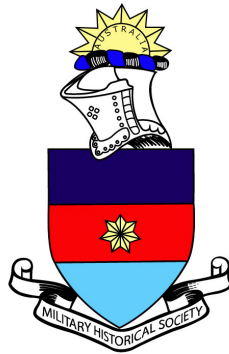


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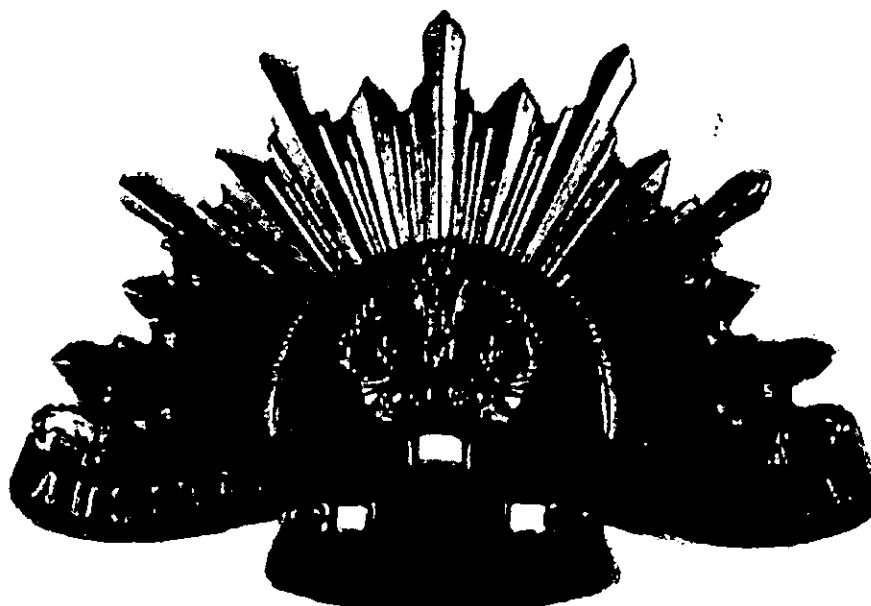
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## OUT OF EMPIRE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTRUCTIONAL CORPS, 1921-1955

Roland Millbank



### INTRODUCTION

The story of the Australian Instructional Corps (AIC) is much more than just an account of the life of the Corps as the permanent force posting unit for the Warrant Officer Instructors of the Australian Army from 1921 to 1955.<sup>1</sup> For almost all of its first fifty years, from Federation in 1901 until the 4th June 1947, the Australian Army was a citizen force.<sup>2</sup> The Corps, as the training agency of this citizen army between the two world wars, played a critical role in preparing the army for war and in the training of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Imperial Force (AIF) during the Second World War. The Army as an organization of government was not isolated from either the political process or the economic situation that Australia found itself in after the Great War, and later experienced in the Great Depression. Defence was directly affected by politics and economics which impacted on the Army and had a filter effect on each of the permanent force members who made up the Australian Instructional Corps. The full history of the Corps, currently in production, will seek to demonstrate the vital role played by the AIC in the total defence process of Australia before, during, and after the Second World War. By amplification and expansion it will attempt to ascertain the correct significance of the Corps to Australia.

1 Arthur Newton, 'The Australian Instructional Corps', *Army Journal*, No. 267, August 1971, Canberra, Directorate of Military Training, pp 29-52.

2 Graeme Sligo, The Development of the Australian Regular Army, *The Second Fifty Years: The Australian Army 1947-1997*, eds. Peter Dennis & Jeffrey Grey, Canberra, School of History, University College, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1997, 22.

Additionally the history will attempt to clarify the role of the AIC as a source of Australian military power for the Empire between the two world wars.

Accepting that the role of the AIC was the training agency for the citizen army leads to the question "What did the Army train for?" There is an ongoing historical debate concerning whether the task of the between-wars Army was preparing for invasion or simply for actions with which to repel raids. During his period in office from October 1929 to November 1930 Prime Minister Scullin made clear to the Army his policy supporting the "raids" concept.<sup>3</sup> This was endorsed by his successor Prime Minister Lyons at a cabinet decision on 15 February 1932 where it was agreed the role of the Army was "to be based on the provision for defence against raids".<sup>4</sup> However there is evidence that senior officers actively encouraged the Army to plan for invasion.<sup>5</sup> Clearly, because of its crucial training task, the Australian Instructional Corps was in the thick of this controversy. What role did the Corps play? How did the Corps actually do its work? How significant was this role in the defence of Australia? An attempt to unravel answers to these questions is the principal aim of the full history of the Corps.

Prominent military historians such as Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*,<sup>6</sup> and Albert Palazzo, *Defenders of Australia, The Third Division, 1916-1991*,<sup>7</sup> writing about the inter-war period, have already explored the important story of how ill prepared Australia was to commit to a major war in 1939. Although the research and conclusions reached by Grey and Palazzo might be perceived to cast doubts on the efficiency of the task undertaken by the Corps, it must be acknowledged at the outset that these reputable historians have produced creditable evidence backing up their claims. Indeed in *A Century of Service; 100 years of the Australian Army* (2001), Lt-General Peter Cosgrove comments "When World War II arrived ... the Army was even less prepared than it had been in 1914".<sup>8</sup> The proposition that findings by Grey and Palazzo are correct and accurate poses the question, "How had Australia arrived at the crisis in 1939 so unprepared?" Had there been lessons from the Great War 1914-1918 which had demonstrated the importance of preparedness that had been neglected or forgotten?" Providing answers to these questions also prepares a background against which the task of the Australian Instructional Corps for "training all soldiers as well as men called up for compulsory military training"<sup>9</sup> can be judged.

The theme of this short introduction to the history of the Australian Instructional Corps is based on the premise that metaphorically "the AIC was a uniquely Australian child of a British mother, a child that grew up between the two world wars". The title, "Out of Empire", has been deliberately chosen because there is evidence to demonstrate that the Corps was a 'child of empire'. It is contended that it was the 'needs of empire' which saw the Corps raised in 1921, and after WWII similarly the 'demise of empire' was a significant contributory factor leading to the disbandment of the Corps in 1955.

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- 3 Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1999, p 133.
  - 4 Claude Neumann, *Australia's Citizen Soldiers, 1919-1939: A Study of Organization, Command, Recruiting, Training & Equipment*, MA thesis, University of New South Wales at Duntroon, 1978, p 93.
  - 5 Albert Palazzo, *Failure to Obey: The Australian Army and the First Line Component Deception*, *Australian Army Journal*, Volume 1, Number 1, June 2003, Canberra, Land Studies Warfare Centre, p 42.
  - 6 Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p 139.
  - 7 Albert Palazzo, *Defenders of Australia: The 3rd Australian Division 1916-1991*, Australian Military History Publications, Sydney, 2002, p 87.
  - 8 Peter Cosgrove, 'Introduction', *A Century of Service: 100 years of the Australian Army*, Army History Unit, 2001, p xiv.
  - 9 P. Dennis, J. Grey, E. Morris & R. Prior, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p 72.

## THE BIRTH OF THE CORPS

As a result of the operational experience gained by the AIF in the Great War the citizen army was re-organized on a divisional basis as the Australian Military Forces (AMF) in 1921.<sup>10</sup> To cope with this much larger organization, important changes were made to the manner in which this new army was to be administered and trained. The organization which had run the Army since Federation, the Administrative and Instructional Staff (A & I Staff) was disbanded in October 1921.<sup>11</sup> To replace the A & I Staff, two new Australia wide posting units for officers and senior non commissioned officers were raised. The higher ranking of these two units, the Australian Staff Corps was formed on 1 October 1920 and included all the officers of the combat arms.<sup>12</sup> Similarly on 14 April 1921 the Australian Instructional Corps, consisting of "Permanent Instructional Staff (Commissioned Quartermasters, Warrant and Non Commissioned Officers)" was raised and took over the task of training the AMF.<sup>13</sup>

In his Annual Report for 1921 the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt.-Gen. Sir Harry Chauvel stated,

The Permanent Instructional Staff (Warrant & NCO's) has been re-organized to include Instructors of Technical Arms, Artillery, Engineers etc, and formed into the Australian Instructional Corps, with one seniority list for officers and one for other ranks. The Corps is 61 below establishment, and the shortage at this juncture is exceedingly serious, as it throws extra work on the existing staffs in regard to unit training and administration, both in home training and at camps.<sup>14</sup>

The AIC was an Australia wide posting unit to which, with few exceptions, the majority of permanent force warrant officers belonged. The Corps had an establishment consisting of 48 commissioned Quartermasters and 552 Warrant Officers.<sup>15</sup> The commissioned quartermasters were all Class 1A Warrant Officers and held honorary ranks as Lieutenants, Captains and Majors. They were addressed as QM and Hon. Maj, or QM and Hon. Capt, or QM and Hon. Lieut. The Corps, after the Royal Australian Artillery, was probably the second largest Permanent Military Force (PMF) unit in the AMF with its establishment strength of 600.<sup>16</sup> Some extent of the prominence in size of the AIC can be gauged from the fact that the total PMF in 1922 was 1,600 all ranks.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the Staff Corps which had a chain of command from the Chief of Staff downwards, the AIC had a flat structure because it was totally composed of Staff Sergeant Majors and Warrant Officers, a small number of whom were commissioned Quartermasters. The AIC members were individually posted to Battalions, Regiments, Brigades and Divisions. For administration and discipline the members were then held "under command" of the senior AMF or Staff Corps officer of the unit to which they had been posted. This system of command was not without its problems. While the AIC Quartermasters held commissioned rank, on parade they were actually subordinate to the senior combat officer present, a fact that

10 *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt. General Sir H. G. Chauvel, GCMG, KCB Melbourne 31 May 1921, Parliamentary Report No. 154, 10 November 1921.*

11 Dennis, Grey, Morris & Prior, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, p 75.

12 Dennis, Grey, Morris & Prior, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, p 75.

13 *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, 31 May 1921, Item 71, p 17.*

14 *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, 31 May 1921, Item 78, p 17.*

15 *Report for the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt. General Sir H. G. Chauvel, GCMG, KCB Melbourne 31 May 1925, Parliamentary Report No. 24, 14 July 1925, Item 89, p 20.*

16 *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt. General Sir H. G. Chauvel, GCMG, KCB, Melbourne, 31 May 1928, Parliamentary Report No. 257, 13 September 1928, item 50.*

17 Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies*, p 160.

was subject to a complaint, upheld in favour of the Staff Corps Captain against an AIC Hon. Major by the Military Board in 1925.<sup>18</sup>

A combination of economic and political factors dealt the post war Army massive blows even before it had chance to securely position its new divisional structure. The plans of the 1919 Swinburne Report for "Six infantry and two mounted divisions and their proper proportion of corps and line of communication troops, a total of approximately 180,000 troops"<sup>19</sup> were soon modified by the government. In 1920 in his address at the commencement of the Senior Officers Conference, the Minister of Defence "pointed out that finances were straitened" and this set the tone on deliberations.<sup>20</sup> The Conference eventually recommended that the Army Establishment should be "two cavalry divisions, four infantry divisions and a local defence fifth division".<sup>21</sup> Even this reduction was modified and after the 1920-1921 Washington Naval Conference,<sup>22</sup> while there were seven militia divisions on paper, the actual strength was 31,000, while the permanent force was reduced to 1,600.<sup>23</sup> Progressive reductions of the Army size from 1920 until 1935 were felt throughout the permanent forces and the effect on the AIC will be discussed as the story unfolds chronologically.

## QUARTERMASTER AND WARRANT OFFICER APPOINTMENTS

The British Army, strongly institutional regarding rank and privilege, brought in as appointments the titles of Quartermaster and Warrant Officer which recognised long and distinguished service by senior soldiers without providing either promotion or increased pay. The Quartermaster, as the name suggests, was originally the officer of the regiment who organised where the troops would be billeted or quartered when on campaign. Writing about the British Army between 1777 and 1855 Richard Holmes provides an excellent description,

The Quartermaster, responsible for supplying the battalion with all its requisites from ammunition and accommodation to food and fuel, was always an ex-ranker: for most of this period held the commissioned appointment of quartermaster, and was eventually granted formal rank – as in lieutenant and quartermaster.<sup>24</sup>

The Australian Army adopted the appointment title Quartermaster, and followed the British Army tradition of granting honorary rank to accompany the appointment.

The appointment of Warrant Officer also follows the tradition of the British Army. From earlier times non commissioned officers had two ranks, those of Corporal and Sergeant. In addition the senior sergeant of a regiment carried the rank of sergeant-major because he was the senior non commissioned officer. Non commissioned officers, like all soldiers in the British Army of earlier times, were subject to summary justice. The range of punishments including flogging, discharge and death, all of which were within the powers of the commanding officer. For senior non commissioned officers this all changed when the (British) Army Board, on their own authority,

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18 *Military Board Agenda No. 188/1925, "QM's Power of Command"*, National Archives of Australia, Melbourne Office, MP367/1, Item 409/3/2000.

19 *Report on Certain Matters of Defence Policy, Melbourne June 30th 1919*, Department of Defence, Item 2.

20 *Report on the Military Defence of Australia by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces 1920*, Department of Defence, Page 3.

21 *Report on the Military Defence of Australia by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces 1920*, Item 3 (i).

22 Heather Radi, "1920-29", *A New History of Australia*, ed. Frank Crowley, Melbourne, William Heinmann, 1980, p 364.

23 Gavin Long, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: Series 1 Army, To Benghazi*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1952, p 4.

24 Richard Holmes, *Redcoat; The British Soldier in the Age of Horse & Musket*, London, HarperCollins, 2001, p 113.

issued individual soldiers with a Warrant confirming their status in the Army as distinct from simply within their own (single) regiment. The significance of the Warrant of Appointment for senior soldiers meant that when charged with an offence, they could no longer be dealt with by summary proceedings.<sup>25</sup>

The British Army of the Victorian era introduced a fourth rank for non commissioned officers with the designation of Staff Sergeant-Major (SSM). The duties of this non commissioned officer were administrative which was denoted by the 'Staff' title. Staff Sergeant-Majors were ranked above Sergeants but below the Regimental Sergeant-Major (RSM). The AIC initially used the rank system of Staff Sergeant-Majors which started at SSM Class 1 (Warrant Officer Class 1A) an example being :-

No. 548 WOI T.J. Ikin is appointed Temporary Staff Sergeant-Major, 1<sup>st</sup> Class, with the temporary rank of Warrant Officer, Class 1, graded "A" for the purpose of pay, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1940 and allotted for duty as Comd. S. M., W. Comd (approved 7.2.41 – 248/715/1464).<sup>26</sup>

through to SSM Class 3 (Warrant Officer Class II):-

2351 T/S.Sgt. D. M. Gran appointed Temporary Staff Sergeant-Major, 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, with the temporary rank of Warrant Officer, Class II on 17.1.41. (248/15/1428).<sup>27</sup>

Changes in appointments and ranks within the Australian Army over 100 years has transposed the Quartermaster appointment into a technical commission, the Warrant status has been adopted as a rank, and the Staff Sergeant-Major has become a Staff Sergeant.

## AIC UNIFORM

AIC members were recognisable because their uniform was different from the conventional AMF uniform in three distinctive ways; shoulder straps, badges of rank and Corps badges. AIC members wore two (2) half an inch wide scarlet stripes, with half an inch gap between them, on both shoulder straps; they wore badges of rank enclosed in an oval wreath on the right sleeve only, except for Class One Warrant Officers,<sup>28</sup> and from 1930 onwards, they had the distinctive AIC badge with the red and blue enamel backgrounds. From 1921 to 1930 the AIC wore the badge previously worn by the A & I Staff which was the gold 'Rising Sun' badge with the crown set against red enamel. The change to AIC gold 'Rising Sun' badge with the crown set against a red enamel background and words "Australian Instructional Corps" against a blue enamel background were the result of a national competition held within the Army in 1930 for which 57 designs were submitted.<sup>29</sup> The distinctive AIC badge was used both as a large hat badge and smaller collar badges. There was no distinctive badge for officers, in the AIC both Officers and Warrant Officers wore the same badges (McPherson, C.W., MM, 2002, pers. Comm., 25 November).

