after the war. At the end of the war when the

² The Australian colour patch system for the Second World War is extraordinarily complex and complicated. Colonel Chinn (ret'd), the acknowledged expert on the subject and the author of the Army Colour Patch Register once stated to the author that as much as he admired the AIF, he fervently hoped they would never be raised again.

CEF demobilised and the Canadian army reorganised into a small regular component supported by a large part time militia, 'battle patches' fell into immediate disuse. Units went back to relying entirely on their regimental, corps and service cap and collar badges as the outward sign of unit pride and history.

In Australia, on the other hand, while regimental and corps badges were reintroduced on the establishment of the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) in 1921, the decision was made to grant to the newly organised CMF the 'privilege' (note the word) of wearing the colour patches of the corresponding unit in the AIF. In addition, former members of the AIF were permitted to wear a miniature version of the colour patch of the last AIF unit in which they had served.³ Not only were war time colour patches preserved in wear, new patches for both permanent and part time units and formations continued to be authorised right up until the outbreak of the Second World War.⁴ This latter development led to the most extreme example of how far the system could be stretched when, in the 1920s, a miniature colour patch, featuring an anchor, was authorised for wear by members of the PMF or CMF who had served in the RAN during the late war!

Thus while in Canada the battle patch system quickly passed into oblivion with the cessation of hostilities, in Australia colour patches continued to be an outward sign, and a very jealously guarded one, of unit identity and pride. No less an authority than General Sir John Monash stated that 'the private soldier valued his battalion colour patch almost more than any other decoration'.⁵

Which system was better? That's easily answered — both (or neither). Each system evolved totally separately under two different military organisations with two entirely different ways of looking at what might be referred to as 'battlefield heraldry'. Both were developed to fulfil a specific need and both did the job admirably well. As an Australian I will always have a great deal of pride and fascination in the AIF colour patch system. On the other hand, as a person with a wide ranging interest in military heraldry, I will always also have a great deal of interest in and respect for the Canadian battle patch system.

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³ Military Order (M0) 206/21.

⁴ Both the Australian and Canadian Armies resurrected their colour patch systems during the Second World War but once again the Australian system was far more comprehensive than the Canadian one and Australians looked to the colour patch as their sign of unit identity and pride while the Canadians looked to their regimental and corps cap badges, collar badges and newly introduced embroidered shoulder titles. The Australian system lasted until 1949 when it was scrapped in favour of the British system of shoulder titles and lanyards. The system has been readopted in a very much modified form since the 1980s.

⁵ Quoted in *Australian Victories in France 1918*.

The Sailor on the Sydney Cenotaph

George Franki

In 'Around the Water Cart', *Sabretache*, December 1999, mention is made of the figures of the soldier and sailor on the Cenotaph in Martin Place, Sydney. Details are given of the soldier model, Corporal William Darby, AIF, but the name only is given of the sailor, Leading Seaman John William Varcoe, RAN (actually Varcoe in his naval records). Varcoe was born at Baker's Swamp, NSW, on 20 July 1897. He entered the RAN on 3 June 1913 as a Boy Second Class and trained in Training Ship *Tingara*, a three masted sailing ship, formerly *Sobraon*, launched in 1866 and used as an immigrant ship and a reformatory for delinquent boys before being acquired by the RAN in 1912.

Varcoe left *Tingara* on 22 September 1914 as a Signal Boy and was drafted to HMAS *Cerberus* and HMAS *Pioneer* before joining the destroyer HMAS *Parramatta* on 14 April 1917. By then a signalman, he served in *Parramatta* until 20 July 1919. The destroyer was one of six RAN River Class destroyers based at Brindisi, Italy. On 15 November 1917, an Italian steamer, *Orione*, was torpedoed while on passage from Valona to Brindisi. *Parramatta* took *Orione* in tow and, while setting up the tow, the two ships were again attacked by a submarine. *Parramatta* continued with the tow until relieved by a tug. Varcoe had been aboard *Orione* and for his efforts in maintaining communications he was awarded a Distinguished Service Medal (DSM). Of the 1071 'Tingara Boys' who served in the RAN in World War 1, Varcoe was the only one to win an award. *Tingara* trainees made up about 10% of all RAN World War 1 ratings. On 9 April 1923, by then a leading seaman, John Varcoe signed on again in the RAN for a further five years. He was discharged from the Navy at Sydney on 8 April 1928.

