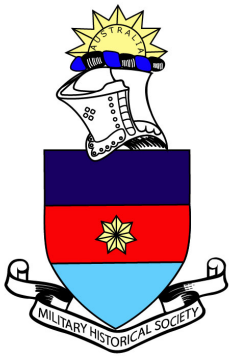
Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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

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

www.mhsa.org.au

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

"CLEANING THE AUGEAN STABLES." THE MOROTAI MUTINY?

Kristen Alexander

The Commissioner:	The aim of your action was the improved situation.
Group Captain Arthur:	Yes.
The Commissioner:	To clean up the Augean Stables.
Group Captain Arthur:	Yes.

(Commissioner to the Inquiry, John Vincent William Barry KC, to Group Captain Arthur, 10 August 1945.)[1]

In the latter stages of the war in the Pacific, the First Tactical Air Force (TAF) was based at Morotai. At this stage, General MacArthur was formulating a series of moves which aimed to free the southern Philippines, Netherlands East Indies and British Borneo of hostile forces. These actions were part of the overall Montclair plan. The main role of the RAAF's First TAF in these operations was the neutralization and destruction of the enemy and his installations, as well as assisting in the air defence of Morotai.[2] Before the OBOE Operations which commenced in May 1945 with the landing at Tarakan, this mainly comprised strafing ground targets and watercraft, and some dive-bombing. Although there were few enemy aircraft seen in the air, the enemy anti-aircraft defences were active and a number of aircraft were shot at.[3]

Group Captain Arthur of No 81 Wing, came to the conclusion that the operations he was carrying out were not worthwhile: that the returns were outweighed by the costs in almost every case. He asked his Intelligence Officer to put together what he called a Balance Sheet for his Wing's operations in order to quantify the benefits as opposed to the results. He took his balance sheet to the Air Officer Commanding, Air Commodore Cobby, and was disappointed that no official attention was given to it. He assumed that, because no action

---

1 Transcript of Evidence, p.2337. This classical allusion refers to the fifth labour of Hercules, an heroic attempt to clear up a nasty mess. Here, Eurystheus ordered Hercules to clean up King Augeas' stables in a single day. The King owned more cattle than anyone else in Greece, and the stables were in quite a state. Hercules struck a bargain with the King that if he cleaned the stables in one day, the King would give him one tenth of his cattle. In order to clean the stables in the stipulated one day, Hercules diverted the course of two nearby rivers which rushed through the large openings that Hercules had made in the stable walls. All of the mess flowed out of the stables into the yard beyond. Naturally enough, the King was not impressed, and he decided not to pay up. Hercules took the matter to a judge who, using the King's own son to give evidence, ruled that Hercules would have to be paid. But this particular labour did not satisfy Eurystheus, as Eurystheus declared that it did not count, because Hercules was paid for having done the work. (http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hercules/stables.html)

The majority of references for this paper have been taken from the Transcript of Evidence for the "Inquiry into Certain Questions Related to ABO "N" 548 of 1944 and Certain Questions Relating to Applications for Permission to Resign their Commissions by Eight Officers of the Royal Australian Air Force" (below referred to as Transcript of Evidence) the Report of that Inquiry by the Commissioner, John Vincent William Barry KC (below referred to as the Barry Report) and Exhibits to the Inquiry (below referred to as Exhibits). The general chronology for the "mutiny" has been taken from both the Report and the Transcript of Evidence, as has many uncited background details. Uncited background details relating to the separation of command in the SWPA have been drawn from Ashworth, Norman: How Not to Run an Airforce! The Higher Command of the Royal Australian Air Force during the Second World War. Air Power Studies Centre Fairbairn ACT 2000.

2 Odgers, George: Air War Against Japan 1943-1945. Australia in the War of 1939-45. Series 3 (Air) Volume Two, Australian War Memorial Canberra 1968. pp. 392-394.

3 Odgers p.397

was taken to remedy the situation, there was something dishonest in the way the First TAF, in particular and the RAAF in general, were prosecuting the war.

Arthur mentioned his unease to a number of friends and colleagues who indicated support of his views and on 20 April 1945, Group Captain Wilfred Arthur, Group Captain Clive Caldwell, Wing Commander Kenneth Ranger, Wing Commander Robert Gibbes, Squadron Leader John Waddy, Squadron Leader Bert Grace, Squadron Leader Douglas Vanderfield and Squadron Leader Stuart Harpham applied for permission to resign. Subsequent to this action, an Inquiry was held to investigate the resignations, as well as other matters. This was conducted by John Vincent William Barry KC.

That is the "mutiny" in a nutshell, but before I go any further, I will briefly touch on the issues of mutiny and resignation during wartime. Firstly the issue of mutiny. The Commissioner explored the aspect of mutiny during the Inquiry as he needed to determine the intentions behind the Group's actions: ie whether they were, as indicated by the individual members, a sincere means towards the end of prompting an inquiry and change, or whether they were in fact mutinous.

The issue was first raised when Arthur stated that, after he came to Morotai, he had decided that he would not take part in the operations that he thought were worthless. He was then asked "This gets very close to Mutiny, does it not", and he responded "Yes. I meant to make as big a fuss as I possibly could with the object of getting the position corrected."[4] Arthur may have agreed that the stand was close to mutiny, but he certainly did not seriously entertain the thought that they might stand a trial for mutiny:

> Because we thought that, in the end, if we put our cards on the table, we would have a sufficiently strong case to prejudice a lot of people in our favour. All the same, we realised that, to lay ourselves open to any charge of mutiny, we might lessen the force of what we were doing, which was the reason we put the things in as resignations and not as any attempt to unseat people higher up... It occurred to us, but we did not seriously think, or I did not, anyhow, that we would be charged with mutiny.

Arthur conceded that it was possible that some might consider that their conduct was mutinous, and also claimed that they were prepared to commit mutiny, in the true sense of the word, as a final resort.[5] That Arthur had considered that the actions could perhaps be construed as mutinous comes through clearly when we look at the aide-memoire that he drew up which detailed the Group's claims and aims. This was originally headed "Morotai Mutiny?" The word "Morotai" was eventually crossed out and a question mark followed "Mutiny".[6] Arthur was asked about the title and in particular why the "Morotai" had been struck out. He did not remember why he struck out the word "Morotai", and thought he had included it in the first place because "the alliteration must have appealed to me". He explained he had used a question mark in the title "because I thought that is probably what it would become ...known as".[7]

The Commissioner to the Inquiry, John Vincent William Barry KC, evidently satisfied himself that the eight had no real intentions towards mutiny, and he did not comment on the potentially mutinous actions in his report. The incident has been popularly referred to as the "Morotai Mutiny", but, although Arthur facetiously used the phrase in his aide-memoire, it did not gain popular currency until many years later. Although the actions of the eight were clearly not mutinous, for want of something better, and although quite erroneous, I will refer to the group as "the mutineers", and occasionally refer to the "mutiny". But always in inverted commas!

---

4 Transcript of Evidence p. 484.
5 Transcript of Evidence p. 496.
6 Exhibit No 127
7 Transcript of Evidence p. 2137

And now the issue of resignation in wartime. There is no provision for officers to resign their commissions in time of war. Indeed, the relevant Order was drawn to the attention of the Commissioner: "Except during time of war and except as otherwise prescribed, an officer may by writing under his hand tender the resignation of his commission at any time by giving three months notice." At this point, Flight Lieutenant Davoren, who was representing Caldwell, countered: "But there is no provision that prohibits your requesting permission, nor is there any requirement that when you make such a request, the grounds of your application must be stated".[8] The "mutineers" were fully aware of this situation. In his evidence, Gibbes indicates quite clearly that Davoren's advice was that there was no order allowing them to terminate their commissions but there was nothing stopping them from applying.[9]

Throughout the Inquiry, the officers had explained their action using variations of the phrase "applying for permission to resign". But the Commissioner considered that there was little difference between this and tendering one's resignation:

> No one can leave His Majesty's service or surrender His Majesty's commission without His Majesty's agreement and the distinction that you make between an application to resign and an application for permission to resign is verbal only, because the effect is just the same. You take yourself out of the precise words of the regulation, but the most that any officer can do is apply for permission to resign. You may describe that by saying that he is tendering his resignation.[10]

What is of interest here is not so much that the "mutineers" could not actually resign their commissions, but at no time during their interviews with Air Commodore Cobby, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock or Air Vice-Marshal Jones was this fact ever mentioned. By attempting to find out their reasons, Cobby, Jones and Bostock gave the clear impression that their applications would be considered. Indeed, Cobby specifically stated to Waddy "I cannot accept this unless you give me some reasons" [11] Admittedly, Cobby did write to the "mutineers" on 26 April 1945, to advise them that there were no provision in Air Force Regulations or elsewhere for an officer to resign in time of war, but, erroneously compounding the impression that perhaps their resignations would be accepted, he went on to add:

> However, action may be taken by this Headquarters to refer any such application received to higher authority providing sufficient grounds of an urgent and special nature are advance to justify special consideration of the application.[12]

I will now turn to the circumstances leading up to the "mutiny". Group Captain Wilfred Stanley (Wilf or Woof) Arthur was born in 1919. He joined the RAAF in 1939 and was one of the last cadets trained under the old scheme. His first overseas posting was with No 3 Squadron RAAF to the Middle East. He had a successful stint with this squadron, on one occasion shooting down three planes during one sortie, one after his own aircraft was damaged. For this he was awarded an immediate DFC. He received a Mentioned in Despatches in January 1942. He was posted back to Australia shortly after to join 76 Squadron. He was promoted to Squadron Leader and in January 1943 was appointed to command No 75 Squadron which was located at Milne Bay. He was awarded the DSO in April 1944, and shortly after took up the role of Wing Leader, No 71 Wing at Goodenough Island, with the rank of Wing Commander. In August 1944, at the age of 24, he was promoted to Group Captain, the youngest to have achieved this rank. After injury,

---

8 Transcript of Evidence pp. 1263-64.
9 Transcript of Evidence p. 431.
10 Transcript of Evidence p. 1264.
11 Transcript of Evidence p. 1266.
12 Exhibit 47 and cited in Barry Report p.140.

repatriation and a brief stint as commanding officer of No 2 OTU, he was posted to 81 Wing at Noemfoor Island and Labuan and then transferred to command 78 Wing at Nadzab in early April 1945.[13]

Arthur was dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the RAAF for quite some time:

> There were occasions previously when certain things that had been done by the RAAF had disappointed and probably disgusted me, but I finally sold out ... about the time I was at Morotai. I thought there was very little hope left for the RAAF...

He went on to explain that by "selling out", he meant:

> What I considered the complete dishonesty of purpose [evident] in First TAF and the fact that I considered there was no attempt being made to kill Japanese, and that the only reason for most of the activities of First TAF was personal benefit of individuals within the Air Force. I considered there were certain persons using the Air Force for their own personal advantage and in the Air Force, it means peoples' lives. I reckoned it was and I reckon it is treason. It is also my opinion from what I have seen before that it is not peculiar to First TAF; that it exists in all the Air Force.[14]

In particular, Arthur had noted that the operational effort was not worth the return. He believed "we were wasting time, endangering peoples' lives and wasting valuable bombs and ammunition."[15]

> I tried to make plain all the way through that we were not complaining about the role given to us, we were complaining about the implementation of the role. We were not complaining because we had an unspectacular role and could not get to places were we could fight enemy aircraft. People were sorry, naturally, but that is not the reason for their resignations...My chief reason was that people were getting killed.[16]

Arthur was so concerned that he actually cancelled some operations that he thought were not worth the effort. As a consequence, Group Captain Gibson, Air Commodore Cobby's Senior Air Staff Officer, visited Noemfoor, where Arthur was stationed at the time, and told him that commanding the Wing was a big responsibility for a person as young as Arthur was, but that he could command it as he saw fit "so long as you operate to capacity".[17] Arthur took this to imply that that he had to operate to capacity or else he would be relieved of his command. After this, Arthur asked his Intelligence Officer, Flight Lieutenant Tyler, to prepare a balance sheet from operational reports from the preceding three months. The purpose of this balance sheet was to show, in respect of 81 Wing, the expenditure in pilots, aircraft, petrol, bombs and ammunition weighed against the damage reported on the enemy.

Barry noted that this balance sheet, and the others that Arthur subsequently prepared in relation to other Wings, was open to obvious criticism in that it did not allow for the strategic necessity of operations, and it did not include damage inflicted on the enemy, but not actually seen by pilots. Nor did it attempt to quantify any psychological effect that the operations had on the Japanese. Indeed, Gibson considered it a "very ill-informed document". However, the Air Officer Commanding, Air Commodore Cobby, thought that

---

13 Garrisson, Air Commodore A D: Australian Fighter Aces 1914-1953. Air Power Studies Centre Fairbairn ACT and Australian War Memorial Canberra ACT 1999, p120 and Shores, Christopher and Williams, Clive: Aces High. A Tribute to the Most Notable Fighter Pilots of the British and Commonwealth Forces in WWII, pp. 99-100.
14 Transcript of Evidence pp. 472-473.
15 Transcript of Evidence p. 474.
16 Transcript of Evidence p. 486.
17 Transcript of Evidence p. 475.

the balance sheet was a fair document and sincere, and Air Vice-Marshal Jones considered it a balanced opinion. Barry acknowledged the limitations of the balance sheet, but considered it a useful starting point for a judgment on the value of the operations and noted that Arthur did not at any time claim that it presented the whole picture.[18]

Arthur initially discussed his balance sheet with Group Captain Gerald Packer who was the Senior Officer Administrative (SOA) of First TAF until January 1945. Arthur decided to bring it to Packer because he realised that he had the:

> rare ability of being able to get down to fundamentals, and I took the figures to him because I knew he was an advocate of the system of recording facts in terms of figures ... and I wanted to know if my deductions from this set were justified.[19]

Packer considered that the document had merit, and told Arthur to take it direct to AOC Cobby. He suggested that, in order to get a hearing, Arthur should tell Cobby that it related to the delicate subject of morale. Encouraged by Packer, Arthur took the paper to Cobby on 23 January 1945.

Arthur showed Cobby his figures and explained why he thought the operations were not worthwhile. Cobby looked at the figures and said they were interesting and asked for copies of the balance sheet, relevant operational instructions and the intelligence appreciations. After the meeting, Arthur had the impression that Cobby was pleased to have the matter brought to his attention, and Cobby indicated that he would look into things. Arthur went away believing that something positive would come out of his meeting with Cobby. Cobby passed the balance sheet to his staff who showed him that the situation was not as bad as Arthur made out. Cobby told them to inform Arthur of this. However, this did not happen: Arthur heard nothing from either Cobby or his staff. Once Arthur realised that Cobby was not going to take any action, he concluded that the worthless operations were carried out with the connivance of First TAF Command. At that point, Arthur began sounding out others of like opinion. He went to Morotai on 13 March 1945 "with the express intention of finding if any other senior people there were interested in making a stand against the type of operations we were engaged in".[20]

The first person he spoke to on arriving at Morotai was Wing Commander Ranger. Ranger was the Senior Staff Officer (Plans) and he was closely involved with the planning for the OBOE operations. Ranger and Arthur had known each other previously in New Guinea. Whilst with 9 Operational Group at Port Moresby and Milne Bay under AOC Air Commodore Hewitt, Ranger submitted a redress of grievance against Hewitt "for the reason that I could not carry out my duties as SASO effectively, due to the attitude of Air Commodore Hewitt and his lack of balance, vanity and lack of purpose in the prosecution of the war".[21] Ranger made nine allegations and the end result was that Hewitt was dismissed from his position.[22] Arthur would probably have been aware of this incident, and he chose to speak with Ranger "because I knew him to be someone who would, if he had an opinion, back it up with statements ... [and have] the moral guts to put it forward".[23]

---

18 Barry Report p.116.
19 Transcript of Evidence p. 479.
20 Transcript of Evidence p. 483.
21 Transcript of Evidence p. 711.
22 Stephens, Alan: Power Plus Attitude. Ideas, Strategy and Doctrine in the Royal Australian Air Force 1921-91. RAAF Air Power Studies Centre/AGPS Canberra 1992, pp 67 and 87 and Hewitt, J E: Adversity in Success. Extracts from Air Vice-Marshal Hewitt's Diaries 1939-1948. Langate Publishing Victoria 1980, p165
23 Transcript of Evidence p. 495.

During the course of the Inquiry, Ranger displayed just as much passion as Arthur in his belief that there was something rotten in the administration of the RAAF. Ranger had broad administrative experience in a number of areas.[24] He specifically doubted the honesty of purpose and ability of certain senior officers, and he considered that the RAAF was overmanned to the extent that its effectiveness was hampered. Ranger was also concerned that the separation of operational and administrative control and the ongoing conflict between the Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal George Jones and Air Officer Commanding RAAF Command, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock impacted on the efficiency of the RAAF.

Ranger had felt discontent with the operations of the RAAF since his return from New Guinea, but the catalyst for his determination to take some sort of action now was the attitude of his superiors, and in particular Group Captain Simms, in relation to the amount of equipment that the RAAF should be taking on the OBOE 1 (Tarakan) operations. As Staff Officer (Plans), Ranger was intimately involved with the Army in planning the Tarakan operation and saw clearly that they "were up against a great shortage of shipping...GHQ had given the Army and the Air Force what the Senior Commanders considered an inadequate amount.[25] It was obvious to Ranger that some cutbacks of equipment and personnel would need to be made and he discussed this widely to see how these cutbacks could be made effectively. Ranger created considerable waves by pushing his position and attempting to reduce the RAAF estimates and was eventually removed from his position and appointed to a less important post.