The members of the AIC were held in great respect throughout the Army, but like many familiar institutions, they acquired at least one nickname. The Swan Street Sappers quotes an in-between

25 Holmes, *Redcoat; The British Soldier in the Age of Horse & Musket*, p121.

26 *Australian Army Orders, Melbourne, 28 February 1941, AAO 22, Australian Instructional Corps, 2. Temporary Promotions, Page 47.*

27 *AAO 22, 28th February 1941, p 48.*

28 Newton, 'The Australian Instructional Corps', 48.

29 National Archives, Victoria, *Series Number B1535, Symbol Number 716/2/182, AIC Badge Design, 1930.*

wars engineer revealing "Distinctive red stripes on members' epaulettes earned them the nickname 'rosellas'".<sup>30</sup>

## AIC TASKS AND DUTIES

The Australian Instructional Corps was an Australia wide organisation and the tasks of AIC members were spread through all arms and services of the Army. In 1922 AIC members were posted to each of the Headquarters, all of the designated Training Areas, Cavalry Regiments, Infantry Battalions, the Royal Australian Field Artillery (RAFA), the Australian Fortress Artillery (AFA), the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery (RAGA), the Australian Garrison Artillery (AGA), the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE), the Australian Engineers Field (AE Field), the Australian Engineers Fortress (AE Fortress), the Signals Corps, the Australian Medical Corps, the Australian Service Corps and the Australian Veterinary Corps.<sup>31</sup> The 1922-1923 Establishment of five hundred and fifty nine men (559) consisted of forty one (41) Quartermasters, twenty one (21) Class 1A Warrant Officers, one hundred and sixty four (164) Class 1B Warrant Officers and three hundred and seventy four (374) Class II Warrant Officers.<sup>32</sup>

All AIC Warrant Officers were involved in either General Instructional Duty or Regimental Duty. By far the largest number of AIC members was involved in Instructional Duties, actual numbers being ten (10) Staff Sergeants-Major, 1<sup>st</sup> Class (WO1A) and five hundred and five (505) Staff Sergeants-Major 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Class (WO1B & WOII).<sup>33</sup> By comparison, apart from thirty three (33) members on Regimental Duties with the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery, there was one (1) Battery Sergeant-Major with the RAFA, six (6) members with RAE being two (2) Regimental Storekeepers & four (4) Company Sergeant-Majors, two (2) Dispensers with AMC and two (2) Company Sergeant-Majors with the ASC. On Regimental Duties with the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery were two (2) Armament Clerks (WO1A & 1<sup>st</sup> Class Master Gunners), Nine (9) 1<sup>st</sup> Class Master Gunners (WO1A), Two (2) Regimental Sergeants-Major, Five (5) 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Master Gunners, Two (2) Bandmasters, Three (3) QM Sergeants and Ten (10) Battery Sergeants-Major.<sup>34</sup>

Members of the Corps often had two roles if they were commissioned quartermasters. They frequently acted as adjutants for regiments in addition to their primary activities in materiel supply as in the case of QM & Hon. Capt. C Mills OBE, appointed Adj. & QM 3<sup>rd</sup> Div. Signals on 24 Sept 1929.<sup>35</sup> Commonly they were posted as Officiating Area Officers with responsibilities for several regimental units in a segment of a Military District an example being

No. 298 Warrant Officer (Class II.) C. Deves, AIC is appointed Officiating Area Officer, Area 3A (Granville), 2<sup>nd</sup> Divisional Area, vice No. 53 Warrant Officer (Class I.) W. H. Barham, AIC, dated 5 November 1923.<sup>36</sup>

AIC Warrant Officers and Non Commissioned Officers were posted to the Field Force

30 Rob Youl, *Swan Street Sappers, 1860-1996: A History of the Engineer Training Depot, Swan Street, Melbourne & of Sappers in Victoria*, Melbourne, HQ Logistic Support Force Engineers, 1995, p 13.

31 *Military Order 422-1923 (29/9/23), Permanent Forces-Annual Establishments, 1923-24, (i) Australian Instructional Corps.*

32 *Military Order 422-1923 (29/9/23)*

33 *Military Order 422-1923 (29/9/23)*

34 *Military Order 422-1923 (29/9/23)*

35 *Military Order 425-1923 Allotment for Duty Officers of the Permanent Forces; Appointment P.B.559/16/833.*

36 *Military Order 514-1923 Australian Instructional Corps, Officiating Area Officers, P.B. 559/15/3191.*

Units of Infantry and Cavalry in the Militia force as Instructors, frequently with the position of Regimental Sergeant Major as occurred to No.102 Warrant Officer, Class 1 (Hon. Lt.) G. D. Duncan, AIC appointed R.S.M of the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1923.<sup>37</sup>

## TRAINING OF INSTRUCTORS

At the end of the Great War, with the much larger divisional structure about to be introduced, the AMF was well aware of the urgent need for Instructors. In 1919 with the A & I Staff still operating, the Army organised No.1 School of Instruction held at Liverpool from 22 August 1919 to 20 November 1919 with 260 students. This was followed by No.2 School of Instruction, also with 260 students, from 8 January 1920 to 7 April 1920.<sup>38</sup> The results of the two courses were combined and the 379 successful candidates, who joined the AIC when it was raised, were then placed in order of examination merit that subsequently became the seniority listing.<sup>39</sup>

Just prior to the establishment of the AIC the Army had opened the Central Training Depot (CTD) at Liverpool on 11 July 1921.<sup>40</sup> The CTD was intended to run a range of courses from Training Recruits to Training Instructors. This the CTD was able to achieve for a short period of time, until it became a victim of the budget cuts described elsewhere. No.1 Course was run from August 1921 until February 1922 with 70 students, however only 20 were successful.<sup>41</sup> No.2 Course had commenced in late 1920 but as a result of budget cuts the Military Board decided to close CTD temporarily and the course was discontinued. Colonel Newton notes succinctly:

With the closing of the Central Training Depot in 1922 there were no Instructor Courses held until 1935.<sup>42</sup>

Political decisions on defence economy with the 1922 Budget cuts, the 1929 change in policy by the Scullin Government and the Great Depression all combined to restrict Army Instructor Training from 1922 to 1935. It was not until after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, China, that the Lyons Nationalist Government then put in place a modest five year programme of defence rearmament. The training of Instructors began in earnest again in 1935 at the Small Arms School (SAS), Randwick with No.1 (Special) AIC Course from 12 February to 12 June 1935 with 24 students. This was followed by No.2 (Special) AIC Course from 4 February to 13 June 1936 where out of 24 students, 20 were successful.<sup>43</sup> For the next three years, the Small Arms School progressively ran Number 3 (Special), No. 4 (Special), No.5 (Special) 8 February to 11 June 1938,<sup>44</sup> 6 and 7 (Special) AIC Courses, qualifying a total of 307 Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery students.<sup>45</sup>

The advent of the commencement of the Second World War once more brought changes to the manner in which instructors were trained. No. 8 (Special) AIC Course was held at the Central Training Depot, Liverpool commencing 1 August 1939,<sup>46</sup> with 113 infantry and cavalry students qualifying in January 1940.<sup>47</sup> No.9 (Special) AIC Course, for infantry only, from 10 February to 7 June 1940,<sup>48</sup> was held conjointly at Randwick and Liverpool by SAS and CTD, and 157

37 *Military Order 202-1923 Australian Instructional Corps, Officiating Area Officers, Appointment, P.559/36/117.*

38 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 34.

39 *Military Order 167-1920 Instructional Staff (W. & N.C.O.'s), 24/4/20, A609/24/447.*

40 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 36.

41 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 38.

42 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 39.

43 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 41.

44 National Archives, Victoria, *Series Number MP 385/3, Symbol Number 929/7/344, No.5 Course AIC*

45 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 41.

46 National Archives, Victoria, *Series Number MP 385/3, Symbol Number 27/20/719, No. 8 Course AIC*

47 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 42.

48 National Archives, Victoria, *Series Number MP 385/3, Symbol Number 27/20/807, No.9 Course AIC*



students qualified.<sup>49</sup> This proved to be the last AIC Course ever held as places were advertised for No.10 (Special) Course 13 July 1940 to 24 August 1940,<sup>50</sup> but it was cancelled. The incredible demands on Army training caused by the raising of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF with four (4) new Divisions for the Second World War caused the Army to open a number of new training schools from 1940 onwards. The existing four (4) Army schools of 1921-1939 increased to thirty nine (39) by 1945.<sup>51</sup> After the war, for the Interim Army and the Regular Army, the number of Schools stabilised at thirty four (34).<sup>52</sup> The increased number of specialised "Corps Schools" based on the "Services" placed great demands on the requirement for a great many specialist instructors in the post war period from 1945 onwards. The shift from general instruction to specialist instruction was a major factor in decreasing need for an Army wide Instructional Corps based on a Central Training system.

## REDUCTIONS

As a result of economic conditions in the inter-war period impositions on defence and the Army were forced on the AIC and their numbers were reduced on several occasions. This process actually commenced prior to the raising of the Corps. At that time there were 234 PMF Warrant and Non Commissioned Officers who had attained Commissioned rank with 1<sup>st</sup> AIF. The Military Board solution, using AIF seniority, was to appoint 22 permanent Quartermasters, 20 temporary Quartermasters and grant the remaining 192 the Honorary rank of Lieutenant.<sup>53</sup> As all of these men were PMF Warrant and Non Commissioned Officers they were paid as soldiers and not as officers. Among the temporary quartermasters was the sole Victoria Cross recipient in the Corps and the PMF, Capt John Newland, VC.<sup>54</sup> It is reported he threatened resignation if refused a permanent Quartermaster commission but the Military Board refused to change its ruling because there were five senior to him.<sup>55</sup> The Minister agreed with the Military Board but used his discretion, the result being, The Governor-General in Council has approved of the undermentioned ex-Warrant Officer of the Permanent Military Forces being appointed, from the Reserve of Officers, Area Officer of a Training Area and Quartermaster of a unit of the Citizen Forces, dated 1<sup>st</sup> January 1922 with salary commencing at the rate of £350 per annum:

*To be Quartermaster and Honorary Captain.* - Captain J.E. Newland, V.C. (Ex. Min. No. 2).<sup>56</sup>

There is little doubt that the Washington Naval Conference and the Hughes Government desire to cut the defence vote caused the next wave of reductions in the PMF. It cut very deep; seventy two (72) regular officers out of a total of three hundred (300) were compulsorily retired.<sup>57</sup> Bad as this was, worse was to follow on 30 June 1922 with the Australian Instructional Corps losing one hundred and sixty nine (169) from an establishment of six hundred (600).<sup>58</sup> The Australian Army historian commented that one immediate result was that "training courses for instructors went into abeyance until 1935".<sup>59</sup>

49 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 43.

50 National Archives, Victoria, Series Number MP 385/3, Symbol Number 27/20/808, No10 Course AIC

51 *Allied Landforce Schools as at 24 Feb 44, Appendix "L", Sheet 3.*

52 *Allied Landforce Schools as at 24 Feb 44, Appendix "L", Sheet 2.*

53 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 35.

54 Lionel Wigmore, *They Dared Mightily*, Canberra, Australian War Memorial, 1986, p 102.

55 Newton, "The Australian Instructional Corps", p 36.

56 *Military Order 22-1922, Gazette Notices, Extracts from Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No. 3, of 12th January 1922, Permanent Military Forces, Australian Instructional Corps.*

57 Long, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: Series 1 Army, To Benghazi*, p 5.

58 *Military Order 288-1922 Australian Instructional Corps, Warrant Officers, Discharges, AM Regulation 358(1) xii.*

59 Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p 78.

Defence cuts continued throughout the nineteen twenties. In 1928, in its last year of office the Bruce-Page Nationalist government effected a reduction in the permanent force of 230 all ranks.<sup>60</sup> When James Scullin and Labor came to power on 12 October 1929 he immediately moved to suspend "Universal Training" and cancel remaining military camps for that training year. Forced to consider retrenchment once more the Military Board identified 247 all ranks "including 65 Staff Corps Officers and 123 Warrant Officers".<sup>61</sup>

### RELIGION, POLITICS AND THE AIC

There is an old adage in the Army that in an officers' mess two subjects are not discussed, religion and politics. It may be possible when all the information on an "AIC Nominal Roll" has been collected to provide a statistical breakdown on the religions professed by members of the AIC, at present this is not possible. On the second subject of politics, there are existing records relating to involvement by members. A number of AIC Officers and Warrant Officers offered themselves as candidates at local elections, and to do this they sought official permission. In 1934 QM & Hon. Maj. J. W. Shreeve, AIC posted to 1/15 Royal New South Wales Lancers (RNSWL) residing at Northmead was asked by Northmead Progress Association to represent them as a Councillor on the Blacktown Shire Council. Permission was granted to proceed with the nomination.<sup>62</sup> In a similar situation, Staff Sergeant Major 3<sup>rd</sup> Class (WOII) R. Dewar, AIC applied for, and was granted permission, to contest the vacancy on Claremont Municipal Council, Perth in 1933. 5<sup>th</sup> Military District Commander reported,

The applicant is due for retirement in November 1934, and as it would appear to be an advantage to have an ex-soldier on the Council the application is forwarded and recommended for favourable consideration.<sup>63</sup>

Not so fortunate was WO1 B J. Mouchmore, RAGA, Master of the S.S. *Mars*. His application in 1924 to contest in the Queenscliff Borough elections was rejected by the Military Board on the grounds that his application was similar to a Warrant Officer of the Australian Instructional Corps where "approval could not be given to the application".<sup>64</sup>

In the Federal political sphere, whether it was the communist left or the fascist right, the Army authorities were relentless in pursuing culprits in attempting to keep politics out of the Army. While there is little evidence available that communism did cause some anxiety to the Army hierarchy in the early post war period, it was the activities of the New Guard in the second decade between the wars that caused sharp Army reaction. It is quite possible that a number of AIC members was involved with the New Guard however there is only evidence of one QM actually charged with membership. This officer had served with Lt Col Campbell and had meetings with Mr De Groot and Major Scott. When fronted by the Commandant of the Artillery Schools of Instruction, the QM maintained the New Guard had contacted him because he had previously been a member of a Melbourne organisation presided by General White.<sup>65</sup> Without detailed knowledge of New Guard membership concerning this "secret army of the right",<sup>66</sup> in the case involving this QM, on current knowledge the 'innocent until proved guilty' verdict must stand in his case. As a postscript to these activities it needs to be stated that for the Army, the

60 Grey, *The Australian Army*, p 78.

61 Grey, *The Australian Army*, p 39.

62 National Archives, Victoria, Series Number B1535, Symbol Number 859/16/298, Civic Activities, 1934.

63 National Archives, Victoria, Series Number B1535, Symbol Number 859/16/298, Civic Activities, 1933.

64 National Archives, Victoria, Series Number B1535, Symbol Number 859/16/298, Civic Activities, 1924.

65 National Archives, New South Wales, Series Number SP1141/1, Symbol Number SP33/1/30, QM & Hon. Lt. H H Downey, MC, AIC, Disloyalty due to New Guard Association, 1933.

66 Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1999, p179.

maxim described at the commencement of this section of AIC history is still the correct mess etiquette in the second century of the Australian Army.

### CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Viewed from the conditions of service enjoyed by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in its second century of operation, the problems encountered by AIC Members appear dreadful at best. Probably the greatest injustice occurred in 1929 when not only the AIC, but the whole permanent force had to take up to eight (8) weeks unpaid leave for economic reasons to stave off further redundancies.<sup>67</sup> Within the Corps the difficulties experienced by AIC staff throughout the in-between war period mostly concerned conditions of service related to medical treatment and accommodation.

The huge advances in medical technology and the greatly increased availability of public hospitals has reduced many previously life threatening operations to routine procedures. In contrast medical operations performed in the nineteen thirties were often both dangerous and costly. In March 1939 WOII Le Serve was diagnosed with sub-acute appendicitis by the Regimental Medical Officer (RMO) and was not fit for duty. However, because his absence would have caused substantial problems for his militia unit's annual camp when the 15th Light Horse Regiment was coping with greatly increased numbers due to the approaching war, WOII Le Serve went to camp. His problem worsened, he developed acute appendicitis and was operated at the Lismore Base Hospital incurring fees of £17.17.00. Had WOII Le Serve missed the camp and gone instead to the Departmental Hospital at Randwick he would have incurred no cost. The Military Board sought advice from the Deputy Director General Medical Services (DDMS) who recommended refusal of payment because "Illness deemed as not contacted on duty". After seeking Ministerial authority for payment, the Military Board subsequently ruled "the cost of operations involving the administration of anaesthetic cannot be admitted as a charge against public funds".<sup>68</sup> With the average basic wage at £3.19.00 per week, for a conscientious Warrant Officer, doing his very best for his regiment and the Army while obviously sick, the rejection of such a large payment costing over 5 weeks wages must have seemed intolerable.<sup>69</sup> In a somewhat similar situation in 1938, WOII Sparrow stationed at Clare, South Australia was found to be suffering acute appendicitis and was admitted to Clare hospital where his appendix was removed, all in a three hour period. Charged £21-00-00 for the operation WO Sparrow sought reimbursement that was disallowed because, Military Financial Regulations and Instructions, paras. 234-238, provide only for payment of hospital maintenance fees and do not provide for reimbursement of fees charged by medical practitioners for operations.<sup>70</sup>

The other constant problem for AIC staff was accommodation. Instructional Corps members were subject to frequent moves, and the family went with them. Costs of removal were posted against the Department of Defence and always subject to audit. Removals could be as simple as moving from one side of Sydney to the other,<sup>71</sup> or across the state, inter state and overseas in peace and war.<sup>72</sup> George Osgood, who joined the RAN at 16 in 1939 and later became a POW,

67 Long, *Australia in the War 1939-1945, Series I Army, To Benghazi*, p 14.

68 National Archives, Victoria, *Series No.B1535, Control Symbol 738/3/452, S. A.M. LeServe, 1939.*

69 John Barrett, *We Were There: Australian Soldiers of World War II tell their stories*, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1987, p 104.

