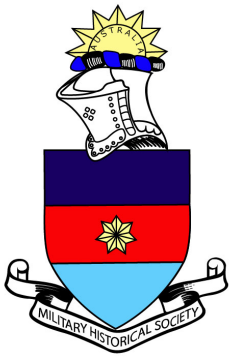
Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



Sabretache policy is that the submission of material gives the Society permission to print your material, to allow the material to be included in digital databases such as the MHSA website, Australian Public Affairs-Full Text, INFORMIT and EBSCO. Reprints to non-profit historical and other societies will be approved provided suitable attribution is included and a copy of the reprint is sent to the author. Copyright remains with the author who may reprint his or her article or material from the article without seeking permission from the Society.

The Society encourages the download and distribution of *Sabretache* for personal use only and *Sabretache* can not be reproduced without the written consent of the Society.

www.mhsa.org.au

Military Historical Society of Australia
PO Box 5030, Garran, ACT 2605.
email: webmaster@mhsa.org.au

PATROL FROM MENARI - TO FIND THE JAPANESE

Capt Bede G D Tongs, MM1

The 3rd Infantry Battalion advanced onto the Kokoda Track. I was Platoon Sergeant of 10 Platoon, B Company and in most instances, Platoon Commander.

After leaving the army vehicles near Bisiatabu we set off marching past McDonalds Corner, Owens Corner, introduced to mud at Uberi, climb to Imita Ridge then down and up to Ioribaiwa Ridge were we extricated the remnants of the 21st Brigade Headquarters, 2/14th and 2/16th Battalions. The 2/27th had taken to the bush earlier.

Back onto Ioribaiwa, the Japanese were very active when the 25th Brigade arrived 2/25th, 2/31st 2/33rd Battalions. Japanese pressure increased, the Australian forces had to withdraw to Imita Ridge. Active patrolling back to Ioribaiwa, the 58 man volunteer patrol from the 3rd Battalion the only successful one. I was in command of a Section on that patrol. While on Imita Ridge, the artillery guns of the 14th Field Regiment was music to our ears as the rounds whistled overhead. The move forward started from Ioribaiwa on the 1 October. The 3rd Battalion led the fight forward, through Naro then onto Menari, some patrols forward, however no contact with the Japanese.

On the afternoon of the 5 October, I received word to report to the CO, Lt Col Cameron. He said, "Bede, the Japanese have to be located as there is no sign since they withdrew from Ioribaiwa." He asked me would I lead a patrol along the Kokoda Track through Kagi, Templeton's Crossing and beyond to find the Japanese. I answered, "Yes Sir." He then detailed the object of the patrol, strength, route and drew a sketch map on the back on an Army signal form. Patrol to leave Menari at 0700 hrs on the 6 October.

Lt Col Cameron had been in the forward area on the Kokoda Track with the 39th Battalion and the 53rd Battalion. This enabled him to pass on information of importance regarding the general topography and approximate timings between villages and strategic points.

It was to be a reconnaissance patrol, strength eight men, two men to return with a report on progress one complete day's march from Menari. The sketch map listed Menari, Seventh Day Adventists Ridge (generally referred to as Mission Ridge), Efogi, Kagi, Templeton's Crossing, Eora Creek, Alola, Isuarava, Deneki and Kokoda. During the briefing, Lt Col Cameron was suffering an attack of malaria, however it did not delay the issuing of orders for the task ahead.

My orders were to keep going until I found the Japanese, report on location and approximate strength. I was also to protect the left flank of a fighting patrol from the 2/25th Battalion, strength 53 men and commanded by Lt Barnett with Lt Cox. Their route was from Efogi by branch track to Myola then Templeton's Crossing to find and fight the Japanese.

Also in my orders was to keep an eye out for the CO of the 2/14th Battalion, Lt Col Keys and a party from his Battalion. His group was missing after an encounter with the Japanese in the Isuarava/Alola area around 30 August. Lt Col Cameron shook hands with me and wished me good luck. I saluted him and returned to B Company and my 10 Platoon area. I saluted the eight

---

1 My father was an ANZAC, No 1071, George Tongs, 13th Infantry Battalion, AIF. Born at Alton, Hampshire, England. Arrived in Australia in 1911. He was Wounded in Action at Quinn's Post in May 1915.

men - all good, solid performers.[2]

Extra rations were collected. The Regimental Quartermaster was always kind to me when on patrol. He would say, "Bede, take as much as you and your boys can handle." Ammunition checked and replenished where necessary, some extra four second hand grenades. We had to travel as light as possible. Even so, we carried all our worldly possessions. There was no leaving anything behind as the Battalion was on the move.

Field dressings were checked. I carried some spares. We had no specialist in first aid or stretcher bearer with us. Unfortunately, my own training in first aid was practically nil. During our army training we were so busy being taught how to kill that survival was left to the luck of the draw. I was always concerned about my lack of knowledge in being able to deal with a wounded soldier, such as stopping bleeding. We also had an issue phial of morphine in a small wooden case. I was told not to inject it for head wounds but otherwise it was in order. I still have my issue phial in my possession. The phial carried on the individual soldier was to be used on the particular person if necessary.

The members of my patrol were informed of the task ahead. The route was explained.

We had been under attack before by the Japanese. At least four of us had taken part in the successful 58 man volunteer patrol from Imita Ridge to Ioribaiwa Ridge in September when we clashed with and killed some Japanese.

All members of the patrol knew it was to be no pushover and I said, "We keep going until we contact the Japanese, as ordered by the CO."

Prior to leaving Menari at 0700hrs, on the 6 October, there were three smokers in the patrol with little or no tobacco. I asked Warrant Officer Jarrett who was with ANGAU, and who had a Papuan carrier party in the village. "Have you any spare boong twist tobacco, as my soldiers who are about to go on a long patrol have none." He answered, "Yes, I have some but unfortunately it is packed away and the cargo boys are just about to move." The Warrant Officer said he was taking supplies to an aircraft spotter somewhere out from the village of Kagi. He said, "If you can arrive in North Efogi the same time as the carriers, I will unpack the boong twist and give your boys some." I thanked him and said that we would do our best. I thought, 'That's goodbye to the tobacco,' as whoever heard of a group of Australian's racing a Papuan carrier team. However, we arrived in the village a quarter of an hour ahead of the carrier team. Warrant Officer Jarrett was as amazed as we were. The patrol smokers received some sticks of boong twist and expressed their gratitude.

Back to the patrol moving out of Menari. It was an enthusiastic group, the high morale was as if the boys were going on a picnic. Yet all members of my patrol, since early September, had witnessed the tragedy of jungle warfare - walking wounded with blood and mud soaked dressings, some being led and aided by less disabled wounded. Walking wounded who normally would have been stretcher cases and had probably been walking for up to seven days. They were walking because they knew the Papuan carriers were stretched to the limits of human endurance. Even so, these carriers were still able to smile, and protected the Australian soldiers with banana leaves or similar.

---

2 Corporal Barry Flint from Queanbeyan, my Second-in-Command; Lance Corporal George Webb, Griffith; Privates Fred Chapman, Bombala; Jack Roberts, Queanbeyan; Ted Miners, Bombala; Graham Todman, Mudgee; J C Baker, North Coast and Dick Mason, Sydney

The soldiers coming back had been tested beyond any normal type of combat. This included the terrain, shortage of rations, limited ammunition and the Japanese enemy with victory after victory as their driving force.

With that background and knowing we were going to make contact with the Japanese the best thing to have on one's side was high spirits, high morale and a sense of humour.

We were told that it was a reasonably safe journey to Kagi but be careful after North Efogi, even so our order of march was two forward scouts with Thompson Sub-machine Carbines, then me and members of the patrol. The last man was nominated as dragman whose job was to get away and report to the Unit the fate and location of the patrol, if the patrol was ambushed or attacked.

As a small patrol of nine men, we were able to keep up a pretty good pace. We also had the incentive to reach North Efogi on or about the same time as Warrant Officer Jarrett and the Papuan carriers.

The Kokoda Track showed signs of much movement. The Japanese had left imprints of the familiar split-toe footwear in the hardening mud. There was another type of boot with the steel heel protector, a little over half a horseshoe, whereas the Australian Army boot had a full steel horseshoe. We were experts in detecting signs of movement left by the Japanese.

The patrol faced a super test. As things stood by the time we made contact we would only be seven men strong. Two runners would have been dispatched with word of our progress once we were one full day's march from Menari.

Along the part of the Track, especially the Mission Ridge area, where the 21st Brigade AIF troops had made a gallant stand causing many Japanese casualties the unburied remains of Australian Soldiers were a disturbing sight. Some remains were still in stretchers in line one behind the other on the Track, wounded or sick had met death, the stretcher party having been ambushed or attacked whilst on the move. They would have been shot or bayoneted to death. Identification discs were on the skeletal remains. We left them there as I knew authorities moving forward would be the best ones to secure the discs.

Along the Track to Efogi and beyond, bodies of our troops were on or near the Track. The Japanese advance had been costly to both forces. No doubt the gallantry of these Australian troops had taken some of the momentum out of the Japanese advance, enabling a build up of additional troop resistance further back along the Track.

As a member of the 3rd Battalion, I witnessed the introduction of the 25th Brigade AIF at Ioribaiwa Ridge, the withdrawal to Imita Ridge and the fight forward. Now as we passed fallen Australian comrades, our step became more resolute, determined the tide on the Kokoda Track had turned. Late afternoon we moved into the jungle and camped for the night.

Another patrol from the 3rd Battalion was close behind us. Next morning, as we commenced the steep climb up to the village of Kagi, the patrol led by Sergeant Con Hogan with Sergeant Len Griffiths their role being to proceed from Kagi into the Seregina Valley in the search for Lt Col Keys, CO of the 2/14th Battalion AIF, also to report on the track Seregina to Alola.

A number of Japanese bodies were on the right hand side of the Track on the climb to Kagi. The bodies were in a deplorable state, fly blown and apparently victims of dysentery by the added stench and visible filth. The steep climb to Kagi must have been too much for their spirit and bodies. The number of dead was approximately sixteen. There appeared to have been no water available to them so they must have died a painful, lingering death.

I would like to record that the Japanese were glorious in victory but devastated in defeat.

I have spoken to Sergeant Len Griffiths regarding the patrol he was with on the approach to Kagi. (Sergeant Con Hogan was killed in action at Templeton's crossing in October with the 3rd Battalion.) My patrol had continued to climb to Kagi, Sergeant Griffiths was just passing the last group of what appeared to be dead Japanese, when a soldier amongst the bodies sat up with a grenade in his hand, about five paces away. Sergeant Griffiths, who was the dragman, said he shouted a warning to the patrol, but the Japanese was too weak to throw the grenade. When the soldier was confronted and disarmed, he was found to be fly-blown from dysentery. He was eventually evacuated.

My patrol reached the village of Kagi. I directed the forward scouts to skirt the right side of the nearest hut as this direction proved the most cover from any enemy still in occupation. Many huts had been destroyed by fire and only charred black upright timbers remained. An odd grass covered structure however was still standing. Having made sure no Japanese were visible in the village, I investigated the nearest hut, approaching with caution, covered by two patrol men, my service rifle on the hip and ready to fire. A native came to the doorway, not speaking but with a wide grin on his face. He put out his hand for me to shake, which I did. A conversation in Pidgin English started and we learnt he was from Rabaul and had deserted the Japanese. We found inside the hut two more Rabaul natives who had been shot by the Japanese. One through the instep of the right foot and the other through the calf of his leg. Both were incapable of walking, the wounds badly inflamed with pronounced swelling. They were pleased to see we were Australians. As we applied field dressings to each wound we were told they had been brought from Rabaul by the Japanese and forced to work as carriers and in this case, on becoming ill and unable to carry, were deliberately shot by the Japanese.

They went on to say that in most cases the sick native was shot dead. The third native said he deserted the Japanese to care for his friends and they managed to reach Kagi and the shelter where we found them. The friend of the wounded had provided water and vegetables from native gardens. We gave them some tins of bully beef and three packets of our army biscuits.

My patrol moved forward from Kagi, our haste slackened and extreme caution was the order. In the far distance the tree covered mountains was distinct narrow gap, the famous Kagi Gap. With many spells during the climb and hopefully no hindrance from the Japanese, we would be passing through it in a few hours. The Track goes down a little after leaving the village and as there was not much scrub for a few hundred yards it was not good for concealment. All we could do was space ourselves further apart to make a less easy target. We came across the isolated remains of an Australian soldier. The skull bare of any covering and looking closely I found a bullet hole to the back of his skull. He was probably doing the best he could to outdistance the Japanese when a well-aimed shot on this straight stretch of track caused his death, no identification discs were on his skeletal remains – Mr Billy.

We started to climb steadily, the Track skirted a native garden of some size. All edible food had apparently been removed. The track surface had hardened. We had many breathers short spells always moving into the bush a little off the track and making no noise. We knew that being so far out from any Australian force we were very vulnerable form the front, rear and odd side tracks, right and left - even with all the jungle covering us from view we felt like the proverbial 'shag on a rock'. However, morale was high, spirits high, our sense of humour intact. Corporal Flint carried a small tin of meat extract, form where he obtained it I do not know, but the objective was to boil the billy at Kokoda and brew the contents.

The village of Kagi seemed to be a long way behind, we were now in the Kagi Gap, slightly misty at an altitude of 7000 feet. Beautiful green ground fern about 9 inches high with worn foot track visible an area of beauty and quiet. Nine pairs of human feet could not disturb the

tranquillity, I thought for a second of a comparison with heaven. I soon put that thought out of my head as it was a bit too close to possible reality.

The soldiers in the group were at their peak of excellence - members of the 3rd Battalion at their best. There were no moans, disgruntled talk or remarks, we all knew every step we took on this part of the Kokoda Track we were one step closer to the Japanese – our objective.

The two forward scouts did not ask to be changed. Lance Corporal George Webb was the number one scout, our formation was as we had left Menari. As we proceeded I nominated various places such as the odd prominent bump, suitable large tree or clump of jungle along the track. The objective of this was to identify rendezvous points (RV) in case we became separated through ambush or similar surprise attack. All my patrol knew their response on making contact or being fired on by the Japanese – go to the right hand side of the Track no matter what. Whenever I took a patrol out against the Japanese they were always told a definite movement on contact. The ideal one was to go to the high side of the track, the important lesson is for a definite move to be nominated early because it is too late to nominate right or left when the action starts a split second can be the difference between life and death.

The altitude and freshness of air was invigorating, the hardened track showed no visible signs of recent movement except at damp areas.

The time of day was creeping towards time to call a halt, we had been awake since stand-to at North Efogi at 0430 hrs. On the go since 0700 hrs with never a dull moment. Our bodies were starting to say 'watch it, don't walk into a Japanese trap now'. We approached a fair sized creek with water flowing rapidly. Fortunately a tree trunk spanned from bank to bank. We observed from cover to make sure no Japanese were waiting. One of the scouts crossed and looked around. I decided we could camp after such a gruelling but satisfying days activity. After filling our water bottles we withdrew along the track approximately 200 yards to a reasonably snug position in the jungle growth but still able to observe the track from both directions.

I decided we would light a fire and boil up for a well-earned drink of tea. Speed was essential and in a short while enough tea was brewed to share.

Low cloud or mist settled over us. I don't like the word 'shroud' to describe the mist but it was a dense white protector as far as we were concerned and any smoke from our fire was mixed with the eerie dense semi-transparent friend.

With only nine men we formed an all-round defensive position, a kind of hollow centre and circle. I decided one sentry at a time was sufficient. The mist covering the Track was in our favour. Phosphorous sticks glowed in the damp jungle also an odd fire-fly entertained us. Each one of us was in touching distance of a boot of the next soldier which was the method used for communication and waking up the next sentry for duty.

Not a twig was snapped or leaf ruffled as we blended into the damp jungle. We wrapped our half grey army blanket and ground sheet around one's body and slept until it was your turn to be sentry. The nights silence was interrupted by the ever-present drip, drip of accumulated moisture dropping from leaf to leaf high up in the tree tops - the call of an odd night bird and off in the distance some jungle giant crashing through trees and undergrowth to earth and so the night passed.

No fire for breakfast just bully beef and army biscuits, quietly pack up and wait for a little better visibility on the Track before moving forward.

Two of the patrol were to be despatched to take word of our progress back to the 3rd Battalion Headquarters message giving condition of the track, signs of enemy movement and the condition

of the patrol. Seven of us set off after waving silently to the two runners departing in the opposite direction. No thought crossed my mind that I would never meet up with them again.

From here our progress was slow. The forward scout set the pace. As far as I was concerned, he had all the time he thought fit. I had experienced forward scouts being thrust into death. Never under my command but when I had moved with a patrol who had been commanded by another.

We never met any Papuan people. It was better for us that no native people were on the move as we could treat any movement to our front as suspect. It was formation as yesterday, right side of the track - blend into the tree and scrub growth as best we could. The going was hot. We had to be careful with our water bottles as we did not know the distance to the next refill although we were pretty sure it would rain at about 1400hrs.

The Kokoda Track wound its way up and down and through picturesque heavy jungle with thick undergrowth to the edge of the foot pad. A section we advanced through was unusually interesting. A stand of high pandanus palms with mist seeping through the supporting roots a scene which seemed to belong to another planet. The trunk appeared to be balanced with no visible means of attachment to the numerous slender root structure as the density of the mist smothered the point of joining. Towering up into the mist were very tall beautifully, straight pandanus palm trunks – a vision I'll never forget. I saw this again in 1980 and 1983.

The patrol kept any thoughts about this wonderland to themselves, we all knew any noise - even a spoken word - could be our undoing. Every ridge or bump ahead of us now was being approached with all the skill we knew. I always believed in 'never underestimate your enemy.' The ideal places on the Kokoda Track for an ambush or solid defensive position was the high ground and we were starting to climb again steadily but on the way up. We were wet through with perspiration and the torrential downpour commenced. We never unrolled our groundsheets and splashed along the track trying to control our tan issue army boots to avoid taking a header into the mud. Tropical downpours are noisy and visibility was down to about two yards. We kept moving. Our service rifles carried in the slung position but reversed, rifle muzzle pointing down. A little ungainly and not as fast for being bought into instant action, however it was better than having a barrel full of water.

On patrol when approaching a suspect area, weapons were carried in a ready for action manner for instant use. The seven man patrol was wet to the skin as we had been many times since the 3rd Battalion's entry into the Owen Stanley Ranges, however the downpour was starting to ease, but the squelching mud still existed and as we moved forward the moisture on our clothes turned from rainwater to perspiration. The visibility on the track was greater so extreme care was the order.

Some signs of the Japanese having been on the track, even after the heavier rains was starting to show - broken branches, the odd footprint, tree roots which crossed the track showed fresh scars. There was also the feeling that something would soon be happening. I decided we would take a spell and moved off the track into the jungle. After a breather, we adjusted our bootlaces and pulled up our socks – that is, those who had them, checked the lacing on our yankee-type gaiters, wriggled our shoulders to cope with the always-there web equipment shoulder traps, the weight of our full haversack which caused the shoulder straps to bite as though intent on severing one' s arms at the shoulders and away we went. The patrol was in good spirits. Good-luck bid to first and second scout whose answer's were, "She'll be right Bede," we silently advanced.

In the distance to our right we could hear short bursts of automatic fire and rifle shots, the time was 0815. I thought Lieutenant Barnett and the 2/25th patrol must have contacted the Japanese in the Myola area. From then on our advance was extremely cautious, blending into the jungle

growth on the right-hand side of the track all weapons ready for instant action. The track had widened to approximately two yards. Footprints - the split-toe type - were fairly fresh.

The forward scout signalled to me using the close on him signal, his clenched fist placed on top of his steel helmet. The members of the patrol moved silently into the jungle growth just far enough to be able to maintain visual contact with each other. I moved up to the forward scout and he pointed to the reason for his signal. On a pronounced bump were five neatly arranged large green leaf squats were apparently a Japanese standing – or sitting – patrol had been, by all appearances, a short time ago. It was the first time I had come across the use of leaves to sit upon by the Japanese. A good idea but this certainly gave us the message that the Japanese were not very far away. The members of the patrol were informed of the evacuated Japanese squat and we continued our advance. I undid the flap of my equipment basic pouch - the one in which I carried two hand grenades with four second fuses. I also carried another four grenades in my haversack on my back.

We crept silently forward off the track still in visible contact with each other. Strangely enough, the jungle undergrowth had thinned, not cut about by the Japanese. Fortunately for us there were large trees which we took advantage of for cover from view and fire. I estimated the Japanese who had presumably occupied the green leaf squats would have been approximately 150 to 200 yards forward of the Japanese main defensive position and apparently had heard us approaching or just by chance withdrew to their main position.

Whichever way it was, the whole seven of us would soon be in contact with them. We closed our spacing but were slightly staggered to give each man a field of fire unobstructed by his friend in front. The forward scout, Lance Corporal George Webb, signalled enemy in sight at the same time a burst of fire from a Japanese light machine gun. The shots appeared to be on our left down the track. Our two Thompson sub-machine carbines and each rifleman started firing. It was rapid fire - our usual reaction on contact. I also threw a grenade.

The time was 0900hrs. Understandably the Japanese replied with intense fire from a front similar to fire from a full strength platoon. I noticed some movement to my left front which I interpreted as defence in depth. There was Japanese machine gun fire to our left and down the track. Some bullets started cracking over our heads and I gave the order for the two scouts to pull back. George Webb was occupied in firing his Thompson sub machine gun, when all of a sudden he exclaimed, "The bloody thing won't work!" I called out, "Come back, George!" Luckily a sturdy tree was handy for him to take cover the Japs were starting to concentrate fire in our direction.

The .45 calibre Tommy Guns we took into action were nearly worn out through use in training, especially the H-piece or lock which caused a stoppage. The drill was to hit the body part on the top near the actuator a smart heavy blow with your right hand. Faulty cartridges often caused misfires. I never had a misfire from the numerous .303 rounds fired from my faithful Lee-Enfield service rifle.

However, George Webb was taking cover and called, "The bloody thing still won't work!", and we wanted him back. He was approximately two and a half yards from me, a long way in the jungle. Another hand grenade was thrown and the rest of the patrol fired rapid fire into the Japanese position as George made a successful dash back to us.

We immediately broke off our engagement and kept in the foliage. Machine gun and rifle fire was still coming from their defensive positions and was cracking overhead. We kept moving until we arrived at a position I had pointed out on our move forward. We had a welcome spell. We badly needed a breather. The seven man patrol was a happy group, still in one piece.

Our orders had been successfully carried out, although we were still in no mans land. We had located the Japanese on the Kokoda track, the first contact on the Kagi – Templeton's Crossing track made by any Australians since the Japanese retreat from Ioribaiwa Ridge.

As members of the 3rd Infantry Battalion we were justly proud of this achievement. We made our way back along the track pausing at various points I had indicated on our move forward. We were always ready to counter any Japanese who could have followed us. Through the Kagi Gap we were on a downhill track and eager to re-join our Battalion. We kept up a pretty fair pace, always in proper formation.

All of a sudden the forward scout signalled halt. We all immediately took cover, I went forward to the scouts, protected by foliage, I looked down the straight stretch where there appeared to be movement seventy yards along. After some time a figure moved onto the track. He was an Australian soldier with a Thompson sub-machine carbine. He disappeared as he had appeared - silently and quick in movement.

As patrol commander I was working out how I was going to let our forces know we also were Australians. Undoubtedly they had been informed about a patrol from the 3rd Battalion being on the Kagi track. I had experienced being fired on by Australians earlier, a devastating experience coming under fire from your fellow Australians. One successful way I found to stop then firing was from a well protected position start swearing as only an Australian Digger can. The words, 'Stop firing, you bastards, or we'll open up on you!' Generally there was no immediate result, the call would be repeated a number of times. The Japanese used words spoken in English but were suspect as only an Australian can use the word 'bastard'. The greeting generally was, on meeting up with the attackers, 'thank goodness you mob are rotten shots, none of us were hit.'

Now back to the seven man patrol, knowing it was an Australian soldier we had observed, I called out, "We are Australians, you silly bastards!" No shots were fired, a few more calls including, "It's a patrol from the 3rd Battalion!"

After a time an Australian soldier appeared, immediately moved on to the track and waved, more troops came onto the track, my patrol moved forward. On reaching the Australians we all had a happy greeting. They were a group from the 2/25th Infantry Battalion. They were impressed with the information and expressed admiration for the 3rd Battalion recce patrol. They said they had not been sure who was coming down the track. The Officer said only when he heard the word 'bastards' coming through loud and clear did he know it was Australians.

We carried on to Kagi were we met up with a 3rd Battalion Signal detachment with a 108 wireless set, then kept moving until we reached our Unit near Efogi North. Our CO, Lt Col Cameron was very pleased, he asked me to express his thanks to my patrol members, which I did. I gave my report to the CO, Adjutant and Intelligence Officer. All were pleased with the success of the operation.

On re-joining 10 Platoon and B Company we were looked on as something special. My good friend, Sergeant Bob Taylor organised a dixie of tea for each. Bob was happy about our safe return. After our tea we immediately set about shaving our couple of days growth of whiskers.

The 3rd Battalion was preparing to move forward, via Myola. No rest in sight, a little later in the day I received a message to report to our CO Lt Col Cameron, addressing me as Bede he said, "I want you to go back as guide to where you found the Japanese, with a Platoon from A Company. The fighting patrol is to move out next morning."

Here I go again, I also believed in the process of elimination, the more you stick your head out, the less chance of being able to pull it back in, however.

---oOo---

Don't call me "Killer": Clive Robertson Caldwell in the Western Desert May-December 1941[1]

Kristen Alexander

Clive Robertson Caldwell flew with both RAF and RAAF squadrons during World War II. With a total score of 27 and 3 shared destroyed, 6 probables and 15 damaged, he was the highest Australian ace in World War II.[2] Quite early in the piece, he was given the sobriquet "Killer", which appeared to aptly sum up his activities. According to Bobby Gibbes, he was dubbed "Killer" because "of his habit of shooting up any enemy vehicle which he saw below when returning from a sortie. Invariably he landed back at his base with almost no ammunition left".[3] The name stuck from an early stage and made its way into the popular imagination through numerous articles during the war years.[4]. The name may have been in common use, but Caldwell did not like it, and, funnily enough, did not appreciate the telegram from one journalist in 1983 enquiring whether "Killer" Caldwell was still alive![5]. But in the public arena at least – his family and friends did not use it – the nickname stuck until his death. Even the Sydney Morning Herald's obituary used the nickname in its headline (whilst mentioning in the text how Caldwell deplored the name and could never shake it off!)[6]

In May 1941, Caldwell was posted to No 250 Squadron RAF, and I will focus on some of his key experiences with this Squadron. To illustrate these, I will draw mainly on Caldwell's own writings, in particular some letters written by Caldwell to his friend, Ernest Richardson Slade-Slade.[7]

Caldwell was 6 ft 2 ½ inches tall, with dark complexion, dark hair and brown eyes.[8] He has been described variously as a little like General de Gaulle: "tall as a young tree, and as lean and springy, hair black as a raven, broad square shoulders, clean-cut features, and a certain dignity, a certain assurance";[9] as "tall and lean of stature and strong limbed";[10] as a "tall, lanky, close-

---

1 For general operational chronology, unless otherwise specifically referenced, I have relied on Caldwell's Flying Log Book (AWM PR00514 Item 8)

2 Shores, Christopher and Williams, Clive: *Aces High. A Tribute to the Most Notable Fighter Pilots of the British and Commonwealth Forces in WWII*, Grub Street London 1994, p.163.

3 Website: WWII Ace Stories: www.elknet.pl/acestory/caldw/caldw.htm for Gibbes story

4 Including John Hetherington: "Killer", Melbourne *Herald* 27 Nov 1943 (from AWM PR00514 [2 of 7] Item 6) and Barry Young: "Killer Opens Score Against Japanese", *Daily Mirror* c March-October 1943 (clipping in Caldwell portfolio Alexander/Fax) acquired April 2002); *These Eagles: the Story of the RAAF at War* AWM Canberra 1942 p130.

5 Pauline Moffatt: Shooting Down Shadows!", *Australasian Post*, 10 February 1983, p.10.

6 Private conversation, Mrs Jean Caldwell/Kristen Alexander 4 September 2002 and SMH Obituary 9 August 1994 in Caldwell portfolio Alexander/Fax.

7 Extracts used in this article come mainly from 2 letters written by Caldwell to his friend Ernest Richardson Slade-Slade (referred to by Caldwell in the letters as Slade) on 4 July 1941 and 28 December 1941. (These letters are in the possession of Kristen Alexander and David Fax). The majority of extracts are from the letter of 4 July 1941. Other extracts are taken from his notebook, in which he jotted down impressions, thoughts and the odd quotation; combat report; flying logbook; and letter to August von Kagenek. Some extracts are taken from interviews and articles with Caldwell. See individual citations below.

