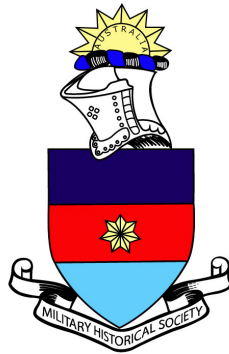


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'Uncle Stan' and the Staff Corps

Karl James*

Sir Stanley Savige, KBE CB DSO MC ED had a long and distinguished record in both world wars, but clashed with his fellow officers almost as frequently as with the enemy. He is remembered as a long-standing contributor to the feud between the militia and Staff Corps officers during the Second World War, in favour of the militia.¹ David Horner has covered the broader debate, in his article 'Staff Corps verse militia: The Australian Experience in World War II', where he highlighted the debate was mainly confined to senior officers while they were in the Middle East. With the return of the Second AIF to Australia in 1942, the debate quickly shifted to the AIF-militia rivalry.² Yet why Savige was embittered towards the Staff Corps? The answer however lies in Savige's philosophy on the role of a commander and his own bitter experiences with some members of the Staff Corps.

Gavin Long, General Editor of the official histories of Australia in the Second World War, observed Savige was loyal to his seniors and junior officers, and looked on any officer who served under him as one of his family. He did not have 'a brilliant mind – his staff invariably beat him badly at Chequers, [but] he has a gift of leadership, knowledge of men, great tact, and much commonsense.'³

Savige was born on 26 June 1890 in Morwell, and grew up in Korumburra in Gippsland Victoria. At twelve, he left school and took up his first job as a blacksmith's striker. He subsequently held a variety of casual jobs, before working in a drapery. Savige was proud of his humble origins, and these experiences formed Savige's approach and outlook on life. 'You can never really know blokes unless you have worked along side them,' he once told war correspondent John Hetherington. 'I reckon the best education I ever had was swinging a pick as one of a gang of navvies when I was a young fellow.'⁴

Savige volunteered for the First AIF on 6 March 1915, and was posted to the 24th Infantry Battalion. He served in Gallipoli, where he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, and was one of the last leave on the final night of the evacuation.⁵ In 1916, as the AIF began operations on the Western Front, he was appointed Battalion Intelligence Officer. In May he was made Brigade Intelligence Officer. Throughout the Somme offensive Savige worked on the Brigade's staff. Savige rejoined his Battalion in 1917, becoming Adjutant during Second Bullecourt. In 1918, Savige served with distinction in Persia with Dunsterforce.⁶

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¹ Billett, 'Savige, Lieutenant-General Stanley George', in Beaumont, Joan, (ed), *Australian Defence: sources and statistics*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2001, p 159.

² Horner, D M, 'Staff Corps verse militia: The Australian experience in World War II', *Defence Force Journal*, no 26, Jan/Feb 1981, p 17.

³ Australian War Memorial [AWM], AWM67, item2/27, notebook 27, pp 41-43.

⁴ *The Argus*, 17 May 1954.

⁵ National Archives of Australia [NAA], B888, item VX13, Stanley George Savige defence service record, and Savige, S G, 'Lone Pine Sector: 24th Battalion's Good-bye', *Reveille*, vol 6, no 4, 1932.

⁶ For Savige and Dunsterforce see: Savige, S G, *Stalky's Forlorn Hope*, Alexander McCubbin, Melbourne, 1920; Savige, S G and F Lord, 'The Australians of the Dunsterforce', in Burke, Keast, (ed), *With Horse and Mors in Mesopotamia: The Story of Anzacs in Asia*, Marr Committee, Sydney, 1927, pp 104-108; 'Epic of Dunsterforce', *Reveille*, December 31, 1931, and Lloyd, Ross, 'Savige saviour: Dunsterforce in Persia', *Wartime*, issue 12, Summer 2000, pp 22-27.

The Great War gave Savage an opportunity for success and advancement that must have seemed unlikely five years earlier. Despite a rudimentary education and humble origins, he earned his commission, a DSO, MC and thrice mentioned in dispatches. He also formed a life long, friendship with his old commander Brigade-General John Gellibrand.

C E W Bean considered Gellibrand to have been best teacher of young officers in the AIF.⁷ Savage moulded his own style of command from the lessons taught by Gellibrand, and years later Savage was proud to state he learnt his staff work from Gellibrand. It was Gellibrand who introduced Savage to the notion staff officers were servants of the troops.

'Well, my boy, [Gellibrand said to Savage,] I suppose you think that now you are a Staff officer you are a most important person ... [but] Never forget that the sole purpose of his appointment is that he becomes a servant of the troops.'⁸ Savage's biographer, W B Russell, believes Savage inherited a mistrust of the regular army system from Gellibrand.⁹ But it was not until the interwar period, while Savage had his own militia command that his antagonism, towards the Staff Corps took shape.

The Staff Corps was established in 1920 to provide the organisational and administrative knowledge required by modern armies. During the interwar period these professional soldiers held the staff appointments in militia battalions and regiments, while militia officers held commands. Neglected by successive federal governments, it was a frustrating time for these men who were overworked, underpaid, and with stifled promotion. Warren Perry argues this formed a remarkably strong corporate spirit among the Staff Corps, who fought to maintain their interests.¹⁰ It 'bound them up into a close corporation', observed one citizen soldier, 'so that if you touched one of them you hurt them all'.¹¹ Some Staff Corps officers resented merely serving militia officers, and instead thought the militia should serve regular officers.

One such officer may have been Major Crombie, Savage's Brigade Major in the 10th Brigade. Savage paraded Crombie on several occasions for receiving and issuing orders through staff channels without informing him. Things came to a head in May 1935, when Savage discovered Crombie issued the Brigades' training policy to all units without consulting him. For Savage, this was a clear breach of military procedure, and defied his personal philosophy that it was the commander who led, with the staff officer assisting the commander and his troops. Savage could not stand this overt threat that took his command from out of his hands. Angrily he made his position clear to his GOC, 'I command the Brigade in fact and not in theory therefore my command is active and not relegated to the passive signing of documents as presented by my Brigade Major.' Generally, Savage did not think highly of the staff corps officers, and this incident only intensified his prejudices. Our men, Savage wrote to Gellibrand, 'are taken in hand from an early age & trained only to be soldiers. In peace they are chiefly military clerks with an ability to repeat the contents of the little red books. Some of course get well beyond that stage but are few in numbers'.¹² In the small peacetime army, Savage's reputation was well known, little wonder George Vasey later described Savage as being 'under suspicion as a shooter of the Staff Corps.'¹³

⁷ AWM, 3DRL/6405, item 4, letter Bean to Gellibrand, 30 July 1943.

⁸ AWM, AWM254, item 170, GS Minute No 1 - Address given to HQ New Guinea Force Junior Staff Officers Course by Lt Gen S G Savage, CB, CBE, DSO, MC, 20 Sep 1944, p 4.

⁹ Russell, W B, *There Goes a Man: The Biography of Sir Stanley G Savage*, Longmans, Melbourne, 1959, p 189.

¹⁰ Perry, Warren, 'The Australian Staff Corps - its origin, duties and influence from October 1920 to the outbreak of the War of 1939-45', *Sabretache*, vol 36, no 4, October/December, 1995, pp 30 - 41.

¹¹ Long, Gavin, *The Final Campaigns*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1963, p 46.

¹² AWM, 3DRL/1473, item 75, Notes of conference with GOC 3Div, 9 May 1938, and letter Savage to Gellibrand, 26 May 1938.

¹³ Letter Vasey to Jess Vasey, 17 November 1940, in Horner, David, *General Vasey's War*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1992, p 74.

If Savige was suspicious of the Staff Corps before the war, his worse fears were realised during the Libyan campaign of 1941. At the outbreak of Second World War, Savige was quickly accepted as the commander of the 17th Infantry Brigade, 6th Division, enlisting on 13 October 1939.¹⁴ Ivan Chapman has described the situation within the Division as being rife with 'jostling and manoeuvring for favour' among ambitious officers vying for postings.¹⁵ More accurately, it was marked with factionalism and infighting.

When Major-General Iven Mackay became GOC 6th Division, his two principle staff officers were Lieutenant-Colonel Frank Berryman and Lieutenant-Colonel George Vasey. Both were career Staff Corps officers, and both were embittered by the mistaken belief that Government policy was that only militia officers would hold command appointments. This made them 'more firmly resolved than ever to defend [the] interests' of the Staff Corps.¹⁶ Berryman denigrated militia officers as mere 'weekend soldiers', while Vasey describing them as 'amateur soldiers'. If you want a Doctor, Vasey told Long, you go to a professional Doctor not an amateur who studies medicine on the weekends.¹⁷

During the ensuing campaign, both Berryman and Vasey were to favour Brigadier Horace 'Red Robbie' Robertson and his 19th Brigade over Savige. A fellow Staff Corps officer, Robertson's flamboyant and flashy skills as a commander have been widely praised, but Savige was unimpressed with Robertson thinking he was 'not so capable but can put it over'.¹⁸

The hostility between Berryman, Vasey, Robertson, and Savige was brought out during the battle for Bardia. Savige was not invited to the first planning conference for the attack held on 28 December 1940, despite the important role the 17th Brigade was to play, being deliberately excluded by Berryman.¹⁹ Savige was hurt and resented being slighted. The battle began on 3 January 1941, by the third day of the battle Savige's Brigade was advancing slower and meeting heavier resistance than expected, Berryman decided it had become 'disorganised and tired'. Consequently he introduced Robertson's 19th Brigade into the battle, and told Savige to halt and assign one of his infantry battalions to Robertson.²⁰ Savige was incensed and offered his resignation to Mackay who would not accept it.²¹ This was the beginning of Savige's suspicion that the staff corps was out to get him, and there was good reason for his anxiety. Vasey wrote home on several occasions Savige should be removed. 'The one snag is Stan. He's hopeless. Quite unfitted for his job and I'm trying to do something about' and 'Had Iven any real go Stan would get a bowler hat'.²²

¹⁴ NAA, B888, item VX13, Stanley George Savige defence service record. Given Savige's well-known position on the Staff Corps, it is interesting to note that only three of its officers went away with his Brigade. By the time the Brigade went into Libya only one was left, the others having been transferred, and the last staff corps officer went to the 16th Brigade after Bardia. AWM67, item 1/5, diary 5, 20 July 1944, pp 56-57.

¹⁵ Chapman, Ivan D, *Iven Mackay: Citizen and Soldier*, Melway Publishing, Melbourne, 1975, p 152.

¹⁶ Travers, B H, 'The Staff Corps – CMF conflict as seen by a young AIF officer 1940-41', *Australian War Memorial History Conference*, 1987, and Long, *To Benghazi*, p 46.

¹⁷ Sayers, Stuart, 'Lieutenant-General the Honourable Sir Edmund Herring: Joint and Allied Commander', in Horner, David, (ed), *The Commanders: Australian military leadership in the twentieth century*, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1984, pp 247-248, and AWM67, item 2/44, notebook44, pp 35-36.

¹⁸ Travers, B H, 'The Staff Corps – CMF conflict as seen by a young AIF officer 1940-41', *Australian War Memorial History Conference*, 1987, and AWM67, item 2/74, notebook 74, p 14.

¹⁹ Russell, *op cit*, p 198.

²⁰ Long, *op cit*, p 190 and p 196.

²¹ AWM67, item 1/5, diary 5, 20 July 1944, p 56.

²² Letters, 1 March and 6 January 1941, Vasey Papers, in Grey, *Australian Brass*, p 223.

The Brigade was disappointed with its performance and outcome, but Savage retained its confidence and support.²³ The rest of the Libyan Campaign frustrated and disappointed Savage. During the capture of Tobruk the 17th Brigade was used piece-meal with its components being dispersed over a wide area, and as a pool of reinforcements for other brigades.²⁴ Mackay had promised the 17th Brigade would lead the way to Derna, but when the time came the 19th Brigade was sent through. Vasey had chosen Robertson to lead the advance and not Savage.²⁵ This drove 'the iron of suspicion deeper' into Savage's soul.²⁶ When the 17th Brigade reached Giovanni Berta, it was again halted on the road in order to allow the 19th Brigade to lead the way to Barce. By now Savage had had enough. He called his Battalion commanders together and asked them whether they thought his presence was a hindrance. 'They protested and said that they were behind him. "Every man in the Bde [Brigade] knows what the racket is ... and they are behind you".'²⁷ Savage was a modest man but he was proud and super-sensitive.²⁸ He keenly felt he was being victimised by the Staff Corps, who were only interested in looking after the interests of its members. He was sure 'the Divisional staff did all it could to advance the prestige of Robertson'.²⁹

Unhappy, suspicious and increasingly bitter, Savage retained command of his Brigade for another two campaigns; first in Greece during April, and the battle for Damour during the Syrian campaign in July. In December Savage was recalled to Australia, and during 1942 commanded the 3rd Division shaping it into an effective frontline force that he led during the Salamaua campaign in 1943. During the Salamaua campaign an incident occurred that revealed Savage's philosophy about himself and his strengths and weakness as a commander. The commander of the US task force operating in the area approached Savage appealing for help in dealing with their supply problems. The US officer recalled 'Savage would not talk about supply. He waved his hand airily and said, "I don't worry about supply problems – I leave that to others. I fight battles."³⁰

In Savage's mind, the commander would train his men, look after their comfort and moral, and lead them in battle. 'The sight of the well-loved general toiling along the rugged tracks', David Dexter wrote, 'with his pack up and observing the battle area from the forward observation posts gave a great boost to the spirits of the men. As he moved through the units tin pannikins of tea were offered in such numbers that he could drink no more.'³¹ A slow and gruelling campaign, it was the type of war best suited to Savage where the General's contribution was in personal inspiration and concern for his troops' welfare. It was his concern for the troops that earned him the nickname 'Uncle Stan'. Savage worked closely with his subordinates, regularly conferring with his staff and local commanders. This could only be done, Savage said, 'because of the wonderful team spirit which the difficulties of the day produced ... we were all "Mates" in a team, and the plan to obtain victory was the outcome of discussions on levels from Company Commander to Divisional Command'.³²

These were his strengths. Savage's weakness was his limited interpretation of generalship and his difficulties in grasping the techniques of modern warfare. The 'others', to whom he would leave

²³ See AWM, 3DRL/6850, item 100, letter Brock to Mackay, 11 January 1941; letter Godfrey to Brock, 8 January 1941, letter Walker to Brock, 8 January 1941, and letter Cremor to CRC 6 Div, 8 January 1941.