70 National Archives, Canberra, *Series No.A472/6, Control Symbol W3141; R. W. Sparrow, AIC, WOII, Payment of Surgical Fees, 1941.*

71 National Archives, NSW, *Series No.SP1008/1, Control Symbol 512/1631, 2770 Warrant Officer II H. Fisher, Transfer from 1/19 Bn to 20/54 Bn, 1939.*

72 National Archives, NSW, *Series No.SP196/3, Control Symbol H3, 511 QM & Hon. Lt .J. E. Hendry, 1936.*

remembers moves as a child from Arncliffe to Orange, and finally Paddington as his father, NP 3706 (later NX41519) WO1 Athol Osgood took various postings (Osgood, G, 2003, pers. comm. 22 April). Accommodation problems were considered by the Military Board on 19 October 1921 when claims involving 17 QM and WOs unable to rent houses were examined in detail.<sup>73</sup> Accommodation problems continued throughout the in-between wars period and were to become items on the Military Board Agenda once more when Darwin became a focal point of military interest in the Northern Territory.<sup>74</sup> However there were some positive results concerning travel and accommodation as demonstrated in the situation where a newly promoted Warrant Officer earning £3.18.00 per week,<sup>75</sup> was able to include his widowed Mother as a dependent, and thus claim a 1<sup>st</sup> class rail fare of £6.11.5d for her to his new appointment.<sup>76</sup>

## HEROES AND VILLAINS

In the process of constructing a Nominal Roll of the Australian Instructional Corps because none exists, it has become apparent that the Corps contained a staggeringly high number of highly decorated officers and soldiers. Awards for the 505 presently documented cases include 1 Victoria Cross (VC), 7 Military Crosses (MC), 2 Distinguished Service Orders (DSO), 1 Cross de Guerre (C de G), 2 Distinguished Conduct Medals (DCM), 9 Military Medals (MM), 1 Military Medal & Bar (MM & Bar) and 1 Mention in Dispatches (MID) all awarded for gallantry on active service. Peace time service awards for exceptional devotion to duty, from the same group reveals 5 Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) and 10 Members of the same order (MBE). With the expectation that the Nominal Roll can possibly reach 5,000 it is clear, apart from the single Victoria Cross, each of these numbers quoted will increase considerably.

As is reflected in all levels of society, the AIC was no exception and did have its share of villains. One married Quartermaster, with a distinguished war record, purported to be a single gentleman in order to obtain a young lady's favours. After receiving complaints from the young lady's fiancée, the Adjutant General invoked a Court of Inquiry which, although critical of this officer's behaviour, found "no military offence had been committed".<sup>77</sup> In another situation a Warrant Officer complained about unfair dismissal when he was not asked to re-engage. Investigation revealed that he had altered travel warrants "for the purpose of proceeding on or returning from his annual recreation leave" which he was not entitled to do.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps the most unfortunate case was the Warrant Officer, recalled from active service, who had used a woman friend to pose as his wife to claim marriage allowance. Although he was entitled to claim the allowance, the Courts-Martial ruled that this money was for his wife and for another woman to claim was "Forgery".<sup>79</sup> Equally depressing was the AIC Warrant Officer listed in Military Orders as "struck off strength as from 16<sup>th</sup> February 1923, having been posted as a deserter on that date".<sup>80</sup> At this distance of time from the event, the conditions that caused such a highly qualified permanent NCO to desert from the service of the Army can only be speculated upon.

73 *Military Board Proceedings, 19th October 1921, Item Taken without Notice, Transfer of members of the Australian Instructional Corps – Claims arising out of inability to rent houses.*

74 *Military Board Proceedings, 30th October 1936, Item 101/1936 Case of WO Ferres.*

75 *Military Board Proceedings, 16th November 1921, Item 409/1921.*

76 *National Archives, Canberra, Series No.MP385/3, Control Symbol 27/20/673, No. 7 Course, WWII W. R. J. Shields, 1939.*

77 *National Archives, Victoria, Series No.MP367/1, Control Symbol 452/1/246, Mr. Rollins complaint against QM & Hon. Maj. T. J. Farrow, AIC, 1928.*

78 *National Archives, Victoria, Series No.B1535, Control Symbol 701/12/101, C. H. Brown, 1931.*

79 *National Archives, Canberra, Series No.A471/1, Control Symbol 70929, Court-Martial – NP4974 WO2. J. C. Carson, AIC, 1945.*

80 *Military Order 188-1923 Australian Instructional Corps, Struck Off Strength, P559/15/608.*

## SUPERANNUATION AND PAY

When the Corps was formed the prospects of the Army as a career for Warrant Officers and NCOs was less than encouraging. Soldiers were only permitted to sign on for 3 years at a time, and the Army authorities had a number of reasons available to effect discharge whenever they felt it necessary. In his first report as Inspector General, reviewing the Instructional Staff, Sir Harry Chauvel commented on declining standards caused by "low rates of pay and the absence of a pension system".<sup>81</sup> Commenting on the AIC in 1923 General Chauvel went further,

The real difficulty in regard to the Corps is the unattractiveness of its pay and privileges as balanced against the qualifications demanded and the duties imposed. From a commercial point of view alone it will be seen that the practicality of securing and retaining the services of a highly trained man for wages lower than those of a manual worker is remote.<sup>82</sup>

However the conditions of service for the Australian Instructional Corps did improve with a Superannuation Act and better rates of pay, so that by 1925 General Chauvel could report,

A young man can look forward to a reasonable standard of living throughout his service and a pension amounting to approximately half pay at the end of it.<sup>83</sup>

Wages and conditions in the Army and the Corps throughout the in-between war period suffered the economic effects of peace time restrictions and the Great Depression and were generally quite poor. It was only when Australia started the re-arming programme from 1935 onwards did prospects appear better for career soldiers.

The Second World War put everything on "hold". However, even after the Second World War, there were still difficulties attached to Army pay and conditions as Jeffrey Grey reveals in 1949

The basic problem which faced the services (they) were unable to meet their manpower targets and the government consistently refused to allow them to improve rates of pay and conditions of service which might have made the services a more attractive option in a time of full employment.<sup>84</sup>

## MOVEMENT TOWARDS WAR

The rising nationalism of Japan and its activities in Manchuria in 1933-34 forced Australia and its allies in the Pacific region to meet this strongly emerging threat.<sup>85</sup> As the re-armament process slowly took place from 1935-1939 the AIC and the PMF increased in size. The peace-time Corps establishment remained almost unchanged throughout the between-wars period. This changed drastically with war establishments introduced for 1940-41 with 185 QMs and 1,039 WOs, a total of 1,123 all ranks. The war establishment included a proposal to temporarily commission a further 23 QMs for Army Headquarters and 26 QMs for Army Schools.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, at the same time the PMF had increased to 3,500.<sup>87</sup> Signs of a change in the fortunes of the AIC came with the raising of the Darwin Mobile Force (DMF) in 1939.<sup>88</sup>

81 *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt. General Sir H. G. Chauvel, GCMG, KCB, Melbourne, 31st May 1921, item 80.*

82 *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt. General Sir H. G. Chauvel, GCMG, KCB, Melbourne, 31st May 1923, Parliamentary Report No. 25, 17th July 1923, item 149.*

83 *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt. General Sir H. G. Chauvel, GCMG, KCB, Melbourne, 31st May 1925, item 89.*

84 Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, p 196.

85 A. T. Ross, *Armed and Ready: The Industrial Development and Defence of Australia 1900-1945*, Turton & Armstrong, Sydney, 1994, p 111.

86 National Archives, South Australia, *Series D844, Control Symbol 55/3/29, Schedule "A", Australian Instructional Corps, Quartermasters & Warrant Officers, Annual Establishment 1940-41.*

87 Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies*, p 161.

88 K. H. Trevan, "The Darwin Mobile Force" in *The Army Journal, Number 275, April 1972, pp 3-17.*

The significance of the DMF was that it was the first ever field force unit raised by the PMF.<sup>89</sup> All DMF soldiers had to be enlisted as Gunners because the Defence Act specifically rejected enlistment of permanent infantry soldiers. The DMF had several roles one of which was to provide experience to soldiers to allow them to join the AIC.<sup>90</sup> Lt Col. L.F. Guest, a graduate of No.9 (Special) Course, CTD, recalled a number of DMF members on his course (Guest, L.F., 2003, pers. comm., 2 April). Thus practical experience of soldiering in Australia's far north was to be important in the way in which the Corps was able to respond to the challenge posed by the Second World War to the AMF.

## WORLD WAR II

The Second World War was to provide both the opportunity and at the same time a watershed for the AIC. By late 1942 the Corps had almost ceased to exist as a separate entity.<sup>91</sup> A large number of the Corps members enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF in key Warrant appointments such as Regimental Sergeant Majors (RSMs), Arthur Newton, No.2 (Special) Course became the RSM of 2/17 Bn (Newton, A, "A Full Military Life", 1971), Colonel Guy Fawcett, OBE, No.4 (Special) Course had been the RSM of the Darwin Mobile Force in 1938 and was commissioned into 2/27 Bn (Fawcett, G, 2003, pers. comm., 25 May). Additionally, significant numbers of AIC members were commissioned both into the permanent forces and the AMF. There is little doubt of the effectiveness of the instructional work of the Corps in wartime operations relating to both the AMF and the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF but it will need further research before the full story can be told. To this end much of the work of the Corps, devoted to aspects of training through logistics and mechanization, moving from peacetime to active service needs to be examined and analysed. Completion of the AIC Nominal Roll will enable the war time careers of the AIC members to be studied in detail to provide firm evidence of the contribution of the AIC to the Army and to the defence of Australia. The work of the Corps on active service concluded at the end of the Second World War in August 1945 when the disbandment of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF saw the return of AIC members to the PMF. However, by 1946 the Corps had become part of the new 'Interim Army'.

## A REGULAR AUSTRALIAN ARMY

As a direct result of the bombing of Darwin and the threat to the Australian mainland caused by the war in the Pacific, the Australian government had been forced to realise that the rationale of using citizen armies had serious limitations for both defensive and offensive operations. At the end of the war the government came up with a totally new post war defence policy. Flowing from this new policy, a major reorganisation of the Australian Army took place in 1947.<sup>92</sup> From a 'citizen army' model the Federal Government now moved to create a 'regular army' based on a brigade formation "Field Force" capable of operating at home and overseas.<sup>93</sup> When the Australian Army moved from its 'interim phase' to the 'regular force concept', the task of the AIC was rapidly taken over by the Schools raised by the "Arms" (infantry/cavalry/engineers/signals) and "Services" (transport/medical etc.) of the army. As previously mentioned the original 4 (four) Army Schools operating from 1919-1939 by the end of World War 2 had expanded to 34 (thirty four) Army Schools. Specialization now included Armour, Artillery, Signals, Ordnance, Electrical & Mechanical, Medical, Intelligence, Education and a range of gender specific Schools.<sup>94</sup>

89 Trevan, "The Darwin Mobile Force", p 5.

90 Trevan, "The Darwin Mobile Force", p 5.

91 Sligo, "The Development of the Australian Regular Army 1944-1952", p 27.

92 Sligo, "The Development of the Australian Regular Army 1944-1952", p 22.

93 Sligo, "The Development of the Australian Regular Army 1944-1952", p 35.

94 *Allied Landforces Schools, 22 Feb 44, Appendix "I", Sheets 1-3.*

Of major consequence to the operations of the AIC was the change initiated by the Australian Infantry Corps, which formed a School of Infantry at Bonegilla near Albury.<sup>95</sup> Colonel C. W. McPherson, MM, psc, an AIC Staff Sergeant-Major with 21<sup>st</sup> Light Horse Regiment at Wagga Wagga, NSW, attended No.1 School in 1944 (McPherson, C. W., 2002, pers. comm., 25 November). The staff of the School of Infantry then took over the training of junior officers and non commissioned officers (NCOs) in instruction and regimental duties. For the first time in 30 years this key task of the Army was not undertaken by the AIC, and although not significant at the time in hindsight it can be viewed as the 'beginning of the end' for the Corps. Equally significant, although again not recognised at the time, was that as the "Arms" and "Services" of the Australian Regular Army (ARA) raised their respective Corps Schools, numbers of AIC staff were selected for senior appointments within these training establishments.<sup>96</sup> Clearly, diminishing numbers and the dilution of roles, were both to seriously effect the work of the AIC. In this situation also, the provision of a Nominal Roll will assist in tracing the careers of Corps members such as QM and Hon. Lt. V. E. Dowdy transferred from being Brigade Sergeant-Major 2 Cav Brigade, Armidale to QM and Adjt (T) of 15 Light Horse Regiment at Lismore in late 1939.<sup>97</sup> After transferring to the Staff Corps he later became Brigadier Vincent Dowdy, Director of Supplies and Transport (Newton, A.J.C, MBE, 2002, pers. comm., 1 October).

By early 1946 on the political scene, the British Empire was disintegrating and the needs of empire were being replaced by new global and regional alliances. Both Britain and Australia had now come to conclude that these new situations could not be properly served by reliance on a citizen army and expeditionary forces. Although in Australia there were still citizen forces operating in a reserve capacity, their training was centralised and gradually taken over by the "Arms" and "Services" Corps Schools. The conflict in Korea and the "Cold War confrontation" was to provide the Federal Government of the day with the strong rationale for legislation to provide for a permanent army to fight where directed, and for the role of the citizen forces to be a second line for home defence.<sup>98</sup>

## DISBANDMENT

When the 'interim army' was disbanded 14 August 1952,<sup>99</sup> and the Australian Regular Army formed and the AIC members were gradually absorbed into regular army units, the few that remained in the Corps continued to oversee training for school cadets until the early nineteen fifties.<sup>100</sup>

One Quartermaster who served almost the entire length of the Corps existence was Alfred Robert Ethridge (DOB 12 June 1894). After commissioned service (Lt) with the 48<sup>th</sup> Kooyong Regiment prior to WWI, he enlisted as an A/SSM Instructional Staff (A&I Staff) on 20<sup>th</sup> October 1915. Throughout WWI he was an Instructional Staff Warrant Officer training troops in Australia. At the end of First World War he graduated from No.2 School of Instruction at Liverpool in 1920. Thus SSM Ethridge became an original founding member of the AIC in 1921. Six months after the AIC was established he was promoted PMF Warrant Officer Class II, and in 1927 he was promoted Warrant Officer Class I. WO Ethridge served with a number of 3<sup>rd</sup> Division units as RQMS and RSM including the 24<sup>th</sup> and 39<sup>th</sup> Battalions. In 1938 he became T/QM and Hon. Lt with the 39<sup>th</sup> Bn and entered WWII as a T/Capt and Instructor at Officer Training Units (OCTU) and Schools (OCS), later joining the Military

95 Newton, *The Australian instructional Corps*, p 43.

96 Newton, *The Australian Instructional Corps*, p 45.

97 National Archives, NSW, *Series SP1008/1, Control Symbol 512/7/1956, QM & Hon Lt. V E Dowdy Transfer Armidale to Lismore, 1940.*

98 K. G. Cooke, "One Army" in *The Second Fifty Years: The Australian Army 1947-1997*, The Army History Unit, Canberra, 1997 p 78.

99 Sligo, *The Development of the Australian Regular Army*, p 45.

100 Dennis, Grey, Morris & Prior, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, p 72.

Secretary's staff as a Major. After the war he was appointed Capt (QM) in 1948 and later Major (QM). Major Ethridge retired from the "Interim Army" in April 1951 having served 39 years and 326 days (Ethridge, D, 2003, pers. comm., 8 May).