The two bronze statues on the Cenotaph were designed by Sir Bertrand Mackennal, an expatriate Australian sculptor who had designed the tomb of Edward VII at Windsor and the medals for the Olympic Games of 1908. Mackennal also constructed the statues of Cardinal Patrick Moran and Archbishop Michael Kelly, which stand at the southern end of St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney.

The statues of the soldier and sailor had not been completed when the Cenotaph was dedicated on 8 August 1927. They were later unveiled before a large crowd on 21 February 1929 in the presence of Sir John Monash.

Sources:

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Book Review

Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *The Boer War; Army, Nation and Empire* — proceedings of the 1999 Chief of Army/Australian War Memorial Military History Conference, Army History Unit, 2000

This volume contains the papers delivered at the Chief of Army's annual history conference on 4-5 November 1999, which was held on this occasion in conjunction with the Australian War Memorial. The speakers at the conference covered the actions of the British Empire and British South Africans, the Afrikaners, and the black and coloured populations as well as the home front. Both the early phases of the war, the long guerrilla phase after 1900 and the forcible relocation of the civilian population is touched upon.

Lieutenant-General Frank Hickling Chief of Army opened the conference with the remarks:

Given that 1999 marks the centenary of the beginning of the conflict, the Boer War was an obvious topic for this year's conference. But there are a number of other reasons for holding a conference on that war in this year.

The war coincided with the move to federation in the Australian colonies. It saw the first use of Commonwealth troops in military operations. In the wider context of Empire, the war had an impact on the way Britain and the dominions interacted. The Empire's foreign and domestic policies, especially Imperial defence policy, reflected the consequences of the South African experience throughout the critical years that preceded the First World War.

The volume contains the following papers:

- Craig Wilcox: Looking Back on the South African War
- Bill Nasson: South Africa's Post-Boer, Boer War
- Ian F W Beckett: The South African War and the Late Victorian Army 31
- Ian van der Waag: South Africa and the Boer Military System 45
- Stephen Badsey: The Boer War as a Media War
- Carman Miller : The Crucible of War: Canadian and British Troops During the Boer War
- Jean Bou : Modem Cavalry: Mounted Rifles, the Boer War, and the Doctrinal Debates
- Iain G Spence: 'To Shoot and Ride': Mobility and Firepower in Mounted Warfare
- Stephen Clarke: manufacturing Spontaneity'? The Role of the Commandants in the Colonial Offers of Troops to the South African War
- Peter Burness : Tommy Cornstalk: A Soldier's Impression of the War
- Peter Stanley : With Banjo to Kimberley: Banjo Paterson's South African War Verse as History
- D M Horner : The Influence of the Boer War on Australian Commanders in the First World War
- Bobbie Oliver: 'A Wanton Deed of Blood and Rapine': Opposition to Australian Participation in the Boer War
- Melanie Oppenheimer: Home Front Largesse: Colonial Patriotic Funds and the Boer War
- John Hirst: Blooding the Nation: The Boer War and Federation
- Luke Trainor: Convenient Conflict? Aspects of the Boer War and Australian Federation

The role of Australian colonial forces and the impact of the war on Australian colonial societies receives deserved scholarly attention. —Anthony Staunton

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1918: Defining Victory — Proceedings of the 1998 Chief of Army Military History Conference \$10.00

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Around the Water Cart

by 'Joe Furphy'

A one-day seminar 'Australians in the Korean War – 50 Years On' will be conducted by the Royal United Services Institute of Victoria at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne on Saturday 8 April 2000. Speakers include MAJGEN Jim Hughes AO DSO MC (ret) and an overview will be given by prominent military historian Chris Coulthard-Clark. Registration \$40 including lunch, morning and afternoon teas and copy of proceedings. **Numbers will be limited – inquire now!** Secretary RUSI (02) 9282 7498. (*Flyer from RUSI*).