²⁴ Long, *op cit*, p 218 and p 235.

²⁵ Chapman, *op cit*, p 204.

²⁶ Russell, *op cit*, p 211.

²⁷ AWM67, item 1/5, diary 5, 20 July 1944, p 56.

²⁸ Harding, Eric, Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Savage KBE, CB, DSO, MC, ED and Legacy, (the author), Melbourne, 1971, p 1.

²⁹ AWM67, item 1/5, diary 5, 20 July 1944, p 58.

³⁰ AWM67, item 1/5, diary 5, 7 July 1944, pp 49-50.

³¹ Dexter, David, *The New Guinea Offensives*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1961, p 188, and Russell, *op cit*, p 271.

³² AWM, 3DRL/2529, item 126, Australia in the War of 1939-45. Notes by Lt-Gen Sir Stanley Savage, on Vol V, Wau-Salamaua Campaign April-August 1943, chapter VII, p 2.

supply problems and the like, were his skilled and talented staff officers, such as his chief of staff Lieutenant-Colonel John Wilton. It was no accident Savige had a good staff. General Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief Australian Military Forces and a close personal friend, was 'well aware of Savige's military failings ... and always kept an outstanding staff officer close to him,'³³

With the return of the Second AIF the regular verse citizen soldier debate changed its emphasis to AIF verse militia. With the expansion of the AMF, personalities and egos were more readily accommodated, consequently when Savige took his Division into battle during the Salamaua Campaign, and then the II Australian Corps on Bougainville, he worked with Staff Corps officers who suited his temperament. Savige thought no 'adjectives [were] too good' to describe Wilton.³⁴ Savige thought his principle staff officers during the Bougainville Campaign, Brigadiers Ragnar Garrett and 'Roly' Pulver were 'outstandingly good'. Savige also worked closely with Major-General William Bridgeford, commander of the 3rd Division.³⁵ Savige's close relationship with these regular officers suggest his hostility towards the Staff Corps was not directed against all, but was based on personal experience and personality clashes. After all, Savige had had a spectacular clash with Lieutenant-General Ned Herring GOC New Guinea Force during the Salamaua campaign and he was a militia officer.

Savige survived the war, and was honoured with a KBE, a CB and again mentioned in despatches. Savige's final public shot in the militia – Staff Corps rivalry was a statement made to Melbourne's *Herald* in May 1946. Savige thought the Duntroon system had failed during the war, evident from the high percentage of Duntroon graduates who not only failed as Commanders but also inefficient Staff Officers.

By their general attitude and actions a large number indicated their complete misconception and understanding of the frame work, role or spirit of Australia's National Army. They lived in a world apart and their attitude and actions indicated clearly an enforced toleration of their citizen colleagues. This was carried forward to and throughout the war.³⁶

It is clear Savige's role in the Staff Corps – Militia debate was fuelled by his own bitter experiences with some Staff Corps officers. Savige knew war: he had seen it, fought it, and had successfully commanded men. He did not need some clerk to tell him how to fight, or worse, how to lead men. Savige felt the Staff Corps, were only concerned with furthering the interests of its members. This was a suspicion that first appeared in the late 1930s and confirmed during the Libyan campaign. Savige truly believed he had been victimised by the machinations of the Staff Corps. Curiously enough, Savige's good relationships with many regular officers while campaigning in the Pacific suggest personalities were also important. A Staff Corps officer might be all right, so long as they knew Savige was in command.

³³ Hetherington, John, *Blamey Controversial Soldier: A biography of Field Marshal Sir Thomas Blamey, GBE, KCB, CMG, DSO, ED*, The Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1973, p 315.

³⁴ AWM, AWM172, item 13, interview Savige with Dexter, 10 April 1951, p 2.

³⁵ AWM, 3DRL/2529, item 128, Australia in the war of 1939-45. Notes by Lt-Gen Sir Stanley Savige on vol VII, chapter 4, The Bougainville campaign takes shape, pp 6-7.

³⁶ 3DRL/0357, Statement made to Melbourne 'Herald' by Savige on the subject of Duntroon and the Military Board, *S G Savige papers*.



The Forlorn Hope and Australia

Clem Sargent

The extract from *The Sharpe Companion* on the role of the Forlorn Hope, which appeared in the December 2003 issue of *Sabretache*, recalls Australian connections with the Forlorn Hope at one of the most famous, and bloodiest, actions of the Peninsular War – the assault on the breach of the fortress city of Badajoz on the night of 6 April 1812.

On the Princes Highway, about 33 kms from the Victorian- South Australian border, at the turn-off to the village of Dartmoor, there is a tourist marker to an historic site, Fort O'Hare. Surveyor-General Major Thomas L Mitchell, during his exploration of Australia Felix, as he termed this region of south western Victoria, on 18 August 1836, instructed his Second-in-Command, Assistant Surveyor Stapleton, to occupy the round point of a hill on the north side of the junction of the later-named Glenelg and Crawford Rivers. This point Mitchell 'named Fort O'Hare in the memory of a truly brave soldier, my Commanding Officer who fell at Badajoz in leading the forlorn hope of the Light Division in the storm'.³⁷

Mitchell had been gazetted an Ensign in the 1/95th, the Rifle Regiment (after Waterloo the Rifle Brigade), on 24 July 1811 and his company commander, Major Peter O'Hare was already a regimental hero. Commissioned a lieutenant in January 1797 in the 69th Regiment, reputedly from the ranks, O'Hare transferred to the 'Experimental Corps of Riflemen' in March 1800. It in turn became 'a Corps of Riflemen' on 11 October 1800 and, on 18 January 1803, the 95th or Rifle Regiment. O'Hare had served with the Rifles in South America, Sweden, and in the Iberian Peninsula, in the retreat to Corunna and seven other engagements before going to his death in the breach at Badajoz with the words 'A Lieutenant Colonel or cold meat in a few hours'.³⁸

Another Rifles officer, Lieutenant James Marshal Stokes, who also fell with O'Hare and the stormers at the breach, had been commemorated by Mitchell four days previously when, on 14 August, he gave the name 'Stokes' to a river which flows into the Glenelg River about four kms north of Dartmoor.

The name Fort O'Hare has never come into general usage and, unfortunately, the depot site can not be accessed from the Princes Highway and Dartmoor as it lies on the opposite bank of the junction of the Glenelg and Crawford Rivers.

Even so the relationship of Mitchell with both O'Hare and Stokes is preserved in the Appin district of New South Wales where Mitchell named two creeks passing through his property there, headwaters of the Georges River, O'Hare Creek and Stokes Creek. These titles are still current, preserving for posterity the memory of two gallant officers who fell with the Forlorn Hope in the breach at Badajoz.

³⁷ Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, 1839, *Journal of three expeditions into the interior of eastern Australia*, Vol II, T & W Booth, London, P. 220.

³⁸ Colonel Willoughby Verner, 1912, *History & campaigns of The Rifle Brigade*, John Bale, Sons and Danielson, London, Chap.VII.



Rabaul 1942: the Sacrifice of John Eshott Carr (1922-1942)

Paul A Rosenzweig¹

Anzac Day may mark Australia's birth as a nation, but the sacrifice of young Australians on islands like Ambon, New Britain and Timor forged our sense of identity with the Southeast Asian region. In the Dardanelles in 1915, Australians had established an international identity, which was reinforced at Pozières and then a quarter of a century later in the Western Desert. But in 1941-42, young Australians stood firm in the path of Japanese expansionism, resolute and steadfast in their role of blunting, if not actually stopping, the Japanese advance on Australia itself. Entire groups of defenders were massacred, whole battalions were taken into captivity – and War Cemeteries on neighbouring islands remain as mute testimony to their sacrifice.

Perhaps the most poignant of these memorials are the shrines and large bronze plaques bearing the names of Australian Service personnel with no known grave – erected to honour those who could not be accorded the dignity of an honourable burial and an individual marked grave. The newest of these shrines is a small monument in Ballarat Botanical Gardens, unveiled in February 2004. One of those young Australians denied a formal, identified resting place was John Eshott Carr from Tasmania, whose name is listed both at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and in the Rabaul War Cemetery. Interestingly, his sacrifice is also recalled by a 1939-45 Memorial Plaque in Holy Trinity Church at Cressy in Tasmania, with which his foster-father Lieutenant Colonel Robert Thirkell MBE VD had a significant association.

Genealogy

John Carr was born in Singapore in the Malay States on 21 June 1922, the son of Cedric Errol Carr and his wife Nellie (nee Twiff). The family moved to Tasmania but soon after, when John was aged 4 years, Cedric Carr divorced his wife and was awarded custody of his son. Nellie Twiff returned to Mt Pleasant in Singapore, and John Carr lived with his father in East Melbourne, Victoria. In 1930, John Carr was sent back to Tasmania to live with his aunt Stella (his mother's sister) and her husband Captain R W M Thirkell and, at Cedric Carr's request, Robert Thirkell became the legal Trustee and Guardian of young John. Cedric Carr died in New Guinea in 1937 and John Carr, then aged 15, was legally adopted by Robert and Stella Thirkell.

Robert Mowbray Winston Thirkell OBE VD (1890-1954) was the descendent of a north Tasmania pioneer family from Woodstock near Longford. In 1850, Thirkell's predecessors had built the original St James' Chapel on the family property – a private chapel established for the family's own use and for the people connected with them (whenever a clergyman was available) and for conducting family services at other times. Following the establishment of the Anglican Parish of Cressy in Northern Tasmania in 1858, the Thirkell family transferred St James' Chapel and its land to the Diocese of Cressy on 14 May 1866. This chapel, together with the family burial ground, was consecrated on 30 October 1867.

Born in Richmond, Tasmania on 13 February 1890, Robert Thirkell saw active service in the Great War at Gallipoli and in France as an officer with the 3rd Australian Field Company Engineers, and then with the 12th Battalion AIF. For his war service with the 12th Battalion,

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Captain Thirkell was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the Military Division (MBE) in 1919². He was also awarded the Colonial Auxiliary Forces Officers' Decoration for 20 years' commissioned service in the Militia (with war service counting double); this decoration had superseded the Volunteer Decoration in 1908, but the unfortunate post-nominals 'VD' were retained.

War service

At Fort Direction in Tasmania on 25 June 1940, John Carr volunteered for service with the Australian Military Forces – “for the duration of the war and one year thereafter”. He was aged 18, and he gave his occupation as Clerk. Interestingly, he stated his next-of-kin to be his mother Nellie Gilmore (nee Twiff) of 168 Mt Pleasant, Singapore. He was allotted to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery with the rank of Gunner, and with the Service number TP10735³. The 'T' prefix to his Service number represents the State of enlistment (Tasmania), and the 'P' prefix indicates that he was a member of the Permanent Force – not the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), which had an 'X' prefix. Gunner Carr was allocated to the 7th Heavy Battery RAA, commanded by Captain Mark Sydney Pritchard.

The following year, Carr enlisted in East Melbourne, Victoria on 22 February for war service within Australia or abroad. He was allocated to the 'Special Force Tropical Services', which was later designated as 'Tropical Coastal Defence Unit'. Meanwhile, at the Singapore Conference of February 1941, the Australian War Cabinet promised to send an AIF battalion to Rabaul on the island of New Britain to assist in its defence if the Japanese entered the war. Accordingly, the Coastal Defence Unit became 'L' Heavy Battery, commanded by Major James Rowland Purcell Clark, a Clerk from New Town in Tasmania.

This battery was among several auxiliary troops dedicated to support the 2/22nd Battalion AIF of the 23rd Infantry Brigade (under the command of Brigadier Edward Lind CBE), of the 8th Australian Division. The 2/22nd Battalion Group AIF, known operationally as 'Lark Force', was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Howard Hammond Carr ED – no relation to Gunner John Carr of 'L' Heavy Battery.

Coastal Defence

In March 1941 the 2/22nd Battalion Group, with 'L' Heavy Battery, deployed to Rabaul. The force also possessed a medical company from the 2/10th Field Ambulance, and an anti-aircraft battery and the 17th Anti-Tank Battery which joined it later in the year, and on Rabaul was supplemented by the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. John Carr qualified as a Signaller (Trade Group II) on 14 August 1941.

Lark Force was one of three such forces deployed to the north of Australia to confront and stall the Japanese: 'Gull Force' (the 2/21st Battalion Group AIF) deployed to Ambon, and 'Sparrow Force' (the 2/40th Battalion Group AIF) went to the island of Timor. The names of these forces carried a particular irony – one officer captured on Ambon later suggested that the operational name of the brigade as a whole should have been 'the Shags' for the way the individual battalion groups were stuck out on 'rocks' outside the secure perimeter without support.

² London Gazette, 3 June 1919, p.7005; Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, 6 October 1919, p.1464.

³ Carr was not originally recorded as a Tasmanian Gunner (<http://www.vision.net.au/~pwood/1939.htm>, 'Tasmanian Gunner's Honour Roll'), but this was remedied in a special edition of the Artillery News (1 January 2004): "Whilst we are unable to alter the information in previously published works we can amend our Internet history and draw the attention of our gunner fraternity to the fact that we have found another of our 'lost' comrades-in-arms".



This plaque in Lions Park at Stockton, Newcastle recalls the transfer of Fort Wallace's 6-inch coastal guns to 'L' Heavy Battery at Praed Point, Rabaul. The lion is one of a pair relocated to Stockton from Singleton Army base.

Major John Turner MBE later wrote:

This was the best Australia could do to try and defend the 'stepping stones' from Asia, and thereby our northern coasts. But, of course, islands, defended only by small numbers of troops in fixed defences, with virtually no air support, and the loss of the sealanes – are doomed when invested by a determined and powerful enemy.⁴

The veterans of these forces, those who survived three and a half years' brutal captivity, recognise that in each case an inadequate force was sent to a remote outpost, with no provision

⁴ Major J M Turner MBE, retd (ex-2/21st Battalion Group AIF), Mufti, 30 April 1968.

for reinforcement or evacuation. One former member of Gull Force recalled, "*We called ourselves 'The Lost Battalion'. And they sure lost us, didn't they?*"⁵. Others see the episode as one of political ineptitude and poor strategic planning. Others felt betrayed by the politicians of the time, feeling that their deployments were based on political decisions, not military appreciations. In their more bitter moments however, some came to recognise that there was no ineptitude – seeing the deployment of Gull, Lark and Sparrow Forces as a deliberate and calculated strategy of sacrifice, to purchase a delay with human lives.