The practical end of the Corps came in 1953 when the remaining Warrant Officers, (AIC) became Warrant Officers, (ARA).<sup>101</sup> The legal end occurred on 19 May 1955 when the Australian Army Regulation 68 was issued removing the Australian Instructional Corps from 'Order of battle' of the Australian Army.<sup>102</sup>

### **DID TRAINING WORK & THE AIC PROVIDE DEFENCE OF AUSTRALIA?**

Considerable research is still required to find the evidence and produce the analysis clearly demonstrating that the training provided by the AIC greatly contributed to the defence of Australia particularly in World War Two. At this point the evidence points to a qualified "yes". Recalling his AIC service WWII Tom Dawson, who graduated from No.9 (Special) Course, Small Arms School, stated "In 1940 we conducted an Officers' and NCO's course of three weeks in Townsville, then a 3 months camp at Miowera, North Queensland where the whole Battalion began from scratch" (Dawson, T.A., 2002, pers. comm., 27 June). The official Army historian of WWII Gavin Long concludes,

The militia ... did produce both a nucleus of officers capable of successfully commanding platoons, companies and battalions in action, and a body of useful NCO's.<sup>103</sup>

The fact that the training provided by the AIC was based on the British model and not always suited to Australian conditions had not escaped the notice of Army Authorities. From 1935 onwards Colonel Lavarack as Chief of the General Staff (CGS) had worked to create a 'permanent force tactical school'. However as Jeffrey Grey points out,

Lavarack's aim of an Australian tactical system suited to Australian conditions was only met fully after the outbreak of the war with Japan.<sup>104</sup>

### **SUMMARY**

As a brief overview "Out of Empire, An introduction to the history of the Australian Instructional Corps 1921-1955" has suggested that metaphorically the life and death of the Corps has been bound to the needs of Empire, and later its demise. The circumstances involved in the raising of the Corps have been explored including the origins of its rank structure. Details of Corps operations and individual members are investigated through 'Religion and Politics', 'Conditions of Service', 'Heroes and Villains' and 'Superannuation and Pay'. Some of the economic, political and military constraints on the operations of the Corps have been identified and analysed.

Although the work of the AIC between the wars and leading up to World War Two has outlined much detail remains to be identified and analysed. Acknowledging that logistics and mechanization have impacted on training in the Australian Army through both peace and war, the work of the Corps in these areas has yet to be explored and dissected. Similarly, activities of the Darwin Mobile Force and war records of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF will provide a wealth of material to expand this brief introduction to the story of the AIC into a full and profound history of the Corps. The demise of Empire after the Second World War set in train the transformation of the citizen army, through the interim army to a regular army. The rise of specialist "arms and services" schools provided the circumstances that culminated in

101 Newton, *The Australian Instructional Corps*, p 31.

102 Newton, *The Australian Instructional Corps*, p 30.

103 Long, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: Series 1 Army, To Benghazi*, 31.

104 Grey, *The Australian Army*, p 102.



the disbandment of the Australian Instructional Corps in 1955 as it disappeared from the Australian Army 'Order of Battle'.

Historians have recognised that the citizen army which comprised the 2nd AIF acquitted themselves equally as well in battle as did their fathers who formed the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF. In acknowledging the debt Australia owed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF it is fitting that the last words on this small story of the Australian Instructional Corps should come in a tribute from Lt-Gen. Sir Harry Chauvel who wrote

The Warrant Officer of the Instructional Corps has been for years and always will be, the backbone of our citizen army.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Report of the Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces, Lt. General Sir H. G. Chauvel, GCMG, KCB Melbourne 31 May 1923, p 24.*



## **“Locust”, “Whiting” and New Britain: Guy Black’s Covert War with M and Z Units**

**Dr Ian Black and Keith Richmond<sup>1</sup>**

Since the end of World War II the covert war in New Guinea and adjacent islands has been the subject of numerous accounts from historians and those who served there. This article seeks to discuss the experiences of one man – an accountant by training who demonstrated uncommon ability in covert operations, and then returned to being a small businessman in New Guinea and later, livestock breeder in NSW.

Guy Black was born in Longreach, Queensland, on 24 October 1914, one of a family of five. His father was a bank manager, so Guy’s schooling was constantly interrupted by transfers, but included final schooling to Intermediate level at Toowoomba Grammar. In the middle of the Depression he began accountancy studies at night, and after passing his final examinations with distinction, applied for a position in the New Guinea administration. He was posted to Salamaua in August 1936 on a salary of £300 a year. He moved to Lae in January 1937 and then to Wewak for 18 months. After leave he went to work in Rabaul, travelling on the ‘Macdhui’.<sup>2</sup>

When war was declared in 1939, Guy enrolled with the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. He then enlisted in the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF (6<sup>th</sup> Division) on 14 February 1940. After training he sailed with the second convoy to the Middle East, disembarking at Kantara in Palestine on 18 May 1940. He served as a pay clerk with the 6<sup>th</sup> Division’s Australian Overseas Base Unit for six months and later transferred to 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Cash Office. As he expressed it some 40 odd years later, “with 6<sup>th</sup> Division HQ in the Western Desert to Bardia, Tobruk, and on to Benghazi in early 1941. Then over to Greece and being bombed and strafed every day. Then carted off to Crete for about 16 days with more bombing etc”.<sup>3</sup> He was promoted to Corporal on 26 March 1940 and to Sergeant on 2 April 1941. On 18 February 1942 he embarked on the SS Andes at Suez for home, and disembarked at Adelaide on 16 March.

### **Training at the House on the Hill**

On 30 May 1942 Guy Black was taken on strength of Z Special Unit. Guy later commented he “was asked to be part of Z which was then being formed...I guess it was because of my experience as a Native Labour Officer in New Guinea that I was transferred into Z Unit...There I met up with other ex-New Guinea men who had worked with the natives”.<sup>4</sup> As Powell notes, “ISD recruited volunteers from the three Australian armed services, with most coming from the AIF, but civilians who knew the islands were keenly sought and had to be inducted into the services”.<sup>5</sup> On 23 June Guy was appointed Acting Lieutenant.

1 Dr Ian Black, the son of Captain Guy Black MC is an Adelaide-based agriculture economist. Keith Richmond is a nephew in law to Guy Black.

2 Profiles of Guy Black are in The Sunday Mail, 6 August 1995, page 5; Vera Bradley, *I Didn’t Know That: Cairns and District, Tully to Cape York 1939-1946*, Boolarong Press, Brisbane, 1995, page 165; and James Sinclair, *Golden Gateway: Lae and the Province of Morobe*, Crawford House, Bathurst NSW, 1998, page 179. Also, Guy Black, Defence Service Record (NGX 55)

3 Guy Black, letter to Tas Baillie, 9 December 1996

4 Ibid.

5 Alan Powell, *War By Stealth: Australians and the Allied Intelligence Bureau 1942-1945*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1996, page 20

By way of background, in April 1942 the Inter Allied Services Department (IASD or more usually ISD) was formed under the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) to conduct clandestine warfare along the lines of the Special Operations Executive in Europe. (From April 1943 this section became known as the Services Reconnaissance Department.)<sup>6</sup> The new group recruited men to serve outside Australia and conduct covert operations in the Southwest Pacific. A special holding unit known as Z Special Unit was established to maintain recruits. In May 1943, M Unit was established as an administrative unit, and all former Z Unit staff and those of independent companies were transferred.

On 1 June Guy left for six weeks at the Foster guerrilla training camp on Wilson's Promontory, one of the first to experience the new camp. He said later: "With others I was sent to that Foster camp in the middle of winter (1942). We got a bit cold in Greece from time to time but Foster beat everything. A couple of months later someone came to their senses and moved everything to Cairns".<sup>7</sup>

Guy arrived in Cairns on 3 August. Z recruits went into training at a large house known as Fairview, a short distance out of Cairns and known as The House on the Hill. As Guy said, "I think we were the first intake to arrive at the House on the Hill... We did our jungle training in the scrub around the foothills near the house, and learned to use limpet mines at the town swimming baths. The purpose of our training was to work behind the lines in various parts of New Guinea by gathering intelligence information on enemy activity".<sup>8</sup>

With the Japanese occupying much of New Guinea and with the few resources available to the Allies at that time, aerial surveillance was not possible. If information on enemy movements was to be obtained, the only hope was to engage men who were familiar with the country and with the native tribes and have them observe Japanese movements. In consequence the focus fell on former plantation owners, miners, and administration staff such as Guy Black.

Patrols into enemy territory faced three main challenges. First, the Japanese were dominant and they had taken over huge areas: their next likely invasion target was Australia. Any patrol into the New Guinea hinterland faced considerable danger. Secondly, the attitude of the natives, and their response to the Japanese occupation, was an unknown. While some old friendships and allegiances might be retained, Allied patrols were never sure if or when they would be betrayed. Finally, there was an imperative to have information quickly. The war situation was fluid, and nobody knew from one day to the next whether the Japanese had taken over another landing field or village.

When the Japanese finally retreated back over the ranges in late 1942 the demand for intelligence on Japanese activities turned from the Port Moresby area to places where the Japanese might retreat and build up their strength. Thus the patrol that Guy Black was being trained for was changed to the area behind Aitape or Vanimo. Then the patrol was given another task. It was to guide another party, staffed by members of Dutch units, so they could report on the level of penetration into their territory of Dutch New Guinea. This 'Dutch party' was under the direction of the Netherlands East Indies part of AIB – later known as NEFIS III (Netherlands Forces Intelligence Services).

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6 Powell, *ibid*, pages 21, 22, 73

7 Guy Black, letter to Tas Baillie, 27 November 1995

8 Vera Bradley, *I Didn't Know That*, *op cit*, page 165

### The Locust Mission<sup>9</sup>

Guy's patrol, known as Locust, was led by Lieutenant Jack Fryer, with Lieutenant Guy Black, Lieutenant Harry Aiken, and Sergeant Les (Tas) Baillie as radio operator. For Whiting (the Dutch party),<sup>10</sup> the leader was Sergeant H.N. Staverman, with Corporal D.J. Topman, two Dutch East Indies (Indonesian) privates, H. Pattiwal and M. Reharing, and an Australian radio operator, Sergeant Len Siffleet, who was of Dutch descent.<sup>11</sup>

As the leader of the Locust team, Jack Fryer became the guide for both parties. Fryer was greatly in demand by the armed forces because of his knowledge of the country. From 1934 he had been engaged as a surveyor in oil search operations in Papua and New Guinea (Oil Search Limited, 1932-1938 and Australasian Petroleum Company, 1938-1942). He was prevented from undertaking most of the training with Locust and Whiting as he was in Melbourne and Bendigo preparing maps of New Guinea as an officer of the Australian Survey Corps. As Powell notes, Fryer was engaged by the US forces "to help with a survey of the Abau-Aiaru country southeast of Port Moresby" after June 1942.<sup>12</sup> He also gave advice on engineering access to US engineers in the south of Papua, as well as to New Guinea Force on terrain and climate. He made a brief trip to Cairns to meet the Locust members, finally joining both Locust and Whiting members in Port Moresby on 24 December.

Fryer was obviously a key figure in the success of the venture, and as Guy Black said of him, "we travelled through the middle of nowhere and he knew exactly where we were, and did not hesitate to go forward where the Japs might be. A most competent man".<sup>13</sup> His team was capable too: Harry Aiken had worked with Fryer in oil exploration work and was a capable bushman, while Black had worked with natives and had served in New Guinea. Apart from the natives, no one in the Dutch party had any bushcraft.

As the patrol was about to begin, they learned that Wewak had been occupied by the Japanese while two other possible locations for landing on the Sepik were also declared to be too dangerous to use. This knowledge, plus the lack of aircraft, meant there was no other choice but to walk.<sup>14</sup> So it was agreed that the patrols and their gear would be taken as far as Bena Bena (inland of Madang) by aircraft and then they would walk the 300 miles or so to the target area.<sup>15</sup> As the official history of the mission written under the auspices of General MacArthur said of Locust, it was "one of the most exhausting treks in AIB history".<sup>16</sup>

9 Information on the Locust mission has been drawn from a number of sources, including the wartime diary of Guy Black; Powell, *op cit*; Eric Feldt, *The Coastwatchers*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1981; Archives A 3269 08 *The Official History of the Operations and Administration of Special Operations Australia, Volume II*, hereafter *Official History*; and *History of the Intelligence Activities Under General Douglas MacArthur, 1942-1950, The Intelligence Series, G-2, USAFFE-SWPA-AFPAC-FEC-SCAP*, Wilmington DEL, Scholarly Resources, 1950, *Operations of the AIB Volume IV*, hereafter *Operations of AIB*

10 It should be noted that Jack Fryer who led the parties, had never heard the code name Whiting until 1986 and Fryer, Black and Baillie in their writings referred to it as 'the Dutch party' – Jack Fryer notes in possession of the Black family

11 *Operations of AIB*, *op cit*, page 45. Topman only went as far as Mt Hagen before returning to Bena Bena.

12 Powell, *op cit*, page 60

13 Guy Black, letter to Tas Baillie, 27 November 1995

14 Feldt, *op cit*, pages 197, 209 and *Official History*, *op cit*, page 3

15 The slowness of mounting the Locust/Whiting exercise was reinforced when there was a sudden demand for information on Wewak. If Locust and Whiting had air transport to the Sepik they could have done the job, but it was too late. Another patrol, led by Lt LE Ashton was sent by air to the Sepik. But they were surprised by the Japanese and had to make a run for it. The patrol later met up with Locust: see Feldt, *op cit*, page 215

16 *Official History*, *op cit*, page 45

Guy Black left Port Moresby by DC3 on 20 January 1943 and spent that night at Bena Bena. The next morning he departed with 101 local native carriers for the first stop at Garuma, to be joined by Jack Fryer with the remaining loads. The official record claims that there were 400 native carriers in total, but this sounds too high.<sup>17</sup> Guy said that "101 natives were sufficient to keep us moving" although they welcomed greater numbers in order to ease the burden.

Maintenance of the carrier line was a major problem. The large number of carriers was necessary to take the provisions required for a long stay in the Aitape area. They had some permanent carriers while all the others had to be recruited as they passed through villages. Carriers generally worked until the end of their territory, and then demanded to return home. Worse, on 12 February, approximately 80 carriers decamped during the night – at other times some of the carriers would throw their loads into the bush and run away. If there was a carrier shortage, loads sometimes had to be split with half or even a third taken one day and the remainder brought up over the next few days, making the long trip even slower. Natives in the highland areas were more amenable but in the lowlands troubles escalated. Guy Black's main role was the supervision and recruitment of carriers, and the provision of food for the patrols.

There was a familiar daily routine after leaving Bena Bena. After breakfast all supplies were broken into loads for the carriers – the radio took 16 men for example – and the carriers made ready. They broke camp around 8.30 am, and generally walked around 10-16 miles a day, resting often. They tried to reach a village where food (and possibly carriers) could be procured by early afternoon. They slept either in communal houses or on occasions built their own shelter. This schedule varied according to circumstances, such as terrain, weather, availability of suitable housing or food, and the distance between villages. Regular radio contact was maintained with Port Moresby.

There was great frustration in being forced to remain immobile waiting for carriers. At the beginning of March Guy pondered in his diary whether it would be better to take a small group with minimal supplies and make a quick march to the objective. This would allow them to provide some intelligence back to Port Moresby.<sup>18</sup>

The widening Japanese occupation of New Guinea meant that on occasions the patrols had to take a detour. In February, for example, they had to skirt the recently occupied Ramu River area and walk over mountains at altitudes over 10,000 feet. On occasions the carriers had to build bridges to allow them to get across a river. The patrols were sustained by regular aerial drops that provided food as well as essentials such as mail, guns and radio parts.

It was a long, arduous and slow journey. As a change from walking, in April they used a pinnace along with native canoes and sailed from Yimas down the Sepik.<sup>19</sup> Guy recalled that whole days were spent climbing hills and wading through swamps and one of the tasks after making camp was to get rid of the leeches that had attached themselves to their bodies. Because of rain and sweat their clothes and boots were rarely dry<sup>20</sup>. Food was a constant concern. In addition to the stores they carried and the provisions retrieved from the monthly aerial drops, they depended on obtaining native foods, making saccac from the sago palm, or buying the occasional pig.

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17 See Powell, *op cit*, page 60 and Official History, *op cit*, page 8

18 Guy Black diary, 4 March 1943

19 It is worth noting that in country assumed to be occupied by the enemy, during March Locust ran across not only the Ashton party but also another civilian group retreating from Wewak and the advancing Japanese (two men from this group stayed with Locust). This group had used a pinnace and were preparing to destroy it when Locust arrived and saw an opportunity for an easier passage along the river. Locust also met some of the Mosstroops men sent in to protect the patrols. Also, in October Locust met the GAV Stanley team working with the natives west of the Torricelli mountains.

20 Reminiscences with family.

On 14 June 1943, almost six months after leaving Bena Bena, the parties arrived at the Lumi airstrip in the foothills of the Torricelli mountains. Fryer established a base camp. This was inland of Aitape, in an area known as Mai Mai. They had travelled 514 miles by foot and 230 miles by boat since leaving Bena Bena on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January.<sup>21</sup>

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, the Whiting party led by Sergeant Staverman with 66 carriers began the walk to the area behind Hollandia to begin their observation of the Japanese. The Whiting party received three food drops while it was camped at Wama, some 25 km south of Vanimo.<sup>22</sup>

The Locust party then moved into the next stage of its operation. The plan was to walk from village to village, seeking information and staying away from the Japanese patrols. Each day saw the usual breaking of camp, and the constant search for food and for more carriers. Their intent was to establish a network of native intelligence on activities of the Japanese, and in turn to advise Port Moresby of useful information.