Arthur found in Ranger someone who was particularly sympathetic to his own discontent, and a ready ally in action. During Arthur and Ranger's first discussion, they canvassed ways in which they could correct the state of affairs, but "in view of the fact that the AOC was aware of the position and was doing nothing about it - and his senior officers here – we felt that if we tendered our resignations it might cause an inquiry such as the one that is now being held."[26] They realized, however, that if just the two of them tendered their resignation, it would have no practical effect. They knew that they needed to enlist the help or sympathy of others. Arthur did not want just people who thought as he did, he "wanted people who would be quite prepared to go right through with the business".[27] This reasoning indicates that the decision to resign was not just a whim: there was an element of strategic planning behind the move to ensure the best result. Part of ensuring that best result was getting Group Captain Caldwell on board. Arthur had previously spoken to Caldwell about the matter of worthless operations and he knew Caldwell was sympathetic to his opinions. Arthur particularly wanted Caldwell because:

---

24 Wing Commander Kenneth Ranger was born in 1913. He joined the Air Force as an Air Cadet in 1934 and was promoted to Flying Officer in July 1935. His appointment was terminated on medical grounds in January 1936. At the outbreak of war he was on the reserve of officers and was re-appointed as a Pilot officer on 7 September 1939. He was an administrative and special duties officer and served in command and administrative positions including with No. 9 OG from December 1942 until July 1943, Senior Officer Administrative from May 1944 with 5MG and Staff Officer Admin (Plans) with 1st TAF from February 1945. He was promoted to Temporary Wing Commander in October 1942. [Ranger, Statement of Service: Exhibit 55 and Transcript of Evidence p. 7111.]

25 Transcript of Evidence p. 721.

26 Transcript of Evidence p. 728A.

27 Transcript of Evidence p. 495.

> I knew that if he did understand it, he would go as far as he possibly could to back up his opinions. Also, I know that his opinions, without any facts behind them, were worth a lot more than the opinions of most other people in the area.[28]

Caldwell agreed to join in, indicating to Arthur that he was optimistic about what could be achieved. Caldwell was confident that they could get several others who would be prepared to go with them. Caldwell suggested Gibbes, Grace and Vanderfield, and Arthur spoke to them that afternoon. Vanderfield suggested Waddy, and "then we got down to business".[29] Harpham did not join in until a little later.

It should be noted that Caldwell's involvement with the "mutineers" was problematic. Although he was genuinely dissatisfied with operations and had discussed his concerns many a time with members of the group and with his superiors, his motives for joining the group were always going to be suspected by the RAAF and, of course, Barry. This was because of the charges against him relating to liquor trafficking and selling via his batman, and also because it was he who forced the issue of an Inquiry in the first place. In addition, there was some speculation that perhaps his involvement was to deflect attention from the liquor charges. Finally, in a communication to Air Commodore Cobby dated 9 April 1945, he had requested that his commission be terminated. This was after the first meeting where, despite his urgings, the group had decided not to apply to resign. Ultimately, Barry concluded that Caldwell's reasons, "all of a personal nature, place Group Captain Caldwell in a different category from the other seven officers".[30]

In his testimony, Wing Commander Gibbes expressed his dissatisfaction quite strongly:

> I had been dissatisfied with the service before I got there and Morotai to me was just sickening...almost from the feeling of the pilots who were operating the area and after I myself had been operating for a week or so and had a really good look around and seen the futility of the operations which had been given, I could not see any point in carrying on. I certainly lost all keenness for remaining in the service.[31]

One sortie in particular upsetting him: "I felt horrible about it, being an ex bushy."[32]

> ... at about lunch time I went out and darned if I didn't have to turn butcher. And Heavens, it was butchering too, in every sense of the word. No - not the Japs. Cattle ... If we are to get the Japs out of this area without loss of human lives, starvation will be our main weapon ... God, I hated doing it but could do nothing else. Felt as sick as hell.[33]

Squadron Leader Waddy considered that the targets they were set were of no significance and that both aircraft and pilots were being endangered needlessly. His brother, Mr Edmund Barton Waddy, represented Waddy and he elicited detailed explanations of operations in order to illustrate to the Commissioner Waddy's position. Waddy spoke of his concerns to his commanding officer, Group Captain Brookes:

> I suggested to him that the long trips we were doing were a waste of time and not worth the risk. He told me that our commitments were that we had to keep the strips unserviceable in the area and carry out watercraft sweeps.

---

28 Transcript of Evidence p. 496.
29 Transcript of Evidence p. 496.
30 Barry Report p. 146.
31 Transcript of Evidence p. 418.
32 Interview Kristen Alexander and Wing Commander R H Gibbes DSO, DFC and Bar, 8 May 2003.
33 Sinclair, James: Sepik Pilot. Wing Commander Bobby Gibbes, DSO DFC Lansdowne Press Melbourne 1971, p. 66.

When Waddy pointed out the problems with these types of task, Brookes

> informed me they were necessary and then he said whether necessary or not we have to fly a certain number of operational hours a month.[34]

Waddy also spoke with Wing Commander Atherton, who succeeded Brookes and was disappointed that neither Brookes nor Atherton took notice of his representations. In early April, Waddy asked his Intelligence Officer to draw up a profit and loss statement for 80 Squadron from 1 October 1944 to 31 March 1945. He "had it drawn up for my own satisfaction to point out and to bring out the fact that the expenditure by the squadron was not compensated for by the achievements of the Squadron."[35] Indeed, during that period, Waddy's Squadron lost 10 pilots, and one pilot from a Dutch Squadron attached to 80 Squadron. Seven of these pilots were lost due to operations.

Although Waddy was dissatisfied with the way operations were carried out, and he had discussed his opinions with his commanding officers, he was mindful of his position as a lower ranked officer: there was not much he could do on his own to protest against the wasteful operations:

> There was no further action I could take other than what I did, and that was to state what I thought about the operations to my immediate superior officer...It was not my place to go any higher than my own particular superior officer under those circumstances. If they agreed to the operations being carried out, there was very little I could do about it except carry them out.[36]

Interestingly, although Waddy was clearly discontent with the operations his squadron had to carry out, his operational reports indicated that the operational results were satisfactory. "They were meant to convey that the Squadron was satisfactorily carrying out its duty". Barry tried to resolve this apparent contradiction and Waddy explained:

> We attacked them and achieved good results attacking them from the point of view of the squadron hitting the target.
>
> Commissioner: If you got four OKs on an entirely useless target, how would you describe the results?
>
> Waddy: as far as the squadron were concerned, "good results". We would probably write it down as "excellent bombing".[37]

Both Squadron Leaders Grace and Vanderfield had had frustrating and disappointing experiences in the RAAF. They had served together in England and were both posted to Malaya. On their return to Australia, both were caught up in the problems relating to their rank. They felt that they were the objects of discrimination by permanent RAAF officers because they had trained under the Empire Air Training Scheme. Grace experienced great difficulties and frustrations during the formation and transport to Morotai of 82 Squadron, which Grace was commanding, and Barry described this experience as "a sorry tale of muddle and delay".[38] Once at Morotai, as with the other "mutineers", Grace quickly formed the opinion that the operations that he was required to carry out were worthless and that his aircraft and personnel were being endangered unnecessarily. Vanderfield had experienced months of inactivity at Darwin with 110 Mobile Fighter Control Unit, and then when the

---

34 Transcript of Evidence p. 1181.
35 Transcript of Evidence p. 1210.
36 Transcript of Evidence p. 1237.
37 Transcript of Evidence p. 1194.
38 Barry Report p. 151.

unit transferred to Morotai, he observed that the Fighter Wings were engaged on what seemed to him, to be useless operations.

Squadron Leader Harpham's discontent arose primarily because 60 Operational Base Unit was not able to perform its basic functions because he did not have sufficient and appropriate equipment and personnel. Harpham also considered that his task of commander of this Unit was made more difficult because he had to deal with indecisive, incompetent and unco-operative members of First TAF Headquarters.[39] Barry noted that Arthur had not discussed his concerns with Harpham prior to the first meeting of the Eight which was held on 6 April 1945. This meeting was held in Harpham's quarters, and Harpham did not arrive until quite late in the proceedings, after he returned from a film. Barry was "disposed to think that Harpham's participation resulted very largely from the circumstances that his quarters were considered a suitable meeting place."[40]

This may have been true initially, but I think Barry underestimated Harpham somewhat. He would have had plenty of opportunity to back away from the decision to join in, and certainly, after Flight Lieutenant Davoren joined the meeting of 19 April, he would have been fully aware of the possible consequences of the joint decision to apply to resign. Indeed, in explaining his reasons for joining the movement he stated

> I joined because at that psychological moment I happened to be very fed up with the whole show and, to be quite frank, I felt that I wanted to get out of the Service altogether. Then it was suggested that I might serve some useful purpose by combining my efforts and doing something constructive, instead of destructive, as far as the Air Force was concerned.[41]

Perhaps, like Harpham, they had all reached their "psychological moment" and Arthur was quickly able to capitalise on those feelings.

The group decided to restrict its numbers just to these eight. Caldwell explained that

> The common factor was based on the fact that we did know each other very well; we had mutual confidence and mutual experience, which we believe has demonstrated sufficiently, to us at any rate, that the RAAF is not doing its job as it should...It would have been very easy indeed to have swelled this into a question of some thousands. It would have been very inadvisable to have done so, because it would have only excited a lot of people who had not yet formed an opinion based on careful thought in the matter.[42]

I will comment briefly here on the links between the "mutineers" which contributed towards that "mutual confidence and mutual experience". At the time of the "mutiny", Caldwell, Gibbes and Harpham were attached to 80 Wing and Grace and Waddy were attached to 78 Wing. Arthur assumed command of this Wing, after commanding No 81 Wing, in early April 1945. Vanderfield's Mobile Fighter Control Unit operated in conjunction with the fighter wings to which these six officers were attached. Ranger was attached to Headquarters First TAF. As well as these immediate links, the Eight had varying degrees of friendship and common service links. Caldwell, Waddy, Gibbes and Arthur had served in the Middle East. Caldwell and Waddy were both in 250 Squadron, Gibbes and Arthur served in 3 Squadron, and Caldwell and Gibbes were Squadron Leaders in the same Wing. Caldwell, Gibbes, Arthur and Waddy were at No 2 OTU Mildura together after they returned from overseas. Caldwell and Gibbes became friends (a friendship that lasted until Caldwell's death), as did Caldwell and Waddy (Caldwell was

---

39 Barry Report p. 152.
40 Barry Report p. 122.
41 Transcript of Evidence p. 1495.
42 Transcript of Evidence p. 140.

godfather to Waddy's daughter). Arthur and Ranger knew each other in New Guinea and, although different ages, had the common bond of attending the same school. Vanderfield, Grace and Gibbes knew each other before going overseas. Grace and Vanderfield served together in England and were both posted to Malaya. Caldwell and Vanderfield test flew the Boomerang together and Caldwell dealt with Vanderfield frequently in Darwin when both No 80 Fighter Wing and 110 Mobile Fighter Control Unit were stationed there prior to transfer to Morotai. Caldwell and Harpham saw each other virtually every day, and Caldwell, Gibbes, Grace and Vanderfield would often use Harpham's quarters as a convenient meeting place as it was central to all of them.

The Eight frequently discussed the issues amongst themselves depending on who was around at the time but there were only three occasions on which they all met, and at these meetings the plans for action were discussed. The first meeting of the Eight occurred on 6 April 1945 and was held at Harpham's quarters as it was the most central venue. Harpham did not join the group until later in the evening, after he returned from a film. Arthur, Ranger and Caldwell were leading figures in the discussion. Arthur covered the operational aspects, Ranger covered administrative shortcomings and Caldwell urged immediate resignation. Arthur, already committed to drastic action, considered that "we were just beating around the bush"[43] and the meeting broke up with nothing conclusive planned. However, they did recognise that any move they might make could not be made through normal channels. Arthur already had experience with Cobby not taking the matter further, and Waddy was still waiting for some response to a redress of grievance. Although no decision was made at this meeting, Arthur noted that Caldwell "put our feelings fairly well when he said what ever we have to lose out of this, is nothing compared to what we probably risked before. Compared with risking our life, that was probably small."[44]

This indicates that the level of commitment of the Eight was high right from the beginning. They may not have yet agreed to resign in concert, but their feelings of discontent were strong. They were not just engaged in idle conversation. None of the Eight walked away after this preliminary meeting.

The next meeting was called for 14 April 1945. It came about because the OBOE operations were starting shortly, and they would be split up. Accordingly, they wanted to make final arrangements before they were separated. However, they did not want to "spring the trap" until after the OBOE operations because, "Group Captain Caldwell and Wing Commander Gibbes had handicapped themselves and we did not want to become associated with the liquor business."[45] Arthur recognized that "they were under a cloud in the eyes of lots of people and anything they had to say could probably be construed as just spitefulness, or as an attempt to divert attention from their own trouble."[46]

Caldwell was due to be posted out of the area and they agreed to a course of action that hinged upon his departure to Australia on leave. When Caldwell arrived back in Australia, he was to sound out the Minister of Air, Drakeford and the Honourable J P Abbott, MHR. He would then write to each of the others, informing them of the results of the interviews. They would then each send Caldwell a telegram, "Many happy returns of the -th". At that point, they would simultaneously submit their requests for termination of their commissions. The date of the "Happy Returns" telegram was to be the date of the receipt of

---

43 Transcript of Evidence p 498.
44 Transcript of Evidence p 498.
45 Transcript of Evidence p. 1108A.
46 Transcript of Evidence p. 1109.

Caldwell's letters and of the requests for termination of their commissions. When he received their telegrams, Caldwell would lodge his own request to terminate his commission. It should be noted that Caldwell had already submitted a request to terminate his commission on 9 April 1945. Some of the officers were aware of this, but none considered that that would exclude him from participating in the joint action.

This commitment to a plan of action had been strongly influenced by Ranger's growing dissatisfaction with and distrust of the First TAF Headquarters staff regarding the equipment taken by the RAAF on OBOE 1. By this stage, Ranger had become very vocal in his disagreements relating to the OBOE operations and at a planning conference on 15 April, Ranger and a number of others openly expressed views that were contrary to those held by Group Captain Simms, who had replaced Packer as SOA. Arthur and Ranger then considered that it would be likely that they might be posted from the area. The group then arranged another meeting for 19 April.

Flight Lieutenant Davoren, who was representing Caldwell in his Court Martial arrived that evening and the group invited him to join the meeting. Davoren ensured that all of the officers were aware of the seriousness of their intentions and wanted to ensure that they were not acting on a whim. Waddy stated that Davoren asked:

> "Is this the result of a grouch over a few beers or a few grogs?" and we informed him that it was not, that we considered it for some long time and decided we were going to take some action now. He then asked us if we realised we were about to take big steps with far reaching effects. We said we hoped they would have far reaching effects, because that was the object. He said "if this is the case, and you understand the position, all right, go ahead". But he said he wanted to make sure we fully realised that we were doing something which would in his opinion have repercussions in the Service.[47]

Davoren then wrote the applications for permission to resign. The applications were all identically worded, and indicated that they were to take effect immediately. Bobby Gibbes still has his original application and it reads:

> FROM: Wing Commander R H Gibbes (260714) DSO DFC & Bar
> TO: Headquarters First Tactical Air Force, RAAF, Morotai
> DATE: 20 APR 45
> REF:
>
> APPLICATION FOR RESIGNATION OF COMMISSION
>
> 1. I hereby respectfully make application that I be permitted to resign my Commission as an officer in the Royal Australian Air Force, forthwith.
>
> [signed]
> (R H GIBBES)
> Wing Commander.[48]

The "mutineers" decided to use the word "forthwith" because if they used a looser term, the matter could be put off. But even so, acknowledging the slow workings of the RAAF, they knew that some time would elapse before their applications could be considered, and, those who expected to participate in the forthcoming Tarakan operation would still be able to do so. They then submitted their applications, via the appropriate channels, the next day.

Cobby was surprised at this action and he interviewed all of the applicants except for Caldwell. He decided not to interview Caldwell because:

---

47 Transcript of Evidence p. 1231.
48 Personal papers of Wing Commander R H Gibbes DSO DFC and Bar

> He was under a charge by me and had sent in a letter which as AOC I thought was a threatening letter. That was 13th April. I thought it would be unseemly to have Caldwell there... I thought [this letter] was an effort to get out of his Court Martial.[49]

No reasons were given for the applications. Given the pending Tarakan operation, Cobby decided to advise the AOC RAAF Command, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock because:

> I thought that Bostock ought to know that at least the Wing Commander, who at that time had been assigned the position of Air Task Commander, or the Commander of the area pending going in, and several other officers had put in their resignations.[50]

Bostock arrived on 21 April 1945 and interviewed everyone but Caldwell. Barry supported the decision not to interview Caldwell, but I tend to think that if Caldwell had already submitted a resignation, and now seven more were submitting their applications, they should all be interviewed to determine whether or not there was some connection. Given that the "mutineers" had considered that some links with Caldwell's Court Martial might have been made with their action, it would also have made sense for Bostock to interview all at this stage to find out if there were actually any links. Indeed, Clause 8 of the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry was framed to determine if there were any links. (See below).