'L' Heavy Battery was established at Praed Point at Rabaul, its coastal defence guns overlooking the entrance from St George's Channel to the various harbours (Blanche Bay, Matupi Harbour, Keravia Bay and Simpson Harbour). It became known as 'Rabaul Heavy Battery' or 'Praed Point Heavy Battery', and was equipped with two 6-inch BL (breech-loading) Mark VII guns. These were not naval guns however, as described in the Department of Information handbook *Pacific Victory* published soon after the war. They were 6-inch coastal guns which had originally been installed at Fort Wallace at Stockton in Newcastle when the fort was built in 1913, and were removed in April 1939 when Fort Wallace had more modern 9.2-inch guns installed.

Fort Wallace had its origins in the 'Russian scare' of the late 19th century, when the threat of Russian naval attack prompted the construction of a series of fortifications along the coast of New South Wales. In Newcastle, Fort Scratchley opened in 1882 with two mounted 6-inch guns on Flagstaff Hill on the mainland, overlooking the city and the mouth of the Hunter River. Fort Wallace was established across the harbour, also with two 6-inch coastal guns, to cover the harbour and beaches in the Newcastle area. The Fort Wallace guns were dated 1901 and bore the 'VR' cipher of Queen Victoria. One had the markings "Empl Fort Wallace 2nd Mil District, Newcastle Defences No.1420", and the other "Empl Stockton Aust No.1420".

During World War 2, Fort Wallace (with its new 9.2-inch guns) was linked to a series of beach defences around Stockton, comprising machine-gun emplacements, barbed wire entanglements, searchlights and cement anti-tank traps. There were also two anti-aircraft batteries: 'Link' Battery (near the current golf course) and 'Wave' Battery (behind the wave trap). In addition, 'Dune' Battery (beside Corroba Oval) defended Fort Wallace with its two 3-pounder guns. Fort Scratchley was one of the few gun installations in eastern Australia that had an opportunity to fire against an adversary – at about 2.15 am on 8 June 1942, when Japanese submarine I-21 (Captain Kanji Matsumura) shelled the Newcastle shipyards. The submarine crossed Stockton Bight and, from a position about 9 kilometres northeast of Newcastle, fired 34 shells at the Newcastle shipyards at Carrington, the BHP Works at Kooragang Island and the coal ship *Iron Knight* moored at the steelworks docks. The Fort Scratchley guns returned fire with 4 rounds⁶.

Today, Fort Scratchley is a museum and its 9.2-inch guns are fired by volunteers on commemorative occasions such as Australia Day. Across the harbour, a plaque in Norm Bassan MBE Lions Park at Stockton (opened on 11 January 1975) recalls the early presence of Fort Wallace and the transfer of its guns to Rabaul. The plaque is overlooked by a pair of stone lions which came from Singleton Army base, which apparently had been located at an Army barracks in Malaya from the end of the war until the 1960s.

The transfer of the Fort Wallace 6-inch guns to Rabaul was approved by the Australian War Cabinet, and they were installed at Rabaul in July 1941. Then in December, just days after Japan entered the war, the Chiefs of Staff in Australia considered the prospects for New Britain and conceded that a Japanese attack would be beyond the capacity of the garrison to resist. However,

5 Mr L J Penny (ex-2/21st Battalion Group AIF), pers comm, 25 July 1996.

6 I-21 was later sunk by an American vessel, in February 1944 near the Gilbert Islands in the Pacific.

it was decided that Lark Force would not be reinforced and would not be withdrawn - but there was a compulsory evacuation of all European women and children. On 1 January 1942, Colonel J J Scanlon DSO, Commander Headquarters New Guinea Area, directed that there would be no withdrawal.

Invasion

The island of New Britain, the largest and most important in the Bismarck Archipelago, was formerly a German possession. Rabaul had been the scene of the first fighting by Australian troops in the 1914-18 War, when they seized the German wireless station – on the site of which now stands a War Cemetery. In 1941, Rabaul was the capital of the Australian Mandated Territory of New Guinea, the Australian Army's 8th Military District. Lark Force's mission on New Britain was to garrison the outpost and to protect the seaplane anchorages and airfields at Vunakanau and Lakunai on Gazelle Peninsula at the northern end of the island.

Rabaul was attacked by 22 Japanese bomber aircraft on 4 January 1942 – the first enemy bombs to fall on Australian territory in the war. There were further bombing and reconnaissance flights preceding the invasion of New Britain by the Japanese South Seas Force (*Nankai Shitai*, drawn from the 55th Division) on 20 January 1942. There was an intense bombing raid by 120 aircraft just after midnight, followed by landings by the 144th Infantry Regiment at Keravia Bay and Simpson Harbour. Some 17,000 men landed, opposed by a defending force of 76 officers, 6 nurses and 1,314 Other Ranks. The defenders were pushed out of Rabaul by daylight; many fled inland and many surrendered.

On 22 January, Praed Point Heavy Battery suffered an intense bombing raid by 45 aircraft. It was then overrun by I Battalion of the 144th Infantry Regiment, and by 23 January Rabaul was in Japanese hands. Some 400 of the defending force managed to escape to Australia. The remaining survivors were taken into captivity, and at Tol Plantation about 160 Australian soldiers were massacred by the Japanese after surrendering.

On 18 April 1942, John Carr was officially listed as Missing (with effect 25 January 1942). In May 1943, his foster-father, Lieutenant Colonel Thirkell of Land Headquarters in Melbourne wrote to District Base Records seeking clarification of John Carr's status. In response, Tasmanian Lines of Communication Records Office (Tasmania Force) formally advised Thirkell that Gunner Carr had nominated his mother as his next-of-kin on his attestation papers, and details could only be released to her. Carr's mother was noted as being resident in Singapore however, and owing to the occupation of that city by the Japanese it had not possible to advise her that her son had been posted as "missing". Accordingly, Thirkell was advised, Carr's name had not yet been released in a Press Casualty List⁷.

Captivity

Those captured at Rabaul were put to forced labour in the Blanche Bay area, living in unsanitary conditions and subject to brutal treatment by their the Imperial Japanese Army guards. After John Carr was officially posted as missing, in 1943 Colonel Thirkell alluded to the hope that his foster-son might still be alive: "*We have had no news regarding his fate, except from unofficial sources with effect that he got away from Rabaul and was last seen at a village in New Britain, near Rabaul, on 1 February 1942*"⁸. This hope was futile however. John Carr was a prisoner of

⁷ Tasmanian Lines of Communication Records Office (Tasmania Force), letter to Lieutenant Colonel R W M Thirkell dated 21 May 1943.

⁸ Lieutenant Colonel R W M Thirkell, letter to District Base Records in Melbourne dated 4 May 1943.

the Japanese for just six months – he died at sea on 1 July 1942, locked in the hold of a cargo ship which sank off the Philippines coast, torpedoed by an American submarine.

The Rabaul Prisoner-of-War Camp was handed over to the Imperial Japanese Navy in May 1942. On 22 June, the prisoners were taken aboard a Japanese cargo ship for transfer to another Prisoner-of-War Camp on Hainan Island, off the South China Coast. Their transport was the 7,267 ton SS *Montevideo Maru*, formerly a passenger cargo freighter, which had been chartered as a naval auxiliary. As well as members of Lark Force, the *Montevideo Maru* carried 133 Australian soldiers of the 1st Independent Company (captured whilst trying to escape by sea from Kavieng on the day of the invasion) and 30 Scandinavian seamen from the MV *Herstein* (the last vessel to enter Rabaul before the invasion). Between 1942 and 1945, over 120,000 Allied prisoners were transported in ‘hellships’ such as the *Montevideo Maru* – there were a total of 156 voyages undertaken by 134 ships, with a total of 21,039 fatalities.

On 1 July 1942, as the *Montevideo Maru* made passage for the Chinese coast, she was struck by two torpedoes on her starboard quarter, fired by the American submarine USS *Sturgeon* (SS187) operating out of Fremantle, Western Australia. Of the 1,053 prisoners on board, which included 208 civilians and missionaries, there were no survivors. The incident was recorded in the Log Book of USS *Sturgeon*, although the fact that she was carrying Allied prisoners was apparently not known at that time. The Japanese Navy Department reported the sinking to the Prisoner of War Information Bureau in Japan on 6 January 1943 and provided a complete nominal roll of those onboard – but this roll received no attention until it was discovered by Australian officer in the files of the Bureau in September 1945.

Gunner John Carr, aged 20, was one of the 845 military prisoners who perished. For the duration of the war however, John Carr was officially listed as ‘Missing-in-Action, presumed dead’. After the *Montevideo Maru* nominal roll was discovered in Japan, its existence was officially reported on 6 October and telegrams notifying families were sent immediately after. On 19 October, John Carr was formally recorded as ‘Became missing 1 July 1942, for official purposes presumed dead’. Tasmania Echelon and Records issued his Certificate of Death (Presumption) in January 1946.

As a final bureaucratic action, those who had been members of the Permanent Forces at the time of their deployment to Rabaul (which was at that time Australian territory) were retrospectively granted AIF status. In 1947, Colonel Thirkell was advised by 2nd Echelon Army Headquarters that John Carr had been granted AIF status with effect from 22 February 1941, with the Service number TX4362 (the ‘X’ denoting AIF):

*Action has been taken by the Department of the Army to grant AIF status retrospectively to members of the Permanent Military Forces and Citizen Military Forces who were serving with the Garrison at Rabaul at the time of the Japanese landing and who were captured or died in the subsequent operations.*⁹

Commemoration

John Carr was posthumously awarded the 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star and War Medal, 1939-45 (all with impressed naming). He was entitled to the Australian Service Medal, 1939-45 but this was not claimed. John Carr’s service is honoured by the Rabaul 1942-45 Memorial on the shores of Simpson Harbour at Rabaul, which was unveiled on 16 September 1993 to commemorate all Australian forces who served in East New Britain. The memorial was buried in the 1994 volcanic eruptions, but in late 2002 was excavated and placed on top of an elevated plinth.

9 2nd Echelon Army Headquarters, letter to Lieutenant Colonel R W M Thirkell dated 15 August 1947.

Carr's tragic death on 1 July 1942 is commemorated by an adjacent monument, honouring those members of Lark Force who embarked on the Naval auxiliary *Montevideo Maru* and were lost at sea. Six decades after this tragic event, a Montevideo Maru Monument was unveiled in Ballarat Botanical Gardens on 7 February 2004, within the precinct of the Australian ex-POWs Memorial (listing over 35,000 names) which was unveiled the previous day.

More specifically, John Carr is listed by name on Panel 21 of the Australian War Memorial Commemorative Wall in Canberra, and Panel 6 of the Rabaul Memorial in the Rabaul (*Bita Paka*) War Cemetery in Papua-New Guinea. The Rabaul Memorial commemorates 1,224 members of the RAAF and the Australian Army (including personnel of the New Guinea and Papuan local forces and constabulary) who lost their lives in New Britain and New Ireland in January and February 1942, and in New Britain from November 1944 to August 1945, and who have no known grave. This is the largest single list of its kind from any battle area in which Australians fought in Papua New Guinea between 1942 and 1945.

At home, a memorial plaque in granite in Holy Trinity Church at Cressy, Tasmania honours the memory of those who gave their lives in the 1939-1945 War. John Carr's foster-father Robert Thirkell had a significant connection with Holy Trinity Church, his family having donated St James' Chapel in 1866. Further, Thirkell was the son of George Frederick Thirkell and Lucilla Kate – the daughter of the first Rector of Cressy's Holy Trinity Church¹⁰, the Reverend James Marsh Norman (1828-1904) and his wife Tessie. Reverend Norman was Curate from 1851 to 1862, and Rector from 1862 to 1900, and a stained glass window of Saint Simeon in Holy Trinity Church today honours the memory of James and Tessie Norman.

Robert Thirkell served during World War 2 as a Lieutenant Colonel (Citizens' Military Forces), on full-time duty from 27 October 1941. He was attached to Movements Branch, Land Headquarters (General List, Special Duties), and from August 1942 until October 1945 he operated independently in support of the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU). Specifically, he was responsible for lugger operations (provision and movement) and shell currency fishing operations in the Far North Queensland and Torres Strait Area (including Townsville, Cairns, Horn Island and Thursday Island) and in New Guinea (Merauke).

Following the war, the Thirkells resided at 'Leverington' via Cressy in Tasmania (across the river from 'Darlington'). Based on his recollections from his own military service and the loss of his foster-son in Rabaul, and the almost four years of uncertainty about John Carr's fate, Robert Thirkell personally carried out major renovations to St James' Chapel, after it had sat vacant and unused for thirty years since closing in 1919. Thirkell's labours bore fruit in 1949, when the old chapel re-opened as the Church of St James in Darlington Park (Parish of Cressy).

Thirkell's mother Lucilla died in 1950, and his father George in 1951, and Robert Thirkell himself died in 1954. Major renovations to Cressy Holy Trinity Church were carried out in 1956, largely funded by bequests from Robert Thirkell and his father. In a commemoration service held on 3 June 1956, a new pulpit was dedicated in memory of George and Lucilla Thirkell, and a Hymn Board was dedicated in memory of Robert Thirkell MBE VD.

Cressy Holy Trinity Church now houses a significant family memorial – a stained glass window honouring Rector James Norman and his wife Tessie, a pulpit in memory of their daughter Lucilla and her husband George Thirkell, a Hymn Board in memory of Robert Thirkell, and a

¹⁰ Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Cressy was built between April 1857 and March 1858 (consecrated 19 May 1858), replacing an earlier building of 1838-44. A lengthy chancel, porch with boarded gable, and shingled fleche were added in 1894. It is an attractive building in richly coloured red brick, set in an attractive churchyard.

1939-1945 War Memorial Plaque in tribute to John Carr and those other Tasmanians who gave their lives in the war. Meanwhile, John Carr's name is honoured in the War Cemetery in Rabaul, one of Kipling's 'Silent Cities'. The 'inhabitants' of this city, originally gathered in the imperial tradition within 'a hollow square' after battle to be counted and acquitted against the nominal roll, are all acknowledged by individual headstones. Those whose bodies could not be recovered, trapped within the wreck of the *Montevideo Maru*, are honoured by commemorative plaques and now, a specific memorial in Australia.

Collectively such memorials, our 'obligation to past sacrifices', serve three purposes. Firstly, they pay public tribute to the individuals who lost their lives. Secondly, the Cross of Sacrifice which dominates the War Cemetery is their insurance for the future, reflecting Christendom's belief in resurrection. And thirdly, they remind us today that these men and women of an earlier generation bought for us a freedom and security that they themselves were denied.