It was very dangerous to work with the natives. There were some tribes such as the Wapis that became little more than extensions of the Japanese army, and team members narrowly evaded capture at different times. Perhaps a typical encounter with unfriendly natives was when Guy was out negotiating for food. He was suddenly surrounded by locals and only escaped by firing into the air to frighten them<sup>23</sup>. Guy later said that "there were no fuzzy wuzzy angels in Northeast New Guinea...headquarters staff did not foresee the perfidy of the native New Guineans in that part of New Guinea. They betrayed willingly".<sup>24</sup>

In early October a message was received saying that Staverman and Pattiwal of the Dutch party had been killed. There was no word of Siffleet's location. After Fryer discussed the matter with Port Moresby, on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October Guy reported in his diary, "departed 1315, making trip in search of Siffleet, do not expect to get back under six weeks".<sup>25</sup> Fryer, Black, and a small number of natives joined the search.

Despite their best efforts they failed to find Siffleet, and on 18 November they were told to return to base. According to information available later, Staverman and Pattiwal had set out on a reconnaissance mission. They had left the others at the Wama base. Inland from Vanimo on 4 October, natives led the Japanese to Staverman and Pattiwal and ambushed them. Staverman was killed, although Pattiwal escaped back to camp to join the others. After Siffleet contacted Fryer, the radio was buried and the remaining group retreated in the direction of the Fryer party, only to be betrayed by the Wapi tribe. Pattiwal, Reharing and Siffleet were taken to Aitape by the Wapis and on 24 October executed by the Japanese.<sup>26</sup> A photograph of Len Siffleet being beheaded by a Japanese soldier was later found when the Americans invaded Hollandia, and the photograph was published in Life Magazine. Subsequently it has been published many times, often with a mistaken caption.<sup>27</sup>

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21 Official History, op cit, page 8

22 *ibid*

23 Reminiscences with family.

24 Guy Black, letter to staff member of Australian War Memorial inquiring about Len Siffleet, 15 December 1997

25 Guy Black diary

26 Operations of AIB, op cit, pages 45-46, Official History, op cit, page 8, and Powell, op cit, page 61

27 Perhaps one of the saddest aspects of the Len Siffleet photograph (which today appears as a display in the Australian War Memorial) was that for years it was confused with the beheading of Flight Lieutenant W Newton VC. With the incorrect caption it has often appeared, not only in newspapers but in the Time-Life Pictorial History of World War II. This caused ongoing concern for those involved with Locust, and Guy Black spent considerable effort trying to correct incorrect captioning over the years. See Australian 14 August 1995, letters column; The Sunday Mail 23 July 1995, page 96; The Sun 11 February 1988, page 5; and letter to the editor from Guy Black, Sunday Mail 3 July 1995

A decision was made in Port Moresby to withdraw the Locust party. When Locust had set out from Port Moresby, their orders were to work closely with the natives, "it being assumed they would willingly cooperate. How wrong they were".<sup>28</sup> Guy said later "they were very pro-Jap at that time".<sup>29</sup> Powell noted that the Japanese were becoming more aggressive and the Locust party could only "mark time" for without willing natives their efforts were rendered almost useless.<sup>30</sup> Fryer and Black were withdrawn by Catalina on 27 November 1943 from Kokiabu on the Sepik and flown to Port Moresby and thence to Brisbane.

According to the official history of the patrol, when Locust returned "it brought a mass of expert information concerning enemy dispositions and defences".<sup>31</sup> This may be so but to most people, the Locust patrol is remembered because of its links with the ill-fated Whiting party. Locust did bring back with it some information on defences and dispositions, as well as sketches of inland routes, and that intelligence was subsequently of value to the Australian forces. But the reality was that by the time the Australians reached the Aitape area, they could have mounted aerial surveillance and done much the same job.

If we look back over the course of Locust, Guy had travelled over 700 miles by the time he took his last canoe trip down the Sepik to be collected by Catalina. While on the trek he caught a cold from walking through a thunderstorm; a filling fell out of a back tooth in February requiring Topman to remove the tooth while Guy sat on a biscuit tin (the tooth was then worn as an ornament by the native boss boy); in late May and June he developed boils or possibly a type of tropical ulcer on his legs; he suspected he had appendicitis in late August (and in November) and endured severe abdominal pains for days on end; a branch broke that he was leaning on and he fell onto a sago palm tree, getting thorns in his arms, hand and face, and then a disturbed hornet nesting in the sago palm stung him. His compass and belt were lost in a river, and a branch broke and fell on his Austen gun putting it out of action (he fixed it by levering with a tomahawk). These maladies were not serious enough to require him being pulled out, and all the others suffered similarly. At one point Guy noted in his diary that Fryer was still unable to walk after a week, while Tas Baillie reported years later that he (Tas) was the only one of the party not to be rendered immobile for some days with ulcers on the legs. So it was part of the reality of walking long distances in an inhospitable climate and conditions, without any medical attention.

By Christmas 1943 Guy returned to his family, then travelled to Cairns where he married Jane Bavinton. Jane was employed as Controller Stores Records Keeper with the NEFIS III organisation working out of the House on the Hill.

#### New Britain

After leave Guy was sent to 'Tabragalba' cattle station near Beaudesert in Southeast Queensland. With the pressure on the AIB for better training opportunities, they had moved from the House on the Hill (where the Locust team had trained). The house was handed to NEFIS III and 'Tabragalba' then became the new base for AIB operations.

This time Guy was trained for an exercise on New Britain. There, the Japanese had installed coastwatchers drawn from Japanese Marines and AIB forces were dropped at different parts of the island to conduct intelligence operations and observe the Japanese. But progress was slow, and aerial attacks were not very effective in the jungle conditions. The AIB men on New Britain had to make a decision whether to disband operations, or to seek to use the skills of the native

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28 Guy Black, letter to AWM staff member, 15 December 1997

29 Guy Black, letter to Tas Baillie, 27 November 1995

30 Powell, op cit, page 61

31 Operations of AIB, op cit, page 61.

population. It was decided to seek guns from Australia to arm the natives against the Japanese<sup>32</sup>. The concept of undertaking overt search and destroy activity represented a challenge to the long-held AIB headquarters strictures that demanded clandestine activity and followed Eric Feldt's philosophy of having as their guide Ferdinand the flower-smelling bull of Disney cartoon fame. After some rumination and the realisation that the fortunes of war were changing, shotguns and later rifles were dropped to the AIB men by late February 1944.<sup>33</sup>

Guy Black left Australia on 2 March 1944 with 23 others for New Britain, just at the time the guerrilla actions were being escalated under Major I Skinner's leadership. The Australian forces were split into two, with groups going to the north and the south coasts. As Guy said, "I was put into a new group of about ten officers and NCOs and in March of that year we were transported to Port Moresby and then to Finschhafen... we were raced across the strait in two Motor Torpedo boats and along the south coast of New Britain to arrive at Waterfall Bay at about 1 am. We all got well and truly dunked in the surf but made our way into the mountains where we built a camp. Liberators dropped all sorts of supplies and much equipment such as guns (carbines, Owens), grenades..."<sup>34</sup> The base was two days inland at Lakiri. One of the benefits of being in that area was that a native chief, Golpak, one of two Paramount Luluais in Southern New Britain at the time, assisted them whenever he could; other Luluais were sympathetic to the Japanese.<sup>35</sup>

The Japanese were present in force and enjoyed the support of a considerable number of natives. In addition there were kembis or native auxiliaries working with the Japanese and were willing to kill anyone linked with the Allies.<sup>36</sup> The response of the AIB group led by Major B Fairfax-Ross from May 1944, was that they established a series of warning lines, whereby the friendly natives would signal if the Japanese crossed their lines. These were up to eight hours walk away and were designed to provide ample warning of potential ambushes. With extra personnel, Fairfax-Ross split his soldiers into three platoons, each led by a Lieutenant to facilitate independent engagements. From Lakiri to the east there were too many Japanese to be defeated. So the emphasis was on leaving them alone and depending on the intelligence rings to provide warning of attack, at which stage the Japanese would be harassed. On the western side, Golpak's impact was greater so that became the focus of activities.

Guy Black's diary for the time on New Britain was destroyed after the war, probably because it contained descriptions of Japanese cannibalism of two native children. As a result not much unit level detail exists. Nor have other chroniclers given us much more material: perhaps the war had moved on toward the Philippines and Japan, and the focus was with those operations. Our knowledge thus comes from accounts from some of those who served there including Major Fairfax-Ross, some material drawn from official sources, and scant comments from the official history of AIB.<sup>37</sup>

The New Britain operation was a case of classic guerrilla activities – a game of hide and seek, followed by hit and run tactics from the Australians and their native troops. There were short periods of intense activity, followed by pursuit, rest and consolidation. Patrols were small, they carried what they could as there were no carrier lines, and essential supplies were dropped in by

32 In addition to the native NCOs with the Australians that had been trained in Australia.

33 Operations of AIB, op cit, page 82 and Malcolm Wright, *If I Die: Coastwatching and Guerrilla Warfare Behind Japanese Lines*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1965, page 190

34 Guy Black, letter to Tas Baillie, 18 August 1995

35 Powell, op cit, page 245

36 AWM 54 423/9/31, AIB Field Reports, AIB Field Activities New Britain, April 44-Mar 45

37 See Feldt, op cit, page 363; Operations of the AIB, op cit, page 82, Gavin Long, *The Final Campaigns, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1963, Chapter 10, and Smith's Weekly 27 April 1946, page 15* for a journalistic approach. Also see the excellent AWM 54 423/9/31, AIB Field Reports, written by Major B Fairfax-Ross



aircraft. Where air drops to patrols were not possible, the groups had to return to camp for more supplies and then re-find the action.<sup>38</sup>

For the AIB, local natives were the key to success. These men were recruited especially from the former workers on coconut plantations on New Britain. Much of the time spent by platoon leaders such as Guy Black went into training the natives to enable them to conduct missions against the Japanese.<sup>39</sup> As Guy later commented, the main role for all the troops was "ambushing parties of Japanese who were making their way back to Rabaul to wait out the war".<sup>40</sup> The Japanese they were facing were both Japanese Marines, acting as coastwatchers, and the regular army soldiers. Charlton noted that Major Fairfax-Ross had "four officers, ten Australian non-commissioned officers and about 140 native troops...Fairfax-Ross was able to harass the enemy repeatedly around the Wide Bay area. The Japanese responded by punishing the local natives..."<sup>41</sup>

It was a slow, grinding operation where the intent was to approach the target quietly then hit hard before retreating. As an example, Skinner, Black and a platoon moved down the coast in April to the Japanese post at Palmamal on Jacquinot Bay, riding in seven war canoes.<sup>42</sup> Two of the native troops led a dawn raid killing five of the ten men present and forcing the other five to run. Four were hunted down and killed while the fifth was imprisoned. When the Australians were there they found a collection of Japanese occupation money, including one shilling and half shilling notes.

In late May, Guy led a platoon from Lakiri to the Jacquinot Bay area to await the results of an American raid at Awul.<sup>43</sup> Marching from the Bay to Lau and Atu, Guy met up with other troops and patrols were organised. By mid-June, the guerrillas caught up with a large Japanese party, killing 28 but losing five of their own. Guy's platoon gave chase to some that had evaded capture, and at Rang they killed a further nine but withdrew after losing Sergeant Kogimara.<sup>44</sup> As the Japanese group moved downstream, Guy Black returned to Atu to get more provisions and to care for the natives who had cut their feet on rough rocks. They pursued another Japanese patrol, and killed two men. In the difficult terrain another two men had escaped. Before the patrol was able to complete its task they were recalled to base for rest. Guy later said "we latched onto a company of Japs and in a series of ambushes killed them all....in one ambush the Japs were moving up a kunai grass hill and we were waiting at the top and rolled grenades down on them"<sup>45</sup> Patrols accounted for 59 enemy killed in these engagements.<sup>46</sup>

A few weeks after this successful engagement, and following reports of Japanese cannibalism of two native children, Guy led a team after a Japanese patrol and they were able to surprise them and kill four. While two men were considered to be still at large, Guy had to break off the engagement to undertake another task. As the main body returned to base, one patrol remained to track the last two Japanese from the engagement; after 13 more days of tracking, they were also found and killed.

38 For setting up the Lakiri base, see AWM 54 423/9/31 and the dropping of 25,000 lb of stores.

39 *ibid*

40 Guy Black, letter to AWM staff member, 15 December 1997

41 Peter Charlton, *The Unnecessary War: Island Campaigns of the Southwest Pacific, 1944-45*, Macmillan, South Melbourne, 1983, page 92

42 Powell, *op cit*, page 246

43 AWM 54 423/9/31

44 Long, *op cit*, page 244. Kogimara was Guy's sergeant and in the close-knit camaraderie of the guerrilla unit, Guy was deeply saddened by the loss. It was the only native Guy lost under his leadership.

45 Personal reminiscences with family.

46 AWM 54 423/9/31

Guy left the engagement so that he could make contact with another party. On 3 September 1944 he met a group from New Guinea Force who had landed in Jacquinot Bay from a corvette "and guided them on a four day reconnaissance of the area".<sup>47</sup>

From 10 October 1944 onward the Fairfax-Ross team was instructed to cease guerrilla activities.<sup>48</sup> This reversion to a passive intelligence unit was meant to keep the place free from enemy soldiers until after the invasion occurred. Guy Black and a platoon were moved twice, to Bouvalpum to set up observation posts overlooking Jacquinot and Waterfall Bays on 13 October, and then later to Kalangina in mid November, again to observe. On 4 November, the 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> Division, landed at Jacquinot Bay unopposed. This was a great tribute to the work of Major Fairfax-Ross and his men who had kept the Japanese under check. In late December forces also landed at Sampun. For Fairfax-Ross and his team, their role was now that of observing. The time for guerrilla warfare had largely passed.<sup>49</sup> This change also allowed men to be sent home for rest and new staff members were introduced to take over the new phase. Guy, who had been promoted Acting Captain on 2 November, left in December 1944 and Fairfax-Ross left in March 1945.

In retrospect the search and destroy operations in New Britain led by men including Skinner and Fairfax-Ross were highly successful, whereas "Locust" was not a great success and "Whiting" a disaster. It is ironic that there is considerable detail known about the Locust and Whiting missions and too little about the unit level operations on New Britain<sup>50</sup>.

After leave, Guy was appointed as camp Commandant of the M and Z Special Unit staging camp then located at the Milton Tennis Courts in Brisbane. Guy enjoyed this posting, partly because he had as his second in-charge John Stokie, originally a plantation owner on New Britain and later a member of M unit, and they shared many common interests.

Guy Black was recommended for the Military Cross on 23 July 1945, "for conspicuous gallantry in action and outstanding service within enemy occupied territory". The award was supported by Major Fairfax-Ross, Major E.P. Hill of M Unit, Commander McManus of AIB, and Brigadier V.A. Wills of AIB. The medal was awarded on 21 February 1946. The citation reads in part:

Capt. Black was a most reliable officer whose service was characterised by efficiency and conscientious application to duty. In June-July and August-September 1944 he led patrols from Jacquinot Bay west to the AWUL area and pursued the enemy coastwatching garrisons inland through most difficult mountainous country forcing them to join action, and in a series of isolated engagements in which he also directed the operations of free native irregulars, finally cleared the area in which 68 enemy coastwatchers were killed".

#### Post-war

After being demobilised in late 1945, Guy began the difficult process of re-establishing himself in civilian life. After running a newsagency in Brisbane with his wife Jane, they returned to the battered remnants of Rabaul in June 1946. Guy went back to his old job as Government clerk for a time before resigning and then establishing a freight forwarding agency. In 1947, with another ex-member of M unit, Colin Hooper, he purchased a coconut plantation named 'Marau'. Then, with backing from four others he decided to establish a picture theatre in Rabaul. An ex-Army Quonset hut from Manus Island was purchased and it was erected with wartime dunnage for the walls and projection room, while bamboo from the jungle provided the seats.

47 Powell, op cit, page 250 and AWM 54 423/9/31

48 Long, op cit, page 246

49 AWM 54 423/9/31

50 More extensive material on these missions as well as on Guy Black is available from the main author on request.

Guy opened The Palms Theatre in August 1947. His staff included Bidigop, a native ex-sergeant who had been with the ill-fated John Murphy party on New Britain.<sup>51</sup> Bidigop escaped to Jacquinot Bay, saw the natives who had betrayed the Murphy party, and killed them. For that he was sent to prison, until Guy found him in a prisoner working party on Rabaul wharf and had Bidigop paroled in his care. They were to work together for many years.

Guy subsequently sold the property and eventually the theatre and then took over a trade store. He returned to Australia in 1959 and spent his time as a stock breeder. Guy and Jane retired to the Sunshine Coast in 1979, first settling at Palmwoods and then at Buderim. Guy died on 25 December 1998. He is survived by his wife Jane, son Ian, daughter in law Judy and grandchildren Paul and Rebecca.