During the meeting, Bostock seemed to be trying to either make the situation go away or to at least cover it up. Perhaps, understandably, in the lead up to the commencement of the OBOE operations, he did not need this distraction. Firstly, he asked the seven officers to keep the content of the meeting confidential. He also said that they could say anything they liked and that there would be no disciplinary action taken. Mr Edmund Waddy, in questioning his brother, stated that he considered this to be "a most extraordinary situation" and asked Waddy to explain why Bostock might have said this:

> I think he had no idea of what our reasons were, and he was trying to find out, and I think he was of the opinion at that time that they were reasons that could probably be remedied on the spot.[51]

Waddy also testified that Bostock was warning them that if they continued with their action, people would accuse them of having cold feet before the Tarakan operations. Waddy considered that Bostock said this because "he was trying to dissuade us from continuing what we had started".[52]

> He made the remark that if we insisted that our applications stand, it would bring about a public inquiry. I think he said it would drag the name of the RAAF through the mud and we did not want to do that, that it would crucify the AOC [ie Cobby] letting down the AIF, and it could be said we had cold feet and I gathered his main concern was that we should withdraw the applications and not continue with what we had started, because it was going to cause quite a stir in the RAAF...AVM Bostock did not know what our reasons were, but that was his attitude. He wanted us to withdraw our applications.[53]

---

49 Transcript of Evidence p. 1787. Caldwell's letter was the one in which he indicated that liquor trafficking was widespread and condoned in the RAAF and "named names".
50 Transcript of Evidence p. 1788.
51 Transcript of Evidence p. 1267.
52 Transcript of Evidence p. 1269.
53 Transcript of Evidence p. 1269.

Waddy then quoted Bostock as saying

> I will leave these applications on the table and if you pick them up, all records and all notes of any of this affair will be expunged from Air Force records and files and nothing will be heard about it.[54]

Mr Waddy made an interesting observation on Bostock's behaviour, which his brother agreed with (although it must be admitted that Barry was not impressed by Mr Waddy venturing his own opinion):

> I am led to this conclusion...that AVM Bostock appeared to use quite a number of lines of persuasion to get you to withdraw your applications, without pressing you for the reasons for the applications, even to the extent of suggesting that all records would be expunged it they were taken back by you.[55]

In his Report, Barry's only reference to Bostock's attempt to make the matter go away was:

> AVM Bostock sought to get them to withdraw the applications and stressed the gravity of the step they had taken. The applications had been placed on the table, and he urged them to take them and tear them up and nothing more would be heard of the incident.[56]

Eventually, the seven officers agreed to take their resignations back and resubmit them, replacing "forthwith" with "at the end of current operations". Applications in the amended form, were then lodged by each of them.

The next day, Bostock prepared a signal which he intended to send to RAAF Headquarters. He showed this to Cobby before he sent it. Some of the key points in this signal were that Bostock considered the morale throughout First TAF to be "at a dangerously low level"; that seven officers had submitted their resignations, with no reasons, and that despite his interviewing them, no reasons were forthcoming; "that the attitude of the seven officers...is a reliable index to the widespread dissatisfaction which pervades the whole TAF"; and that there was a general belief that "TAF HQ staff is incompetent, arrogant to a degree...and is generally unhelpful".[57] Bostock requested that Air Commodore Frederick Scherger relieve Cobby, and that both Simms and Gibson be replaced. Bostock also stated that Cobby "must accept responsibility for the state of his Command". He stated that, after the "fullest and frankest discussions" Cobby accepted this. However, Cobby did not fully accept Bostock's assessment of the situation and sent his own signal later that day denying that morale was low but admitting serious discontent and that distrust of his staff had produced dissatisfaction. He wrote that:

> I feel confident that matters can be effectively handled by me and that harmony will be restored if Group Captain Simms and Group Captain Gibson are replaced. I fully realise however the responsibilities that devolve upon a commander and will accept the decision in regard to myself without question.[58]

This indicates that, contrary to Bostock's declaration that Cobby accepted responsibility, Cobby is only indicating that he understands the concept of command responsibility. He does not go as far as accepting personal responsibility for the situation.

Shortly after, the Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal George Jones arrived on the island and interviewed the seven officers separately. Arthur believes that Jones was friendly and

---

54 Transcript of Evidence p. 1271.
55 Transcript of Evidence p. 1271.
56 Barry Report p. 134.
57 Bostock Signal quoted in Barry Report pp. 136-137.
58 Cobby Signal quoted in Report pp. 137-138.

was making a definite attempt to get to the bottom of the affair. Jones indicated to Arthur that he would take drastic steps to cure what was wrong.[59] Jones asked for their reasons, and still they would not give them. However, each did tell Jones enough for him to realise that they were dissatisfied with operational activities. They all met after their interviews with Jones, and agreed that as the business had got as far as the CAS, they would tell him some of the details. However, rather than present a clear statement of their reasons, they agreed that Arthur would take his balance sheets to Jones and answer any questions Jones may have had.[60] Arthur met with Jones the next day and had just started to explain his balance sheet when Jones received word that General George C Kenney, Commander of the Allied Air Forces, wanted to interview the group. Arthur thought that before Jones heard from Kenney, he was interested in the balance sheet, but that he lost interest afterwards, so he then left. Ultimately, Arthur's assessment of Jones' interest was that, although he was favourably impressed with Jones' attitude at their first meeting, his

> previous experience of him told me that he was not the type of person that would be likely to do anything much. I thought that he might, as a sort of last desperate move, and that if he was pushed as much as he was, he might do something.[61]

Bostock, who was directly responsible to General George Kenney, Commander of the Allied Air Forces in the South-West Pacific Area, had sent copies of his signals to Kenney as he thought Kenney should be aware of the situation. Jones was not impressed that Kenney was brought into the matter and Barry concurred with Jones, considering it "a domestic matter which should have been confined within the RAAF".[62] I disagree with this somewhat. As the Head of the Allied Air Force in the SWPA, and relying on the First TAF to provide air cover in the Tarakan operation, I think Kenney had every right to get involved if there was an operational threat. However, as Bostock was successful in getting the seven officers to agree to change the wording of their resignations, there was no threat to operations.

After Jones had completed his investigation of the "mutiny" he advised Drakeford that:

> the AOC First TAF and the AOF RAAF Command both confirmed the view that the Senior Air Staff Officer, Group Captain Gibson and the Senior Administrative Officer, Group Captain Simms had not carried out their duties very satisfactorily, and that it was desirable that they be relieved by more suitable officers. I have already taken action to bring this about.
>
> The AOC RAAF Command and General Kenney consider that the AOC First TAF, Air Commodore Cobby, has not kept himself as closely informed on operational matters as he might have, and that it is advisable that he should be relieved. They request that Air Commodore Scherger be made available to command First Tactical Air Force.[63]

Drakeford agreed with Jones' report. With Jones' replacement of Gibson, Simms and Cobby, the "mutineers" aim of forcing a change of command was realised. But this was only one part of their overall aim. They also wanted an inquiry into the matter of wasted RAAF effort. I will now briefly cover how this Inquiry came about. Although the "mutineers" took a course of action which provided the best opportunity to force an inquiry into their actions, and Bostock threatened that he would launch an inquiry, I am not convinced that there would ever have been a public inquiry if not for Caldwell and his involvement in liquor trading.

---

59 Transcript of Evidence p. 1119.
60 Transcript of Evidence p. 1120.
61 Transcript of Evidence p. 1120.
62 Barry Report p. 138.
63 RAAF Historical Section: File 36/501/637. Inquiry into Certain Allegations relating to Trading in Liquor and Kindred Matters in the First TAF and Northern Area. Jones/Drakeford: Report on Inspection Made by CAS of First TAF 2 May 1945.

On 9 April 1945, Caldwell prepared a statement that referred to the charges laid against two airmen who had been charged with selling liquor ten days previously. He indicated his own involvement in liquor transactions, but in an attempt to indicate that liquor transactions were condoned in First TAF, he stated that: "To my own certain knowledge and to the certain knowledge of others, a number of senior RAAF officers, including some senior to me in rank and appointment, have sold and traded liquor hereabouts..."[64]

The next day, Caldwell was then charged on five counts of "Conduct to the Prejudice of Good Order and Air Force Discipline" relating to his liquor transactions. Cobby then formally required Caldwell to provide details of his allegations. Caldwell provided that statement on 13 April 1945. In this statement, Caldwell named names, and also indicated that Cobby himself was witness to one instance relating to a liquor transaction.

Caldwell's allegations were treated very seriously and the Secretary of the Department of Air, M C Langslow, in a minute to Drakeford dated 1 May 1945, stated that:

> the allegations ... made by Group Captain Caldwell involve a number of senior officers and, in view of their seriousness, a full investigation must be made to prove or disprove them ... Investigation by a judge is regarded as the soundest and best course to adopt.[65]

The purpose of Langslow's minute to Drakeford was to brief the Minister on the result of Jones' visit to the First TAF, based on a phone call he had received from Jones that day. Nowhere was the mention in that minute of the suggestion of an inquiry into the resignations of the officers. In his report to Drakeford dated the next day, Jones put the resignations down to discontent and made recommendations on removing Cobby. He stated that he believed there was no connection between Caldwell's liquor trafficking and the resignations, but he made no suggestion of an inquiry into the resignations.[66] On 4 May 1945, Langslow wrote to the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department indicating that Drakeford had approved the establishment of an Inquiry under the National Security (Inquiries) Regulations into the allegations made by Caldwell, and sought a recommendation for a suitable person, preferably a judge, to conduct the inquiry. Langslow also requested that the Terms of Reference be drafted. Because of the seriousness of the charges, Langslow stated that the inquiry should start at the earliest possible date. Langslow made no reference to the resignations of the officers in this letter.[67]

It was decided that John Vincent William Barry KC would be appointed as Commissioner to the Inquiry. Barry had had considerable experience on Commissions of Inquiry during the war years. In 1942, he assisted Sir Charles Lowe, Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry into the part played by the RAAF in the defence of Darwin. On 1 December 1944, he was appointed as Commissioner on the Commission of Inquiry into the Suspension of the Civil Administration in Papua in February 1942.[68]

---

64 Exhibit 8

65 RAAF Historical Section: File 36/501/637. Inquiry into Certain Allegations relating to Trading in Liquor and Kindred Matters in the First TAF and Northern Area. Langslow/Drakeford: Result of CAS Visit to First Tactical Air Force Morotai, 1 May 1945.

66 RAAF Historical Section: File 36/501/637. Inquiry into Certain Allegations relating to Trading in Liquor and Kindred Matters in the First TAF and Northern Area. Jones/Drakeford: Report on Inspection Made by CAS of First TAF 2 May 1945.

67 NAA file: A472, W2772A RAAF First TAF – Dealings with Alcoholic Liquor. Langslow/Secretary, Attorney General's Department: Court Martial – Group Captain C R Caldwell DSO DFC and Bar– and Allegations Arising Therefrom.

68 Barry had also held important postings including membership of the Aliens Classification Committee and Chairman of the Legal Advisory Committee. From 1944 to 1947 he was President of the Australian Council of Civil Liberties and from June 1944 until June 1945 he was a member of the Federal War Regulations Advisory Committee.

The Terms of Reference were drawn up, going through a number of drafts, with one of the earliest ones indicating that the focus of the inquiry was firmly on Caldwell's allegations. Before the Inquiry into liquor trading was formally announced, the matter of the resignations reached the Press and both Federal Houses of Parliament. On 15 May 1945 Drakeford made a Statement to the House, concerning both the resignations and the illegal liquor trading. He stated that Caldwell's Court Martial had been suspended because of his allegations implicating other personnel, and announced that Barry had been appointed as Commissioner of an Inquiry to investigate these matters. He stated that "Mr Barry will commence his inquiry immediately upon Terms of Reference sufficiently wide to embrace any matters in issue or anything reasonably incidental to them."[69]

The Inquiry was established under National Security Regulations. Clauses 1-7 of the terms of reference specifically refer to liquor trading and importation and were designed to cover as broadly as possible both Caldwell's actions and his allegations that other unnamed and named members of the RAAF were involved in similar activities. In his Statement to the House, Drakeford did not specifically mention that the Inquiry would cover the resignations of the officers, but Clause 8 of the final Terms of Reference, dated 11 May 1945 states that the resignations would be inquired into, but only as they related to Caldwell's actions:

> Whether the applications by the undermentioned officers (ie the Eight) for permission to resign their commissions in the RAAF were in any way related to or connected with all or any of the matters above mentioned, or with the subject matter of disciplinary proceedings instituted against Group Captain C R Caldwell...

Despite not referring to the matter in his report to Drakeford, Jones, in his autobiography, states that "Since there was disaffection amongst the officers who "resigned", although their actions were motivated by loyalty to Australia, I had to act, and I decided to ask the Minister for Air for a judicial enquiry."[70] In addition to Jones' involvement, I am inclined to think that the combined interest of both Parliament and the Press also would have been a factor. As the mechanism for a Commission of Inquiry into RAAF matters was already in place, thanks to Caldwell's allegations, it was a relatively simple matter to tag-end the resignations on to it. But if the liquor Inquiry had not already been established, I doubt if the resignations themselves would have been investigated, and it would have been unlikely for the RAAF to offer itself up for scrutiny at that end-stage of the war.

The "Inquiry into Certain Questions Related to ABO "N" 548 of 1944 and Certain Questions Relating to Applications for Permission to Resign their Commissions by Eight Officers of the Royal Australian Air Force" opened on 16 May 1945 in Melbourne. Mr Oliver James Gillard of the Victorian Bar appeared to assist the Commission. Evidence was taken in Melbourne, Townsville, Morotai, and Leyte, and Barry also travelled to Bougainville and Tadji. 107 witnesses were examined under oath and 137 exhibits were tendered. The last day of sitting was 27 August 1945. Barry completed his Report on 14 September 1945.

During the Inquiry, the "mutineers" were at great pains to convince Barry that they believed that the problems relating to operations did not exist just in the First TAF, but throughout the RAAF. Caldwell was the first of the "mutineers" to appear before the Inquiry, giving evidence on the first three days of the Inquiry. On 17 May, he raised the issue of operations within the RAAF:

---

69 Extract from Hansard, House of Representatives 15 May 1945 on RAAF Historical Section File 36/501/637.

70 Jones, Sir George: From Private to Air Marshal. The Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir George Jones. Greenhouse Publications Richmond Victoria 1988, p. 93.

> We found that we believed in one common point despite the reasons for which we approached it: that was that the operations and administration of the RAAF from the point of view of its prosecution of the war was not satisfactory from our point of view.[71]

Caldwell elaborated further on prompting from the Commissioner:

> Commissioner: It was not merely discontent at the fact that aircraft were going out and dropping bombs on useless targets?
>
> Caldwell: No. That is a local aspect only. I am not solely concerned with that. I feel that the RAAF after 5½ years of war has not achieved the position in relation to the prosecution of the war against the enemy that it should have done.[72]

The next day, the Commissioner specifically asked Caldwell what he believed was wrong with the Air Force:

> To summarise it, we believed the operations that were carried out were ineffectual and wrong; that our sphere of operations is second rate; and that the provisioning and basic administration of the Service is false – or inefficient.[73] ... It was felt ... that if the eight of us who thought the same way acted in concert, then it would seem that as our aims and opinions were obviously the same, it would be worthy of comment and would attract sufficient attention to possibly achieve an investigation into the administration and operational programme of the RAAF.[74]

On 21 May 1945 Barry contacted Langslow and asked that new Terms of Reference be drawn up under Air Force Regulations to enable him to conduct his inquiries outside of Australia. He also asked that Clause 8 of the new Terms be extended to now read

> Whether the applications by the undermentioned officers for permission to resign their commissions in the RAAF were in any way related to or connected with
>
> (a) all or any of the matters above mentioned, or with the subject matter of disciplinary proceedings instituted against Group Captain C R Caldwell... or
>
> (b) operational activities with the First Tactical Air Force between the month of November 1944 and the 19th April 1945 ...[75]

Barry's requests were agreed to and the new Terms of Reference were dated 24 May 1945. In requesting this amendment, perhaps Barry was prompted by Caldwell's evidence, or perhaps he was concerned by the report on the front page of that weekend's issue of *Smith's Weekly* which called for a public inquiry:

> No question of national security will be involved, but a story of colossal waste of taxpayers' money and of the time of the pilots will be unfolded. For instance, it will be suggested that, in order to buttress RAAF statistics of miles flown and ammunition expended and so forth, pilots flew their planes out to bomb and strafe places which the Americans had used only for practice. Let us hear what that gallant Australian air ace of World War I, Air Commodore Cobby...has to say about this canker that has crept into the RAAF.[76]

The "mutineers" believed that the problems that they experienced were not just restricted to the First TAF, but were widespread throughout the RAAF. Accordingly, they wanted an

---

71 Transcript of Evidence p. 119.
72 Transcript of Evidence p. 124.
73 Transcript of Evidence p. 132.
74 Transcript of Evidence p. 139.
75 RAAF Historical Section File 36/501/617: Inquiry into Certain Questions re ABO B 548/44 and other matters by Mr J V Barry KC. Special Inquiry – Morotai: Proposed Extension of Terms of Reference, 21 May 1945 and letter Langslow/Barry 21 May 1945.
76 Smith's Weekly 19 May 1945.

investigation into the operations of the RAAF, not just the First TAF. Indeed, in his Report, Barry specifically stated:

> It is not within the ambit of my Inquiry...to investigate the truth or otherwise of their allegations concerning the general condition of the RAAF. I shall mention what are their main criticisms in that regard, but I emphasise that I do not make any findings upon the soundness or otherwise of those criticisms.[77]

The original Clause 8 meant that the "mutineers" aim would not be realised. But with the amended Clause 8, at least the operational activities of the First TAF would be investigated, and their aim was partially realised.