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The Queenscliff Mysteries 1942

Bill Billett

The *Geelong Advertiser* of 7 July 1990 carried an article by local writer Jack Loney on German and Japanese activities in Bass Strait. He mentioned a 1938 Japanese naval chart of the Geelong region that an army private had found in a tunnel at Rabaul. Jack also mentioned the mysterious activities around the Australian coastline, and the possibility that they could be linked to a surprise attack. 1942 was a dark period in Australia's history. Following the attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941, and the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, suspicious activities were kept quiet in order to prevent the spread of alarm and despondency. In his article Jack also mentioned the death of Private John Hulston on 1 September 1942.

During 1996 and 1997 I was involved in some research for two projects, the Old Melbourne Goal's exhibition *Love, Leave and Larrikins*, and also some work for entries on military topics in a forthcoming Encyclopedia of Melbourne. During this work I recalled the article by Jack Loney and decided to try to discover if the Queenscliff mysteries were ever solved. However, the research had to be postponed until after my book *War Trophies* (Kangaroo Press, East Rowville NSW, 199), was published.

To set the scene for the shooting of John Joseph Hulston, and to expand on Jack Loney's Japanese involvement theories, a few little know facts deserve to be mentioned. Japanese reconnaissance did take place in Australia prior to the entry of Japan into the Second World War of 1939-1945. Major Sei Hashida of the Japanese General Staff had visited Australia in 1941 on a questionable mission. He arrived at Brisbane in January 1941. His stated purpose for the visit was to investigate wool, metal and other industries. During his time in Australia he travelled extensively, noting his activities in a diary.

After leaving Australia via Singapore Hashida was arrested by the Dutch in Batavia. His diary and other papers were taken from him, and sent to Australia. Hashida was sent back to Japan. Entries in the diary confirm that Hashida was engaged in espionage activities during his visit. At Sydney he studied the Harbour Bridge and its measurements. He also noted naval bases and the Qantas landing area. It is also recorded that he made an appreciation of beach landing areas. He watched troops embarking in the *Aquitania* on 1 February 1942, and on the *Queen Mary* on the 2nd. From Sydney he travelled around the coast by bus to Melbourne arriving on the 11th, making notes as he went. At Melbourne he was briefed that there were military areas around the coast and that access to these were denied to him. In spite of this Hashida travelled on the Geelong Road on 13th making notes on 'Routes, Flying Fields, Terrain, anchorages, Double rail track'. After leaving Melbourne Hashida went on to Adelaide, Perth, Port Headland, Broome and Wyndham, then on to Darwin, recording items of strategic interest all the way. He left Australia from Darwin in early March.

After his arrest in Batavia, Hashida's diary revealed the military information he obtained and the names of Japanese nationals, [agents?] he had met, and any counter espionage measures taken against him. He also had five sketch maps of ports, harbours and other installations on him. Were the 1942 bombing raids on Broome, Port Headland, Darwin and Wyndham, selected as targets based on Hashida's reconnaissance?

We now move on to February 1942, when aerial reconnaissance over Sydney and Melbourne took place. On the night of 17 February the Japanese long-range reconnaissance submarine I-25 surfaced some distance from Sydney. Pilot, Flying Warrant Officer Nobuo Fujita was catapulted off the deck in his tiny Yokosuka E14Y1 (Glen) floatplane. He then flew over Sydney during the

night noting the ships in the harbour and the defences. The aircraft was housed in a watertight hangar attached to the conning tower of the I Class submarines. After surfacing the aircraft was pulled out of the hangar and assembled, then placed on a catapult for launching. After returning to the submarine, the aircraft was hoisted back aboard by a crane, stripped down and placed in the hangar.

Two hours prior to dawn on 26 February, the I-25 launched Fujita near Cape Wickham, at the northern tip of King Island. Fujita and his observer, Shoji Okuda, flew northwards to Cape Otway, and then along the coast to a point just west of the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse where he turned inland and headed for Melbourne. He crossed the coast around dawn, noting the new gun positions, and then flew over Portarlington, Laverton, Williamstown dockyards and Melbourne. Once again he was looking for warships and defence installations. After flying over Melbourne he flew over the beachside suburbs down the Mornington Peninsula to Cape Shank then back to Cape Wickham. For full details of Fujita's flights see David Jenkins *Battle Surface*, Sydney, 1992. The I-25 repeated similar flights over Hobart, then New Zealand, Fiji and Samoa. All ports and harbours, and their defences, were of great interest to the Japan, and indeed Germany. Submarine and unidentified aircraft sightings, in and over Bass Strait, during the early part of the war are too numerous to mention here. German raiders also operated in the area.

We next move on to 28/29 May 1942 when Driver Arthur Roy Willis, V160322, a soldier from 3 Reserve Battalion was murdered, two days before midget submarines were launched from the decks of specially modified I-25 submarines to attack Sydney harbour on the night of 31 May/1 June. Willis had obtained special leave to go to visit a lawyer in Geelong. Willis had been a member of the AIF in the First World War (1914-1918). Between the wars he owned and operated a bus service at Casterton. He had arranged with another soldier, Michael Green, who owned his own car and had also obtained leave, to give him a lift back to Lonsdale Bight Camp that night. 44 years old Willis had known Green from the First World War. They were friends, and Willis carried a photograph taken during the war, of himself and Green, on the night he was shot.

After his business was completed with the lawyer, Willis met up with a female friend from Casterton and went for a meal at George's café. After the meal he went back to Orchard Street and ordered a taxi to take him to the East Geelong tram Terminus, where he was to meet Green between 2 to 6am. Green did not pass the tram terminus, he took a wrong turn and drove down past the salt works before turning right and up to the Queenscliff Road. He saw no sign of Willis who was next seen lying on the side of the Wallington to Ocean Grave road at 8am on 29 May by a labourer on his way to work. The man did not think to stop and examine the body. A Mr James Vincent Carlon was the next to see the body while riding his horse along the road at 8.35am. He realised that the person on the ground was dead and went to Mr Duffield's property, which was nearby, and telephoned the police.

It was reported in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 30 May 1942 that a local orchardist had heard two shots fired at about 2.45am, a short time later five more were heard, then another two. The number of rounds fired is not certain and no empty cartridge cases were found at the scene of the shooting. It was suggested in the newspaper that the first two shots had been fired whilst the victim was standing because there were powder burns on his skin, and the remainder while he was lying on the ground. An army greatcoat was on the ground beside the body. The Victoria Police Gazette, No 22 of 4 June 1942 records that only four bullets were recovered, other may still be in the ground at the spot where the shooting occurred. There were five wounds discovered in Willis' body. A six-chambered .45 Spanish revolver had been stolen from an officer attending a district camp in the area in May. Ballistic tests on the bullets found in, and around the body confirmed that a similar gun had been used in the murder.

The inquest into the death of Willis was opened at the beginning of September, but as reported in the *Geelong Advertiser* on 4 September, it was immediately adjourned because the detectives, who were to give evidence, were involved in another urgent investigation; the shooting of John Joseph Hulston at Queenscliff a few days earlier.

Willis' inquest was eventually held 14-16 December 1942, and the finding was that Willis had died from a bullet wound in the abdomen and had been murdered by a person unknown. Captain D. J. Henderson, of 3 Reserve Battalion described Willis at the inquest, as 'an excellent chap, straight honest and conscientious.' Willis is buried in the Williamstown Public Cemetery. His murder remains unsolved.

Shortly before midnight on 30 August 1942 Bombardier (Bdr) Maxwell Boughton was second in command of the night guard on, numbers 1 and 2 gun-positions at the Crows Nest Battery at Queenscliff. The command post for the 'watch' was the battery observation post (BOP), which was four hundred yards from both gun positions. Gunner (Gnr) Waterson was also in the BOP. There were only four gunners available to guard the No. 2 gun-position that night, Gunners, Hulston, James, Parkinson and Woodhouse. Their period of guard duty was to last until 7.am the next morning. Each of the four soldiers would be on guard for one and three-quarters of an hour each. Behind each gun-position was a shelter where the soldiers off watch could sleep. Clouds covered the sky that night and at first it rained, later there were intermittent breaks and the moon shone through the clouds. It was fairly cold and the men wore their greatcoats.

18 year-old V236228 Gnr John Joseph Hulston of Ballarat was posted as a sentry at the entrance gate at 3.30 am. He was due to be relieved at 5.15 am. He was a slightly built youngster 167cm (5 foot six inches) in height. He was popular with his group, very active, and was described by a friend as happy and carefree.

Around 4.20 am Gnr D. R. Waterson requested permission to leave the BOP from the Bdr in charge and went down to the camp area. On his way to the gate, the sentry, John Hulston, challenged him. Waterson had not been challenged before and asked Hulston what he was doing. Hulston replied that there was a new order out and that everybody must be challenged. Waterson went on to the camp, returning approximately fifteen or twenty minutes later. On his way back to the BOP he walked along the road making as much noise as he could so that Hulston would hear him coming. When he arrived at the sentry post at the gate there was nobody there. Using his torch he looked around and found that the gate was wide open. On his way out he had closed it.

He walked on towards the BOP and on the way met Bdr Boughton and told him that his sentry was not at the gate. Boughton went to look for the sentry whilst Waterson continued to the BOP where he arrived five minutes later. Bdr Boughton could not find Gnr Hulston around the gate and went to No.2 shelter to see if he was there, he wasn't. Gnr Len Woodhouse took over sentry duty at the gate and Gnrs James and Parkinson were sent to look for Hulston.

Bdr Boughton checked the kitchen and latrines but he could not find Hulston anywhere. While he was in the kitchen, he heard the footsteps of someone running past the building. He went outside but could not see anyone. Next he went to the main gate where he met Lieutenant (Lt) Jackson, the officer of the watch that night, who told Boughton that James and Parkinson had found some tracks leading from the gate by the sentry post down the top of the steps to the beach.

From the top of the steps, James and Parkinson had spotted what they thought was a person crouching at the bottom of the steps; it was still quite dark at the time. Thinking it was Hulston they called out "Is that you Johnny?" Instead of a reply the person fired four or five shots at

them. James was hit by a bullet in the thigh and was bleeding. Parkinson tried to fire his rifle but couldn't load it fast enough. The gunman ran off, along the beach and up into the scrub towards the camp area.

Later Parkinson discovered that bullets had hit his rifle. Parkinson went to the gun-position and reported what had happened to the BOP by telephone. Waterson received the call about five minutes after he had returned. He also spoke to Bdr Gordon and related his story to him also. Bdr Gordon informed Lt Jackson of the incident. James had borrowed Parkinson's rifle to use as a crutch and was making his way back to the barrackroom while Parkinson contacted the BOP; he had left his rifle behind in the gun-position. James thought the gunman was wearing a military ground sheet.

Stephen Ferrier, a local fisherman, who was in the militia, joined Parkinson in the search, this time with loaded rifles. They went to the sentry post where they saw Hulston's helmet and balaclava inside. Then they followed the drag marks on the beach. Ferrier noticed the clear-cut mark made by a bayonet in the sand.

Parkinson took Lt Jackson down to the beach to show him what they had found. On the beach they were a pair of military working dress trousers, the lower half of what was then known as a 'giggle-suit'. The trousers were torn down the full length of one leg. They were dry and found a few metres from the steps.

At 6.30 am on 1 September Lt Jackson telephoned First Constable T. Stone at Queenscliff police station and told him what had happened. Constable Stone then went to the beach with the soldiers and found five empty .45 calibre shells. Gunner Welsh, who was with him, found a live .45 round. Gnr Waterson was also on the beach with Constable Stone when he spotted Hulston's rifle, with its bayonet in the fixed position, lying on the seabed about 3 metres out from shore. The rifle was passed on to Detective Sergeant Lyon. Waterson also mentioned in his evidence to the subsequent inquest that the footmarks appeared to have been made with a rubber heel.

At about 8.30 am Detective Constable L. B. Burrows from Geelong joined Senior Detective James and Detective Simpson in the search. They followed the drag marks to the top of the steps, near the officer's mess, a house called Maytone. At the base of the steps they followed a trail of footsteps along the beach in the direction of the lighthouse, to a point where they entered through a wire entanglement into the camp area.

Another soldier, Sydney Edgar (Bluey) Finnegan, was an adventurous youngster who enlisted in the militia, under age, using the surname Wynne in the Royal Australian Engineers. Bluey was involved in the search for the missing sentry on the morning of 1 September 1942. Colonel Ron Garland's history of 2/3 Independent Company, *Nothing Is Forever*, mentions the search for Hulston. Bluey Finnegan told Ron Garland that the footprints on the beach appeared to have a divided toe, like the Japanese rubber soled jungle boot prints he later saw in New Guinea. He also claims that he found a button that looked like it had come from 'his mates ground sheet'. Bluey thought the missing man was Tiny Twist, or Tilson. Hulston was 167cm (5 foot six inches) and could well have been called tiny by his mates. A check with the Central Army Records in 1998 confirmed that there was no record of either name and that the only soldier that went missing at the time in question was Hulston. Bluey could well have had trouble after commando service in New Guinea. After the search Bluey was transferred to 2/AIF, posted, on paper, to 34 Training Battalion on 12 September 1942. He was then sent to the Guerrilla Training Centre at Foster, where he joined 2/3 Independent Company. His true name was discovered in the unit, it was changed and he served on as VX90233 Trooper S E Finnegan. He stayed with the unit throughout the war.

Now back to the search. Detective Sergeant F. W. Lyon and other detectives joined in the investigation, but the body of John Hulston was not found. Following the trail of footsteps, Sgt Lyon found a piece of material with a button that appeared to be from an army ground sheet snagged on the barbed wire at the spot where the gunman had got through the entanglement.

On 10 September 1942 Gnr D. F. B. Denton went fishing on the rocks near the old pipeline close to the fort. While he was fishing he was looking in the various rock pools and spotted what he at first thought was an army greatcoat. He looked closer and saw a leg protruding from the coat. He called out to Stephen Ferrier who in a patrol boat just of the beach, Ferrier was now in the Royal Australian navy, who contacted the local headquarters and asked them to advise the detectives who were at Queenscliff.

The body was recovered and taken to Geelong, where Dr C. H. Mollinson conducted a post mortem examination of the body, which had been identified as that of Gnr John Joseph Hulston. His finding was that, death was caused by a bullet wound of the chest. Dr Mollinson recovered a .45 bullet from the body and gave it to Detective Sergeant Lyon. Powder burn marks on the greatcoat indicated that the bullet had been fired at very close range. John Hulston was buried at the Springvale Cemetery the following day.