Two South Korean soldiers, believed killed in the 1950-53 Korean War, have returned home, after being held captive in communist North Korea for more than 45 years. The two were caught during a battle in Kumhwa in July 1953 and were sent to work in North Korean mines. They managed to escape into China and thence to South Korea. For the first time last month, South Korea said that about 136 POW were still alive and being held captive in the north (*Port Moresby Post*, 15 December 1998, courtesy of *Old Faithful*, magazine of the 3RAR Association, Queensland, Jan 2000).

A publication which had its genesis in an investigation of the names on the World War I Roll of Honour in the Yass (NSWL) Soldiers' Memorial Hall is 'We Have Not Forgotten: Yass & District's War, 1914-1918'. It looks at the experience as soldiers or workers on the home front

of men and women from Yass itself as well as areas from Binalong to Burrinjuck and Goonadah to Rye Park. It reproduces residents' oral histories, details of the 1915 and 1918 recruiting marches, memorial services and 'in memoriam' notices for soldiers, war memorials and honour boards in the area, bravery awards and many other details. Softcover, 343pps; illustrated; indexed; bibliography. Paperback \$30; Hardback \$45 both plus p&p. Contact Milltown Research, PO Box 563, Yass, NSW, 2582. (*Descent*, Journal of the Society of Australian Genealogists, March 1999).

For the first time in NSW, public access to State Records has a statutory basis. The *State Records Act 1998* entitles the public to all State Records over 30 years of age, including those produced by all public offices except the governor, courts and Parliament. Enquires to (02) 9237 0126 or e-mail: execofficer@records.nsw.gov.au. (*Descent*, March 1999).

On Tuesday 20 June 2000 at 5.15pm, Associate Professor David Phillips will speak to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria on 'Australia's Imperial War a Century Ago: the Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902'. 239 A'Beckett St, Melbourne. Enquires for non-member attendance at this lecture to (03) 9326 9288 (*Supplement to History News*, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, February 2000).

A new Internet web site, at Hamilton, Victoria, documents the war memorials and memorabilia items in the western districts of Victoria. A database of more than 22,000 names listed on war memorials in the region will be added shortly. The Web address is: http://www.deakin.edu.au/fac_arts/swwh but presently the web site has the following notice: 'We regret that access to this site has been temporarily suspended ... the site will be re-commissioned when a more comprehensive version becomes available, sometime in May.' (*Their Service – Our Heritage* Newsletter, Department of Veterans' Affairs, December 1999).

In September 1939, four Douglas DC-3s arrived in Canberra to serve with No 18 Squadron, RAAF. Incredible as it might seem, sixty years later the RAAF is still operating DC-3s, three of which serve with the Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU) in South Australia. Also, one of those original four 'Daks' is still flying, operated by Ansett Airlines for special flights. (*ACT Branch Newsletter*, October 1999)

A New Zealander, Clive Franklin Collett, made the first official RFC parachute jump from an aircraft, a BE2c, in January 1917. A civilian had successfully jumped by parachute from an aircraft in 1914 and RFC balloon crews (observers) were issued with and used parachutes, but the RFC stubbornly refused their issue to aircrew. They had a change of heart after Capt T H Orde-Lees had very publicly demonstrated the use of parachutes for saving aircrew by jumping from London's Tower Bridge and from the Middle Temple (dangerously low altitudes), thus allowing Collett to undertake the first official RFC jump from an aircraft. (*The Volunteers*, Journal of the New Zealand Military Historical Society, July 1999)

The medals of an Australian soldier who invented the drip-fired rifle to cover the Anzac withdrawal from the Gallipoli peninsula have been presented to the Australian War Memorial. Captain William Scurry, an architectural modeller from Melbourne, was serving with the 7th