Barry completed his Report to Drakeford on 14 September 1945. He specifically iterated that there was no challenge to the sincerity and honesty of the "mutineers", and in his Report he quoted Jones who stated that:

> I believed them all to be sincere in what they were stating and what they had attempted to do ... Yes, sincerely held beliefs, no matter how ill-founded, coupled possibly with a rather exaggerated sense of national duty.[78]

In his Report, Barry paid considerable attention to the separation of administrative and operational commands in the RAAF. This issue was significant because it impacted on two aspects of the matters investigated. The first aspect concerned the operational activities of the First TAF and the origin of the directions to undertake those activities. The second aspect related to the allegations by some of the Eight that this separation had contributed considerably to the conditions existing within the RAAF which precipitated their taking action.

I will firstly address the operational activities of the First TAF. In 1942, the Australian government agreed to a set of arrangements whereby General MacArthur was to command the Allied forces in the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA). General Kenney commanded the Allied Air Forces, including the RAAF. Kenney established RAAF Command, headed by Air Vice-Marshal Bostock. Through Kenney, Bostock answered to MacArthur. Arthur, and others of the Eight, were not aware that the air operations of the Allied Air Forces were controlled ultimately by MacArthur. They thought that the Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Jones in RAAF Headquarters was responsible for RAAF operations.

One consequence of MacArthur's involvement in the SWPA which had direct bearing on the "mutiny", was his determination to keep the RAAF out of direct action with the Japanese, with the plum air offence roles being taken by the Americans. Looking back on the role of MacArthur in the South West Pacific, former Chief of Air Staff George Jones commented that MacArthur had "sidestepped" Australia out of the final victory over Japan, as he wanted all the glory for himself.[79] Ultimately, this secondary role in the final stages of the War with Japan, resulted in considerable discontent amongst the Australians. In his Report, Barry stated that it was apparent, that, as a consequence of this arrangement:

---

77 Barry Report p. 111.
78 Transcript of Evidence p1743 and quoted in Barry Report p. 163.
79 George Jones, Sunday Press article 20/1/85 cited in Stephens, Alan: Power Plus Attitude. Ideas, Strategy and Doctrine in the Royal Australian Air Force 1921-91. RAAF Air Power Studies Centre / AGPS Canberra 1992. p.57. Stephens has noted that although some have argued that the mopping up was unnecessary, and that the Japanese should have been left to rot, this opinion was not shared by all. General Kenney considered that the mopping up role was important, and Air Commodore Cobby believed that "his force's work...helped to keep about 40,000 enemy troops immobilised, as a consequence of which MacArthur was able to press on with the Philippines Campaign, confident that by-passed forces were unable to threaten his flank." Power Plus Attitude p.69.

> RAAF Headquarters had no control over the operational role assigned to First TAF and therefore cannot be held responsible for that role or for the manner in which operational activities within the assignment to First TAF were carried out...Even when First TAF came for the first time under RAAF Command, RAAF Headquarters still had no control over, and thus no responsibility for, First TAF's operational activities.[80]

Vindicating the stand taken by Arthur and his fellow "mutineers", Barry stated that

> Undoubtedly a conditioning factor of great importance in the state of affairs that developed at First TAF...Inevitably it produced a feeling of being in a backwater, as it were, far removed from the progress of the Pacific War. This feeling was not dissipated by knowledge of the forthcoming operations against the enemy in Borneo. I have no doubt that a considerable amount of effort was expended by the Wings within First TAF on useless targets."[81]

He concluded that

> The evidence satisfies me that, upon the facts known to them, they were reasonably entitled to conclude that the operations upon which they were engaged were wasteful and unnecessary. I find therefore that Group Captains Arthur and Caldwell, and Squadron Leaders Gibbes, Waddy and Grace sincerely believed, upon the information at their disposal, that the operations which they have described at length in their evidence were of no real value in the prosecution of the war.[82]

Regarding the motives for participation in the resignations, Barry found that the immediate cause of the applications for permission to resign their commissions for Arthur, Ranger, Gibbes, Waddy, Grace, Vanderfield, and Harpham was their dissatisfaction with the operational activities within First TAF. He found that their resignations were not connected with the disciplinary proceedings instituted against Caldwell.[83] In relation to Caldwell's involvement, Barry concluded that one of Caldwell's motivating factors was his disciplinary proceedings.[84] He found that Caldwell's "opinion of operational activities with First TAF...influenced but were not the immediate cause of Group Captain Caldwell's applying to resign his commission."[85]

I will now turn to the other aspect of the separation of administrative and operational commands which added to the atmosphere of discontent within the First TAF. This was the on-going and well known conflict between Jones and Bostock. Under the new arrangements, as Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Jones was responsible for administration, personnel, provision and maintenance of aircraft and training. He was ultimately answerable to the Air Board and the Minister of Air. As mentioned before, operational matters were the responsibility of Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, who was ultimately responsible to General MacArthur. The separation of these functions was not an ideal framework to operate within, and would require considerable efforts at co-ordination to make the arrangement work. Indeed, in 1942, the Chiefs of Staff considered that:

> It is not possible to separate operational and administrative commanders. The anomalous position would be created whereby, if there was a difference of opinion between the operational commander and the Chief of Air Staff in matters affecting the RAAF only, there would be no one to give an authoritative decision. Such a system of divided control, it is felt, might result in

80 Barry Report p. 166.
81 Barry Report p. 173.
82 Barry Report p. 176.
83 Barry Report p. 190.
84 Barry Report p. 189.
85 Barry Report p. 191.

> the formation of groups within the Air Force itself, which would be destructive of morale and efficiency.[86]

The opinion of the Chiefs of Staff proved prophetic and difficulties and conflict between the two arose almost from the start. Numerous failed attempts were made to resolve the situation, including importing a senior RAF officer, but the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Sir Frederick Shedden, in a memorandum to Prime Minister Curtin, eventually concluded that

> It must not be overlooked, in connection with General MacArthur's views, that the opinion is held by senior RAAF officers that the Americans do not wish to have a senior RAF officer in the South-West Pacific Area, and prefer the divided arrangement, because they can play one side off against the other ...[87]

As far as General Kenney was concerned, he was content to accept the situation as it was: "I'd rather have Jones and Bostock even if they do fight each other harder than the Jap".[88] Although he considered that the feud "sometimes was a nuisance", he "liked the situation as it was. I considered Bostock the better combat leader and field commander and I preferred Jones as the RAAF administrative and supply head".[89] Ultimately however, because of the lack of co-ordination between the operational activities and the supporting logistics, Bostock was not able to effectively fulfil his role.[90]

Some of the Eight alleged that the problems arising from the separation of command "contributed in great measure to the condition existing within the RAAF which they stated was a reason for their taking action".[91] The "mutineers" provided a great deal of evidence relating to the Jones/Bostock relationship and how they considered that it affected operations. Barry noted that, until it emerged in evidence, Arthur had not been aware that CAS Jones had had no control over the operations of the First TAF.[92] Indeed, Squadron Leader Clapin, who was questioning Ranger, indicated to the Commissioner that he had done a bit of research to see if there was anything in writing stating a clear delineation of the division of control, and he informed Barry that he had found very little evidence:

> I can find it only in certain regulations under the Air Force Act which are reproduced in Air Force Orders and which merely entrust the Chief of Air Staff with responsibility for the whole of the Service plus certain training operations. The secret publications ASD205, I think, is the only statement I can find with regard to control operations and function of the service and it does not cite the

---

86 Chiefs of Staff Committee Report to the Prime Minister as Minister for Defence 26 September 1942: Higher Direction of the RAAF, March 1942-1944 Cited in Ashworth, Norman: How Not to Run an Airforce! The Higher Command of the Royal Australian Air Force During the Second World War. Air Power Studies Centre Fairbairn ACT 2000, p. 148 Volume 1.

87 Shedden to Curtin, Memorandum 30 October 1944 cited in Horner, D M: High Command. Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939 - 1945. Allen & Unwin Sydney 1992, p. 360.

88 Lieutenant General George C Kenney, Commander Allied Air Forces, May 1943. Cited in Ashworth, Norman: How Not to Run an Airforce! The Higher Command of the Royal Australian Air Force During the Second World War. Air Power Studies Centre Fairbairn ACT 2000, p157 Volume 1.

89 David Horner: Strategy and Higher Command in The RAAF in the Southwest Pacific Area 1942-45. The Proceedings of 1993 History Conference Held in Canberra on 14 October 1993. RAAF Air Power Studies Centre Canberra 1993, p. 56.

90 Ashworth, Norman: How Not to Run an Airforce! The Higher Command of the Royal Australian Air Force During the Second World War. Air Power Studies Centre Fairbairn ACT 2000, Volume 1 p. 121.

91 Barry Report p. 154.

92 Barry Report p. 153.

> authority...Those are the only places I can find produced in writing in regard to the state of affairs as they are known to exist.[93]

Ranger in particular went into detail about the effects of the Bostock/Jones situation, and his opinions of it. Ranger felt that

> we cannot have any efficiency whatever in the Air Force while there is the divided control between operations and administration. I think that in any successful Air Force in this way, they have gone hand in hand, and the split in this Service can lead to catastrophe, in my opinion.[94]

As far as the interminable wrangling between Jones and Bostock was concerned, Ranger stated "I deplore the fighting and wrangling between them which is common knowledge throughout the Air Force. Every week there are instances of it. Within the last fortnight or so we had had a case."[95]

Cobby claimed that the conflict had an unsettling effect, and Odgers, echoing Cobby's words, stated in his Official History that "there can be no doubt that failure to overcome the conflict within the RAAF had an unsettling effect on the force."[96] Barry questioned both Jones and Bostock over their relationship, and paid particular attention to the separation of administrative and operational commands within the RAAF and the consequent problems, noting that:

> It is undoubted that the separation of administrative and operational command gave rise to unforeseen difficulties. With a service organised on such a basis, very distinct efforts would be required by the officers occupying the positions of Chief of Air Staff and Air Officer Commanding RAAF Command to harmonise their relations if satisfactory results were to be achieved.[97]

Although acknowledging that the situation may have had an unsettling effect, Barry concluded, however, that the behaviour of Jones and Bostock should not have directly impacted on the ability of subordinate officers to carry out their allotted tasks:

> Whatever they may have thought of the policy which had produced the separation, there was in fact no confusion affecting them in the performance of their functions. As Air Vice Marshal Bostock deposed and, Air Vice Marshal Jones agreed, the Air Officer Commanding First Tactical Air Force had full operational and administrative control and therefore subordinate officers within First TAF would have had a co-ordinated set of orders without any division of any sort as far as they were concerned.[98]

Perhaps it should not have had an effect, but it did have a wide-ranging effect and Alan Stephens is particularly damning when he states that the Jones/Bostock conflict, "created the most corrosive atmosphere in the Air Force. There is no doubt that their unedifying public brawling diminished the RAAF's war effort".[99]

I will now turn to the part played by Air Commodore Cobby in the lead-up to the "mutiny". Cobby was greatly responsible for the circumstances that triggered the "mutiny". As mentioned above, Cobby, on advice from his staff, did not investigate the issues raised by Arthur in his balance sheet. This decision not to follow up Arthur's concerns, led Arthur to conclude that the worthless operations were condoned by First TAF. Barry considered that Cobby had "to some

---

93 Transcript of Evidence p. 730.
94 Transcript of Evidence p. 734.
95 Transcript of Evidence pp. 744A-745. Ranger's evidence was given on 8 June 1945, and after this comment went on to elaborate on the latest example of the continuing conflict.
96 Barry Report p. 153 and Odgers, George: Air War Against Japan 1943-1945. Australia in the War of 1939-45. Series 3 (Air) Volume 2, Australian War Memorial Canberra 1968, p. 439.
97 Barry Report pp. 164-165.
98 Barry Report p. 167.
99 Stephens: Power Plus Attitude pp. 63-64.

extent isolated himself from the officers of his command by living with his two senior officers..." and that it was "amongst his duties as AOC to maintain proper control over his command and the proper discharge of that duty required him to be aware of the state of feeling within his command."[100] Barry commented that, when Arthur brought his balance sheet to Cobby, "this should have brought home to Cobby that all was not well with First TAF."[101] Barry went on to add that

> The facts that there was such intense and widespread dissatisfaction within his Command and that he was unaware of it, leave only one conclusion open, namely, that Air Commodore Cobby failed in the discharge of his duty as AOC, First TAF, to maintain proper control over his command.[102]

During his evidence, Cobby had indicated that the actions of the "mutineers" had taken him by surprise, and this is noted by Barry in the above statement. But Arthur's evidence indicates that Cobby was fully aware of how bad the situation was. Arthur stated that they had actually asked Cobby to come in on the movement:

> While we knew that he was somewhat to blame [ie for the situation that had developed] we felt that his value to our move, because of his name with the Public, together with Group Captain Caldwell, would give us a very considerable amount of public support... he was the prima donna of one war, and ... arm-in-arm with the prima donna of the next war, we would put up a reasonable front and attract a lot of attention in the headlines of the newspapers...We felt that would outweigh the disadvantage of having somebody on our side who was to blame.[103]

Cobby refused to come on board and Arthur stated that "afterwards we were more or less glad that he did not come in because we thought "he may not go all the way".[104] Arthur also agreed with the Commissioner's statement that "it would have been an awkward state of affairs if one member of the group taking the action was to have laid upon him the blame for the state of affairs of which the group was complaining."[105] Given this, and remembering Ranger's forceful disagreements regarding the OBOE planning, it should have been patently obvious to Cobby that there were problems and I do not know how he could claim to have had no knowledge of discontent and dissatisfaction.

Before I conclude, I will briefly touch on "what happened next". After Barry presented his Report to Drakeford, Air Commodore J Hewitt, the Air Member for Personnel, reviewed the Report. His recommendations to CAS Jones related solely to Caldwell, Cobby, Simms and Gibson. He did not comment on the resignations, other than to state Barry's findings in relation to them.[106] Drakeford referred the Report to Air Board for review[107] and Air Board considered that neither the Report nor Findings called for a general review and report. Air Board not did concur with Hewitt's earlier recommendations to terminate the appointments of Cobby, Gibson and Simms, and Hewitt appended a dissenting note.[108] Drakeford then requested that Air Board reconsider its proposals in relation to Cobby, Gibson and Simms, "having full regard also to the

---

100 Barry Report pp. 185-186.
101 Barry Report p. 185.
102 Barry Report p. 189.
103 Transcript of Evidence p. 2345.
104 Transcript of Evidence p. 2346.
105 Transcript of Evidence p. 1346.
106 RAAF Historical Section File 36/501/617: Inquiry into Certain Questions re ABO B 548/44 and other matters by Mr J V Barry KC: Hewitt/CAS 24/9/45.
107 RAAF Historical Section File 36/501/617: Inquiry into Certain Questions re ABO B 548/44 and other matters by Mr J V Barry KC: Langslow/CAS 20/9/45.
108 RAAF Historical Section File 36/501/617: Inquiry into Certain Questions re ABO B 548/44 and other matters by Mr J V Barry KC: Air Board Minute of meeting 5/10/1945.

basis of AMPs dissent".[109] Air Board subsequently reviewed its decisions, but saw no reason to vary them. Drakeford, however, strongly supported Hewitt's recommendations, considering them fully justified, and he endorsed them. The appointments of Cobby, Gibson and Simms were to be terminated.[110]

In conclusion, I consider that "mutiny" was a partial success. The "mutineers' " resignations initially precipitated the removal of Cobby, Simms and Gibson from the area, and, in his Report, Barry echoed Jones' perceptions of the involvement of these three in precipitating the "mutiny". With this, an immediate remedy of the situation was made. The "mutineers" also got an Inquiry, which was certainly an important success given Bostock's apparent efforts to make the problem go away. However, Barry was limited by the Terms of Reference to reporting on the operations of the First TAF only, and not those of the RAAF as the "mutineers" wanted. In addition, the Inquiry was not held in public, and only the summary was released to the Press, so public debate on the state of the Air Force was not fueled until the next year when, after his forced retirement, Bostock published a series of articles that were highly critical of the RAAF. The Report was tabled in 1946 as a response to those criticisms.

The "mutiny", and subsequently the Report, highlighted the command framework that precipitated the state of discontent in the SWPA, but it was too late to do anything about it. With the end of the war, the SWPA framework was dismantled, and even if the war had continued, it is unlikely that the problems arising from the division of administrative and operational functions could have been resolved, especially the on-going "feud" between Jones and Bostock. Despite various attempts by Curtin, Drakeford, Jones and Bostock since 1942 to resolve the situation, no solution was ever agreed to.

Partial success maybe, but, it must be noted that, with the removal of Cobby, Simms and Gibson, and the subsequent investigations into the reasons for the resignations, there was at least clear official recognition that there were serious problems within the First TAF and these would not have been addressed but for the "mutineers" actions. And from the perspective of the "mutineers", the "mutiny" was successful. They did get an inquiry, and they forced a change of command. Looking back on the "mutiny", Bobby Gibbes stated that:

> We did manage to change the command up there completely. One or two of them I felt sad about. Harry Cobby who was a wonderful man, he was posted. But some of the others I wasn't distressed about. But we did change the command, and that's what we set out to do.[111]

---oOo---

Bibliography - Primary sources

AWM S01646. Oral History Recording. Wing Commander Gibbes/Ken Llewelyn 12 February 1993

Interview Kristen Alexander and Wing Commander R H Gibbes DSO, DFC and Bar, 8 May 2003

National Archives of Australia: File A472, W2772A RAAF First TAF – Dealings with Alcoholic Liquor.

Personal papers of Wing Commander R H Gibbes DSO DFC & Bar

---

109 RAAF Historical Section File 36/501/617: Inquiry into Certain Questions re ABO B 548/44 and other matters by Mr J V Barry KC: Drakeford/Airboard 18/10/45.