An inquest into the death of Arthur Roy Willis was held at Geelong, 14-16 December 1942; it has been opened in June, but adjourned until the investigation into John Hulston's case had been investigated. The finding was that Willis had died from a bullet wound in the abdomen.

Hulston's inquest was opened on 16 December 1942 after Willis' inquest had closed. The finding of Mr E. J. Haynes, who heard both cases, was that John Joseph Hulston died from the effects of a bullet wound in the chest, and that he had been murdered by a person unknown.

Both cases remain a mystery. On 2 August 1948 it was reported in *The Argus* that new information had been provided on the murders and police reopened their investigations, without result. There are many unanswered questions, were the lethal bullets fired from the same gun? Japanese agents were told in training not to use Japanese weapons on covert missions. This is known from documents captured after the Second World War. Did local criminals shoot the two soldiers? Did local criminals target Hulston? One of the men on guard on the fatal night believed that Hulston was to give evidence in Geelong court the next day. Was he targeted to silence him? However, in spite of many inquiries, both cases remain unsolved. Soldiers who were on guard on the night that John Hulston was shot still fear for their safety.

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Request for Assistance - 12th Regiment (East Suffolk)

Ken Larbalestier of Sydney is writing a book on the 12th Regiment's service in Australia and New Zealand (1854-1867). He is seeking to contact any descendant of soldiers from this Regiment. If you can Ken his email is acrossbows2@msn.com.au

Request for Assistance - Memorial Avenues

TREENET (www.treenet.com.au) is an independent non-profit organisation dedicated to improving the urban forest by promoting research into the management of street trees. Sarah Cockerell, Research Assistant with TREENET, is seeking information on memorial avenues planted around Australia. The research is planned to form part of a campaign to restore, replant and preserve these memorials. Any help would be greatly appreciated. Contact Sarah at (08) 8303 7134, TREENET, PMB 1, Glen Osmond SA 5064



‘The Sacking of Albany’ — the image of the Boer War veteran in Australia.

Les Hetherington

On Saturday morning, 31 May 1902, Australia’s acting Minister for Defence, former New South Wales Premier Sir William Lyne, boarded the troopship *Aurania* in Port Phillip Bay. The *Aurania* was bringing home the largest contingent of Australian soldiers to return from the war in South Africa – 1500 men from New South Wales, Victorian, Queensland and New Zealand contingents, together with demobilised Australian volunteers who had served in South African units. The acting minister was not there to provide a warm welcome to the men, and he was greeted by surly troops – ‘an air of depression seemed to hang over everyone’ reported a journalist from *The Age* newspaper also on board. Sir William was to investigate ‘grave claims’ and ‘strange complaints’ about riot, disorder and property damage, from both Albany, the Western Australian town that had been the vessel’s first port of call on the voyage, and Cape Town, the ship’s port of embarkation in South Africa.

The complaints had been received while the ship was steaming across the Great Australian Bight. Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* reported on 29 May that Sir William Lyne had been shocked to receive ‘two accounts from South Africa for about £500’, claims for compensation resulting from allegations ‘that a number of returning soldiers [those on the *Aurania*], in a wild outbreak by way of celebrating their last night in South Africa, broke windows and generally painted Cape Town “red”’. Sydney’s *Telegraph* had editorialised the previous day under the heading of ‘the sacking of Albany’ that the returning soldiers had indulged in a ‘riotous orgy’, resulting in accusations of theft, breaking and entering, and the smashing of windows – so that ‘many of the victims furnished the officer commanding with claims for compensation’. The newspaper suggested the officers shared the blame. Through their ‘undue relaxation of discipline [they] contributed ... to these proceedings ...’, realising ‘thus the worst of the evils to be locally expected of militarism, that of forcible domination of citizens by swaggering soldiers ... excesses ... not for a moment to be tolerated’.

A welcome prepared in Sydney was in danger of cancellation. The Commonwealth and New South Wales governments, and the Commonwealth military authorities, wanted to know the truth about the allegations, which also included that ‘a large amount of Government property was thrown overboard ... on the way to Western Australia’.

It has been said that by these actions the soldiers made themselves objects of contempt in Australia, undermining the heroic status they had previously enjoyed. But were they actually guilty of the crimes attributed to them and did their guilt or innocence really alter the attitude of the Australian community towards them? Had the soldiers really become objects of contempt in the eyes of their fellow Australians? With 1200 of the 1500 men aboard from New South Wales it was that State that was going to bear the bulk of any odium that arose from the alleged incidents.

In overall command of the returning soldiers was Lieutenant-Colonel Harry Beauchamp Lassetter, of the 2nd NSW Mounted Rifles. Sydney-born and a prominent businessman in civilian life, his first career had been in the British Army, and he was a Sandhurst-trained veteran of the Nile campaign of 1885. The NSW Premier, John See, had already telegraphed Lassetter by the time Sir William boarded the *Aurania*, asking for a report on the truth or not of the allegations. Lassetter responded, reported the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 2 June, that ‘the looting at Capetown was not done by the troops under my command. No Government properties were

thrown overboard by the troops ... No great excesses were committed at Albany. A few stowaways and men who are not Australians committed a few robberies. The conduct of the Australian troops under my charge aboard the *Aurania* has been exemplary'.

Lassetter also gave this account to Sir William on board the ship. The troops were resentful about the publication of reports reflecting upon their conduct, and Lassetter indignant. 'The men', he said, 'were as fine a body as he had ever had to deal with':

he considered it grossly unfair that they should have heaped upon them the opprobrium which should have been bestowed on the actual offenders ... about the Capetown affair ... there had been considerable exaggeration. ... After leaving Capetown it was found that there were on board some 25 or 30 stowaways... These men were put ashore at Albany and immediately began misconducting themselves. From the fact that they were in uniform the townspeople concluded that they belonged to the regular troops on the transport. A cruel injustice had, in consequence, been done to a very fine body of men ...

Other officers pointed out that while the men were said to have behaved outrageously at Albany none was subsequently imprisoned on the ship. The stowaways were 'scallywags', and it was they and two *Aurania* firemen who caused the trouble.

The *Aurania's* Captain King supported Lassetter's opinion of the men during the voyage, saying their 'conduct ... throughout the voyage, considering the very large body on board, had been really exemplary. ... He was sure no one could find fault with their general conduct'. Afterwards Sir William addressed the troops. 'They had been sent out in the name of Australia to fight the battles of the Empire', he said, 'and ... they had fulfilled that duty nobly and well.'

When a large body of fighting men are returning after an arduous campaign, I should be surprised if one did not find some committing some slight indiscretions. But we got cables which put the matter in a very serious light. I am pleased to find ... that there is very little truth in these exaggerated rumours — (loud cheers) ... I have heard ... the statement of the facts of the case, and when that statement ... is known, the people will see that it was only a semblance of truth on which the cable was based, but nothing of a serious character. (Loud and prolonged cheering.) ...

The men cheered 'vociferously' as the Minister's launch steamed off for shore, their Sydney welcome assured.

The *Aurania* continued her voyage to Sydney shortly after 4 o'clock on Saturday afternoon. A 'fairly large' crowd gathered at Watson's Bay to see it pass through Sydney Heads at 4:30 pm on Monday 2 June. Major-General Sir Edward Hutton, since December 1901 the first General Officer Commanding, Commonwealth Military Forces and a former Commandant of the New South Wales Forces, was cordially received by Lieutenant-Colonel Lassetter aboard ship, but a *Daily Telegraph* reporter got shorter shrift. Lassetter had given orders the *Daily Telegraph* was not to be allowed aboard, and when one reporter attempted it just as Major-General Hutton arrived, Lassetter had the journalist 'conducted "down below"'. 'I'll teach your *Daily Telegraph* to libel my men!', 'thundered' Lassetter. However, the Major-General told the reporter he was satisfied with the explanation of the Cape Town and Albany incidents, and, probably with reference to the *Daily Telegraph's* editorial of 28 May, indignant about the 'statements' made about Albany in particular.

Although publicly satisfied with Lassetter's explanation, General Hutton continued the investigation into the incidents in both Cape Town and Albany. As 'Picquet', the *West Australian's* military correspondent, noted on 7 June, 'the last has not been heard of this unpleasant business' at Albany.

Reputedly what had happened in Cape Town involved both disorderly conduct in the town itself and the ransacking and robbing of a Sikh camp adjacent to where returning colonial soldiers

were bivouacked before their departure from South Africa. The 3rd New South Wales Bushmen's contingent were also accused of stealing a large quantity of beer and brandy while entrained for Cape Town from the South African hinterland.

A formal report dated 27 May sent from South Africa by Major-General Sir Henry Settle, KCB, DSO, said although some payments had been made already, still outstanding was a sum of £544/14/5. But even Settle agreed it had been 'impossible to bring charges home to either corps or individuals', after a 'complete failure to identify' the culprits. Nevertheless, Settle had paid £500 himself and was seeking reimbursement from the Australian government.

Lassetter and the officer commanding the Bushmen, Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon Rupert Carington, formerly a Guards officer and member of the House of Commons, responded with denials.

In a letter from 'Widgiewa', his property near Narrandera, New South Wales, Carington wrote on 28 August 1902 that while he could say nothing about the voyage home as he had remained in South Africa for further service, the Bushmen were completely innocent of looting on the train journey. Most passengers, he said, had been from British or local units, and the officer in command of the train had been a militia captain (as if this was sufficient explanation). No Bushmen had been present when the Sikh camp had been looted, and, as for Capetown, he said, 'I consider the behaviour of the men under the circumstances excellent'. He had patrolled the town personally on the night before the *Aurania* sailed and 'saw no disturbance of any kind'. There had been only one claim against the Bushmen, for £4/10/0, which he paid.

Lassetter also denied any involvement of his men in the looting and destruction of property. In a letter dated 8 September 1902 he accepted that the looting on the Sikh camp had taken place, but other units than those from New South Wales were present. Nevertheless, he had paid £110 restitution, more than the Australians fair share. Earlier, in June and August, Lassetter had said that at the time the camp was attacked, he had mustered the 2nd and 3rd NSW Mounted Rifles and the Bushmen – not all of whom had yet arrived in the camp – and all had been accounted for. He believed, consequently, that no New South Wales troops had taken part in the looting, or the trouble in the remount lines that had started it, but that these had been the fault of the militia and irregular corps soldiers waiting to be returned to England or demobilised locally. Although denying responsibility he had given the local commandant £110 to help with compensation and considered the matter ended. At Cape Town, Lassetter claimed, the conduct of the troops under his command had been 'uniformly good', and that apart from some drunkenness and absence without leave there had been 'no crime whatsoever in my Regiment'. 'I did not see', he assured the Australian authorities, 'a single one of the New South Wales men who misbehaved himself or whose conduct was in any way reprehensible'. Rather, Lassetter said, it was the fault of the British and local authorities 'filling up the ranks with deserters from the mercantile marine and the scum of the earth, who are found at Cape Town, and carting them to the front as Australians'. This gave the Australians a bad name. Lassetter had refused to accept such reinforcements, though some had been offered to him.

Major Granville Burnage of the 3rd NSW Mounted Rifles also described the conduct of his regiment in Cape Town as 'extremely good'. No damage was done the night they were in the town, and the British Army embarkation officer had congratulated the men on their conduct while going aboard the *Aurania*.

A claim against three unidentified Australian non-commissioned officers that they had stolen a bicycle valued at £3 while drunk in Cape Town, the property of the British Army, and had taken it aboard the *Aurania* was never substantiated, and the bicycle never recovered.

In Albany it was reported by the Officer Commanding Albany garrison, Major V L Beer, that the conduct of the troops from the *Aurania* during the two days from the afternoon of 21 May had prompted the local magistrate to write to Lassetter asking that leave be stopped and a picket be sent ashore to keep order, the Police being inadequate for the task. Leave was stopped on 23 May. Major Beer wrote that 'the large majority of the men were well-behaved, but little control appears to have been exercised over the rowdy element'. He accused this 'rowdy element' of a great deal of drunkenness, disgusting language, urinating in the street in broad daylight, 'considerable wanton destruction of property', and, at the Royal George Hotel, the use of mirrors and glass doors for 'revolver practice'. Troops were accused of assaulting and robbing Ah Box, a local Chinese man, and the theft of over £20 worth of cash and jewellery from Miss Bertha Weiss, barmaid at the 'Royal George', £150 worth of jewellery belonging to Mrs Stonell, the wife of the proprietor of the White Hart Hotel, billiard balls, a mackintosh, a pair of mounted deer horns and miscellaneous items from Duffner's Jewellers. Troops were suspected also of several other robberies, including the theft of a boat and two dinghies, valued at £100.

Despite the apparent detail of Major Beer's report, he had been in town only once during the time the *Aurania* men were ashore (his barracks being a mile and a half from the Albany Post Office). He had seen no disturbances and had heard about it only after shore leave had been cancelled and the soldiers were back on board ship. But Beer himself was criticised for taking no steps to prevent the disturbances, given that the majority of the soldiers were not involved, for not communicating with the *Aurania*, and for failing to detail a picket to assist the Police. Major Beer, concluded a minute on the Department's file, 'would seem to have completely overlooked the responsibility of himself as OC Troops Albany'. Beer responded that he had a strength of only two officers and 16 other ranks to face more than 1,000 men on shore leave and had felt it was the responsibility of the officers aboard the *Aurania* to do something.

To the specific accusations Lassetter replied that only one man had returned to the *Aurania* drunk, that the disturbances were the responsibility of discharged South African irregulars who still wore their khaki uniforms, deserting ship's firemen and stowaways. These last included 'American gamblers' who, Lassetter said, came on board with the express purpose of swindling the troops. Several were landed at Albany and others escaped custody during the stopover.

As had been the case in South Africa, no individuals or units could be specifically charged with any of the alleged crimes. Major Beer also admitted that in a number of cases the damage done was paid for, and that a subscription was taken up among the men to repay Miss Weiss for her losses (she nevertheless continued to pursue her claim). The investigation finally recognised eight claims for damages amounting to £211/0/6, Major-General Hutton having concluded as early as 5 August that 'there is in my opinion no doubt that various irregularities were committed, and some indiscipline shown by the Troops and others who landed in Albany from the troopship *Aurania*'.

Attempting to make the best of the situation, and believing the New South Wales troops had had their pay withheld pending the outcome of the inquiry, Hutton recommended that they be charged with the full amount owing, including from the officers. Lassetter objected, but the matter was moot, New South Wales having either not received or ignored Hutton's instruction about withholding pay. In the end Hutton could only recommend the whole matter be referred to the New South Wales Government to see if it would make good the claims. Miss Weiss was still attempting to obtain some compensation in July 1903.