Guy was lucky – he spent two periods in hospital during the war, once with rubella in Palestine in late June 1940 and once with malaria in late January 1945 in the Brisbane Military Hospital. He was never wounded in action although the privations on Locust thinned and changed the colour of his hair in a year. Yet during that operation, he did not see one Japanese soldier. In late 1996 Guy, in discussing his wartime exploits, said “My early life was interesting to say the least. It is just that we do not know what is ahead of us”.<sup>52</sup>

From 1995 Guy corresponded with Tas Baillie (wireless operator on the Locust mission) and they discussed the people with whom they had served: Harry Aiken died in 1987, and Jack Fryer in 1980. Tas Baillie died in June 1997. In 1995, Baillie had arranged for a commemorative plaque to the M and Z Units to be unveiled at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. This occurred on 10 November, on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disbanding of ‘Tabragalba’ camp.<sup>53</sup> Today the plaque is among other memorial plaques in the path of remembrance leading to the Memorial.

As a journalist said of Guy some years before his death, “His hair-raising escapades during the war and his New Guinea business flair after the fighting stopped are the things movies are made of”.<sup>54</sup> And yet Guy Black, stockbreeder, businessman, accountant, would say only that he did his job and what was required of him.

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51 See Powell, *op cit*, page 105

52 Guy Black, letter to Tas Baillie, 9 December 1996

53 Vet Affairs, December 1995, page 8

54 Sunday Mail 6 August 1995, page 5

## **'And the Sphinx smiled' Aubrey and Hilda Abbott, Darwin, 1937-46**

Paul A Rosenzweig<sup>1</sup>

A simple key, with a fancy handle bearing the engraved name, date and details of the event, links the opening of a popular wartime hotel in Darwin with a marriage proposal on the Nile two decades earlier - the beginning of a strong partnership which culminated in some controversy when the Top End was believed to be under threat of invasion. This commemorative key was used by Mrs Hilda Abbott in 1940 to officially open the Hotel Darwin, a venue of considerable significance in Darwin. Springing from adversity, the hotel pinned its hopes on the military build-up in the north while, in the face of attack by enemy and cyclone, it showed the defiance and resurgent spirit of the Territorian. Hilda Abbott's husband was Administrator of the Northern Territory throughout World War 2, and both had interesting military backgrounds from World War 1 - he in German New Guinea, the Dardanelles and the Sinai, and she as an officer of the Red Cross accompanying the AIF.

### **Hilda Abbott**

Hilda Gertrude Harnett<sup>2</sup> was born at Eucumbene Station on 9 September 1890, the daughter of John Harnett, a grazier of Monaro, NSW. Educated at Loreto Convent at Kirribilli, she was the first Australian woman to serve overseas with the Australian Red Cross Society in World War 1. Whilst working in the Cairo office, she met an officer of the Australian Light Horse, a veteran of service both on New Ireland and Gallipoli, Captain Aubrey Abbott. After meeting regularly, one day Abbott bought a hamper, hired a barge on the Nile and took Hilda for a picnic. In front of the Sphinx, one of the pivotal icons in the memory of AIF veterans, Aubrey Abbott proposed to Hilda: 'And the Sphinx smiled', he liked to recount.

They married in Westminster Cathedral in London on 24 October 1916, and had two daughters (Hilda Marion and Dorothy Lydiard). Hilda Abbott was an attractive, energetic and confident lady who had travelled widely. By the 1930s, she was noted as a furniture designer and author of articles and books (many under the pseudonym Haliden Hartt). In 1937, *Women's Weekly* described her as "charmingly self-possessed".

### **Aubrey Abbott**

Charles Lydiard Aubrey Abbott<sup>3</sup> was born in North Sydney on 4 May 1886, the son of Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, the Chief Stipendiary Magistrate of Sydney, and Marion ('May'), nee Lydiard. Educated at The King's School at Parramatta, in the years leading up to World War 1 Aubrey Abbott spent his time in Queensland - he ran away from school in 1895 to be a jackeroo near Gunnedah, he was a stockman at Mitchell and Roma, and was a cane-cutter at Pleystowe Mill in Mackay. Finally, he was a Mounted Constable in the NSW Police Force, and was then a Confidential Clerk at Police Headquarters in Brisbane when he enlisted in 1914.

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1 Paul Rosenzweig is a collector and non-professional military historian and biographer. He has contributed to *Sabretache* and other historical journals on a voluntary basis regularly over the last twenty years, and was for several years a member of the Executive Committee of the Historical Society of the Northern Territory.

2 Carment & James (1992); *Women's Weekly*, April 1937.

3 Abbott (1950); Alexander (1950); Carment et al (1990); Mrs M Bednall, pers comm (various, 1991-92) and family papers; *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 April 1968, 2 May 1975.

An early enlistee, he was assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) with the rank of Private. Raised independently of the Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force (as it was known in 1914), the ANMEF departed Australia on 19 August, tasked with seizing the German Pacific Territories - New Ireland, New Britain, Kaiserwilhelmland, Nauru and the Admiralty Islands. In particular, it was to seize the German wireless stations at Rabaul and Nauru. The force landed at Rabaul on 11 September 1914, and by 21 September the German Governor had surrendered and all fighting ceased.

From 23 March 1915, Abbott served with the 12<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment at Gallipoli, as a Corporal at first but subsequently commissioned in the field. Also serving on Gallipoli was his brother with his father's name, Sergeant Thomas Kingsmill Abbott. He too had enlisted early, on 17 August 1914, being allocated the regimental number of 10. He landed at Gallipoli with A Company of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion AIF, receiving a bullet wound to his leg on May 7<sup>th</sup>, and returned to Australia on 19 January the following year<sup>4</sup>.

From Gallipoli, Lieutenant Aubrey Abbott went to the Sinai (where he was wounded-in-action), Palestine and Syria. On a feature wall in his Point Piper and Elizabeth Bay homes in his retirement years was displayed a sword taken from a Turkish General: "I am sorry Sir, but I have to ask you for your sword" Abbott recalled saying as a young Captain after participating in the famous charge against the Turkish stronghold of Beersheba. From 19 September 1918, Abbott served with the Desert Mounted Corps under Lieutenant General Chauvel, which destroyed two Turkish Armies and then rode on through Kuneitra and Sasa to Damascus. In just a fortnight, the Australian light horsemen captured over 30,000 Turks, destroyed the Turkish forward elements and completely shattered all enemy reserves. At the time of the unveiling of the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial in Canberra on 19 April 1968<sup>5</sup>, Abbott's prime memory was of the 12<sup>th</sup> Light Horse out on the Esdraelon Plain just after the breakthrough of September 19<sup>th</sup>:

In clear sunshine, between us and the sea, a whole division of cavalry was advancing at a fast trot, with the divisional commander and his staff leading it, his red pennant of rank snapping in the breeze. As far as we could see there were endless lines of cavalry and the heavy thud of horses moving came across the plain to us on higher ground. It was cavalry in action - the apotheosis of the horse. Something never to be seen again.<sup>6</sup>

### Administrator

Abbott was demobilised in 1918 with the rank of Captain and established 'Echo Hills' near Tamworth, NSW (1919-37). Elected as a Member of the House of Representatives in 1925, he was MP for Gwydir (Country Party) in 1925-29 and 1931-37. He was Minister for Home & Territories in 1928 and for Home Affairs 1928-29 in the Bruce-Page Government, a portfolio which included responsibility for the Northern Territory. He resigned from the House of Representatives on 28 March 1937 to accept the post of Administrator of the Northern Territory.

Abbott was appointed as the Territory's fourth Administrator under Commonwealth control on 29 March 1937<sup>7</sup>, and he additionally held the appointment of Commissioner of Police. He and Hilda arrived in Darwin on 19 April 1937. She was recorded as saying, "They call Darwin 'the

4 <http://www.mindspring.com/~johnaust/Gallipoli.htm>

5 This was a replica of the original which stood on the bank of the Suez Canal near Port Said, unveiled on 23 November 1932 and damaged beyond repair by Egyptian nationalists on 26 December 1956 during the Suez conflict.

6 The Sydney Morning Herald, 18 April 1968.

7 Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No.14 dated 1 April 1937; See Rosenzweig, P A (1993) 'Government House and the Services'. *Sabretache*, XXXIV: 13-22 (January/March 1993).

front door of Australia' these days, and I shall walk in and make myself at home"<sup>8</sup>. The Abbotts were formally welcomed with a ceremonial parade outside Government House by the Darwin Garrison.

The first soldiers forming a permanent Top End garrison (5 officers and 42 men of the Royal Australian Artillery and Royal Australian Engineers) had come to Darwin in September 1932. Under the command of Lt Col T.R. Williams, they left Port Phillip and Port Jackson in HMAS Albatross in August. This group, known as the 'Darwin Detachment' (and administered by the 1<sup>st</sup> Military District<sup>9</sup>), installed themselves at the abandoned Vestey's Meatworks at Bullocky Point, and were responsible for building fortifications, coastal gun positions and quarters on the headland behind Emery and Elliott Points. They were supplemented by another group (3 officers and 29 other ranks) which came to Darwin on 20 September 1933 on the steamer SS Marella, as part of the Lyons Government's imperial strategy to contain the Japanese. The gunners were formed into the 9<sup>th</sup> Heavy Battery, RAA (commanded by Maj C.A. Clowes DSO MC), and the engineer detachment (under Lt R.R. McNicoll) was designated the 7<sup>th</sup> Fortress Company in 1936. Together, they formed the 'Darwin Garrison'.



The Darwin Garrison and public servants of the Northern Territory Administration on parade outside Government House, Darwin in early 1937, awaiting the arrival of the Administrator. The Darwin Cenotaph stood in this location from 1921 until it was relocated to the Civic Centre in 1970 (and then subsequently to its present location in Bicentennial Park in 1992).

From 13 April 1936 to 12 March 1939, the Darwin Garrison was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wilford William Whittle (1892-1964). His Garrison manned two 6-inch Mark VII guns at East Point and two guns at Emery Point, and an anti-aircraft battery at Elliott Point overlooking the approaches to Port Darwin. Three ammunition magazines were built, partially below ground, at the tip of Emery Point near the lighthouse. Some of the buildings in the new Larrakeyah Barracks were brought from Thursday Island after the garrison there was closed

<sup>8</sup> *Women's Weekly*, April 1937.

<sup>9</sup> Cabinet approval-in-principal for the creation of 7th Military District as an independent command (comprising the whole of the Northern Territory) was granted on 13 March 1939, although it was not formally sanctioned until October 1939.

down (one of these was still in use in the 1960s as the headquarters of the Command and Staff Training Unit). Most of the new buildings owed their design to B C G Burnett (1889-1955), Principal Architect to Works Branch, Department of the Interior from his arrival in the Northern Territory in 1937 until his resignation in 1946. The Other Ranks Mess, built in 1939, was steel-framed with louvre panels. The Sergeants Mess built in 1940 (and still in use today) was a two-storey Burnett design of steel frame and concrete. The NT Force headquarters building was one-storey, of reinforced concrete, with a tower which housed the air-raid siren (used for Headquarters 7<sup>th</sup> Military District post-war, until 1981 when it was occupied by the North West Mobile Force; the siren is still present, used today as a cyclone siren). Within Larrakeyah Barracks, a crescent recalls Lieutenant Colonel Whittle's service in Darwin.

At his welcome to the Top End in early 1937, Abbott inspected the troops, accompanied by Whittle and Major 'Bush' Forrest. The Garrison troops wore khaki shorts and puttees, khaki tunics with gilt buttons and collar badges, and khaki pith helmets. Abbott himself was resplendent in white from head to toe – shoes, trousers, jacket and a white pith helmet. He still wore this same rig eight years later when he and Hilda welcomed Australian 8<sup>th</sup> Division POWs returning to Australia via Darwin.

### Government House

There is no doubt the Abbots came to Darwin with an air of self-assumed grandeur about them. He made the public servants of his Administration dress in a uniform of white shorts and stockings, white shirt and tie – no coat, in deference to the extreme tropical climate, but senior officials always had one on hand in case they were required to report to the Administrator. He immediately gained notoriety, and a degree of alienation from the unions, by using his public servants to break a wharf labourers' strike. But he also showed an impressive optimism for the Top End - he cleared the Murrarji stock route to encourage graziers and had the Manager of 'Hobo Downs' rename the station as 'Utopia' to make it seem less melancholic. He pressed for the formation of a Legislative Council, but did not see its introduction (in 1947, although the Federal Government retained the power of veto).

Hilda Abbott busied herself with supporting engagements and official duties, and was responsible for a significant refurbishing of Government House, particularly in the aftermath of the 1937 cyclone and at the end of World War 2. She revived the Darwin Branch of the Red Cross Society, and in 1946 'Hilda Abbott Cottage' was named in recognition of her tireless commitment. She too attracted criticism by her insistence that lady guests to the House be 'properly' attired, including stockings and gloves - seen by the locals as totally inappropriate in the oppressive heat and humidity of Darwin (where the only cooling was provided by punkahs on the verandahs operated by staff).

Nevertheless, Lieutenant Owen Griffiths RAN of HMAS Platypus noted that from Government House a "decorous and genteel atmosphere" permeated the community<sup>10</sup>. Wine was served with meals – previously unheard of in a town where nothing but beer was drunk, and generally in great quantity. Mrs Abbott in particular saw it as her duty to develop Government House into an oasis of refinement and civilisation in the (colonial) desert, a feature of similar establishments throughout the Commonwealth and the British Empire<sup>11</sup>.

The Abbots were at Government House on the morning of 19 February 1942, and Aubrey Abbott suffered a perforated ear-drum when his bomb-shelter received an almost direct hit during the first Japanese raid on Darwin. As everyone then feared a Japanese invasion, he sent

10 Griffiths, O (nd) *Darwin Drama*. Bloxham & Chambers, Sydney, p.36.

11 See Coulthard-Clark, C D (1988) *Gables, Ghosts and Governors-General*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

his wife and staff to Alice Springs for their safety; he remained in Darwin supervising the emergency response until 2 March. He then relocated to Alice Springs from where he managed the Administration until after the war. Disaffected members of the local population seized the opportunity of the Royal Commission, and the ability to present evidence in secret without cross-examination, to lay unfounded allegations against the Abbotts. They were accused of 'abandoning' Darwin, ignoring the cries of a maid 'trapped' in the rubble, and burning holes in the National Flag to simulate Japanese bullet holes - all of which have proven to be baseless and purely vexatious.

He managed the administration of the Territory from Alice Springs throughout the war and, at the end of his term, the Abbotts left Darwin by aircraft on 26 May 1946. The Government Secretary, Mr Leslie Giles acted as Administrator from 27 May until the formal expiration of Abbott's term on 30 June. After the war, the Abbotts settled on 'Murrulla' at Wingen, NSW. He died at Darling Point on 30 April 1975, and received a State funeral at St Mark's Anglican Church, Darling Point. Hilda Abbott continued her travelling and writing, and died in Bowral, NSW on 26 May 1984.



The Honourable Aubrey Abbott in tropical rig, escorted by Lieutenant Colonel Whittle, inspects a guard mounted in his honour by the Darwin Garrison, 1937.

### Honours and memorials

Aubrey Abbott was awarded the 1914–15 Star; the British War Medal 1914–20 and the Victory Medal. Various sources have suggested that he was mentioned-in-despatches, but there is no record of this. Photographs of his service ribbons provided by the family do not show the bronze oak leaves device. Neither can he be seen wearing it on the stylish white tunic of the uniform he designed for himself as Administrator, very much in the colonial viceroy style complete with bullion cord epaulettes and bullion on velvet gorget patches worn on the stand-up collars. Abbott was self-confident and a little flamboyant, and it is not conceivable that he would not have worn the oak leaves device had he indeed been mentioned-in-despatches. In 1935 he was awarded the King George V Jubilee Medal, and he received the King George VI Coronation Medal in 1937.



A strong advocate for development of the Northern Territory, Aubrey Abbott is recalled today in Darwin by Abbott Crescent. Within the Administrator's Office, his name is recorded on a large timber Honour Board in the reception foyer, while his photo is included in a photographic gallery of all previous Administrators in the entrance to the Administrator's Office. A portrait of Abbott by Denes De Holesch (1910-1983), commissioned by Abbott in 1938, hangs on the Western Verandah of Government House, while a modern portrait hangs in the gallery of Parliament House. Also held by Government House is Abbott's 'Address Book', which was recovered from the rubble of his office in 1942 some months after the first bombing raids, a record of visitors from 1937 to 1946. The unique Administrator's uniform designed by Abbott is held by the NT Museum, and the National Flag riddled by Japanese bullets on 19 February 1942 is held by the Australian War Memorial.

Holesch was also commissioned to produce a portrait of Hilda Abbott, and in 1986 the two paintings returned to Government House, Darwin, presented by the Abbotts' daughter Marion. At her request, the Administrator then donated the portrait of Hilda Abbott to the NT Division of the Red Cross Society – recognising both her service overseas with the Red Cross Society during First World War, and as President of this Division from 1937 to 1946.