8 NAA Series No A9300, Barcode 3177248: Caldwell personal record, Citizen Air Force application.

9 NAA Series SP300/3 Barcode 3253046: John Elliott 2BL Radio Talk 31 August 1944, p.2.

10 Email Buz Busby/Archie Wilson/Kristen Alexander 14 and 15 July 2002 (Archie Wilson was a foundation member of 250 Squadron when it was reformed).

mustached, easy smiling typical Australian" 10);[11] as being gigantic, and one of the strongest men in the RAAF;[12] and as "...tough and dark, with sharp aquiline features, flashing eyes and a stern but loquacious mouth.".[13] It appears to me that Caldwell looked particularly Errol Flynnish: the archetypal tall dark and handsome! And perhaps I am not the only one who thought this. At one stage, for an ANZAC House Appeal, the Combined Services Women's Auxiliary nominated Caldwell for a pin-up man contest![14]

Caldwell was athletically orientated: he was a state junior javelin champion, and he represented NSW in the national track and field championships in 1930 and 1932, and in 1931, he held the state 440 yards hurdles record. He played golf and boxed[15] and eventually became a crack shot.[16] In 1938, Caldwell joined the Royal Aero Club. He had solo-ed after three and a half hours, and had 11 flying hours to his credit when he enlisted with the RAAF at war's outbreak.[17] It has been reported that Caldwell did not really like flying.[18] This is not true. After joining the Aero Club, he quickly found that he loved flying. His wife told me that he loved to watch birds fly. He would just sit and watch them. Whilst flying, he had the feeling of a bird in the air. He loved to fly, and this love of flying stayed with him after the war when be bought his own little plane and flew it often, and for many years. As war approached, he realised that he did not want to go into the military and especially did not want to be a footslogger. So, with his recently discovered love of flying, it had to be the RAAF, and nothing else. He particularly wanted to be a fighter pilot, but he was 29 at the time, too old for fighter training. So he decided to fudge his age on official records and a chemist friend obliterated the real date on Caldwell's birth certificate.[19]

At one stage, Caldwell wrote of his reasons for volunteering. He said that they

> were multiple, and I was never sure how to appropriately weight the components. It was of course the thing to do. There was duty involved which I wanted to accept. Hitler and his Nazi supporters were a provocation. There was the invitation to adventure. There was a great game to be played and I wanted to play a part of it.[20]

After discovering that the men of his intake were destined to become instructors, he sought a discharge and rejoined as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme on 25 May 1940.[21] Caldwell's initial training postings were to 2 Recruit Depot Richmond, 2 Initial Training School Bradfield Park, 4 Elementary Flying Training School Mascot, 2 Service Flying Training School Wagga Wagga and 2 ED Bradfield Park, and he was commissioned as a pilot officer in January 1941.

---

11 Clement Semmler (ed): *The War Diaries of Kenneth Slessor, Official Australian Correspondent 1940-1944* University of Queensland Press St Lucia 1985 p.385.
12 Stanley Brogden: *Sky Diggers. A Tribute to the RAAF* Whitcombe & Tombs Melbourne [c1944] p.101.
13 Carel Birkby: *Close to the Sun. The Story of The Sudan Squadron Royal Air Force* 250 Squadron Association UK 2000 edition (CD-Rom) p.21.
14 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 2 of 7, item 6
15 Sporting references from Peter Firkins. *The Golden Eagles. Air Heroes of Two World Wars*, St George Books, 1980 p.175.
16 Crack Shot reference: Stanley Brogden: op. cit. p.101.
17 Shores, Christopher and Williams, Clive: op.cit. p.162.
18 Geoff McCamey: "Killer Caldwell. Greatest Flying Ace Receives Fresh Honours. Daily Telegraph 28 May 1983 p.17.
19 The chemist was Eddie Samuels. Private conversation Mrs Jean Caldwell/Alexander 4 September 2002
20 AWM PR00514 folder 1 "General"
21 Peter Dennis, Jeffrey Grey, Ewan Morris, Robin Prior with John Connor: *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Oxford University Press Melbourne 1999 reprint p.134.

On 3 February 1941 he embarked for the Middle East and on arrival was allocated to the Middle East Pool.[22] On 8 May 1941, Pilot Officer Clive Caldwell joined No 250 Squadron RAF.[23]

250 Squadron had originally formed in August 1918 and had been occupied with coastal reconnaissance duties over the Bristol Channel and its approaches. It disbanded on 15 May 1919.[24] It reformed on 1 April 1941 and was composed essentially of "K" Flight on its move from the Sudan. It was initially based at Aqir, but moved to Lake Maryat on 25 May and then to Sidi Haneish on 11 June.[25] It became operational on 11 May when 10 pilots and aircraft were ordered to participate in the defence of Alexandria.[26] The Squadron was equipped mainly with Tomahawks, and it was the first Tomahawk squadron in the Middle East. Compared with the German's Messerchmidtt Bf109, the Tomahawk was of inferior speed and rate of climb, but it was reliable and was perhaps the best fighter available at the time.[27] 250 Squadron initially devoted its time to defence duties, but when it moved to the Western Desert in June 1941, it carried out fighter patrols until February 1942, when it returned to Egypt.[28]

Caldwell's first mission was on 12 May when he escorted some bombers to Palmyra.[29] Before moving on from Alexandria, he claimed a "small success". He told Slade that he considered it to be "a little overdue. I felt as if I had been chasing its tail all over Transjordan, Syria, Cyprus and Turkey down as far as the Dodecanese".[30] Nothing terribly much happened for a while after the Squadron transferred to the Western Desert. Caldwell noted that he had done "several patrols, once or twice without seeing a darn thing and on a couple of occasions we had a short chase and an indecisive action with some Jerries but no blood on either side".[31] On 11 June, 250 Squadron moved forward to Sidi Haneish to take part in Operation Battleaxe, the army campaign designed to relieve Tobruk, which opened on 14 June.[32] Then, says Caldwell,

> all of a sudden it came with a rush, as you might say. We had orders for eight machines to ground straffe the enemy transport roads up near Capuzzo. This went off extra well and we had a fine time killing quite a number of fellers and mucking up their push carts ...[33]

Caldwell told Slade that

> The next day the push up for Tobruk's relief started and the air became pretty busy. We lost a plane that day on a patrol, and had a bit of skirmishing but though we damaged a couple couldn't get a confirmation of one even. This confirmation is petty tough – you have to give your word that you saw it actually hit the ground and two other independent reports saying the same are required before its OK, so that, if you are over enemy country, as we mostly are, its not easy to

---

22 NAA Series No A9300, Barcode 3177248 personal file/service record for brief details of training establishments. *Units of the Royal Australian Air Force. A Concise History. Volume 8. Training Units*. AGPS Canberra 1995 various pages for correct names of establishments.

23 AWM 54: Australian A&SD Officers Serving with the Royal Air Force Overseas. Extracts from files and Notes Thereon (Part 2 of 2 Parts) and Records of RAAF Personnel Serving with other than RAAF Squadrons. 250 squadron record.

24 J J Halley: Royal Air Force Unit Histories Volume 2 Nos 201 to 1435 Squadrons 1st April 1918 to 1st April 1968. Air-Britain (Historians) Ltd Essex 1973 p.36.

25 AWM 54: 250 Squadron notes

26 Russell Brown: *Desert Warriors. Australian P-40 Pilots at War in the Middle East and North Africa 1941-1943*, Banner Books Maryborough 2000, p.20.

27 Ibid. p.6.

28 J J Halley: op. cit. p.36.

29 AWM PR00514 Item 8 Caldwell's Pilot's Flying Log Book

30 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 (Alexander/Fax)

31 Ibid.

32 Russell Brown: op. cit. p.20.

33 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941(Alexander/Fax). Note in this reference and subsequently, Caldwell uses the term "straffe" rather than "strafe".

> get the two independents even if you do see it all yourself, unless the army blokes see it and report duly ...[34]

Confirmation of downed planes was particularly difficult. Wing Commander Bobby Gibbes wrote that "it was not possible for a desert pilot to have a victory confirmed without a witness. Our aircraft were not equipped with camera-guns so we had no photographic records of combats fought".[35] The RAF and RAAF may have been tough as far as confirmations were concerned, but not so the Luftwaffe. After the war, Gibbes became a friend of Erhard Braune, an ex-commanding officer of III/JG 27. In a discussion with him regarding tactics, Gibbes asked Braune why the claims of some Luftwaffe pilots appeared unrealistic as they did not add up with known Allied losses. Braune told Gibbes that these high claims helped the morale of the German population![36]

But back to Caldwell's account:

> On the second day we had some fun over Halfaya Pass (Hellfire) and again no definite results, but some close work just the same and the Hurricanes got a couple down. The third day our chaps were retreating and we were out on the ground straffe racket again.[37]

Caldwell's flying log is full of references to his straffing activities: each time he carefully noted when he had accounted for dead personnel. One estimate has even suggested that Caldwell may have killed as many as 600 enemy soldiers,[38] and Caldwell considered that it was worth it, if it meant disrupting enemy forces for a week or even a few days.[39] He may have been a diligent and successful ground straffer, but Caldwell recognised the dangers associated with it.

> You can't make too many mistakes in this business for at the bottom of your dive, you are travelling like a comet with plenty to do. Its chancy work, too, for the most ill-directed shot from some gunner on the ground may sink you. Everyone is firing at you, and although most of them are wide of the mark, it is easy to run into a stray bullet.[40]

On 18 June, Caldwell had another go at the ground straffe racket.

> We took off at dawn and I had to land again with electrical trouble. The other seven pushed on and when I got off again 15 minutes later, they were some 60 miles on their way. Anyhow, I knew where we were to go and what needed doing, so I pushed along on my pat malone to give a bit of a personal performance. Being a bit scared of the Jerries getting me, I kept pretty low down in the seat skirting the Gulf of Sollum and cutting across the wire[41] just below Bardia and hitting the road, Bardia to Tobruk, about 5 miles west of B[ardia]. Flying at about 15 feet at 250 mph, I suddenly came on two lorries. As I closed toward 'em, the crews jumped out and dived into the ditch at the roadside. I opened fire on the first truck at about 500 yards and then suddenly another chap popped out of the second truck. I gave the rudder a touch and knocked him off like a ninepin. He fairly leapt into the air and came down flat on his back in the road! Well I turned and gave the lorries another splash just to fix 'em for sure, then put a burst across the 3 Jerries lying in plain view in the ditch and so did them in. About 10 miles further along, I found five lorries all dispersed in a circle and had a go at them, putting 3 out of action. In the meantime, they opened up with machine guns and a bit of tracer was flying about. I had a stab at one gun post and silenced that, fixing the two gunners and pushed off toward Tobruk. On the way I found an odd

---

34 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 (Alexander/Fax)
35 Bobby Gibbes' forward in Russell Brown: op. cit. p.x.
36 Ibid
37 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941. (Alexander/Fax)
38 Alan Stephens and Jeff Isaacs, High Fliers. Leaders of the Royal Australian Air Force, AGPS, Canberra 1996 p.63.
39 Pauline Moffatt: op.cit. p.10.
40 AWM MSS1495, research papers relating to Keith Woodward's proposed history of the RAAF
41 'The Wire' was the barbed wire fence dividing Egypt from Libya. See Bobby Gibbes: You Live But Once. Autobiography, the author, 1994 p.57.

> one about and gave 'em a short 1 sec' burst with few results. When I covered the 90 odd miles of coast I turned round and came back down it for luck, getting in another attack at the still parked 5 trucks and catching one chap mucking about with an engine, so of course he went unserviceable too. As I passed the original two lorries the four blokes were still there and hadn't wriggled so no doubt they were good and cold. Well as I got near Bardia the road goes to the right towards Sollum and I thought it might be a bit of a shock to the Jerries if I buzzed thru the middle of their big do at Bardia, so keeping right down on the deck, I ducked over the rise and was right in the middle of them before I hardly knew it myself. Well they fired all sorts of things at me but beyond a few in the tail, I came to no grief: their shooting was lousy.[42]

Caldwell's account of this day's efforts sounds rather heroic and "boys own", but the reality was anything but. In a 1943 interview with John Hetherington for the Melbourne Herald, Caldwell recalled that during that first dogfight on the way home, his "mouth and throat were dry".

> I had to keep working my tongue to make the saliva run. It was the first time I had been attacked by enemy fighters and I just didn't know enough to cope.[43]

In an interview after the war with journalist Keith Woodward, Caldwell stated that

> ... this single-seater fighting is queer stuff. It is like a drink or drugs; it grows on you. Sometimes when you are in a tight spot you think 'I'll never get out of this'. You know fear, and your tongue sticks to the roof of your mouth. But you do get out of it and back on the ground. Then the itch begins again and you can hardly wait to get up into the air again and have another go.[44]

Caldwell once confessed that he was not an instant success as a pilot, and that it "took about 30 missions to bag my first kill." He had done plenty of shooting, but he wasn't downing any planes.[45] This concerned him, so he put in a lot of time and energy developing his gunnery sense by practicing low-level firing at his own aircraft's shadow.[46] The idea for this came about when one day, whilst flying low over the desert, he paid close attention to his formation's shadows over the sand:

> When we flew low over the desert the early morning sun cast racing shadows on the sand. When I tried to hit a colleague's shadow I missed; I fired over the shadow and well behind, but with more practice and self-correcting I soon mastered the art of deflection shooting with fixed guns.[47]

Archie Wilson, a fellow 250 squadron pilot, wrote that he and Caldwell avidly discussed the "merits of this initiative at length and how best to have this introduced into [their] training programme on an official basis".[48] They did get it into the training programme, and the method proved so successful, that Air Marshal Tedder sent a directive to all fighter squadrons of the Desert Air Force which referred to the method introduced by Pilot Officer Caldwell of 250 Squadron![49] Caldwell considered that shadow shooting was "the best contribution I was able to make to the cause".[50]

But back to June 1941. Nothing of much significance happened in the next few days after the 18th. Caldwell noted that there was:

---

42 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 (Alexander/Fax)
43 AWM PR00514 [2 of 7] Item 6 John Hetherington: "Killer", Melbourne Herald 27 Nov 1943
44 AWM MSS1495, research papers relating to Keith Woodward's proposed history of the RAAF
45 Geoff McCamey: op.cit. p.17.
46 A D Garrisson: Australian Air Aces 1914-1953, Air Power Studies Centre, Fairbairn ACT 1999, p74 citing John Herington: Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943, AWM, Canberra 1954
47 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell at AWM. Folder 1 of 7
48 Email Buz Busby/Archie Wilson/ Kristen Alexander 14 and 15 July 2002
49 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell at AWM. Folder 1 of 7
50 Pauline Moffatt: "Shooting Down Shadows!", Australasian Post 10 February 1983 p.10.

> a bit more of this straffing stuff and an odd high patrol but without anything of note turning up, just a few touch and dive away stuff and no decisive action either way.[51]

Things became a bit more exciting on 25 June when his diligent shadow shooting practice finally paid off. He and 9 other aircraft "had the job of escorting bombers to Gazala to do up the drome there. First day a surprise, and we got away scot free and did a little ground straffing on the way home for good measure" and the next day "the old Jerry was waiting for us in force.[52]

Caldwell told Slade that there

> had been some intelligence before we left that a lot of German kites had been on patrol all day and a lot more on advance dromes at readiness so we sort of expected it. Well, we got there OK and the bombers did a fine job and set off home. Then all of a sudden as we sort of stooged around, down they came on us like bombs. In the first rush no one was hurt and they carried on away down in their dive. As we got near Tobruk the AA opened up and we shifted away a bit, then they arrived in force and about 40 machines (52)[53] got going on us. I was sort of flopping about all over the sky trying to get fixed and having a shot now and then as one flashed by. I got on one chap's tail and was just going along well when I heard a couple of sharp taps and saw some holes appear in my wing and tracer slipping by just beside the cockpit so I deduced that one must be on my tail and took plenty of violent action to spook him off. When I recovered from the shock I was at about 9000 feet and more or less unattached. Then just below me, out of the general ruck ... an ME109 quickly flew straight and level, so I winged over and dived on it. He saw me and dived too, but I managed to close to about 150 feet and let him have the lot. We raced on down, me firing like hell and as we got truly low, I began to pull out and he just kept right on, hit the ground and exploded with a hell of a flash. I bobbed back up to about 6000 feet and got in a go at a G-50 who got away, firing off a bit of white stuff, either smoke or glycol. I don't know which as I was again in bother from behind and had to leave. Well I got back to our advance landing ground, found a couple of my mates there and reviewed the damage. In all, I saw about 6 planes hit and explode and one or two others a bit off true. I had 16 holes in the old crate and the wireless shot away just over my head, so I was a bit lucky.[54]

The plane that Caldwell shot down was his first and the other pilots recall that he screamed into his radio-telephone whilst he fought and that he was crazy with the excitement of it all.[55] The account of the incident in the 250 Squadron diary records Caldwell's excitement during the action and states that "P/O Caldwell shot down an ME109, having shouted over the R/T for five minutes 109, 109, 109.... he has at last seen an E/A in the air and also shot it down".[56]

Other than a gun test on the 27th, things were pretty quiet for Caldwell until 30 June.

> Then we got orders to do a fighter patrol over some of HM ships going to Tobruk. The ships were expected to be attacked during the day and the fighters were to be over them all the time from dawn to dark. It was expected also that the real attack would come in the evening as they neared Tobruk and this squadron was to have the honour of that last hour's patrol. ... We arrived over the ships at 5 pm as requested at 20,000 feet and began our patrol. Almost immediately three 109s were seen ... about a mile away, waggling about almost as if to attract us. Then we saw ... 9 more 109s about 5000 feet above them waiting for us to take the bait. We began to circle over the ships, keeping a good eye on the boys of the crooked cross ... and then darn me if the air below didn't seem to come alive with planes. A bunch of about 25 JU 87 dive bombers with an escort of some 30 109s and G-50 were hurling along ... with a flight of some 68 ME110s out to the left of them. There was no time to piddle about now, so we half rolled and dived on

---

51 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 (Alexander/Fax
52 Ibid
53 The squadron records note that there were actually 30 planes: AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes
54 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941(Alexander/Fax)
55 Carel Birkby: op. cit. p.22.
56 Russell Brown: op. cit. p.22.

> em. The 87s kept on and started in on the ships while the fighters both from above and below set on us. I picked on a 110 on the outside and after a bit of a chase about, drew smoke from his starboard engine, then after one more burst he suddenly dived straight into the sea. There was such a hurry and scurry on that it was hard to tell what was what.[57]

Obviously so: although this account to Slade does not mention it, nor even his own log book, the downing of that 110 was actually shared with Sgt Bob Whittle.[58] But back to Caldwell's version of events.

> Anyway, after an odd dash here and there and a bit of [a] look at the bombing which was going great guns, I managed to pick a couple of G-50s who were touching about down lower. As I looked at em, one of our four Tomahawks whistled past on its way down with no tail and hit the sea in a hell of a splash. After an unsuccessful dive on the G-50s I got right up underneath a 109 and saw my bullets go into it. He wheeled over and dived, but I don't think was properly fixed. Then I saw two more kites go hurtling down, had a look at the bombing on the ships and decided to pop down and have a dig at the JU87s who were having such a lovely time with the unfortunate ships and destroyers. By now some of the ships had been hit and relays of 87s with fresh loads were coming on the scene. Well I sort of got into the circle as they dived, bombed, climbed and circled for a new attack. I picked a bloke and waited while he dived then got him flush as he climbed up the other side. He turned and began to go down with a streak of white smoke coming out. I fastened onto him and shoved in another burst for good measure. Saw him burst into flames and go down over the sea about ½ mile from the largest ship. I ducked back into the circle again and right away caught a fellow as he was turning in on his approach to dive. After the first burst he straightened up, then began also to go down in a shallow dive, so I hung on his tail and gave him a bit more and saw the tell tale white stream back from him. I had a bit much speed on and had to pull out to the side to avoid bumping into him just after my last burst. I was quite close, about a wing span out to the side and above him and could see the pilot sitting in an absolute furnace in the cockpit, just being roasted. He went into the sea and no doubt it cooled him off, but would be a little late I think. I felt so good about this, that I was just going back for another when a couple of nasty looking 109s came after me. I had a quick look round to see where the remainder of our bunch were, couldn't see any, so put the nose over and dived full bore round behind one of the destroyers and headed for the German shore about 20 miles away. I managed to shake em off, looked at my clock, saw it was 8 minutes to six and near tea time so kept right on going. Just as I got near Bardia, right down over the water so that I couldn't be dived on, I saw some figures in a little beasty so I just turned aside for a moment and though they spread out, managed to bowl one bloke over.[59]

Towards the end of his letter, Caldwell became a bit more contemplative, ruminating on the toll that the air battles had taken on his comrades.

> Of the original 26 pilots in this outfit we now have 11 left. Of course we have had some new ones come in ... [but] some of the new ones have also gone in the meantime. We got two new Australian pilots four days ago, we now have but one of the two left, the other bloke got bumped off yesterday.[60]

This was not the only time that Caldwell contemplated the toll on those involved in battle: "I've seen a lot of my friends go. In fact so many of em have died that I'm not quite sure who's alive and who isn't".[61] And on facing death himself, he mused "Was this to be the last trip. And would

---

57 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 (Alexander/Fax)
58 AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes
59 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 (Alexander/Fax)
60 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 (Alexander/Fax). AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes indicates that the new arrivals were Sgts Nitschke and Mortimer. Sgt Mortimer was accidentally killed in a practice dogfight on 3 July 1941.
61 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 1 of 7. Notebook p 8. In this letter to Slade of 4 July 1941, Caldwell refers specifically to 3 Australian who were killed in combat: Donald Munro (18 June 1941: the pilot

I ever see the sun rise again to flood the earth with its splendour. I paled [at] the very thought of death at that moment ..."[62]

War, and in particular battle, may have had its scary moments, but Caldwell had no doubts that he should be fighting. His prompt enlistment at war's outbreak, along with the fudged documents, and his reasons for joining indicate his commitment. He wrote that "[w]e are fighting a war we cannot afford to lose".[63] and that "[i]t's better for a few men to die in battle than for millions to live in slavery."[64] He considered that "[t]o kill a man is no worry. At first you think about it a little, but you soon get over that. It's your life or theirs. This is war. You do what you have to do and then forget it. All rules of civilian life are suspended and [you] find yourself doing and thinking all manner of things that you never thought you could do".[65] In the 1943 interview with Hetherington, Caldwell explained that "one has a detached feeling when he sits in an aircraft firing at a man on the ground". "The man below has no reality as a human being. He is just a target, and it is your sole purpose to knock him over."[66] And of how war and killing affected him, he wrote that

> "[t]he human mind faced with a situation that is too much for it, protects itself with a dull coating of indifference – to everything except the immediate problem of ... survival. He becomes drained of emotion, emptied of all feeling for others. Men jest among themselves that death had passed them over so often that they cannot die, yet know that they will at anytime, perhaps within a few hours.[67]

But enough of introspection and back to action. After the excitement of his first dogfights and successes, July was a relatively quite month with 250 Squadron almost entirely engaged in convoy escort. But for Caldwell, there were some highlights, and the first occurred on 7 July. Here, Caldwell and 5 others from 250 Squadron, co-operated with other squadrons in an offensive sweep over the Bardia area,[68] but Caldwell was the only one who encountered enemy aircraft. He had experienced engine trouble and had become separated from the formation. He continued on his own, and ended up shooting down one of two G-50s which had been returning to their base. On the way home, he straffed some car parks near Sollum, and killed a number of enemy soldiers. He was credited with the G-50.[69] Caldwell notes in his flying log that he also killed 14 personnel as well as damaging some enemy vehicles.

Apparently the rest of the Squadron suspected that Caldwell had deliberately given them the slip. As they had spotted him, they weren't too convinced when he insisted that the engine trouble had cleared itself after he had turned back, and that he then couldn't find the formation. When he finally returned after the completed mission, his mates decided they would teach him a bit of a lesson. So when he arrived, calling for a drink and wanting to talk of his experiences, no one paid terribly much attention. He repeated his story, but his comrades just raised their eyebrows and hummed disbelievingly. Someone, in a bored tone, said that he should phone the Air Officer Commanding and tell him about it all. And he did. The tables were turned against the mess when

---

who was shot down whilst baling out, see Russell Brown: op. cit. p.21), Jim Kent (30 June 1941, the pilot of the Tomahawk that hit the sea with no tail see AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes), and David Gale (26 June 1941). All three trained with Caldwell at 2 Service Flying Training School Wagga and 2 ED Bradfield Park (For training reference, see Peter Ilbery: Hatching an Air Force 2SFTS, 5SFTS, 1BFTS Uranquinty and Wagga Wagga Banner Books 2002 p.167.)

62 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 1 of 7. Notebook p.4.
63 Ibid. p.10
64 Ibid. pp.12-13
65 Ibid. p.14.
66 AWM PR00514 [2 of 7] Item 6 John Hetherington: "Killer", Melbourne *Herald* 27 Nov 1943
67 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 1 of 7. Notebook p 17
68 John Herington: *Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra 1954, p.105.
69 AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes

Caldwell and the CO were promptly ordered to HQ, and as a consequence of Caldwell's adventures, the Command planned a heavy attack. The Squadron diarist got in the last word though, with a bit of a backhanded compliment which hinted at their feelings about lone-wolf tactics: "Good show, but don't run about by yourself again".[70]

Early August 1941 saw lots of gun and air tests, some patrolling and some minor skirmishes. On 18 August, 12 Tomahawks were sent off to patrol over HM Ships. 20 ME109s and 6 ME 110s attempted to attack the ships and split up the Tomahawk formation. Several enemy aircraft, including one by Caldwell, were hit and damaged. On 23 August, Caldwell's plane was damaged in enemy action and he was forced to land at Tobruk. Damage was serious enough to warrant a two night stay, and he returned to base at first light on the 25th.[71]

Whilst patrolling HM ships on 28 August, he claimed another probable from an encounter with 16 ME109Es,[72] but the most significant action of August occurred on the 29th. On this occasion, 10 Tomahawks were sent to patrol HM ships north of Sidi Barrani and encountered I/JG27. Whilst acting as weaver, Caldwell was attacked by 2 MEs. He was shot and his plane caught fire. In his combat report, he wrote that he had been attacked apparently simultaneously, and as well as damage to his plane, he ended up with " a number of bullets entering my left shoulder and hip, small pieces of glass embedding in my face, my helmet and goggles being pulled askew across my nose and eyes – no doubt a near miss." A near miss, perhaps, but it didn't end there. The plane spun out of control and he blacked out whilst pulling out of the dive. He recovered to see flames in the cockpit. He was just about to bail out when the fire died out. So he decided to remain in the plane and attempt a landing. He limped his way back to base, but even with a seriously damaged plane, he still managed to shoot down an ME109F that happened to get in his way![73] When he finally got back to base, he had blood running down his leg and filling his boots, and his left arm was covered with blood.[74] He had to be pulled out of his cockpit and was taken to hospital. In the 250 Squadron diary, the recorder noted that Caldwell's only comment about the incident was "I didn't think it could ever happen to me",[75] and Caldwell admitted later that he thought he'd "bought it this time definitely".[76] This day's efforts resulted in his being awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation, which appeared in *The London Gazette* on 26 December 1941, stated "This officer has performed splendid work in the Middle East operations. He has at all times shown dogged determination and high devotion to duty which have proved an inspiration to his fellow pilots."[77]

Caldwell may have been injured and hospitalised after his encounter on the 29th, but you can't keep a keen man down and, after noting himself as unserviceable in his log on 30 August, he was back in the seat again on 1 September when he was jumped by ME109s on a patrol. Of this encounter he wrote "self nearly bought it. Very bad."[78]

September and October were relatively quiet months for 250 Squadron, with a series of standing patrols and more escort duty of convoys. There may have been limited opportunities for

---

70 Carel Birkby; op.cit. pp.24-25.
71 AWM PR00514 Item 8 Caldwell's Pilot's Flying Log Book
72 Ibid
73 Combat report, attachment to AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes
74 *Australasian Post* 8 March 1962 p.4.
75 Russell Brown: op. cit. p.27.
76 "The Desert is a Funny Place" in *Over to You. New Broadcasts by the RAF*, HMSO London, 1943, p102. Note: this story is not credited in this book. However, cross reference with Brown, Robin: Shark Squadron. The History of 112 Squadron R.F.C., R.A.F 1917-1975 Crecy Books 1994 p63. The broadcast was made on the BBC's Sunday Night Postscript shortly after leaving 112 Squadron.
77 Michael Maton: *The Distinguished Flying Cross to Australians*, the author St Ives, 2000 p.70.
78 AWM PR00514 Item 8 Caldwell's Pilot's Flying Log Book

increasing his tally, but Caldwell made the most of them. He carried out some straffing activities and noted some downed ground personnel in his log. On 12 September, Caldwell took over command of the Squadron's "K" Flight.[79] Two days later, on his first bomber escort duty after he took over command, he was attacked by an ME109 and he damaged two. He damaged two others on 26 and 30 September and shot down two more ME109s on 27 and 28 September. Both of these were confirmed.