So it seems there was some substance to the accusations that disorderly behaviour did take place, at least in Albany. However, despite the incriminating circumstances, no concrete evidence was ever proffered that connected any individual member of the units aboard the *Aurania* to these

incidents. Nor could any certain accusations ever be laid against a particular unit. General Hutton was convinced wrong-doing had occurred, but was stymied in his attempt to arrange some restitution by the fact that the units had been paid out and disbanded. His hands were also tied by the divided military and political responsibility for the soldiers, who had volunteered, served and returned as members of New South Wales, not Commonwealth, military forces. Neither General Settle in Capetown nor the citizens of Albany appear to have received any payment, from either the Commonwealth or the State of New South Wales.

In the short term, the outcome of the investigation was less relevant than the reception the men received when they arrived in Sydney. State authorities, satisfied with the explanations Colonel Lassetter had given, went ahead with the planned reception. 'An enormous number of people' greeted the *Aurania* when it berthed early on Tuesday morning, 3 June, reported the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'and formed a dense mass in Macquarie-street between Circular Quay and the gates of the Federal Government House, it being along that street the troops would have to march to reach the Inner Domain'. The *Aurania* and other ships in the harbour were decorated with bunting, and a guard of honour and the band of the Permanent Artillery force were on the dock to receive the men, who were escorted on their march through Sydney by mounted police, an escort of lancers, a troop of mounted cadets, and the artillery, Police and Civil Service Bands. At the Inner Domain when the troops arrived were Lady Rawson and her daughter, Rear-Admiral Beaumont, the Premier, former Premier and Federal politician George Reid, the Archbishop of Sydney, Colonel Lassetter's father, Frederick Lassetter, the New South Wales Minister for Public Instruction and the Inspector-General of Police. Among the many senior military officers present was Major-General Hutton, wearing the uniform of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles, of which he was honorary colonel. Hutton 'made a cursory inspection of the men' before the New South Wales Governor, Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, KCB, who had only recently taken up his post, arrived to address the returned soldiers.

The Governor welcomed the men home, saying 'we are all proud of you and what you have done'. Then Premier See spoke, saying significantly that 'not a tittle of truth' had been found in the 'unfortunate comments' about their conduct in Capetown and Albany. He 'heartily congratulated the officers and men on their return, and on the magnificent deeds they had performed in South Africa in the cause of the Empire'. More strongly, Major-General Hutton said:

I congratulate you on having so well vindicated the trust reposed in you when you left these shores as representatives of New South Wales. I share to the full the indignation felt by you all at the publicity given to the rumours of irregularity on the part of the troops ... Those rumours have been given a credit entirely undeserved. ... it was at least to be hoped that the irregularities so detrimental to the honour of us soldiers should have been substantiated in some form before being given the publicity which was accorded them. The statements caused a thrill of indignation and shame throughout the whole of Australia, and no one felt them more than myself, not only as the General Officer Commanding the military forces of the Commonwealth, but as honorary Colonel of the distinguished regiment whose uniform I wear.

Rawson, See and Hutton were all cheered for their speeches. George Reid managed also to elicit laughter before also saying to loud cheers:

You came out from the ranks of your fellow-countrymen as volunteers. We were proud of you then. We watched your hardships, your conspicuous gallantry and success, and now that you have come back we are proud of you still. ... I join with the Premier in thanking you, on behalf of the people of this country and all Australia, for the noble record which you have put up for this grand new land.

Large and enthusiastic crowds cheered the returned soldiers as they then marched up Macquarie, William, Bourke and Oxford Streets to Victoria Barracks. There the troops were provided with

lunch and paid out. This done, the men who could joined their families and friends who were waiting, and 'there were more welcomes home and other signs of affection everywhere in evidence'. Later, said the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Hutton indicated he 'was very pleased at the successful manner in which the general arrangements had been carried out. The men behaved themselves extremely well, and caused no trouble'. The *Daily Telegraph* quoted Hutton as saying that 'it was a day on which all Australia could be proud'.

On the following Wednesday evening the returned soldiers were the guests of the Government at a 'half smoke concert' at Sydney Town Hall. Again the main political leaders of New South Wales were present – the Governor, the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition – as were other politicians, senior public servants, and military figures. The *Daily Telegraph* contradicted its 28 May opinion, recording that 'in the speeches ... a note was struck which could leave no doubt in the mind of the returned troops' the appreciation of the people of New South Wales 'of the hardships they have endured and the part they have played in making a name for Australia prouder than in days not long gone'.

Reports over the following days recorded similar receptions for the *Aurania* soldiers returning to their homes in country New South Wales – particularly at Newcastle, Forbes, Hay, Orange, Tumut and West Maitland. At West Maitland 'the health of the returned soldiers' – Captain Robert Scobie and Lieutenant Malbon Thompson, of the 3rd Mounted Rifles, prominent among them – 'was enthusiastically honored' by the Mayor, several local military officers, and 'a large gathering' at the Military Hall. Tumut's nine returning soldiers were met on the road by horsemen and vehicles, and were escorted into the be-flagged and decorated town by the Tumut Brass Band. Each soldier was mounted on a grey horse supplied by the townspeople before they were welcomed by the Mayor in front of a crowd of about 400. In Sydney, Colonel Lassetter was given a banquet by staff of his family firm, F Lassetter and Co. Ltd, on Saturday, 7 June.

The events of 3 June and subsequent days suggest that whatever the truth about the incidents in Cape Town and Albany, it was never the case that the men were viewed by the community to which they returned in anything but the highest regard. Despite what the *Daily Telegraph* had thought on 28 May, the *Aurania* troops from New South Wales were welcomed home enthusiastically. There was no mistaking the overwhelming public and official approbation with which they were greeted, in Sydney and in regional centres. Publicly at least, this never changed. The *Daily Telegraph* itself, on 16 June, quoted a letter from Major-General Fetherstonhaugh in South Africa, under whom Lassetter's 2nd Mounted Rifles and Carington's 3rd Imperial Bushmen had served. Fetherstonhaugh wrote that 'I appreciate their good and gallant service during the past year ... I hope that if you get an opportunity you will convey to all ranks the very high esteem I have of them ... I cannot say enough in praise of their conduct under fire and elsewhere'. And that seems also to have been the final assessment of the people of Australia.

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MHSA History Prize

Officer Cadet Andrew Hastie was awarded the Military Historical Society of Australia History Prize at the Awards Ceremony, held at the Australian Defence Force Academy on Wednesday, 10 December 2003. The prize was presented to Officer Cadet Hastie by the Federal President, Major Robert Morrison.

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“Listed for the Connaught Rangers” Analysis of a military painting

Graham Wilson



One of the most well known military artists of the 19th century was Lady Elizabeth Butler. Her painting depicting the charge of the Scots Grays at Waterloo (“Scotland Forever”) is perhaps one of the most widely recognized British military paintings of the last 200 years. Similarly, her depiction of the action at the height of the Battle of Rorke’s Drift (“The Defence of Rorke’s Drift”) is just as widely known and admired.

A lesser known painting, however, is her tribute to Ireland (her adopted country) and the Irish soldier (a tribute perhaps to her beloved husband), the lyrical “Listed for the Connaught Rangers,” first displayed in 1878. This painting, which at first glance seems to lack the power and force of such other of Lady Butler’s work as “The Roll Call,” “Floreat Etona,” “Scotland Forever” and “The Return From Inkerman,” yet still, on close study, is a work of immense power and great artistry. The painting deserves and requires the closest attention and once having received this, certainly rewards the viewer.

In this short article I intend to explore several interconnected themes, namely the life and work of Lady Elizabeth Butler, the life of her husband that great Irish Catholic soldier General Sir William Butler, and the history of that magnificent but now long dead Irish regiment, the Connaught Rangers. Finally, I will concentrate on the painting that prompted this article in the first place. I wish to make it quite clear, however, that I will not be discussing the technical aspects of the painting. I lack the qualifications for such a task and leave it to the experts.

Lady Elizabeth Butler was born Elizabeth Thompson in Laussane, Switzerland in 1846. According to her biographer Wilfred Meynell she displayed an interest in both art and military themes from an early age. At a time when female artists and their work were widely disparaged, Elizabeth Thompson nevertheless enrolled and trained at the South Kensington School of Design. Her interest in military themes was witnessed by her very first work accepted for display at the Royal Academy in London, a water colour entitled “Two Wounded French Officers in the Franco-Prussian War.” While other artists and critics continued to disparage both Elizabeth Thompson and her fellow female painters, still

no one could fault the young artist's grasp of military detail. This detail was the result of exhaustive research and long discussions with veteran soldiers.

Elizabeth Thompson created a sensation in 1874 when, at the age of 27, her somber, evocative work entitled "Calling the Roll After an Engagement in the Crimea" (usually referred to as "The Roll Call") was accepted and displayed by the Royal Academy. Not only accepted but nominated as the Academy's painting of the year. The painting, which was purchased by Queen Victoria and remains in the Queen's Collection today, was not only a critical sensation, but a public one as well. When it was displayed the crowds that thronged to view it were so great that police guards had to be mounted, both to control the crowd and to protect the painting.

In a somewhat patronising compliment, the *Daily Telegraph* editorialised that the artist's mastery of military subjects "hacked off" at least two of the shackles oppressing women. In typically overblown Victorian language the editorial noted that with the acclaim and acceptance of "The Roll Call" the public saw "a manacle knocked off a woman's wrist and a shackle hacked off her ankle." The editorial went on to specifics, noting that the painting ensured that women artists would now be "enlarged from wasting upon fruitless objects the sympathies which would be developed for the advantage of humanity" while at the same time being endowed "with a vocation which can be cultivated in (her own) home, without the risk of submission to any galling tyranny or more galling patronage." Apparently the irony of the patronising tone of the editorial itself was lost on the editor!

More to the point, John Ruskin the foremost English art critic of the day, who stated that he "never approached a picture with more iniquitous prejudice against it than I did Miss Thompson's" was completely won over. On viewing the painting Ruskin renounced previous criticism and went on to compare the artist's sense of colour and light with that of his favourite (male) artist, John Turner.

Following the stunning success of "The Roll Call" Elizabeth Thompson went on to paint a series of military battle scenes which were easily amongst the most popular images of Victorian Britain. "Scotland Forever" is included in just about every book written about the Battle of Waterloo, while "The Defence of Rorke's Drift" is almost as well known in connection with the Zulu War.

In 1877 Elizabeth Thompson married an Irish soldier, Major William Butler, descendant of an old noble family from Tipperary. William Butler was born at Ballyslateen near Golden, Co. Tipperary in 1838. The Butler family had lived in the area since 1584 when Thomas Butler, 10th Earl of Ormond, had settled his brothers there after the destruction of the Butler's mortal foes, the Desmonds. The Butler family was relatively well off, although much of the family's wealth had been dissipated over the years in fines and confiscations resulting from the family's refusal to give up the Catholic faith. William grew up in an atmosphere of love and surrounded by books and learning. Nevertheless, he was not shielded from the realities of contemporary Irish life. He carried memories of the horror of scenes of evictions of Irish peasants with him for his entire life.

William Butler followed the family military tradition when he was gazetted to the 69th Foot in 1858. Service with his regiment and then later on detached duty followed in India, Burma and then in Canada. In Canada he served under Sir Garnet Wolsley in the Red River Campaign and incidentally was instrumental in setting up the constabulary force that became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. His service in Canada also resulted in a critically acclaimed novel entitled *Red Cloud*, published in 1872 which remained a standard British school textbook until the 1930's. In the year that Elizabeth Thompson was displaying "The Roll Call" in London, William Butler was engaged in a vicious and deadly

jungle campaign on the fever ridden west coast of Africa, serving in the Ashanti War under his old mentor Wolsley. His writings reveal that he was horrified by evidence of the slave trade and by the white man's disastrous effect on the African. Yet, for all that, he remained unswerving in his loyalty to the Queen and to the British Army.

Back in England in 1877 Major William Butler met, wooed, courted and wed the well-known artist Elizabeth Thompson. The wedding was something of a sensation and a highlight of the London social year. Many people looked askance at the match between the Jesuit educated, Irish Catholic soldier with the decidedly left leaning outlook and the quintessentially English toast of the London art and literary scene. Just as many if not more, however, applauded the match. Not the least of these was Elizabeth Butler's former critic John Ruskin who, in a warm letter of congratulation to the couple, wrote: "What may you not do for England, the two of you."

The newly married couple honeymooned in Ireland. They then went on to spend the first few years of the marriage in William's homeland as he served on staff postings in Ireland. Elizabeth immediately noticed the hold Ireland had on William and herself very soon fell in love with the country and its people. Indeed, apart from postings and holidays, Elizabeth was to make her home in Ireland until her death in 1933.

Despite taking time out to bear and raise five children, Elizabeth Butler continued to paint. Battle related scenes - "Steady the Drums and Fifes," "The 28th Regiment at Quatre Bras," "The Return from Inkerman," "Floreat Etona," etc - continued to dominate her work. But her life in Ireland and her newfound love for her husband's country of birth also led her to produce two less well known, Irish related non-battle scenes. These are "Listed for the Connaught Rangers," the central theme of this article, and "Evicted," a poignant, bitter comment on the plight of Ireland's rural poor painted in 1889.

William Butler saw further extensive service overseas including a period serving with the North West Mounted Police in Canada and service in the Egyptian campaign against Arabi Pasha in 1882. In 1899, now a major general, he was serving as General Officer Commanding South Africa when he sent his famous cable to the War Office on 23 June resigning his command. General Butler's reason for resigning was his disgust at the way the looming war with the Boer Republics was being engineered in the wake of the farcical Jamieson Raid. Relieved of command he returned to England to take up a home command and become, as a friend at the War Office told him, "the best abused man in England." He retired in October 1905 at the age of 67 and was knighted in the King's Birthday Honour's List in 1906, becoming Sir William Butler. It was at this point that the former Elizabeth Thompson became Lady Elizabeth Butler. General Sir William Butler died at the family home in Tipperary in 1910. Lady Elizabeth Butler lived and painted until 1933. The family home, Bansha Castle, was confiscated by the Free State in 1922 and Lady Butler packed up in indignation and moved to Gormanston where she stayed with her daughter until her death.