## Hotel Darwin

In his record of life in Darwin, Lieutenant Owen Griffiths RAN recorded that "Government House and the new Hotel Darwin were the centres of social life"<sup>12</sup>. The well-known Hotel Darwin which stood on the corner of the Esplanade and Herbert Street was a fine example of the pre-war style of tropical architecture. The complex had its earliest origins in the Commercial Hotel built in 1870 on the corner of Mitchell and Herbert Streets, which in 1883 was enlarged and renamed The Palmerston Club Hotel. Construction of the Hotel Darwin, on the corner of Herbert Street and the Esplanade, was commenced in 1938. The building was designed by B C G Burnett, who had designed the buildings of Larrakeyah Barracks. The designs of these and other Top End buildings reflect Burnett's earlier experiences in Southeast Asia, with buildings well suited for the tropics and well oriented to maximise the effects of the breezes sweeping in from the harbour.

When finished, the Hotel Darwin was a two-storey building of rendered brick and concrete, with distinctive blue Marseilles roof tiles. It boasted the most modern of features and services, well beyond anything ever before seen in Darwin. The colour scheme throughout was turquoise and green, and the main lounge had a dance-floor of jarrah and tallow. The Chairman of Directors noted the significance of Darwin as the venue for this grand new venture:

Darwin may be looked upon as the front door to Australia, and with the advent of the Air Services and rapid militarization of the town, the importance of Darwin demanded modern accommodation.<sup>13</sup>

The enormity of the defence build-up and its impact on the local infrastructure cannot be understated. In the earliest days of the Darwin Garrison, the non-Aboriginal population of Darwin totalled just 1,572. It had risen to 3,653 by June 1939, excluding military personnel, although much of this increase was attributable to civilian contractors engaged for the military building programme. By December 1942, there were 32,000 Australian troops and 5,000 US soldiers in the Northern Territory.

With war underway in Europe, the Hotel Darwin was officially opened on 9 July 1940 by the wife of the Administrator, Mrs Hilda Abbott, who turned the lock with a suitably inscribed

<sup>12</sup> Griffiths (nd) p.34.

<sup>13</sup> *The Northern Standard*, 9 July 1940: 'New Darwin Hotel Supplement'.

commemorative key – a standard key with a fancy brass plate brazed on at the head. One sarcastic wit (who noted that his invitation to the opening ceremony had obviously ‘gone astray in the post’) wrote to the local paper:

I understand a golden key was used. Of course, a golden key will open any door in this world, but how eminently fitting to use one as a symbol when opening an hotel where board runs from six guineas.<sup>14</sup>

After the fall of France, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery (armed with outdated 3-inch 20 cwt anti-aircraft guns) was sent to Darwin as an immediate reinforcement of the garrison. Leaving Brisbane on the SS Zealandia and SS Orungal on 1 July 1940, it arrived at Port Darwin the day after the Hotel Darwin’s ceremonial opening. Battery Headquarters was established at Larrakeyah Barracks, 3 Section was at Parap and 2 Section was at the Darwin Oval across the road from the Hotel Darwin. In 1941, the battery also established the Quarantine anti-aircraft site, to defend the South West section of Darwin Harbour. The guns were soon replaced with 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns and, in December 1940, the Militia 14<sup>th</sup> Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery came to Darwin, to free up the 2 HAA gunners for duty in the Middle East. Many letters were written by soldiers in Darwin who spoke of gun drills and unit sports held on that oval, with the impressive Hotel Darwin as a backdrop.

A plaque on the Darwin Oval site records that four guns of 14 HAA were the first to engage the incoming Japanese aircraft on 19 February 1942, and that other guns then engaged the aircraft continuously during this and subsequent attacks. Despite the attention these guns might have attracted, the Hotel Darwin was untouched by Japanese bombs. It was looters however, that did the damage.

After the raids, there was a breakdown of military control which led to an outbreak of ransacking and systematic theft from vacated shops and houses. One author spoke of, “a period of chaos leading to an attempted dictatorship by the military policemen whose only authority was a uniform and an armband”<sup>15</sup>. Furniture and furnishings, beds and linen, stock and hotel equipment were all pilfered. Some tried to justify the ‘acquisition’ of goods and foodstuffs which might otherwise have spoiled, or the collection of goods which would only have fallen to the Japanese. In the majority of cases however, as noted by Abbott, it was simple theft of goods, to be sold for personal gain<sup>16</sup>. Abbott testified to the Royal Commission that the hotels were closed and a guard had been placed on them by the Provost Officer, but the hotels themselves were the first to be looted. He soon became aware that members of the Provost Corps were themselves involved in the looting - several were later arrested and prosecuted. Abbott later wrote: “If there was a weak link it was the Provost Corps, both in numbers and calibre”<sup>17</sup>. Commander Laurance Tozer RAN, Commanding Officer HMAS Melville (Naval Headquarters) was responsible for establishing a patrol programme around the town area and the docks - concerned as much about a Japanese landing as he was of sabotage and looting within the largely deserted town. He gave his Petty Officers a very clear mission for the night of 19/20 February: “The Navy will patrol the town tonight to prevent any looting or sabotage”<sup>18</sup>. Abbott later reported on some success achieved by Tozer:

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14 *The Northern Standard*, 12 July 1940.

15 Lockwood (1972) pp.168-169.

16 Lowe (1942) p.11; Royal Commission evidence by the Honourable C L A Abbott, 25 March 1942 (AA ACT, Series A816/1, item 37/301/293).

17 The Honourable C L A Abbott, letter to the Minister for the Interior dated 11 April 1942; *In* Lowe (1942) p.42.

18 Bracht, W H (nd) ‘Memoirs in Peace and War. Book 1. The battle for existence’. Australian War Memorial (AWM78, 400/2, 490290, MSS1576), pp.169-170.



The Honourable Aubrey Abbott, Administrator of the Northern Territory (left) in the colonial viceroys uniform he designed for himself, at Government House, Darwin towards the end of 1941 at the investiture of Brigadier E F Lind (Commander 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade) as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

An instance of the prevalence of looting is that when the Royal Commission appointed to investigate the air raid was taking evidence in Darwin from 5 to 10 March, soldiers, at that very time, were taking refrigerators, wireless sets, sewing machines and clothing in Army lorries to the wharf and selling them to sailors on the motor vessel *Yochow* for cigarettes and tobacco. Captain L E Tozer, RAN, saw what was going on, and the police at Brisbane, which was the vessel's destination, were informed. When the ship arrived she was boarded by the police, who were able to prevent most of the stolen property from being thrown into the Brisbane River by the crew when they found the ship was to be searched. Twenty members of the crew were convicted.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Abbott (1950) p.94.

Laurance Tozer was one of a select few decorated for his performance in Darwin at the time of the raids: "For courage and devotion to duty whilst serving in HMAS Melville during an air raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942"<sup>20</sup>. He was Mentioned in Despatches as much for bravery as for his powers of leadership, particularly in connection with implementing the emergency organisation of the port and preventing the total destruction by fire of the Adelaide Steamship Company freighter SS Barossa. Naval Headquarters (Base Organisation Darwin) had originally been established in Darwin in 1935, at 56 Mitchell Street, about 1 kilometre from the wharves, and was commissioned as HMAS Melville on 1 August 1940. The Navy had a significant association with the Hotel Darwin – it was responsible for carrying out repairs, and then for some time the hotel was used as the Naval Headquarters radio facility and quarters.

After the war, the southeast wing facing Herbert Street was the only portion of the original building still standing. An accommodation wing was built on the Herbert Street side in 1946, and the 'Hot & Cold Bar' was built on the site of the old Palmerston Club Hotel on the corner of Mitchell and Herbert Streets. This hotel dated back to 1883, an expanded version of the original Commercial Hotel established on that site in 1870 during the earliest days of the township of Palmerston as it was then known. From 1921, the Palmerston Club and Terminus Hotels (which had both been operating at a loss under government control since 1915) had been managed by J.J. Parer, the descendant of an old Spanish settler. He was a Darwin entrepreneur recorded as being particularly militant in his support of First World War, and had founded the Overseas Club in February 1917 while his son Leslie was serving with distinction in France. Leslie James Parer had actually been the first from the Northern Territory to enlist with the AIF, travelling interstate to join the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Field Artillery Brigade as a Gunner on 17 August 1914. He returned to Australia on 13 November 1918, a recipient of the Military Medal for bravery in the field<sup>21</sup>, and Parer Drive in Casuarina recalls his father's various contributions to Darwin. Parer's Palmerston Club Hotel had burnt to the ground a month after the first Japanese raid in 1942, and the site lay vacant until the 'Hot & Cold Bar' was built in 1946.

In 1947, shops were built between the Hotel and the Hot & Cold Bar. In 1968, the Esplanade accommodation wing was added, and a modern northwest wing was built in 1972, retaining the original open concept. The hotel was extensively damaged by Cyclone Tracy in 1974: the roof was completely blown away and the interior ruined. The shops facing Herbert Street were destroyed and were not rebuilt (this site later became a car park). There was extensive restoration of the whole structure to its original character in 1975, and the hotel again opened its doors for business in June 1976.

## Conclusion

In many ways, the Hotel Darwin epitomised the Territory and people like Aubrey and Hilda Abbott. It was defiant, emerging with the hope of resurgence following the adversity of the depression - at the start of what proved to be an economic boom period when the defence presence in Darwin was increasing dramatically. It again showed its defiance by standing unscathed following the Japanese raids, and its bar was well patronised by soldiers throughout the war, based in the Top End or on their way overseas. It entered the local folklore as the soldier's 'last stop' before deployment. And then once again, like so many Territorians did, it shrugged off the debris of Cyclone Tracy and re-emerged as one of the focal points of the modern rebuilt Darwin, its pre-war charm and military heritage earning it an undying respect from the local population.

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<sup>20</sup> *Third Supplement to The London Gazette*, 1 September 1942, p.3818.

<sup>21</sup> *London Gazette*, 14 May 1919, page 6060; *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 15 September 1919, page 1367.

A significant Darwin focal point, not least because of its naval and military connection, the Hotel Darwin has been the venue for many reunion gatherings, especially during the War Service Memorial Year of 1992. Its tropical atmosphere, open spaces and fans, wicker and palms, effectively captured the spirit of 'old' Darwin. Although a civil facility, its links with the military and its prime position opposite Darwin Oval (later established as Bicentennial Park, with the cenotaph relocated) also saw it become the perfect 'staging point' following Anzac Day and other commemorative services before moving further into town to the RSL.

Again, like many who came to the Territory, after surviving enemy action and cyclone it was politics which finally brought the Hotel Darwin's chapter to a close. Reports (said by some to be spurious) of concrete cancer in the structure and escalating values of inner-city land during the 1980s and 1990s put pressures on the site and, despite injunctions by the National Trust (NT), the Hotel Darwin was demolished by the Government after hours on Friday 10 September 1999, with much public outcry<sup>22</sup>. Part of the Top End, and its military heritage in defence of Australia, was lost that night.

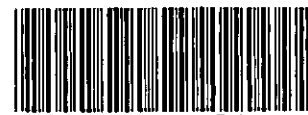
A reminder of the Hotel Darwin, which itself was a key aspect of Darwin 'BB' ('Before the Bombing') and a symbol of all things Territorian, Hilda Abbott's ornate key was presented by the author to the Northern Territory Museum in 2002.

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22 See <http://www.ntu.edu.au/faculties/technology/schbe/hoteldarwin.html>, and also Stinson, K (2002) 'Historic sites and Developmentalism: A Study of the Country Liberal Party's Policy on the Development of Darwin'. *Journal of Northern Territory History*, 13: 15-23.



## LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS STEPHEN FREEMAN 15th Battalion (Queensland & Tasmania) AIF

John Meyers<sup>1</sup>



Douglas Stephen Freeman, the fourth son of William Freeman and his wife Lucy Rose, of "Clodagh," Beresford Road, Rose Bay, Sydney, was born at New Canterbury Rd, Marrickville, Sydney, on the 18 March 1876. He was a cousin (mother's side) to Colonel H.N. Maclaurin, commander of the 1st Brigade AIF killed in action at Gallipoli on 27 April 1915. Freeman was educated at Newington College, Sydney and Tamworth (NSW) Grammar School. Afterwards he qualified as a mining engineer and mining surveyor, being a prizeman of the School of Mines, Coolgardie, West Aust. He was a certificated mine manager for NSW and Qld. He lived a temperate and spartan life.

In 1905, Freeman was practising as an assayer and conducting a cyanide plant near Coolgardie, which he himself specially designed and equipped. An incident occurred which clearly showed the character of the man. Mr Weston, manager of a nearby mine, fell into a vat of boiling liquid and was in danger of losing his legs unless human skin from a healthy person could be procured and grafted. Freeman offered seventy-two square inches from his own thighs and the skin was removed from him and grafted. As a result of this operation he spent a month recovering. Mr Weston recovered after a considerable period and had a most successful career. In 1911, Freeman, as manager, was entrusted with the task of opening the Mount Oxide Copper Mine in

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<sup>1</sup> ANZAC research is always looking for additional information and photos of any of the 507 Australian and New Zealand officers who died as a result of service on Gallipoli. If you can assist please contact John Meyers, PO Box 743, Maryborough Q 4650 or email: johnmeyers@daleandmeyers.com.au Website [www.anzacs.org](http://www.anzacs.org)

tropical Queensland, midway between Cloncurry and the Gulf of Carpentaria. He obtained twelve miners, good handy men, ten horses, conveyances, tools, stores, etc., and trekked from a railway terminus a distance of 275 kms across country. Unfortunately, the rainy season had commenced and the rivers to be crossed were in raging flood, with dangerous snags, many hidden in the discoloured waters. To ensure a reasonably safe crossing for the men and horses, Freeman swam the rivers to locate points of danger, current courses, etc., the men under direction meanwhile building rafts of pine stems. After swimming back, he guided the loaded rafts safely across the streams, losing only one horse in his dangerous undertaking. His last mining appointment was that of manager of the Queensland Copper Company, Mount Perry, west of Bundaberg in Queensland. Freeman was a fearless and expert horseman with an extraordinary power and capacity for training even the most unruly horses. He had been amateur champion pedestrian in the 100 yards to 880 yards competition at the West Aust Goldfields, 1904-05.

Freeman had always been interested in military affairs and he commenced his military career when he was mine manager at Cootamundra, NSW, by accepting a commission as Lieutenant in the 3rd NSW Light Horse. Later he transferred to a Qld unit. When the First World War broke out he volunteered for the AIF and received a commission as 2nd Lt in C Coy of the 15th Battalion AIF. He was a firm disciplinarian but considerate to and popular with his men. He proceeded to Egypt with his battalion, going on with it to the Dardanelles. Freeman was killed in action at Quinn's Post, Gallipoli, on Monday 3 May 1915, after putting out of action many of the enemy, bravely taking many risks and inspiring confidence in the men of his command. He was buried at the rear of Quinn's Post, with Lt Binnie of the 13th Bn and six other Australians.

The following extract from a letter written by a brother officer (it is thought that this letter was written by Lt L.N. Collin 15th Bn who was killed in action six days later) to Freeman's father describes the manner in which Freeman lost his life:

We went up to the trenches immediately we landed and for six days and nights had no rest whatever. The Turks were entrenched immediately in front of us and we had beaten them off every time. Your son was on my right with his platoon and was all the time up and down the trench encouraging his men. On the morning of 3rd May, after a very quiet day on the 2nd, they commenced the attack at dawn with a terrific fusillade of bombs. Several of our men went down and though we were having a busy time, they seemed to be attacking with greater vigour to our right. Freeman did splendid work all through the attack and his bravery was unquestionable, almost amounting to recklessness. From his trench he accounted for fully five of the enemy for every man he lost. He came into my portion of the trench to warn us that the enemy were coming up on our left over ground we couldn't see and in his eagerness caught up one of the men's rifles so that they could more readily locate the position. We beat the attack off, but in the midst of it he was shot from another direction. He died almost immediately and his last words as we carried him out were, 'Keep it going, lads. We'll beat them all right.'

One of his men wrote:

That was one of the saddest days we had in our Company when Freeman was killed, but he died one of the bravest officers that the 15th Battalion had. He was killed by a sniper whilst himself sniping and he killed thirteen and wounded five before a fatal shot got him right through the brain. He was shot by an unseen rifle and as he fell the man on each side of him was shot dead as they tried to carry him out of the trench, so we had to leave our three comrades where they were until sunset, when the stretcher-bearers could carry them out and enable our boys to bury them. But the late Lieut was too brave, for he put down his revolver and got two rifles and as the man on each side of him loaded them he emptied them until he got excited and put his head and shoulders above the sandbags and that gave the enemy a nice sky-line shot and you can guess a Turkish sniper never makes a miss. But he got it so sudden that he only said half a dozen words. He mentioned two names that I could not hear, but what I heard was 'Bravo, Queensland!' I understand he gave a message to the man on his right, but he was

shot while trying to carry the Lieutenant. Sad to say, the day I left the field the roll was called and one NCO and five men answered out of 145 men of old C Company.