On 18 October he damaged an ME109. He noted in his log book that it was almost a probable, but blamed the ships for not confirming it! On 23 October he participated in a dawn patrol over HM Ships. Later that day, in a solo ground straffe operation, he damaged 2 motor transport in the Bardia – Capuzzo area, setting one alight and killing crew. As well as knocking out crew and motor transport, this operation proved important from an intelligence perspective. Caldwell's log and the Squadron Operations record indicate that Caldwell saw 4 dummy tanks [80]

> ... in the Sollum-Buq Buq area. Machine-gun bullets would not penetrate their steel hides, but he thought the rattle of bullets on the plates would make the crews inside feel a little upset. He singled out one tank and opened fire with all of his guns. And then he noticed an odd thing. The tank was smoldering where his bullets had struck. Smoldering steel! It didn't make sense. Half-circling back, he saw that these tanks were not made of steel but of hessian, that the 'guns' protruding from their turrets were wooden poles!

He headed off back to base as fast as he could and made his report to Army Intelligence.[81]

On a patrol over HM ships on 29 October, Caldwell's aircraft was damaged in an enemy action. He force-landed whilst on fire near Sidi Barrani and jumped out after the aircraft touched down on its belly. The aircraft then exploded. On the 30th, whilst participating in a fighter sweep, he was engaged by some ME109Fs, got separated from his formation and was chased by 3 MEs for approximately 20 minutes. He noted in his log that all this was "very strenuous".[82]

November 1941 opened with general preparation for Operation Crusader, with the air plan to begin on 14 November.[83] Crusader was the third British offensive against the Afrika Korps and was intended to defeat the Axis in Cyrenaica and to relieve Tobruk.[84] Caldwell told Slade that he had

> been as busy as hell ever since that push started ... The show generally right from the start has been fairly tough with plenty of flying and plenty of air fighting for us.[85]

Once the campaign opened, Caldwell participated in a number of sweep and troop patrols, and engaged with ME109s on 4 occasions, with a success on 22 November. Whilst on bomber escort, he shot down in flames one ME109F and damaged an ME109E. He was responsible for a damaged ME109F on 26 November, a shot down ME109 on 28 November which he noted as a probable, and a probable on 30 November.

November may have been a busy month, but December saw perhaps the most brilliant air action of the Western Desert campaign. This occurred on 5 December and involved Caldwell shooting down five JU87 Stukas in 18 seconds.[86] In this action, he led 12 planes from 250 Squadron and

---

79 Ibid
80 Ibid. and PRO AIR27/1501. Operations Record Book RAF Form 540.
81 John Hetherington: "Killer", Melbourne *Herald* 27 Nov 1943 (from AWM PR00514 [2 of 7] Item 6)
82 AWM PR00514 Item 8 Caldwell's Pilot's Flying Log Book
83 AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes and John Herington: *Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra 1954 p.106.
84 Russell Brown: op. cit. p.39.
85 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 28 December 1941 (Alexander/Fax)
86 Alan Stephens: *The Royal Australian Air Force*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p.82.

some from 112 Squadron, a total of 21 aircraft airborne. They engaged 70 plus planes, approximately 40 JU87s and 30 ME109s. Including the 5 he shot down, 24 enemy aircraft fell.[87]

In his combat report he wrote

> At 300 yards I opened fire with all my guns at the leader of one of the rear sections of three, allowing too little deflection, and hit No 2 and No 3, one of which burst into flames immediately, the other going down smoking and went into flames after losing about 1000 feet. I then attacked the leader of the rear section .... from below and behind, opening fire with guns at very close range. Enemy aircraft turned over and dived steeply with the root of the starboard wing in flames. ... another stuka opened fire again at close range. The enemy aircraft caught fire..... and crashed in flames near some dispersed MT. (The fifth stuka) .... was able to pull up under the belly of the one at the rear holding the burst until very close range. The enemy aircraft diced gently straight ahead streaming smoke, caught fire and then dived into the ground....".[88]

For this action, Caldwell was awarded the bar to his DFC. This was gazetted on the same day as the DFC. The extract from citations in his record of service states that

> F/Lt Caldwell continues to take his toll of enemy aircraft... He flies on every possible sortie against the enemy, often leading our formations, and displays at all times an aggressiveness of spirit and a determination and devotion to duty of the highest order ...[89]

Apparently, the commanding officer of No 238 Wing had told Caldwell that he had actually recommended him for the Distinguished Service Order (and gave him a copy of the citation). Caldwell learned later that the DSO was not granted because the Australian authorities had rejected it on the grounds that he was an Empire Air Trainee and had been decorated sufficiently.[90]

December saw some more engagements, some damaged ME109s and a probable.

> Twice I was unlucky in that I definitely shot the enemy down and saw them hit the ground but was unable to get corroboration, the other chaps being too busy to see it and the crashes being far into enemy territory so they figure in the possible and unconfirmed list."[91]

He had 2 more confirmed planes down on 22 December, and participated in 2 missions on Christmas Eve. In the first one, he damaged an ME109F. I will return to that incident later.

He wrote of the second mission, where they were escorting Blenheims to Agedabia, in an article for "Wings".[92] Caldwell was not scheduled to lead this formation, but, shortly after take off, the leader told him to take over as he had to return with engine trouble. Caldwell took over, but his own plane was also experiencing some engine trouble and he hoped it would clear as he progressed. It didn't, and he expressed the hope that it would not decide to quit whilst over enemy territory as it "would be a pity to miss out that way and become a POW for Christmas".

As they continued towards Agedabia, he was surprised that the German fighters had not put in an appearance, as they usually got to them well before they came near the target. However, the AA was providing a good barrage and he commented that the Germans "are really good with their AA defence". One of the bombers was hit and caught fire, losing height. Caldwell's engine got worse and he found himself lagging, and shortly afterwards the Messerschmitts arrived. Caldwell

---

87 AWM PR00514 Item 8 Caldwell's Pilot's Flying Log Book
88 Combat report, attachment to AWM 54: Squadron 250 notes
89 AWM PR00514 [2 of 7] Item 6: Record of service extract from citation, and NAA Series No A9300, Barcode 3177248: Record of Service P File, Citation
90 Peter Firkins. *The Golden Eagles. Air Heroes of Two World Wars*, St George Books, 1980 p182
91 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 28 December 1941 (Alexander/Fax)
92 *Wings* Vol 2 No 7, December 21 1943, Directorate of Public Relations RAAF Victoria, pp.14-15. All references to this mission and the following story about Christmas – and pork! – in the desert, come from this article.

revved and boosted as high as he dared, but the aircraft vibrated from the roughness of the engine and he still lagged. He recalled that

> the Huns attack but appear to disregard me at the rear and struggling which is strange- a straggler is always considered pretty easy meat. Whitish blue ropes of smoke – tracer – whip up past my nose and I bank round in a steep turn before the Hun beneath my tail corrects his aim. Another occasion to be thankful the enemy is so addicted to the use of tracer.

There appear to be only 7 or 8 ME109s attacking the main formation, and the Tomahawks turn to meet the attacks. By now, Caldwell had lagged even further behind and black smoke kept coming from his exhaust. Two MEs then decided to give him their exclusive attention and were above and behind on either side of him. He engaged with one, both firing and missing, and then dived. They both chased after and gained on him. He was still about half a mile from the "main show".

> ... one of the Huns opens fire and I have to turn. The second ME cuts the corner and comes in on my flank. Suddenly there is a Tomahawk on his tail and firing. Bits fly from the rudder and tail of the ME but he pulls up in a steep climb as I turn to cover the Tommy's tail. The other ME has also gone back up and flying abreast of each other the other Tomahawk and myself tail after the rest ... The MEs are still above us and then attack together. We turn to the left and open fire but see no results, and the MEs flash past and are gone. ... The Huns have left the others too ...

Throughout this, the engine had still been creating problems. As he came into land, the engine stopped for good. He bounced a bit, but no damage and a safe landing.

In that same article, Caldwell told of his Christmas in the desert. There was no rest from operations on Christmas Day, and, in the company of a South African fighter squadron, he took off in a sweep of the Hasseat Agedabia sector. The weather was not the best: cold wind, rising dust and overcast sky. The weather got worse as they progressed and there was no sign of enemy aircraft. Someone begun singing Christmas Carols over the R/T, thinking that this might bring out the enemy, but none were sighted in the air.[93]

Caldwell also describes the Christmas festivities. They had been hoping for a special delivery of pork, but it had been waylaid and by the time they found it, it had turned green. John Waddy and some others buried the pork with due ceremony, and erected a cross on the spot to the effect "Here lies 250 RAF Squadron's Christmas Dinner 1941". So Christmas lunch, on a cold and windy day, was cold bully and biscuits, well salted with sand. There was no liquor because they had drunk it all the night before. Caldwell and the others in the squadron had settled down for an afternoon of doing nothing, but after awhile he and the other flight commander were lucky enough to be taken by their CO to accept an invitation from the CO of the AA defences. There they shared some very good Scotch and returned at dusk, to the news that they had orders for a show at first light on the next morning. So, that was Christmas, and the next day, business as usual.

He saw some enemy fighters on Boxing Day, but "they would not play with us".[94] In 3 separate sorties on the 27th, he had some contact with the enemy, and in his last recce flight escaped from 6 ME109s by low flying. He had some good results in the last days of the month from straffing the Agedabia aerodrome, as well as some ammunition and petrol trucks and the "odd personnel".[95]

---

93 Carel Birkby: op. cit. p.34 indicates that the CO, Teddy Morris, was probably "the conductor of this show" which, as well as carols, included bawdy songs and some facetious remarks.
94 AWM PR00514 Item 8 Caldwell's Pilot's Flying Log Book.
95 Ibid.

By the end of December 1941, Caldwell had logged a total of 585 hours and 15 minutes flying time.[96] All up in the Middle East, he covered 67,000 miles in operational flying. Caldwell apparently told a story that highlights the extent of this operational experience. One day he was speaking with an American fighter pilot. "'You a pursoot pilot?' asked the American. 'Yes' [said Caldwell]. 'You seen any action?'. 'Oh, yes. A bit'. 'You'll see plenty before you've finished', nodded the American. 'I've been on seven missions.' 'You have?' replied Caldwell. 'I sure have. How many have you been on?'. 'Oh, ... about two hundred and eighty'."[97]

Caldwell wrote that he had enjoyed his time with 250 Squadron, flying "more operations with it than any other unit and [where he] had more good fortune", but he actually considered 112 Squadron, as his first command, to be his favourite squadron.[98] He developed into a leader and administrator who received the highest forms of praise. In December 1941, Squadron Leader Morris wrote in Caldwell's log book "An exceptional fighter pilot whose leadership and skill in combat have been of the highest order". These leadership and combat skills were recognised further when, on promotion to Squadron Leader of 112 Squadron, Caldwell became the first Empire Training Scheme pilot to be appointed to the command of an RAF fighter squadron.[99] In May 1942, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder wrote in Caldwell's flying log "An excellent leader and a first class shot", and as well as the DFC and Bar, Caldwell was awarded the Polish Cross of Valour in 1942 and the Distinguished Service Order in 1943. Caldwell transferred to his new command early in January 1942. The majority of Caldwell's kills occurred during his time with 250 Squadron, but he continued to rack up successes with 112 Squadron and throughout his flying career.[100]

Caldwell made his mark with 250 Squadron. Despite their practical jokes, Caldwell was respected and well-regarded by members of his Squadron. Archie Wilson got on well with him from the outset, and summing up Caldwell's abilities as a pilot, he commented that

> as a pilot, no doubt owing to his gangly physique, he tended to be rough on the controls of his aircraft and so not entirely suited to tight formation exercises, but was always in complete control of his machine and gifted with an outstanding ability as a marksman, both in air to air and air to ground firing.

Archie considered that Caldwell "was a courageous and highly competent fighter pilot who served his country with dedication and distinction".[101] Bob Bennett, Caldwell's batman from the time Caldwell joined 250 Squadron until he left to join 112, said of his time with Caldwell that "there's nothing I've been prouder of."[102] Even after Caldwell left the Squadron, his comrades still looked on him with pride, and to the newer and younger pilots he became a legendary figure.[103]

This article is entitled Don't Call Me "Killer". I mentioned earlier how Caldwell acquired his sobriquet, but was he really a killer? Some of Caldwell's comments in his letters to Slade show that in battle, he was a tough, focussed and committed fighter pilot. Archie Wilson "found him to be very much his own man with a positive, if somewhat slightly aggressive demeanor and with a

---

96 Ibid.
97 Stanley Brogden: op.cit. p.105.
98 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 1 of 7
99 Russell Brown: op. cit. p.78.
100 With 112 Squadron: 2.5 destroyed, 4 damaged and 1 probable; with No 1 Fighter Wing, 8 destroyed: Shores, Christopher and Williams, Clive: op.cit. p.163.
101 This comment and above comments from Archie Wilson: Email Buz Busby/Archie Wilson/ Kristen Alexander 14 and 15 July 2002
102 Carel Birkby: op. cit. p.37.
103 Ibid. p.65.

hint of a ruthless streak in his manner."[104] Caldwell may have been aggressive and somewhat ruthless during his wartime career, but he believed that he had good reason. He once wrote that "[w]e are fighting a war we cannot afford to lose"[105] and that "[i]t's better for a few men to die in battle than for millions to live in slavery."[106] He wrote that

> To kill a man is no worry. At first you think about it a little, but you soon get over that. It's your life or theirs. This is war. You do what you have to do and then forget it. All rules of civilian life are suspended and [you] find yourself doing and thinking all manner of things that you never thought you could do.[107]

Caldwell once explained that "One has a detached feeling when he sits in an aircraft firing at a man on the ground". "The man below has no reality as a human being. He is just a target, and it is your sole purpose to knock him over."[108]

He may have considered them to be targets, but Caldwell still maintained a certain respect for the abilities of the enemy. He wrote to Slade that

> The Hun is very stubborn and though we now have, it seems, the definite mastery of the air in these parts, the German fighters still put up a tough resistance and with his reinforcements coming in, still a lot more of us will have jumped into the silence before we reach Tripoli.[109]

And of how he was affected by war and killing, Caldwell wrote another time that

> The human mind faced with a situation that is too much for it, protects itself with a dull coating of indifference – to everything except the immediate problem of ...survival. He becomes drained of emotion, emptied of all feeling for others.[110]

But perhaps Caldwell did have some feeling for his enemy. Carel Birkby, who wrote the 250 Squadron story *Close to the Sun*, considered that Caldwell's actions in combat demonstrated a mercy approaching pity, a compassion. He wrote:

> When he had got a German full across the reflector sights and let him have everything including the tracer from his machine guns, and the enemy plane caught fire and the pilot was sorely wounded and struggled in vain to free himself from his seat and get his hood back in order to escape, then "Killer" showed compassion: he closed in on the trapped and helpless pilot writhing there in the flames and gave him a coup de grace with his guns.[111]

Whether a ruthless or a compassionate killer, Mrs Caldwell told me that her husband was certainly affected by the war, and that afterwards, he could not even kill a rabbit. She said that he did not talk of his experiences readily and frequently rebuffed potential biographers. He wanted to "draw down the blind".[112]

I will now close with two stories that highlight a different side to Caldwell: a side to him that belies the image of a killer. In late 1949, Caldwell wrote to a 10 year old boy. He wrote that he and the boy's father had spent some time together talking about the boy and his keenness on flying. Caldwell remembered those conversations, and the purpose of his letter was to add some photos of Spitfires to the boy's collection. He had especially obtained them for the boy from the Department of Air. He also said what when next he was in Melbourne he would arrange for the

---

104 Email Buz Busby/Archie Wilson/Kristen Alexander 14 and 15 July 2002
105 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 1 of 7. Notebook p.10.
106 Ibid. pp.12-13.
107 Ibid. p.14.
108 AWM PR00514 [2 of 7] Item 6 John Hetherington: "Killer", Melbourne Herald 27 Nov 1943
109 Letter Caldwell/Slade-Slade 28 December 1941 (Alexander/Fax)
110 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 1 of 7. Notebook p.17.
111 Carel Birkby: op. cit. p.21.
112 Private conversation Mrs Jean Caldwell/Alexander 4 September 2002

two of them to meet and "have a bit of a yarn about flying". These were not empty words. They did meet. And such an impression was made, that the grown man still has the letter and photos in his possession.[113]

I mentioned earlier the ME109F that Caldwell damaged on Christmas Eve. This turned out to be his last claim with 250 Squadron. But as well as being his last claim, it became an opportunity for Caldwell to come in contact with the human side of the enemy. Caldwell's victories were impersonal, the result of a finger on the firing button, and there could be no knowledge of the person behind the target. But in 1985, he received a letter, which provided a human perspective to that brief encounter in 1941.[114]

The letter was written by August Graf von Kageneck, the younger brother of Oberlt Erbo Graf von Kageneck who was the Geschwader's leading pilot and had claimed 65 victories before he arrived in Africa. He ended up with a total score of 69 victories.[115] Erbo was shot down on the afternoon of 24 December 1941 near Derne in Libya, and his brother wrote that "I have some reasonable reasons to believe you are the man who forced down the ME109 of my brother". Von Kageneck goes on to say that his brother died 18 days later. He wrote that

> of course I've not the slightest hostile feeling for you, on the contrary, we are all glad that this awful slaughter has come to an end ... But to find almost four and a half decades later the person who was - in all honour - responsible for the death of my brother, is a strange hazard only possible by the very special character of the individual fighting in the air.[116]

Caldwell wrote back to von Kageneck that

> Mankind will never live in peace until we overcome the natural savagery that exists in all of us, propels us in wars, perhaps soon to our own destruction ... Thus it was that your distinguished brother and I, absolute strangers in a strange land, but operational in that now distant tragedy called World War II, were there doing what we were on that particular Christmas Eve. It is an odd feeling to be now given this insight into what was, until your letter, a purely impersonal and inconclusive brief encounter so long ago.[117]

Kristen is continuing her research into the war time activities of Clive Robertson Caldwell and would welcome comments on this paper (including highlighting of any errors of fact or interpretation). If any one has any stories concerning Caldwell's activities, she would appreciate it if they could contact her.

Mrs Kristen Alexander
GPO Box 3170
Canberra ACT 2601 Australia
02 6259 0540 (+ 61 2 6259 0540)
alexfax@alexanderfaxbooks.com.au

---

113 Private letter: Clive R Caldwell to John Forestier, 6 December 1949
114 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell at AWM. Folder 2 of 7 Item 6 letter from Von Kagenek
115 Russell Brown: op. cit. p.65.
116 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 2 of 7 Item 6 letter from Von Kagenek
117 AWM PR00514 Personal papers of Clive Caldwell. Folder 2 of 7. International Herald Tribune, 23 May 1990, p.9.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Australian War Memorial: AWM PR00514; AWM MSS1495; AWM 54
NAA Series No A9300, Barcode 3177248; NAA Series SP300/3 Barcode 3253046; NAA Series A471 Barcode 99760
Caldwell portfolio acquired April 2002 by Alexander/Fax. Includes letters to Ernest Richardson Slade-Slade 4 July 1941 and 28 December 1941, photos and news clippings.
Letter Caldwell/ John Forestier 6 December 1949
Email Buz Busby/Archie Wilson/ Kristen Alexander 14 and 15 July 2002
Private conversation Mrs Jean Caldwell/ Kristen Alexander 4 September 2002
Public Records Office AIR27/1501 250 Squadron Operations Record Book RAF Forms 540 & 541

Secondary Sources

Birkby, Carel: *Close to the Sun. The Story of The Sudan Squadron Royal Air Force*, 250 Squadron Association UK 2000 edition (CD-Rom)
Brogden, Stanley: *Sky Diggers. A Tribute to the RAAF*, Whitcombe & Tombs Melbourne nd [c1944]
Brown, Robin: *Shark Squadron. The History of 112 Squadron R.F.C., R.A.F 1917-1975* Crecy Books 1994
Brown, Russell: *Desert Warriors. Australian P-40 Pilots at War in the Middle East and North Africa 1941-1943*, Banner Books Maryborough 2000
Firkins, Peter: *The Golden Eagles. Air Heroes of Two World Wars*, St George Books, 1980
Garrisson, A D: *Australian Air Aces 1914-1953*, Air Power Studies Centre, Fairbairn ACT 1999
Herington, John: *Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra 1954
Ilbery, Peter: *Hatching an Airforce 2SFTS, 5SFTS, 1 BFTS Uranquinty and Wagga Wagga* Banner Books
Semmler, Clement (ed): *The War Diaries of Kenneth Slessor, Official Australian Correspondent 1940-1944* University of Queensland Press St Lucia 1985
Shores, Christopher and Williams, Clive: *Aces High. A Tribute to the Most Notable Fighter Pilots of the British and Commonwealth Forces in WWII*, Grub Street London 1994
Stephens, Alan and Isaacs, Jeff: *High Fliers. Leaders of the Royal Australian Air Force*, AGPS, Canberra 1996
"The Desert is a Funny Place" in *Over to You. New Broadcasts by the RAF*, HMSO London, 1943.
These Eagles: the Story of the RAAF at War AWM Canberra 1942
Website: WWII Ace Stories: www.elknet.pl/acestory/caldw/caldw.htm
Wings Vol 2 No 7 December 21 1943, Directorate of Public Relations RAAF Victoria

Articles additional to those from AWM personal papers:

Geoff McCamey: "Killer Caldwell. Greatest Flying Ace Receives Fresh Honours": *Daily Telegraph* 28 May 1983
Pauline Moffatt: "Shooting Down Shadows!", *Australasian Post* 10 February 1983
(No author credit) *Australasian Post* 8 March 1962

THE APPOINTMENT OF LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SQUIRES THE ROLE OF MAJORGENERAL SIR CARL JESS IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MILITARY BOARD AND THE GOVERNMENT

Ronald J Austin, RFD, ED

Introduction

The 1930s was a challenging period for the Australian Army and the Military Board. The impact of the Great Depression saw the Army suffer huge reductions in personnel, and until the late 1930s, little effort was made to re-equip or modernize the Army. Political expediency combined with a parsimonious attitude towards defence by the Scullin Labour Government since it abandoned Universal Training in 1930, an approach continued by the Lyons Government when it took office in 1932, left the Army in a position where budget cuts had denied the Army the ability to defend Australia and its interests from attack.

By early 1935, two outstanding officers had been appointed to the Military Board - John Lavarack as Chief of the General Staff [CGS), and Sir Cart Jess, as Adjutant-General. Both men had forceful personalities which were to lead to a conflict between the Board and two successive Defence Ministers (Parkhill & Thorby), and the newly appointed Secretary of the Defence Department, Frederick Shedden. It was this perceived lack of co-operation during a period in which the threat of a European conflict appeared increasingly likely, that led the Lyons Government in 1938 to appoint a British general – E K Squires as Inspector-General of the Australian Military Forces.

In his recent book *The Australian Army*, Albert Palazzo dismisses this crisis thus: 'in June 1938 the government finally appointed a new Inspector-General. The government chose to overlook Lavarack for the position, and instead selected a British officer, Lt-Gen Ernest K Squires' (p.123). The crisis that arose within the senior ranks of the Staff Corps, and particularly the Military Board, from that appointment, deserves greater attention from historians, and is the subject of today's paper.

Major-General John D Lavarack (1885-1952). When he was appointed as CGS In April 1935, Lavarack was a colonel in the Permanent Forces. Upon his appointment Lavarack superseded more senior officers including Sir Carl Jess, who had been Adjutant-General since late 1934. Lt-Col Lavarack had attended the Imperial Defence College in 1928, along with Shedden and Lt-Col Squires. Lavarack, although seen as having an 'egotistic and patronising manner', was also recognised as possessing 'conspicuous ability'. Unfortunately, in 1930, in his capacity as Director of Military Operations & Intelligence, he had written a caustic rebuttal of a paper presented by Shedden, in which Shedden advocated a defence strategy that relied on the protection of the Royal Navy and the yet to be completed naval base at Singapore, as Shedden predicted only small raids upon the Australian coastline. Lavarack argued that Australia could be subjected to attack by Japan, and a strategy that relied on the protection of the Royal Navy was flawed. Such views which were vindicated a mere decade later, and the forceful manner in which Lavarack expressed his opinions both to Shedden and the Defence Ministers, marginalised Lavarack and the Military Board from effective input to the Government on some defence issues.

Major-General Sir Carl Jess (1894-1948). The son of a German immigrant, Jess was a career soldier who had as his mentors two senior Great War generals - Sir John Monash and Lord Birdwood. Regarded as a brilliant staff officer and administrator, Jess had ended the war as a brigadier-general [GOC 10 Brigade], having risen to that rank from that of lieutenant in less than ten years, and in 1919 took over from Monash as Director of Demobilization and Commandant of AIF HQ in England. Loved by his soldiers when he commanded the 7th Battalion, Jess

nonetheless possessed a pugnacious and autocratic manner which at times during his earlier career, had placed him at odds with the Military Board. After being knighted as a reward for his role in organising the 1934 Victorian Centenary, Jess was appointed as Second Member of the Military Board in December 1934. Five months later, he was overlooked when Lavarack, his junior in rank and service was appointed. Governments, using the familiar excuse of financial restraint, did not give Jess; and other senior officers the opportunity to improve their knowledge of high level policy and planning through overseas secondments and visits.

Ministers of Defence. Politicians to hold this portfolio during the mid-late 1930s included Sir Archdale Parkhill [October 1934-November 1937], Harold Thorby [November 1937-November 1938], and Brigadier Geoffrey Street [November 1938-November 1939]. Parkhill was regarded as having 'neither the necessary experience nor the required technical knowledge to formulate an effective Australian defence policy'. Parkhill had clashed with the Military Board in 1936 over an article in *The Bulletin* of 22 July 1936, in which the Government's handling of defence was harshly criticised. This incident led Parkhill to suspect that leaks to the press may have come from the Board. Harold Thorby was the Minister who took the initial brunt of the Parliamentary and public outcry about the appointment of Squires during 1938, but in November that year he was replaced by Brigadier Street, MC, who had served at Gallipoli, and after the war continued to serve in the militia, being promoted to brigadier in 1938.

Frederick Shedden (1893-1971) – Secretary of the Department of Defence. When Frederick Shedden took over as Secretary upon the retirement of M L Shepherd in November 1937, it heralded a new force in defence politics and administration. Shedden was a brilliant administrator who was also a confirmed Imperialist. Such views had already brought him into conflict with Lavarack, and during the late 1930s, the Military Board and Shedden became increasingly distant from each other. It was due to Shedden's influence, some might suggest scheming, that Prime Minister Lyons finally agreed after periodic urging by Shedden, to the appointment of a British officer to the lapsed post of Inspector-General [held by General Sir Harry Chauvel until his retirement In 1930]. Shedden exerted great influence over his political 'masters', and in 1936 advised Parkhill that it 'is undesirable that the Army should have access to information relating to the other services which may prove a embarrassment to the minister and the Government'. During that same year Shedden also persuaded Parkhill to withdraw his recommendation for Lavarack to be elevated to a CB.

Lieutenant-General Kenneth Squires (1882-1940). Educated at Eton, Squires was a career officer in the Indian Army, who had fought as a Royal Engineer major in the Great War, but had subsequently held a series of highly responsible appointments. The 56 year old Squires who had been serving as Director of Staff Duties at the War Office since 1936, was duly offered and accepted the post of Inspector-General by the Australian Government. He was promoted to lieutenant-general simultaneously with his appointment as Inspector-General.

A New Inspector-General

In November and December 1937, the Military Board and the Staff Corps were rocked by a series of critical articles written by Major-General H Gordon Bennett, a militia officer who had commanded the 6th Battalion and the 3rd Brigade during the Great War. The political furore that ensured, almost led to Bennett being court-martialled, an approach favoured by Jess and the Military Board, who were disturbed by the bitter attack on the Staff Corps. However, by late January 1938, a compromise solution was reached, with most senior officers accepting that Bennett's career appeared to have been seriously damaged. The Bennett affair merely added to the Government's growing disaffection with the Military Board, and by April 1938, it had become generally known that the Lyon's Government was going to appoint a British general to the post of Inspector-General, a post left vacant since the retirement of Chauvel. The Government came under

sustained attack from the Labour opposition when it was revealed that the Military Board had not been consulted about the appointment, and during one Parliamentary debate, Senator Charles Brand, a brigadier-general from the Great War, claimed that "the appointment would be an insult to the capable Australian generals still on the active list." In defending its decision, the Government claimed that Australian officers had 'been out of touch with modem developments', but if that was the case, it was entirely due to the Government's reluctance to finance overseas visits by senior officers. Political attacks upon the appointment of Squires accelerated in September 1938, when it was revealed that he was to receive a salary double to that received by his Australian contemporaries!

Despite the political outcry and widespread public condemnation of the appointment, the Government stuck by its decision, and Squires was given the task of writing reports on the Australian Army, and providing recommendations for change. By December 1938, Squires had completed his first report and handed It to the Minister. Squires recommended the formation of the existing seven Military Districts into four commands. A key recommendation of his report was the formation of a regular infantry brigade, but although initially accepted by the Government, this recommendation was not proceeded with. In January 1939, Shedden forwarded a copy of the report to the Military Board seeking their comments. Although not in agreement with all aspects of the report, the Board gave its qualified approval. However, the simmering antagonism between the Military Board and the Government was soon to re-appear.