110 RAAF Historical Section File 36/501/617: Inquiry into Certain Questions re ABO B 548/44 and other matters by Mr J V Barry KC: Air Board Minute 23/10/1945; Drakeford's minute 23/10/1945.

111 AWM S01646. Oral History Recording. Wing Commander Gibbes/Ken Llewelyn 12 February 1993.

RAAF Historical Section: Transcript of Evidence for the "Inquiry into Certain Questions Related to ABO "N" 548 of 1944 and Certain Questions Relating to Applications for Permission to Resign their Commissions by Eight Officers of the Royal Australian Air Force; Report of that Inquiry by the Commissioner, John Vincent William Barry KC (the Barry Report) and Exhibits to the Inquiry (below referred to as Exhibits).

RAAF Historical Section: File 36/501/617: Inquiry into Certain Questions re ABO B 548/44 and other matters by Mr J V Barry KC

RAAF Historical Section: File 36/501/637. Inquiry into Certain Allegations relating to Trading in Liquor and Kindred Matters in the First TAF and Northern Area.

Bibliography - Secondary Sources

Ashworth, Norman: How Not to Run an Airforce! The Higher Command of the Royal Australian Air Force During the Second World War. Air Power Studies Centre Fairbairn ACT 2000.

Garrisson, Air Commodore A D: Australian Fighter Aces 1914-1953. Air Power Studies Centre Fairbairn ACT and Australian War Memorial Canberra ACT 1999.

Hewitt, J E: Adversity in Success. Extracts from Air Vice-Marshal Hewitt's Diaries 1939-1948. Langate Publishing Victoria 1980.

Horner, D M: High Command. Australia's Struggle for an Independent War Strategy 1939 - 1945. Allen & Unwin Sydney 1992.

Jones, Sir George: From Private to Air Marshal. The Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir George Jones. Greenhouse Publications Richmond Victoria 1988.

Odgers, George: Air War Against Japan 1943-1945. Australia in the War of 1939-45. Series 3 (Air) Volume 2, Australian War Memorial Canberra 1968.

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

Sinclair, James: Sepik Pilot. Wing Commander Bobby Gibbes, D.S.O., D.F.C. Lansdowne Press Melbourne 1971

Stephens, Alan: Power Plus Attitude. Ideas, Strategy and Doctrine in the Royal Australian Air Force 1921-91. RAAF Air Power Studies Centre / AGPS Canberra 1992.

The RAAF in the Southwest Pacific Area 1942-45. The Proceedings of 1993 History Conference Held in Canberra on 14 October 1993. RAAF Air Power Studies Centre Canberra 1993

---oOo---

NAKANO AGENTS AND THE JAPANESE FORCES IN NEW GUINEA, 1942-1945

Keith Richmond

Even sixty years after the event, we know little of the undercover war in New Guinea.[1] Clandestine, unconventional activities of the Japanese who fought a long and occasionally inspired attack on the Allies have been even less publicised. While many Japanese records were destroyed at war's end and material available in translation is restricted, this paper seeks to begin the process of understanding. The focus is on the work undertaken by graduates of the intelligence agency known as the Nakano School, or *Nakano Gakko*.

The long history of the Japanese in intelligence gathering is well known, with the involvement of secret societies, research institutions and the very effective system known as the mass method of gathering information where the entire community was expected to contribute. This produced a duplication of functions and information, as well as a greater capacity for controlling those providing the information. All forms of intelligence-gathering were intertwined: it was "difficult to differentiate, for example, between those organisations designed for the collection and collation of economic intelligence, and those engaged in purely military, naval or political matters".[2]

Some intelligence was obtained by Japanese agents in New Guinea before the war, but it was inconsistent at best and depended on the ability of the agent or contact involved. There was, for example, great detail such as stocks held in individual sheds, although there was a lack of information on vital issues including food supplies or the state of the Kokoda trail.[3]

Nakano School agents were involved with the Army and Navy, with both forces demonstrating an ongoing commitment to undercover activities. The Army's Second Division incorporated the Kempeitai (the police responsible for security and counter intelligence); the Special Service Agency known as Tokumu Kikan (espionage); and the Central Special Intelligence Department (code breaking).[4] The Navy's General Staff had its Department of Naval Intelligence and Special Service Organisations[5], and importantly, it

---

1 For the purposes of this paper New Guinea is taken as the island mass comprising the areas of Dutch New Guinea, New Guinea and Papua, and adjacent islands.

2 Peter Elphick, *Far Eastern File: The Intelligence War in the Far East 1930-1945*, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1997, pages 34 and 35. There are many books that contain references to the Japanese intelligence system, but see generally, Elphick, ibid; Tony Matthews, *Shadows Dancing: Japanese Espionage Against the West 1939-1945*, Robert Hale, London, 1993; John Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II*, Random House, New York, 1995; and JW Bennett, WA Hobart and JB Spitzer, *Intelligence and Cryptanalytic Activities of the Japanese During World War II*, Aegean Park Press, Laguna Hills CA, 1986.

3 Lex McAulay, *Blood and Iron: The Battle for Kokoda*, 1942, Arrow Books, Sydney, 1991, page 20 and AWM 54 757/3/6 'Petrol-Oil-Lubrication (and other Petroleum Supplies)' dated 22 January 1942

4 James Hansen, *Japanese Intelligence: The Competitive Edge*, NIBC Press, Washington DC, 1996, page 24. Some of the best Nakano graduates went to the Tokumu Kikan at theatre level while the remainder went to the operational agencies such as will be found later in the paper – Elphick, op cit, page 50.

5 For the Navy intelligence operations, see Elphick, ibid, pages 41-42 while for the work of embassies and consulates, see ibid, page 48 and Tony Matthews, *Shadows Dancing*, op cit.

was the Navy that was given responsibility for civil administration and the maintenance of public order on New Guinea.

The Navy was the most active of the services in its clandestine activity pre-war. In the Pacific area it gathered intelligence by working with commercial bodies such as the South Seas Development Company[6] while its Special Service Organisation obtained information from sailors employed on shipping in the waters around New Guinea and Australia.[7] Submarines were known to have visited the north coast of Australia and occasionally contacted remote aboriginal communities in their search for possible landing places.[8]

Until 1940 the Army had focussed on China and was not concerned with the south, but with the emerging possibility of a war in the Pacific, it made three decisions to boost intelligence capability. First, the Nakano School was formally established in Tokyo. This had been operating since 1938 as an intelligence academy, and it was to train more than 2500 operatives by the end of the war. Secondly, the process of sending out trained operatives across the Asia Pacific area was accelerated. The third decision was to establish the Dora Nawa Unit, which became famous as the research organisation that assessed all data for the invasion to begin the Pacific War.[9] When war began, the Japanese not only drew on the intelligence developed over years but undertook a further deliberate dispersal of agents.[10]

The Nakano School provided a rigorous introduction to the life of an agent. Extended courses were provided on a wide variety of topics including languages, philosophy, history, current events, martial arts, propaganda, counter intelligence and the facets of covert action. On graduation, some agents remained in Japan to monitor subversion, although more commonly they were sent overseas to infiltrate established institutions. Agents often posed as "immigrants, students or businessmen".[11] They gathered information and acted as intermediaries, usually operating through the integrated Japanese network of the consular

---

6 The South Seas Development Company was perhaps the best known of the commercial enterprises that were established by both private and government sources from the 1890s to develop the nations to the south. This company was established in 1921 and became very successful in agricultural enterprises – and especially so in assisting the Japanese Navy in intelligence gathering. Its founder, Matsui Haruji, convinced of the importance of the southward expansion, proposed in the 1930s that the Japanese acquire Dutch New Guinea. Matsui's company was well established there, with a focus on mining and plantations.

7 Richard Hall, *The Secret State: Australia's Spy Industry*, Cassell, Sydney, 1978, page 28, says that prior to the war, Australian intelligence services had spies on luggers so they could watch the Japanese, and that agents were in New Guinea to study Japanese shipping movements.

8 See Archives A 8911/1/266, 'Detection of Japanese Espionage, Northern Australia and Contacts with Aboriginals'

9 Mark Peattie, 'Nanshin: The Southward Advance, 1931-1941 as a Prelude to the Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia', in Peter Duus et al (eds) *The Japanese Wartime Empire 1931-1945*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1997, page 227 and Elphick, op cit, page 38. Also see Stephen Mercado, *The Shadow Warriors of Nakano: A History of the Imperial Japanese Army's Elite Intelligence School*, Brasseys Inc, Washington DC, 2002, page xi – note that he almost invariably uses any synonym other than kikan when referring to these units. The Noborito Research Institute that developed the special tools and devices for the spies also began at the same time: Mercado, ibid

10 Japanese Demobilisation Bureau, Reports of General MacArthur, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, Volume II, Part I, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1966, page 2

11 Elphick, op cit, page 39 – as an example, Major Niiho to be encountered later in the paper, posed as a Domei reporter. Also see Stephen Mercado, 'An Insight Into Japanese CI', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Volume 15 No 4, Winter 2002-2003, pages 628-632 for the use of agents in Japan. Note that kikans or agencies were not only the work of Nakano agents: Elphick, op cit, page 38, said that such agencies had been established from the late 1920s in China, Manchuria and Mongolia.

service network, banks, industrial houses, shipping companies or the commercial bodies such as the South Seas Development Company. They worked closely with the Kempeitai, the notorious Japanese military police, and in many cases the roles of the agents and the Kempeitai dovetailed to the extent that programs were indistinguishable. The agents often arranged themselves into special service agencies or kikans that were involved in undercover intelligence work, including espionage, propaganda and subversion, fifth column activities, internal security and pacification of the native populations.[12]

Special service agencies were present in almost every country occupied by the Japanese, including Java, Burma, Brunei, the Philippines and Malaya.[13] Establishment of an agency aggregated the activities of the individual agents, allowing a concerted effort to be made on a particular project – such as undertaking anti-colonial activities in India and undermining ties to the Army. Of Australian interest, in late 1943 a unit known as the Pine Kikan or the Pinetree was established in the Dutch East Indies to conduct long-distance reconnaissance on Australia. Japanese Navy intelligence indicated considerable Allied activity on roads and airfields on the coast of Western Australia. Lieutenant Koko of the Pine Kikan wanted to test whether the reports were accurate. On 23 January 1944 a group of four Japanese and 25 Malays set sail from Kupang on Timor and landed some days later at a point assumed to be some 540 km southwest of Darwin at Admiralty Bay. The group stayed four days and took photographs to show there was no Allied airfield or other activity there. The film was sent to Tokyo where it perished in an air raid.[14]

Activities in New Guinea

Undercover activities of the Japanese in New Guinea differed according to the location of the Japanese (that is, whether they were in the east or west of the island), the extent to which the occupation was in an area previously settled by the Japanese, and the distance from the Allied advance. In general, garrisons in Dutch New Guinea were established where there had been a strong pre-war presence of the Japanese, usually by the South Seas Development Company, and the focus was then on long-term work with the natives. In the east of the island, the Japanese had no strong presence pre-war and with the inevitability of battle there, the focus was on stemming the Allied advance. (To take one example, coast watching and observation posts were set up on the north coast to monitor the presence of Allied aircraft.) As is well known, the Japanese occupied a number of settlements particularly on the northern coast of the island where they established or expanded facilities such as ports and airstrips as well as establishing garrison units.[15]

The Japanese utilised the Naval Minseibu civil system for administering New Guinea, along with the actions of the feared Kempeitai; the coordinating 8th Navy Development

---

12 WB Simpson, *Special Agent in the Pacific, World War II: Counter Intelligence – Military, Political and Economic*, Rivercross Publishing, New York, 1995 at page 46 says the Kempeitai served as an agent for the Tokuma Kikan

13 Archives A8911/1/11, 'Espionage (Japanese) Includes Reports of Japanese Associations and Activities', and see attached 'Notes on Tokumu Kikan', pages 5-6. Also see Mercado, *Shadow Warriors*, op cit, passim and AWM 54 423/4/115, 'Notes on the Tokuma Kikan, and Japanese Intelligence Organisations, 1944', page 7 for more examples

14 Louis Allen, 'The Nakano School', in *Proceedings of the British Association for Japanese Studies*, Volume 10, 1985, pages 9-18 at pages 14-17. There is some level of disagreement over where the boat landed and what boat was actually used, but the basic facts remain: see Allen, ibid, page 17 for some options and Alan Powell, *The Shadow's Edge: Australia's Northern War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1988, page 224 where he gives a new boat name and new place of landing for the same operation. Powell extends the long list of sightings and landings made by the Japanese over that given in Archives A 8911/1/266, op cit.

15 See www.info-indo.com/indonesia/history/eastindies19.htm

Department was installed at Wewak by February 1943 and Hollandia by March 1944.[16] Natives were incorporated in their administration, in setting up schools, by being recruited into the militia unit known as the Native Police Force, and in the utilisation of the native hierarchy in pacifying or controlling the community.

Garrisons were established in the west at Manokwari, Fakfak, Babo, Nabire, Hollandia, and Sorong. It is likely there was a kikan or at least a Kempeitai unit established in the Manokwari area and the far west of the island from the time the Japanese first landed there in April 1942. Nakano agents undertook four main activities: training the natives in military activities; establishing spying operations; guerrilla operations; and establishing special agencies in Dutch New Guinea.

Natives were being used by the Japanese from the early months of the war, not just in standard military training but for undercover purposes. One report said:

> In 1942 there existed at Manokwari, Dutch New Guinea, a special training school known as Hirata Tai, after its commanding officer, Hirata...In September 1943 this school was transferred to Kaimana (also in Dutch New Guinea). The school trained Papuans in secret police methods. Graduates were to ascertain the allegiance among the natives, whether they were passing around Allied pamphlets, spreading false rumours, etc.[17]

There were other reports that indicated the military use of the natives. One report of 6 December 1943 said that "The enemy is reported to train Papuans in the use of rifles at Iworep village.."[18] (that is, near Dobo, the largest settlement in the Aroe Islands off the west coast of Dutch New Guinea). According to a diary entry for 9 December 1943 for Lieutenant G B Black who was sent on the Inter-Allied Services Department (ISD) Locust mission from Bena Bena to Aitape: "Natives being trained at Aitape in use of firearms, grenades etc".[19] The latter suggests that similar training exercises might have been quite widespread by extending into the eastern part of the island as well.

Where it was possible, the Japanese incorporated the natives into a spy system, regardless of whether it was in the east or west of the island. In part the pacification activities were oriented to this end – the natives were urged to help the Japanese forces, to bring in any downed airmen, and to let the soldiers know of any useful intelligence. As one Allied intelligence report said, the "Japanese have organised an extensive native intelligence system for reconnaissance and espionage purposes."[20] Where the Nakano agents were not active it was the Kempeitai that operated the spy system. Schools for potential spies were held and one report noted that "at present there about 100 receiving education" at Lae.[21]

---

16 See AWM 55 12/28, 'Kempei', page 5 for an example of natives being used as soldiers in the Markham River area in June 1943, and Iwamoto Hiromitsu, 'Japanese Occupation of Rabaul, 1942-1945', http://members.jcom.home.ne.jp/1542365201/1999symposiumpaper/iwamoto.html Interestingly, establishment of civil administration lagged months behind both the occupation and the establishment of kikans, indicating that the existing forces were considered most capable administrators.

17 AWM 54 627/1/8, 'Japanese Intelligence Collecting Agencies – Their Organisation and Function in Peace and in War, 29 May 1945', page 33. (There are quite surprising similarities between the work of the Allies and the Japanese in the undercover tactics they used in New Guinea, including the establishment of spying operations with the natives.) Also see AWM 54 423/9/27, 'Conference Reports, Report on South West Coast, 6 December 1943', page 1

18 ibid, page 1. Dobo was the place where Reverend Leonard Kentish was executed – Kentish was taken from the wreck of the HMAS Patricia Cam by the pilot of a float plane on 22 January 1943 and executed at Dobo on 4 May 1943 – www.ozatwar.com/japsbomb/kentishaffair.htm

19 Diary of Captain G B Black MC, relating to Locust mission, on loan to author.

20 AWM 55 12/43, 'Intelligence Gathering', page 30

21 ibid, page 21

Spies were paid for their services. The total number of paid spies is not known, although natives bringing advice were likely to have been compensated so the potential number must have been many thousands. Certainly the life of Allied troops or patrols was made difficult and many were betrayed by willing natives. Even if the natives did not betray their presence, the likelihood of food or shelter being given to an Allied soldier was markedly reduced.

