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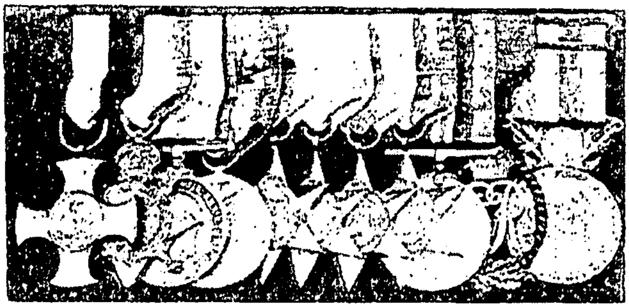
PO Box 5030, Garran, ACT 2605.
email: webmaster@mhsa.org.au

THE MIDSHIPMAN WHO CHANGED THE COURSE OF THE GALLIPOLI CAMPAIGN

John Meyers



The Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum in Queensland was recently fortunate enough to acquire the Great War Distinguished Service Cross medal group of 11 awarded to Midshipman (later Captain) J S Metcalf, RNR. Metcalf was inadvertently responsible for changing the direction of the picket boats that were towing the row boats ashore at Anzac Cove with 1500 Australians on board from the 9th 10th and 11th Battalions of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, who were the covering force at the initial landing at 4.30 am on Sunday, 25 April 1915.

John Savile Metcalf, who was born in December 1895 and educated at Carlisle Grammar School in England, was apprenticed to the Runciman Line in 1910. He gained appointment as a Third Officer about the time of the outbreak of hostilities in August 1914. Mobilized in his capacity as a midshipman in the Royal Naval Reserve, his first seagoing appointment was on the battleship *Triumph* in the Dardanelles. It was for his subsequent gallantry in command of one of her picket boats in the landings on 24-25 April, receiving a severe wound in his right forearm, that he was awarded the DSC and a "mention" (*London Gazette* 16 August 1915).

During the landing, the *Triumph* was sent ahead by Admiral Thursby after the squadron had sailed from Mudros, to act as 'marking ship' off Gaba Tepe and to assist with covering fire for the troops going ashore. The *Triumph* supplied two power boats for the landing : a picket boat – Midshipman John Metcalf, No. 2 tow of troops from the Queen and a steam pinnace, No. 11 tow, Midshipman Fred Garner, with soldiers from the London. These two young officers were told that the Queen's picket boat, No. 1 tow, would have a commissioned officer on board (Lieutenant-Commander J B Waterlow) who would act as 'guide' of the flotilla and would know where to go.

The original plan stated that the Covering Force of 1500 was to be landed from the following battleships: *Queen* (flagship), A & B Companies, 9th (Queensland) Battalion, tow numbers 1 to 4; *Prince of Wales*, B & C Coys, 10th (South Aust) Bn, tows 5 to 8; London, A & C Coys, 11th (West Aust) Bn, tows 9 to 12. The Force would be landed in 12 tows, covering a frontage of about 1.6 kilometres. Also, they were to land about two kilometres south of the actual landing at Ari Burnu (Bee Point), at the reasonably flat country north of Gaba Tepe, named Brighton Beach. The rest of the 3rd Infantry Brigade was to follow in destroyers and be landed by the returning tows. As soon as the bridge-head was secure, the rest of the Australian & New Zealand Army Corps was to arrive in transports at scheduled intervals and unload, as soon as possible, guns, ammunition, stores (including water), horses, mules, donkeys and all the implements of war.

Metcalf later described his part in the landings in the book "Gallipoli", by Eric Bush. (Bush was a fifteen year old Midshipman in charge of one of the tows and was the youngest ever recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross. He served in both WW1 and WW2 in the Royal Navy. As well as the DSC for Gallipoli, he was decorated with the Distinguished Service Order with two bars during WW2).

Metcalf's description follows:

> On reaching the rendezvous our two power boats were hoisted out and we lay off waiting for the battleships to arrive. When they showed up, we went over to our parent ships, picked up our tows and took up our appointed stations for the run in. The big ships were moving very slowly ahead. I kept No. 1 tow in sight.
>
> Before long an officer with a megaphone on the bridge of the Queen hailed me, "Go ahead, picket boat!" I immediately ordered an increase of revolutions and stand by for full speed. I kept my eyes on No 1 tow, the guide boat, ready to keep station on her as she forged ahead.
>
> A minute or two later an angry shout was addressed to me from the bridge of the Queen: "Picket boat, will you go ahead!" It sounded as though I was being accused of cowardice. I ordered "full speed ahead!" and away we went.
>
> I soon lost sight of the Queen and of her No.1 tow, though I could still see No.3 tow off my port beam and presumed that all the other tows were in line abreast to port of her.
>
> At the first light of dawn I realized we were heading for the beach just north of Gaba Tepe (the correct one), which I knew to be well fortified, as we in the Triumph had often been close to it and from my action station in the spotting top, I had seen the headland time and time again. My immediate thoughts were that we were too far south. The troops and the boats would be lost by a murderous enfilading (right flank) fire as we passed, so I hauled away from it to the northward as much as I dared, without crossing the bows of No. 3 tow. A few minutes later when the other tows to port had conformed, it appeared to me that we were still going too near Gaba Tepe and again I altered course away from it. Eventually we landed south of Ari Burnu, with No. 3 tow only a few yards away on my port side.

(Other records show that he changed direction to port by two points (22 ½ degrees) and again by 1 ½ points (nearly 17 degrees). These are quite significant changes over a distance of less than three kilometres)

Major Salisbury, the OC of B Coy, 9th Battalion who was in the extreme right-hand tow, says:

> The naval officer (Lt-Comd. Waterlow) guiding the tows was in the picket boat of my tow. Apparently he was steering the right course for Gaba Tepe, for somewhat more than half way in to shore the rest of the tows had sagged away to the north and were out of sight. Some of the picket boats were smaller than the others and perhaps could not keep their loads up against the current setting north. Our tow was behind a large picket boat and when the rest of the tows got out of sight to the north we turned north until we steamed across the sterns of the other tows with the naval officer apparently counting them. We then turned south to get back to our place on the right, but very soon the shore could be seen, so the picket boat drew up into position as third tow instead of first, thus sandwiching half of B Coy into A Coy.

Due to Metcalf's losing contact with the No.1 guiding tow and turning to port, the result was that ten of the tows ended up in a cluster at Ari Burnu point and tows 11 and 12 ended up on North Beach directly opposite the current Anzac Day ceremony location in front of the Sphinx.

It is a well known fact that this error understandably caused a major crisis. Not only were they in the wrong location but battalions and companies were mixed up and many groups started chasing Turks to their immediate front instead of obeying their original orders.

There is still conjecture as to whether landing at the original planned site on Brighton beach would have prevented the loss of so many men on Day 1 and subsequent days or otherwise.

t is interesting to note that neither General Ian Hamilton, Commander-in-Chief of /lediterranean Expeditionary Force [MEF], nor Lieutenant-General Birdwood, Commander of he Anzacs, ever took the Navy to task over this major blunder and the Navy was quite happy to eave sleeping dogs lie. Admiral Thursby wrote in a report on the 28th April that 'The landing ;ad taken place practically as arranged, our right flank being only a few hundred yards (metres) o the north of its assigned position. This proved afterwards to be an advantage, as it was found mpossible to advance from the open beach and our troops had to close in, to get the protection ıf the high ground.'

'his was an amazing statement, when the error exceeded 1.6 kilometres and when the majority ıf the troops never had a chance to advance from any open beach!

\s mentioned earlier, Midshipman Metcalf was wounded during the landings and was evacuated o a hospital in Alexandria, a fortuitous move, for a few weeks later the *Triumph* was torpedoed .nd sunk off the Anzac coast with significant loss of life. Back home by September 1915, he oined the destroyer *Faulknor* and was present on her at Jutland in the following year, ıarticularly her close encounter with the SMS *Grosser Hurfurst*. After passing down the German ine and delivering a torpedo attack, *Faulknor* then engaged the German ship with her 4-inch ;uns. Having then been unable to take up Jellicoe's personal offer of a commission in the Royal lavy, on financial grounds, he served on several more destroyers before the end of the war, ımong them *Saumarez* (December 1916 to May 1917), *Seal*, as "Jimmy the One" (May to)ctober 1917), and *Ettrick* (March to December 1918).

/letcalf was demobilized as a lieutenant in June 1919. Qualifying for his Master's Ticket in the ame year, he joined the Orient Line and was still serving in that capacity on the renewal of ıostilities in 1939. In the interim he had been awarded the Spanish Lifeboat Society's Gallantry /ledal in 1927, the RNR Decoration in 1928 and was promoted to Commander, RNR in 1934.

\ppointed to the command of the Orient Line's *Ormonde* in the spring of 1940, he gave ıssistance at the evacuation of British troops at Narvik and St. Nazaire in 1940, his ship being epeatedly attacked on the latter occasion 'By his skilful manoeuvres he dodged the bombs and anded the troops safely in England'. In the following month, the Admiralty appointed him Commodore of East Coast Convoys at Southend, followed by a similar appointment in *Lady 3lanche* at Liverpool. Then in 1942 he was placed in charge of auxiliary patrols at Scapa Flow, vhere he volunteered for "Force X", a dummy convoy designed to draw *Tirpitz* away from 'O17. However, his ships 'were blanketed in fog which shrouded them so completely from]erman reconnaissance that their attempts to lure the *Tirpitz* after them were rendered entirely ıseless'.

n late 1942, Metcalf was appointed Commodore of Atlantic Convoys at Belfast and in October .943 he went to America to take command of the aircraft carrier HMS *Ranee* which he sailed for he Indian Ocean in the New Year. Having then handed over the *Ranee* to Rear-Admiral ;ebastian in May 1944 and promoted to Captain, he attended a net-laying course at Rosyth and ook command of the *Guardian*. He was present on her at the signing of the Japanese surrender n Hong Kong in September 1945.

Released from the Royal Naval Reserve in March 1946, Metcalf was employed at the Admiralty n the 1950s in connection with the Royal Naval Mine Watching Service until his retirement. He lied in January 1975, aged 79 years.

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Eric Bush. *Gallipoli*, 1975

Norman Harvey. *From Anzac to the Hindenburg Line*, 1941

Dix Noonan & Webb, *Research information*, 2007

MOUNTED TROOPS AT BATTLE OF BEERSHEBA

Roslyn King Pike Shepherd*

ıccording to Gullett it was only 'after a moment's thought'[1] that General Chauvel ordered a ıounted infantry unit; the 4th Light Horse Brigade to charge in cavalry style the well entrenched nemy position east of Beersheba. Did three months of planning and preparations by experienced avalry commanders really come down to a desperate last minute decision or was it a carefully ırepared attack employing proven strategy which had been carefully planned down to the last ıetail? This approach to the problem is based on an appreciation of the importance of the ıperation to the war in general and a detailed investigation of the deployments made during the ıattle as described by historians and units' war diaries. The activities of the 4th Light Horse 3rigade are then compared with several strategies described by Sun–tzu in his *The Art of War*[2] n an attempt to uncover a more rigorous understanding of the attack.

3y early in 1917 the Prime Minister of England needed a victory following the succession of ailures on the Western front, to galvanise the sorely tested public to endure a longer war.

> The spring campaign of 1917 had been bitterly disappointing for the Allies. Russia had collapsed, the great French offensive in Champagne had been a demoralising failure, and the submarine warfare was causing the gravest anxiety. The United States had, indeed, just entered the war, but it would be long before their military help could become effective. All hope of ending the war in 1917 was gone. The Premier[3] believed, rightly or wrongly, that some striking military success was needed to sustain, in this fourth year of war, the endurance of the civil population. It was this belief that prompted him to say to General Allenby before his departure to Egypt that 'he wanted Jerusalem as a Christmas present for the British nation.' This same conviction was repeated in a telegram sent to General Allenby in August, in which he was instructed to press the Turks in order, among other reasons, 'to strengthen the staying power and morale of this country.'[4]

Although the decision to invade Palestine was politically driven it was more than a public ·elations exercise:

> There were also very sound strategical reasons for striking a blow on the Palestine front at this time. The collapse of Russia had set free numerous Turkish forces, and it was known that these were being assembled round Aleppo, under German guidance and leadership, for the recapture of Baghdad.[5] The threat thus offered to the Mesopotamian sector of the battle line could be more quickly and economically countered by an offensive in Palestine than by the direct reinforcement of General Maude's army ... Thus General Allenby's main strategical objective was the defeat of the Turkish

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* Roslyn King Pike Shepherd is a qualified teacher and musicologist working as a cataloguer in historical society museums in Victoria; for a an extended period as an art librarian in a fine arts departmental library and more recently as a casual school teacher. In 2002 she began researching the campaigns of the 3rd and 4th Light Horse Brigades in particular their supply sections from 1916 to 1919.

1 H.S. Gullett, The Australian Imperial Force in Sinai and Palestine 1914–1918 Vol. VII of Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18, by C.E.W. Bean (Sydney: Angus & Robinson, 1941 & 1984) AWM copy on web: 393

2 Ralph D. Sawyer & Mei-chun Lee Sawyer, Sun Tzu The Art of War translated with introductions and commentary (Oxford, Westview Press, 1994)

3 Mr. Lloyd George

4 Field Marshal Earl Wavell, The Palestine Campaigns, A Short History of the British Army Series (London: Constable & Co., 1968): 96

5 Baghdad fell to the British on 11 March 1917 see Field Marshal Lord Carver The National Army Museum Book of the Turkish Front 1914–18 The Campaigns at Gallipoli, in Mesopotamia and in Palestine, Pan Grand Strategy Series (London: Pan Macmillan Ltd 2004): 174–5

> army in Southern Palestine in order to draw down the Turkish reserves from Aleppo, and so to remove the danger of an expedition against Baghdad.6

For the offensive General Allenby was given almost all the resources he requested, and he was given time; from the middle of June to the end of October 1917 to develop plans and complete preparations for the attack on the Gaza–Beersheba line and the advance north. Since the First Battle for Gaza in March 1917 that town had become impregnable and an attack on Beersheba appeared the only possible way forward.

> From Gaza the Turkish defences stretched nineteen miles to Hureira and Qawuka, astride the railway, with every advantage of observation over the long bare slopes which an attacker must cross ... Beyond this main position, after a gap of some eight miles, the Beersheba defences were less developed, especially on the east of the town, where the waterless nature of the country and its lack of roads, minimized the threat of a British attack. The stronger positions lay to the west and south–west of Beersheba.7

'The XXI Army Corps, under General Bulfin – 52nd, 54th, 75th Divisions' 8 with the Imperial Service Cavalry Brigade (Jodhpur, Mysore, and Hyderabad Lancers)9 was given the job of demonstrating in front of Gaza while 'The XX Army Corps, under General Chetwode – 10th, 53rd, 60th, 74th Divisions' 10 'was not to capture Beersheba ... The role of this Corps was to pin the main garrison firmly down ' 11 by attacking the west and south west trenches.