Battalion as a Lance Corporal when he invented the 'pop-off' automatic firing mechanism by which water dripped from a tin into another suspended below it. When full, the second tin pulled down on a string attached to the rifle's trigger, the timing of the shot being determined by the size of the hole in the first tin. Scurry was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal and mentioned in despatches for his invention. In 1918, he was commissioned and sent to France in command of a light trench mortar battery. He earned a Military Cross before being practically blinded by a German bomb. He took up strawberry farming in the inter-war years and, despite his disabilities, enlisted again in World War 2 and commanded the prisoner of war camp at Tatura, near Shepparton, in Victoria. (*The Canberra Times*, 18 September 1999)

The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* plans to include in a forthcoming volume an article on Major Norman Isaac Winning, MBE, who gave distinguished service with the 2/5th and 2/8th Commando Squadrons in New Guinea during World War 2. The General Editor, ADB is anxious to hear from anyone who has information about Major Winning's pre- and post-war careers, especially family members. Major Winning was killed in the Subang district of Java, Indonesia. Information to General Editor ADB at Australian National University ACT 0200. Mr K Bovill of WA is also researching Major Winning and would like to hear from anyone who can help him locate his grave. Information to (08) 9339 2623. (*Vetaffairs*, Journal of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, December 1999)

During 1999, a National Servicemen's Memorial was dedicated at Puckapunyal Army Base in recognition of national servicemen from all three services that served in Victoria from 1951 to 1972. (*Vetaffairs*, December 1999)

A blast from the past has washed up on the beach at Portsea, Victoria. The surf uncovered an old 9.2 inch naval shell. It has been identified as a fabulous example of an 1880s shore-fired naval shell, 60cm long, 25cm wide and weighing around 120kg. The Senior Ammunition Technical Officer, Southern Region said its design predated modern high explosive and driving bands. It was shrapnel design consisting of a heavy cast outer casing around 5cm thick and containing hundreds of iron balls. At the base of the casing was a chamber filled with gunpowder. When ignited, the powder forced a plate forward like a piston, explosively propelling the iron balls forward and shattering the outer casing. After breaching the outer casing with explosive, the SATO found the inner casing full of seawater. Due to the difficulty of removing it, the shell remains on the beach. (*Army*, 17 February 2000)

The dawn service at Anzac in 2000, the 85th anniversary of the first landing, will be held at a new site, 300 metres north of Ari Burnu where previous services have been held. The new site is dominated by the rocky hill called The Sphinx. It is substantially larger than the old one and is the place of the Anzac evacuation from Gallipoli. Also, the new site will allow the cemetery at Ari Burnu to be restored as a place of quiet and reflection. It will be linked to the new site by a path that follows the route of a light rail line constructed by the Anzacs. (*Vetaffairs*, December 1999)

While on the subject of military railways, several British-built miniature locomotives which were previously used by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) to haul ammunition around the Smithfield Magazine at Salisbury, South Australia have been acquired by railway museums in Victoria and South Australia. (*ACT Branch Newsletter*, February 2000)

The new home of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria at 239 A'Beckett St, Melbourne is the western section of the former Medical Corps 'drill hall'. The site was in military hands from 1886 when a small weatherboard orderly room was built for the Volunteers: this was replaced in 1900 by a Federation style Orderly Room and in 1939 by the present building. The RHSV would like to build up a history archive about their new home, as they did with their former one at the Old Mint. If anyone has information about the building and its uses, contact RHSV at (03) 9326 9288. (*History News*, RHSV, February 2000)

Some books from Messrs Berkelouw of 'Bendooley', Old Hume Highway, Berrima, NSW (02) 4877 1370 as listed in their *Australiana Bulletin* Volume 19 No 1:

The Defence Act 1903-1939 and Regulations and Orders for the Australian Military Forces and Senior Cadets 1927. Melbourne 1940. Crudely rebound using original front cover. 564pp. Numerous amendments pasted in and additional inserts. \$125. [Who remembers pasting amendments in AMR&O?]