With a multitude of spies and helpers, the Japanese were able to cover a large amount of territory at any time, thus: "Native spies were sent out to investigate the conditions in the vicinity of the Nako River...".[22] Also, "Spy squads in about three groups (organised with a CO who is an officer competent to gather intelligence and some NCOs plus natives) will infiltrate into villages and gather intelligence ..."[23] An uncorroborated report exists on the possibility of agents being active far from base during the Kokoda operations.[24]

References to guerrilla tactics occur frequently in the Japanese writings on New Guinea, and it was the agents of the Nakano School who created an effective fighting force. There were four stages of development. To begin, standard guerrilla activities were used in Guadalcanal and New Guinea.[25] In December 1942 at a time of desperation at Buna, infiltration tactics were recognised as being the only means of silencing American artillery. Volunteers were split into groups of twenty, the units penetrated the lines around Soputa in December 1942 and January 1943, blowing up at least one 25 pounder but not succeeding in silencing the guns.[26]

Realising the potential impact of such activities, as a second stage it was decided to train special units to undertake infiltration and guerrilla activities. Some fifteen Nakano agents were sent to eastern New Guinea in early 1943 to demonstrate and a camp to train troops was established 50 km east of Lae. The 200 recruits were from the Takasago tribes of Formosa, and these men distinguished themselves in all subsequent actions. Instruction was given by Nakano squad leaders in means of attack, the study of topography of an area, as well as in the pacification of natives. Known as the Saito Unit, the initial team left in early September to attack an Australian camp in the Kainantu area in the Eastern Highlands Province. Their role was to destroy installations using special incendiary devices (capable of producing heat of over 2000 degrees) developed by the Noborita Institute. The first raid produced over 60 Australian casualties, considerable arms and material were confiscated, and much of the camp destroyed.[27] This success was followed by over 60 raids on Allied positions, notably in the Ramu Valley, at the Driniumor, and an attack on Dagua airfield.[28]

---

22 ibid, page 21
23 ibid, pages 23-24
24 Robert Piper, *The Hidden Chapters: Untold Stories of Australians at War in the Pacific*, Pagemasters, Carlton, Victoria, 1995, pages 77-82 has the story of three aircraft that landed at Table Bay, east of Port Moresby, in September 1942 and the men proceeded to walk inland – but to contact agents or seek another Kokoda trail is unknown
25 See Kengoro Tanaka, *Operations of the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces in the Papua New Guinea Theater During World War II*, Japan Papua New Guinea Goodwill Society, Tokyo, 1980, page 169 for the example of the Oba Raiding Party
26 Small parties of four men were active on Guadalcanal – Japanese Monograph No 34, *17th Army Operations*, Volume 1, Department of the Army, Washington DC, page 144
27 No evidence was found in David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1961, of any attack of this style near the dates mentioned. For a history of the guerrilla activities and the Saito group, see *Japanese Night Combat*, Japanese Monographs, Department of the Army, Washington DC, Part 3, pages 529-535. Most Japanese official histories of the New Guinea land war contain some mention of the Saito group. See Japanese Monograph No 41, *18th Army*

The third stage was a tribute to the work of the Nakano agents: because of the perceived value of the work, there was a commitment from Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo that more irregular forces were required. This led to the opening of a section of the Nakano School devoted to guerrilla training – the Futamata branch accepted its first intake on 1 September 1944.[29] So the Nakano impact in eastern New Guinea was significant not only on tactics but future training of Nakano agents.

The final stage occurred in early 1945 when the 18th Army realised that it could no longer operate as a normal fighting force, so it was decided to launch wide scale guerrilla actions.[30] Accordingly the original Saito unit was broken up and dispersed throughout other units with the aim of instructing the 18th Army generally in the performance of infiltration activities; the Nakano agents assisted in the instruction. Not surprisingly, perhaps, not all the reports on the wider use of infiltration and guerrilla activities were complimentary.[31]

Special Agencies in Dutch New Guinea

The final area of Nakano activity concerns the use of the special service agencies in Dutch New Guinea. The 8th Naval Construction Department landed at Wewak and established its headquarters[32] while a field branch of the Kempeitai was also established. As of February 1943, Captain Michiaki of the Japanese Navy was in charge of the unit that set about the development of military and agricultural projects, working with civilian firms, Mitsui and the South Seas Development Company. Numerous Nakano agents were attached to this unit.[33] The Department was split into four sections – General Affairs, Development (agricultural projects), Intendance (supply), and Medical. The General Affairs area concerned itself with investigation of political conditions, morale and loyalty of the natives, propaganda and recruitment of labourers. Any disciplinary actions were turned over to the

---

Operations, Volume 5, Department of the Army, Washington DC, pages 13-14 which describes a commendation to Lt Sato of the Saito unit and details all operations.

28 Mercado, *Shadow Warriors*, op cit, page 119

29 ibid, page 87

30 *Japanese Night Combat*, op cit, at page 534 says it was in the spring of 1945 that a decision to establish wide-scale raiding units was taken.

31 Japanese Monograph No 40, *18th Army Operations* Volume 4, Department of the Army, Washington DC, page 230. The Japanese author of one history suggested that the claims made by raiding units might have been exaggerated – See *Japanese Night Combat*, op cit, page 535. Also, Japanese Demobilisation Bureau, Reports of General MacArthur, op cit, page 349 refers to the establishment of formalised parties – the 1st Raiding Party was established in January 1944 and added to the Order of Battle for the 2nd Area Army, and other units were sent to Dutch New Guinea but arrived too late to take part in action. (Some 40 Nakano agents led the 1st and 2nd Raiding Units in battle.) Raiding parties under different terminology were active all through the war in New Guinea, and the 2nd Raiding Units were most effective on Moratai – see Japanese Monograph No 13, *North of Australia Operations Record 1943-1945*, Department of the Army, Washington DC, page 41; Japanese Monograph No 136, *North of Australia Operations, Supplement*, Department of the Army, Washington DC, page 43a; and GH Fearnside, *Half to Remember: Reminiscences of an Australian Infantry Soldier in World War* II, Haldane Publishing, Sydney, 1975, page 191

32 Not surprisingly, perhaps, an Allied intelligence report dated 29 March 1945 indicated that natives were well disposed toward the Japanese in the area surrounding the "8th Naval Construction Station...who have been cooperative in matters such as billeting, supplies and transport" – AWM 55 12/43, op cit, page 47.

33 The total number of Nakano agents here is unknown although it is assumed that, as in the east where guerrilla actions were led by Nakano agents, the leaders and squad leaders at least would have been Nakano graduates. The usual practice was for the Nakano agents to act as leaders then recruit the men, and natives, required. In the official reports, terms such as "special intelligence units' and "pacification units' were commonly used but not 'kikans' – see AWM 55 4/4/6,'Allied and Japanese Operations Among Natives of Dutch New Guinea'.

Kempeitai and important findings were sent to the Naval Special Service Department in Soerabaya. This latter location was the home of the Kana Kikan under Naval Captain Hanada, and was the headquarters for western New Guinea operations.

A number of small agencies or kikans was established in the area from Hollandia (near the border of Dutch New Guinea) west, under the cloak of the 8th Naval Construction Department. They were known by different titles, including 'Kikans', 'Agencies' or 'Agents', 'Pacification Units', and 'Construction Agencies'. They covered the north and west of the country with some presence in the north-central area. They were:

- Kami Kikan, headed by Captain (later Major) Niiho Satoru in February 1944 and stationed in Hollandia.
- Taka Kikan, sited in the Wissel Lakes area (in the west) and led by Lieutenant Ogawa.
- Tatsu Kikan, headquartered at Goai (in the north between Sarmi and Hollandia) and led by Lieutenant Uchiyama. This was also known as the Goai Pacification Unit or the Ryu Agent.
- Wani Kikan, near Lake Habbema (in the central area), led by Captain Hidaka. It was also known as the Hatsubema Pacification Unit.
- Tora Kikan, headquartered at Sarmi in the north, and known as the Sarmi Agent.
- The Jin Agent was led by Major Niiho in June 1944.
- Ume Kikan, based in Biak (an island off the north coast).[34]

Each kikan was headed by an officer up to Major level with 30 to 40 men. The Tatsu Unit, to take an example, led by Lieutenant Uchiyama, had 36 men under him including 5 in intelligence, 8 on wireless duties, 11 men on defence, five men on medical duties, six Military Police, and one interpreter. The leader of the Taka Kikan, Lieutenant Ogawa, entered Australia in May 1941 posing as a cabin boy on board the Canberra Maru. His task was the systematic reconnaissance of Sydney Harbour, and it is suggested his work was used by the submarines attacking the area in 1942.[35] When Captain Hidaka of the Wani Agent was killed in an attack on a seaplane base, Major Niiho was ordered to take command of all units in the area from mid-1944. On a less cheerful aspect, Major Niiho, who led the Kami, Jin and Wani agents, had brought to him any Allied airmen who were downed in the area. Niiho had them executed (and in turn after the war he was executed after trial by the Allies).[36]

The purpose of the kikans included the establishment of native espionage networks, collection of intelligence, military exploration such as gathering information on the topography and resources of an area, and control and administration of the natives. When an area was considered sufficiently friendly, a 'guard' of natives was formed to act on behalf of the kikan and collect information. Similarly, the Ume Agency, stationed on Biak,

---

34 For a review of the activities of the agencies, see AWM 54 627/1/8, op cit, passim. Stephen Robinson, 'What Role did Propaganda and Spying Play in New Guinea', http://airp.awm.gov.au/airp/remember/nsf/pages/NT00005112 says at page 2 that the Tatsu organisation "infiltrated teams into New Guinea by parachute and flying boat" which sounds unnecessary given that Tatsu was based in the Sarmi area which the Japanese controlled. Late in the war, the Sato Construction and Repair Unit (another title for a kikan) was assigned to pacification duties – Japanese Monograph No 40, op cit, page 238. It is worth noting that Allied patrols were in the Wissel Lakes area (400 miles NW of Merauke) for 14 months in 1943-44 and in the Hollandia area for extensive periods in 1944-45 – see Gavin Long, *The Final Campaigns*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1963, page 620, and GB Courtney, *Silent Feet: The History of Z Special Operations 1942-1945*, Slouch Hat, McRae, Victoria, 1993, Chapter 8

35 Elphick, op cit, page 226

36 Mercado, *Shadow Warriors*, op cit, page 235. The Tatsu unit was involved with the interrogation of LG Siffleet, a member of the Whiting party captured in October 1943. He was later beheaded at Aitape – AWM 55 4/4/6, op cit, page 5

"will, in close liaison with the Naval Pioneer Unit, establish an indirect intelligence organisation composed chiefly of natives".[37]

Other units (drawn from existing kikans) were delegated for specific purposes, including the Mamberamo Expeditionary Force, the Hirose Exploration Unit and the Tatsu Exploration Unit.[38]

As an example of the material sent by the Kami Agency from the Hollandia area to Soerabaya, a report on the Topographical Description of Hollandia was included as part of Intelligence Report No 1 sent on 27 December 1943, with sections devoted to geography, climate, natural features, population, education, administrative organisation, and so on.[39] An explanation was included with the lengthy report, saying "The original investigation of this area was made by the 8th Naval Construction Section in May 1943, but the records were lost in the enemy bombing attack on the district government office. The information given here consists of recollections of the former staff of DEI [Dutch East Indies] and persons familiar with the area".[40]

The kikans treated the natives as willing conscripts, and orders directing their life-changing activities were issued on a constant basis. One example was entitled 'Plan for Carrying Out Special Intelligence Against the Natives By 36th Division', which listed their objectives: "a. First period: To win the native's confidence and establish bases. b. Second period: To organise natives to assist in gathering intelligence, and to extend the main position".[41]

Similarly the Tatsu Kikan issued a Proclamation to the natives in the Goai area urging cooperation. The charter contained a series of points beginning "The object of the Japanese Army penetration into the Goai area is to protect the natives and to crush the advance of the enemy and seize his agents. It is not for the purpose of obtaining coolies or provisions". Other items on the Proclamation included claims of support for the Japanese from natives at Manokwari, Sarmi and Hollandia, the dominant position of the Japanese Army ("Rest assured of that"), the need for the natives to grow food for soldiers, and the importance of the natives seeking out the Japanese to obtain medical attention.[42] Kikans were also used to build group villages and instruct the guard units in their undercover activities.

These agencies were required to fill complex roles and some examples of their work are of value. First, as part of an investigation into the possibility of finding areas suitable for airfields, the Kami Kikan suggested that the best locations were occupied by two plantations under the control of the 8th Naval Construction Section – and each farm had approximately 50 acres under crops and vegetables.[43] Thus the unit working on agricultural projects was important in the provision of foodstuffs, and would have controlled a sizeable proportion of the labour force (in conjunction with the South Seas Development Company). Secondly, they conducted routine police investigations, so the Kami unit was involved in the apprehension of natives espousing a mystic cult as well as the prevention of rumours

37 Japanese Monograph No 136, op cit, pages 5,8,13,29,33,37,38,39,42,43
38 AWM 55 4/4/6, op cit, pages 12, 16
39 AWM 55 5/26, Enemy Publications, 'Intelligence Report File of the Kami Organisation (Special Service Organisation), 25 January 1945, Intelligence Report No 1', page 7
40 ibid
41 AWM 55 4/4/6, op cit, page B
42 ibid, page 19
43 AWM 55 5/26, op cit, page 49. Also see Japanese Monograph No 40, op cit, page 90 which says that the 8th Construction Unit farm at Yarabos was providing potato plants for the starving troops in late 1944

among natives, while the Tatsu unit investigated the murder of policemen.[44] Thirdly, a special subjugation unit, part of the Army Intelligence Squad, engaged in battle with Allied troops.[45] And fourthly, in December 1943 natives on neighbouring Biak and Japen Islands arose in mutiny against the Japanese Army, and were pacified by the Biak Detachment (presumably with the assistance of the Ume Kikan).[46]

Two other uprisings from the native people were recorded in opposition to the Japanese presence, including the Tablasoefa village chief, who in 1944 wrote on behalf of 13 villages to the 8th Naval Construction Section and complained about the Japanese presence. Some 34 villagers were arrested following the complaint. Also, the chief at Armopa and his villagers fled into the hills in protest at Japanese recruitment practices. At the conclusion of their reports, the Japanese were keen to attribute blame, and if the Allies were not responsible (as in these cases they clearly were not) it was assumed that the natives alone deserved punishment.[47] In one report from the Kami Unit, there is a comment on some natives not complying: "They have no wish to engage in work, because they do not understand the Imperial Army's holy war".[48]

Perhaps the most important work undertaken by the kikans was that of pacification. This is to be understood as keeping the natives under control in any way, whether by bribery and giving trade goods such as salt or knives, or by more active measures such as arrest as indicated above. In one representative exercise, the Kami unit conducted a wide-scale pacification program lasting from early February until the middle of May, 1944. In this time the unit marched from Hollandia to Arzo, Ampasu, Hollekang, and thence to the upper reaches of the Sepik before returning to Hollandia. In each case the process was the same: the units went from one village to the next, conducting military intelligence and pacifying the natives along the way: "special stress was laid on the district leader, the village and tribe chiefs". (The aim was to convince the head man to accept the Japanese teachings and then the villagers would follow his lead.) An area with a radius of 25-30 km around the main centre was pacified. After achieving this, the unit moved to the next centre and repeated the process, again pacifying all natives in a 25-30 km radius around the centre. It was noted in the Ampasu sector "We have fully succeeded in the pacifying plan by various methods both mental and physical. The natives have offered us their devotion, labour, material and information and further have cooperated in our operations".[49] In the same manner, the Tatsu Unit sent a report that stated "about 4000-5000 natives within 60 km radius of Manokwari are regarded as friendly to Japan".[50] The most active units from the information currently available, seems to have been the Kami and Tatsu Kikans, both of which submitted lengthy reports on their area of occupation.

Reflecting the often overlapping style of intelligence gathering as used generally by the Japanese, a similar approach applied in New Guinea. Agencies or kikans were but part of an extensive and conflicting intelligence operation where special units worked alongside regular service units: the collection included the Ikoi unit or 2nd Army Intelligence Section, the Kempeitai, the Civil Administration or Minseibu, 36th Division units, and the Propaganda Department. In addition, there were eight "intelligence units" around Goai

---

44 AWM 55 5/14, Enemy Publications, 'Military Police Intelligence Report', pages 3,6,8
45 ibid, page 20
46 ibid, page 21
47 See AWM 55 5/26, op cit, pages 15, 51 and AWM 55 5/14, op cit, page 8
48 AWM 55 5/26, op cit, page 51
49 ibid, pages 54, 55
50 AWM 55 4/4/6, op cit, page 2

under the control of the 36th Division (likely to have been the Tatsu agency).[51] To complete the picture, an intelligence operative revealed in his diary that he had attended a lecture at Sarmi from a representative of the Nanyo Development Company, a commercial enterprise promoting Japanese economic activity as well as intelligence gathering.[52] Again demonstrating close links, tactics and field manuals relating to intelligence activities of a range of personnel ranging from the commandos to the Kempeitai, were remarkably similar.[53]

The kikans were also active in deceptive activity, not surprising when the list of fellow collaborators above is viewed. For example, the Kami Kikan after being advised of an Allied push, stated that it would step up pacification of the natives in the path of the advance (thus denying the Allied troops an easy passage) and would prepare for "dispersed combat". In the field manuals, suggestions were given on the use of devices such as deceptive movements and deceptive flight, exploitation of false information, and use of radio propaganda.[54] Fifth column activity also featured in their instruction manuals but seems not to have been applied too readily under the New Guinea conditions: suggestions included the use of bacterial agents, plus military, diplomatic and economic activities (such as disruption of the currency system and sabotage of natural resources), creating terror among the population, and employing "feint attacks and other various types of tactics to threaten the enemy's rear and confuse him".[55]

Impact of the Japanese Activity

The effectiveness of the undercover approaches is open to question. A report written during the war said:

> The available evidence indicates that none of the Activities Agencies (Kosaku Kikan) produced any significant volume of intelligence-type information. Although many reports from operational units in New Guinea are available, only a few scattered references to 'native reports' as a source of intelligence have been noted.[56]

This comment, while probably true, misses the point that it is likely there was little intelligence of value to be revealed, and the contribution of the natives was substantial in reporting the presence of downed airmen or any infiltrating patrol activity.

There was no pattern of 'left-behind' units in the over-run areas of New Guinea, and anyway, performance was likely to be poor owing to the straitened circumstances of the Japanese especially after mid-1944 when the main challenge was keeping a starving army in some sort of fighting condition, and their lack of capacity to act on intelligence.