'The Desert Mounted Corps, under General Chauvel, consisted of the Anzac, Australian and Yeomanry Mounted Divisions' 12 was assigned the task of taking the town and the several redoubts and associated trenches all bristling with artillery and machine guns, which covered the open ground to the east and south east of Beersheba. Massey provides the following details of the Corps:

Anzac Mounted Division

1st A.L.H. Bde	2nd A.L.H. Bde	N.Z. Mtd. Rifles Bde
1st A.L.H. Regt	5th A.L.H. Regt	Auckland M. Rifles
2nd A.L.H. Regt	6th A.L.H. Regt	Canterbury M. Rifles
3rd A.L.H. Regt	7th A.L.H. Regt	Wellington M. Rifles

Australian Mounted Division

3rd L.H. Brigade	4th L.H. Brigade	5th Mtd. Brigade
8th A.L.H. Regt	4th A.L.H. Regt	1/1st Warwick Yeo
9th "	11th "	1/1st Gloucester Yeo
10th "	12th "	1/1st Worcester Yeo

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6 Wavell: 96–7
7 Hill, A. J., Chauvel of the Light Horse A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel, GCMG, KCB (Melbourne University Press, 1978): 120
8 Wavell: 101
9 Historical Section Committee of Imperial Defence Great Britain, Major–General Sir L.J. Blenkinsop & Lieut.–Colonel J.W. Rainey (eds), History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: Veterinary Services (London: H.M. Stationers, 1925): 200
10 Wavell: 101
11 E.G. Keogh, Suez to Aleppo (Melbourne: Directorate of Military Training 1955): 153
12 Wavell: 101

Yeomanry Mounted Division

6th Mtd. Brigade	8th Mtd. Brigade	22nd Mtd. Brigade
1/1st Bucks Hussars Yeo	1/1st City of London Yeo	1/1st Lincolnshire
1/1st Berkshire Yeo	1/1st Co. of London Yeo	1/1st Staffordshire
1/1st Dorset Yeo	1/3rd Co. of London Yeo	1/1st E. Riding

7th Mounted Brigade (attached Desert Corps).

1/1st Sherwood Rangers. 1/1st South Notts Hussars.

Imperial Camel Brigade. 13

The Anzac Mounted Division's three brigades began the attack on the redoubt at Tel el Sakaty which covered the road north to Jerusalem via Hebron and the rear of the main redoubt at Tel el Saba. 'The safety of Beersheba against attack from the east and south–east hinged mainly on a strong redoubt on Tel el Saba ... 3 miles due east of the town.' 14 They were reinforced by one brigade of the Australian Mounted Division; the 3rd Light Horse Brigade during the day. A third redoubt to the south of the town at Ras Ghannam covered the same open ground to the east of the town but from the opposite direction and created the possibility for a deadly cross fire. The 7th Mounted Brigade was placed near the Asluj road south of Ras Ghannam with the 8th Light Horse Regiment on their right flank.

The 'Yeomanry Mounted Division was on the west side of the wadi Ghuzze in G.H.Q. reserve.' 15 and the War Diary of the 1/1st Dorset Yeomanry Regiment, 6th Mounted Brigade documents their move from Marakeb on the Mediterranean coast inland the day before the battle:

23 to 29/10/17	Remained in bivouac Marakeb
30	Marakeb – Shellal. 16

From Shellal the Yeomanry Mounted Division could watch the gap between the 21st Corps at Gaza and the 20th Corps at Beersheba in case enemy cavalry attempted a breakthrough or outflanking movement. The War Diary of the 6th Mounted Brigade notes on '1 November 0400 Marched to E. bank of Wadi Ghuzze in support of 22nd MB Remained in reserve all day.' 17 They stayed in the area until 5 November when they accompanied their Division to Beersheba.

> Chauvel decided to keep his two veteran divisions, knowing that he could rely on them to reach their positions across unknown country by night and on time; the yeomanry he detached for the covering role. 18

Not because of any reticence suggested by Gullett, 'Before Beersheba all, or nearly all, the British cavalry leaders had a deep respect for the Turks in position.' 19 but rather because General Chauvel knew the Australian and Anzac Mounted Divisions extremely well. He commanded the Anzac Mounted Division in 1916 when it consisted of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigades with the 5th Mounted Brigade, Imperial Camel Corps Brigade and 52nd Infantry Division attached, which had successfully fought its way

13 William T. Massey, How Jerusalem Was Won Being the Record of Allenby's Campaign in Palestine, (London: 1919, www Project Gutenberg EBook # 10098): Appendix V

14 Gullett: 387

15 Massey 1919: Chapter 7 para 10

16 1/1st Dorset Yeomanry Regiment, 6th Mounted Brigade Yeomanry Mounted Division War Diary Vol 29 National Archives Kew: WO95/4506

17 6th Mounted Brigade Headquarters YMD War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4506

18 Hill: 123

19 Gullett: 403

across Sinai. He also knew of the 11th Light Horse Regiment having been a member of its founding unit in his youth20 and he also knew of the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments which both saw service at Gallipoli and in defence of the Suez Canal before reforming into the 4th Light Horse Brigade in time for the Second Battle for Gaza.

The 20th Corps had one cavalry regiment; the 1/2nd County of London Yeomanry Regiment operating east of the Wadi Ghuzzeh which saw action on the right flank of that Corps on both sides of the Khalasa Road and in the vicinity of the Wadi Na'an capturing Hill 1070.21 And the only other cavalry; the 5th and 7th Mounted Brigades were both ordered to support the charge of the 4th Light Horse Brigade:

> The remaining brigade of the Australian Division, the 5th Mounted Brigade, was ordered to follow the 4th ALH Brigade in support. The 7th Mounted Brigade south of the town had also been ordered to advance mounted.22

The 7th Mounted Brigade had two regiments; the 1/1st South Notts Hussars and the 1/1st Nottinghamshire Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry which had been about the Asluj Road south of Point 1180 and Ras Ghannam for most of the day when they were ordered to join Australian Mounted Division and half an hour later to advance and support the 4th LH Brigade:

> 1500 Bde came under orders GOC Ausdiv & orders were received to move NE & cooperate in attack on SABA.23
>
> 1530 Bde pushed forward to Pt 1180 & on receipt of orders to support vigorously left flank of 4th ALH Bde SRY attack enemy position at Ras Ghamman under covering fire of Essex RHA from Pt 1180.24

But according to the 1/1st Nottinghamshire Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry Regiment War Diary they neither supported the 'left flank of 4th LHB' nor did they attack Ras Gannam until one hour and 40 minutes later with only one squadron of their own and one of the South Notts Hussars [SNH] which arrived at Ras Ghannam at ten minutes past five o'clock:

> 1600 Orders were received to cooperate in an attack on Beersheba by the Australian Division. The Regiment pushed forward and the leadingSquadron (c) with Squadron SNH at 1710 galloped Ras Gaannam. The Turks fled without firing a shot. The rest of the Regiment occupied the trenches east of Ras Gaannam.25

According to the 11th Light Horse Regiment War Diary the Turks' retirement from Ras Ghannam took place 'At 1650 the enemy were seen to be evacuating Ras Ghannam' 26 approximately twenty minutes after the charge of the 4th Light Horse Brigade began and twenty minutes before the 7th Mounted Brigade 'galloped' Ras Ghannam.

The 7th Mounted Brigade Headquarters War diary states:

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20 General Chauvel, Forward to History of the 11th Light Horse Regiment Fourth Light Horse Brigade Australian Imperial Forces War 1914-1919 by Ernest W. Hammond (Brisbane: William Brooks & Co. 1942)

21 1/2nd County of London Yeomanry Regiment War Diary Report to Headquarters 20th Corps 14/11/17 by 'W. Morrison Bell, Lieut-Col. Commdg. XXth Corps Cavalry' NA Kew: WO 95/4484 WD717 3 pages

22 Wavell: 123 and Hill: 127 whose note claims four brigades in the attack

23 'Saba' could refer to the wadi or the town which was also known as 'Bir Saba' see 4th LHB War Diary Secret Special Instructions issued with Brigade Order No. 21 of 30/6/17 or to Tel el Saba but by 3 pm the fight there was over.

24 7th Mounted Brigade Headquarters War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4405

25 1/1st Nottinghamshire Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry Regiment 7th MB War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4405

26 11th Light Horse Regiment 4th LH Brigade AMD War Diary AWM: 4-10-16-25 Appendix XV

1700 Position captured & consolidated covering left flank of 4th ALH Bde

2030 Objective reached watered bivouacked near Railway Bridge Casualties 1 officer ... SNH wounded right leg at Ras Ghamman.27

But by 5 pm the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade was three or four miles away from the 7th Mounted Brigade in Beersheba and any consolidation with its left flank could not be achieved until the 7th Mounted Brigade marched in to the town between 8.30 pm and 11 pm. The War Diary of the 1/1st Nottinghamshire Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry Regiment confirms:

> Information was received that the 4 ALH Bde had penetrated into Beersheba. The 7th Mtd Bde marched down the Asluj road into the town meeting no opposition. They watered there about 2300 hours, horses being 30 hours without water.28

The second cavalry brigade ordered to support the charge; the 5th Mounted Brigade had been at Iswaiwin east of Beersheba all day in Desert Mounted Corps reserve:

> 5. (b) (iii) 5th Mounted Brigade will be Corps Reserve and will follow the remainder of the Division as far as Iswaiwin.29

This is confirmed by the War Diary of the 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment, 'The 5th Mtd Bde were Corps Reserve for the day.' 30 According to the War Diary of the 5th Mounted Brigade Headquarters, only one of its regiments; the 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry was ordered to support the charge not the whole brigade as suggested by Wavell and Hill:

> At 1400 Warwick Yeo was detailed to support Gen'l Grant 4th ALH Bde in attack on Beersheba.31

The early time of 2 pm is curious as it would place the order well before the fall of Tel el Saba and one hour before the meeting at Corps Headquarters:

> At that time (about 3 o'clock) Hodgson, together with Grant of the 4th Light Horse Brigade and FitzGerald of the 5th Mounted (Yeomanry) Brigade, was at Chauvel's headquarters.32

Both 4th Light Horse and 5th Mounted Brigade commanders probably received their orders from General Hodgson commander of the Australian Mounted Division at that time. However, it took one and one quarter hours for the 5th Mounted Brigade to communicate the order to the Warwickshire Regiment, 'At 1615 an order was received for the Regiment to act as support to the 4th ALH Brigade.' 33 The delay was costly and prevented them from getting organised and into position during the one and one half hours it took Grant to gather up the 4th and 12th Light Horse Regiments, which 'as a precaution against bombing, were scattered over a wide area in single troops' 34 and commence the charge. The 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment were too late and the order 'was subsequently cancelled' 35 at ten minutes to five o'clock. The cancellation is confirmed by the 5th Mounted Brigade Headquarters War Diary but neither war dairy gives any details of when that occurred. However, both the timing of the cancellation and that only one regiment of 5th Mounted Brigade was ordered forward, are confirmed by the 11th Light Horse

27 7th Mounted Brigade Headquarters War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4405
28 1/1st Nottinghamshire Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry Regiment 7th MB War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4405
29 Australian Mounted Division Administrative Instructions, Divisional Orders, Reports various Operations & Intelligence Summaries 1916, 1917,1918: Preliminary Instructions No. 1: AWM 25 455/6
30 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment 5th MB, AMD War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4565
31 5th Mounted Brigade Headquarters AMD War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4565
32 Gullett: 393
33 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment 5th MB AMD AWM War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4565
34 Gullett: 394
35 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment 5th MB AMD AWM War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4565

Regiment War Diary which reproduces the order, was also sent to 4th Light Horse and 5th Mounted Brigades:

> At 1650 I received a message from Australian Mtd Division reading as follows: – Reference No. GK 30 '11th Light Horse Regt. will forthwith join 4th LH Bde instead of Regiment 5th Mtd. Bde aaa Latter will rejoin 5th Mtd Bde forthwith aaa addt. 11th LH Regt 5th Mtd Bde 4th LH Bde.' 36

The 11th Light Horse Regiment took the place of the 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment which moved back to 5th Mounted Brigade twenty minutes after the charge began and the subsequent movements of the 5th Mounted Brigade, AMD are described in the war diaries except the 1st Royal Gloucestershire Hussars,37 which has nothing for that regiment's movements on the day. The 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment's War Diary rather confusingly describes them supporting the charge but not:

> The attack commenced about 1000 & by 1630 the place with all surrounding positions had been captured. The 5th Mtd Bde were Corps Reserve for the day. At 1615 an order was received for the Regiment to act as support to the 4th ALH Brigade who were completing the capture. The Brigade galloped the few remaining defences of the town and captured numerous prisoners. This order was subsequently cancelled and the Regiment then proceeded to water ... (signed) F.A. Wrak St A/Adjt 1/1 Warwick Yeomanry.38

And according to the 1/1 Worcestershire Yeomanry Regiment they were saddled and ready at 4 pm:

> 1600 saddled up & proceeded to water 1700 watered at Hannam and returned to Isweiwin until 2100.39

And the 5th Mounted Brigade Headquarters War Diary confirms:

> At 1400 Warwick Yeo was detailed to support Gen'l Grant 4th ALH Bde in attack on Beersheba. This was cancelled and Brigade proceeded to water at Bir Hamam and Bir Imshash ... At 2000 the Brigade marched to Beersheba and found it occupied by 4th ALH Bde.40

Although the 5th and 7th Mounted Brigades were at the time of the charge under orders of General Hodgson, Australian Mounted Division both brigades, according to their complex and confusing war diaries experienced problems associated with orders being received, passed on and put into effect. But their late arrival in Beersheba that night must have been noted by all and may well have been accompanied by mutterings of 'gone to water'. There is no mention of the commanders of the 5th and 7th Mounted Brigade receiving any sanctions despite their several failures.

The 4th Light Horse Brigade according to Gullett, received the order to charge only because they were nearer the town:

> Grant's Australians had only their rifles and bayonets, but they were nearer Beersheba. After a moment's thought, Chauvel gave the lead to the light horsemen. "Put Grant straight at it," was his terse command to Hodgson; and Grant, swinging on to his horse, galloped away to prepare and assemble his regiments.41

Hill also suggests the decision was based on proximity; 'Which brigade – the Englishmen, with their swords, or the Australians, who were nearer?' 42 Gullett claims, 'FitzGerald's yeomanry had

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36 11th Light Horse Regiment 4th LHB AMD War Diary AWM: 4–10–16–25 E52/29–E52/30
37 1st Royal Gloucestershire Hussars 5th MB AMD NA WO95/4565 Vol. 27
38 1/1 Warwickshire Yeomanry Regiment 5th MB AMD War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4565
39 1/1 Worcestershire Yeomanry Regiment, 5th MB AMD War Diary NA Kew: WO95/4566
40 5th Mounted Brigade Headquarters AMD NA Kew WO95/4565
41 Gullett: 393
42 Hill: 127

their swords and were close behind Chauvel's headquarters' 43 but Hill maintains, 'Grant's 4th LH Brigade was dispersed close to Corps HQ while Fitzgerald's 5th Yeomanry were similarly dispersed a mile back from Khashim Zanna.' 44 Hill is worried 'with Allenby's plans and his own [Chauvel's] in disarray ... that Chetwode, whose objectives had been captured, might rush some of his own troops into the town ... [that he] 'Put Grant straight at it.' 45

But from his commanding position at headquarters General Chauvel could see the entire battlefield:

> Chauvel established his HQ about four miles from Beersheba on a hill called Khashim Zanna which gave him, in his own words, 'a dress circle view of the whole show.' 46

He would have been able to follow the movements of most of his troops and been aware how the attacks on Tel el Sakaty and Tel el Saba progressed and that the 5th and 7th Mounted Brigades did not move as ordered while he waited for the charge by 4th Light Horse Brigade. Gullett describes a different General Chauvel far from Hill's almost panicked character:

> This [Beersheba] has sometimes been referred to as the critical fight of Chauvel's career. But the Australian leader has confessed that he was far more anxious during the morning of the Turks' attack at Romani than while waiting for Grant's throw at Beersheba.47