The Government's 'hidden agenda Squires as CGS

In April 1939, General Jess heard rumours that the Government intended to appoint Squires as CGS. The so-called 'imperial cringe factor' which saw the need to appoint British officers to senior military posts in the Australian forces, was alive and well, and strongly supported by the new Prime Minister, Robert Menzies. In February 1940, a British officer Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett was appointed as Chief of the Air Staff, and from 1937-1941, Admiral Colvin of the Royal Navy served as Chief of the Naval Staff. This meant that at various times between 1939 and 1940, all three service chiefs were British officers.

Jess as Adjutant-General was responsible for the administration of the army, and was so alarmed by the recent appointment of Squires as Inspector-General, and the rumours regarding the post of CGS, that he sought the views of the Judge Advocate-General, Bowie-Wilson, regarding the legality of the Squires' appointment. On 26 April 1939, Jess wrote to Brigadier Street, voicing his concerns about the legality of Squires as Inspector-General, quoting the *Defence Act*, Sections 8(1), 4 and 14. The essence of Jess, argument was that as Squires was not a member of the Permanent Forces, he could only have been appointed as a local lieutenant-general in the militia. If that interpretation was correct, Squires could not be appointed as a Member of the Military Board or as CGSuntil existing regulations wore amended.

The Legal Arguments

Coincidental to these legal arguments, came news that the Government was sending Lavarack to England in order to update himself on the deteriorating situation in Europe. Fearing that the rumours regarding Squires' elevation to CGS would now be realised with Lavarack conveniently out of the country, Jess sought a format legal opinion from the Judge Advocate-General. The Military Board was now faced with a challenge to its authority, and on 9 May 1939, Jess sent a copy of the flies to Lavarack who was about to leave the country on board the SS *Otranto*, so that he would be fully aware of the legal developments.

From the Government's point of view, the departure of Lavarack provided two benefits - it removed an outspoken critic of the Government's defence policy, and also provided the opportunity to install Squires as Acting CGS. The machinations between the Government and

Shedden would provide ample scope to historians seeking to explore conspiracy theories. The Government now announced that Squires would be Acting CGS during the absence of Major-General Lavarack. With relationships between the Military Board and the Government at its lowest ebb for many years, Jess at last received Bowie-Wilson's legal opinion. Like Jess, Bowie-Wilson also held very strong views about the Squires' appointment., and argued that: 'I have no doubt that it is illegal to appoint Lieutenant-General Squires - or any other British officer - to the position of Inspector-General of the Forces under the present *Defence Act*.'

On 12 May 1939, Jess forwarded Bowie-Wilson's opinion to Street in his capacity as Minister for Defence. Rather than expose the Government to further public scrutiny regarding Squires, Jess suggested to Street that 'in the interests of the service that the matter should be kept as secret as possible'. Jess even avoided showing the explosive legal opinion to his fellow Board Members. By his actions in seeking the Judge Advocate-General's opinion regarding the legality of the Government's actions, and then going directly to the Minister rather than through Shedden, Jess placed his own career in jeopardy.

Street now sought his own legal advice, and the Solicitor-General conveniently assured him that the Government's actions were quite legal. This approval permitted Street to confirm Squires' appointment. Bowie-Wilson was outraged when he found that his legal opinion had been rejected by the Government. He wrote to Jess seeking a copy of the dissenting opinion, adding 'in fairness to myself, I think I am entitled to see the reasons given for disagreeing with my opinion. Street responded to Jess with a hand-written note in which he agreed to send Bowie-Wilson a copy of the opinion, and also agreed to keep the correspondence secret as had earlier been suggested by Jess.

Replacing Old Guard

Thus ended a crisis which had occupied the attention of the Military Board, the Minister, and no doubt Shedden, for some months. As a result of Squires' recommendations, on 11 August 1939, the Government announced the retirement of the two remaining Members of the Military Board, Major-Generals Jess and Phillips [QMG], together with a long list of other senior officers to be placed on the Reserve of Officers. In his absence, Lavarack was confirmed, albeit temporarily, as CGS. The well known aviator and politician, Sir Thomas White declared that 'At a time like the present with the world situation full of dangerous possibilities, it might be legitimately asked whether such steps are well advised. A drastic change in Military Board personnel seemed a strange move at such a season.' Jess of course challenged the new appointments, and in particular that of Brigadier Charles Miles, the Commandant at RMC Duntroon, who was of the same age as Jess, and whose military and administrative experience was much less than that of Jess.

The final irony was that the officer appointed to replace Jess as Adjutant-General, was Colonel E K Smart whose daughter was later to marry Jess' younger son John [later Liberal MP). However, Jess was reprieved by the outbreak of war a couple of weeks later. His retirement was cancelled and he was appointed as Chairman of the Manpower Planning Committee, with the rank of lieutenant-general, but he was denied the active command he sought Lavarack was sidelined into the post of GOC Southern Command, and on 13 October 1939, the Government appointed Squires as CGS, and Blamey as GOC 6th Division, A1F. It was not until April 1940, that Lavarack was given the opportunity to demonstrate his capabilities as GOC 7th Division, AIF.

Summary

The pre-war period had been a difficult one for the Military Board, having been exposed to public condemnation as a result of the Gordon Bennett articles in the press in 1937, and then the

Continued page 75

President of the RSL, sees him as having been `a mentor to four RSL National Presidents'. He was active in the United Service Institution and the Military History Society of Australia. He travelled right round Australia with Joan for six months with a caravan. He visited Gallipoli and Palestine where his father had fought as a Light Horseman in World War I. He was a dedicated gardener, tennis player and above all a devoted family man.

Perhaps his finest characteristic was the ability he had to get on exceptionally well with his colleagues. He will be remembered as a man who cared for others, a quiet gentleman, a good soldier and a close friend of many people.

J J Shelton

The appointment of Lieutenant-General Squires (cont)

appointment of General Squires in the following year. The prickly relationship between the Military Board and successive Defence Ministers, played into the hands of Shedden as Secretary of the Department of Defence. Although charged with administering and maintaining the Australian Army, a decade of reduced budgets, and a near sighted vision of future defence needs by Governments, placed the Board in an impossible position. Opportunities to influence defence policy dissipated due to the uneasy relationship between Lavarack and Shedden.

The appointment of Squires was an attempt by Shedden and the Government to circumvent a critical Military Board and seek ideas from a fresh 'untainted' source. This paper has briefly covered the turmoil created by civilian and political intrusion into the administration of the Army, and the problems which arose largely from the clash of personal egos during a period in which the Government, Military Board and the Department of Defence should have been working to a common goal, that of the defence of Australia. Whether or not intrusion by civilian defence bureaucrats into the areas of military planning and defence policy, prior to the outbreak of war in 1939 was appropriate, remains a matter of debate. Interestingly, a recent article by Brigadier Wallace in the *Defender*, in which he claims that `the frustration of serving in a structure that subordinates professional military advice to amateur civilian opinion should not be underestimated', suggest that such problems remain today!

---oOo---

Further reading:

R Austin. *A Soldier's Soldier The Life of Lt-Gen Sir Carl Jess*. Slouch Hat Publications, McCrae, 2001.
D Homer. *Defence Supremo* Allen the Unwin St Leonards, 2000.
Brig J Wallace. 'Reforming Defence', *Defender*, Winter 2002.

Letters to the Editor (cont)
From Neville Foldi, Fadden ACT

Reading the most informative contribution by Peter Shaw in the December 2002 issue awoke an issue that has troubled me for some time. That is the ultimate fate of "laid up" Colours being in a museum.

From my experience, admittedly many years ago, new Colours on presentation were consecrated, often at a "drum head" ceremony. On being laid up they were then lodged in an appropriate church. I remember admiring the blackened and tattered Colours of the Guards Regiments which fought at Waterloo. To my mind laid up Colours are not appropriate museum exhibits but should remain in church. I may be out of touch and welcome other views.

CONVICT WORK GANGS
The British Garrison in Australia 1788-1841
Military Supervision of Convict Work Gangs. Part I[1]

Clem Sargent

From the time of the arrival of the First Fleet in New South Wales in 1788 until the end of transportation in the 1840s the development of the greatest part of the Colony's infrastructure - the public buildings, the roads and harbours - was achieved by the use of convict labour working largely under the supervision of garrison officers. Here it is proposed to examine the role of the garrison, officers and men, in the control of convict labour on colonial projects, in particular in the supervision of road-building gangs, including the notorious ironed gangs.

During the voyage of the First Fleet the officers of the Royal Marine detachment had determined that the Marines would guard but not supervise convict labour even though there were tradesmen among the members of the detachment. Consequently Governor Phillip appointed one of his midshipman, Henry Brewer, to oversee all works, and began the custom of the governor appointing one of the garrison's officers as Artillery and Engineer Officer and later, Inspector of Public Works, responsible also for road construction, until 1826 when Governor Darling separated the responsibility for Public Works from superintendence of road and bridge building gangs.

Up to 1810 the dirt tracks, and later the roads, followed the paths of the explorers of the Sydney basin. Exploration was limited in the north by Broken Bay and the Hawkesbury River, by the Blue Mountains in the west, and had not moved further out than Botany Bay and the Cow Pastures in the south. The arrival of Governor Macquarie in 1810 brought an impetus to both exploration and road construction. The most significant of these were the crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813 and the construction by William Cox, ex-paymaster of the New South Wales Corps, of the road across those mountains to Bathurst in 1814. By 1818, in the south, the Argyle (Goulburn) and Lake Bathurst areas had been opened up. Although a penal settlement had been established at Newcastle in 1804 and the Illawarra had been opened up by cedar cutters in 1811, communication to those areas was by sea until a track had been found from Windsor to Jerry's Plains on the Hunter River in 1819 and another track found to the future site of Wollongong in 1822.

In his final report to Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for Colonies, Macquarie was able to report the construction during his term of office of 276 miles (444 km)of roads including turnpikes (toll roads) from Sydney to Parramatta and Liverpool, Parramatta to Windsor, Emu Ford (now Emu Plains) and Liverpool, and carriage roads (single lane), Sydney to South Head and Botany Bay, Parramatta to Richmond and Liverpool, Liverpool to Airds, the Cataract River, and the Cow Pastures, Appin to the Cow Pastures, from the Richmond road to Toongabbie, and the Emu Plains to Bathurst road constructed by Cox.[2]

Macquarie had not included in his report the road to South Head constructed on a contract by Private William Simms of Macquarie's own regiment, the 73rd. The construction of this road, the first recreational road in Australia was financed by private subscription, 'liberally supported by officers of the Colony'. Twenty one fellow members of Simms' regiment provided the labour to

---

[1] Part II covering details of the detachments supervising convict work on the Great Roads, some of the public works, and identifying the locations of stockade sites, will be published in a later edition.

2 Macquarie to Bathurst, 27 July 1822, HRA I, X, p. 697.

complete the road in ten weeks from 25 March 1811. The road is now known as Old South Head Road and its construction in 1811 is marked by an obelisk at Watsons Bay.3

The Artillery and Engineer Officers appointed by successive governors were aided by assistants, usually from amongst the convict population. The best known of these was Francis Greenway, transported in 1814 for forgery, granted a ticket of leave in 1815 and appointed Assistant Engineer in 1816, a position he held until dismissed by Governor Brisbane in 1822. Many of the buildings designed by Greenway form part of the colonial heritage of Sydney.

Concurrent with Greenway's dismissal Brisbane instituted an enquiry into the conduct of Major George Druitt, 48th Regiment, 'Head of the Engineer Department which embraces the whole of the Mechanics besides labourers on the Roads and Public Works', where convict gangs worked under the supervision of convict overseers or holders of tickets of leave. Druitt had been officially appointed 'Chief Civil & Military Engineer' on 17 April 1819; six months later, in evidence to Commissioner of Inquiry, J T Bigge, Druitt enumerated an imposing list of his achievements in the office, which he claimed to have held for a year and ten months. He had employed significantly larger work gangs than previously on the roads to Parramatta, Liverpool, Windsor and South Head and stated in his evidence to Bigge that:

> the materials which were formerly used on the Roads were soft sandstone & clay close to the roadside; I made it a particular part of my duty to examine the face of the adjacent country for iron stone & sharp gravel in which I succeeded to my full expectations. The construction of the road I also changed by throwing up the centre in a barrel form with clear tables on each side & throwing the iron stone gravel on the iron stone wh. is laid on the clay foundation. The Wooden Bridges on the Parramatta Road have been repaired & new ones built on the Great Western & Windsor Roads & I have commenced making new Bridges where requisite on the Liverpool Road, ... Over the morasses I have paid particular attention to have the foundations laid with Strong Iron Bark Logs, which I have found to answer extremely well.4

Druitt's work conformed to the techniques being introduced by Telford and Macadam to British road building and his use of corduroy over wet ground followed the work of the blind British road maker, John Metcalf. Druitt's supervision of Sydney road building greatly contributed to the record of development claimed by Macquarie.

At the same time as he advised the Horse Guards of the enquiry he had begun into Druitt's administration Brisbane requested that a company of the Royal Staff Corps be sent out as he conceived that 'they would render essential benefit to the public service'. He envisaged that they could be successfully employed in the supervision of convict work gangs.5

The Royal Staff Corps was raised in 1800 as a branch of the Quartermaster General's Department, a result of the Duke of York's experience in his 1799 campaign in Holland where he had been unable to obtain sufficient field engineer support, nominally provided by the Royal Military Artificers, from the Master General of Ordnance who controlled the deployment of the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers and the Royal Military Artificers. The soldiers of the Royal Staff Corps included carpenters, bricklayers, stonemasons, sawyers, blacksmiths, shipwrights, miners, quarrymen and labourers. Officers were trained at the Royal Military College at Great Marlow (later Sandhurst) or entered from infantry and cavalry regiments by examination in trigonometrical surveying, field engineering, fortifications and topographical sketching. The major roles of the Corps were field engineering, roadwork, construction of bridges and

---

3 Col D V Goldsmith (Retd), Macquarie's Regiment, *Sabretache*, Vol XV No 1, Sep 1972, pp. 2-12.
4 Druitt, *Evidence to the Report on the State of the Colony of New South Wales*, 27 Oct 1819, Bonwick Transcripts, Box 1, pp. 1-96, ML, Sydney
5 HRA I, X, pp. 626-628, Brisbane to Maj Gen Sir Herbert Taylor, 4 March 1822.

supervision of troops allocated to assist in these duties. The officers were also employed as guides and in reconnaissance mapping for the force Quartermaster General's staff.6

Druitt asked to be relieved of his post as Chief Engineer on 31 January 1822, Brisbane accepted Druitt's resignation and appointed in his place, as Acting Chief Engineer, his own ADC Captain John Ovens. With over 3000 convicts working in 50 gangs Ovens embarked on a program of clearing for further settlement. Ovens was so successful in this activity that Brisbane recommended him for promotion to a majority in the Army.7 Major Ovens died on 7 December 1825; during Ovens' period of incapacity due to his illness, Brisbane posted the newly arrived Lieutenant Colonel Henry Dumaresq to be the Acting Chief Engineer. Henry was the eldest of the three Dumaresq brothers who came to New South Wales under the aegis of the incoming governor, Lieutenant General Sir Ralph Darling who had married the Dumaresqs' sister.

Henry Dumaresq had been gazetted a captain in the Royal Veterans , three companies of which were being recruited for service in NSW but his arrival in Sydney on the *Phillip Dundas* in October 1825 was in his capacity as private secretary to Darling with the task of organising accommodation for the new governor and his entourage. On Darling's arrival in Sydney on the *Catherine Stewart Forbes* from England via Hobart on 17 December 1825 Henry relinquished his engineering responsibilities to become Clerk of the Executive Council. His brother William, Captain in the Royal Staff Corps, who arrived with the governor and a detachment of the Royal Staff Corps, was appointed to the vacant position of Acting Chief Engineer and Inspector of Roads and Bridges. The third Dumaresq brother, Edward, who had also arrived on the *Catherine Stewart Forbes,* disembarked and remained in Hobart.

Henry Dumaresq had distinguished service during the Peninsular War in the 9th Foot and at Waterloo, where he was severely wounded; he went on to half-pay as a lieutenant colonel but was gazetted as a captain in the Royal New South Wales Veterans to come to New South Wales. His brother, William, had served in the Royal Staff Corps in the Peninsula and later in Canada where he had been employed in the construction of the Ottawa Canal..8

With William Dumaresq was Lieutenant Charles Stoddart, two sergeants, one bugler and 27 rank and file. The detachment ultimately reached a strength of 60, with 5 First Class Artificers, 11 Second Class, and 44 Third Class. The headquarters of the New South Wales detachment was initially at Parramatta but was later relocated to South Creek (St Marys). The artificers were almost immediately detached for duty with road gangs. Forty-one are shown in the Muster Roll as 'on duty with road party' in November 1827 but, unfortunately the Musters record no further detail on the location of the respective gangs. The Muster Rolls, WO 12/ 11084-87, show for their entire service in New South Wales, that the Corps members were employed with road gangs. Later newspaper reports stated that the Staff Corps were employed on roads and bridges in the Sydney-Parramatta area, although in 1826 Darling had changed the system of employment of convicts, not assigned but under direct government control, by the establishment of road gangs in which the worst offenders were placed in irons to become members of the 'ironed gangs' with the main task of working on 'the three great roads from Sydney. 9

Within seven months of the arrival of the Royal Staff Corps the first elements of the Royal Veteran Companies reached Sydney on 12 July 1826 on board the transport *John Barry.* The

---

6 T. W. J. Connolly, *The History Of The Corps of Royal Sappers And Miners,* London, 1855, Vol I, pp 118-119. Fortescue, *A History of The British Army*, Vol IV, Pt 2, pp. 880-81; S G P Ward, *Wellington's Headquarters,* Oxford,1957, pp.28-29.

7 Brisbane to Bathurst, 23 July 1824, HRA I, XI, p. 323.

8 ADB entries for Dumaresq, Vol I, pp. 332-335.

9 WO 12/ 11085, Aust Joint Copying Project Reel 3917, NLA.

detachment consisted of five officers, one surgeon, five sergeants and 479 rank and file. The Veterans had been enlisted in London by authority of a proclamation of 12 September 1825, 'for the purpose of being employed as superintendents and overseers of convicts in addition to their military duty'. The Veterans were to be Chelsea Hospital Outpensioners, of good character in the Army, with preference being given to ex-NCOs.

Again the Musters of the Veterans are equally uninformative on the employment of the Veterans as those of the Staff Corps are on that organisation. In the Musters (WO12/11230) the Veterans are typically described as 'Det to Windsor' or 'In Govt employ' but deficient in description of their employment or precise location. This information can only be gleaned from odd references in the Colonial Secretary's correspondence held by the NSW Archives Office, in the *Historical Records of Australia* and in occasional mention in the Muster Rolls and Monthly Returns.

The immediate deployment of the Staff Corps and later the Veterans, to road duties reflect Darling's interest in improving road communications in the colony. He realised that the rapid expansion of the colony which was taking place could not be sustained without the establishment of an improved system of road communication. The roads, in some places little better than tracks, extended to Bathurst in the west and to Goulburn in the south. There were no overland roads to Newcastle and the growing development on the Hunter River (a track had been opened to the Upper Hunter but it was not a formed road) or to the Illawarra; communication to those regions was mainly by sea. On the road to Bathurst the descent of Mount York was so difficult that trees were chained behind wagons to act as brakes. Soldiers of the garrison regiments were detached to various outposts along the roads. From Sydney to Bathurst there were posts at Longbottom (Concord), Parramatta, Emu Plains, the Weatherboard Hut (Wentworth Falls), Cox's Rover and at Bathurst. The strength at these posts ranged from two at Emu Plains to 57 at Bathurst. The detachments' duties were mainly to check movement passes, to provide security against possible convict outbreaks and, in the case of Bathurst, to control the native population. Soldiers were detached from the major posts to escort convicts to new places of labour.

William Dumaresq relinquished his position of Inspector of Roads and Bridges in April 1827, retaining the office of Director of Public Works, but finally going onto half-pay on 15 November 1829. Lieutenant Ernest Wilford, of the same Corps, who had arrived in Sydney on the *Andromeda* in March 1827, was appointed Surveyor of Roads and Bridges and to the command of the Staff Corps detachment in Dumaresq's place. Wilford had previous service in Royal Artillery before being gazetted Lieutenant in the Royal Staff Corps on 17 March 1825. In his report to the Colonial Office of Wilford's appointment Darling advised that he had appointed three Subaltern Officers as Assistant Surveyors of Roads and Bridges 'to be employed on the three Great roads leading to Argyle, Bathurst and Hunter's River'.[10]

Darling's decision to employ military officers on duties previously carried out by overseers of road gangs was challenged by the Colonial Office in London and more information was demanded. Darling's detailed reply not only explained the role of the military officers but also outlined his policy for the employment of ironed gangs on the roads. His advice was to have a later unexpected policy response by the Colonial Office. The reply advised that military officers, designated Assistant Surveyors, were to control several road parties where previously the overseers' duties were confined to one party. Darling further justified an expansion of the use of road gangs on the grounds of economy for the colonial administration as the prisoners, 'Double distilled Villains', would be more effectively employed on the roads instead of otherwise 'eating the Bread of Idleness at a Penal Settlement, or in some other Place of confinement, occasioning a much greater Expense than they do at present'. He compared the cost involved keeping prisoners

10 WO 12/2309; Darling to Bathurst, 26 April 1827, HRA I, XIII, p. 268.

in fixed establishments to the road gangs who were 'lodged in Huts constructed by themselves, without costing the Government even a nail'.[11]

The last statement throws some light on the mode of operations of the road parties at that time. As they moved camp along the line of road the convicts built their own huts, either from the well-known timber slab construction or from bark, both types roofed with bark, although where supplies of suitable bark were not available tents of hide were known to be used. But the use of huts continued until 1832.[12] These road camps were generally known as 'stations'.

Wilford resigned from the position of Surveyor of Roads and Bridges on 27 February 1828; in June 1829 he was appointed a sheriff's 'assessor' and then returned to Britain on 18 September 1829. His replacement as Surveyor of Roads and Bridges was Lieutenant William Hughes who had arrived in Sydney on 27 September 1827. Hughes had been gazetted an Ensign in the 34th Regiment on 17 April 1825 and Lieutenant in the Royal Staff Corps on 20 April 1826. It seems that Hughes must have been one of those officers with an appropriate education to have been appointed to this technical corps. His stay in New South Wales was short as, with the disbandment of the Royal Staff Corps in 1828, Hughes returned to Britain on 11 November 1829.[13]

Two other military officers were identified in Darling's despatch – Lieutenant Warner, Royal Veterans, in charge of parties on the northern road and Lieutenant Shadforth in charge on the western road; W A Thompson was appointed Sub-Inspector on the southern road. Jonathan Warner had begun his military career as an Ensign in the York Light Infantry Volunteers in 1808.This was a Foreign Corps in British pay, raised in the Dutch colonies of Guiana in South America from Dutch regular soldiers in garrison there who volunteered into the British service. Originally titled the Barbados Volunteer Emigrants, the regiment became known as the York Light Infantry Volunteers in January 1804. The whole of its service was in the West Indies, Warner was one of the British officers appointed to the regiment. When the unit was disbanded in 1817 he was appointed to a Royal Veteran Battalion and elected to serve in New South Wales on 24 September 1825, arriving in Sydney on the *Orpheus* in September 1826.[14]

Warner was detailed for duty on the Great North Road in January 1827. He remained on the North Road until August 1828 when he was relieved by Percy Simpson, who had established the first settlement at Wellington, west of Bathurst. With the Veterans programmed for disbandment also, Warner went on to half-pay once more, taking up a grant at the northern end of Lake Macquarie. He is remembered there by the title of Warners Bay and the locality of the same name.

Simpson had served in the Army and was on the retired on Full-Pay List, back-dated to 12 June 1812.[15] He had begun his career as an Ensign in the 1st Garrison Battalion, 6 July 1809, and on 12 June 1812 was appointed Lieutenant in the Royal Corsican Rangers, raised in 1803 from Corsican refugees and émigrés by Major Hudson Lowe, later Napoleon's gaoler at St Helena. Simpson served with the Rangers in the Ionian Islands where he held positions in the administration. The Corsican Rangers were disbanded in 1817 when Simpson went on to half-pay until restored to the Retired On Full-Pay List, apparently at the time of his move to New

---

11 Huskisson to Darling, 10 November 1827, HRA, XIII, p. 64-5; Darling to Huskisson, 28 March 1828, HRA I, XIV, pp.69-73.
12 Grace Karskens, *Four essays about the GREAT NORTH ROAD*, 1998, Kulnura, Wirrimbirra Workshop, pp. 62-3.
13 Army Lists; WO 12/11087.
14 Major G Tylden, E. D., 1939,'The York Light Infantry Volunteers', *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, London, Vol XXXIX, pp. 140-143.
15 Army List 1823.

South Wales in 1822.[16] He arrived with a letter of recommendation to Governor Brisbane and was appointed as the first commandant, to establish a new settlement at Wellington. He appears to have been a forceful character as he clashed with soldiers of both the 3rd and 40th Regiments there. The settlement at Wellington was abandoned in 1826 by which time he had taken up a grant at Cooranbong. Simpson proved an unsuccessful farmer and had sought an appointment as an Assistant Surveyor on the roads.

The other officer in Darling's despatch of 28 March 1828 was identified only as Lieutenant Shadforth. There were two lieutenants of that name in the 57th Regiment, Henry and Thomas. They had arrived in the Colony in 1825 along with their father Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Shadforth, in acting command of the regiment. Thomas Shadforth junior was eventually to succeed to the command of the regiment in the Crimea where he was killed in the unsuccessful attack on the Redan on 18 June 1855.[17]

Unfortunately the employment of men of both the Royal Staff Corps and the Veterans as supervisors of convict labour proved unsuccessful. In March 1828 Governor Darling recommended the disbandment of the Royal Staff Corps and the Veterans as 'the object of their employment here [as overseers of convict road gangs] having entirely failed'. The men of the Corps were too closely associated with the convicts under their control, with idleness resulting from their association. The soldiers were constantly in the field with no financial incentive while the convict overseer was more used to dealing with convicts, was stricter, and received allowances of sixpence to one shilling and threepence a day and 'had much to hope from attention to his duty'.[18]

The response to Darling's recommendation came from Sir George Murray in early 1829, stating that the 'Commander-in-Chief would recommend to His Majesty that this Corps be reduced'. Murray's advice referred to the Corps as a whole, not only the companies in New South Wales. Officers were placed on half-pay or, with the soldiers, given the options of transferring to regiments in New South Wales, to be sent home, or to remain as settlers, enjoying the usual resettlement privileges extended to veterans. Most chose the latter option; forty eight Staff Corps soldiers were discharged in Sydney alone on 29 April 1829 and the last man of the Corps was eventually transferred to the 17th Regiment on 1 January 1831.[19] The land grants to those settling in the colony were largely in the areas where grants had previously been made to the men of the NSW Veteran Company when that unit had been disbanded in 1823. Some tradesmen of the Royal Staff Corps took up town allotments. Even before recommending the disbandment of the Royal Staff Corps companies, Governor Darling had already written suggesting that the Royal Veterans should be disbanded. He held them to be 'the most drunken, disorderly, worthless set of fellows that ever existed'. There was more in his letter supporting Darling's opinion of the Veterans. The order for their disbandment followed on 25 May 1830.[20]

The news of the imminent disbandment of the Royal Staff Corps and the anticipated disbandment of the Veterans was enthusiastically endorsed in an editorial in *The Australian* of 2nd January 1829. The editorial queried the achievements of the members of the Royal Staff Corps; they had 'made a few bridges passable, opened up or contrived a new line of road here and there, or repaired an old one'; the work could have been carried out by contractors at half the expense, the

---

16 Cecil C P Lawson, *A History Of The Uniforms Of The British Army,* Vol V, London, 1967, Kaye & Ward Ltd, p. 160.

17 H H Woolright, *History Of the Fifty-Seventh (West Middlesex) Regiment Of Foot 1755-1881*, London, 1893, Richard Bentley and Sons, pp. 225, 387-388.