The History and Regimental Standing Orders of the 30 Infantry Battalion, the New South Wales Scottish Regiment. Prepared and Issued under the direction of the Commanding Officer 30 Bn. 1959. 221pp. With numerous plates, some of which are coloured and foldout tables. \$85.

Staff and Regimental Lists, Australian Military Forces, 1st January 1914. Melbourne 1914. Facsimile reprint, 1989. 158pp. \$50.

Australian Military Senior Cadets. Training, Musketry and Rifle Exercises, 1917. Melbourne. 1917. With figures in text. \$65.

And from K R White Books, telephone (02) 6292 6600:

Men of Courage. The History of 2/25 Australian Infantry Battalion. Allan W Drayton. Published February 2000 by the Battalion Association. Case bound. 380 pages. 100 photographs and maps, nominal roll, Honours and Awards, citations, Honour Roll, list of casualties, bibliography, members' anecdotes and index. \$49 plus p&p.

Geoff Howe of Ancestral Trail Publications, Croydon Park NSW (02) 9798 8949 sends news of his book *Words of War*. It is based on letter from; and contemporary newspaper interviews with more than 40 soldiers from the Inner Western Suburbs of Sydney who fought in the South African War. There is material from the NSW Lancers, NSW Mounted Infantry, NSW 'A' Battery, the NSW Army Medical Corps and the Bushmen. Among the better-known names mentioned are Fighting Charlie Cox of the Lancers, Lieutenant Russell Watson who took the surrender at Pretoria and the Reverend James Green who witnessed the fighting at Elands River. 124 pages illustrated. \$20 plus \$4.50 p&p.

Members' Notices

New Zealand Brigade's first attempt to take Chunuk Bair, 7 August 1915

I have commissioned a painting by Allan Waite, a well known Australian military artist, depicting New Zealand Brigade's first attempt to take Chunuk Bair on 7 August 1915. If I am able to cover my print costs on the basis of a quantity of initial but firm orders, I will undertake a limited print run. I have endeavoured to make the work as accurate as possible, making extensive use of both Bean's and Chris Pugsley's books on the subject. Pugsley, Joe Crumlin (an expert on Northern Anzac), and Heather Stone from the Auckland Army Museum, have all helped by supplying information and guiding the process. The prints would be 24" x 16", produced on high quality card (280 gsm linen embossed and selloglazed finished). To members of the Society I am asking A\$100 for each of the proposed 150 signed proofs and A\$50 for the unsigned prints. Postage would be approximately A\$5. For an order of more than 5 prints, a 10% discount on print prices would apply. (For retail sale, I am recommending A\$150 and A\$75 respectively.)

— Stephen Rankin, 17 Courallie Road, Northbridge, NSW 2063



At 11 am on 7 August 1915 Auckland Battalion, followed by 2/10 Ghurkhas, attacked from the Apex position along Rhododendron Ridge in an attempt to take the crest of Chunuk Bair. The bayonet charge was a disaster. The troops managed to reach the Pinnacle, only 100 yards from their start position and 400 yards short of their objective. In less than an hour the battalion had taken some 300 casualties with only 100 men reaching relative security of a shallow trench abandoned earlier by the Turks. The Ghurkhas fared little better. When meeting the intense fusillade they were either swerved left into the Aghyl Dere or went over the crest of Rhododendron and were lost in the Sazli Dere where they came under fire from Battleship Hill. In terms of slaughter, it was New Zealand's 'Nek': a repeat of the annihilation of the Australian Light Horse some seven hours earlier.

MHSA Biennial Conference 2000

The 2000 Seminar
Queen's Birthday Weekend
13 to 15 June 2000
Canberra

The MHSA 2000 Seminar will be hosted by the ACT Branch, and in the Centenary year will have a primary focus on the centenary of the war in South Africa, and the 100 year history of the Australian Army.