At Romani General Chauvel had every reason to be concerned as the action had been planned on the assumption that he would have command of his Anzac Mounted Division. But General Lawrence, based at Kantara had taken over command of two of his brigades and General Chauvel was dependant on poor communications with General Lawrence many miles away from the action to know when the right time was to send in the crucial reinforcements; the 3rd Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigades to support the gallant but sagging and seriously depleted 1st and 2nd Light Horse Brigades and stop the enemy advance.48

But at Beersheba General Chauvel was in charge of Desert Mounted Corps and had ordered the deployments and agreed on the strategy and the timing and he knew that if there were no followers, no mounted brigades to support the charge of his mounted infantry, he knew he could depend on the 4th Light Horse Brigade and his troops had every reason to be confident of his proven abilities:

> Yesterday we were inspected by General Chauvel ... We were all pleased to see him as he is well liked by both officers and men. A chap feels pretty safe with a leader like him. I saw him riding backwards and forwards under heavy fire at Romani and Bir–el–Abd and it seemed that he did not know what danger was. Now that he is back we don't think it will be long before we are at the Turks again.49

General Chauvel had commanded the brilliantly successful Anzac Mounted Division as it advanced across the Sinai pushing the enemy back at every sticking point:

> Murray lavished praise on the Anzacs [Anzac Mounted Division] ... 'Every day they show what an indispensable part of my forces they are'; 'I cannot speak too highly of the gallantry, steadfastness and

43 Gullett: 393
44 Hill: 127
45 Hill: 127 cites 'HC to Gullett Notes on Chapter XXIII, Sinai and Palestine p. 381'
46 Hill: 126
47 Gullet: 402
48 see Battle of Romani in Powles, C. Guy, Lieut.–Colonel. CMG, DSO, The New Zealanders in Sinai and Palestine Volume III Official History New Zealand's Effort in the Great War, (Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin and Wellington: Whitcombe & Tombs Ltd 1922) He served as Brigade Major NZMR Brigade 1914–16; AA & QMG Anzac Mounted Division 1916–18.
49 Trooper Ingham, just before the Battle for Rafa from an unidentified newspaper cutting, Scrapbrook No. 2, CP in Hill: 86

untiring energy shown by this fine division throughout the operations'; 'These Anzac troops are the keystone of the defence of Egypt.' [50]

General Chauvel also enjoyed the confidence of his commander General Allenby; they were both experienced cavalry officers who had seen service during the Boer War in South Africa, 'with Field–Marshal Lord Roberts on the 100 mile trek to Kimberley and on to Bloemfontein[51] and taken part in Lord Roberts' advance from Bloemfontein to Pretoria in May 1900.[52]

More recently General Allenby 'was admired for his leadership of the cavalry division which had covered the retreat of the British Expeditionary Force from Mons in the early days of the war.' [53] and prior to taking up his appointment in Palestine, 'General Sir Edmund Allenby, the commander of the Third Army in France, ... had just won a striking victory at Arras.' [54]

These two great cavalry commanders knew better than to leave major decisions about a crucially important battle to the last minute. The key strategy was made known and steps taken to implement it five days before the battle in the unsigned fragment of the Australian Mounted Division's Commander General Hodgson's Secret *Preliminary Instructions No. 1* marked 'GS Copy No. 2 SR/462' by hand and stamped 'Australian Mounted Division Headquarters 26 Oct 1917.' This Instruction recognises the opportunities for mounted attack and puts forward the idea of employing bayonets as swords.

> 12 (a) (i) It is to be noticed that the country is built for mounted action, whereas any dismounted attack is handicapped for want of cover.
>
> The Divisional Commander hopes that all Brigades will endeavour to profit by their knowledge of these facts.
>
> (ii) To manoeuvre an attack mounted an arme–blanche weapon is necessary. The Divisional Commander suggests that the bayonet is equally as good as the sword, if used as a sword for pointing only; it has the same moral effect as a sword, as it glitters in the sun and the difference could not be detected by the enemy.[55]

Further several aspects of the unorthodox charge implemented during the battle by Generals Allenby and Chauvel can be found in the writings of Sun–tzu an ancient Chinese military tactician. A translation, introduction and commentary on Sun–tzu's *The Art of War,* notes that 'the Sung *Seven Military Classics* edition, which has been historically available and influential for nine centuries' [56] has also been accessible to Europeans for two hundred years. 'Sun-tzu's *Military Strategy*, traditionally known as the *Art of War*, has received much exposure in the West. First translated by a French missionary roughly two hundred years ago' [57] the influential concepts and strategies had time to find their way into western military literature which Generals Allenby, Chetwode and Chauvel studied.

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50 Hill: 95
51 Hill: 20–1
52 A.B. Paterson Happy Despatches setis.library.usyd.edu.au/ozlit Chapter XVI Lord Allenby (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934): 188 The advance is described in Anon, Mounted Service Manual for Mounted Troops of the Australian Commonwealth (Sydney: Government Printer, 1902): 344–5 and 3 maps
53 Keogh: 133
54 Wavell: 91–2
55 Secret Preliminary Instructions No. 1 AMD Admin AWM 25 455/6: 4 also described in some detail by Hill: 125
56 Sawyer: 23
57 Sawyer: 79

The first aspect was simply that the 4th Light Horse Brigade, following orders rested out of sight all day.58 The brigade had only been seen in battle at the Second Gaza and the enemy were probably unaware a mounted infantry brigade was in the area. Sawyers explains:

> No doubt realizing that any action will elicit a response and that remaining invisible is impossible, Sun-tzu advanced a theory of what might best be summarized as the 'deceptive and formless.' While unstated in the *Art of War*, obviously the best way to be unfathomable – that is, to be formless – is to display false appearances to the enemy. By integrating these two principles, a foe can be manipulated and vital secrecy preserved.59

Secondly as the day wore on the Australian troops would have become increasingly keen to get involved in the action, to get it over with, to take their part in the battle. Their pent up energy can be recognised as Sawyer explains the Shih Strategic Configuration of Power:

> Sun-tzu sought to maneuver the army into a position where it enjoyed such great tactical advantage that the impact of its attack, the impulse of its 'strategic configuration of power' (*shih*), would be like the sudden onrush of water cascading from mountain peaks. Deploying the troops into a suitable configuration (*hsing*); creating a favourable 'imbalance of power' (*ch'uan*).60

And the charge by fresh troops late in the day certainly resembled this description of tremendous potential energy unleashed against the weary defenders who had been engaged all day actively fighting and defending the town.

The third aspect; the timing of the charge seems to incorporate the following strategy described in *The Art of War*:

> Sun-tzu's principle for striking the enemy when their *ch'i* had abated: 'The *ch'i* of the Three Armies can be snatched away, the commanding general's mind can be seized. For this reason in the morning their *ch'i* is ardent; during the day their *ch'i* becomes indolent; at dusk their *ch'i* is exhausted. Thus one who excels at employing the army avoids their ardent *ch'i*, and strikes when it is indolent or exhausted. This is the way to maniplulate *ch'i*.' 61

Further the employment of orthodox and unorthodox strategies during the Battle for Beersheba reflect these opposites as described in Sun–tzu's Strategic Military Power:

> In general, in battle one engages with the orthodox and gains victory through the unorthodox. Thus one who excels at sending forth the unorthodox is as inexhaustible as Heaven, as unlimited as the Yangtze and Yellow rivers.62

Sawyers provides the following elaboration:

> in essence 'orthodox' tactics include employing troops in the normal, conventional, 'by the book' expected ways, such as massive frontal assaults, while stressing order and deliberate movement. 'Unorthodox' tactics are primarily realized through employing forces, especially flexible ones, in imaginative, unconventional, unexpected ways ... Their definition is of course dependent upon normal expectation within a particular battlefield context, as well as the enemy's actual anticipations, and therefore they are mutually defining, mutually transforming, and circular in essence.63

At Beersheba the battle began with the orthodox deployment of the 20th Infantry Corps and the Anzac Mounted Division; the infantry divisions of foot soldiers attacking from the south west had the shorter distance to cover and moved into positions in front of the town while the two

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58 4th LH Bde War Diary Page 58 Vol. I signed by Bde Major
59 Sawyer: 138
60 Sawyer: 145
61 Sawyer: 118
62 Sawyer: 187
63 Sawyer: 148

mounted divisions with some 30 miles' distance to travel circled round to the far side of Beersheba. There were no surprises here for the enemy defenders, they had seen these deployments before and would not have been unduly worried. Similar moves had been made at the Battle of Magdhaba, the Battle of Rafa and the First Battle for Gaza; at Magdhaba by troops on camels instead of infantry:

> General Chaytor with his own brigade [New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade] and the 3rd LH Brigade was given orders to move on Magdhaba by the north and north–east and to endeavour to cut off all retreat. The camels advanced straight on Magdhaba.64

And at Rafa/El Magruntein:

> The battle of Rafa took the same course as that of Maghdaba – the long night approach,65 the contact at dawn, the closing in during the forenoon, the determined attack in the afternoon and the surrender at dusk.66

And at the First Gaza:

> the Anzac Mounted Division encircled Gaza and cut off all retreat of the garrison, the enemy's reinforcing troops from Huj and from the Beersheba railway line were successfully held off; and the infantry, aided by the New Zealanders, captured Ali Muntar and all the principal defences of Gaza; yet the town, twenty four hours afterwards was still in the hands of the Turks.67

On 31 October 1917 at Beersheba the enemy expected another advance under fire similar to that described by Gullett during the attack at Tel el Saba:

> At 1 pm Cox ordered the 2nd Light Horse Regiment in from the south on the left of the 3rd, and they advanced at the gallop until they reached a zone of heavy fire, when their dismounting afforded a pretty example of light horse work at its best. So rapidly were the galloping horses checked, cleared, and rushed back by the horseholders, and so quickly did the dismounted men resume their advance on foot, that the Turks, under the impression that the regiment had retired on the horses, shelled the galloping animals, while for a time the riflemen were not fired upon.68

Thus far the battle for Beersheba had been fought in an orthodox way but everything changed at 4.30 pm with the unorthodox move of the mounted infantry force. The deployment of the 4th Light Horse Brigade was completely unexpected; the tired enemy was caught off guard by the pent up force of the Light Horsemen as they erupted from nowhere just as the sun was setting. Further the charge by the 12th Light Horse Regiment failed to stop and rode home in conventional cavalry style despite being armed with hand held bayonets.

A History of the 4th Light Horse Brigade describes the effect of the charge:

> The rapidity of the attack seemed to demoralised the enemy as they mostly fired high, and it was afterwards found that the sights of their rifles were never lowered below 800 metres. The enemy Artillery was also unable to estimate the pace, and the shells all went over the heads of the advancing troops.69

Keogh confirms:

> Rifles examined after the action showed that even the infantry had failed to lower their sights below 800 yards. Consequently most of the fire at the shorter and more dangerous ranges passed overhead.

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64 Powles: 51
65 A thirty–mile ride according to Powles: 66–7
66 Powles: 69
67 Powles: 87–8
68 Gullett: 391
69 History of 4th Light Horse Brigade AWM 224 MS 28: 8–9

> The brigade had only 64 casualties,70 and most of these were sustained in the hand–to–hand fighting in the trenches.71

The Turks were surprised by the 4th Light Horse Brigade, but probably not because they mistook bayonets for swords as General Hodgson suggested.72 The enemy had plenty of time to correctly identified bayonets in the hands of the mounted infantry as they rode towards them with the setting sun in the Australians' faces and their armaments easily recognisable. But the enemy expected the attackers to dismount at some stage; possibly around 800 meters/yards where there may have been a suitable dip which could give some protection for the horses. So the defenders waited for the charge to halt, for the men to leave their horses with the horseholders and continue the charge on foot in the usual manner. That they failed to stop probably would not have registered with the defenders for some time as they continued to labour under their wrong anticipation, and the charge could have gone some considerable distance past their mark before they started to appreciate the unorthodox nature of the attack, but by then the advantage had already tipped in favour of the attacking force. Victory was gained because the defenders were taken completely by surprise and failed to react in time to the unorthodox deployment. The charge was completely unorthodox and completely victorious.

> A German staff officer captured in Beersheba said that, when the 4th Brigade was seen to move, its advance had been taken for a mere demonstration. 'We did not believe,' he said, 'that the charge would be pushed home. That seemed an impossible intention. I have heard a great deal of the fighting quality of Australian soldiers. They are not soldiers at all; they are madmen.' 73

Had the 4th Light Horse Brigade been armed with swords or had a cavalry brigade been sent to charge the town in an orthodox cavalry attack, there is every reason to believe the gun sights would have been adjusted and deadly effective firing continued. A little more than one week later on 8 November 1917 an enemy rearguard position consisting of artillery and infantry was gallantly galloped at Huj by two squadrons and four troops of the 5th Mounted Brigade. They were conventionally armed and behaved as cavalry were expected.

> They now came under fire from the infantry escort. The leading squadron of the Worcestershires charged and dispersed this infantry, and then turned and rode in at the guns from the flank. Meanwhile the squadron of the Warwickshires, supported by the remaining two troops of the Worcestershires, rode straight at the guns and at the machine guns which covered them. The remaining two troops of Warwickshires charged some Turks seen withdrawing from the position. All three attacks rode home. Eleven guns, four machine guns and about seventy prisoners were taken, and a large number of the personnel of the batteries – Germans and Austrians besides Turks – who all stood to their guns to the last, were killed with the sword. The casualties of the Yeomanry were, however, extremely high. Of twelve officers, the three squadron commanders were killed and six others wounded; of 158 men, [*sic*] 26 were killed and 40 wounded; of 170 horses, 100 were killed.74

But Gullett's claim, that:

> From then to the end of the war the Turks never forgot Beersheba; their cavalry, always shy of the light horsemen, from that hour practically faded out of the war, so afraid were they of a blow from these reckless men who had ridden their big horses over strongly armed entrenchments; and the

70 On the basis the composition of a Light Horse Brigade (war establishment) of 3 regiments equalled 1,743 troopers [Mounted Service Manual MT 1902 p.10] and the War Diary 12th LHR for 4/8/17 states 'Daily Strength 25 officers, 485 other ranks.' So it can be assumed about 1000 took part in the charge and the 4th LHB War Diary records 35 killed and 39 wounded.

71 Keogh: 156

72 AMD Admin Preliminary Instructions No. 1: 4 AWM 25 455/6: 4

73 Gullett: 404

74 Wavell: 147

> enemy infantry, when galloped, as after Beersheba they frequently were, invariably shot wildly and surrendered early in the conflict.[75]

did not stand even until the 5th Mounted Brigade's charge. The day before on 7 November 1917 one troop of the 11th Light Horse Regiment of the 4th Light Horse Brigade made a gallant charge at Tel el Sheria. The troop of mounted infantry/riflemen was armed only with hand held bayonets and proved the 'mutually transforming, and circular in essence' [76] of the orthodox and unorthodox. The unorthodox had already become the orthodox and the enemy infantry were not surprised; they were ready for them and slaughtered (all but five) of the light horsemen while they were struggling to get to their rifles; their hand held bayonets all but useless.

> After galloping past these men and dismounting for action very heavy fire was opened on him from front and right and left and rear almost annihilating the troop.[77]

If it had been possible to issue these Light Horsemen with rifle buckets during the intervening days, it may have been enough to once more make their charge unorthodox as they would have had their rifles to hand when they dismounted and they could have defended themselves at close quarters. Perhaps General Chauvel had not fully understood the fleeting nature of the orthodox and unorthodox or was there just no time to obtain and issue rifle buckets? As it was they were swordless and defenceless while struggling to get their rifles over their heads and off their backs and the enemy were prepared for them.