18 Darling to Huskisson, 7 March1828, HRA I, XIV, p. 23; 28 March 1828, p. 70.

19 WO 12/11087.

20 Darling to Hay, 8 February 1827, HRA I, XIII, pp. 86-87.

paper claimed. The editor echoed, too, Darling's view of the Veterans, but the editor also took the opportunity to question the policy of appointing military officers, in receipt of their service pay and allowances, to posts in the civil administration, with additional salaries which were a charge against Colonial funds. *The Australian,* an opponent of Darling and his administration, could not forego the opportunity to draw attention to what it saw as nepotism on Darling's part, with two of his brothers-in-law, the Dumaresqs, filling lucrative colonial office.[21]

In view of the disbandment of the Royal Staff Corps, Darling replaced Hughes as Surveyor of Roads and Bridges by Major Edmund Lockyer, 57th Regiment. Lockyer had served with the 19th Regiment from 1803, mostly in India and Ceylon, before transferring to the 57th in August 1824. Shortly after his arrival in Sydney on the *Royal Charlotte* in April 1825, Governor Brisbane had selected him to further investigate the proposed site for a secondary penal settlement at Moreton Bay, and in November 1826 he was sent by Darling to establish a settlement at King George Sound in Western Australia. Lockyer returned to Sydney in April 1827 and decided to settle in the colony, selling out his commission. He received a post as magistrate at Parramatta before Darling appointed him Surveyor of Roads and Bridges on 14 August 1828. Unfortunately for Lockyer, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir George Murray, refused to confirm his appointment and, in a despatch of 20 June 1829 directed that the responsibility for Roads and Bridges should pass to the office of the Surveyor General – his old Peninsular War subordinate, Thomas Mitchell. The Surveyor-General, who had already carried out some surveys for re-alignment of existing roads, welcomed the change. Responsibility for detailed supervision of roads and bridges fell to the Assistant Surveyors of Mitchell's department with overseers 'of the convict class'.[22]

The retirement of Captain William Dumaresq created a gap in the engineer resources in the colony, filled for a short while by a Mr Kinghorne, who proved incompetent. Dumaresq continued to act in the position 'solely to prevent the embarrassment which would be occasioned by his resignation at this moment'. Darling requested that a competent engineer be sent out to fill the vacancy. The Home Government's response was to send out Captain Charles Wilson, 'late of the Royal Artillery', who over speculated in land and stock and was ultimately dismissed from the civil service.[23]

Darling's policy of sentencing second offenders to serve in ironed gangs instead of at secondary penal settlements, such as Moreton Bay, greatly increased the number of workers on the roads. Those not in irons were referred to as 'road gangs' as distinct from the 'ironed gangs'. The increase in numbers brought with it an increase in the number of escapes and the depredation of outlying settlements by these 'bushrangers'. To overcome this, military guards were placed at the main work stations on the roads, but escapes continued to occur.

As a result of the policy expressed by Darling in 1828, and the availability of more labour as chain gangs on the roads, the energetic Surveyor-General, Mitchell, was able to accelerate the program of construction on the three great roads. One of his earliest projects was to effect the re-alignment of the Great Western Road by a deviation of the line of road from Cox's road, north of Mount York, to a line on the southern of Mount York closer to Mount Victoria, first named by Mitchell in 1830. Construction was begun in 1829 by three ironed gangs, totalling about 250 men, whose first task was to build their own camp at the foot of Mount Victoria. The camp was enclosed by a high fence 'so as to form a stockade', and this term became synonymous with the

---

21 *The Australian,* 2 January 1829.

22 ADB Vol II, p.123-124; Murray to Darling, 26 May 1829, HRA I, XIV, p. 793; Bourke to Goderich, 3 November 1832, HRA I, XVI, p.788.

23 Darling to Bathurst, 7 August 1827, HRA I, XIII, p.496; Murray to Darling, 15 July 1828, HRA I, XIV, p. 248. Darling to Goderich,, 10 June 1831, HRA I, XVI, pp.266-269.

previous term 'station'. Work proceeded rapidly on the Mount Victoria deviation so that by 1832 planning had begun for the establishment of a stockade at Cox's River, and the plan for this stockade, authorised by Assistant Surveyor John Nicholson in August/September 1832, has survived in the records of the Archives Office of NSW. An enhanced copy is shown below.

Sir Richard Bourke replaced Darling as governor, arriving in Sydney on 3 December 1831. One of his earliest acts as Governor was to issue *'Instructions For the Superintendents of Iron Gang Stockades'*. Lockyer had drafted orders in December 1828 for the organisation, administration and operation of ironed gangs and Bourke's *'Instructions'* appear to be an executive promulgation of these orders. The superintendents controlled and were responsible for the gangs; the role of the military guard detachments was defined as essentially to prevent the escape of prisoners and to provide escorts when more than three convicts were being sent to hospital or to appear before a Bench of Magistrates. It is possible that Nicholson's plan for the Cox's River stockade formed part of, or supported the Governor's instruction. 24

Impressed by the arguments of Darling and particularly of George Arthur, Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemens Land, supporting the employment of recidivist convicts in ironed gangs on the roads instead of creating new remote settlements to which the second offenders could be despatched, in 1833 the British bureaucracy, ever conscious of the costs of maintaining the remote colonies, empowered judges to impose a period of compulsory service in irons on prisoners sentenced to transportation. The period was to be related to the magnitude of the offence and the past record of the criminal. This action ensured an increasing supply of road gang labour. Bourke and Arthur both protested concerning the severity of the added punishment and on examination of the matter in Britain it was found to be illegal – there was no legislation providing for such additional punishment. In March 1835 Bourke received instructions to release from irons those convicts who had been sentenced to service in irons illegally.25

A further factor in the increase of road making activity was the availability from 1830 onwards of three regiments in the New South Wales garrison, the 57th, 39th and 17th Regiments. From 1831 the Monthly Returns, (WO 17 series) record the detailed deployment of garrison detachments, including those of the NSW stockade detachments, and, in addition, the Returns give an indication of the opening and closing of the major stockades. The details of the deployments on the three roads, Newcastle and the Illawarra will be shown later. In a despatch of 18 June 1833 relating mainly to the deployment of regiments in the Colony, Bourke concluded by proposing that '---- the employment of an officer of Engineers to superintend the construction and repairs of Military and Convict Buildings ----- would be productive of a considerable saving of expense to the British Treasury.'26 After much discussion between the Treasury, Colonies and the Master General of Ordnance it was agreed that two Royal Engineer officers should be posted – one to New South Wales and one to Van Diemens Land. Captain George Barney RE arrived in Sydney with his family on the *British Sovereign* on 11 December 1835.

Barney had been appointed a second lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in July 1808. He served in the Iberian Peninsula from June1809 to September 1813, being severely wounded at the siege of San Sebastian on 31 August 1813; recovered from his wounds Barney took part in the capture of Guadeloupe in the French West Indies on 9 May 1814 and continued to serve in the West Indies for several years, reaching the rank of captain in 1825. In the field the Royal Engineer was involved in the design and construction of field works and the conduct of sieges, but in Sydney

24 HRA I, XVII, 10 September 1832, pp. 336-341.
25 Bourke to Aberdeen, 24 July 1835, HRA I, XVIII, pp. 47-48.
26 Bourke to Somerset, 18 June 1833, HRA I, XVII, pp. 146-148.

Barney was employed on civil as well as the military engineering tasks in the maintenance of military and convict establishments.[27]

In a detailed despatch on 15 January 1834 Governor Bourke, reporting to Stanley, Under Secretary for the Colonies, on the condition of convicts in ironed gangs, had mentioned '--- moveable Houses, which have lately been constructed for the purpose of placing small parties at work on such part of the Roads as require a few hands for a short time to effect their formation or repair'.[28]

The use of moveable huts is an obvious development from the large stockades constructed in Darling's time when, in 1829, up to 250 men had been employed in the construction of the Mount Victoria Pass. The requirement for accommodation and security for this number of prisoners called for the establishment of a stockade of the size of the plan for the 1832 Cox's River stockade with approximately 350 running feet of hutted accommodation. Obviously as work progressed along the roads, where massive gangs were not to be employed in limited areas, stockades or stations would have been set up where smaller gangs of up to 80 men, could be employed within walking distance, in irons, of their work sites. Consequently, in 1834 a further plan was issued to Deputy Surveyor-General, Samuel Augustus Perry, detailing the layout for a smaller 'stockade' with four 20 by 10 feet cabins, providing accommodation for 80 ironed gang convicts, with a similarly reduced complex to house the guard.

Such a 'stockade' is described in the journal of Ensign Best, 80th Regiment, who in 1838 travelled from Windsor to Berrima to join a Court Martial. Best overnighted at Liverpool on his second night from Windsor and recorded in his journal for 6 January 1838:

'Having ridden only nine miles (road & bush as usual) I went out for a stroll in the course of which I saw my first Stockade. It consisted of nothing but an assemblage of bark Huts placed on two or three sides of a square for the soldiers to live in the fourth being occupied by several wooden cages with a small iron grated opening as window these cages are 10 or twelve feet long and 8 or ten broad and perhaps 10 feet high certain shelves serve for beds a blanket only being allowed prisoners the prisoners are shut up in these every night at six and brought out at the same hour in the morning. Sentries parade the rear and front of these boxes all night in some stockades only one sentry is posted.'[29]

The wooden cages described by Best – Bourke's 'moveable Houses' – were fitted with four small solid wooden wheels, allowing the cages to be moved as work progressed along the roads. Although sometimes depicted being drawn by bullocks, it is not difficult to believe that they could sometimes have been moved by teams of the occupants.

The control of road and ironed gangs by the Surveyor-General's department and its overseers was judged unsatisfactory by Governor Bourke in 1836. Having found that '--- the voluntary attentions of the Military Superintendent of Iron Gangs have done more for the speedy improvement of the Roads than the paid services of Civil overseers and Surveyors ---' Bourke planned to reduce the work parties so that only ironed gangs remained on the great roads and to transfer responsibility for the construction and repair of roads and bridges to the 'Commanding Royal Engineer'. The military officers in charge of guard detachments were to become Assistant Engineers, with subordinate Military Overseers, taking their instructions from the Commanding Royal Engineer. The Governor believed considerable savings could be made. The Surveyor-

---

27 ADB Vol I entry for Barney.
28 Bourke to Stanley, 15 January 1834, HRA I, XVII, p. 321.
29 Nancy M Taylor (Ed), *The Journal of Ensign Best 1837-1848,* Wellington NZ, 1966, R E Owen, p. 149.

General would retain responsibility for the design of 'lines and directions of great roads' but the Town Surveyor would continue to direct works in the town of Sydney.[30]

Accordingly, '*Instructions for Assistant Engineers*' were issued by the Brigade Major, on behalf of the Commanding Royal Engineer. The Instructions were detailed and lengthy. They comprised Instructions for Assistant Engineers [a preamble]

A [the military duties of the officer in charge]
B [the control of the convicts]
C [relating to convict gangs out of irons and Pay and Allowances for military personnel]
D [the Delivery & Assignment of Convicts on expiration of their Sentence to Labour]

The Instructions for Assistant Engineers and the section on Pay and Allowances, only, are quoted here as they are considered to throw light on the conditions of service for officers and men detached for duty with the ironed gangs:

Instructions for Assistant Engineers

> Military officers employed upon the roads and public works in New South Wales as assistant engineers and superintendents of ironed gangs, have three distinct duties to perform : That which relates to the military detachment under their orders; that which regards the safe custody and discipline of the convicts whom they have to keep at hard labour; and that which embraces the actual execution of the work, according to the instructions received from the commanding royal engineer. Instructions are here given for the performance of the first two of these duties, under heads marked respectively A and B. the instructions of the commanding royal engineer relating to the execution of the work, will be conveyed by him to the assistant engineers, as occasion demands.

Pay and Allowances of Assistant Engineers, and of Non-commissioned Officers and Soldiers employed on Roads or Public Works

> 1. The officer appointed assistant engineer, will receive the extra pay of 6s. per day whilst employed, and forage for one horse, with the usual certificate of being kept and effective for the public service.
>
> 2. The officer will have a wooden house or hut constructed for his occupation at the stockade where he is stationed, but he is to provide his own furniture of every description.
>
> 3. On proceeding to the stockade, and in case of any subsequent movement, carriage will be provided for the officer's furniture, as well as his baggage, the latter being regulated by orders of the command.
>
> 4. One non-commissioned officer will be employed as a constable and turnkey at each stockade, with the extra pay of 1s per day, and overseers appointed by the commanding royal engineer will be allowed 1s per day to each non-commissioned officer, and 6d to a private. Steady, active, and intelligent men are to be selected for this duty, and no more employed than are absolutely necessary for carrying on the work with efficiency.
>
> 5. The assistant engineer will be allowed to employ a steady non-commissioned officer as clerk, with pay of 6d per day.

Clarification of the layout of the stockades in this period is given in the following extract from Instructions B:

> Convicts in irons will be divided into gangs of about 80 prisoners each, and this number will occupy four wooden houses, which, with the officers' and soldiers' barracks, guardroom, store, and convicts' mess shed, form what is called a stockade, these buildings having been formerly

---

30 Bourke to Glenelg, 29 December 1836, HRA 1, XVIII, pp. 626-628.

> surrounded with a stake fence, but which has been discontinued, as it is found the convicts are more securely guarded by placing sentries at the angles of the wooden houses, and leaving a space all around open to their fire.[31]

Sir Richard Bourke resigned as Governor shortly after writing to advise of his intention to place ironed gangs under military supervision. His proposal was referred to Sir George Gipps who was selected as Bourke's replacement. Gipps, a Royal Engineer, who had experience with the organisation of slave labour in the West Indies, aware also of the concern of Sir George Arthur, Lieutenant Governor in Van Diemens Land and comments by Lieutenant Colonel Henry Breton, lately Commanding Officer 4th Regiment, The King's Own, in New South Wales, to the British Parliamentary Select Committee on Transportation, on the unsuitability of the supervision of convict labour by serving soldiers, recommended that two companies of the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners be employed in this role. To offset the cost of the Sappers and Miners Gipps later recommended that it be met by a reduction of two companies of one of the garrison infantry regiments. This set off another round of bureaucratic negotiations involving the Colonial Office, Treasury, Horse Guards, and the Master-General of Ordnance (the Sappers and Miners were part of the Ordnance organisation) involving not only finance but also the effect which the reduction of two infantry companies would create in the trooping program of Home, Australia, India, Home. Ultimately the first detachment of Sappers and Miners did not reach Sydney until July 1854 – to construct and operate the Sydney Mint.[32]

Lieutenant Colonel Breton served in New South Wales and Van Diemens Land from 1832 to 1836 when he returned to England where, in May 1837 he gave evidence before the Parliamentary Select Committee on a range of matters concerning military service in New South Wales, including the employment of troops as both guards and supervisors of convict work gangs. He reiterated Governor Darling's view on the demoralising effect on men, many of whom 'find their brothers and fathers and connexions out there as convicts' and the subversion of troops by convicts into acts of bushranging. He considered the dispersion of troops into widely scattered small detachments to be 'ruinous to the regiment --- the officers disgusted and the men reckless'; the system was particularly injurious to young officers away from their regiments, 'without society some take to keeping women'.[33]

The New South Wales Legislative Council meeting in August 1838 to consider estimates provided for twelve Assistant Engineers, 17 Stockade Sergeants, eight Military Overseers, 12 Military Clerks at stockades and 12 Military Schoolmasters indicated the existence at that time of 12 active stockades. As many as can be positively identified are shown on this indicative plan. The discussions on the estimates provided some insight into the operation of the stockades. James Macarthur claimed that at Berrima both the officer and sergeant lived in the town and the stockade was under the control of a corporal. The Brigade Major confirmed that the orders were for the officer to live in the stockade but Ensign Best who visited Berrima about that time to take part in a Court Martial found Lieutenant North, in charge of the stockade living with his wife, wife's' mother and brother, in a four- roomed bark cottage and that the stockade 'was beautifully clean and did great credit to the Commanding Officer.'

The Attorney General pointed out that soldiers on duty with ironed gangs, kept on sentry duty from sunrise to sunset, under a blazing sun, received no extra pay whereas in India, in like conditions, they would receive Indian allowances. He expressed concern that the Regimental

---

31 Report From the Select Committee on Transportation, 3 August 1838, British Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol 22, pp. 249-256.

32 Gipps to Glenelg, 20 September 1837, HRA I, XIX, pp. 94-96.

33 Report From the Select Committee on Transportation, 3August 1838, British Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol 22, pp.133-156.

Commanding Officers had no authority to inspect or 'interfere, in the organisation of the stockades, that all responsibility rested with Major Barney.' The Brigade Major pointed out the difficulty of retaining efficient officers in the stockades because of the movement of regiments to Indian service. [34]

At the August 1839 Legislative Council estimates hearing Major Barney was called to assist with discussions on the Colony's roads. He said that he had reported favourably on the system at the end of his first six months but now found that there was a lack of effective superintendence; he had no one who could 'make out a line of road or understood the use of an instrument'. He was at the mercy of the Surveyor-General's Department for any alterations desired in road alignment. Both road and ironed gangs were now stationed at only five fixed points but could move only a couple of miles of each side of the stockade and the section between went without repair. This statement puts in doubt the efficacy of the introduction of the 'moveable houses' and raises the question whether they were ever used away from the known stockades. At the Campbelltown stockade which had previously held 150 prisoners there were now only 60 but the guard detachment was still 40 strong. On completion of the Campbelltown reservoir it was his intention to move the stockade to Menangle. Barney reported that he had 2000 convicts employed in the Engineering Department, of these 900 were in irons. The western road had been repaired by contract, 'not in a scientific manner' but much metal had been placed on it and it was then the best road in the Colony.[35] A deposit of blue metal had been found in Pennant Hills in 1832. The material was quarried and broken up by convict labour and carried by water 'from what became known as the Pennant Hills wharf'.[36]

Barney had already reported to Gipps that the system of control of convict labour by 'Soldiers of the Line --- is a complete failure' and Gipps passed this information to the Colonial Office on 29 March 1839, expressing also his belief that there seemed little prospect of his obtaining men of the Royal Sappers and Miners for the superintendence of Public Works. His belief was confirmed by a despatch from the Colonial Office, in which when Gipps was advised that the proposal to substitute two companies of Sappers and Miners for two companies of the Line would be too expensive, would 'derange' plans for relief and the internal arrangement for the garrison regiments and, in conclusion, that the Colonial Office was 'compelled to regard it as impractical'.[37]

Faced with the failure of supervision by military officers, the refusal of a detachment of Sappers and Miners and the decision of the Home Government in 1840 to stop transportation to New South Wales, activity on the roads tapered off, convicts replaced by contract workers and those convicts still seeing out their sentences in irons being employed on public works. By January 1844 all the stockades had disappeared from the Monthly Returns with the exception of Towrang, manned by only one Rank and File. He, too, had disappeared from the Returns by August 1844.

---oOo---

34 Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council, reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald,* 27 August 1838. Nancy M Taylor (Ed), *Journal of Ensign Best,* p. 151.

35 Votes and Proceedings, reported in the *Supplement to the Sydney Morning Herald,* 26 August 1839.

36 Sir T L Mitchell, *A Report upon the progress which had been made in opening Roads and in the construction of Public Works generally in the colony during his occupancy of his present office.* Sydney, 1856, p. 68, ML.

37 Normanby to Gipps, 27 June 1839, HRA XX, p. 205.

THE BRITISH ARMY IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA 1836 – 1870

Anthony F. Harris

With the exception of a couple of short breaks, British troops have been a part of South Australia's history since the days leading up to Proclamation in December 1836 until all troops were withdrawn from the Australian colonies in 1870. Despite the founding principles of self support, free settlers, selected immigration of labour paid for by land sales and, more sanctimoniously, no convicts; within about 5 years the status of the Province changed to that of an ordinary Crown colony, largely dependent on Britain for protection and survival.

The Royal Marines

Britain's military connection with South Australia started the day *HMS Buffalo* left the wharves in London. On board was a detachment of Royal Marines – a 'quarter guard' comprising 16 men without an officer – sent out not as a provincial defence force but 'to keep the natives, stragglers from other settlements, and idlers in check during the initial settlement'.1 They also acted as a Vice Regal guard to the Governor of the new Province, Captain John Hindmarsh RN who was also on board. The Marines remained in the colony for about 18 months and fortunately a number of documents survive describing the detachment, who they were and, to some extent, what they did.

It is recorded that 16 men comprised the detachment but to date 19 names of individual Marines (possibly 20) have been identified. The Governor acted as their Commanding Officer and it seems they were accommodated on board the *Buffalo* unless on shore duties when they lived in tents. However a more permanent on-shore facility – a few cottages – was provided before the *Buffalo* returned home. Their duties were largely those of guards; to the Governor and his residence, and to the largely inadequate gaol which it had early been found necessary to establish. It might be added here that there is a reference to a number of escapes from the gaol despite the Marine guard, and the comment was made: 'the escapes from the gaol being of such frequent occurrence...no reliance whatever can be placed on the vigilance of the Marines'.2

They were also engaged on 'government work' and this included assisting in the building of the first Government House and some cottages to house new immigrants. A couple of lists of those Marines employed on such work survive, showing that about 8 were tradesmen (carpenters and masons), the remainder being regarded as labourers.3

The Marines were remembered mainly for their shortcomings rather than for their services. There are several letters complaining of their drunkenness and thievery; one in particular making no bones about the effects of alcohol. In a post-mortem report on the death of Marine Private John Collett, with the finding of 'serious apoplexy produced by habitual intoxication', the Colonial Surgeon states: 'I have ... three patients at present ... labouring under the effects of habitual drunkenness ... every Marine who has been under my care since the arrival of the party in the Colony with one exception has had his illness produced or aggravated by the same cause'.4

---

1 Pike, D., *Paradise of Dissent–South Australia 1829-1857*, p.284.
2 State Records (SR) GRG24/1/1838 No.143
3 SR GRG24/1/1837 No.286a1
4 SR GRG24/1/1838 No.187a

Three of the detachment John Collett, Thomas Paine and John (or Henry ?) King died in South Australia but, other than Collett, there seems to be no record of how they died or where they were interred.[5] Another, Private John Wadcott, was transported to Van Diemen's Land as a convict (offence unspecified).[6]

Their presence in South Australia seems to have been suffered or tolerated by the colonists rather than appreciated. At the time of their departure with Governor Hindmarsh on the *Alligator* in July 1838, descriptive words such as 'drunken' and 'undisciplined' seemed to dominate the opinions of the more dignified Adelaide residents. More formal documents refer to the Royal Marines detachment as 'a miserable set, being the refuse of the Marine Barracks at Portsmouth'.[7]

The Royal Sappers & Miners

An essential part of the planned 'self supporting' Province was the sale of land, but sales could not be achieved without prior survey. William Light had been appointed surveyor to the project but it was not long before ill health and little assistance began to affect his work. Great demands were put on Light to complete surveys so that more land could be sold. Eventually Governor George Gawler (Hindmarsh' replacement) was able to procure through the Colonial Office the services of a group of Royal Sappers and Miners under an officer of the Royal Engineers to assist with survey. Without going into great detail – which has already been well covered by Robert McNicoll [8] – the Sappers and Miners arrived in 1839 and went on to perform much useful work in the Colony over a period of around 18 years. Thanks to a few Departmental Returns and Pay Lists, plus various government correspondence references; to date about 40 individuals have been recorded as serving with the detachment. Many of these men took their discharge in the colony and went on to become valuable members of the community, serving as qualified surveyors, draftsmen and clerks working in both the public and private sectors. As men took their discharge or returned to England at the end of their term of engagement, so replacements were sent out, and the number of men of the corps on station varied according to the health of the colonial coffers or the demands required of them. At one stage they were down to a detachment of six men but it generally stayed at around 12 to 15 men.

The duties of the Sappers and Miners in South Australia were many and varied. They worked with, and sometimes led, survey parties the length and breadth of the colony. They travelled with small exploration parties into the interior; they constructed buildings; they built bridges. Among the detachment at various times were blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, miners, bricklayers etc., all useful, practical trades.[9] There are also several instances of members of the corps being employed as clerks and storekeepers, even if only temporarily. Sergeant Robert Gardiner – Great Grandfather of a past-President of the MHSA's Western Australian Branch – at one stage was commended for the excellent manner with which he had organised the Colonial Engineer's Store.[10] Whilst in the Royal Sappers & Miners Gardiner spent considerable time in the Surveyor General's Office and, after his discharge in February 1854 with the rank of Sergeant Major, continued in his situation and became an influential and highly respected member of the staff. Among their many duties the Sappers and Miners also functioned as artillerymen, such as for firing royal salutes. However, apart from these occasional more formal ceremonies it seems highly likely that they were rarely out of their working dress and that their parade uniforms spent more time in, rather than on, their chests.

---

5 ibid No.135a
6 ibid No.98a
7 Zwillenberg, H.J., The Beginning of South Australia's Defence Forces, *Sabretache*, Vol.XX No.1
8 McNicoll, Robert, *The Royal Australian Engineers* 1835-1902, pp.117-130
9 SR GRG24/6/1846 No.137
10 SR GRG24/4/5 (F) p.329

Unlike the men of the British Line Regiments that served in the Colony, those Sappers and Miners who came out to South Australia did so as volunteers; they were not simply posted to the colony. Similarly, it was considered desirable that the volunteers for South Australia be married men.[11] As stated earlier, a fairly high proportion of the South Australian Detachments took their discharge in Adelaide and a number have left a lasting mark. The river port town of Goolwa near the mouth of the Murray River at some stage recognised the labours of a number of officers of the Crown Lands Department and named several of its streets after them. These include discharged members of the Royal Sappers and Miners and in all 10 men are so commemorated. The Royal Engineer officers who supervised the R.S. & M. detachment, Edward Frome and his successor Arthur Freeling, both of whom held the civil office of Surveyor General, are similarly memorialised elsewhere. Nearly 20 men including the officers, possibly more, have left their names in towns, street names or geographical points across the State.

There is no doubt that the Sappers and Miners stationed in South Australia were all very practical men and there are few instances of offences or misdemeanors. A Return of May 1841 shows 3 referred to as 'Under punishment' with an appropriate drop in working pay – but no other details.[12] Pte. William Pasmore, a tailor by trade, was obviously in the grip of the grog and was several times recommended for return to England for discharge on account of his drunkenness and inefficiency, but it was not until 1852 that he was sent back to Headquarters in England.[13] Despite his shortcomings, Pte. Pasmore was nevertheless memorialised by the Passmore (sic) River, now generally referred to as Wilpena Creek.[14]

There is no direct reference to the Royal Sappers and Miners leaving Adelaide, probably because the last few remained in the colony. In the latter half of 1860 only two Sappers are recorded as working with the Crown Lands Dept; L/Cpl James Elder and Sapper Thomas Evans. Both remained in South Australia, being discharged in Adelaide in February 1861. One other Sapper stayed behind. Pte Henry Hearnden, who died of consumption in Adelaide in July 1845, leaving a 23 year old widow and two daughters, the younger of whom died a few months later.[15]

So the detachment that slipped into the colony almost un-announced, did so much work for the colony over so many years, simply faded away again with barely any formal recognition. But they certainly left their mark.

The Line Regiments

Governor Gawler was recalled principally for being too generous with money he hadn't been allocated and he was replaced in May 1841 by Governor George Grey. The new incumbent was a severe administrator who put the financial brakes on to such an extent that it was to create a crisis of high unemployment and low investment. But it was Grey who was able to persuade the Colonial Office of the need for a military presence in the colony and on the 17th October 1841 a detachment of the 96th Regiment disembarked in Adelaide.[16] Basically Governor Grey was not sympathetic to the local Police Force and as part of his cost-cutting program the force had been greatly reduced. The incoming troops would make up the shortfall of the retrenched police at a considerable saving to the local budget, for it was cheaper to engage a British soldier than to pay a civil policeman.

---

11 SR GRG24/6/1847 No.753 (encl.)
12 SR GRG24/6/1844 No.162
13 SR GRG44/41/2
14 Manning, Geoffrey H., *Place Names of South Australia*, p.241
15 SR GRG24/6/1845 No.787
16 SR GRG122/5 pp.2-3

In all, apart from a period of about 3 years between October 1863 and November 1866, there were 11 detachments of the British Army from 8 regiments stationed in the colony from October 1841 until August 1870. The Detachments came from the 96th Regt (about 4½ years); the 11th – 2½ years (first term), 10½ years (second term), 99th – 2½ months; 40th – 16 months (first term), 5½ years (second term); 12th – 2½ years; 14th – 9 months (first term), 10 months (second term); 50th – 1 year 8 months; and the 18th – 6½ months.

Duties

It is not until 1857 that a document formally discusses the daily duties of the troops and adds to one or two brief, almost casual, references to some specific activity. The Officer Commanding the Troops in SA, then Major Thomas Nelson, replying to a request from the Chief Secretary, states:

> ... that the general daily duties of the Troops are those laid down in the Queen's Regulations and Orders for the Army, which embrace, amongst others:
>
> To aid in the General Defence of the Colony,
> To aid the Civil Power, when called upon, in repressing disturbances,
> And to furnish such guards, and Detachments, as may be required (and in accordance with the Queen's Regulations).
>
> The General Local Duties at present are:
>
> To furnish a guard to His Excellency the Governor in Chief,
> A Guard to the Treasury,
> A Detachment at Robe Town, Guichen Bay, [more of this later]
> And another about to be stationed at the Dry Creek.
> In addition it is the practice for the troops to render their assistance in all cases of Fire.'17

The size of the different Detachments stationed in Adelaide varied considerably, from around 40 Officers and men to 3 companies of around 250 officers and men. At the time of the above reference to duties, the Detachment of the 11th Regt. comprised around 70 in total, including an officer strength of 1 Major, 1 Captain and 1 Lieutenant. Although it seems that there were generally sufficient to perform all or most of those stated duties, there were certainly times when duties were tailored to suit the number of men on station, such as withdrawing the Treasury Guard temporarily until more men were available. Over the years we also find some references to other more unusual duties. One reference states that in 1841 a Detachment sent to the Murray River region had to build its own barracks. In 1852 a twelve man working party of the 11th was requested by the Lieut. Governor to assist in relocating furniture from one set of government buildings to another.18 A couple of months later a request for 'any of the men of your detachment' that could be spared to assist in getting in the harvest for a local farmer.19 In both these instances the men would receive extra pay at the 'going rate' for civilian labour for the work done. Another document refers to three men of the 40th Foot being 'on duty at the racecourse';20 while yet another instance shows a number of the troops being provided to clean all the small arms of the local volunteer force held in the government armoury and stores.21

One area that was a point of contention was the posting of gaol and prison guards from the military. It had to be clearly stated that any such detachments were not to be used to literally

---

17 SR GRG24/6/1857 No.1957
18 SR GRG24/4/25 (T) p.707
19 ibid p.972
20 SR GRS2414/1/P, Register 'C', 24 Apr. 1860
21 SR GRG24/8/1846 p.343 & GRG24/6/1851 No.3220

guard the prisoners.[22] They were to be stationed nearby to support the prison guards or police force in the event of an escape, a riot, or other mischief which became more than those civil authorities could handle. In the case of the prison at Dry Creek (Yatala), being a considerable distance from Adelaide, a barrack and guard house was eventually built for the guard of about 12 men.[23]

Barracks

From the start of the military presence in Adelaide there appears to have been virtually no consideration of building a permanent barrack facility, and for many years the troops lived in barracks consisting of various types of rented accommodation. These premises ranged from converted warehouses or store buildings, pre-existing cottages and buildings little better than weatherboard or iron sheds. It was not until the mid to late 1850's that the army moved into buildings of substance; sound stone buildings owned by the colonial government, albeit built for a different though similar use.