But all that was in the future when Elizabeth Butler's evocative, lyric painting "Listed for the Connaught Rangers" was painted in 1878, the year following her marriage to William Butler. The painting shows a recruiting party of a sergeant, two musicians and a private of the Connaught Rangers and two ragged Irish peasant recruits marching out of a sodden Kerry glen. Despite the military theme of the painting, the peaceful nature of the subject was a radical departure from Elizabeth Butler's previous work. It would eventually be complemented by her other major non-military work "Evicted."

Before examining "Listed for the Connaught Rangers" in detail it is necessary to stop for a moment and ask the question: who or what were the Connaught Rangers?

At the time of the painting, Ireland was of course ruled by United Kingdom and was considered part of the United Kingdom. Thus, there was no Irish Army, Irishmen perforce serving instead in the British Army. An Irishman taking the Queen's shilling could opt to enlist in any regiment of the British Army which had vacancies (all usually did). Due to the fact that the garrison in Ireland was almost exclusively made up of "English" units, Irishmen, who enlisted in great numbers due to the parlous economic state of their homeland, made up a significant portion of the British Army, especially the regiments of foot. But, while there was space for Irishmen anywhere in the army, most preferred if possible to enlist in an Irish regiment. In 1878 there were eight Irish regiments of foot in the British Army: the Royal Irish Regiment, the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the Royal Irish Rifles, the Royal Irish Fusiliers, the Connaught Rangers, the Leinster Regiment, the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. Of these the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, the Royal Irish Rifles and the Royal Irish Fusiliers traditionally recruited from amongst the Protestant majority in the north of Ireland. The Royal Irish Regiment, the Connaught Rangers, the Leinster Regiment, the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers on the other hand all recruited in the south of Ireland, were overwhelmingly Catholic and were referred to as the "Southern Irish regiments."

The Connaught Rangers traced their history back to 1793 when they were raised as the 88th (Connaught Rangers) Regiment of Foot in the ancient Irish kingdom of Connaught. The Rangers had the distinction of being the only regiment in the British Army to carry its regional title from its birth. All other regiments went through numerous name changes until the Cardwell Reform of 1882 finally settled on names. The Cardwell Reforms saw the 88th Regiment of Foot linked with the 94th (The Scotch Brigade) Regiment of Foot to form the Connaught Rangers. The 88th became the 1st Battalion the Connaught Rangers and the 94th became the 2nd Battalion. Cardwell's system, which came at the height of British imperial expansion, linked regiments to a particular "recruiting area." The idea was that at any one time one battalion of each two battalion regiment would be serving overseas (India, Burma, Canada, Aden, Gibraltar, South Africa etc) while the other battalion would remain on "home service" recruiting, training and despatching reinforcement drafts to the overseas battalion. Theoretically the battalions were supposed to swap at regular and fixed intervals but this did not always occur. For example, when the poet Robert Graves joined the 2nd Battalion the Royal Welch Fusiliers as a subaltern in France in 1915 the battalion had just arrived from India where they had been serving for the previous 27 years. Graves was astonished at the sight of fusiliers, used to years of dealing with "blackies," kicking French civilians in the backside and swearing at them in Hindustani!

Over the years the Connaught Rangers acquired a reputation for hard fighting. They served under Wellington in India and earned their first battle honour at Seringapatam. Later they served with Wellington in the Peninsular and then in France and Belgium, their savagery in battle earning them the nickname "The Devil's Own." They also later acquired the somewhat bizarre and obscure nickname of the "Jaysus Alberts." The Connaughts went on to serve in India, the Crimea, Burma, the Boer War and the First World War. In the very last days of the First World War the Connaught Rangers had the unique distinction of having a non-Regular battalion converted to a Regular battalion. The 5th (Service) Battalion was paraded in France and given the unique order: "5th Battalion Connaught Rangers ground arms, 2nd Battalion Connaught Rangers take up arms."

So, that was some historical background on the "Devil's Own," now I'll turn to the painting. First, what is it about? Well, in 1879 recruiting in the British Army was still done by recruiting parties to the beat of the drum. The party, under a specially selected sergeant, would tour a designated area, the musicians drawing attention to the party's arrival. Once a crowd, or even one man, had gathered the sergeant and the others in the party would

attempt by whatever means available to tempt likely recruits into taking the Queen's shilling. The last phrase was literally true. By both tradition and law a man was not legally enlisted, even if he had signed attestation papers, until he accepted a shilling from the hand of the recruiting sergeant. The shilling was an ancient symbol of the binding of the contract between the recruit and the crown. As odd as it may sound the practice still continues in the British Army. To this day every soldier enlisting into the

British Army is handed a nominal sum of money to bind the contract once he is attested. Irish regiments, while they had their depots and regimental headquarters in Ireland rarely served there. British fears of armed Irishmen in their own land meant that Irish battalions on home service would almost always spend their time in England. But they still recruited in Ireland and it was to Ireland that the recruiting parties went. Thus the subject of the painting.

Firstly, the setting and scenery of the painting. Elizabeth Butler stated that the scene depicted a recruiting party in a "Kerry glen." The setting is typically Irish. A blue sky is partly obscured by heavy rain clouds. We can in fact see by the water on the road that it has only recently rained. In the background we see dark, craggy almost forbidding hills. The country in the foreground is rocky, barren heath scattered with stones and graced by stubby tussocks of tough grass. It is in fact typical of the poor, sparse land in the south and west of Ireland. To the left of the painting are the tumbled remains of a peasant cottage, probably victim of the "crowbar brigade" of a magisterially backed landlord's eviction. The party marches down a rutted, unsealed, muddy Irish country road. In short, the country represents the type of place any sane person would be glad to see the back of. In the middle distance, between the rear two figures and the base of the mountains, nestled in the glen we can just make out the tiny village the party has apparently just marched from. This would be where the two recruits were "listed." Possibly it was market day and visited specially. Or possibly it was just the next half-forgotten rural backwater village on the party's rounds.

Now, what about the figures in the painting? We can see that there are two distinct groups, the four at the front and two in the rear. Taking the rear group first. To the left, immediately behind the sergeant, is a private who has stopped to light his pipe. To the right is a band boy, immediately identifiable by his youth and musician's facings and wings on his tunic. He is a fifer, as can be seen by the fife case on his belt and he carries a bugle in the regulation marching position.

Now, we turn to the group in the foreground. From left to right, another band boy, this one a drummer, two recruits and then the recruiting sergeant. The drummer has his drum slung over his shoulder and is bent forward as if struggling to keep up. The recruit on the left is visibly lagging behind and is looking back, perhaps at the tumbled cottage. Was it his? Was this why he enlisted? Or perhaps it reminds him of what happened to his cottage. The second recruit by contrast is looking straight ahead, head up, shoulders back, hands in pockets and clay pipe in mouth as he marches off into the future. Finally there is the sergeant, who is for me the central figure of the painting. He is tall, erect, immaculately turned out in regimental scarlet jacket with the yellow facings of the Connaught Rangers; scarlet sash over his shoulder; white pipe clayed belt around his waist; and glengarry bonnet set at a rakish but precise angle on his head. Note that he carries a swagger cane in his right hand and has taken off his right hand glove, which he carries, in his left hand.

How accurate is the painting in detail? Well, from everything I know and have been able to find out, it is accurate down to the tiniest detail. Certainly as regards the setting and the weather conditions, Elizabeth Butler was painting from life and recall that no less an authority than John Ruskin had already lauded her for her treatment of colour and light. Her two Irish recruits were also probably painted from life. There is sympathy in their treatment

- the two men are not caricatures of the typical "music hall Mick." At the same time the artist certainly made no attempt to "pretty up" the poor quality of their clothes or the slovenliness of their appearance. They can probably be reasonably safely taken to be correct portrayals of typical Irish rural labourers of the day.

As for the uniforms, the artist cannot be faulted in any way at all. The uniform details including the glengarries, the sergeant's sash, belt and cane, the musician's facings and wings on the two band boys, the facings and trim on the jackets, even the cut of the trousers are one hundred percent accurate. Again, we must remember that the artist painted from life. She had already established a reputation for stunning accuracy and attention to detail in her representations of British soldiers. Also, she was now married to a soldier, an Irish one at that, and would certainly have been at pains to get the details right.

Having now established that Elizabeth Butler produced a totally accurate portrayal of a recruiting party of the Connaught Rangers in rural Ireland circa 1878, the question needs to be asked, what does the painting mean? What was the artist saying? After all the work was a major departure from the painter's normal style. There is obviously a message involved. I will stress here that, as all things are in the eye of the beholder, the interpretation of "Listed for the Connaught Rangers" which follows is purely my own. I leave it up to others to reach their own conclusions.

I believe that Elizabeth Butler painted "Listed for the Connaught Rangers" for a number of reasons. First as a tribute to a great Irish soldier, her beloved husband William. Secondly as a comment on the cruel dichotomy of the Irish soldier - a man who was forced, more often than not by sheer circumstance, to turn his back on the beloved land of his birth and enlist in the army of the oppressor. Finally, as a tribute to the eternal spirit of the regiment.

The tribute to her husband is obvious. The artist has chosen to represent a recruiting party of an Irish regiment in an Irish setting. A transplanted Englishwoman and Catholic convert, Elizabeth Butler fell in love with Ireland from the very first moment. Not only that, she developed a deep sympathy for the Irish people and a bitter resentment against their station and those who had put them there. Indeed her later painting "Evicted" was based solidly on her own experiences. She witnessed an eviction in Wicklow and described how the evicted woman, dignified in her distress, came to search for such simple belongings as might have survived the ashes of her former home. In Elizabeth Butler's own words: "She was very philosophical, and did not rise to the level of my indignation as an ardent English sympathiser." This empathy is reflected in "Listed for the Connaught Rangers." Note that of all her works, only "Listed" and "Evicted" have an Irish theme.

For the comment on the torn loyalties of the Irish soldier, we must look at the recruits. These two figures are quite fascinating. The one on the left is slight, bent, hesitant, lagging. He is looking back as if unwilling to cut the ties which bind him to Ireland. His feet drag and his eyes are drawn to the tumbled cottage, symbol of the oppressor's hand on his land. He is obviously an unwilling recruit, probably forced into the arms of the British Army by financial necessity. One gets the feeling that he will not make a good soldier and in fact will probably not survive the initial training process but will fall by the wayside. He may even desert. Still, he engenders sympathy as a bewildered and probably simple man, forced into a path he does not care for and already pining for the land he left.

The other recruit is totally the opposite. Tall, well built, he strides out along the muddy road like "Adam striding out over the very first bog" (as an Irishman was once described to me by another Irishman). His head is up and his shoulders are back. Compare him to the sergeant who he almost seems to be imitating. The set of their shoulders is almost identical. With his head up and his clay pipe clenched jauntily in his mouth, he is almost arrogant as

he strides forward on the shining road to what he probably sees as a shining future. One gets the impression that *he* will not fall by the wayside. These two figures then represent the bitter duality of the Irish soldier. Torn between love of Ireland and love regiment (rarely love of the army). The smaller recruit represents love of Ireland, the larger one love of regiment. Both are to be pitied.

The two recruits can also be taken, perhaps, as an allegory on the stages of a soldier's life. The smaller recruit represents the new recruit, tossed into an alien world, still not divorced from his civilian past and struggling to make his way. The larger figure is the recruit after he has lost some of what Kipling referred to as "his gutter devil" and is on the way to making a soldier. Perhaps this is also part of what the artist is saying.

Now for the soldiers, the two at the back first. The private lighting his pipe is probably (although I admit I may be drawing a long bow here) meant to illustrate the accepted image of the Irish private of the period. Brave in battle, feckless and unreliable in barracks. Well turned out, he still takes advantage of the sergeant's lack of attention on him to illicitly light his pipe. In any well-disciplined army, and especially the British Army of the time, smoking on the march was a privilege to be extended or withheld at the discretion of superiors. As a member of a recruiting party the private would be expected to be regimentally correct at all times. But here the man seems to have thought: "What the hell, it's been a long day, we've got our quota and the sarge isn't looking. I'll light up me pipe." Again, I stress that I don't *know* if this is what Elizabeth Butler is trying to say, but it is certainly what it says to me.

The band boy is interesting. In total contrast to the private he is marching along regimentally correct, in obvious imitation of the sergeant. The sergeant is unmistakably his hero, his role model. His stance, his bearing and his marching gait consciously imitate the sergeant's. One can almost read his thoughts as he contemplates his own future - once he turns 17 he can go on to line service and work to emulate his hero. One day he'll be the recruiting sergeant marching down an Irish road.

The other band boy is less assured. Note that his drum is slung. He's done his duty, he's beaten the drum and called in the recruits and now he's going home. But he is not as robust as his companions are. His drum is a burden that bows him down and he's struggling. Nevertheless, he is marching on gamely and keeping up. It is possible to draw a parallel between the drummer and the smaller recruit but it's not a strong one. The recruit's chances seemed doomed while the drummer displays the courage to battle on. He may never take the sergeant's place but it won't be for want of trying.

Now the sergeant, as I have already noted, for me the dominant, most interesting and most important figure in the painting. He is a young man, in his late 20's or early 30's at the most. He is serious and conscious of the importance of his job. Immaculately turned out, every inch of his frame exudes pride in regiment and pride in self. Not so long ago he was a ragged farm labourer, just like the recruits. Now he is a man of substance, respected by his peers and trusted by his superiors. He is the hero of the fifer, the (probable) terror of the pipe smoking private and the supporter of the drummer. It is his aloof disregard for the trials of the road that is helping the poor drummer to struggle on. He is also the early role model for the larger recruit. Pride in regiment is shown in the way that the sergeant wears his uniform, not a thread out of place. Pride in self and care are demonstrated by his carrying his right hand glove in his left hand. The swagger cane may already be wet. If not, it runs the risk of becoming wet if the rains come again and staining the glove. The sergeant carries the cane correctly held parallel to the ground, lightly grasped at the pivot point and swung through from front to rear so as to be kept parallel at all times.

These four figures, the two band boys, the private and the sergeant, speak to me of the eternal regiment. Behind stretch all of those men of the "Devil's Own" who have taken the King's or Queen's shilling all the way back to 1793. In front of them stretches the future of the regiment, which will endure so long as one single "Jaysus Albert" is left draw breath. More importantly, on this lonely and isolated country road these four ARE the regiment and by being there with them the two recruits, one willing one not, are also part of the regiment. This is a large part of what the sergeant is trying to convey, both to the other soldiers, his juniors, and to the recruits, the new soldiers. The regiment is everything. And the regiment will endure. The sergeant could, quite literally, drop stone dead in the muddy road but the regiment would not die. The regiment will live on because behind him march the fifer and the private and beside him marches the drummer and with him march the recruits, the newest generation of the family. They will keep the regiment alive long after the sergeant is gone and thus the sergeant will never die because the *regiment* will never die. This is, I believe, the third message Elizabeth Butler is sending with her painting.