At Beersheba the gallant 4th and 12th Regiments of the 4th Light Horse Brigade showed tremendous courage and dash and carried the day in the best traditions of bravery and élan any true cavalry unit would have been proud of and that day they won the battle for all the British Army. Their ride was all the more courageous because they lacked proper arms with which to effectively engage the enemy at close quarter and during that long gallop they could have no idea how the enemy would receive their blow. Wavell confirms, 'This charge was a gallant affair, and deserves all the praise which has been bestowed on it.' [78] The troops took the ultimate risk but their commanders had made detailed and thorough plans before ordering the unorthodox attack. And they were lucky that some unknowable event or action did not prevent their triumph; even the weather helped with rain just prior to the battle. Their actions were responsible for taking out the linchpin and over the next several days of stiff fighting at Tel el Khuweilfe and Tel el Sheria the strong defensive Gaza – Beersheba line began to unravel and the enemy was pushed north; Jerusalem was outflanked and occupied early in December just five weeks later, in plenty of time for Christmas.

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75 Gullett: 404
76 Sawyer: 148
77 11th Australian Light Horse Regiment War Diary: 265
78 Wavell: 125

HUGO THROSSELL'S CONVERSION TO SOCIALISM

Peter Hopper

The front page of the 7 November 1919 edition of *The Westralian Worker* gave prominent exposure to a demonstration that was to be held on the Perth Esplanade to protest against the "Capitalist War on Russian Self-Government". This newspaper was the official organ of the West Australian Labor Party under its editor, John Curtin. The Labor Party had split during the war when its leader, William Morris Hughes attempted to introduce conscription. It was not surprising therefore that the paper was attacking a continuation of the war in Europe into Russia where the Bolsheviks had seized power in 1917. However, what was surprising was that Captain Hugo Throssell VC would be one of the speakers at this demonstration. He certainly wasn't going to support the Allied intervention into Russia to support the White Armies in their attempt to overthrow the Red Army. He was going to speak against this intervention on the basis of his newly adopted conversion to socialism.

By getting Hugo Throssell to support the Labor Party's stand against this war, John Curtin had certainly produced a drawcard for the demonstration. Throssell was no ordinary returned digger. He had been awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry at Gallipoli in August 1915 and was given a great reception when he arrived back in Western Australia in 1918[1]. For many it must have seemed quite odd that now he was actively supporting a stand against the "capitalist governments" as the newspaper labelled them.

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How do we account for this conversion to socialism by a Victoria Cross recipient? What had influenced him to adopt this stand? Three weeks after arriving back in Western Australia Hugo gave two lantern lectures on 9 and 10 January 1919. These were clearly not to promote socialism. They were entitled "The Light Horse in the Holy Land". *The West Australian* explained that Captain Throssell "had secured a fine collection of views when in Palestine and a large number of war trophies, which would prove most interesting".[2]. On 9 January, the first lantern lecture was held at West's Picture Hall in Subiaco. The poster advertising this exhibition pointed out that selections would be made from 200 photographs that Hugo had taken on the spot depicting Gallipoli and Palestine campaigns, especially dealing with the 10th Light Horse Regiment's work in Gaza, Beersheba, Jerusalem, Jericho and the Jordan valley.[3] The price of admission was listed at two shillings and one shilling. This was probably the equivalent to paying $30 in today's currency. The following evening he gave the same lecture at Claremont. Half the proceeds for these presentations were to be given to the Returned Soldiers' Association.[4]

We now need to ask how Throssell had obtained all that material for the lectures. On 29 August 1915 he had been wounded twice during the battle at Hill 60 in the Gallipoli campaign. As a consequence he was evacuated by the hospital ship "Devanha" to Lemnos, Malta, Gibraltar and finally to 3rd London General Hospital. Two days later Hugo records in his diary that he met

1 The West Australian, 16 December 1918
2 Ibid., 8 January 1919
3 See Throssell documents at www.anzacsite.gov.au "Handbill advertising a poster".
4 The West Australian, 9 January 1919

Miss KSP5. This is a reference to Katharine Susannah Prichard whom he later married. She must have made quite an impression on him at the time in order to be included in his diary.

In April 1916 Hugo was invalided back to Australia and allotted light duties. Once he had recovered he returned to Egypt and rejoined his old unit, the famous 10th Light Horse Regiment. It was with this regiment that he had earlier earned his Victoria Cross. In April 1917 he was back in action at the 2nd Battle of Gaza where he was once again wounded. It was during this battle that his brother Ric was killed. The loss of Ric greatly distressed Hugo but he returned to his regiment for the final offensives in Palestine and led the 10th Light Horse guard of honour at the fall of Jerusalem in December 19176. He had obviously taken these photographs during his exploits at Gallipoli and in the Middle East. On 15 December 1917 he had been given the honour of commanding the Guard at Jaffa Gate to welcome General Allanby on his triumphant entrance to that famous ancient city. No doubt he had a photograph of that scene in his collection.

Throssell gave his lantern lectures as a single man and certainly not as a socialist. Later that month, however, he travelled to Melbourne where he was reunited with and promptly married Katharine Susannah Prichard in a Melbourne Registry office on 28 January 1919.

Hugo's conversion to socialism is closely linked to the influence of his wife. She was by then an accomplished novelist and socialist. She had been an outspoken opponent of conscription in 19177 and following the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia she viewed the fulfilment of a socialist state as a means of creating a world free from war. The death of her brother Alan in France on 12 December 1917 had angered her8. She maintained that his life was wasted by the blunders and folly of the High Command. Back in Melbourne, during 1918, she mixed with noted writers, musicians and artists. Of this period she later wrote:

> Opposition to the war was growing with reports of colossal profiteering in the war industries; the sacrifices demanded of working people in wage cuts; the persecution of conscientious objectors and trade unionists seeking to preserve rights won by working men and women in a century of struggle9.

According to Katharine, Hugo's conversion to socialism can be traced back to his war-weariness and disillusionment while he was in the Middle East in 1917. She noted this in his letters home at the time but Hugo had not translated this disillusionment into socialism10. After they were married he admitted he had never heard the arguments for socialism before but now "couldn't fault them". Throughout 1919, however, Katharine fed Hugo with the works of Marx and Engels and by July he was ready to publicly declare himself a socialist11

It was at the Peace Day celebrations in Northam on Saturday, 17 July 1919, that he publicly pronounced himself a socialist. At the time it came as a great shock to those present. His father, the Hon George Throssell had been Minister for Crown Lands for many years and was even Premier of WA in 1901. He died in 1910 and as a result was spared the embarrassment of Hugo's pronouncement that day. No one, except Katharine, was aware he would make this stand. He was given a great reception by the thousands who had assembled and began by reminding them that five years ago he had ridden through the streets of Northam in charge of eighteen men,

5 See Throssell documents, op.cit
6 Suzanne Welborn, "Throssell, Hugo Vivian Hope (1884-1933)", Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol 12, Melbourne University Press, 1990, p. 224
7 Prichard KSP Child of the Hurricane: An Autobiography Angus & Robertson, Melbourne, 1963, pp 232-7
8 Ibid p.247
9 Ibid p. 231
10 Ibid , p 233
11 Throssell, Ric, My Father's Son Mandarin Australia, Port Melbourne, 1990, p 71

who were amongst the first to enlist. With him were the late Harry Eaton and the speaker's brother Eric. Of the eighteen, seven were lying either in Gallipoli, Palestine or France. He then declared, without warning, that the war had made him a socialist[12]. 'You could have heard a pin drop'. Katherine wrote to her friend Nettie Palmer. 'Jim himself was ghastly, his face all torn with emotion. It was terrible-but magnificent'[13]. To his close associates and friends Hugo was known as 'Jim' throughout much of his life.

Hugo told everyone present that if they did not want war they "must scrap this rotten system of production" (capitalism). A Mr Saul Solomon followed Hugo's address to conclude the program and made a somewhat underhand reference to "the failure of socialism in Australia".[14] The dye was now cast.

Hugo's next public support of socialism was the Perth Esplanade address with John Curtin in November 1919. In this he admitted he wasn't a great public speaker but because he felt so strongly about the Russian situation he felt obliged to speak out. He pointed out that Russia had lost more men in the war than the total number of live men comprising both the armies of France and Britain. He now felt that Russia should be left unmolested to pursue its own ideals and ideas of government. A resolution was carried supporting the self-determination of all peoples and protesting against the intervention of the allied governments in the internal affairs of the Russian Soviet Republic[15].

A fortnight later Katharine delivered an address on socialism to a large and enthusiastic audience in the Burt Memorial Hall in St Georges Terrace, Perth. This had been organised by the Anglican Social Questions Committee. She told her audience that socialism stood for reason, love, justice and honesty, the freeing of overworked and underpaid men, women and children. She concluded by reminding everyone that although socialism was feared by the capitalists it could not fail[16]. Hugo accompanied her on these occasions to see that 'she got a fair go' and his impressive physical stature was put to great effect if she was heckled.

It did not take very long before Hugo's public support for socialism brought him to the attention of the Military Intelligence. On 24 November 1919, Major H E Jones submitted a report claiming that Hugo's war injuries had "affected his mind".[17] The implication here was that you would have to be of unsound mind to hold socialist views. Katharine's influence on Hugo was also mentioned but to many people in Australia at the time it was too difficult to accept that a Victoria Cross recipient could possibly support socialism of his own doing.

Did Hugo's adoption of socialism lead him towards membership of the Communist Party of Australia in 1920 ? It is interesting to note here that Katharine told him that it would be better for him to remain out of the Communist Party; he would have more influence that way.[18] Hugo felt a bit left out at this decision but later he agreed that he was not yet ready for membership. He did however fully support Katharine's membership and involvement in the Communist Party and in doing so paid the price in the long run. His job with the Returned Soldiers' Land Settlement Board came to an end in 1922[19] and financial pressures played heavily with his mind. On 19 November 1933 he shot himself in the head with his service revolver hoping that his wife and 11

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12 The Northam Advertiser 23 July 1919
13 Throssell,Ric, op.cit. p 74
14 The Northam Advertiser 23 July 1919
15 The Westralian Worker 14 November 1919
16 The West Australian 21 November 1919
17 Throssell, Ric , op.cit, p. 76
18 Ibid p. 77
19 Prichard KSP Child of the Hurricane op.cit. p.260 Katharine writes: It seemed that my political activities and his support of them, had something to do with the decision to dispense with his services.

year old son would cope better on his war pension. It was a tragedy that shocked the nation and was a sad reflection on the life of a courageous soldier whose only 'crime' was to follow the political persuasion of his talented wife.

The First World War impacted strongly upon the minds of many of the returned servicemen. They felt that the existing political and economic system had let them down. The depression of the 1930s only reinforced this viewpoint and the lure of socialism forced them to reappraise the 'old order' that had led them into the 'War to End All Wars'. Hugo Vivian Hope Throssell's conversion to socialism is but a small reminder of the desires of so many returned servicemen to ensure that the world they were returning to would be one in which war would be a thing of the past. The scars of that war had left indelible marks on their psyches.

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THE 'JAP TRACK': THE JAPANESE ROUTE TO WAU, JANUARY 1943

Phillip Bradley*

The Japanese operation to capture Wau at the end of January 1943 was one of the most enterprising of the Pacific War. Bypassing the two main routes of advance to Wau, the Japanese force had blazed its own trail over seemingly impassable terrain. The force had arrived within sight of Wau before it was challenged and the holding of Wau airfield was only made possible by the staunch defence of Wandumi Ridge by a company of infantry under Captain Bill Sherlock of the 2/6th Battalion. How had the Japanese force under Colonel Okabe managed to pass through the Australian defences and almost capture Wau? The following edited extract from the recently published *The Battle for Wau* provides some of the answers.

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By 18 January 1943, following the failed Australian attack on Mubo, it was estimated that there were three hundred enemy troops holding the Saddle area above Mubo.[1] The Japanese had the choice of two routes if they chose to advance to Wau. The Buisaval Track was considered the most likely avenue of approach and the Australians had their strongest dispositions here. The 2/7th Independent Company, a platoon of the 2/5th Independent Company and two companies of the 2/6th Battalion had been deployed along the track. The 2/7th had ambush positions set up out in front of Skindiwai to give early warning of any enemy move to the main force, gathering behind. It was less likely that the Japanese would advance up the rugged Black Cat Track as they would have to negotiate the difficult Bitoi River gorge, but Lieutenant Doug Kemp's platoon had been deployed to the Black Cat mine to warn of any such move.

Following the Japanese move up onto the Saddle, Major Fergus MacAdie, the 2/7th Independent Company commander, met with Major John Jones, who had now brought his B Company forward to Skindiwai. MacAdie told Jones that he thought the Japanese were in much greater strength than the 300 that Colonel Fleay, the Kanga Force commander, had estimated. He also thought that the threat along the Black Cat Track was the key one and that the Japanese move up to the Saddle was a holding action only.[2] At 0900 on 21 January Major Jones left Skindiwai to reconnoitre the area out near Waipali and Buibaining. The short and sturdy Jones needed a guide, so MacAdie allocated one of his section commanders, Lieutenant Pat Dunshea, an astute and experienced bushman.

Dunshea took Jones and his batman across from Skindiwai via the 'high road', a track that crossed the main range where it was some 2000 metres high. The small party pushed on until they came out onto the top of a ridge overlooking Buibaining. Here there was an opening in the jungle where you could look down into the Bitoi River gorge.[3]

They noted that enemy forces had moved through the area in some strength and some 100 of them had only left the area that morning. The Japanese had come out of Mubo up to Waipali and then past Buibaining before using ropes and pitons to get down the slope from Buibaining to the Bitoi River at the foot of the Black Cat Track. A Japanese party could now be seen at the foot of

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* Phillip Bradley is the author of The Battle for Wau: New Guinea's frontline 1942–1943, recently published by Cambridge University Press. For details see New Releases.

1 2/6th Battalion War Diary, AWM 52, 8/3/6, Jan-Mar 43, scan 009.

2 Hay, Nothing Over Us, pp. 261-2.

3 Pat Dunshea, 2/7th Independent Company, interview, 13 December 2004.

the track, about one and a half kilometres away. Fifteen men were bathing in a waterhole on the Bitoi River at the foot of the Black Cat Track and Dunshea could hear them singing out. On the slope above the waterhole some 60 or 70 more enemy troops were already climbing up the Black Cat Track towards House Copper. It was difficult to establish exact numbers as men kept moving back and forth between various groups. Pat Dunshea handed his binoculars across to Jones. 'Take a look at that,' he told him. Jones soon observed, 'I can't count the buggers either but they're Japs alright.' Dunshea told Jones, 'I'd like your CO to know right away, could you send your runner back?' The runner got back that night with the information. In the fading light Dunshea and Jones watched as 50 more Japanese troops climbed up the Black Cat Track.[4]

At this stage a Japanese force had been moving along the Black Cat Track from Mubo for four or five days, having left Mubo on 16 and 17 January.[5] What Dunshea's patrol had seen was the first evidence of the passage of some 1500 enemy troops, staggering their passage over a number of days. The indications were that the Japanese were moving in force up the Black Cat Track, while holding their blocking position at the Saddle. On the same day that they had secured the Saddle area, 17 January, the Japanese had begun moving troops along the Black Cat Track. They moved past the Saddle and then through Waipali, Buibaining and back down to the Bitoi River before climbing up the other side in the direction of House Copper. By the time the Australian patrols picked up their presence most of them had already passed, with only small details left along the route.