The Royal Sappers and Miners seem to have been barracked wherever rented accommodation could be found. Their requirements were perhaps a little more complicated due to the relatively high number who had wives and families with them. They were initially quartered at Port Adelaide,[24] but during the years of their stay in the colony their barracks included what had been the native children's school at Walkerville, situated beyond the parklands at the north eastern corner of the city. They were also accommodated in a few cottages at a place known as the Native Location – on the banks of the Torrens River. In 1850 these cottages were described as '... in such a dilapidated state that they cannot last much longer. Considerable sums are yearly required to keep them habitable. These buildings are scattered over the Park Lands from the Gaol to the Police Barracks, from which much inconvenience is experienced'.[25]

A review of available buildings in Adelaide prior to the arrival of the 96th Regiment in October 1841 resulted in the renting and fitting out of a store and an adjoining house in Grenfell St., but these premises were only leased for one year. The conversion was effected by men of the Royal Sappers and Miners, assisted by 'Emigrant Mechanics and Labourers'.[26] Subsequent barracks were located in Pirie St., Flinders St. and Waymouth St., with adjacent buildings sometimes also rented as Barrack Stores. Most of these appear to have been less than suitable and there is much correspondence covering complaints about drainage, insanitary conditions, poor ventilation and so on.

There is some correspondence to show that land for a military barrack was purchased at Alberton, north west of Adelaide close to the Port but there appears to be no subsequent evidence that the construction or movement of troops to the area took place.[27] In the mid-1850's a government-owned building known as the Destitute Asylum came under the consideration of the authorities and was subsequently to become the military barracks. By 1859 it is described as comprising 'Commandant's Office, Commissariat Office, Barrack Office, Orderly Room, 5 Barrack Rooms, 6 Rooms for married soldiers, Staff Sergeant's Quarters, Hospital, School Room, Cook House, Wash House, Bathroom, Cleaning Shed, Barrack Stores, Ash Pits, Fuel Shed, Guard Room and 4 Cells and Privies. It could accommodate 120 men and could easily be

22 SR GRG24/51/14, Mil. No.8
23 SR GRG24/51/18
24 McNicholl op. cit. p.119
25 SR GRG24/6/1850 No.872
26 SR GRG24/1/1843 No.78
27 SR GRG24/6/1855 No.1319

made available for 160'.[28] It housed many men over the decade or more that it was in use and remained a barrack until the final recall of the troops in August 1870.

Detachments

During the period of the British Army's deployment in South Australia there were three, perhaps four occasions when it was deemed necessary to send detachments away from Adelaide to act in their role as support for the civil power. Two of these postings were due to conflict between settlers and Aboriginals, one due to paranoia caused by the large influx of 'celestials', and perhaps the fourth for an as yet undisclosed reason.

Moorundie

Following Edward J Eyre's incredible exploratory expeditions across the head of the Bight he was given the opportunity of taking land in an area along the Murray River which had taken his eye when overlanding stock into the infant province from New South Wales. Unfortunately subsequent overlanding parties had experienced considerable conflict with the Murray Aboriginals (in many cases instigated by the overlanders) and Eyre was appointed Protector of Aborigines and Resident Magistrate of the area with a view to protecting the stock routes and interceding between the local tribes and white settlers.[29] The settlement was known as Moorundie, about 6 miles south of Blanchetown. Early in November 1841 a party of the 96th Regiment consisting of a Sergeant and 12 men was detached from Adelaide to support the small police presence should any conflict be too much for them to handle. The men were to live under canvas 'for some time...'[30] but a barrack was eventually built and there exists a good description of it as it was when later taken over by the Police.[31]

The Resident Magistrate was seen as a fair administrator and was sympathetic to and respected by the local Aboriginals. Specific instructions were given controlling the terms under which the troops could be called out and it was made very clear that there was to be no suggestion of punitive action – all offenders were to be subject to the law. Conflict diminished and by mid-1845 the size of the Detachment was down to a Sergeant and seven men, the reduction due to 'the state of tranquility which has for so long a period prevailed amongst the natives ...'[32] The Detachment was withdrawn to Adelaide by April 1846, shortly before the 96th left the colony and it appears that no further military detachments were sent to the district. The settlement was subject to severe flooding and was eventually abandoned. The site now sits within the boundaries of Portee Station.

Port Lincoln

Less than six months after the military post at Moorundie was established word was received in Adelaide reporting murder and mayhem in Port Lincoln on the west coast of the colony. A station owner and two servants had been murdered and the owner's wife left for dead after an attack 'committed by the natives'. The alarm in the district bordered on panic and immediate arrangements were made to send over a subaltern and fifteen men of the 96th.[33] The officer, Lieut. Hugonin, was sworn in as a Justice of the Peace allowing him to act as a Magistrate of the Province, and the Government Resident at Port Lincoln was instructed to afford the Lieutenant every assistance. Again, as with the detachment at Moorundie, specific instructions were given to

---

28 SR GRG35/13/21
29 SR GRG24/4/4/(E) pp.120-1
30 ibid p.137
31 SR GRG24/6/1846 No.462
32 SR GRG24/4/9 (H) p.308
33 SR GRG24/4/4/(E) pp.601-2

Hugonin. While he was authorised to arrest any aboriginal 'against whom any fair ground of suspicion may be', he was told 'your duty consists solely in apprehending the natives who have been concerned in the late murders, not in punishing them'.[34] A rent-free house was temporarily lent to the Military privately but the Government Resident was later able to secure suitable quarters at a weekly rent of two shillings and six pence. Such was the proposed temporary nature of the detachment that the building was only to be taken on a week to week basis. The detachment was reduced to a Sergeant, a Corporal and six men in mid-to late June 1842 with Lieutenant Hugonin and the rest of the Detachment returning to Adelaide.[35] The remaining troops stayed in the district at least until 1845 but with little further record of their activities or final recall.

Robe Town

From the Government Resident, Robe Town to the Chief Secretary, 28 May 1857: 'I have the honor to report...that for some months there has been a constant influx of Chinese into this Port en route for the Victorian Diggings – and that it often occurs that several thousands of them are encamped around the town at one time...many of the residents are beginning to feel uneasy at the utter want of protection to life and property, in case of a disturbance taking place'. This letter, with its underlying hysteria, goes on to suggest that the government might station a small detachment of the military in the town and, no doubt pre-empting expected queries, goes on to say that there is 'a building – at present unoccupied –which would serve as a barrack for about twenty men'.[36]

While the politicians considered instituting a Bill to control Chinese immigration with the imposition of a poll tax, Major Thomas Nelson, Commanding the Troops in SA, suggested a party of twelve may be sufficient. However the Executive Council resolved that a party of 25 men and one officer should be sent to Robe Town immediately, the government paying all travelling and incidental expenses and allowing the officer 15 shillings a day in lieu of lodging money. The Detachment of the 12th Regiment disembarked at Robe on 15 June 1857. Major Nelson travelled to Robe with the detachment and on his return a few days later reported on the most inadequate nature of the quarters. Although suggestions for improvements to the barracks were discussed there is no evidence that they were put into effect.[37] However an increase in the Colonial pay of the detachment of 3½d per day was sanctioned – perhaps an inducement to mollify their complaints about the unsatisfactory living conditions.[38]

Why the residents should be so fearful causes question. Certainly in a strongly AngloSaxon/Celtic community the presence of so many Chinese may have been somewhat intimidating. But figures are quoted stating the Chinese tended to stay in the district for only two or three days and on average spent from 30 shillings to two pounds per man.[39] If the original statement in my opening paragraph quoting 'several thousands encamped around the town at one time' are only half accurate it would still mean a considerable amount of money coming into a very small township. And the Chinese were really at that time interested in only one thing – Gold! There are references to 'not a single building, cottage or mess room...or even a tent'[40] being available to rent in the town so it was obviously a boom time for all.

---

34 ibid pp.609-12
35 ibid p.751
36 SR GRG24/6/1857 No.883
37 ibid No.988 & 989
38 SR GRG24/4/30 (Y) p.251
39 SR GRG24/6/1857 No.988
40 ibid No.989

No reports have been located recording any form of disturbance or mayhem and the paranoia obviously subsided while the Chinese went about their business and the locals made their quid. The detachment was withdrawn to Adelaide about 12 months after it first arrived.[41]

Queen's Own Town

The township of Finnis, situated between Strathalbyn and Goolwa heading towards the mouth of the River Murray, was originally named Queen's Own Town, a reference to the 50th (The Queen's Own) Regiment. A number of the township's principal streets were named after the officers of the regiment and, despite road closures and diminished area, fragments of some of these roads still exist. Passing through Finniss today it is almost impossible to see any resemblance to the original layout and there is not a street sign to be seen. Unfortunately there are no references to the presence of the regiment in the district in any official documents so far researched. The *Effective States* returns of the 50th, a number of which exist, make no mention of detachments or postings outside Adelaide other than the guard detachment at Dry Creek. A history of the district compiled in 1994 gives the name of the farming property on which the site of the camp was located. The author describes the location and also states that 'until 1992 two big strainer posts still stood marking the gateway into the camp'.[42] Nothing has been found in official sources to show why the regiment was stationed in the district. The 50th had three companies in the colony (H, J and K Companies); perhaps one company was temporarily detached from the city, maybe a part of a company? Further research is obviously necessary.

Deserters and Defaulters

Although there are gaps that prevent comment on some of the regiments in the colony, local court and prison records certainly bring the shortcomings of the troops to the fore. From these we find all the relatively petty offences right through to the dyed in the wool criminal (at least in 19th C terms). The first 'deserter' notice appears in the SA *Government Gazette* about 6 months after the arrival of the 96th Regiment.[43] Offences mostly range from drunk & disorderly; assault, theft and, as something a little more unusual, feloniously shooting at a sheep.[44] At Moorundie many of the offenders were fined with a few days in gaol in default of payment, and for those who couldn't pay the fine it meant a trip to Adelaide to serve their sentence in Adelaide Gaol.

There was no military prison as such in the colony. Those cells that existed in barracks were used mainly to hold offenders prior to sentencing and transfer to the civil gaol. The records of Adelaide Gaol are peppered with entries which include sentences as short as 96 hours or as long as several years, the longer sentences being served in Yatala Labour Prison – usually referred to as Dry Creek.

Relatively minor offences were commonplace – Breaking Barracks, Absent at tattoo, and theft of varying degrees. Occasionally we find a charge out of the ordinary, such as 'concealing disease' – not stated but we can guess. But the mainstay of the daily charge sheet was drunkenness, often accompanied with disorderly behaviour or assault as the inebriated miscreant abused the local populace or had a punch up with the arresting policeman. It was with these offences that recidivism becomes apparent. A Return of Soldiers of the 14th Regt incarcerated in Adelaide Gaol during their first term stay in Adelaide from November 1866 to August 1867 was published as a Parliamentary Paper and has since been statistically analysed by the late Hans

41 SR GRG24/4/31 p.158
42 Partridge, Heather, *Regiment on the River...*, Finniss District Hall, 1994
43 SA *Government Gazette*, 5 May 1842
44 SR GRG4/133

Zwillenberg.[45] Comparative figures for other Regiments have not been fully compiled but both the 50th and the 11th would have given the 14th a good run for their money. One figure that may be of interest; During the last month of the 50th Regiment's term between the 2nd and 27th March the desertion rate averages at one every one and a half days.[46] The sentence for desertion unless accompanied by some other antisocial activity was usually around 56 days hard labour. Private James Lawley appears to have been the 50th's last deserter from Adelaide. He made his run on 27 March 1869 just 5 days before the regiment left for England; but he was apprehended and back in the care of the military authorities (the 2/14th Regt.) by the 14th April, starting his sentence in Adelaide Gaol the following day.[47]

But offences in the civil courts were a different thing. Charges of stealing from individuals, burglary, assault etc. usually earned a sentence of 3 months hard labour or more; a Pte John Challinor of the 50th Regt. in December 1867 was awarded 10 years hard labour for Arson – Maliciously setting fire to a haystack.[48] Obviously the locals regarded this sort of behaviour in the height of summer with much the same feeling as we do today. As an aside Challinor ended with quite a record. He spent 12 of the next 15 years in gaol after having his initial sentence reduced by seven years due to illness. A wasted life to say the least.

There is no doubt that offenders, and more particularly deserters, posed a continuing problem for the military authorities, especially in places like Adelaide where relatively small detachments were posted. It was invariably the case that when officers commanding were asked to supply, for instance, an extra guard detail, or perhaps take a reduction in the number of troops under their command, the reply was usually something along the lines of 'we're already understaffed as it is!' So it is easy to see that desertions probably placed considerable strain on their resources.

In 1849 Captain Moore of the 11th Regt, as Officer Commanding the Troops in South Australia, wrote to the Colonial Secretary describing the difficulties in apprehending deserters, stating: '...the Police have hitherto been quite unsuccessful in apprehending any of these men from their being unable to identify them.' On two occasions an NCO of the 11th was allowed to accompany one of the Mounted Police troopers into country districts in an attempt to bring some of the deserters in, with some degree of success.[49] During the 11th Regiment's first term in the colony desertions were such that a notice was placed in the SA *Government Gazette* on 9 September 1847, 'beg[ging] to draw attention to the 25th clause of the Mutiny Act' which warns of the consequences of assisting or concealing the desertion of a soldier.

So far in excess of 500 prison admissions of military personnel have been recorded and there are many more to be added to the list from references such as the AJCP microfilms.

A number of the military took their discharge locally, a number stayed by default after being left behind in prison or after successfully deserting. A few died in the colony but unfortunately local records are not as complete or as detailed as they could be so identifying and locating them all is not very straightforward.

Withdrawal

But all was not disaffection, intolerance, drunkeness or idleness. There were sobriety or temperance groups within regiments; they had some sports facilities (a 'fives' court – a type of ball game) provided, and shooting competitions with the local volunteers. A library was

---

45 SA Parliamentary Papers PP No.126 1867, See Zwillenberg op.cit. p.44.
46 Author's statistics.
47 SA *Police Gazette*, 31 Mar. 1869 p.40. See also SR GRS2414/1/P, 15 Apr. 1869.
48 SR GRS2414/1/P, 2 Dec. 1867
49 SR GRG24/6/1849 No.2260

instituted in the 1860's and many soldiers earned sufficient good conduct points to qualify for local discharge. As the last detachment stationed in the colony was about to depart, bringing to an end around 30 years of British military presence in the colony, the following rather kindly words were penned by the officer commanding the 2nd Battalion, 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment: '15 August 1870. My Dear Sir, I beg to enclose to you the names of the soldiers we leave behind – (No.610 Cpl. John Gallagher, No.1384 Pte. W J Bunting of the 2nd/14th, No.1453 Pte. Richard Sullivan and No.1505 Pte. Robert Smith 2nd/14th). The first on the list I can recommend as one of the best and steadiest men in the Regiment...The other three are all steady and good men. Believe me, My Dear Sir, Yours very truly, J. H. Rocke. Lt.Col.'[50]

---oOo---

Memorial Walk: National Artillery Museum

Major General John Whitelaw
on behalf of the RAA Historical Company

I am writing to you to seek your support for the Memorial Walk now under construction at the National Artillery Museum. The Museum is already a fine military museum, full of interest for those with an inclination toward our military history. But, more so for those who have an affinity with the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

The construction of this Memorial Walk complements the objectives of the Museum. It provides the opportunity for the commemoration of all gunners, as individuals, as groups or units in the majestic setting of North Head: The home of our Regiment for fifty years.

Work is already well advanced. The foundations have been laid, the five main stations have been erected and remain to be faced with stone. These contemplative stations are dedicated to our participation in the wars prior to the federation of the colonies, to the two world wars, the post-1945 operations and lastly to our frequent involvement in peacekeeping activities. The extensive paving to connect these stations is now underway, but there remains an almost unlimited opportunity for further contributions of payers to be incorporated.

The project is being financed entirely by generous individual and collective donations and sponsorship. This is principally from subscription for splendidly engraved payers with names and details of those who are remembered for their service by relatives, comrades, unit associations and others.

Order forms for payers are available from The National Artillery Museum, North Head, PO Box 1042, Manly NSW 1042, or by telephoning the Museum on (02) 9976 3855. Individual inscribed payers may be arranged at $ 50 for the first and $ 40 each for subsequent payers in the group. Centrepiece payers suitable for families, associations and clubs, can feature a suitable engraved emblem and are $1500.

---

50 SR GRG24/6/1870 No.1107

The Relevance of Miscellany Administrative, Support and Logistic Units of the AIF

Graham Wilson

Introduction

As military historians, we are all keenly aware of the fact that the institution that we know today as "the Australian Army" owes its origins very much to the AIF. Prior to 1914, the Australian Army was a collection of mostly part time units, largely inherited from the pre-Federation Colonial forces, supported by a miniscule Permanent establishment and to a large extent struggling to define itself. It was the First World War that gave Australia its first "army", that gave Australia a fighting and military tradition, and that would shape the development of the post-war army, up until the current day.

Yet, when we think of the Australian Army in the First World War, we tend NOT to actually think of an Australian army. When we do think of Australia's army in that conflict we of course think of the AIF. And when we think of the AIF we think of the great fighting infantry and light horse divisions of that force. But, by doing that, we are in fact not thinking of an "army" at all. An expeditionary force made up only of combat units is just that, an expeditionary force, suitable at best to be incorporated into a larger foreign force as a national element. For the truth is, an "army" is more than just infantry, artillery, engineers and cavalry. An "army" is also cooks and bakers, doctors and dentists, drivers and mechanics, clerks and postmen, and so on. By concentrating on the fighting elements of the AIF, the "teeth", and neglecting the administrative and support elements, "the tail", we are in fact denying the right of the AIF to be considered an "Australian army."

The aim of this paper is to examine the administrative and support elements of the AIF and propose and, hopefully, prove the argument that without the various, at times unglamorous, administrative and support elements of the force it would not be able to lay claim to being an Australian army. The paper will concentrate on the operations of the support, logistic and administrative elements of the AIF in the UK and on the Western Front. Although the Australian activity in the Middle East after Gallipoli was ably supported by Australian logistic and support units, the bulk of the support for the Light Horsemen was provided by the British Army. Thus the Middle East campaign will only be touched on. Nor will mention be made of the relatively extensive AIF support, logistic and administrative establishment in Australia.

Genesis

The very first contingent of the AIF to depart for overseas service, comprised the 1st Australian Division, the 4th Australian Infantry Brigade, the 1st Light Horse Brigade and the 4th Light Horse Regiment. But even in these very first days, the AIF included admin and support units and sub-units. Admittedly, these were organic to the formations but still they were there, an acknowledgment that modern war could not be fought by infantry, artillery and cavalry alone. The first contingent included field ambulances, the divisional and brigade trains (transport and supply units), field bakeries, field butcheries and the all important veterinary sections.

One point that must be borne in mind at all times is that to a large extent, in those first days, the AIF was "making things up" as it went along. For example, when the AIF set about establishing the logistic and supply units for the 1st Division, while it was known that, amongst other things, an "ammunition park" and a "supply column" were required, no one had much of an idea of the duties or probable tasks of these mysterious units. The officers appointed to raise and command

the two units eventually discovered an article in the *New Zealand Military Journal* that gave them enough guidance to get on with the job![51] As constituted, the organic support units of the 1st Australian Division were as shown in the list following:

- Divisional Train (ASC)
  - Supply Column
  - Ammunition Park
  - Brigade Train (Supply Company) x 3
- Field Ambulance x 3
- Mobile Veterinary Section
- Field Bakery
- Field Butchery

Originally destined for the UK, for various reasons the first contingents of the AIF were diverted to Egypt and went into camp at Mena in December 1914. Nothing brought home more starkly to both the British and Australian authorities the lack of support, logistic and administrative units of the AIF than the arrival of first contingent. The Australians, for example. would require a minimum of 2,500 tents to accommodate themselves in the desert. They had - none.[52] The AIF in fact had no logistic units apart from those organic to the division and brigades. Bad enough in and of itself, this lack of support units was immediately compounded by the decision to form the 1st Australian Division and the New Zealand Division into a corps. It should be noted that, while "organic" to the 1st Division when despatched, the Supply Column and Ammunition Park were in fact Corps Troops. When the rest of the first contingent disembarked in Egypt, the Supply Column and Ammunition Park continued on to England where they were employed on hauling and transport tasks around Salisbury Plain.[53]

Under the impetus of reorganisation and expansion, supply units of the AIF increased dramatically. By February 1915, in addition to the AIF Administrative Headquarters (formed in Cairo in late 1914) and Base, the supply units of the AIF included:

- 1st Division Train (1,2,3 & 4 Coy Australian Army Service Corps [AASC])
- Reserve Park (10 Coy AASC)
- 1st and 2nd Depot Unit of Supply (DUS)
- 11th Railway Supply Detachment (11 Coy AASC)
- 1st Field Bakery (13 Coy AASC part)
- 1st Field Butchery (13 Coy AASC part)
- 1st, 2nd & 3rd LH Brigade Trains (5, 6 & 12 Coy AASC)
- 4th Infantry Brigade Train (7 Coy AASC)[54]

In addition to the AASC units, elements of the hastily raised Australian Army Ordnance Corps (AAOC) were present in Egypt. These included the Field Ordnance Depot (FOD) at Mena and the Base Ordnance Depot (BOD) at Alexandria.[55]

The Dardanelles

Gallipoli was a major challenge for the supply services of the AIF. Operating with ad hoc organisation, limited facilities, under primitive and physically dangerous conditions, the supply

---

51 Fairclough, Col H., 1962 *Equal to the Task Par Oneri The History of the Royal Australian Army Service Corps*, p 9.
52 Bean, C.E.W., 1921 *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol I, The Story of Anzac*, p. 112.
53 Fairclough, op. cit. p.9. See also Bean p. 114.
54 Lindsay, Neville, 1991 *Equal to the Task Volume 1 The Royal Australian Army Service Corps*, pp. 203-204.
55 Tillbrook, J.D., op. cit. pp. 42-43.

and support elements of ANZAC performed literal miracles. From lighters anchored offshore, the AAOC detachments maintained a supply of ammunition from the very first day of the campaign.[56] Within the very first hours of the campaign, LTCOL J.G. Austin (DADOS 1st Division) followed up behind 3rd Brigade and established an ammunition point near the pier at Hell Spit. The bullet riddled ordnance pennant Austin raised to identify his position is now held by the Australian War Memorial.[57]

Similarly, the AASC units rose magnificently to the challenge of the campaign. After a faltering start, the AASC companies quickly acquired the knowledge and expertise needed to keep the fighting troops supplied and resupplied under the most trying of conditions. Originally tasked with holding seven days' supply of rations in the Depots located around Anzac Cove, the requirement was raised in June 1915 to ten days, while 23 days reserve was held in the main Depot at Anzac Gully. Thus by 17 July the South Depot near the mouth of Shrapnel Gully held 23 days' reserve of rations and 2 days' fuel for 25,000 men along with 5 days' grain and 1 day's hay for 1,000 animals.[58] The field bakery in the meantime had, after a soul destroying period of misemployment as regimental police, began operation on Imbros and kept up a much appreciated supply of baked goods to the AIF units on Gallipoli right up until the end of the campaign.[59] For those not intimately familiar with the conditions at Anzac, it is difficult to imagine just how extreme the conditions were under which the men of the AASC and AAOC maintained the vital supply role for ANZAC.

In addition to the supply and logistic units, major Australian medical units made their first appearance during the Gallipoli Campaign. Both the 1st Australian General Hospital and the 1st Australian Casualty Clearing Station were deployed forward to Lemnos in May 1915 to handle AIF casualties, while the 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital operated in Cairo.[60] As with the more specialised AASC units, the non-divisional medical units were an innovation for the Australian Army and experienced a number of problems early in the war. These were generally overcome and the Australian medical units became noted for their efficiency and competency. The flow of casualties from Gallipoli, both wounded and sick, saw an early increase in the number of medical units. The 1st General Hospital would be joined in quick order by the 2nd and 3rd General Hospitals, along with the 1st and 2nd Stationary Hospitals, the 2nd Casualty Clearing Station, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Auxiliary Hospitals, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Convalescent Depots and the 1st Sanitary Company.[61]

After the Australians withdrew from Gallipoli in December 1915, the supply elements of the AIF were placed under further strain by the requirement to more than double the size of the force. One of the most far reaching developments for the AIF was the establishment of the overseas base early in 1915, under the command of Colonel V.C.M. Selheim. The Base, in effect the Headquarters of the AIF, was organised into seven departments: records, finance, ordnance, medical, base detail (responsible for reinforcements, training, personal administration etc), remounts and postal. It was this organisation that would develop into the great AIF Headquarters in Horseferry Road, London. The Base Headquarters and then later the AIF Headquarters released the commanders of the AIF from the administrative burden they had been under and freed them to concentrate on the operational and tactical aspects of command.[62]

---

56 ibid,.
57 ibid. p.45
58 Fairclough, op. cit. p.13.
59 Bean, Vol II, p. 364.
60 ibid.
61 Bean, op. cit. Vols I and Vol II
62 Bean, op. cit. Vol I, pp.118-119.

With the withdrawal of the AIF from the Dardenelles, the immense task of expanding the force began.[63] When the reorganisation was complete, the AIF consisted of the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Divisions in Egypt, the 3rd Division en route to the UK and the Mounted Division forming in Egypt.

The AIF Splits

In January 1916, it was decided to send the infantry divisions of the AIF to the UK, France and Belgium, along with the bulk of the support, logistic and administrative elements.[64] In France/Belgium, the Australians would form (along with the New Zealand Division) the I and II ANZAC Corps. The Light Horse, in the meantime, along with a reduced allotment of support, logistic and administrative elements, would remain in the Middle East to carry on the fight against the Turks. The 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Divisions began departing Egypt in May 1916, to join the 3rd Division in Europe. With them went the bulk of the "tail" units.

The Middle East

With the departure of the infantry divisions, the AIF presence in the Middle East was represented largely by the light horse units. While the bulk of the support, logistic and administrative units in the Middle East were British or Indian, the AIF formations included organic AIF units. In addition, a number of AIF support, logistic and administrative units served in Egypt, Sinai and Palestine. The overall administration of the AIF units was the responsibility of AIF Administrative HQ in Cairo. Medical support was provided by the 14th General Hospital, the 2nd and 3rd Infectious Diseases Hospitals, the 2nd Stationary Hospital and the Anzac Field Laboratory. Dental care was provided to the Light Horsemen by the 6th, 16th, 25th, 31st, 71st, 73rd, 103rd, 104th, 105th, 106th, 107th, 108th, 109th, 117th and 118th Dental Units. Of critical importance to the Light Horse was the AIF Remount Depot, which started life as the 1st and 2nd Remount Units. The two units were consolidated to form the

Remount Depot in October 1916 and the unit was active until the end of the war. It should also be noted that the AIF operated no less than 15 remount depots in Australia, to supply horses to both the Middle East and to the European theatre. These depots also provided horses for the Indian Army under an Australian-UK government to government agreement.

Apart from these non-divisional units, of course, there were the support units organic to the Australian Mounted Division and the Anzac Mounted Division. These would eventually include the 32nd - 38th AASC Companies, the 26th and 27th DUS, the 6th-10th Mobile Veterinary Sections, 1st-5th Light Horse Field Ambulances and 7th and 8th Veterinary Sections.[65]

UK and the Western Front

From early 1916, the bulk of the AIF was concentrated in the UK, France and Belgium and the Western Front would become the AIF's main focus for the rest of the war. While the infantry divisions and the "corps troops" went to France, the AIF was establish a sophisticated and widespread network of administrative, training, support and logistic units in the UK. These are dealt with in the following paragraphs.

---

63 Or in fact, continued, as the process had already begun with the creation of the 2nd Division from additional units and the decision to raise the 3rd Division in Australia.