A developmental theme on the spirit of the regiment is the ability of the Irish soldier to transfer love of country to love of regiment. A peculiarity of the British Army is the tribalism of its regimental system. Unlike most armies where loyalty is to the army as a whole, in the British Army (and, to a lesser extent, the Australian Army) loyalty is to the regiment. A soldier, even today, is not so much a British soldier as a "Welsh Guardsman" or a "Stafford" or a "DERR" or a "Duke's." So, at the time "Listed for the Connaught Rangers" was painted, an Irishman in the British Army did not see himself as a British soldier. Rather he saw himself as a "Royal Irish" or a "Ranger" or a "Leinster" or a "Munster" or a "Dublin." This ability to identify with the regiment rather than with the army as a whole would have greatly assisted an Irish soldier in coming to terms with having taken service with what he would probably view as his country's oppressor. By extension, Irish regiments became a little piece of Ireland transplanted to whatever part of the world they were serving in. St Patrick's Day, for instance, was celebrated in Burma, in India, in South Africa, Malta, Aden, the trenches of the Western Front. It continues to be celebrated today, the Irish Guards having recently celebrated Paddy's Day in the field in Kosovo. Thus, 19th century Irish soldiers generally did not see themselves as serving the British Army and Crown; rather they saw themselves as serving the colonel of an Irish regiment. Another strength of "the regiment" and perhaps again part of what Lady Butler was saying with her painting.

Well, that's what "Listed for the Connaught Rangers" says to me. As I have stated, all things are in the eye of the beholder and it is up to other viewers to make their own interpretation of the painting. Lady Elizabeth Butler, wife of that great soldier General Sir William Butler (the first Catholic general in the British Army since the time of James II) is rightly considered one of the foremost military artists of the 19th century. Many of her works are well known although in truth many people, while immediately recognising such works as "Scotland Forever" might not know who actually painted it. Others of her works are not as well known and "Listed for the Connaught Rangers" is one of these. This is a pity, as it is at one and the same time a marvelous work of art, a fine tribute to the Irish soldier, a well turned tribute to the concept of the regiment and a poignant comment on the sad, cruel, between two worlds status of the Irish soldier.

Oh, one last thing. The dog? Sorry, I have absolutely no idea why its there, except to say that dogs in British Army paintings of the 19th century seemed to be an ironclad requirement. Also, maybe the dog was actually there the day that Lady Butler first sketched the scene. As a leading Pre-Raphaelite, if it was there, then Lady Butler would have painted it!

Historical Footnote

Despite the message conveyed by Lady Butler's painting, sadly the Connaught Rangers no longer exist. Along with the Royal Irish Regiment, the Leinster Regiment, the Royal Munster Fusiliers and the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, the Connaught Rangers were disbanded in 1922. This decision was made as a result of the recently granted independence of southern Ireland, which meant that the Southern Irish Regiments had lost their recruiting grounds. At the same time economic constraints had forced a reduction of strength on the British Army and obviously the ten Southern Irish battalions went a long way to conveniently meeting the army's need to cut its unit numbers. Fortunately the "Devil's Own" live on in Lady Butler's wonderful painting.

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Interesting award of a British War Medal for service during WW1

John Meyers¹

Over the years there has been considerable debate by medal enthusiasts as to whether there was any entitlement to a BWM for home service during WW1. Some years ago I purchased the following interesting medal group:

Queen Victoria Jubilee 1897 (bronze) eng. COPL J.B.RYAN Q.M.I. TOOWOOMBA
QSA bars Cape Colony; Driefontein; Johannesburg; Diamond Hill; imp.
66 SEJ MAJOR J.B.RYAN QNSLND: M.R.
BWM imp. WO1 J.B.RYAN INS. ST. IMD
LS&GCM (EV11) eng. W.O. J.B.RYAN STAFF REGTL SERGT MAJOR 1ST M.D. 5-7-17
MSM (GV) eng. W.O.1 J.B.RYAN INSTL STAFF 1ST M.D. 1.4.20

James Bernard Ryan was born at Toowoomba on 4 March 1870. He enlisted in the Queensland Defence Force on 30 November 1889 and rose to the rank of CSM on 4 November 1898. Typical of a number of regular soldiers he took a reduction in rank to Sergeant to be accepted for Boer War service. Due to the RSM being returned to Australia with enteric he was once again promoted to CSM in the 1st Qld Contingent. For his service in South Africa he was mentioned in despatches vide LG 10 September 1901. He went back to South Africa as the RSM of the 7th Australian Commonwealth Horse but arrived in the country on 22 June 1902, three weeks after the war ended.

Prior to the Boer War he married and they had five children between the 1898 and 1907. It would appear that all his military service from 1889 until his retirement in 1927 as a Warrant Officer Class One except for his attendance at the 1897 Coronation in England and Boer War service was in Queensland with the QDF and later the AMF. WO Ryan was one of twenty three Permanent Forces Warrant Officers to receive an MSM for "specially Meritorious Service in Australia during the Great War." Ref: CG33 1 Apr 1920.

Military Order Number 7 dated 7 January 1922:

The following conditions are now laid down covering the grant of the British War Medal to members of the Australian Military Forces who did not proceed overseas on active service:-

The British War Medal may be granted, in respect of military service in Australia in the Citizen Forces (compulsory called up service) or in the Permanent Forces to applicants who can produce satisfactory proof:

That during their service in the Citizen Forces (compulsory called up service) or in the Permanent Forces they applied for permission to enlist for military service outside Australia without reservation to rank and did not subsequently withdraw their application and the permission applied for was not forthcoming and they did not have an opportunity of serving outside Australia in any rank and if applicable, that after release from service they volunteered unconditionally for service outside Australia.

Members of the Australian Army Nursing Service who actually handled sick and wounded and who comply with the conditions set forth in the above para are eligible to receive the medal.

¹ John Meyers has been a member of the MHSa since 1980 and has contributed a number of articles to Sabretache. He has a particular interest in the Gallipoli campaign and Queensland's involvement in the Boer War.



A Memory of Disbanded Irish Regiments

Tom Johnstone

On a summer's day in 1922 ten regular infantry battalions paraded in garrison towns across England, and led by their bands, pipes and drums, the officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the battalions escorted their Colours to the nearest railway station. There, the Colours, treasured symbols of regimental pride and tradition, were saluted by their units for the last time and the Colour parties, accompanied by their commanding officers', adjutants' and regimental sergeant majors', slow marched along the platform to the strains of *Auld Lang Syne* towards a waiting train. So unique and poignant was the occasion that in those towns, such as Colchester, Dover and Aldershot, the entire garrison, civic dignitaries, and many townspeople turned out to watch the procession.

On arrival at Windsor on the morning of 12 June, the Colour parties, all arriving together on a train from London, were met by a number of distinguished officers and Court officials. In the Royal waiting room the Colours were unfurled and, having been saluted by an escort of 3rd Grenadier Guards, detachments from ten battalions of infantry and one regiment of Horse formed up outside the station. Led by the band of the Grenadiers, the parade set off in slow time, beginning with the Grenadiers own march, *Scipio*. Changing into quick time the band played the marches of the regiments whose Colours were borne behind: *Garryowen, St Patrick's Day, Come Back to Erin, the Wearing of the Green, Killaloe*. The crowds lining the route stood in silent respect for the occasion, even boys from nearby Eton College were subdued as the procession passed grim-faced and silent save for the almost out of place cheerful lilting Irish music and crunch of hob-nailed boots on gravel. Occasionally there was the sound of a sob in the crowd.

The commanding officers, Colour parties, adjutants and regimental sergeant majors' of the southern Irish regiments had come to Windsor to hand their Colours back to the King. Outside Saint George's Hall within the precincts of Windsor Castle the parade halted. Once again the music of Robbie Burns's song rose into the still air;

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught,¹
For auld lang syne.

The detachments slow-marched into the Hall and then formed ranks in army seniority. On the right of the line was the South Irish Horse, next the Royal Irish Regiment, followed by the Connaught Rangers, Prince of Wales Leinster Regiment, Royal Munster Fusiliers and Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Shortly afterwards, His Majesty King George V entered accompanied by Queen Mary. After a Royal Salute and inspection, the King addressed the parade. Speaking with evident emotion he told them:

We are here to-day in circumstances which cannot fail to strike a note of sadness in our hearts. No regiment parts with its Colours without feelings of sorrow. A knight, in days gone by, bore on his shield his coat-of-arms tokens of valour and worth. Only to death did he surrender them.

Your Colours are the records of valorous deeds in war and of the glorious traditions thereby created. You are called upon to part with them today for reasons beyond your

¹ hearty drink

control and resistance. By you and your predecessors these Colours have been revered and guarded as a sacred trust, which trust you now confide in me as your King. I am proud to accept this trust, but I fully realize with what grief you relinquish these dearly prized emblems and I pledge my word that within these ancient and historic walls your Colours will be treasured, honoured and protected as hallowed memorials of the glorious deeds of brave and loyal regiments."

Outside the Hall the band played the regimental slow marches: *Oft in the Stilly Night*, *The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls*, *Let Erin Remember*. Inside the Hall, to this sadly evocative music, led by its commanding officer each Colour party marched forward in succession and handed their Colours to the King. The South Irish Horse, not having a Guidon, presented an engraving to His Majesty as a memorial of the regiment. Having accepted the Colours the King handed the commanding officers individual addresses to be read later to their battalions.

In each address, the King conveyed a message relevant to the regiment's history. To the Royal Irish he wrote:

It is with feelings of no ordinary sorrow that I address you for the last time: for I know that I am taking leave not merely of a fine regiment, but of great memories and great traditions which hitherto have been kept alive and embodied in you.

During your long life of nearly two hundred and forty years you have faithfully served ten British Sovereigns. You were the first regiment in the Army to bear on your Colours a battle honour which was given to you by King William III in 1695.¹ Marlborough knew you well, and your officers have left records of your great achievements under his command. And when, after much service in every part of the world, you returned to the scene of Marlborough's campaigns in 1914 you showed, from the very first serious action of the war, that after two hundred years your glorious fighting spirit was still the same.

You have your Colours, your trophies and your household Gods, which are dear to you as honour itself. You have thought fit to entrust your Colours to me for custody, and I am very proud to take charge of them, to be preserved and held in reverence at Windsor Castle as a perpetual record of your noble exploits in the field.

Meanwhile be very sure that, with or without external monument, the fame of your great work will never die.

I thank you for your good service to this country and the Empire, and with a full heart I bid you - Farewell.

George R.I
12th June 1922

A similar address was given to each other regiment, differing only in title and historical reference. To the Connaught Rangers he wrote: "I mourn the loss of a regiment so prominent in Picton's fighting division. But your fame is assured by the names of Busaco and Badajoz" And to the Munsters:

Robert Clive was your first Colonel and under him you fought at Plassey, and not Clive only but Forde and Knox and Hector Munro and all the old heroes of India knew of what stuff you were made... Your great deeds, extending over a period of two hundred

¹ The siege and taking of Namur 1695.

and sixty years are written too clearly in the history of the Empire for anything lightly to efface them. "

To the South Irish Horse and Leinsters, youngest of the regiments present, King George addressed similar remarks regarding their service in South Africa and the First World War. The Dublin's must surely have swelled with pride to the King's written words:

You are the oldest of the British garrison in India. Your second battalion dates back to the time when Queen Catherine of Braganza brought Bombay as part of her dowry to King Charles II. Your first battalion to still remoter days. Stringer Lawrence, the teacher of Robert Clive, won many a victory with you. Clive led you to Arcot and Plassey; Eyre Coote to Wandewash; Forde to Condore. Your history is the history of early British dominance in India, and you have shown abundantly that you could fight as well in South Africa and in Europe as in the East Indies. To me it is a mournful task to bid you farewell - I have always taken the greatest pride in your past history, but if the glory of any fighting men be safe, then most assuredly safe is yours."

Today some British regiments are proud to have either the Royal Bengal tiger or the Indian elephant on their colours; uniquely in 1922, the Royal Dublin Fusiliers had both tiger and elephant emblazoned on theirs.

Many officers, NCOs and men from the disbanded battalions accepted offers and transferred to other Regiments and Corps. A considerable number of officers NCOs and men, and all signals platoon's, went to the recently formed Royal Signals. In that Corps, the newly transferred linemen by their cheerful hard work created a tradition of rapid line laying in all weathers or battle conditions that is still remembered in that Corps. Some served throughout World War II, and afterwards. The last serving soldier from the disbanded regiments was Sgt Jeremiah Callaghan, who had been gassed in 1915 on the Western Front serving with the Munsters. He died in 1963, still in uniform with 11th Signal Regiment in Catterick Garrison. The last officer was Colonel Seymour Jourdain, Connaught Rangers, who as a stripling of eighteen just out of RMC Sandhurst, had led a platoon of 6th Connaught Rangers at the capture of Guillemont during the battle of the Somme in 1916.

Alas, the muse of history is a fickle jade. For over seventy years after the memorable words quoted above were written by King George V, to five of his nine Irish infantry regiments, only regimental histories and the British *Official History of the Great War* told the complete heroic story of their achievements. Modern military historians and commentators extolled the battles won by the disbanded Irish regiments without even a mention of the Units name. Hardly to be wondered at, since in their own island home they had been written out of history. Notwithstanding, indeed, probably because of this neglect, during the last decade of the 20th Century isolated stalwarts throughout Ireland dedicated themselves to filling this void in Irish history. Their work succeeded in creating an upsurge of interest which awoke a national memory long erased. It resulted in a new, Irish memorial, being constructed on Messines Ridge where two Irish divisions, one mainly Catholic and Nationalist (16th Irish) and the other mainly Protestant and Unionist (36th Ulster), fought and died side by side in common cause at the capture of the fortress village of Wytschaete. The dedication of the memorial, carried out on Armistice Day 1998 in the presence of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II and H.E. President Mary MacAleese, was shown on worldwide television. The Union flag and the Irish tricolour flying side by side gave fitting, if unspoken, recognition to all those enthusiasts in the Republic of Ireland, who had recently founded Associations linked to the Connaughts, Munsters and Dublins. They had helped considerably in creating within Ireland, a climate of public opinion in which the construction and dedication of the Messines memorial in this historic way was made possible.