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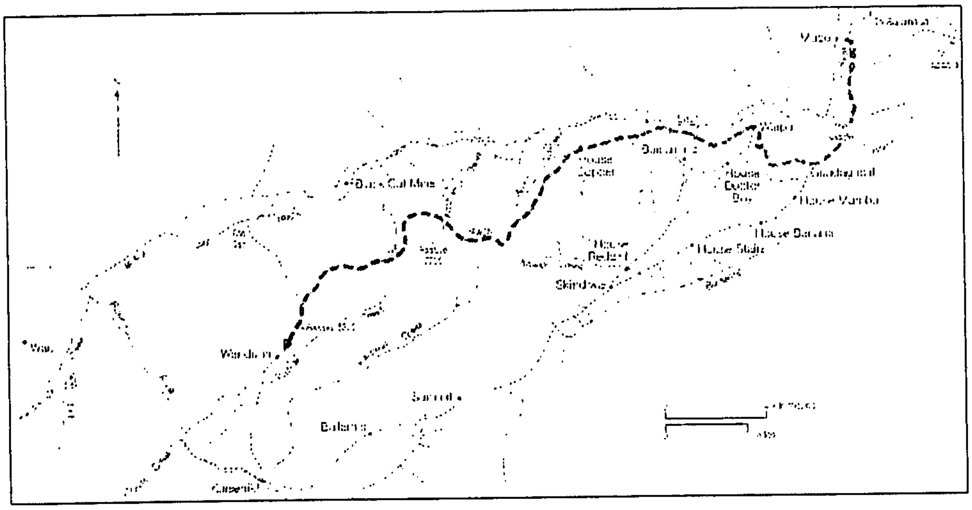
The Japanese force, the majority of two battalions from the 102nd Infantry Regiment, was the one that had landed from a supply convoy in Lae on 7 January. Half of Major Kikutaro Shimomura's 1st Battalion had travelled by thirteen barges from Lae to Salamaua on 13 January with the other half following the next day.[6] One of the companies had travelled by foot, leaving Lae on 9 January and travelling via Markham Point, Buang and Malolo to Salamaua, arriving late on 14 January. Shimomura's battalion, with an artillery company attached, formed the advance party of the Okabe Detachment. Lieutenant Colonel Shosaku Seki's 2nd Battalion would follow.

In planning the route for the attack on Wau, the Japanese command had been limited by an acute lack of knowledge of the terrain. The plan was based on a copy of an Australian 1:250,000 scaled, pre-war, un-contoured map of the region with two possible avenues of advance considered. One route crossed the Markham River and followed the Bulolo Valley, while the other route went from Salamaua up to Mubo and thence to Wau. Because of the easier terrain, the route along the Bulolo Valley was chosen by the 18th Army command and General Okabe was informed of the decision.[7]

However, Okabe was unable to confirm the conditions along the chosen line of advance, while local sources at Salamaua indicated that the route from there through to Wau could be walked in ten days. There was also the consideration that the major barrier of the Markham River had to be crossed in order to use the Bulolo Valley route. Okabe had further concerns that his units would be readily exposed to air attack along the Bulolo Valley route, while the jungle cover along the Salamaua route would provide much better concealment. Having experienced the devastating air attacks on Lae following the convoy landing, Okabe had no desire to see his force destroyed

4 Ibid.
5 Kanga Force: Report on Wau-Mubo Operations, AWM 54, 578/7/3. AWM 54, 423/4/71 quotes a captured Japanese diary stating that parts of 2nd Battalion, 102nd Regiment left Mubo on 16 January.
6 Interrogation Report 47, AWM 55, 6/1.
7 Senshi sosho, pp. 373-95.

before it could even reach Wau. Weighing up the issues, he rejected the Bulolo Valley route and made the decision to advance via Salamaua.8



Black Cat Track

Once that decision had been made, the specific track for the advance had to be considered. The initial way chosen was the Buisaval Track, the easiest route to Wau and the main track used and defended by the Australians. However, the Australian force at Mubo, overestimated by the Japanese at five companies, undoubtedly concerned Okabe. Though the Australians had been pushed back from Mubo, it was clear that this force would defend the Buisaval Track to Wau and, after arriving at Salamaua on 13 January, Okabe issued new operational orders. The advance would commence from Salamaua on 14 January and the line of advance had been, 'changed from that previously indicated.'9

Okabe had been looking at the overprinted Australian map of the region and noted there was another major track to Wau from Mubo. This was the Black Cat Track, following the western edge of the Bitoi River gorge from Waipali and then crossing the river and climbing a ridge via House Copper and the Black Cat mine to Wau. Other tracks were also clearly shown on the map indicating that a shorter and more direct route may be possible. Later termed the 'Jap Track', this route approximately followed the ridge line south-west of Aulac Creek, to the northern slopes of Hill 7200 and then west to Hill 5500. Here a track could be picked up to Wandumi and then on to Kaisenik or Sandy Creek, just east of Wau. However, as the map showed no contours, it gave no real indication of the extreme difficulty of the terrain through which this route would pass.

The Okabe Detachment comprised two echelons following behind Shimomura's advance party. Colonel Kohei Maruoka, the 102nd Regiment commander, travelled with the first echelon, leaving Salamaua on 16 January, two days after the advance party. The second echelon under Major Moriue, the Mountain Artillery Battalion commander, left on 17 January. The troops carried rations for fourteen days but, as they left Salamaua, they were told that those rations had to last twenty days. The ramifications of the Allied air attacks on the Lae convoy were now being

8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.

felt. Maruoka's task was dealt a further blow on 16 January when he was ordered to send two of his ten infantry companies back to Salamaua.[10] This was a serious loss of strength.

The terrain over which the Okabe Detachment was to advance was diabolical. Okabe's men would first have to negotiate the climb up to Waipali and then the precipitous descent back down into the Bitoi gorge. Once they left the Black Cat Track, there was no defined track for Okabe's men to follow and the Japanese advance party had to hack a path through the jungle. The harsh terrain of the Black Cat Track had already had a severe effect on the Japanese plans. Heavily loaded with munitions and supplies, the troops had only been able to make around five to six kilometres per day. Two to three hundred Chinese coolies had accompanied them, but many had dropped out, while the plan to take artillery pieces to Wau was abandoned soon after leaving Mubo.

The reason for the decision to branch off from the Black Cat Track is uncertain, but no doubt had much to do with the difficult conditions already faced. The advance party may well have considered that, if the main track was so difficult, why not find the most direct route to minimise the distance involved. At the particular point where they deviated, just after passing House Copper, the Black Cat Track rises steeply up along the side of the upper Bitoi River valley while the chosen new route to the south, following the ridge line above Aulac Creek, would have looked easier. For the first four kilometres it was.

There are other points to consider as to why the new route may have been taken. Probably without any local native guides, and relying on such a poor and large scale map, the Japanese may indeed have taken the wrong route. Another point, noted by the Australian army at the time[11], was that the Japanese may have known of and followed a 1926 German survey track. The official historian, Dudley McCarthy, also writes of the Japanese advancing 'by way of the long forgotten track.'[12] Another major influence may have been the significant Australian military presence further along the Black Cat Track. The Japanese would have wanted to avoid any contact with the Australians prior to reaching Wau.

However, major obstacles in the form of steep gorges lay across the new route. The Japanese advance party had not arrived at Aulac Creek, around five kilometres south-west of where the Jap Track had branched off from the Black Cat Track, until the night of 21 January.[13] The valley at the upper reaches of Aulac Creek represented a near insurmountable obstacle, and the Japanese engineers detoured a kilometre directly south to avoid the sheer slopes that funnelled down to form the headwaters of Aulac Creek. The huge scar of a kilometre long landslide on the mountainside above clearly demonstrated the danger that the steep terrain posed to Okabe's men.

After the detour south, the Japanese headed west again across a saddle until the northern slopes of Feature 7200, around three kilometres to the west of the Aulac Creek upper reaches, were reached on 23 January. Feature 7200 was actually 2286 metres (7500 feet) high. At this point there was a near vertical descent to Ambador Creek of around 600 metres and then a long and difficult ascent on the other side. It is no wonder that the advance party told Maruoka that the route was unsuitable for the main strength of the detachment and that the Buisaval Track should be used. But Maruoka decided to press on.[14] Despite the difficulty of the route, his force was advancing without any resistance from the Australians.

10 Ibid.
11 Department of Information, The Battle of Wau, p. 12.
12 McCarthy, South-West Pacific Area: First Year, p. 575.
13 Ibid. The Japanese text refers to the location as Aura Creek.
14 Senshi sosho, pp. 373-95.

Behind Okabe's force, patrols found further evidence of considerable troop movement down the Black Cat Track and it was accepted that there was a strong enemy patrol advancing on Black Cat mine. Further reinforcements were moved there and found evidence that the Japanese force, still considered to only be of some 300 men, was bypassing Black Cat Track along a ridge to the south. Stephen Murray-Smith noted: 'From the side of the hut one could look down across the great valley to the long high ridge the other side. Dusk had fallen and as soon as my eyes adjusted themselves to the darkness I too could see, flickering through the trees, intermittent glimpses of what looked like firelight.'[15]

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On the afternoon of 27 January, about one and a half kilometres north of Wandumi, a 2/6th Battalion patrol came across around a dozen Japanese troops setting up booby traps. The patrol opened fire, the enemy replied and then Wild hurriedly pulled his men back to Wandumi.[16]

The Japanese troops were part of the Okabe Detachment's first echelon. They had arrived at Wandumi Trig Point or, as they knew it, Feature 5500, at 1000 that morning after the extraordinary trek from Mubo. They had only just made it, almost defeated by the terrain before they had fired a shot. Accompanying the forward guard company, Captain Yoshiro Saito, the headquarters signals commander, had reached the top of Feature 5500 at around 1300 on the previous day, 26 January. After the struggle through the terrain on near starvation rations, the men had not known where they were, and could only surmise they were on Feature 5500, as there were no higher mountains in front. Then, when they had heard the unmistakable roar of aircraft almost on top of them, they realised they had reached the final slopes above Wau.[17]

Saito immediately set off back down the mountain to report to Okabe's headquarters. Back at headquarters, Okabe had apparently finally decided to pull back to Mubo, replenish supplies and then try to force a passage along the easier Buisaval Track. The news that Wau was now within reach changed things and Okabe asked his regimental commander 'Maruoka, what should we do?' Maruoka was adamant, 'Commander, let's do it.' Okabe agreed. 'OK. Let's go.' Next day, Saito returned to Feature 5500 and moved further forward. Again he heard the sounds of aircraft and then, when he finally saw that Wau lay before him, he drew a sharp breath and exclaimed 'we have done it.'[18]

Okabe's force had indeed reached a position from where it could capture an almost defenceless Wau airfield but due to the extraordinary resistance of Captain Sherlock's company, which kept the airfield open for reinforcements to be flown in, this would prove beyond Okabe's men.

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15 Stephen Murray-Smith, 2/5th Independent Company, AWM 3DRL/514.
16 17th Brigade War Diary, AWM 52, 8/2/17, Jan 43c, scan 027.
17 Saito, 'The Okabe Detachment: failed attack on Wau', pp. 100-1.
18 Ibid, pp. 100-2.

MOSQUITOES BITE AT NIGHT

Ken Wright

During World War 2, 52,818 Australians volunteered for the Royal Australian Air Force as aircrew.[1] They left to fight far away from their homes and loved ones. They came from the land, from sheep and cattle stations, factories, cities, country towns and brought with them that unique sense of humour and devoted mateship that is the fierce pride of the Australian warrior. In the freezing skies over Europe, over 6,636 Australian aviators paid the ultimate price to win a war. They came as boys, flew with Royal Air Force and if they survived, were old men by 30. When the war in Europe ended, 15,000 Australians had been involved in the air war against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

464 Squadron was formed in England in September 1942, and was initially equipped with the unsuccessful Ventura light bomber. This notionally RAAF unit comprised air and ground crew from Australia, Britain, Canada and from across the British Empire. The unit was always cosmopolitan in nature and together with sister units 21 Royal Air Force and 487 Royal New Zealand Air Force squadrons comprised 140 Group of the Second Tactical Air Force. The three squadrons went on to fame as Gestapo and SS hunters. In September 1943, the squadrons had converted to the DeHavilland Mosquito known as the 'Wooden Wonder' or simply as the 'Mossie'. This aircraft excelled in a wide variety of roles including low level and high attack day/night bomber, long range photo reconnaissance, minelayer, pathfinder, high speed military transport, long range day/night fighter and bomber. The Mosquito served in Europe, the Middle East, Far East and the Russian Front. Of the 7,781 Mosquitoes built, 6,710 were delivered during the war years. No fewer than 27 different versions went into service and some of the most spectacular operations of the air war were due to this moulded plywood wonder aircraft. At 437mph [728 kph] it was the most versatile twin engine propeller driven aircraft in the Second World War. Its wooden construction made it more difficult to detect by radar than conventional metal aircraft and it could be flown at great heights at high speed which gave it almost complete immunity from German anti aircraft guns and fighters until the advent of the German ME 163 and ME 262 jet fighters in 1944. It could carry phenomenal loads over extremely long distances performing feats out of all proportion to the original specifications envisaged by its designers. The Mosquito was an outstanding warplane on every count but it was not without its problems. However, the majority of those who flew in them loved them. Right from the start, low level intruder and precision bombing attacks became the squadron's speciality. Their contribution to the war was invaluable but this little known unit is generally only remembered by the daring attacks on Amiens Prison, the Aarhus University and the Copenhagen Gestapo headquarters.

Jack Palmer and Jack Rayner had something in common apart from their first names. Both had originally joined the Australian Army, both somehow managed to transfer to the RAAF in 1942 and both lived in close proximity to each other in the same state. Both went to Nova Scotia in Canada where they teamed up, passed their training courses and travelled to England for final operational training at Bicester, which they completed with above average ratings. They would go on to be a very successful combination and complete a rare 47 day and night intruder missions. In the world of combat crews, life was an attempt to escape the odds. They

1 Joan Beaumont. Australian Defence: sources and statistics, Oxford University Press, 2001 states that in World War 2, 52,818 enlisted as aircrew, 136,565 as ground crew and 26,245 in the WAAAF members.

had the reflexes, instincts and natural self discipline to thrive, if they survived the first few missions.

Just prior to 'Operation Overlord' the planned June 6 1944 D-Day invasion of occupied France, Allied aircraft were tasked to cause maximum delay to all enemy movement by rail, road or river as well as their normal operations as a diversionary tactic. As part of the operation, 464 Squadrons mosquitoes were to operate at night in an allocated area by either of two methods depending on moon, weather and visibility. [1] By low flying attack with cannon, machinegun and bombs using the 'cat's eye' method. As night visibility was best in clear conditions under a half moon, aircrews were kept in darked rooms during the day before raids or encouraged to wear light proof goggles to avoid bright lights that would ruin their night vision. [2] Similar attacks but against targets that had been marked or illuminated by pathfinder aircraft. Operation Overlord was the greatest amphibious assault in history and the landing on the Normandy coast was a great tactical surprise. Some 4,000 ships and landing craft carried 176,000 Allied troops and supplies across the English Channel escorted by 600 warships which supported the assault with their guns. The RAF and the Eighth US Air Force played a large part in the success of the D-Day invasion by disrupting the enemy's ability to re-supply their troops.