---

51 ibid, page 13
52 ibid, page 14. It seems likely that this was the Nanko, ie the South Seas Development Company
53 See, for example, AWM 55 5/37 Enemy Publications, 'Deceptive Tactics Used in Espionage'; AWM 55 5/20 Enemy Publications, 'Military Police, Intelligence, Propaganda, Pacification and Fifth Column Activities' and 'Commando Raiding Unit Tactics'; AWM 55 6/15 'Interrogation Reports (of MP)'; AWM 55 5/26, op cit; AWM 55 12/91 'Japanese Military Police Service'; and Archives A 8911/1/13, 'Hand Written Notebook on Espionage and Sabotage', for a how-to-do-it guide on opening envelopes , incendiarism, etc. AWM 54 627/1/8, op cit, says at page 6 that the special service agencies were engaged in long range espionage while the Kempeitai was involved with local or secondary espionage.
54 ibid, page 32, and AWM 55 5/37, op cit, pages 4-5
55 AWM 55 5/20, op cit, pages A, 9-10
56 JW Bennett, WA Hobart and JB Spitzer, op cit, pages 32-33

(Significantly, the original name for the Nakano School in 1938 was the 'Training Unit for Rear Duties Agents'.[57])

Members of the Allied missions into the New Guinea wilds were occasionally caught and tortured, and some radios and cipher books were captured. Certainly natives disclosed information that harmed the Allies on many occasions. The extent to which the Japanese were able to obtain any information of relevance that significantly impacted on the Allies in New Guinea using these sources must remain a matter of speculation. When one looks at the traditional undercover methods, there is only limited evidence in New Guinea. The use of double agents, for example, with which the Japanese elsewhere were very familiar, was unlikely to be high given the lack of information available and the lack of a sophisticated populace seeking to traffic in technical or military information.

So where did the Japanese get their intelligence? Their most productive methods overall were claimed to be intelligence gained from agents and information obtained from POWs.[58] In New Guinea, the work of the Nakano agents was important along with the natives; men such as Major Niiho were active in interrogating POWs; while code breaking and diplomatic channels might have assisted.

There is no valid means of determining the success of the agencies, the raiding parties or the pacification exercises: it was done to achieve an end and that end was not realised. Nor did the Japanese have the capacity to parachute agents behind the lines or to undertake significant acts of subversion or create panic by the use of explosives -- what did one blow up in New Guinea? The raiding units did what they could with camps, bridges and airfields but one needs to remember the sad state of the retreating forces before one speculates on major achievements using subversion.

Allen summed it up well when he suggested that "much of Nakano's work was rendered nugatory by the surrender in any case".[59] Impressive as the feats of the Nakano agents may have been, they were simply unable to turn the tide of battle.

---oOo---

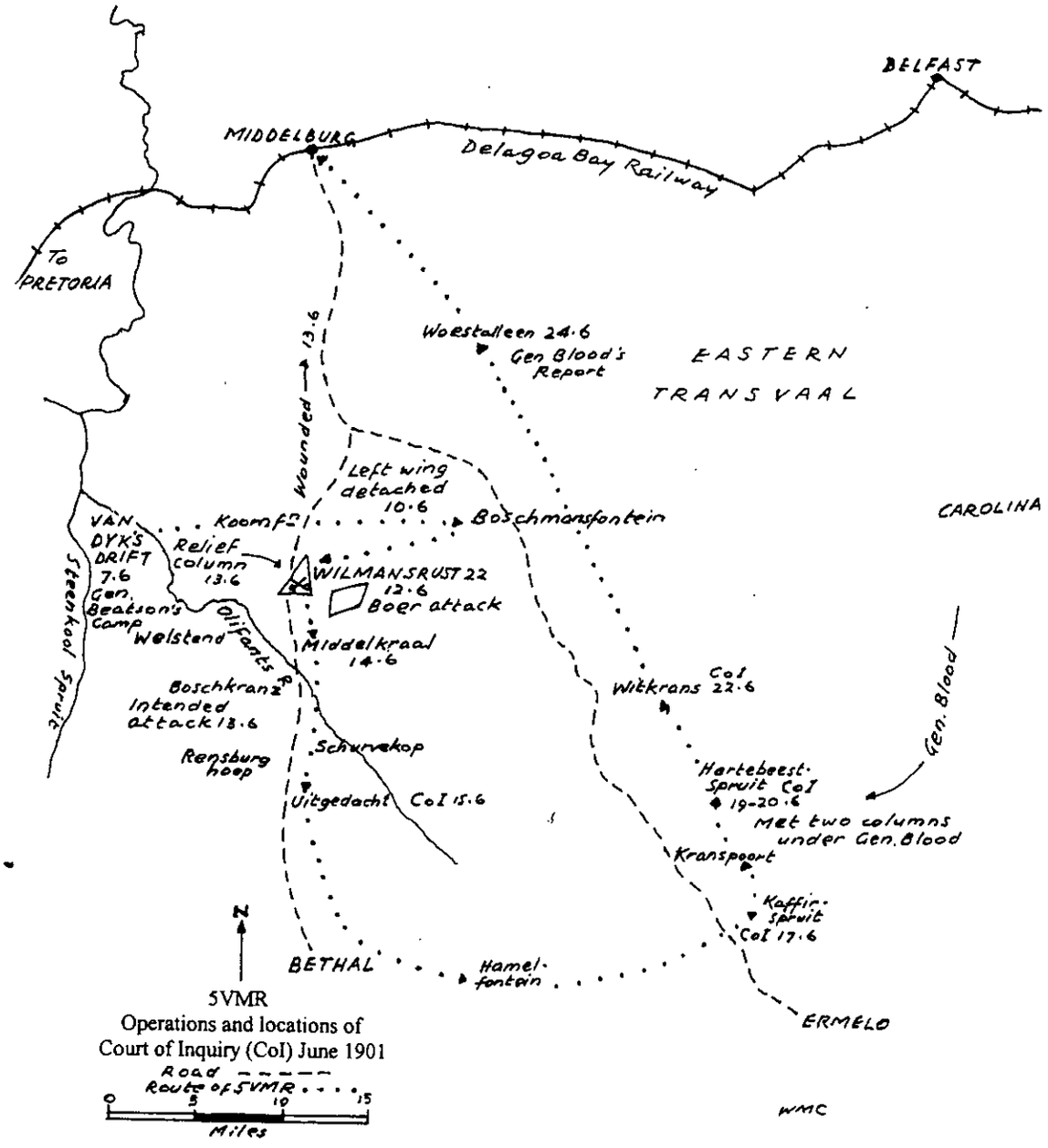
57 Louis Allen, 'The Nakano School', op cit, page 9. The Japanese soldier who eventually walked out of the Philippines jungles in 1974 was a product of the Nakano Futamata group's first graduation. Students were taught never to give in but fight to the end – see Mercado, *Shadow Warriors*, op cit, page 96 and Onada Hiroo, *No Surrender: My Thirty-Year War*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1975, page 28

58 See Archives A 6923 S1/1, 'The Activities of Australian Secret Intelligence and Special Operations Sections', 31 August 1945, passim

59 Allen, op cit, page 17

Correction to September 2003 edition

The footnotes in the article 'Wilmansrust: The Battlefield Trials of the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles' by Max Chamberlain in the September 2003 edition of *Sabretache* were incorrectly printed as 3 to 20 instead of 1 to 18. The locality map for the Middelburg-Bethal area below should have accompanied the Wilmansrust article and would be of assistance to readers of the article



THE ACTION AT BRAKPAN

Max Chamberlain

I

The Australian units in the Boer War were on operations in all nine provinces of the present-day South Africa, as well as in Zimbabwe. I have been unravelling their tracks across this enormous battlefield and analysing their actions, in most of which they were successful, although they suffered severely in some. My approach has been to collect chronological observations of unit movements from whatever authoritative sources could be located and apply these to battlefield maps of the period. Without eye-witnesses to ask it is necessary to rely on clues in books, letters, diaries and newspapers. As this is an exercise in 'cartographic archaeology' I have retained such features as Imperial measurements, ie one mile equals approximately 1.6 kilometres.

I have chosen as a case study the action at Brakpan as perhaps being representative of the Australian service during the guerrilla phase of the war. It illustrates several of the problems encountered in attem pting to recreate history from fragments up to 100 years old. The research indicated that there was confusion about where and when the action happened, controversy about whether it displayed courage or cowardice, and uncertainty about the responsibility of the Commonwealth government in regard to Australian units in the field.

The action occurred in May 1901 in the eastern Transvaal and involved men of the 5th and 6th Western Australian Mounted Infantry (5 and 6WAMI). These units were formed in January and February 1901, ie after Federation, and were part of what were called the Imperial Drafts - Drafts because they were raised to replace the earlier units, and Imperial because they were paid for by the British government.

Section 114 of the Commonwealth Constitution says that 'A State shall not, without consent of the Parliament of the Commonwealth, raise or maintain any naval or military force ...'.[1] Because, in its first year of existence, the Commonwealth was not geared to the rapid formation of an Australia-wide force, the task was undertaken on its behalf by the States - the former Colonies - acting as agents for the Imperial government.

As the Prime Minister said, it was considered 'more satisfactory to have the completion of this work in the hands of those who had begun it, and who were familiar with the conditions of service and all other matters connected with the contingents'.[2] So for the only time in Australia's history, military units were raised by the States.

In Western Australia, the 5th contingent was authorised in December 1900, consisted of 14 Officers, 207 ORs and 234 horses, and sailed on 6 March 1901 aboard the troopship *Devon*, arriving at Durban on 28 March. The 6th contingent was authorised in January 1901, consisted of 14 Officers, 214 ORs and 237 horses, and sailed on 10 April aboard the troopship *Ulstermore*, arriving at Durban on 29 April.[3]

On arrival of the 6th contingent, the units, totalling some 449 men and 471 horses, served side by side in South Africa, under Major (later Lt Colonel) J R Royston DSO, a South African who had

---

1 The Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia.
2 Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, 1901, p. 1488.
3 P L Murray (ed), Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa, 1899-1902, Department of Defence, Melbourne, 1911, p. 418.

been with the Border Mounted Rifles, a Natal Volunteer Corps, and had gained distinction at the defence of Ladysmith.[4] They were part of a column under General Walter Kitchener, which also contained 2nd Imperial Light Horse, 1st Devons, two guns of 53rd Battery, one gun of 10th Mountain Battery and one pom-pom of S Section.[5]

The service began with operations north of the Delagoa Bay Railway when the column worked from Lydenburg towards Middelburg, seeking the Boers under General Ben Viljoen, who were escorting the Transvaal government. The British forced them westward towards the rugged bushveldt where General H C O Plumer's Australian Bushmen were advancing eastward from the Pietersburg Railway. Other columns advanced north from the Delagoa Bay line, including 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles (5VMR) under General S B Beatson, a Bengal Lancer.

In these operations the Australians had several engagements and made captures of prisoners, stock and supplies, although some commanders concentrated on devastation and deportation rather than destruction of the enemy. The measure of success in this war of attrition became, not battles won, but a statistical exercise, numbers of enemy killed or captured, and livestock and bags of mealies confiscated. The Boers, however, fought desperately and skilfully.

Viljoen escaped across the Olifants River and ultimately to the high veldt, south of the Delagoa Bay Railway, where the more open terrain allowed greater manoeuvrability. His commando attacked blockhouses and conducted aggressive operations against the newly-arrived Imperial Yeomanry and Imperial Draft units. The experienced British troops, including the Bushmen, had now departed for home, but the Boers, on the other hand, were now all determined veterans, having rid themselves of the faint-hearted.

The British columns also crossed to the south of the line and Kitchener's and Beatson's columns were engaged in clearing operations in the eastern Transvaal under General Sir Bindon Blood. It was in these operations that the Australians suffered severe casualties, first, according to the South African Field Force Casualty List, at Grobelaar Recht in May and then at Wilmansrust in June. It is with these actions, which became curiously linked, that this paper is concerned.

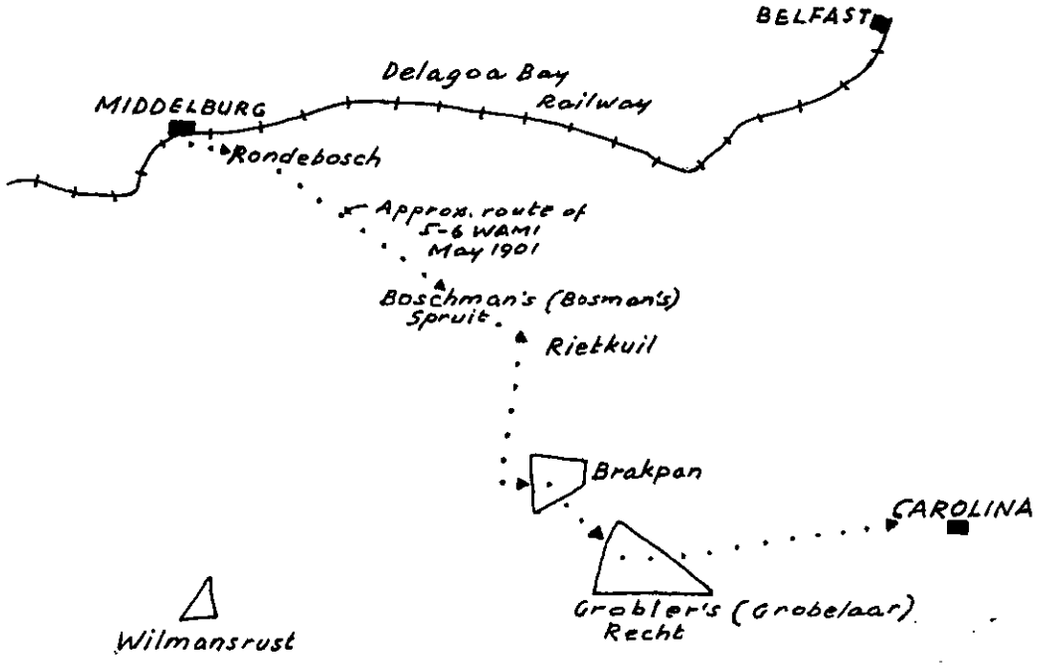
II

Among casualties on the South African War Memorial in Perth is the name of Lieutenant A A Forrest. In Murray's *Official Records* Lt Anthony Alexander Forrest is listed as having been killed in action near Carolina on 15 May 1901 as a member of 5th Western Australian Mounted Infantry. He was the son of Alexander Forrest and the nephew of Sir John Forrest, the early Australian explorers. Alexander had become Mayor of Perth, and Sir John became Premier of Western Australia in 1890 and, after Federation, Defence Minister in the Commonwealth Parliament at the time of the Boer War. Anthony was thought to have benefited from influence when he was able to join 5WAMI as a Lieutenant at the age of 16.[6]

Early references outline the action in which he was killed. Stirling, *Colonials in South Africa* (1907), states, 'On 15th May there was severe fighting at Grobelaar Recht, in which the 5th had Lieutenant Forrest and Sergeant Ejards [*sic*] and 1 man killed and 5 men wounded, and the 6th 4 men killed and Lieutenant S S Reid and 3 men wounded.' [ie seven killed and nine wounded]. He mentions further heavy fighting on the 16th, in which Lieutenant F W Bell won the Victoria Cross.[7]

---

4 ibid
5 The Times History of the War in South Africa, 1907, Vol V, p. 290.
6 Gavin Souter, Lion and Kangaroo, Collins, 1976, p. 68 fn. WA Birth Registration indexed as Alexander Anthony Forrest, 1884, 25706.
7 John Stirling, The Colonials in South Africa, Wm Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh, 1907, pp. 476, 478. It appears that Stirling used casualty and award lists, but not maps.



Murray's account (1911), which was derived from Stirling, is almost identical, except that he refers to Grobelaar Recht as being near Carolina, corrects Sergeant Edwards's name, indicates that the 5th also had Corporal Bollinger killed and four men wounded, alters the 6th's wounded to five, one of whom died later [ie seven killed, one died of wounds and eight wounded], and cites Bell's act at Brakpan on 16 May.[8] On Field Intelligence Department maps of the area the farm Grobelaar Recht - or variously Groblersrecht or Groblers Regt 229 - is shown about 20 miles west of Carolina.[9] Recent accounts continue to refer to two separate actions - Grobelaar Recht on 15 May and Brakpan on 16 May.

Campbell, *History of Western Australian Contingents serving in South Africa during the Boer War 1899-1902* (1910), does not mention Grobelaar Recht, but describes how the units had trekked from Middelburg to Rondebosch on 12 May, and charged the enemy at Bosman's Spruit on the 14th, one man being wounded at Rietkuil, according to the South African Field Force Casualty List. On the 16th, 5 and 6 WAMI were ordered to bring in some wagons from a farm about three miles east of the column, and moved off at about 7.00am. The wagons were found in a spruit up to their axles in mud. They were being removed when the enemy opened fire from the rising ground on the opposite side of the spruit. The Australians crossed the spruit in several divisions, fixed bayonets and drove the enemy off.

---

8 P L Murray, op cit, p. 419.
9 Field Intelligence Department (Pretoria), Ermelo/Carolina map, April 1901. Field Intelligence Department (Cape Town), Ermelo map, April 1900. Jeppe's map, Transvaal, 1899, No. 5.

On advancing further it was discovered that the Boers had planned an ambush, hiding in the long grass, mealie fields and the nearby farmhouse. The troops were ordered to fall back under heavy fire and it was here that Lieutenant F W Bell, 6WAMI, won the VC, although the force suffered heavy casualties until General Walter Kitchener arrived with reinforcements. Casualties were stated as seven killed, among whom was Lieutenant Forrest, two died of wounds and eight wounded. The location of the action was given as Brakpan, a farm several miles north-west of Grobelaar Recht.[10] Therefore there is confusion about the place and date of the engagement and variation in casualties.