64 Gullett, p. xv and pp. 34-36.

65 Mallett, Ross, 1999, Australian Imperial Force Order of Battle.

Administrative Units

While the AIF depended to a fairly large extent (although not as large as usually thought) on the BEF for logistic support, in the field of personnel administration and management the AIF was almost totally independent and self-sustaining. From very humble beginnings, the AIF's headquarters units grew to be large and sophisticated organisations, almost totally independent of the British Army.

AIF Headquarters. To administer the AIF in the Middle East, the AIF Intermediate Base had been established in Cairo in early 1915. Under the command of Colonel Sellheim, the original role of this organisation was simply to relieve Birdwood and Bridges of the administrative load that had been detracting from their main role as operational commanders. The rapidly growing sophistication of the AIF as a military organisation, however, meant that the "Intermediate Base" (i.e. the base between Australia and the fighting front) very soon evolved into a full blown military headquarters with all of the normal staff branches.[66] With decision to move the bulk of the AIF to Europe, the AIF HQ and training depots were ordered to transfer to the UK in April 1916, the HQ under Sellheim arriving on 21 May. It should be noted than an extemporized AIF HQ already existed in the UK. Early in 1915, Western Australia's Agent-General in London, Sir Newton Moore, an experienced pre-war militia soldier, was appointed to form and command Australian depots in the UK. The arrival of the HQ and depots from Egypt saw Moore replaced by Sellheim and the previous ad-hoc arrangement transformed into the AIF Administrative HQ, located at Horseferry Road. Within less than a year the Australian HQ would outgrow its original more than ample quarters at Horseferry Road and command a network of depots, training schools and medical and convalescent units throughout England. Sellheim commanded the HQ until the end of July 1916, when, rather unfairly, he was replaced by the Sydney businessman Colonel R.R. Anderson.[67] Sir Newton Moore, promoted to Brigadier-General, took over command of AIF Depots in the UK.

For the remainder of the war and indeed into 1919, the great headquarters at Horseferry Road commanded and administered the AIF in the UK and Europe, with some oversight also of the administration of AIF troops in the Middle East. The HQ, especially under Anderson, grew in both size and efficiency, its organisational success being easily judged by the completeness of the vast amount of records returned to Australia after the war and still available to the researcher. Two hallmarks of the AIF Administrative HQ were the meticulousness of its records, especially financial, and the large numbers of civilians, especially women, employed. By early 1917, the only uniformed personnel serving at Horseferry Road were those totally necessary to the efficient military operation of the headquarters.

AIF Base Records. In the pre-War AMF, personal records had been of a fairly limited nature. Record keeping for the miniscule regular army was accomplished by a small section, little more than a couple of clerks, located in the Adjutant-General's Branch at Army HQ in Melbourne. Militia records were Military District, i.e. State, based and in fact tended to be very much a unit responsibility, centralisation being achieved by regular unit "returns." [68] This system was, of course, not suitable for a large standing army. With this in mind, the Defence Department established the AIF Base Records in Melbourne in October 1914. The role of the unit was to maintain the personal records of all members of the AIF. With a short war in mind, the original record section had an establishment of three clerks. By 1917, this had grown to more than 330,

---

66 Bean, C.E.W., 1929 Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol III, The AIF in France 1916, p. 165.
67 Bean, Vol III, pp. 166-167.
68 Scott, Ernest, 1936 Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol XI, Australia During the War, p. 231. See also Mullett.

based on an allocation of one clerk per 1,000 records, with a small additional staff "for emergencies."[69]

Australian Section, 3rd Echelon. Faced with the need to maintain accurate personnel records the AIF decided to utilise the British Third Echelon system. British soldiers posted for overseas service had their personal records returned to the Home Records Officer for safe-keeping. An extract of the record was then forwarded to the area or army he was to serve in. The record was held by the GHQ Third Echelon at the base. The AIF established an "Australian Section" in the Third Echelon in Cairo in July 1915. Staffed by clerks detached from the divisions of the AIF, the Australian Section originally had a strength of 143, rising to 353 in 1918. When the infantry divisions and support units went to France in 1916, the bulk of the Australian Section went to Le Havre, leaving a small element in Cairo to handle records of AIF personnel serving in the Middle East. Due to some unresolved "turf disputes", there was a large overlap between AIF Overseas HQ, AIF Base Records in Melbourne and the Australian Section Third Echelon, resulting in duplication of effort. On the other hand, while this was in some ways wasteful, it ensured that the AIF came out of the war with extensive and detailed personnel records.[70]

Base Depots. The role of the Base Depots was to process men on their way to the fighting units, either as reinforcements or as "casuals", i.e men returning from hospital, convalescence, long term schooling, leave or detention. Five Divisional Base Depots were established in March 1916, one for each of the infantry divisions. Originally located at Etaples, the great administrative and logistic node of the BEF, the depots relocated to Harfleur near Le Havre in June 1917. In September 1916 a General Base Depot was formed at Etaples to process men for other than Infantry and Pioneer units. The General Base Depot relocated to Harfleur at the same time as the Divisional Base Depots. In December 1917, in anticipation of the creation of the Australian Corps, the Divisional Base Depots were disbanded and as the Infantry Base Depot, was reorganised to process men for the infantry and pioneers for all of the divisions. Interestingly, Bean notes that the reason for relocating the Australians from Etaples to Harfleur was the fact that the lines of transport for drafts crossed those of the Canadians. Bean notes in his prim manner that at Folkestone "conflicts occurred between Australians and Canadian military police." [71]

Training

As mentioned above under headquarters units, the AIF established a large and sophisticated network of training units, both in the UK and Middle East. Initial training of recruits in Australia was fairly rudimentary, largely being designed simply to instil some sense of discipline and "military belonging" into newly joined civilians. These new recruits were drafted overseas as soon as possible, training continuing in a limited form aboard ship, with the bulk of training, especially that of specialists, being conducted in training depots in England, France and Egypt.

Training Depots. With the transfer of the bulk of the AIF's establishment to England and France, and after some early confusion and re-organisation, the AIF training establishment consisted of:[72]

- No.1 Group - Perham Downs: training brigade for the 1st Division and Pioneers.
- No. 2 Group - Rollestone: training brigade for the 2nd and 4th Divisions.
- No. 3 Group - Lark Hill: training brigade for the 5th Division.

---

69 Scott, op. cit.
70 Bean, Vol II, op. cit. pp. 415-417.
71 Bean, Vol III, p. 178.
72 ibid., pp. 168-169.

- Artillery Depot - Lark Hill.
- Engineers and Signallers Depot - Parkhouse.
- Army Service Corps Depot - Parkhouse.
- Medical Corps Depot - Parkhouse.
- Machine Gun Depot - Tidworth.

Later, for reasons of efficiency, the Engineers were transferred to Christchurch and then Brightlingsea; the Signallers went to Shefford; and the Machine Gunners moved to Grantham.[73] In all these cases, the moves were made in order to co-locate Australian schools with their corresponding British establishments and thus draw on and benefit from the expertise and knowledge bases of these establishments.

The AASC Training Depot at Parkhouse was a particularly busy establishment. The depot not only trained and despatched 150 ASC reinforcements per month and conducted specialist officer and NCO training, it was also responsible for providing the supplies, transport and barracks services support for the AIF in the UK. Taking into account the AIF HQ, several hospitals, units of AFC and AIF depot complex, Parkhouse was responsible, on top of its training commitment, for the housing, feeding and transporting of about 50,000 men at any given time.[74]

In the Middle East, training depots were established for light horse, machine gunners, engineers, signallers, medical, veterinary and Army Service Corps personnel.[75] Although theoretically sub-units of the parent depots in the UK and required to conform to the training programs and standards of the parent unit, the Middle East depots seem to have gone very much their own way, although the outcomes appeared to be the same!

I ANZAC Entrenching Battalion. The ANZAC Entrenching Battalion was interesting unit that combined both training and operational roles. Exasperated at the British GHQ requirement for all men, no matter how well trained, to spend (endure is a better word) at least 10 days of instruction at the infamous "Bull Ring" at Etaples, I Anzac Corps established I ANZAC Entrenching Battalion. The battalion was employed on trench building and maintenance tasks in the front line, thus providing the men in the battalion with some much needed front line experience. The had a high and continual turnover of men as the divisions of ! ANZAC Corps drew their reinforcements from the battalion. These losses were continually made up by men fed into the battalion from the Command Depots, thus continuing the cycle. The battalion continued in this role until broken up in late 1917.[76]

Pay

The question of pay was of such vital concern to both the Commonwealth government and the AIF that an Army Pay Corps was established before the First Contingent sailed. Unfortunately, the small number of personnel available and their lack of experience in the large money transactions entailed in the financial administration the AIF, meant that the pay system in Egypt very quickly reached the point of collapse. Colonely Selheim was so concerned at the state of affairs that he requested an experienced accountant to be sent out to both audit the AIF's finances and to untangle the web of problems created. Lieutenant Colonel Joliffe, an accountant and militia officer, was sent out from Melbourne and carried out the first audit of the AIF's "books."

---

73 ibid., pp. 169-170.
74 Lindsay, Neville, 1991 *Equal to the Task Vol 1 The Royal Australian Army Service Corps*, pp.392-393.
75 ibid, pp. 393-394. See also Bean, Mallett and Mullett.
76 Bean , Vol III., pp. 177-178.

He was joined later by a succession of accountants recruited from the ranks of the AIF and commissioned into the Pay Corps.[77]

Unfortunately, the problems raised their heads again with the expansion of the AIF and the transfer of the bulk of its personnel to the UK and France. When Anderson became Commandant AIF HQ in August 1916 he immediately called for another complete audit. Such were his concerns that the Finance Member of the Military Board, Colonel Laing, was sent out to conduct the audit. Joliffe was brought from Egypt and appointed Chief Paymaster AIF and, supported by a number of other accountants and bookkeepers recruited from the AIF's ranks, gradually sorted out the AIF's financial mess. However, it was such a huge problem that it would not be until the end of 1917 that the AIF would be able to render a full and proper financial account to the Commonwealth Government.[78]

Later in the war, the manning status of the AIF became so critical that the HQ and depots in the UK and France were combed for fit men. The result of this was that the uniformed staff at AIF Administrative HQ was reduced to the absolute bare minimum required for efficient operation. The Pay Corps was not immune to this process and by late 1917 the huge job of paying and administering the finances of the AIF was being carried by a tiny staff. In Bean's words, these men were "so overtaxed that one after another of them broke down in health."[79] The Pay Corps was about the last of the AIF to leave UK. Such was the size of the task of finalising the AIF's accounts with the UK Government that a small Pay Corps element remained behind in London under the command of Major Langslow to finish the job, not returning to Australia until 1921.[80]

That the Pay Corps did a good job can be judged by the fact that while there were numerous complaints by Australian troops about officers, discipline, food, leave, conditions in the trenches, etc, very few complaints are on record about pay.

Police

An army relies on discipline and adherence to its rules and regulations for its fighting efficiency. Unfortunately, not all soldiers are inclined to follow all the rules all the time. Similarly, every army will always contain its element of hard cases. Discipline in the AIF was originally the province of the Provost Marshal, assisted by officers and NCO's seconded to his staff and by the regimental police of divisions, brigades and units. By the time the AIF arrived on the Western Front, this was seen to be unworkable and the various "policemen" were gathered together into a military police corps, originally consisting of "two companies of footmen and a mounted squadron."[81]

Unfortunately, in the early days, the Anzac Police Corps was largely recruited from unsuitable personnel, higher authority originally adhering to the time honoured British type of provost, bombastic and even brutal. This led to some serious problems, both in Europe and in the Middle East. Later, from about mid-1917 onwards, the firm policy of the AIF was that no transfers to the Provost Corps would be accepted except from men with front line experience. This went a long way to raising the esteem of the military police in the eyes of most of the rest of the AIF.

---

77 Bean, Vol II, pp. 397-398.
78 Bean, Vol III, p. 174.
79 Bean Vol V, p. 23.
80 Bean, Vol III, p. 173.
81 ibid., p. 61.

Punishment

Discipline in the AIF is a subject all of its own. That the AIF needed some sort of establishment devoted to discipline and punishment is manifest in figures quoted by no less an authority than Bean. Bean notes that in the first six months of 1917, for example, out of 677 convictions for desertion in the entire BEF (62 divisions), 171 were from the five Australian divisions.[82] Similarly, records that in March 1918, 9 out of every 1,000 Australians were undergoing field imprisonment. This compared with 1 per 1,000 for the British Army and slightly less than 2 per 1,000 for the Canadians.[83] While the ultimate sanction of the death penalty was not an option in the AIF, a large number of Australians found guilty of both military and civil crimes, needed to be incarcerated during the war. Up until 1917, military offenders served their sentences in British establishments. But from 1917 onwards, members of the AIF in the UK and France and Belgium sentenced to a period of servitude in a military prison served their sentences in the AIF's very own prison, the AIF Detention Barracks at Lewes.[84] This establishment, presumably under the control of the Provost Marshal of AIF HQ, remained in existence until 1919.

Postal

Mail is very important to soldiers and this was recognised at the outset by the AIF. An Army Postal Service was set up in September 1914, drawn from volunteers with postal experience under the command of SSGT A.W. Ross. The original establishment was a field post office each for HQ 1st Division, 1st Light Horse Brigade, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Infantry Brigades and 1st Division Train. On arrival in Egypt, the FPO's began operating and not only delivered mail (arranged and shipped by the PMG back in Australia in unit lots) but also transacted the normal business of money orders, parcel post and registered mail.[85]

When it became apparent that the AIF would be committed to operations in the Middle East, base post offices were established at Cairo and Alexandria. SSGT Ross was commissioned lieutenant and appointed Assistant Director Army Postal Services AIF. The Gallipoli campaign overwhelmed the small AIF postal element and led to both an expansion of the postal staff and a reorganisation of the postal establishment. When the bulk of the AIF moved to France and the UK in 1916, the main Base Post Office was transferred from Cairo to Calais, a second one being later established in London. Mail for AIF units in the Middle East continued to be handled by the Base Post Office in Alexandria and a Field Post Office in Cairo.

On 10 March 1916 the Australian Postal Corps was formed and Captain C. Fisher was appointed Director of Postal Services AIF. The Corps was expanded by recruiting volunteers from the Post Master General's Department in Australia. As well as the field post offices organic to the corps and divisional headquarters and the brigade and divisional trains, members of the Postal Corps were included in the establishments of the Sea Transport Service, the Railhead Supply Detachment and the Corps and Divisional Supply Columns (see below). The Postal Corps remained active until the last members of the AIF returned to Australia but disappeared in the 1921 reorganisation of the Australian Army.[86]

---

82 Bean, Vol V, p. 28.
83 ibid., p. 30.
84 Mallett, op. it.
85 Lindsay, p. 338.
86 ibid., p. 339.

Support Units

Engineer

Most engineer units were divisional units and were combat as opposed to support units. There were, however, a number of corps and army level units raised during the war whose role was support rather than actual fighting.

Corps (Engineer) Signals. In the First World War, the Signal Corps as such did not exist but was a branch of the Engineers. While each of the infantry divisions on the Western Front had a Divisional Signal Company, the Australian Corps found that operational developments forced expansion of non-divisional signal assets.

I ANZAC Corps Wireless Section. I ANZAC Corps Wireless Section was formed in 1917 by the Australianisation of K Corps Wireless Section. This unit became Australian Corps Wireless Section in 1918. Its sister organisation, II ANZAC Corps Wireless Section, had been formed from Y Corps Wireless Section and in turn became XXII Corps Wireless Section when II ANZAC Corps was stripped of Australian units and personnel to become XXII Corps.[87]

Australian Corps Signal Company. The Australian Corps Signal Company was formed on 19 February 1918 from personnel drawn from divisional signal companies and I ANZAC Wireless Section. The main role of Australian Corps Signal Company was to provide communications support for corps and army level artillery.[88]

Corps Signal Sections. In additions to the Corps Signal Company, 1st and 2nd Airline Section and 1st and 2nd Cable Section were raised in March 1918 to provide "fixed communications" for Australian Corps.[89]

Pigeon Service. Finally, the AIF made use of pigeons for communications on the Western Front. While this use was not extensive, the number of pigeons employed by the AIF (on loan from the British Army) was sufficient to require the formation of I ANZAC Pigeon Lofts (later Australian Corps Pigeon Lofts) to manage them.[90]

Tunnelling Companies

1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Company of the Mining Battalion were formed in Australia in May 1916. The first three units became 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australian Tunnelling Companies in France in October 1916 with the dissolution of the Mining Battalion.[91] The 4th, 5th and 6th Companies were disbanded and absorbed into the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Tunnelling Companies respectively.[92] The tunnelling companies were employed on a variety of tasks including construction of fixed defences, draining of trench systems, construction of underground accommodation, storage and transport facilities, and mining and countermining tasks.

AE&MM&B Company

When the Mining Battalion was broken up and the tunnelling companies became independent units, it was seen that the battalion's electrical and mechanical elements were too valuable to disperse. They were therefore joined with the Mining Battalion's Boring Section to form the

---

87 Mallett, op. cit.
88 ibid.
89 ibid.
90 Barker, Theo, 1987 *Signals A History of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals 1788-1947*, pp. 67-68 and p. 87.
91 Bean, Vol III, pp. 560-561. See also Mallett.
92 ibid.

Australian Electrical and Mechanical Mining and Boring Company, the AE&MM&B Company. The company was responsible for installing and maintaining lighting and power plant, pumps and fans throughout the First and Second Army areas, for deep well boring in both forward and rear areas, and for shallow boring along the front. Little known by the rest of the AIF, the AE&MM&B Company unit acquired an awesome reputation for efficiency and reliability. In two and half years of service it earned one DSO, two MC's, 5 DCM's, 3 MM's and 15 MSM's.[93]

Engineer Workshops

From the very moment it arrived in France in 1916, the AIF recognised the need for specialised workshops to support engineer operations. I ANZAC Corps Workshops was formed in May 1916. With the creation of the Australian Corps, the unit became Australian Corps Workshops. The role of the unit was to maintain and repair engineer equipment for Corps and Divisional units.[94]

Army Troops Engineers

With the Corps and Divisional engineer units working to capacity, the AIF recognised the need for an "army level" engineer unit to support corps operations. 1st Army Troops Company was formed in July 1917 and provided engineer support to I ANZAC Corps and, from January 1918, Australian Corps.[95]

Topographical

The AIF was a late starter in the area of military map making, relying on BEF topographical resources instead. To be fair to the AIF and the Australian Army generally, the base of skilled personnel it could call on to form an AIF topographical units was miniscule, to say the least. Pressure on BEF resources and the subsequent inability of those resources to support I ANZAC Corps to a level acceptable to the Corps resulted in the formation of I ANZAC Corps Topographical Section on 5 February 1917. The Section was formed from serving members of the AIF with previous survey, mapping or drafting experience. With a strength of one officer and 12 other ranks, I ANZAC Corps Topographical Section became Australian Corps Topographical Section in January 1918. The fact that within the first month of its existence the Corps Topographical Section produced 17 different maps under very primitive conditions, shows how vital this small unit was to the Australian Corps.[96] Unfortunately, during its existence, the Corps Topographical Section was often distracted by arguments and internal squabbling over the enlistment and appointment of Permanent Force members of the Survey Corps to the AIF.[97]

Printing

Towards the end of 1915, AIF Headquarters in Cairo identified the need for a dedicated printing capability to produce forms, manuals and other documents for the AIF. In response to a request from AIF HQ, the Australian Government Printer selected seven members of his staff to form the AIF Printing Section. The senior member of the Section, the Works Foreman, was granted the rank of Warrant Officer. Under him were one sergeant and four corporal Compositors and one sergeant Machinist. The Section, complete with all machinery and equipment, was despatched from Melbourne on 29 January 1916. Shortly after arriving in Cairo, however, it was decided

93. McNicoll, Ronald, 1979 The Royal Australian Engineers 1902 to 1919 Making and Breaking, pp. 180-183.
94 Mallett, Bean and Mullet, op. cit.
95 ibid.
96 Coulthard-CLark, C.D., 2000 Australia's Military Mapmakers The Royal Australian Survey Corps 1915-96, pp. 34-38.
97 ibid.

that the Section was not needed as British military and local civilian resources could be better utilised. As a consequence, the AIF Printing Section was disbanded in May 1916 and the personnel returned to Australia for discharge.[98]

Medical

From a very small start, little more than the organic medical units of the 1st Division and 1st General Hospital, the AIF's medical establishment grew to a large and sophisticated organisation. Wherever possible, Australian casualties were treated in Australian hospitals by Australian staff.

General Hospitals. The General Hospitals were large base hospitals with 250, 500 or 1000 bed capacity. They also generally administered Auxiliary Hospitals. The AIF raised 17 General Hospitals but only the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 10th and 14th served overseas. The 10th General Hospital arrived in the UK on 29 September 1915, intended as a 500 bed hospital for the treatment of Australians in the UK. Unfortunately, a combination of a lack of accommodation and poor AIF medical administration saw the hospital broken up in October 1915 and its personnel used to staff Auxiliary Hospitals. Thus the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Generals Hospitals supported the AIF on the Western Front while the 14th General Hospital operated in Cairo (see below).[99]

Stationary Hospitals. These were smaller hospitals (up to 200 beds), generally based in forward areas. Only two Stationary Hospitals were raised, 1st Stationary Hospital originally served in the Middle East but was transferred to England in October 1916 and renamed 3rd Auxiliary Hospital. The 2nd Stationary Hospital served in the Middle East.[100]

Auxiliary Hospitals. These small hospitals, with no fixed establishment, were located in rear areas. Administered by General Hospitals, they were intended to take less serious cases and also to handle the overflow of casualties resulting from large operations. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Auxiliary Hospitals operated in England (all of them having been formed in Egypt in 1915 and redeployed to England in 1916). The 2nd Auxiliary Hospital specialised in treating amputees and fitting artificial limbs. In addition to the 1st - 6th Auxiliary Hospitals in England, 7th - 28th Auxiliary Hospitals operated in Australia.[101]

Casualty Clearing Stations. The CCS were small hospitals usually located at a railhead or other transportation hub in forward areas. Their role was to provide immediate treatment to stabilise wounded and then to arrange evacuation of casualties back to stationary and general hospitals. The CCS were regarded by medical and nursing staff as the posting of choice as this was where the best the staff were required. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd CCS all saw service in Egypt prior to moving to France in 1916.[102]

Convalescent Depots and Command Depots. Convalescent and later Command Depots were "half way houses" for casualties returning to the front. Men who no longer required hospitalisation but were as yet not fully fit for service. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Convalescent Depots were formed in Egypt in 1915 and transferred to the UK in 1916, at which time they were renamed Command Depots. The 4th and 5th Convalescent Depots were formed in the UK in early 1916. 4th Convalescent Depot was renamed 4th Command Depot in October 1916 while 5th Convalescent Depot was disbanded at the same time and its personnel absorbed into 1st

98 Mullett, Albert J., (by authority) 1917 Report on the Department of Defence From the 1st of July 1914, Until the Thirtieth of June 1917, p. 41.
99 Mallett op. cit. See also Bean, Mullett.
100 ibid.
101 ibid.
102 ibid.

Command Depot. Finally, a second unit entitled 1st Convalescent Depot was formed at Harfleur in April 1918 to provide convalescent care for men treated in hospitals in France and also to process men returning to the front from one of the Command Depots in England.

Infectious Diseases Hospitals. Infectious Diseases Hospital was a polite euphemism for venereal disease hospitals. The AIF raised six of these units, 1st Dermatological Hospital and 2nd and 3rd Infectious Diseases Hospitals in Egypt, while 4th, 5th and 6th Infectious Diseases Hospitals were located in Australia. 1st Dermatological Hospital was eventually transferred to England. Until quite late in the war, these units were little more than prisons where "patients" were kept under harsh and rigorous discipline and treated with a degree of institutional contempt that is difficult to grasp these days. Fortunately, later in the war a more humane and understanding approach was taken and the Infectious Diseases Hospitals became proper medical treatment facilities.

Hospital Ships. The 1st and 2nd Hospital Ships, HMAHS *Karoola* and *Kanowna* respectively, were taken up in 1915 (*Karoola*) and 1914 (*Kanowna* - as transport, became a hospital ship in 1915). Both had a capacity of approximately 450 patients and were employed on the transport of sick and wounded between England and Australia until the middle of 1919. In addition, *Kyarra* was requisitioned as a hospital ship in 1914 for the express purpose of transporting 1st and 2nd General Hospitals, 1st and 2nd Stationary Hospitals and 1st Casualty Clearing Station to Egypt. Following this she reverted to being a transport ship.

Sanitary Sections. The role of the Sanitary Sections was to police and enforce hygiene standards in the AIF. The 1st Sanitary Company was formed in May 1915 at Anzac using sanitary personnel from units deployed at Gallipoli. The Company then fought an unremitting war against rubbish, filth, disease and flies for the rest of the campaign. Following Gallipoli, the Sanitary Sections became divisional troops, with 1st Sanitary Company being broken up to provide personnel for 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Division Sanitary Sections. There was one non-divisional Sanitary Section, 6th Sanitary Section, which was formed at Tel El Kebir in Egypt on 13 March 1916 to serve as the sanitary section for the AIF Base. 6th Sanitary Section later moved to England and provided sanitary support for the AIF depots and units in England.[103]

Dental

The AIF did not consider dental treatment to be of importance at the outbreak of the war. Had it not been for the foresight and generosity of private dental practicioners, who provided their services (plus tools, dental supplies and equipment) free of charge at the beginning of the war, the AIF would have lost a number of potential recruits through dental deficiencies. Even so, the AIF proceeded overseas in 1914 with no dentists or dental mechanics. Officially at least - certainly there were a number of dentists and dental mechanics who enlisted in other units, medical or otherwise, and took their tools with them.[104] It took the Gallipoli campaign and the stark evidence of the debilitating effect of "dental casualties" on a fighting force to change the minds of the AIF medical hierarchy. The first 36 Dental Units were raised in Egypt from January to April 1916, formed from qualified dental personnel who were serving with other units.[105] The

---

103 ibid. see Bean, Vol III, p. 167 for details of difference in "sanitary philosophy" between the AIF and the BEF.

104 Including the author's grandfather, PTE H.J. Wilson, a Rockhampton dentist and a former Naval Reservist who had served with the AN&MEF in 1914. When he enlisted in the AIF in 1916, Henry James obviously decided that firing a Vickers was more exciting and interesting than pulling teeth, as he passed up the opportunity of a commission as a dentist and went overseas as a private with the 10th Machine Gun Company, eventually rising to the high and dizzy rank of Corporal! Family tradition holds that H.J. took the tools of his trade with him and made some extra money on the side via "trench dentistry."

105 Bean, Vol III, p. 43.

Dental Units were the smallest formed units of the AIF, consisting of just four men: one dentist (a lieutenant or captain), two dental mechanics (staff sergeants) and an orderly (private). There were also eventually senior dentists, majors and lieutenant colonels, serving as medical staff officers. Dental Units, of which there were eventually 118, were generally attached to base camps, hospitals and medical units.[106]

Veterinary

At any given time, the AIF had a need for about 37,000 horses to draw transport waggons, to haul guns, to provide mounts for the light horse, and for other specialised needs such as officers mounts and signal despatch purposes. It is not surprising, therefore, that the AIF had a large and sophisticated veterinary establishment. Most veterinary units, however, were "divisional units" in the form of Mobile Veterinary Sections (the AIF would eventually have ten of these units). Two special units formed in France, however, were the Veterinary Hospital and the Veterinary Evacuation Station.

Veterinary Hospital. The AIF never found the corps or army level veterinary support offered by the BEF to be wholly satisfactory and on 21 April 1917 formed the 1st Veterinary Hospital near Calais. The hospital was designed to treat sick and injured animals of I and II ANZAC Corps and later Australian Corps and was capable of treating and accommodating up to 1,250 sick or injured animals. Besides treating AIF horses and mules, the 1st Veterinary Hospital eventually undertook treatment of animals for nearby BEF units as well.[107]

Veterinary Evacuation Station. 1st Veterinary Evacuation Station was formed near Calais on 30 May 1918. The purpose of this unit was to arrange evacuation of sick and injured animals to large veterinary hospitals in France and England and also to act as a "veterinary convalescent depot" for 1st Veterinary Hospital.[108]

Salvage

Salvage became a pressing, almost manic, concern for both the AIF and BEF from early 1916. The role of salvage units was to recover stores, weapons and equipment from the battlefield, with an aim to reducing waste and saving valuable shipping space. Each of the infantry divisions raised a Salvage Section on arrival in France in 1916. These Sections were expanded into Salvage Companies, still subordinate to their parent divisions, in January 1917. This is an indication of how important salvage was to the AIF. In addition to the newly raised Divisional Salvage Companies, I and II ANZAC Corps Salvage Sections were raised on 10 January 1917.[109] II ANZAC Corps Salvage Section was disbanded in January 1918 and I ANZAC Corps Salvage Section became Australian Corps Salvage Section in March 1918.[110]

SUPPLY UNITS

One area in which the AIF experienced a relatively huge expansion was in the supply units, i.e. the units of the Army Service Corps. The tiny pre-war base of the Corps – a miniscule Permanent establishment (187 all ranks) and a not too much bigger Militia element (1137 all ranks)[111] – was totally inadequate for the needs of the expanding AIF, plus the remainder of the AMF. By the end of the war, a total of 95 units had been raised either in Australia or in the Middle East or

---

106 Mallett.
107 Mallett, op. cit.
108 ibid.
109 Bean, Vol III, p. 90.
110 Bean, Vol V, p. 688. See also Mallett.
111 Lindsay, op. cit. p. 27.

the UK.[112] The bulk of these units were divisional assets, part of the "Division Train", but a number of units were raised for Corps or higher service and a number of the divisional units late became Corps assets.