The new boys in the squadron, Flight Lieutenant Palmer [pilot] and Flying Officer Rayner [navigator] arrived at the squadron base on Thorney Island. near Portsmouth, England, early September 1944, and missed all the operations against the enemy both before and after the D-Day invasion and only began their first raid as a team on September 17 over Holland and North West Germany. Flying Officer Rayner recalls their first operation;

> Our main job was to stop any transport, road, rail or river from bringing up supplies to the front. At briefing, crews were given an area to patrol and we left base at intervals between 2100 and midnight to harass transport in our area over a period of up to six hours. We flew in total blackout conditions and once we were over the North Sea and nearing the Dutch coast which we regularly crossed at Egmond we would fly in a corkscrew action to put off any enemy night fighters. Once we were over the North Sea, you would hear the German radar picking us up. You could hear it as a humming noise through our headphones. The volume would increase or decreased as the aircrafts' height went up and down. There was one place called Hilversum in Holland where the Germans had a radar directed blue searchlight. The sounds of the radar carrying out a sweep in our headsets got more intense as we approached then suddenly there was a high pitched squeal and the blue searchlight was switched on and caught us in the middle of the beam. Once an aircraft was targeted, several white searchlights would come and cone our aircraft and the flak would start. We lost our night vision and couldn't read our instruments so essential for night flying. We escaped by putting the aircraft into a steep dive, doing a screaming turn and were gone while they were still blindly groping around looking for us. Once we reached our patrol area, we were free to go where we liked within that area as long as we made every effort to cross on our return, the coast at a point determined at the pre flight briefing. It was our exclusive entry door in which no-one else could use it. We used to see lots of other aircraft go past when bombing raids were taking place and unfortunately with everyone flying around in the dark, there were many collisions.

2/3 October 1944 was a highly eventful night for other members of the squadron. A series of damaging attacks on enemy rail transport in the Osnabruck area resulted in three trains strafed and bombed, a locomotive blown up and nine other trains hit. The two Jacks were also having some success of their own on the same night in the Emmerich-Munster area.

> JR; On railway patrol, we scored a direct hit on railway trucks in a siding, strafed two trains in the marshalling yard blowing one up. The nose combination of four .303 machineguns that fired at a rate of 1,000 rounds per minute and four 20mm cannons at a rate 600 rounds per minute gave the Mosquito a very nasty sting. Mixed in with the ammunition were rounds of high explosive, tracer and incendiaries so when we fired, the tracers could be clearly seen. When strafing with machine

> guns there was some noise whereas the 20mm cannons were very loud and caused considerable vibration in the aircraft. In addition, we carried four 500 pound bombs. Sometimes on a really dark night, two one million candlepower parachute flares were substituted for two bombs which enabled us to illuminate the target before bombing.

28 October 1944. Jack Palmer and Jack Rayner strafed a train and destroyed a locomotive. The following night, four planes from the squadron flew on a special mission. Their objective was to destroy a train loaded with V2 rocket components spotted in a siding near Sneek in Holland. The attack was at low level with about a dozen strafing and bombing runs which were very effective. The next night, the Jacks bombed barges and shot up a small ship in the Dutch Islands and Rhine Delta. The first night of November, they were at it again.

> JR. Sank one tank landing craft and forced the other to shore, cannoned a train, bombed another in the Zwolle/Arnhem area and a few nights later in the same place, machine gunned transport trucks. It was here our luck almost ran out. The night was pitch black and as we patrolled we could see these coloured lights down below us so we went to investigate. As we got close we were starting to get nervous and ready to get out of the area quick fast in case of trouble. Suddenly, it dawned on us that we were over the Zwolle German night fighter base with their aircraft passing us. The only thing that saved us was that their anti aircraft batteries, 150 guns no less, couldn't open up on us for fear of hitting their own planes. Needless to say, we got out of there fast!

16 December 1944. As fog, rain and snow blanketed Allied aerial observation and hobbled combat capabilities, General Gerd von Rundstedt launched a surprise counter offensive in the Ardennes area. The hard pressed Germans had secretly gathered an army of 24 infantry divisions, ten of them armoured and forced a V-shaped salient in between the British and American lines at a weak point forcing the surprised and demoralised Allies back approximately 100 miles [161 kms]. Called 'The Battle of the Bulge' by the Americans and the 'Ardennes Offensive' by the Germans, it was an enormous gamble by the desperate German forces to turn the tide of battle in their favour. The timing was unfortunate as it coincided with the worst winter in decades making life and the conduct of operations extremely difficult for friend and foe alike. Thick fog across the battlefield hampering air operations in the first week of the offensive forced even the redoubtable Mosquito to conduct operations elsewhere. On December 23, the two jacks flew a mission to support the U.S. Army in the St Vith area and on Christmas Eve, flew another support mission to St Vith. They may not have been able to celebrate Christmas in the squadron mess but they did have their very own fireworks display on a grand scale, compliments of the German army. They scored a direct hit on an ammunition train near Murlenbach just inside Germany. Their Christmas went off with a big bang. They supported the Americans again four days later at Laroche.

1 January 1945. While the fighting raged in the Ardennes, the German Air Force launched Operation Bodenplatte [Baseplate] a major offensive against all forward Allied air bases in Europe. Every available combat aircraft was scrambled for the surprise attack. Historians differ greatly as to the numbers of aircraft lost on both sides, but a loose estimate of Allied aircraft the Germans succeeded in destroying was approximately 122, mostly on the ground. The Luftwaffe lost 200 aircraft and irreplaceable crews. The result was a dismal failure for the Germans. The Ardennes offensive lasted 31 days and resulted in an Allied victory and ended any chance of Germany being able reverse their military fortunes. The German war machine would never recover and begin the down hill slide into the abyss of total defeat. In the meantime, 464 Squadron had moved to Rosieres-en-Santerre near Amiens in France. The officers' accommodation and mess were established in the nearby Chateau de Goyencourt which was not as impressive inside as it was outside. Being a Luftwaffe base before the squadron took it over, the Germans had stripped it almost bare and left the new occupants a couple of nasty booby traps which were more nuisance value than anything else. The other ranks unfortunately had to live outside in tents. During the battle when weather conditions permitted, 935 sorties were flown against the enemy hitting 74 trains and attacking over 1,000 wagons. As the fighting moved on, large numbers of serviceable Tiger tanks were found abandoned. They had run out of fuel. Clearly, the squadron had played their part in von Runstedt's defeat.

The Germans may have been down but they certainly were not out, so the Allies decided to 'to put the boot in' and kick the enemy around a bit more. On 22 February, 'Operation Clarion' was launched and was to be the biggest single daylight operation of the war by Allied Air Forces. The Allied army was poised to cross the Rhine at Wesel and 'Clarion' was designed to stop the enemy sending supplies and reinforcements to oppose the crossing. It was hoped that all forms of transport available to the Germans in a 24 hour period would be destroyed. About 9,000 aircraft from bases in England, France, Holland, Belgium and Italy attacked German railways, bridges, roads, rivers, ports and communication centres over 250,000 square miles [647.5000 kilometres] of enemy territory. The Jacks were part of the 16 aircraft the squadron contributed to the operation.

> JR. We had an area south of the major port of Bremen. Tactically, we felt it was a badly organised operation because we had to fly in a group. We were number two. Navigation was difficult and eventually didn't have much of an idea where we were. We came to a railway and followed it north strafing as we went. Suddenly, the outskirts of Bremen loomed up so we veered south-west and bombed a train just west of Soltau scoring a direct hit on the engine. We strafed railway trucks in a siding at Verden, three locomotives at Langwedel and were shot at by a flak train in a siding at Furstenaw. At Ligen we had our second close call and by sheer luck or divine mercy, lived to fight another day. We had accidentally flown between two anti-aircraft gun positions and they had a go at us. It was a 90 degree deflection shot that hit us in the fuselage just in front of the tail. A magnificent piece of gunnery but fortunately for us, the shell failed to explode. If it had, it would have blown the whole tail assembly off and it would have been all over for us. The shell made a hole in the main plane severing the trimming tab cable to the elevator. We limped back to base at ground level which was bloody hard for Jack Palmer as without the trimming tab on the elevator, he had great difficulty holding our aircraft straight and level. German night fighters shadowed us but didn't attack as we were too fast for them. We got back to our base at Rosieres-en-Santerre ok but discovered on landing that only one strand of the elevator cable remained. During this operation, one of our pilots, a Canadian was shot down by an American fighter who possibly mistook the Mosquito for a JU 88 or a ME 110 or so we thought at the time. The Yanks later tried to tell us it was a German in an American plane. We considered this utter rubbish! The Americans were well known for their, 'shoot first and ask questions later' attitude. Fortunately the crew survived and were back in the air a few days later. However, later towards the end of the war one of our squadron pilots, Gordon Nunn, , found in a hanger on a recently abandoned German airfield outside Cologne, two fairly new fully armed Mustang fighters still in their American colours which had been captured by the Germans. It was well known both sides had captured aircraft which were tested in the air for evaluation and comparison to their own. Perhaps in this case, and with hindsight, we may have been hasty in our judgement of the Americans.

It is only speculative but these aircraft may have been part of the highly secret trials and research unit of the Luftwaffe called 2/Verschuchsverband Ob.d.L. This unit operated a number of British and American captured aircraft including P51's P47's Spitfires and even a British Typhoon for testing, evaluation and operational sorties until April 1945.

> JP. I can't remember the date but one very interesting experience we had was with static electricity caused by lightening. We were flying through an electrical storm over Holland/Belgium and you could hear the electrical interference on the radio and radar. Around the perimeter of the propeller, you could see static electricity building up. It began as a whitish colour but as it danced up the wingtip it turned blue. It built up on the props and suddenly, there was a blinding flash and the

static electricity jumped across from the engine across me to the wingtip. I was blinded and couldn't see the instrument panel. The blindness didn't last long but it was certainly an experience.

The squadron moved to Melsbroek in Belgium and in April 1945, the two Jacks began bombing operations over Berlin. Using specially constructed bomb bays to carry a 4,000 pound bomb, the 'Pregnant Mosquitoes' as they were called by the crews, flew missions every night over the dying capital of the Reich.

JR. The Germans hated the Mosquito crews. When the weather was very bad and other aircraft were grounded, the Mosquito would still be up and it was business as usual making life hell for the residents of Berlin. Air raid sirens, exploding bombs, fires, homes destroyed, air-raid shelters full of terrified people and another sleepless night. We got such a bad name that a report came through at one stage that if a crew bailed out and were caught, they would be cut to pieces. Nevertheless, the comradeship that had developed between us was due to the simple fact that one's life depended on the other. One mistake and we were gone. Each of us had, by necessity, established a high degree of personal discipline.

The squadron flew its last operation on 2 May and following the end of hostilities, flew the German Commander, General Alfred Jodl [later executed after the Nuremberg trials for war crimes] to Berlin to sign the surrender agreement on behalf of Germany officially ending WW2 in the West at midnight 8/9 May 1945. Among other VIP's escorted by the squadron were the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Crown Prince Olaf of Norway.

JR. One interesting trip we had was up to the Potsdam conference near Berlin. We were in charge of a flight of three aircraft and had to escort the British Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin back to London from this meeting. We left Melsbroek and flew to Gatow airport in the British sector near Berlin.

The Potsdam Conference 17 July to 2 August 1945 was between the principal Allies to clarify and implement agreements previously reached at the Yalta Conference [4-11 February 45]. The chief representatives were Premier Stalin, Prime Minister Winston Churchill [later replaced by Prime Minister Attlee who defeated Churchill in the British elections at the time] and President Truman. The foreign ministers of the three nations were also present.

JR. We arrived on the 31 July and were not due to leave until 2 August so a group of us with time off decided to go 'sightseeing' to see first hand the famous or infamous German capital. The devastation was horrific. Quite shocking really! The city had been bombed so often, every night for the month of April and had only a few weeks earlier, suffered further terrible destruction by the Russian military. The scene was ghastly and never to be forgotten. We only saw a handful of undamaged buildings; more than 90% were no more than burnt shells. We visited the Reichstag, Germany's Parliament building and inside was ankle deep rubble with fallen ceilings mixed up with hundreds of thousands of Army record cards. We went into the wrecked Reich Chancellery building which was just inside the Russian occupation zone and guarded by their troops. The lack of personal hygiene by the Russians was clearly evident. They went about their natural business wherever they stood thus adding to the rubbish and causing an awful stench.

We wandered around and in one room the floor was inches deep in a variety of war medals and ribbons in dirty envelopes that were being picked over by Russian soldiers. I managed to collect a small box full of assorted medals including a silver Iron Cross and a special medal inscribed with Hitler's signature that he awarded to the mothers of German servicemen. As we passed the Russian guard at the front door on the way out, he just stood there with his submachine gun and gave us the silliest grin I have ever seen. One of our squadron members, Howard Purnell, had previously been in the Chancellery building and got a set of Hitler's door handles. He is reputed to have been the first non-Soviet serviceman to enter Hitler's Berlin bunker after he bribed the Russian guards to allow him in.

464 Squadron may have only been in existence for a short period but their war record is impressive. They destroyed eleven aircraft, 143 MT vehicles, 33 trains, one flying bomb, 24 tanks and damaged six E- Boats, 138 barges and small boats, 2,396 MT vehicles and attacked 328 trains together with 743 stationary railway trucks. Add to this impressive achievement the precision attacks on the SS barracks at Egletons and Bonneuil-Matours in France plus Gestapo HQ's at Odense, the Aarhus University, and Shell house in Copenhagen, Denmark. The best known attack was on the Gestapo prison in Amiens, France. This one hour raid which has now entered RAF and RAAF folklore as perhaps one of the greatest operations of the European conflict, freed political and resistance prisoners who were able to identify many Gestapo agents and collaborators responsible for their imprisonment, seriously damaging future German counter-intelligence efforts. The squadron's achievement can be summarised using the words from a note from the French Resistance five days later.

> I thank you in the name of our comrades for bombardment of the prison. The delay was too short and we were not able to save all, but thanks to the admirable precision attack the first bombs blew in nearly all the doors and many prisoners escaped with the help of the civilian population. Twelve of these prisoners were to have been shot the next day. ... To sum up, it was a success!

After participating in a number of fly pasts, the squadron flew to Fersfield in East Anglia and was disbanded on 24 September 1945. Both Palmer and Rayner returned home and back to civilian life in Australia. Although they had been mentioned in despatches for meritorious service during the war, further accolades were to come. On 6 June 2000, both Jack Rayner and Jack Palmer were honoured by the French Government for their service in the liberation of France. The French Consul-General presented them both with a Diploma of Honour and a medal commemorating the Normandy landing. This award has been presented to only a few Australians, most who served with the RAAF. A fitting recognition not only for their efforts during WW2, but also in memory of all the aircrews and support staff of the squadron whose efforts, **'saw the powers of darkness put to flight and saw the morning break'.**

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KIND PERMISSION.

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FROM MORESBY TO NORMANDY THE STORY OF HMS *BULOLO*

Rohan Goyne

The story of HMS *Bulolo* is the saga of one ship that was at many of the significant events of the Second World War including the Torch, Husky and D-Day landings. However, it started out in relative obscurity as the flagship of the Burns Philp Company, the MV *Bulolo* in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the South Pacific.

Burns Philp Company

James and John Burns arrived in Brisbane in December 1862. After a couple of years jackerooing at Springsure – Central Queensland, they set up as storekeepers at the Gympie goldfields in 1865. By the mid 1870's, James Burns and Robert Philp had gone into a more diversified Townsville – based partnership, which included shipping trade between Brisbane and Sydney for inter-colony and overseas trade. After 1876, James Burns worked from an office in Sydney where Burns Philp Shipping Company was incorporated in 1883. The modest North Queensland beginnings were followed by establishment and steady expansion into a wider range of merchant activities and ship owning together with the establishment of Pacific Island plantations and trading points. The Company was destined to become a pioneer and ambassador for Australia in much of the South Pacific area and in due time, a respected multinational group of companies.