III

Less than a month later, 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles (5VMR), engaged in the same clearing operations, were surprised by General C H Muller and forced to surrender at Wilmansrust, after suffering 18 killed and 42 wounded. Accused of cowardice by their own general, some men of 5VMR felt aggrieved and expressed dissatisfaction with leadership that had cost their comrades' lives and threatened their own. Three men were overheard, court-martialled for 'incitement to mutiny' and sentenced to death. Lord Kitchener commuted these sentences to terms of imprisonment in England.

In the subsequent controversy in the press it was suggested that because, up until then, no Australians had thrown down their arms, 5VMR had damaged the reputation of the Australian soldier, although it was later agreed that it was unlikely that any large body of Australian troops could be totally unlike those that had preceded it. The unit's reputation, however, still suffers unjustly. There were two sequels to this action and it is revealing to examine these before considering further the action at Brakpan.

First, the Report of the Court of Inquiry into Wilmansrust, held in the field in the days following the action, as the battered column fought its way to safety, indicates that the Boers had infiltrated the inappropriate, widely-spaced cavalry picket line insisted on by General Beatson, on a pitch dark night. In the hand-to-hand fighting a bugler had received an order to blow 'Cease Fire', relayed in the confusion by a sergeant, but actually given by a Boer. The sergeant had not realised that some Boers spoke excellent English. So the surrender was due to a Boer ruse and not because the men had thrown down their arms. General Muller had reported six Boers killed and four wounded.[11] The men of 5VMR had obeyed the order of the bugle and were not, therefore, guilty of cowardice.

Second, while the three men convicted of 'incitement to mutiny' languished in prison, questions raised by members of the new Commonwealth Parliament on behalf of relatives, or out of concern for the unit, resulted in cables between the Governor-General and the British authorities seeking clarification of the situation regarding the treatment of 5VMR. How new the Australian authorities were to the complexities of conducting a war is revealed by the following evidence.

When requested to inquire into the whole history of 5VMR, Sir John Forrest, as Defence Minister, at first expressed bewilderment that the military authorities in South Africa or the Commanding Officer had not provided periodical reports of its movements as had the Commanding Officers of earlier Western Australian units of which he had knowledge. On later consideration he was of the opinion that this was an Imperial and not an Australian Corps and

---

10 J Campbell. History of Western Australian Contingents serving in South Africa during the Boer War 1899-1902, Government Printer, Perth WA, 1910, pp. 60-63.

11 Report of the Boer attack on a detachment of Major General Beatson's force at Wilmansrust, WO32/8007, Public Record Office, London. See also General C H Muller's Report to General B Viljoen, The Argus, Melbourne, 1 February 1902.

that the State government merely acted as agent for the Imperial authorities in raising and despatching these men. The position was therefore different from that of the Western Australian contingents with which, as Premier, he was closely associated, and consequently the fact that no progress reports were received from the Commanding Officer was not surprising.[12]

After negotiations, however, a telegram was received from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr Joseph Chamberlain, explaining that the Judge-Advocate General had declared that the three men had been tried under the wrong section of the Army Act and instructions had been issued for their release.[13] Whether this was an admission of ineptness or a bowing to pressure, it was not a mere reprieve nor a pardon but a quashing of the charges, and the men were released and returned to Australia. So 5VMR was also not guilty of mutinous conduct.

IV

The action at Brakpan is not detailed in the *Times History of the War in South Africa* and other major histories of the war, and there is no contemporary discussion of the reason that led to the following incident. When, after Wilmansrust, General Beatson had berated 5VMR as 'a lazy lot of wasters and white-livered curs', a Western Australian officer, Major Sam Harris, was present, and Beatson said that the Victorians had another Colony [*sic*] to keep them company in running away from the Boers, referring to the time when the Western Australians had Lieutenant Forrest and seven men killed.[14] Although Beatson later apologised to Major Harris, Sir John Forrest must have felt this keenly, because his brother, Alexander, who was ill, was said to have not overcome his grief at Anthony's death, when he died five weeks later on 20 June 1901. Many questions were left unanswered. Why did General Beatson regard the retirement of 5 and 6WAMI as running away? Had the action taken place where the casualties were reported at Grobelaar Recht on 15 May, or where Bell won the VC on 16 May at a different farm, Brakpan?

While I was researching these problems an article appeared in the press about a doctor in Bristol, England, who had come across the grave of Lieutenant Colonel F W Bell VC, and was intrigued about why he was buried there, until he had discovered Bell's later career in the Colonial service in Africa and his subsequent retirement to England.[15] Following this publicity he received more information which he summarised for a journal article, mentioning that he had a copy of a detailed map of the action at Brakpan, showing where Bell had won the VC.[16] It was described as being from the Forrest Papers, but my request to the appropriate repository revealed that the map had been missing since 1984. I would have to track down the doctor and seek a copy from him. I managed to deduce an address to write to, and ultimately a copy of the map arrived - perhaps the most detailed sketch-map of any Australian action in this war.

The map indicates that the casualties and the award of the VC occurred at the same place and time. Who prepared the map is not known, but a note refers to the account from Campbell J, 1910, obviously the history of the Western Australian contingents produced by the Western Australian Government Printer,[17] which suggests it may have been drawn by Captain Campbell, CO of 6WAMI, possibly at the request of the Forrest family. It lacks a north point and a scale,

---

12 The Argus, Melbourne, 11-13 November 1901.
13 The Argus, Melbourne, 9 November 1901.
14 Major W McKnight's Report to Major General M F Downes, Commandant, Victorian Military Forces, 21 October 1901, NAA: B168, 1901/3859 Report by Major McKnight on the Wilmansrust Affair.
15 Georgina Harvey, 'Man of war rests in peace', Sunday Herald-Sun, Melbourne, 12 December 1996.
16 Dr James C Briggs, 'The search for Lt Colonel F W Bell VC', Sabretache, Vol XXXVIII, Apr-Jun 1997, pp. 3-12, and later correspondence.
17 Map entitled Sketch of Brakpan, The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Bristol, UK.

but assuming it to be oriented with north at the top of the map, would appear to indicate that the site of the action was, correctly, Brakpan and not Grobelaar Recht.

It shows how Captain Campbell attacked the Boer position with Lieutenant Bell on his right and Lieutenants H B McCormack and S S Reid on his left, and highlights the tracks of their retirement, and the places where Bell won the VC and where the casualties occurred. It also shows that Lieutenant Forrest and an escort were in charge of a wagon when the horses stampeded, taking them out of the line of retirement, and how, while returning on foot, they were shot from 700 yards range. This confirmed that the correct location of the action was Brakpan, and the date was therefore 16 May. The column moved on towards Carolina and the dead were buried on 17 May, the South African War Graves authority giving the location as Grobelaar's Recht, although they were subsequently removed to Middelburg old municipal cemetery.

In corroboration of the date and place of the action, Lord Kitchener's despatch of 28 July, 1901, which lists Bell's VC act at Brakpan, goes on to say 'Captain J Campbell assisted above. Lieutenant S S Reid, at same place and date remained with his men though severely wounded early in the fight. Lieutenant A A Forrest (killed) and A J Brown; for conspicuous gallantry on same occasion ... Surgeon-Captain F B Reid showed absolute disregard of danger in performing his duties on same occasion'.[18]

What appears to have happened is this: when Stirling attempted to record the experience of the Colonials in this war, he depended largely on Official despatches, including casualty and award lists. By ordering such observations chronologically he discovered casualties listed as at Grobelaar Recht and concluded that they had resulted from an action at that place, apparently not realising that the place of burial is often not the place of the action. For some reason, not yet explained but possibly simply clerical error, he assigned them to an action on 15 May. Then, from the award list showing Bell's VC as having been won at Brakpan on the 16th, he concluded that another action had taken place on the following day.

When Murray came to prepare his Official Records, he admitted in the Preface that for parts of the service of the South Australians, Western Australians and Tasmanians he had been indebted to Stirling, and reproduced the descriptions of Grobelaar Recht on 15 and Brakpan on 16 May. It seems that he had not noted Campbell's description, nor seen a map of the action, and so it became enshrined that there were two actions.

This analysis shows the importance of seeking evidence from more than one source when recreating old battles, and the value of checking Field Intelligence Department and other maps for farms and features as they appeared 100 years ago. Also, it is not wise to accept at face value accounts of actions simply because they are based on Official despatches, or included in Official Records, or have been repeated in every derivative reference since first appearing in print. Similarly, it is not wise to accept the validity of critical comments, made in the stress of battle, without challenge.

As with 5VMR, whose ranks included two future VCs at the time of Wilmansrust, and who did not deserve the accusations of cowardly and mutinous conduct, a Victoria Cross and five Mentions in Despatches for 5 and 6WAMI do not seem consistent with an allegation of having run away at Brakpan, and indicate once again the injustice of the imputation of cowardice.

---oOo---

18 John Stirling, op cit, p. 478. Honours and awards, Lord Kitchener's Despatch, 8 July 1901 [sic 28 July]. See also South African War - Honours and Awards 1899-1902, Greenhill Books, 1987, p. 66.

A CRIMEAN WAR MEDAL WITH AUSTRALIAN PROVENANCE

Anthony F Harris

State Records, the public records office ('the archives') of South Australia, is the repository of all official records of the State and within its holdings, among the thousands of documents of governance and bureaucracy, are found the occasional little gem; the unexpected, the unlikely, even the unknown.[1] One of the regular researchers – coincidentally a subscriber to *Sabretache* – discovered, among the correspondence files of the Sheriff's Office (Correctional Services), an artefact that has proved to be a most interesting link with a British Army detachment stationed in Adelaide in the 1860's.[2]

The artefact is a silver Crimea campaign medal with the bar Sebastopol, awarded to a John McEntire of the 13th Regiment of Foot. The issue of the Crimea Medal to the British Army was authorised in December 1854 (while the war was in progress) with the bars 'Inkerman' and 'Alma'. Additional bars were later authorised for 'Balaklava', 'Sebastopol' and, for the Royal Navy, 'Azoff'. The medal ribbon, missing on the McEntire medal, is of pale blue silk with narrow yellow edges.[3]

The reason behind the related correspondence is perhaps more interesting than the artefact itself. The letter was received in the Sheriff's Office from the Deputy Keeper of the Adelaide Gaol who on 22 February 1881 wrote:

> Sir,
>
> I forward herewith a silver Medal found by Prisoner Hickey in the night soil deposited in the Olive Plantations.
>
> I respectfully request that it be forwarded to the Pensions Office so that it may be returned to the owner – and a reward of a few shillings given to the Prisoner Hickey.
>
> I have &c.
>
> Henry Pellew, Deputy Keeper.

The letter was forwarded the next day but the reply from Mr Clark, Paymaster of the Pensions Office (the office that administered pensions to British ex-military and naval personnel who had migrated to South Australia), dated 24 February, was quick, brief and negative:

> Returned to Mr Boothby [Comptroller of Convicts]. There is no such person on my pension lists. I therefore return the medal.

It is well recorded that the 13th Regiment did not serve in South Australia nor in any of the other Australian colonies. The fact that McEntire's name did not appear in the Pension Office lists does not mean that he wasn't in South Australia at some time; it simply means that at the time he was not a resident of South Australia entitled to a British Army pension. So who or where was John McEntire? Initial checks in the South Australian Directories held by State Records showed no-one of that name, while the Biographical Index of South Australians[4], also in the Netley Search Room reference collection, was similarly mute.

Enquiries directed to the UK Public Records Office in Kew generated a reply from the PRO's Military Specialist, William Spencer, containing much information about McEntire and

---

1 This article was published in the April 2002 edition of recordSArchives, the official newsletter of State Records of South Australia. This slightly modified version is reproduced by kind permission of the Department for Administrative and Information Services.
2 State Records (SR), GRG (Government Record Group) 54/1/1881 No.95.
3 Ribbons and Medals, H. Taprell Dorning (Ed. Alec A. Purvis), Osprey Publishing, London, 1983.
4 Biographical Index of South Australians (Ed. Jill Statton), SA Genealogy & Heraldry Soc. Inc, Marden, 1986.

establishing the South Australian provenance of the medal. The material was found in the regimental muster and pay lists in the record series WO12. Mr Spencer's letter reads:

> John McEntire was born in Glasgow and joined the army on 6 February 1854. On 20 September 1854 he joined the 13th Foot, the Somerset Light Infantry. Although no details concerning his age are mentioned in the musters, he was 5' 4¾" on enlistment.
>
> Serving with the 13th in the Crimea for which he was awarded the Crimea Medal with Sebastopol clasp, John McEntire transferred to the 50th Foot on 1 May 1856.
>
> John McEntire served with the 50th Foot until 7 December 1868 when he deserted in Adelaide.
>
> John McEntire was tried by Court Martial once, for an unknown offence, but at the time of the trial he was a Corporal and on being found guilty was reduced to Private. Just prior to his desertion he had been deprived of a weeks pay.[5]

This immediately places McEntire and his medal in South Australia in the late 1860's and perhaps explains why McEntire doesn't appear in the SA Directories in the late 1870's – early 1880's. But what happened after his desertion? The fact that McEntire deserted (was losing a week's pay the final incentive to desert?) meant that the search could continue. Sure enough, the *South Australian Police Gazette*[6] of 9 December 1868, p.3 contains the entry:

> **Deserted from the 50th Regiment of Foot, at Adelaide, 8th December, 1868—4722, Private John McEntire; age, 31 years; size, 5ft. 9½in.; color of complexion, pale; hair, light; eyes, blue; enlisted at Glasgow, February 6th, 1865; born in Drumkirk, county Tyrone; no marks; trade, tanner; dressed in regimentals; since found on the Park Lands.**

It will be seen that there are a number of anomalies between this entry and the information found in the WO12 series in London; Private McEntire has grown 4¾ inches, Glasgow is given as his place of enlistment, not his birthplace, while his birthplace here is given as Drumkirk, County Tyrone (Ireland). So is he a Scot or an Irishman? At least we now have an age, which suggests he was just about 17 years of age when he enlisted, and it is not impossible that a 17 year old could grow 4 inches or more over the next few years to adulthood.

The particularly interesting part in his record is that he transferred to the 50th (Queen's Own) Regiment of Foot, because it is in this regiment that the local provenance is made. Three companies of the 50th Foot (in excess of 250 officers and men as at 1 November 1867[7]) were stationed in Adelaide, arriving from New Zealand in August 1867[8]. Private McEntire deserted in December 1868 and by the time the 50th left to return to England on 1 April 1869[9] he had still not been found. His regiment had been relieved by a detachment of the 14th Foot arriving from Van Diemen's Land on 23 March 1869 and, about 3 weeks after his regiment had sailed away, McEntire was apprehended by the police. He was subsequently handed over to the incoming military authorities, tried by Court Martial and sentenced to 56 days imprisonment with Hard Labour in Adelaide Gaol[10]. He served his time and appears to have had no further brushes with either the military or civil law. After his release he appears on the muster lists and rolls of the 14th Regiment[11] and, although further research is required, it seems that Pte. McEntire returned to England with the 14th when that regiment was recalled in January 1870. It is interesting to see on the rolls that McEntire (and others who for one reason or another were separated from 'their' regiment) was listed as being '50th Regt. attached' rather than being taken on the strength of the later regiment.

---

5 WO12/3071 and 6162 for 1st & last entries. Other details from other musters for the 13th Foot, 1854-56 and the 50th Foot, 1856-1868.
6 SR GRG5/50.
7 SR GRG24/51 No.148.
8 Register newspaper, 10.8.1867 (Mortlock Library, State Library of SA).
9 ibid, 2.4.1869.
10 SR GRS (Government Record Series) 2414/1/P, Vol. 'D', 1864-1871.
11 WO12 Muster Rolls & Pay Lists, AJCP microfilms, Central Library, Flinders University.

McEntire's Crimea Medal, impressed around the rim 'JOHN M^{C}ENTIRE. 13TH REG^{T}.'

Prisoner Hickey, the original finder of the medal, has proved difficult to identify, primarily because his term of imprisonment would be recorded in Volume 'G' of the Adelaide Gaol Registers,[12] the one register in the series that is missing! The index to that particular register shows three prisoners by the name of Hickey in Adelaide Gaol over a two or three year period embracing the date when the medal was found[13]. He may be Richard (one of four aliases), John or Daniel, but until the register is located he remains in obscurity!

Disregarding the obviously unpleasant process of fertilising the olive trees by the prisoners, how did the medal get into the night soil? Was it accidentally 'lost' during McEntire's service in the colony? It is unlikely that it would have been lost in the prison latrines as his possessions were probably taken from him and stored by the military prior to his removal to gaol. Also, it seems that the night soil came not only from the prison latrines but also from one or more municipal collections. This latter statement is perhaps supported by the following comment:

> Most houses, offices and institutions had a privy connected to a cess pit ... These ... were emptied by "nightmen"...loaded on open drays and deposited in the olive groves near the gaol.[14]

Among the many theories propounded by colleagues in discussing the incident is that McEntire may have dropped his medal in the parklands (where according to the *Police Gazette* notice his 'regimentals' were found). Perhaps he divested himself of his regimental dress among the olive plantations near the prison, dropping the medal in the process where it then lay undisturbed until it was actually raked up in the process of spreading the night soil more than 12 years later ?

The medal remains in the original docket, now housed in an archivally sound protective enclosure, available for other researchers to view though now under added security.

---

12 SR GRS2414/1/P.
13 SR GRS2749/1/P, Vol.2.
14 Community History, Vol.11 No.3, October 2001. History Trust of South Australia.