Army Service Corps Companies. The ASC Companies were the core of the ASC support element for a division, each division being allotted four companies on the basis of one for each infantry brigade and for the rest of the division.[113] However, for example, 8 and 9 ASC Companies provided the transport elements for the divisional Supply Columns and Ammunition Sub-Parks but later became Corps assets (see below). Similarly, 13, 19, 27 and 28 Companies were the parent units for the five Field Bakeries and five Field Butcheries.[114] From early 1917, however, these organizations were grouped together around Rouen under Corps management.[115]

Depot Units of Supply. Each division train included five Depot Units of Supply (DUS). These small units (1 officer, 1 warrant officer, 2 NCO's and 10 privates) were responsible for the receipt and distribution of supplies to divisional units, the theoretical disposition being one DUS for each infantry brigade, one for the division artillery and one for the remainder of the division.[116] With the later consolidation of the AIF divisions into one Corps, it was found that there was not enough work within the divisions for all of the DUS. Rather than disband units, however, the AIF loaned spare units to the BEF. Thus in March 1918 1 DUS operated as the 1st Army Purchasing Board, 5 DUS operated as (BEF) 4th Base Supply Depot and 19 DUS operated the 3rd BSD Forage Depot.[117]

Railhead Supply Section. The 1st Railway Supply Detachment had been raised in Egypt with a view to establishing a light rail system at Gallipoli, a largely abortive undertaking. The Section later came into its own in January 1916 when it was employed in providing rail support to the AIF units deployed in defence of the Suez canal.[118] Shortly after the Section deployed to the UK, it was converted into a Railhead Supply Section and allotted to I ANZAC Corps, its counterpart in II ANZAC Corps being a mixed (British) ASC/NZASC unit.[119] In March 1918 the unit became 1st Australian Railhead Supply Section, responsible for the receipt and distribution of all Australian Corps supplies at the railhead.[120] This was a particularly large task when it is considered that the strength of the unit was 3 officers, 11 NCO's and 10 privates (total 24).[121]

Sea Transport Service. The Sea Transport Service grew out of the Military Transport Office, established in 1914 to arrange and supervise the movement overseas of the 1st Division and support troops.[122] The Service became regularised in 1915 and was tasked with organising the transport overseas of new units, reinforcement drafts, horses, vehicles, equipment and supplies. The Service was also responsible for transporting wounded, sick, convalescent and other personnel returning to Australia.[123] With the expansion of the AIF in the UK and Europe, the role of the Sea Transport Service was expanded to include the receipt and storage and redirection of Australian supplies to AIF units. To facilitate this latter task, STS offices were established at

---

112 ibid., p. 36.
113 ibid.
114 ibid., p. 344.
115 ibid. See also Bean, Mallett and Mullett.
116 ibid., pp. 341-342.
117 ibid., pp. 220-221.
118 ibid., pp. 207-208.
119 ibid., p. 220.
120 ibid. 221.
121 ibid., p. 342.
122 Mullett, pp. 272-273.
123 ibid., p. 274.

Southampton and Harfleur.[124] Although responsible also for the transport of troops, horse and supplies to the Middle East, the STS did not have any offices established there, the AIF relying on an AASC staff officer attached to the British Sea Transport Office at Alexandria to oversee the receipt and distribution of AIF reinforcements and supplies.[125] A small organization, the Sea Transport Service was officer dominated although the "terminal function" performed at Southampton and Harfleur called for a small contingent of AASC WO's, NCO's and OR's. The establishment of the Australian Corps in December 1917 and subsequent reorganisation saw an almost total "Australianisation" of the supply function for the AIF with troops and supplies from Australia to the front.

Medical Supply Depot. The bulk of the AIF's medical equipment and supplies were manufactured in Australia and forwarded to the UK and Middle East via the Sea Transport Service. The relatively small amount of supplies for the Middle East were received, stored and managed by the 14th General Hospital in Cairo. For the far larger medical establishment in the UK and France, however, a small depot was established at Parkhouse in 1916, specifically to receive, store and issue medical supplies and equipment. Technically a Medical Corps unit, the Medical Supply Depot was almost totally manned and managed by the Army Service Corps.[126]

Dental Supply Depot. As with the supplies for the AAMC, a small depot was established at Parkhouse to receive, store and distribute supplies for the Dental Service. The Dental Supply Depot actually consisted of a couple of AASC NCO's attached to the 38th Dental Unit.[127]

TRANSPORT UNITS

At the start of the war transport of the AIF was almost totally horse drawn. Although this remained the case for the AIF in the Middle East until the end of the war, the AIF on the Western Front and in the UK saw a relatively huge increase in motorised transport by the last year of the war (although the AIF in England and France still remained heavily dependant on horsed transport right up until the end of the war). The maturing of the AIF also saw wide spread reorganisations of transport assets until, by the end of the war, on the Western Front at least, almost all transport was consolidated at Corps level.

The mix of mechanical and horse transport saw divisions of the AIF on the Western Front commanding ASC Companies (horse drawn transport), Divisional Supply Columns and Divisional Ammunition Sub-Parks. The latter two were both motor transport units with similar organizations but tasked with specific supply roles. The ASC Companies remained generally divisional units and will not be considered further.

Supply Columns. Each infantry Divisional Train included a Divisional Supply Column consisting of 263 officers, WO's, Senior NCO's and enlisted men and equipped with 61 motor vehicles and with an attached Workshop of 24 personnel.[128] The Supply Column was supposedly specifically tasked with the carriage of rations, stores and personnel but in reality it was usually employed on general transport tasks including support for engineer construction.[129]

Ammunition Sub-Parks. The Divisional Ammunition Sub-Park had a strength of 175 all ranks, was equipped with 48 motor vehicles and had an attached Workshop of 12 personnel. As with the Supply Column, the Ammunition Sub-Park was supposedly a commodity specific transport

---

124 ibid., pp. 275-276. See also Lindsay p. 35 & 221.
125 ibid., p. 278
126 ibid., pp. 195-196. See also Mallett and Lindsay.
127 ibid., p. 196.
128 Lindsay, pp. 330-331.
129 ibid.

unit, theoretically responsible only for the transport and delivery of ammunition. Again, however, operational exigencies and imperatives saw these units often employed on general transport tasks.[130]

Ammunition Sub-Park Sections. When the 3rd, 6th and 12th (Army) Field Artillery Brigades were raised by the AIF in April 1917, the 3rd, 6th and 12th Ammunition Sub-Park Sections were raised in order to make the Brigades independent.[131]

Corps Supply Columns. A decision was made in January 1917 to centralise all motor transport at Corps level. As a first step in this process, K (I ANZAC) and Y (II ANZAC) Corps Supply Columns were formed at Rouen. Essentially HQ units, the Corps Supply Columns did not actually have any units under direct command, their staff being responsible for managing the divisional motor transport assets. Y Corps Supply Column was a mixed unit made up of ASC, AASC and NZASC personnel.[132]

Corps Ammunition Sub-Parks. At the same time as the Corps Supply Columns were formed, K and Y Corps Ammunition Sub-Parks were raised. Again, these small, essentially HQ units did not actually have units under command, being responsible simply for the tasking of the Ammunition Sub-Parks and later the Sub-Park Sections.[133]

Motor Transport Companies. The maturation of the motor transport of the AIF final began to take shape with the arrival of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Auxiliary Motor Transport (MT) Companies from Australia in March 1917. The arrival of these units, which were immediately broken up, enabled the final complete motorisation of the Supply Columns and Ammunition Sub-Parks of the AIF (1st Auxiliary MT Company became 2nd Division Supply Column, 2nd Auxiliary MT Company became 5th Division Supply Column and 3rd Auxiliary MT Company became 5th Division Ammunition Sub-Park).[134] The demise of I and II ANZAC Corps and the creation of the Australian Corps in January 1918 was the final impetus for the reorganisation of the motor transport of the AIF. K and Y Corps Supply Columns and Ammunition Sub-Parks, 3rd, 6th and 12th (Army) Ammunition Sub-Park Sections and the divisional Supply Columns and Ammunition Sub-Parks were all disbanded in March 1918. The men, vehicles and equipment of the disbanded units were used to form six Motor Transport Companies, each with a strength of 323 all ranks, 97 motor vehicles and an attached 36 man Workshop. Centrally commanded and controlled by the Corps MT Officer (subordinate to the AD S&T Australian Corps), 1st – 5th MT Companies were assigned to 1st – 5th Divisions respectively with 6th MT Company being assigned to Corps support.[135] Better late than never, the centralisation and rationalisation of motor transport saw a marked increase in the efficiency and availability of the MT units for the final months of the war.

Railway Operating Companies. During the Gallipoli campaign, 11 ASC Company raised 1st Tramway Detachment from personnel with railway experience. The Detachment was tasked with establishing a light railway to facilitate movement of supplies on the Peninsular but this task was not completed at the time of the evacuation in December 1915, the Detachment then being disbanded.[136]

In December 1916, I ANZAC Light Railways was formed in France from qualified personnel drawn from Engineer and Army Service Corps units. The unit was born out of a desperate need

130 ibid.
131 Mallett, op. cit.
132 Lindsay, op. cit. p. 35. See also Mallett.
133 ibid.
134 ibid.
135 ibid.
136 ibid., p. 209.

to ease the burden on the limited surviving road networks during the Battle of Flers. Commanded by a former senior officer of the NSW Railways, I ANZAC Light Railways established and operasted a broad gauge rail line from Fricourt to the Quarry Dump near Montauban. A branch line was then constructed running north as far as Longueval and then on to Delville Wood. Ultimately smaller branch lines reached into the rear areas of each of the Corps divisions, allowing the divisions to be resupplied totally by rail, thus freeing up the divisional transport for other tasks.[137]

In the meantime, desperately short of trained railwaymen, the British government in the second half of 1916 requested suitable personnel from Australia. In the face of a reinforcement crisis, the Australian Government at first declined the request but reconsidered when the British Government pressed the issue and "sweetened the pot" by offering to completely equip the Australian railway units and agreeing to accept men below physical standard. Response from the various State railway authorities for volunteers was so successful that in the end the AIF was able to form a Railway Operating Group of six companies.[138] Units arrived in England one at a time over a period of seven months and were processed through the Australian Railway Troops Depot at Longmoor.[139] From Longmoor the units moved intact to France where they were issued with equipment at Rouen and put to work.

Originally the units raised in Australia were titled "Section(s), Australian Railway Troops." 1st Section arrived in England in April 1917 and was immediately re-designated 60th Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company. It commenced operations in France on 14 April 1917. 2nd Section arrived in France in May 1917, being retitled 55th Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company in April 1917 and then 15th Light Railway Operating Company in August 1917. 3rd Section arrived in France in May 1917, becoming 59th Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company. 4th Section reached France in September 1917 and became 35th Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company. 5th Section arrived in France in October 1917, having been re-titled 16th Light Railway Operating Company. Finally, I ANZAC Light Railways was re-titled 17th Anzac Light Railway Operating Company in June 1917. The strength of the companies was 3 officers and 266 WO's, NCO's and sappers (54 locomotive maintenance men; 19 station-masters, traffic controllers and clerks; and 193 running staff).[140]

With the formation of the Australian Corps in January 1918, the decision was made to bring the Australian railway units together under Australian command. HQ Australian Railway Group was formed at Rouen on 24 February 1918. At the same time the six companies were re-numbered 1st Light Railway (former 15th), 2nd Light Railway (former 16th), 3rd Light Railway (former 17th Anzac), 4th Broad Gauge Railway (former 35th), 5th Broad Gauge Railway (former 59th) and 6th Broad Gauge Railway (former 60th) Operating Companies.[141]

Remount Unit. Although as discussed above the AIF became a steadily more mechanised force as the war went on, even at the end of the war it remained heavily dependant on horses and mules. This was especially so in the Middle East where the level of mechanisation in the AIF formations was negligible at best.

Horses for the Light Horse and other units in the Middle East, although supplied from Australia, were originally processed by British remount units in Egypt. Although Colonel Selhheim as commander of the AIF Intermediate Base had requested and received permission in late 1914 to

---

137 Bean, Vol III, pp. 923-924.
138 ibid., pp. 182-183. See also Mallett.
139 Longmoor was and still is the home of British military rail transport.
140 Bean, op. cit.
141 Bean, Vol VI, p. 1064. See also Mallett.

establish an Australian remount depot, this did not materialise.[142] The 1st and 2nd Remount Units were raised in Australia (largely from overage men, many of them Boer War veterans) in September 1915. On arrival in Egypt, the units faced an immediate reorganisation. 2nd Remount Unit was disbanded, some men going to the 1st Remount Unit, those suitable for operational service transferred to other units and the rest were returned to Australia. 1st Remount Unit became the four-squadron 1st Remount Section, strength later being reduced to two squadrons. In September 1916, the unit was for a short time re-named 1st Remount Unit and then on 2 October 1916 was re-named the AIF Remount Depot.[143] One of the more notable members of the Remount Depot was Major A.B. (Banjo) Paterson, who was a squadron commander with first the Remount Unit and then the Depot.

Remounts for the AIF in the UK and on the Western Front were processed by British remount units.

Ordnance

The Australian Army Ordnance Corps had been formed in great haste in 1914, largely by recruiting men from the civilian Army Ordnance Department.[144] Mostly employed at divisional and brigade level, the AAOC formed two specialist types of unit late in the war, Ammunition Units and Mobile Workshops.

Ammunition Units. The AAOC formed the 1st and 2nd Ammunition Unit in July 1918. The role of these units was to examine, inspect and where necessary destroy or return weapons and ammunition found to be defective. (This role continues today in the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps in the form of the Ammunition Technical Officers).

Workshops. In 1918 the Australian Corps was supported by no less than eight British Ordnance Workshops. From September 1918 Australians began being posted to these units. In November 1918, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australian Mobile Workshops (Medium) were formed by "Australianising" the 2nd, 17th and 22nd (British) Mobile Workshops. The establishment of a Mobile Workshop was 10 officers and 270 other ranks.[145]

Conclusion

From the most humble beginnings, the support, logistic and administrative units of the AIF developed into a large and sophisticated organisation, capable of sustaining the AIF overseas and the Australian Corps in the field.

---oOo---

Bibliography

Anonymous, 1917 *Anzac Memorial,* The Returned Soldiers Association, Sydney

Barker, Theo, 1987 *Signals A History of the Royal Australian Corps of Signals 1788-1947,* The Royal Australian Corps of Signals Committee, Canberra

Bean, C.E.W., *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol I & II, The Story of Anzac, Vol III to VI, The AIF In France 1916,* Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney

Coulthard-CLark, C.D., 2000 *Australia's Military Mapmakers The Royal Australian Survey Corps 1915-96,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne

Fairclough, Colonel H., ED 1962 *Equal to the Task Par Oneri The History of the Royal Australian Army Service Corps,* F.W. Cheshire Pty Ltd, Melbourne

Gullett, H.S., 1923 *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Vol VII, Sinai and Palestine,* Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney

142 Lindsay, op. cit. p. 348.
143 ibid. See also Mallett.
144 Tillbrook, J D To the Warrior His Arms A History of the Ordnance Services in the Australian Army, pp. 84-85.
145 ibid. See also Mallett.

Lindsay, Neville, 1991 *Equal to the Task Volume I The Royal Australian Army Service Corps,* Historia Publications, Kenmore

Macksey, Kenneth, 1989 *For Want of a Nail The Impact on War of Logistics and Communications,* Brassey's (UK) Ltd, London

Mallett, Ross, 1999 *Australian Imperial Force Order of Battle,* Australian Defence Force Academy University College (UNSW), Canberra

McNicoll, Ronald, 1979 *The Royal Australian Engineers 1902 to 1919 Making and Breaking,* The Corps Committed of the Royal Australian Engineers, Canberra

Mullett, Albert J., (by authority) 1917 *Report on the Department of Defence From the 1st of July 1914, Until the Thirtieth of June 1917,* Australian Government Printer, Melbourne

Scott, Ernest, 1936 *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, Volume XI, Australia During the War,* Angus and Robertson Ltd., Sydney

Tillbrook, J.D., 1989 *To the Warrior His Arms A History of the Ordnance Services in the Australian Army,* Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps Committee, Canberra

---oOo---

Members Requests

From Richard Johnston, WA Branch

Information on the whereabouts of a WWI Victory Medal inscribed 1646 Pte H. J. Donegan, 51st Battalion AIF and/or Death Plaque named to Herbert James Donegan. Please contact Richard Johnston on (08) 9364 8216 or e-mail Richard_Johnston@optusnet.com.au

From Tan Roberts, Society Research Officer

I am writing to request the help of any members with an interest in 55th Infantry Battalion, 1st AIF or in the other battalions of 14th Brigade during service on the Western Front in WWI.

Mr Norman Clarke of Bowral, NSW is the son of a member of 3rd Bn AIF who later went on to serve in France with 55th Bn. He wrote to "Army" Newspaper in October 2002 seeking information on any publications on 55th Bn. I replied to his letter on behalf of the Society, pointing out that there is, so far as I know, no published history of 55 Bn. I drew his attention to the histories of 53rd Bn ("The Whale Oil Guards") and of 56th Battalion and to the 1920s publication of a history of 5th Division by Captain Ellis. I also mentioned Bean Volume VI, which has a good description of 55th Bn's attack on the Hindenburg line in September 1918.

Mr Clarke has asked that I inquire through Sabretache's letters column for any further information on 55th Bn, particularly published records or reminiscences that members of the Society may have or know about. Mr Clarke's contact details are:

Mr N Clarke
P O Box 327
BOWRAL NSW 2576
Telephone: 02 4878 9406

SYNOPSIS: THE ORGANISATION OF THE IMPERIAL CAMEL BRIGADE, 1916-1918

Colonel Jim Underwood (Retd)

The complete paper which covers the raising, evolving structure, detailed establishments and disbanding of the Imperial Camel Brigade will appear in a forthcoming "Sabretache".

The 1st Brigade, Imperial Camel Corps – more commonly known as the Imperial Camel Brigade – was raised on 13 December 1916, under the command of Brigadier General Clement Leslie Smith VC MC. The Brigade concentrated at Mazar on the north coast of the Sinai Peninsula on 19 December, and on the following day advanced to El Arish where it was attached to the Anzac Mounted Division. The Brigade received its baptism of fire at the Battle of Madghaba on 23 December 1916 – only four days after it concentrated and 10 days after being raised.

The initial organisation of the Brigade is shown below:

Brigade Headquarters
1st (Anzac) Camel Battalion
2nd (Imperial) Camel Battalion
3rd (Anzac) Camel Battalion
No 1 Mountain Battery, Hong Kong & Singapore, Royal Garrison Artillery
26th (Camel) Machine Gun Squadron, Machine Gun Corps
Section, 2/1st (Cheshire) Field Company Territorial Force (TF) Royal Engineers
Signal Section, Royal Engineers
Wireless Section, Royal Engineers
Section, 1/1st Welsh Field Ambulance TF
Detachment, Army Service Corps
Detachment, Camel Transport Corps
Detachment, Egyptian Labour Corps

The strength of the Brigade was approximately 2,800. It was capable of putting into the firing line, after providing "camel holders": 1,800 rifles, 36 Lewis light machine guns, eight Maxim machine guns and six 10 pounder pack mountain guns.

The main combat elements of the Brigade – the Camel Battalions – were formed from the independent Camel Companies that had been raised from January 1916 onwards to combat the pro-Turkish Senussi tribesmen who were threatening the Nile Valley from the Libyan Desert. During its existence, the Imperial Camel Corps raised 18 Camel Companies – 10 Australian, six British and two New Zealand.

In the first half of 1917, the Imperial Camel Brigade was significantly augmented. A fourth Camel Battalion – the 4th (Anzac) Camel Battalion – was raised. (However, one battalion was usually rested in the Suez Canal Defences while three battalions were deployed forward.) The Mountain Battery received improved mountain guns. The Machine Gun Squadron was re-titled 265th Machine Gun Company and it received new Vickers medium machine guns to replace its obsolescent Maxim guns. The Section 2/1st (Cheshire) Field Company (TF) was replaced by the specially organised 10th (Camel) Field Troop, Royal Engineers. The Section 1/1st Welsh Field Ambulance (TF) was initially replaced by the 1/1st Scottish Horse Mounted Field Ambulance (TF). This unit in turn was replaced by the newly formed Australian Camel Field Ambulance.

The Imperial Camel Brigade Signal Section replaced the earlier expedient wireless and signals sections. Two new units joined the Brigade: the Imperial Camel Corps Mobile Veterinary Section and the Imperial Camel Brigade Ordnance Section. Finally, the ad hoc detachments of the Army Service Corps, Camel Transport Corps and Egyptian Labour Corps were replaced by properly constituted units.

By mid-1918, the British advance into Palestine had moved into country which was increasingly unsuitable for camel operations. (The rugged nature of the Judean Hills and the cold, wet winter of 1917/1918 caused an excessive number of camel casualties.) In early June 1918, the decision was taken to convert the Australian and New Zealand camel infantry to horsed units. Subsequently, personnel from the 1st Camel Battalion were used to form the 14th Australian Light Horse Regiment; while the 3rd Camel Battalion formed the 15th Australian Light Horse Regiment. These two Regiments together with a French colonial cavalry regiment – *Regiment Mixte de Marche de Cavalrie* – were the main combat units of the newly raised 5th Australian Light Horse Brigade. Personnel from the 4th Camel Battalion were used to bolster the two Light Horse Regiments as a number of personnel from the 1st and 3rd Camel Battalions returned to their original units. The two New Zealand camel companies were used to raise the 2nd New Zealand Machine Gun Squadron which supported the 5th Light Horse Brigade. At the same time, the Australian Camel Field Ambulance was converted to a mounted brigade field ambulance and re-titled the 5th Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance, also supporting the 5th Light Horse Brigade.

The six British camel companies were retained until 1919, mainly for patrolling the lines of communication and the Sinai Peninsula. Two British companies were detached to the Hejaz from July to September 1918 to support Colonel T. E. Lawrence's Arab army in its attacks against the Damascus-Medina railway east of Aqaba. The last two British companies were not disbanded until June 1919; however, personnel strengths were progressively run down.

The Imperial Camel Brigade was an ephemeral but hard fighting formation. During the 18 months of its existence it suffered 345 fatalities; significantly higher than any of the other mounted brigades in Palestine during this period of the war.

---oOo---

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Tom Corfinat, Secretary Victorian Colonial Infantry Association Inc.

I refer to the article "One Hundred Years Ago - Development of The Colonial Military Forces in New South Wales 1854-1903" by Dr J K Haken. (*Sabretache* December 2001) On page 35, Dr Haken states "Just before Federation, the University Volunteer Rifle Corps ... was raised. ... and is the oldest of the University regiments in Australia." His reference was the NSW Government Gazette 14 Dec 1900.

The Melbourne University Company was first gazetted in the Victorian Government Gazette of 20 Jun 1884. According to Festberg, Lineage of the Australian Army both the Melbourne and Sydney University Regiments were disbanded in 1942 and raised again in 1946. As the Melbourne University Company (later Regiment) was raised 16 years before the Sydney University unit, I would argue that it is the oldest.

Please keep the articles about the pre-federation armies of Australia coming.

More Letters to Editor see page 75

Obituary - Major General R L Hughes CBE DSO

17 September 1920 - 2 February 2003

`We did what we had to do'. It was difficult to get Major General Ronald Hughes to say much more about his military life.

His distinguished service began with his entry to the Royal Military College, Duntroon on 1 March 1937. Officially it ended on his retirement from the Australian Regular Army in 1977 but he spent the twenty-six years that followed helping individuals and organizations that valued his military experience.

His young brother Jim, also a retired Major General, described Ron's principal attributes as integrity, loyalty, self-discipline and a gift for teamwork. Those of us who served under his command would add ` tolerance'. He valued the points of view of his subordinates. He listened, made a decision and then saw a task through with the minimum of drama. On active service the lives of his soldiers were of primary concern to him.

As an infantry officer he had wide-ranging experiences during the Second World War in regimental, staff, and training positions. He was a platoon commander with the Darwin Mobile Force (Permanent Army) during 1940. In 1943 he took part, as Liaison Officer in an amphibious landing at Nassau Bay, New Guinea with United States forces. By 1944 he was a company commander in the 2/3rd Infantry Battalion in New Guinea and in 1945 he was involved in another amphibious landing at Tarakan in Borneo with the 26`h Australian Infantry Brigade. On the cessation of hostilities he went to Tokyo with the Australian Military Mission to plan the occupation of Japan.

Post war he commanded the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (2RAR) at Puckapunyal, Victoria. The Battalion at this point was training officers and soldiers for the war in Korea, a demanding task. Ron's wife Joan contributed greatly by her support for the families of the soldiers and in organising comfort parcels for the soldiers in Korea.

In July 1952 Ron became the Commanding Officer of 3RAR in Korea and for his leadership in that theatre he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. He was in Korea during a static phase of the war and he recognised the value of active patrolling but he was also aware of its dangers. He was concerned about several orders from higher command to patrol and `capture a prisoner'. `An operation to be avoided if possible' was his later comment. He was too loyal to say more.

In 1967/68 he commanded with distinction the First Australian Task Force in South Vietnam and he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for this service. Napoleon held that `the first qualification (of a leader) is to possess a cool head'. Brigadier Hughes amply demonstrated that he could keep a cool head in South Vietnam, most particularly during the Tet Offensive in 1968. He was always aware of the dangers of operating in minefields and during the action of two of his battalions in the Long Hai Hills, he successfully resisted the pressure from higher command to speed up the movement of the infantry and mine-clearing engineers.

His subsequent Army service after the Vietnam War included commanding the Ist Division which meant that over the span of his military. career he had commanded a platoon, a company, a battalion, a brigade (Task Force) and a division. In addition to his command experiences he had an excellent record as a staff officer.

After retirement he chaired the RSL National Appeals Tribunal, the RSL Committee for the Ageing and he was a Trustee of the Changi Chapel. Major General Peter Phillips, National

President of the RSL, sees him as having been 'a mentor to four RSL National Presidents'. He was active in the United Service Institution and the Military History Society of Australia. He travelled right round Australia with Joan for six months with a caravan. He visited Gallipoli and Palestine where his father had fought as a Light Horseman in World War I. He was a dedicated gardener, tennis player and above all a devoted family man.

Perhaps his finest characteristic was the ability he had to get on exceptionally well with his colleagues. He will be remembered as a man who cared for others, a quiet gentleman, a good soldier and a close friend of many people.

J J Shelton

The appointment of Lieutenant-General Squires (cont)

appointment of General Squires in the following year. The prickly relationship between the Military Board and successive Defence Ministers, played into the hands of Shedden as Secretary of the Department of Defence. Although charged with administering and maintaining the Australian Army, a decade of reduced budgets, and a near sighted vision of future defence needs by Governments, placed the Board in an impossible position. Opportunities to influence defence policy dissipated due to the uneasy relationship between Lavarack and Shedden.

The appointment of Squires was an attempt by Shedden and the Government to circumvent a critical Military Board and seek ideas from a fresh 'untainted' source. This paper has briefly covered the turmoil created by civilian and political intrusion into the administration of the Army, and the problems which arose largely from the clash of personal egos during a period in which the Government, Military Board and the Department of Defence should have been working to a common goal, that of the defence of Australia. Whether or not intrusion by civilian defence bureaucrats into the areas of military planning and defence policy, prior to the outbreak of war in 1939 was appropriate, remains a matter of debate. Interestingly, a recent article by Brigadier Wallace in the *Defender*, in which he claims that 'the frustration of serving in a structure that subordinates professional military advice to amateur civilian opinion should not be underestimated', suggest that such problems remain today!

---oOo---

Further reading:

R Austin. *A Soldier's Soldier The Life of Lt-Gen Sir Carl Jess*. Slouch Hat Publications, McCrae, 2001.
D Homer. *Defence Supremo* Allen the Unwin St Leonards, 2000.
Brig J Wallace. 'Reforming Defence', *Defender*, Winter 2002.

Letters to the Editor (cont)
From Neville Foldi, Fadden ACT

Reading the most informative contribution by Peter Shaw in the December 2002 issue awoke an issue that has troubled me for some time. That is the ultimate fate of "laid up" Colours being in a museum.

From my experience, admittedly many years ago, new Colours on presentation were consecrated, often at a "drum head" ceremony. On being laid up they were then lodged in an appropriate church. I remember admiring the blackened and tattered Colours of the Guards Regiments which fought at Waterloo. To my mind laid up Colours are not appropriate museum exhibits but should remain in church. I may be out of touch and welcome other views.