VENUE

Canberra RSL Club, (1st Floor Auditorium), 13 Moore Street, Canberra City

CONFERENCE CONTACTS

Conference Coordinator:
Mr S H Pyne
9/27 Jinka Street,
HAWKER ACT 2614
02-62545319

MHSA ACT Branch President:
Colin Simpson
Tel. 02-62863548;
Fax: 02-62867548
e-mail cjsimps@ozemail.com.au

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation bookings and costs are a personal responsibility. Early booking of accommodation by participants is strongly recommended because of an international sporting event on the same weekend. Members requiring accommodation assistance should either contact appropriate venues or the ACT Branch Coordinator. Some accommodation options with *indicative* rates:

Acacia Lodge Ph 02-62496955	(\$71, or \$77 twin share)
Garden City Ph 02-62953322	(\$75-\$85)
Gazebo Canberra Ph 02-62763444	(\$135 - bedroom) (\$160 apartment - sleeps 1-4)
Olims Hotel Ph 02-62485511	(Standard room - \$99; Deluxe room - \$145)
Parkroyal Canberra, Ph 02-62478999	(Standard Rate - \$165)
The Chifley Ph 02-62491411	(\$131)
University House Ph 02-62495275	(\$83 single, \$92 twin share, \$95 double suite))

For additional enquiries: "Canberra Getaway" Accommodation Hotline phone 1800-100-660.
Website www.canberratourism.com.au Email enquiries: canberratourism_ctec@atlasmail.com

FEES

Registration - Members:	\$65
Registration - Non-Members:	\$75
Registration - single day:	\$25
Additional guest for Conference Dinner:	\$25
Conference excluding Conference Dinner:	\$45

Persons proposing to attend please forward a deposit of \$20, together with full contact details, plus details of any disability and/or dietary requirements, to the Conference Coordinator by April 2000. Cheques should be made out to The Military Historical Society of Australia (ACT Branch). The balance of fees are payable on Registration.

PROPOSED PROGRAM

Friday 9th June 2000

7.00pm – 8.30pm **Welcome function**
(Finger food - dinner not included)

Saturday 10th June 2000

9.30am – 12.15pm **Queen's Birthday Official Trooping of the Colours Ceremony, Royal Military College, Duntroon**
(Travel to and from Duntroon included in Registration)

12.30pm **Lunch** (Light lunch included in Registration)

2.15pm **Official Opening of the Seminar 2000**
Society Patron Air Marshal I B Gratton, AO, AFC

2.30pm **Keynote Address by Dr. Craig Wilcox, the Australian War Memorial Historian of the Boer War**

3.15pm – 4.00pm **Presented papers**

7.00pm **Official Dinner** (Included in Registration)

Sunday 11th June 2000

10.00am – 5.00pm **Presented papers.** (Light lunch included in Registration)

Monday 12th June

8.00am – 9.45am **Guided Tour of the War Memorials of Anzac Parade**
Finish at the Australian War Memorial

10.30am – 12.30pm **Visit to the Australian War Memorial Research Centre**
An introduction to the War Memorial's Research Facilities and Document holdings.
(Participants can depart as their schedule requires)

Titles of papers currently submitted for presentation:

The five stages of the Australian Army from 1901 – Dr Peter Stanley
Sgt James Rogers VC – Anthony Staunton
Uniforms and equipment of the Second Anglo-Boer War – B Manera and C Simpson.
Majuba Hill (1881) and Spion Kop (1900) – Ron Austin
Military Guards on Convict Transports – Lt Col T C Sargent
The Australian Use of Artillery – Maj Gen J Whitelaw
Feeding the 1st AIF, the Problem and its Solution – Graham Wilson.

Non-Members of the MHSA who have an interest in the study and research of any aspect of military history are most welcome to register and attend this Symposium. Readers should feel free to place this notice on notice boards or distribute it to anyone who may be interested in attending.