MV Bulolo

MV *Bulolo* was built in the Barclay Curle and Co. shipyard Glasgow and launched on 31 May 1938. A twin-screw motor vessel she was 413 feet long, had a beam of 58 feet and was of 6267 gross tons. The ship was needed to enable Burns Philp to continue to honour the contract between the Commonwealth Government and the company for the mail steamer service between Australia, Papua, New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Hebrides, Norfolk and Lord Howe Islands. *Bulolo* commenced trade between Australia and PNG ports on 19 November 1938 and had completed eight voyages by the time the Second World War started.

HMS *Bulolo* – Why?

Between 1939 and 1940, 56 passenger vessels, all twin screw vessels with a service speed of at least 15 knots were requisitioned as armed merchant cruisers for the Royal Navy. *Bulolo* with a service speed of 15 knots and twin screws was taken over on 22 September 1939 by the British Ministry of War Transport on behalf of the Royal Navy. On 21 October, she was taken in hand for conversion as an Armed Merchant Cruiser (AMC) at Simonstown Naval base in South Africa. HMS *Bulolo's* conversion to an AMC was completed in January 1940. Her armament consisted of seven 6 inch and two 3 inch anti-aircraft guns as well a equipment for depth charges and small arms. She had an endurance range of 7700 miles at 15 knots. HMS *Bulolo* was commissioned on 4 January 1940 and sailed on 24 January 1940 from Freetown in Sierra Leone on convoy escort duties to the United Kingdom as part of the Freetown Convoy Escort Group.

Her career as an AMC over the next 15 months was spent predominately in the Atlantic Ocean. She spent much of the period on escort duties travelling between the Americas, South Africa and Britain. She was also used to search for German raiders and in the pursuit of Vichy French merchant shipping.

Conversion to a Landing Ship Headquarters

On the 4 April 1941, *Bulolo* commenced conversion to a Landing Ship Headquarters (LSH). The LSH was a type of vessel which emerged during the course of the war. It was not envisaged at the beginning of the war when the *Bulolo* was requisitioned as an AMC. The new ship was to provide a floating combined headquarters for the seaborne invasions which were envisaged by the Allies. The conversion process included installation of an extensive communications system to provide for Army, Navy and Air control purposes. Her armament was altered with 4x4 in AA, 5x40 mm AA and 14x20 mm. Her crew for the role as an LSH was 264. In 1942/43 four HQ Ship Signal Sections were formed and one joined HMS *Bulolo.* The Royal Signals sections worked alongside the naval communications ratings controlling the radio nets between HQ staffs and the troops ashore. As a LSH, HMS *Bulolo* took part in many of the significant amphibious operations of the war. Two of those were Operations Torch, and Neptune. The role of *HMS Bulolo* in each will be examined.

Operation Torch

At 0800 on 14 October 1942, Vice Admiral H.M. Burrough hoisted his Flag in HMS *Bulolo* as Flag Officer, Force 'E' at Greenock. On 26 October 1942 *HMS Bulolo* sailed as part of Convoy K.M.F.1 from the Clyde in a single line ahead at 9 knots ultimately bound for Africa and the Torch landing beaches. The passage of the convoy from the United Kingdom to the rendezvous with additional escorts off Cape St Vincent was completed on 4 November 1942. There the convoy also rendezvoused with convoy K.F.S.1 which had sailed from the Clyde on the 22 October 1942. From 1600 to 1630 on 5 November 1942 the force was formed into Cruising Order No. 24 for the passage of the Straits of Gibraltar. This was in three columns led by *Keren, Bulolo* and *Karanja* in that order from port to starboard column.

On the 7 November 1942 at 2230, HMS *Bulolo* and the ships of B Sector were stopped in a position 36°52' N., 02°49' E off the coast of Vichy French Algeria. At that time there was a moderate N.E. breeze, slight sea, clear sky and good visibility. Cap Caxine and all coastal lights were burning a reassuring sign. At 2349, the landing craft began making for the assault beaches.

On 9 November 1942, D+2 at 0500 *Bulolo* proceeded to enter Algiers harbour berthing alongside at 0700. On the way round she was attacked twice by single Ju 88's. In the second attack the enemy plane received a hot reception from the close weapons aboard the *Bulolo* and was shot down.

The Commander in Chief Allied Forces, Admiral A. B. Cunningham made the following statement about the use of LSH's in the operation "The two headquarters ships HMS *Bulolo* and HMS *Largs* were of inestimable value".

Operation Neptune

On the 6 June 1944, HMS *Bulolo* took part in the naval element, Operation Neptune, to the greatest sea-borne invasion in history, Operation Overlord. The navy's role in Operation Neptune is summarised by Admiral Ramsay's order to all Allied naval forces under his command:

> Our task in conjunction with the Merchant Navies of the United Nations and supported by the Allied Air Forces, is to carry the Allied Expeditionary Forces to the Continent to establish it there in a secure bridgehead and to build up and maintain it at a rate which will outmatch that of the enemy. Let no one underestimate the magnitude of the task.

There a total of 6,939 vessels involved in the operation.

HMS *Bulolo's* part in D-Day

HMS *Bulolo* was part of Force G (HQ Ship of Admiral Douglas-Pennant) controlling landings of Gold beach. On 6 June 1944, HMS *Bulolo* led assault ships to craft lowering positions of the Normandy coast and remained off the beaches directing the assault. At 07:55 hours HMS *Bulolo* was engaged by the shore battery at Longues sur Mer. The battery was 3 miles to the west of Arromanches and located 215 feet above sea level. It consisted of four Krupp 150 mm TbtsK C/36(L/45) cannons from a decommissioned naval vessel. The battery had a range of 12.5 miles. The fire from the battery was accurate scoring several hits on the *Bulolo.* As a result, the *Bulolo* was forced to weigh anchor and withdraw from the sector. The battery was latter silenced by the combined fire from the HMS *Ajax* and HMS *Argonaut.*

Conclusion

HMS *Bulolo* survived the shelling from the battery on the 6 June 1944 and withdrew from the beachhead on 27 June 1944. She continued to serve as a LSH in the Pacific during the remainder of the war. She was finally returned to Burns Philp on 4 December 1946 after the Royal Navy decided to not continue with any LSH's on its register. Thus ends the story of one ship in the Second World War.

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AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE CEYLON DEFENCE FORCE (1881-1949)

Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe*

This article provides a concise historical account of the evolution and engagement of the Ceylon Defence Force (CDF). From its modest beginnings, the author identifies some aspects of its creation, role, force structure, engagement in war and peacetime, and lastly, its disbandment and reconstitution after independence.

After the suppression of the Kandyan Sinhalese rebels in the insurrection of 1848, the final phase of British imperial consolidation was achieved and the conquest of Ceylon accomplished. With the apex of power in the Indian Ocean firmly in British hands, Ceylon's strategic importance subsided, which had notable effects on its local military forces. The colony's last remaining locally raised regular outfit, the Ceylon Rifle Regiment (CRR), served no practical application and was disbanded in 1873. However, twelve years before the disbandment of the CRR in 1861, there was a short lived attempt by some British planters and mercantile elite to create a volunteer infantry unit legally sanctioned by Ordinance No. 3 of 1861, loosely known as the Matale Rifle Volunteer Corps (MRVC). However, only months after its creation, the MRVC spiralled into obscurity and was decommissioned.

Twenty years later or eight years after the CRR's disbandment, there was another push amongst the British mercantile elite to re-create a reserve military force. The creation of the Ceylon Volunteers (CV) in 1881, whereby the rifle section was designated the 1st battalion Ceylon Light Infantry (CLI), which heralded the first step in the embryonic development of the CDF structure. The CLIV served as the core unit that provided the foundation for additional structural expansion and specialisation in later years (see Table A). These units formed the mainstay of British-Ceylon's strategic manpower reserve, under the purview of the Ceylon Volunteer Force (CVF), renamed in 1910 the Ceylon Defence Force (CDF).

CDF units were primarily designed in terms of role and structure as:

(a) Reliable ancillary force for potential internal security threats to British rule, such as the '1915 riots' and the '1947 General Strike'

(b) Supplementary manpower for overseas imperial military campaigns, most notably during the Second Boer War (1899-1902) and the First and Second World Wars (1914-1918; 1939-1945)

(c) As suggested by Governor Sir James Longden (1877-1883), it also served as, "a very valuable auxiliary to the regular forces in any invasion", exemplified much later during the Second World War when in 1942 a major Japanese threat materialised.

In his article "The New Army and the Law", a brief outline of the CDF's function, was provided by the late HNG Fernando QC, post-independent's Ceylon's Legal Draftsman, and later its Chief Justice:

> the Ceylon Defence Force was not a regular force, and its members only received occasional training with a view to being called out for service when necessary. The only regular force in Ceylon prior to the establishment of the new Ceylon Army consisted of personnel drawn from the United Kingdom Army and assigned for permanent duty in Ceylon, and the responsibility for the defence of Ceylon

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was vested in those personnel who were to be merely assisted in time of stress by the volunteer defence force raised in Ceylon.

Beginning as a battalion sized force, the CDF from the turn of the twentieth century until independence numbered the rough equivalent of a British Army brigade, maintaining peacetime equilibrium at 2,500-3,500 reservists.

The first operational or wartime engagement of a CDF unit was in the Second Boer War. In 1900 a company sized force under the command of Major Murray Menzies from the entirely British, Ceylon Mounted Infantry (CMI), was sent to South Africa experiencing combat at Stinkhoutboom, Cape Colony, Driefontein, Johannesberg, Diamond Hill and Wittebergen. After the CMI was withdrawn, another company sized force from the almost exclusively British, Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps (CPRC) was in 1902 dispatched to South Africa arriving just before hostilities ended, not having experienced combat. The overall conduct of Ceylon troops received accolades from General Kitchener, Chief of Staff to Lord Roberts in South Africa, who affirmed, "The Ceylon Contingent did very good work in South Africa I only wish we had more of them."

In the First World War the CPRC sent a force of 8 officers and 221 other ranks commanded by Major J. Hall Brown. The unit sailed for Egypt on October 1914, and was deployed in defence of the Suez Canal. The unit was officially attached to the Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) and was in 1915 dispatched to Anzac Cove on the Gallipoli Peninsula. The CPRC performed operational duties as guards to ANZAC headquarter staff, including the General Officer Commanding ANZAC, Lieutenant General William Birdwood, who remarked, "I have an excellent guard of Ceylon Planters who are such a nice lot of fellows." According to Colonel T.Y. Wright (Commanding Officer 1904-1912), the CPRC had sustained losses of 80 killed and 99 wounded in the First World War.

In 1915, far away from the front lines, ethnic tensions in Ceylon spilled over into major civil unrest between angry crowds of mainly Sinhalese Buddhists and Muslims. Governor Robert Chalmers (1913-1916) mobilised the CDF, under martial law proclamations lasting 100 days, to confront its first major internal security operation. This was undertaken alongside 300 regular infantrymen of the Indian Army's 28th Punjabi's, who were temporarily on garrison duty in Ceylon. An illustration of how the police and armed forces were used in the '1915 riots' was described in a situation report by Ceylon's Deputy Assistant Adjutant General, Captain LA Northcote, "Disturbances, with outbreaks of fire and looting, were frequent occurrences in Colombo and elsewhere, and order was not obtained until a few rioters had been killed and others wounded by rifle fire and bayonet." According to official figures, 116 people were killed; 63 by military and police forces.

After the '1915 riots' the 28th Punjabi's were dispatched to Mesopotamia and replaced in January 1917 by a detachment of the Indian Army's 80th Carnatics. Frontline manpower shortages and budget cutbacks also compelled the transfer of the 80th Carnatics, the last regular military unit to be stationed in Ceylon on garrison duties. As a consequence the colonial government then raised the specially formed Mobilized Detachment of Ceylon Light Infantry (Mob. Det., CLI), consisting of approximately 200 volunteer soldiery who remained continuously mobilised on a fixed basis.

The Second World War transformed the structure of the CDF, which was mobilised and considerably expanded to fortify Ceylon in meeting the threat posed by the Japanese. By 1945 the CDF reached its wartime peak at 645 officers and 14,247 other ranks. Examples include the Ceylon Supply and Transport Corps (CSTC), which grew in 1939 from 18 Officers and 150 other ranks to 59 Officers and 2,369 other ranks by August 1945. The largest facet of CDF development was represented by the CLI, which grew from one to five battalions by 1946.

CLI troops in 1941 escorted Italian Prisoners of War (POWs) from the Middle East to Ceylon, and later in 1946 Japanese POWs from Ceylon to India. In addition, CLI troop detachments were stationed at Kandy in defence of Supreme Commander, Lord Louis Mountbatten's South East Asia Command (SEAC) headquarters. Some CDF units were placed outside Ceylon undertaking garrison duties on the Seychelles and the Cocos Islands. In fact the Cocos Islands was the scene of an alleged 'mutiny' illustrated by Noel Crusz in his book *The Cocos Islands Mutiny*, (2001), that occurred amongst a dissident group of soldiers from the Ceylon Garrison Artillery (CGA), leading to the trial and execution of two Gunners and one Bombardier.

Later in 1947 during the post-war years, the CDF was again mobilised in its last major internal security operation to suppress a left wing *Hartal*, or mass stoppage of work. The CDF was given additional support by an armed detachment of British Royal Marines from HMS *Glasgow*, who were utilised to deter strikers in Colombo. In his summary of the '1947 General Strike', the Ceylon Army's first post-independence Ceylonese commander, Major General Anton Muttukumaru (1955-1959), who was also in 1943 the CO of the CLI's 2nd battalion, explained:

> In 1947, the Ceylon Defence Force was recalled from leave in order to aid the civil power dealing with a major crisis in the trade union field. Having gone through the experience of a major war, the brush with civilian organisation was rather strange. The experience was however valuable in taking control of disturbed areas, making judgements as to the degree of force to be used and, in any case assisting the civil police in the maintenance of law and order.

The formal end of British rule in Ceylon was 4 February 1948. Nonetheless, British influence still held considerable sway, illustrated by the 1947 Anglo-Ceylonese 'Defence Agreement'. Apart from safeguarding British strategic interests, the accord gave British military advisors a significant role in designing the structure and composition of the post-independence regular and volunteer Ceylon Army, renamed in 1972 the Sri Lanka Army, which was outlined by its first Commander, Brigadier The Earl of Caithness (1949-1952):

> There is already a close affinity between the Ceylon Army and the British Army. Many of the Army's customs and regulations are based on those of the British Army, and all Regiments and Corps of the Ceylon Army are now affiliated to corresponding British Regiments and Corps. To the British Army the Ceylon Army owes much of its formation.

Under British auspices, the Ceylon Army's reconstruction program continued until the tenure of the first two Ceylon Army Commanders, who were British, Brigadiers the Earl of Caithness and Sir Francis Smith Reid (1952-1955) ended.

The CDF was officially disbanded on 11 April 1949 and reconstituted by Army Act No. 17 of 1949 as the Ceylon Volunteer Force (CVF), later the Sri Lanka Army Volunteer Force (SLAVF). Soldiers who had experience in the CDF were actively recruited into the newly constructed regular and reconstituted volunteer Ceylon Army. In its first few years, and with few exceptions, the only new recruits enlisted were officer cadets and soldiers below the rank of Warrant Officer. Ex-CDF veterans featured prominently in the post-independence regular Ceylon Army until General D S Attygalle (1967-1977) finished his term as Commander. The last ex-CDF veteran to leave the Army was Brigadier T S B Sally of the Sinha Regiment, who ended his service tenure in 1979, closing the final chapter of the CDF in Sri Lanka's military history.