More information about the Military Historical Society of Australia can be found on website:

<http://www.pcug.org.au/~astaunto/mhsa.htm>

MHSA Branch Office Bearers

ACT

President
Vice-President
Secretary/Treasurer

Col Simpson
Brad Manera
Graham Wilson
234 Beasley St
Farrer ACT 2617
02 6286 7702 (h)
02 6265 4560 (w)

4th Monday of the month
Feb to Nov at 7.30 pm
Upstairs
Canberra City RSL
Moore St Civic

ALBURY-WODONGA

President
Secretary/Treasurer

Nigel Horne
Doug Hunter
575 Poole St
Albury NSW 2640
02 6021 2835

1st Monday at 8 pm
every 2nd month (Jan/Nov)
VMR Museum
Buna Barracks
Victoria St Albury

GEELONG

President
Vice-President
Secretary

Robin Mawson
Ian Barnes
Steve Chilvers
110 Beacon Point Road
Clifton Springs Vic 3222
03 5253 1176 (h)
03 5249 3222 (w)
Rob Rytir

1st Friday of the month. 7.30 pm
Osborne Naval Museum
North Geelong

Treasurer

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President
Vice-President
Secretary/Treasurer

Don Wright
Dave Radford
Syd Wigzell
17 Royal St
Alexandra Hills Qld 4161
07 3824 2006
07 3395 1843

7.30 pm, 4th Monday of the
month except December
Yeronga Service Club
Fairfield Road
Yeronga Brisbane

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

President
Vice-President Secretary

Tony Rudd
Tony Harris
PO Box 550
Mitcham SA 5062
08 82718619 (h)
08 8226 4779 (w)
John Lawrence

8 pm, 2nd Friday each month
except Good Friday
Army Museum of SA
Keswick Barracks
Anzac Highway, Keswick

Treasurer

VICTORIA

President
Vice-President
Secretary

Steve Gray
Robbie Dalton
George Ward
7 McKenzie Crt
Croydon Vic 3136
03 9725 2916
Bill Black

4th Thurs of month except Dec
Toorak Bowling Club
Mandeville Cres
Toorak
8.15 pm

Treasurer

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

President
Vice-President
Secretary/Treasurer

Russell Mehan
Ian Macfarlan
Peter Bamforth
23 Sweeney Way
Padbury WA 6025
08 9307 7780

3rd Wednesday of the month
Fremantle Army Museum
7.30 pm

Notes from the Editor on contributions to *Sabretache*

While the following are merely guidelines, it certainly helps the Editor in preparing copy for publication if these guidelines are followed. Nevertheless, potential contributors should not be deterred by them if, for example, you do not have access to computers or typewriters. Handwritten articles are always welcome, although, if publication deadlines are tight, they might not be published until the next issue.

Typewritten submissions are preferred. Material should be double spaced with a margin. If your article is prepared on a computer please send a copy on a 3.5' disk (together with a paper copy).

Please write dates in the form 11 June 1993, without punctuation. Ranks, initials and decorations should be without full-stops, eg, Capt B J R Brown MC MM.

Please feel free to use footnotes, which should be grouped at the end of the article (however, when published in *Sabretache* they will appear at the foot of the relevant page). As well as references cited, footnotes should be used for asides that are not central to the article.

Photos to illustrate the article are welcomed and encouraged. However, if you can, forward copies of photos rather than originals.

Articles, preferably, should be in the range of 2,000-2,500 words (approx 4 typeset pages) or 5,000-7,000 words (approx 10 typeset pages) for major feature articles. Articles should be submitted in accordance with the time limits indicated on page 2. Recently, lateness in receiving articles has meant that the Journal has been delayed in publication. Nevertheless, where an article is of particular importance, but is received late, the Editor will endeavour to publish the article if possible and space permitting.

Authors of published articles retain copyright of their articles, but once an article is published in *Sabretache*, the Society, as well as the author, each have the independent right to republish (electronically or in print), or licence the use of the article.

Elizabeth Topperwien
Editor



Application for Membership

I/*We
(Name/Rank etc.)

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hereby apply for membership of the MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA and wish to be admitted as a *Corresponding Member/*Subscriber to *Sabretache* /*Branch Member of the

..... Branch

My main interests are

I/*We enclose remittance of A\$30.00 being annual subscription, due 1 July each year.

Send to: Federal Secretary, PO Box 30, Garran, ACT 2605, Australia



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