Table A

Organisation of the Ceylon Defence Force
(1881-1949)

Regiment/Unit	Acronym	Formed	Disbanded Reconstituted
Ceylon Light Infantry **(a)**	CLI	1881	1949
Ceylon Garrison Artillery **(b)**	CGA	1888	1949
Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps	CPRC	1900	1949
Ceylon Cadet Battalion **(c)**	CCB	1902	1949
Ceylon Mounted Rifles **(d)**	CMR	1906	1938
Ceylon Engineers **(e)**	CE	1911	1949
Ceylon Medical Corps **(f)**	CMC	1911	1949
Colombo Town Guard **(g)**	CTG	1914	1945
Town Guard Artillery **(h)**	TGA	1914	1939
Ceylon Motor Cyclist Corps **(j)**	CMCC	1915	N/A
Mobilised Detachment of Ceylon Light Infantry	Mob. Det., CLI	1917	1939
Ceylon Supply and Transport Corps (i)	CSTC	1918	1949
Post and Telegraph Signals **(k-1)**	PTS	1943	N/A
Ceylon Railway Engineer Corps **(k-2)**	CREC	1943	N/A
Ceylon Electrical and Mechanical Engineers	CEME	1943	1949
Auxiliary Territorial Service (Ceylon) **(l)**	ATS (Ceylon)	1943	1946
Ceylon Signal Corps **(m)**	CSC	1943	1949
Ceylon Corps of Military Police	CCMP	1944	1946

Note: (V) abbreviation indicates the unit is apart of the Ceylon Volunteer Force (1949-1972); Sri Lanka Army Volunteer Force (1972-to-date).

(a) Ceylon Light Infantry Volunteers (1881-1900); Ceylon Light Infantry (1900-1949); 2 (V) Ceylon Light Infantry (1949-1972), 2 (V) Sri Lanka Light Infantry (1972-to-date).

(b) Ceylon Artillery Volunteers (1888-1918); Ceylon Garrison Artillery (1918-1950); 2 (V) Ceylon Artillery (1950-1972); 2 (V) Sri Lanka Artillery (1972-to-date).

(c) The Ceylon Cadet Battalion served as the precursor establishment, which at independence was renamed the Ceylon Cadet Corps (1949-1972). The cadet movement first started in June 1881 two months after the CLI's formation. The Royal College Volunteer Corps, later known as the Royal College Cadet Corps, was the first college to be inaugurated as a cadet auxiliary to the Ceylon Light Infantry. The cadet movement surfaced in practically all other elite English medium schools, such as Wesley, Trinity, St.Thomas, Kingswood and Richmond College etc.

(d) Created in 1892 as the Mounted Infantry section of the Ceylon Light Infantry. Later it was referred to as the Ceylon Mounted Infantry and in 1906 the Ceylon Mounted Rifles. On disbandment its soldiery coalesced with the Ceylon Planters Rifle Corps.

(e) Engineer section of the Ceylon Light Infantry (1881-1911); Ceylon Volunteer Engineers (1911-1918); Ceylon Engineers (1918-1949); 2 (V) Ceylon Engineers (1949-1972); 2 (V) Sri Lanka Engineers (1972-to-date).

(f) Bearer section of the Ceylon Light Infantry (1881-1911); Ceylon Volunteer Medical Corps (1911-1918); Ceylon Medical Corps (1918-1949); 2 (V) Ceylon Army Medical Corps (1949-1972); 2 (V) Sri Lanka Army Medical Corps (1972-to-date).

(g) Colombo Town Guard was only mobilised during wartime and local emergencies, namely the First and Second World Wars.

(h) In January 1918 the Town Guard Artillery was amalgamated into the Ceylon Artillery Volunteers to form 'B' Company of the Ceylon Garrison Artillery.

(i) 2 (V) Ceylon Army Service Corps (1949-1972); 2 (V) Sri Lanka Army Service Corps (1972-to-date).

(j) Cyclist section of the Ceylon Light Infantry (1891-1915).

(k-1; k-2) Post and Telegraph Signals (1955-1956) and Ceylon Railway Engineer Corps (1955-1956) were momentarily reconstituted during Sir John Kotelawala's United National Party (UNP) Prime Ministerial reign (1953-1956).

(l) ATS (Ceylon) was the Ceylon Defence Force's only women's unit.

(m) 2 (V) Ceylon Signals Corps (1949-1972); 2 (V) Sri Lanka Signals Corps (1972-to-date).

Sources: Oscar Abeyaratna, *The History of the Ceylon Light Infantry*, (Colombo: Ceylon Daily News, 1945); *The Sri Lanka Army: 50 Years On – 1949-1999*, (Colombo: Sri Lanka Army, 1999); HNG Fernando, "The New Army and the Law" in *The Ceylon Army Journal*, (Vol. 1 1952 No. 1); Earl of Caithness, "The First Phase" in *The Ceylon Army Journal*, (Vol. 1 1952 No. 1); Anton Muttukumaru, *The Military History of Ceylon*, (Navrang: New Delhi, 1987) and other sources.

FIRST VC RECIPIENTS TO SERVE IN AUSTRALIA

Anthony Staunton

Private Alexander Wright VC, one of the first two Victoria Cross recipients to serve in Australia, who was born in 1826 in Ballymena, Antrim in Northern Ireland has been commemorated in the place of his birth. Councillor Maurice Mills, the Mayor of Ballymena unveiled a Victoria Cross memorial plaque on Thursday, 29 May 2008, in honour of the borough's three Victoria Cross recipients; Sergeant Bernard Diamond, Sir George White and Private Alexander Wright. The plaque is in Ballymena's Memorial Gardens and sits on a granite plinth in keeping with the stonework of the existing War Memorial and Cenotaph at the site on the Galgorm Road.[1]

Sergeant Bernard Diamond served with the Bengal Horse Artillery and was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1857 during the Indian Mutiny. He died in New Zealand in 1892.

Major (later Field Marshall Sir) George White was 44 years old when he was awarded the Victoria Cross in Afghanistan in 1879. He was knighted in 1886 for military service in Burma and became Commander-in-Chief, India, in 1893. He was commander of the garrison at the Siege of Ladysmith 1899–1900 and was Governor of Gibraltar 1900–1904. He was promoted field marshal in 1903 and died in the Chelsea Hospital, London, on 24 June 1912.

Private Alexander Wright was one of the first two Victoria Cross recipients to serve in Australia. He was with the 77th Regiment in the Crimean War and was awarded the Victoria Cross in the first list of recipients. On 22 March 1855, at Sebastopol he distinguished himself in repelling a sortie. On 19 April he showed great bravery at the taking of the Russian Rifle Pits and was particularly noticed for the encouragement he gave the other men while holding the Pits under very heavy fire. He was wounded in this action. He again showed great courage on 30 August 1855, and throughout the war. In mid 1857, Wright was still serving with the 77th Regiment when it was sent to Australia for garrison duty. Neither Wright nor Sergeant John Park, also of the 77th and also born in Northern Ireland, was able to attend the first presentation of the Victoria Cross at Hyde Park on 26 June 1857.

The Victoria Crosses for Wright and Park were dispatched to Australia in late 1857. The medals were probably received in Australia about the same time as the 77th received orders to move to India where the Indian Mutiny had commenced in May 1857. The medals would have been accompanied by a request that the General Officer Commanding Sydney take the earliest opportunity to present the medals in a public and formal manner.

There is no report that the Victoria Crosses awarded to Wright and Park were presented in a public and formal manner in either Sydney or India. Both medals would have been presented at the same time and while the preparations of the 77th for the move to India may have forestalled a public and formal presentation there is no reason to expect that the medals were not presented at the earliest opportunity. If a presentation was made it is most likely to have been in Sydney since the 77th was going to a war zone and it would not have anticipated that when it arrived in India there would be an opportunity for a ceremonial occasion to present medals.

1 "Bravery of Ballymena's 'VC three' set in stone", *Ballymena Times*, 2 June 2008

Soon after the 77th arrived in India the regiment was devastated by cholera. Many of the regiment died from the disease and among the fatalities were the Commanding Officer of the regiment and on 28 July 1858, Private Alexander Wright VC. If his Victoria Cross had not been presented in either Sydney or India it should have been returned to the War Office. There are a number of Victoria Crosses that were sent to India and were then returned to the War Office because the recipient had returned to Britain or was deceased. The Victoria Cross awarded to Wright was not returned which suggests that it was presented to him at the same time as Sergeant John Park received his medal.

Sergeant John Park was one of eight soldiers cited for gallantry at the Battle of Alma on 20 September 1854.[2] This was the first action in which Army personnel were awarded the Victoria Cross. In September 1858 Park was invalided to the Britain from Calcutta but returned to India in 1859. He served at various garrisons in India until 1863 but died at Allahabad on 18 May 1863 at a time when cholera was decimating British regiments stationed there. One can only assume that Sergeant Park also died of cholera. He was just 28 years of age.

Wright and Park were born in Northern Ireland, served with the 77th in Crimea, appeared in the first list of Victoria Cross recipients, served in Australia and died in India. Sadly, there is no known photo of either recipient. While they are definitely the first two Victoria Cross recipients to serve in Australia it is also likely that both were presented with their medals while stationed in Sydney.

Recent Australian Victoria Cross sales

The Victoria Cross awarded posthumously to Adelaide-born Major Peter Badcoe, Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, for three acts of gallantry in Vietnam in 1967 was sold for a hammer price of $400,000 at the Bonhams & Goodman's auction house in Double Bay on 20 May. The award was one of four awards to Australian Army Training Team Vietnam between 1965 and 1969.

The Victoria Cross Military Medal group of medals awarded to Captain George Ingram, 24th Battalion were sold at auction by Sotheby's of Melbourne for a hammer price of over $380,000. He was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry at Montbrehain, France on 5 October 1918 in the last action of the Australian infantry on the Western Front in World War 1. It was 63rd award to Australian forces in World War 1 and the 53rd for the Western Front.

The Victoria Cross and medals awarded to Private William Jackson, 17th Battalion, have been sold privately to an Australian collector, whose identity has not been revealed. The price paid is believed to be $650,000. William Jackson at 19 years and ten months was the youngest Australian awarded the Victoria Cross. His gallantry on the night of 25-26 June 1916 during a trench raid resulted in the first Victoria Cross to an Australian on the Western Front and the first awarded to the 2nd Australian Division. The medals had been auction by Noble Numismatics in Sydney in April but had failed to be sold.

2 As was common for Crimean awards, five of the soldiers including Park were commended for more than one action. Park was cited for conspicuous bravery at the Battles of Alma and Inkerman. Both Park and Wright distinguished themselves at the taking of the Russian Rifle Pits on the night of the 19 April 1855.

Victoria Cross for Canada in 1993 two years after the Victoria Cross for Australia had been instituted in 1991.

Canada, unlike Australia and New Zealand, has modified the design of its medals by adding fleurs de lis to thistle, shamrock and rose and changing the original English inscription to a Latin motto, Pro Valore. It retains its frowning lion and the royal crown. The master engraver at the Royal Canadian Mint designed the moulds and patterns using the drawings that were featured in October 2004 on a Canadian postage stamp. Natural Resources Canada created a unique metal for the Victoria Cross for Canada from piece of original Victoria Cross gunmetal, along with a copper medallion struck in 1867 to mark Confederation, plus native copper and other metals from across Canada and melted them into a special alloy, a sort of "tinny brass," one metallurgist called it. The smelt produced 65 kilograms of ingots, which were locked away and which will provide the raw material for the cross. John Dutrizac of Natural Resources helped oversee the creation of the alloy and the casting of 20 of the new crosses.

Of the 1,356 Victoria Crosses (Including three bars) 1856, 78 have been awarded to members of the Canadian military and one to the Newfoundland Regiment. The last Canadian to be awarded the VC was Hampton Gray, a Canadian navy pilot honoured posthumously after sinking a Japanese destroyer in the dying days of the Second World War. The last surviving Canadian holder of the VC, Ernest (Smokey) Smith, commended for gallantry in Italy in 1944, died in 2005.

Indian Mutiny VC - Pte Michael Murphy, 2nd Bn, Military Train

In 1856, 25 year old Tipperary born Michael Murphy joined the 2nd Battalion, Military Train. The Military Train later became the Royal Army Service Corps and is now the Royal Logistic Corps. Two years later he was in India where the Indian Mutiny had broken out in May 1857. Farrier Murphy was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry on 15 April 1858, when engaged in the pursuit of Koer Singh's Army from Azimgur, Murphy rescued Lieutenant Hamilton, Adjutant of the 3rd Sikh Cavalry who was wounded and surrounded by the enemy. He cut down several men, and, although he was severely wounded, he remained at Hamilton's side until support arrived. Lieutenant Hamilton died from his injuries the next day.

On Tuesday, 15 April 2008, 150 years to the day, soldiers from 8 Transport Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps based at Marne Barracks in Catterick, Yorkshire, who are present day descendants of Murphy's regiment, gathered at his graveside in North Road Cemetery, Darlington, to pay a special tribute to him. "Michael Murphy holds a very important place in the regimental life of the Royal Logistic Corps as one of its five VC winners," said Major Francis Nodder, Second-in-Command of 8 Transport Regiment RLC. "It is fitting that on the 150th anniversary of the action that won him this honour we should gather to pay tribute to his bravery. The regiment has refurbished the grave with new fencing and a new plaque." Members of Michael Murphy's family, community leaders and local school children also attended the remembrance and rededication service.

Sadly, Murphy has another claim to fame. He was one of the eight Victoria Cross recipients to have his award cancelled. Murphy had been sentenced to nine months' hard labour following his conviction of the theft of six bushels of oats and 12 pounds of hay. By Royal Warrant dated 5 March 1872 he became the fourth of eight recipients between 1861 and 1908 to forfeit his award. However, press reports mentioned the forfeiture but added that the rules for the Victoria Cross were later changed to exclude forfeiture and restore the listing of these eight men.

The belief that the rules for the Victoria Cross were later changed to exclude forfeiture and restore the listing of these eight men is quite common and can be found on many websites. However, the warrant for the Victoria Cross still retains the provision for forfeiture and none of the eight have had their awards restored. Similarly, the regulations of the Victoria Cross for Australia published in the *Commonwealth Gazette* on 4 February 1991 contain powers of cancellation and reinstatement.

Part 1 of the 1953 edition of the War Office *Alphabetical list of recipients of the Victoria Cross* is identical to Part 1 of the 1920 edition. Both lists cover awards from 1856 to 1914. Both list all awards for the period with an identical note at the end of each list stating: "The undermentioned, whose names are included in the preceding list, forfeited the Victoria Cross under the authority of the Royal Warrant quoted in ach case."

The National Army Museum website correctly states the position at:
http://www.national-army-museum.ac.uk/exhibitions/vc/page3.shtml

> King George V felt very strongly about the issue of forfeiture and in a letter written by his Private Secretary, Lord Stamfordham, on 26 July 1920, it was stated:
>
> 'The King feels so strongly that, no matter the crime committed by anyone on whom the VC has been conferred, the decoration should not be forfeited. Even were a VC to be sentenced to be hanged for murder, he should be allowed to wear his VC on the scaffold'.
>
> Although the monarch's power to both cancel and restore awards is still contained within the Victoria Cross warrant there have been no further awards forfeited since 1920."

From the original warrant in 1856 up until and including the amending warrant in 1920 the grounds for forfeiture were 'treason, cowardice, felony or an infamous crime'. Since 1930, no grounds have been specified only the power to "cancel or annul the award". There has always been the power to restore a forfeited award but that power has never been exercised. The eight awards forfeited have never been restored.

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