Mural tablets have been erected and dedicated to Freeman's memory at Newington College, Stanmore, Sydney and at St. Michael's Church of England, Vacluse, Rose Bay, Sydney, NSW.

Detailed below is an extract from the diary carried by Freeman until the day of his death on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1915:

December 18- 1914

LET IT NOT BE,  
IF IT SHOULD NOT BE,  
LET IT NOT BE,  
IF IT CANNOT BE,  
LET IT NOT BE,  
IF IT SHOULD NOT BE,  
BUT IF IT IS,  
THEN- LET IT BE-

This diary will become my words and thoughts over the following days, weeks and months, 'let it not be' a reflection on myself for its failings to report accurately (sic) what may happen indeed, nor let me be held atone for the flowerous words used to enhance an event, for creative prose dose an adventure make, I will say that I wish only for the pencil to act as my conscience and the paper as the medium to expose the events as I see them. Daniel told me a story once that depicts the purpose of all mortal men. He said "Matthew was an honest man who knew he had to keep his family in food and clothing. His two sons worked the Blackwelt mine shaft day in day out with him. Never did they take time off and never did they rest, but work and toil from before sunrise to after sunset. – For years they dug in awful conditions and never once did they complain and never once did they back down because things got difficult. The wealthy mine manager exploited his workers – and he increased his wealth by cutting costs and importing cheap equipment. One day faulty – sweaty explosives buried Matthew and his sons and only his wife wife (sic) and daughter mourned their loss. The manager continued to work his wealth – as time progressed he became an alcoholic, loosing (sic) his only son to a local girl (Matthews only surviving daughter.) They married and took over the running of the mines. Conditions were improved and a monument erected in honour of the mine disaster. Matthew and his sons were remembered and revered whilst the manager from old faded away – dying alone from drink. His only testmoney (sic) was his selfish ways and neglectful ambitions – the moral was honest hard work will always be honoured and mortalised whilst selfishness is soon passed over –

Today is hot again, and I feel that the powers who control the war wagon are on tenuous threads. The unit is under much apprehension, as only days away we embark for the open sea, and a war described by most as the adventure of a life time. I am not so sure, but as Cyril says, what will be will be. (This would probably be Capt Cyril Corser, 15Bn)

It's confirmed, we embark on Tuesday AM – early, much to prepare – I will visit today, and post the letter to Heather.

Much has happened. We have been at sea for two days now, and I still have not gotten my sea dog legs, but the smell of salt is very refreshing, and inspires one to eat and exercise, despite the small size of the ship there is a surprising distance one can walk around the decks. Our vessel is the 'Ceramic' and the resonance from the engine room can be mesmurising (sic). Most of my time has been spent reading and resting, but the lead up to Christmas Day surprisingly is overshadowed. The decks are home to Lt.Col Popes 16<sup>th</sup> Btn. Friendly rivalry has sparked numerous competitions and games, many bringing the 15<sup>th</sup> glory. My opinion is the journey, in such conditions will be a long one, and one that must be organized to alleviate boredom in the ranks.

Merry Christmas to all – mass was held this morning by Chaplain Power – followed by a remarkable game of rugby, utilising the entire fore deck – the 16<sup>th</sup> players were far superior despite alterior (sic) tactics employed by the 15<sup>th</sup>. The winning team gained position in line for Christmas dinner. Our lads



...took the loss well. I am writing by gas light in my cabin, shared by Collins, Corser and our HQM (Hon QM) Craig. The night sea is very much nature at peace, and ironical that we cut our way through the silence destined for war.

Fine news – Luther the M.O has advised us to prepare for vaccinations – the ranks will be informed tonight at parade and I will assist C'Coy and D'Coy to channel through as best as can be. The days are hot, and other ships in our convoy seem to be lost in a maze of humidity.

Sea is flat – very hot – still ill.

Jan 10 – Some time has passed since I last wrote – like so many of the men on board –

reactions to the vaccine and the infernal heat have contributed to wide spread reactions, and many, like myself have been simply ill.

Back on track – awoken by a volly (sic) of shots, discovered the 16<sup>th</sup> in platoons were shooting floating targets off the stern – this will no doubt become another competitive source of entertainment between the battalions – lunch was boiled fish today and perhaps the most satisfying meal I have stomached in over a week. Once again the newspaper, titled 'Honk' has made its way into the green room – some lads began putting out a publication, listing sporting results and events coming up. Sometimes this publication throws jest at the individuals who make this journey possible – but at least it is all in good humour..

The sea is like a millpond (sic) again, and the heat becoming our enemy. Below decks it is stifling whilst on deck shade is at a premium. Each company has been tasked with an entertainment rotation. This will assist in alleviating (sic) the sheer monotony of the days.

Hot again, and if not for the antisipation (sic) of a port, then we may well develop frustrations. Morale is good, yet tenious (sic). I found that drill, first aid lessons, weapon cleaning are occupying the lads, but sport and competition are most popular.

Heat on the millpond  
Foam on the bow  
Christmas is past us  
War awaits us now

At church the lads sing  
The gospil (sic) out loud  
We sail to our destin (sic)  
Australians all proud

Our vetrins (sic) take rest  
Remember the African war  
Here we all are  
To even the score

The simple things in life often become neglected. We take so much for granted, yet time and time again I am reminded of such simple luxuries, to shower or bathe in fresh water, not salt, would I'm sure revitalize the spirit, fresh fruit and cold beer, soft music by gentle women, all are pleasures missed.

Illness on board has begun to take hold of some of the rank. The heat does nothing to abate the problems. We are a day out from port. William (probably Hon Lt Frederick William Craig) claims he has first drinks, but I feel we are in for more than we bargained for with the youth amongst us, new world, new people and adventure. I have discussed this with Corser, but decision rests with top.

The entry into a new world has been overshadowed by our ships first death. A 16 Btn lad died during the night from pneumonia. Lt.Col Hope (Pope) has informed the ranks and a somber (sic) feel is masking the new day, Port Aden.

Accommodation is spartan to say the least, but a real bath was reward enough. Fresh fruit is delightful, and the locals are very friendly. Decision made – all rotations not on ship will be restricted

to the camp area during night hours. Despite this, I addressed two of my company for returning late. One can't be blamed.



Heather

Ship out. Repairs and provisions accounted for, full check of ship's company. One Cpl in B Coy missing, he was located smuggling fruit on board. About one week till we reach the famous canal.

Much has happened in the past few days. I have not been at liberty to write nor have I had the inclination. We have had two tragic deaths, both 15<sup>th</sup> Bn lads. They were buried at sea. Sunstroke took young Agutter (DOI 27 January 1915) putting further emphasis on water intake and exposure. Water is rationed and has been the bane of contention – we reached Suez on the 28, and took defensive actions due to an incident with some Aust Engineers being attacked whilst assisting with canal defences. The reaching of Port Said caused delight and frustrations, as only small groups were permitted ashore. Again we stocked, and I had task to obtain a bottle of whiskey (sic) as a gift for a young Lieut who missed his birthday due to illness. The British Navy shows it's purpose, as the warships lie silently at rest, the big deck guns formidable against the setting sun.

Left Said and arrived Alexandria Harbour.

Anxious to disembark. Final checks of the ship and all equipment is slow to be done. The decks are filled with kit and most of the time has been used locating items or counting and recounting supplies. We should be ready tomorrow – ready to entrain for camp – Heliopolis.

Today was a long exhausting day – the Btn disembarked and boarded a train – supplies followed – by night we reached a place called Zeitoun. We walked/marched some 2½ miles to camp – where the troops were then dispersed (sic) and camped –

Parade 6 AM – military life returns. The sands here are amazing – multicoloured undulating plains. The companies have been reformed. Corser is now 2 IC of C Coy, which in turn has been enlarged. Some promotions took place with NCO's being substantive. This duty I took, and despite some confusion, most took well to the change.

Drill begins – today kit inspection – I long to walk the sands, and envelope (sic) this magical ancient land, but I am reminded we are here to fight a war –

Bayonet practice, basic assault and section drill.

Section drill and gun crew work – preparing to take our first field exercise.

Two weeks of exercises – trench assaults and route marches has developed a feeling of frustration – most of the troops want time out to visit the city, despite the attention the locals bring us. A young

boy I call Thomas, brings fresh oranges to me on a daily basis, a small luxury. I feel some rumbling of discontent.

Preparation for Divisional parade took priority today – and again drill formed the majority of the time. I wrote home again, and await some message from Heather. My legs are giving me grief again. I blame the dry climate.

At sea again – my neglect with records is not so much lack of desire but lack of events. The most significant event was the riot in Cairo reputedly started over the unfortunate stabbing of a NZ soldier. The establishment was burned down and great damage inflicted. This along with the burning off of supplies and rubbish prior to departure must have left a feeling of resentment towards the Australians and New Zealanders. We received news of embarkment (sic) in April 1st and since then massed preparation took part. My illness caused by water has played havoc with my composure. Some of my peers sympathise but I feel frustrated. We are now battle ready and destined for the sea inlet of Dardanells (sic) where word has it we will be following the shore advanced parties onto the coast, steep cliff face to the summit where we engage the Turkish farmers. Our ship called 'Seeangbe' is now sitting at anchor. Half the battalion on sister ship 'Australind' is ahead some way. The entry into Dardanells took place under massive fire power from the Navy gunships. Today we sit, waiting, watching what must be a surreal (sic) event on the shores. Numerous medical boats carry wounded from the shore – we are at war, pray it be short.

Nothing like I would ever expect. My chances to write have been limited by our landing and establishing. The landing was around midday under heavy shelling. We moved to the pontoons and made shore. We were to provide every man with additional ammunition, then moved up to HQ at a point named Courtney's Post. The beach is pebble and dry rock covered in thick bracken hazards. The noise of gunfire is consistantly (sic) terrifying. Corser took the men up again. I moved 11 Ptn and awaited orders. Three men returned to the beach, our first casualties. The provado (should be bravado) or perhaps impetuness (sic) shown by the lads is encouraging. Dickson was killed and under a confused order I lost a number of men. We advanced towards the taken trench, but then received the order to retire. Being frustrated with the counter command I made the strange decision to walk about the younger men, urging them to retire. Razorback is just a formidable ridge, only yards wide with drops to both sides.

Little time to write. I miss Heather. The death and carnage is much more than I ever expected – our saps are hindered by the rocky ground and despite casualties from the Turks, we continue to work. Some areas are to (sic) shallow to provide cover, and I am still impressed with the general arrogance and humour of my lads. Whilst chatting to Wilson, a young Private took view over the pit and was shot instantly by a Turkish sniper. Walsh (Capt J.F. Walsh, KIA 28 April 1915 at Courtney's Post) was killed some days ago and tonight we have returned to the beach, a chance to write.

We have been ordered to stay back – being C Coy – the rest is to advance to the gully between Deadman's Ridge where the Turks have a view over our lines. This attack is hoped to deprive them of any vantage. I long for a bath and a proper meal. New orders –

Our losses are mounting, and at times I feel frustration with apathy of some of the lads. Get the job done, let's finish this fight and go home. Willis (Capt W.O. Willis, Adjutant, KIA 3 May 1915 at Pope's Hill) was killed – letters to write. Responsible for so much, and just want to get into it. The Turkish snipers causing havoc. I urge the boys to take him out – it's frustrating – Frank (Capt F Moran MID, wounded 7 August 1915 and DOW at sea on 20 August 1915) insists we maintain a vigil whilst I want to organise a small party to go forward and silence the sniper. I feel very tired, but proud of my lads. I wonder how the inevitable offensive will pan out. The night is cold and I would dearly love a bath and a brandy..

Both Capt Willis and Freeman were officially listed as killed in action on Monday 3 May 1915. Freeman mentions in his diary the death of Willis. It appears that they were both killed during daylight hours. The last entry in this diary states "the night is cold." One would assume they were killed on different days. The 15th Bn history by Chataway incorrectly states that Freeman was killed on 30 April 1915.



## Major Sei Hashida's Visit

Bill Billett

Major Sei Hashida, an army officer serving on the Imperial Japanese General Staff, visited Australia in 1941 on a two-month visa issued by the British Consul at Tokyo. This was only a few months after Germany, Italy, and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact in September 1940. Australian authorities were not advised in advance of his arrival, or the purpose of his visit. Protocol in peacetime required that if a military officer was to visit a country, approval was required in advance, this was more important when the country to be visited was at war. Hashida had left Japan on 29 December 1940 and arrived at Brisbane in the Canberra Maru on 13 January 1941. When asked for his credentials, he was unable to produce them and stated that he was a sick man and the purpose of his trip was for health reasons. Hashida was advised to remain on the ship. When told this, Hashida became unpleasant and, mixing with other Japanese, eventually evaded guards and left the ship.

On the following day, the Japanese Consul General at Sydney advised that Hashida had come to Australia to investigate wool, metal and other industries and their relation to Japanese military requirements.<sup>1</sup> On 15 January Hashida arrived in Sydney and stayed at the Hotel Australia and began shopping for maps and photographs. Military authorities at Sydney were instructed that Hashida was not to be registered as an alien, but kept under close surveillance and any unusual conduct reported immediately.

Hashida visited the Minister for the Army, the Hon. P.C. Spender on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Following this visit, the Japanese Consul General advised the Minister of the purpose of Hashida's visit, and 'requested assistance to allow him to visit the B.H.P. Steel Works at Newcastle, The Small Arms Factory, Lithgow, Air Force and Military Schools and Camps, and the Duntroon Military College'.<sup>2</sup> The Minister refused to grant this request because the Commonwealth was at war. Military Commands were alerted and instructed that Hashida was only to be granted facilities normally available to the public and Japanese consular officials.

During his time at Sydney, Hashida visited many places along the coast and noted the aerodromes marking details in Japanese characters on his maps. Not all of Hashida's trips were reported by those conducting the close surveillance, as you will read later. On 24 January Hashida flew to Canberra where he was barred from visiting the Royal Military College. He returned to Sydney by car the next day via various aerodromes and other sites, marking them on maps he had bought along the way. During the evenings Hashida moved about freely visiting many Japanese nationals. He also had dinner one evening with two Australian women and two Japanese men.

On 8 February Hashida, accompanied by the Japanese vice-consul, boarded a Pioneer bus and headed for Melbourne along the coast road, arriving on 11 February 1941. On arrival at Melbourne Hashida again came under close surveillance and was given a map on which a line was marked some 30-50 miles (48-80 kilometres) inland from the coast, and politely told that he was not permitted south of the line and the coast. He was also advised that he should not 'evinced any interest in Naval, Military or Air Force formations or sites, or in factories engaged in war production, and requested not to take photographs of certain subjects'.<sup>3</sup> Later it will be seen that

1 NAA Vic. 729/6, item 29/401/434 dated 11 Mar 1941. A secret letter from the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence to the Far East Combined Bureau.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

he paid little regard for this advice. In Victoria, Hashida spent most of his time visiting similar sites to those he had at Sydney. He also visited many Japanese nationals and had lunch with a military intelligence officer from Army Headquarters at Menzies Hotel. That is how it appeared to Military Intelligence.

On 22 February Hashida and the Vice Consul flew to Adelaide where he was again given a small map indicating areas he should avoid. This map was more restrictive than the one for Victoria because of the irregular coastline. Hashida complained bitterly and the Japanese Consul General protested to the Government. As a result of this, it was arranged that the same restrictions would not apply on his visit to Western Australia where he arrived on 28 February. Little is reported by the intelligence authorities of his time at Perth. On 8 March Hashida flew to Broome stayed there until the 12<sup>th</sup> and then flew on to Darwin. A busy few days as Hashida did obtain details of Port Hedland, and Wyndham as well as of Broome. At Broome and Darwin he visited the Japanese nationals resident in those areas. The above information reflects the military intelligence and staff view of Hashida's visit.

Hashida stayed at Darwin from 12–16 March 1941, leaving for Dili in Timor at 5 am on the 16<sup>th</sup>. On arrival his in the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) Hashida was detained by the Dutch Authorities and searched. On 19 March 1941 the British Consul at Batavia advised the Captain on the Staff at Singapore Naval base, that Hashida had been arrested after a struggle and placed under police guard in the Hotel du Pavillon. Found among his papers were two notebooks, one containing only is mission brief, and the other contained 60 pages of closely written notes in Japanese characters and a number of sketches of harbours, towns and places in Australia.<sup>4</sup>

Hashida's mission brief was to collect the following information:

1. Strength of Military, naval and Civil Air Forces and their bases.
2. Condition of naval bases and collect material for investigation of the bases.
3. The military establishments in Darwin, Sydney and Melbourne and topographical views (or opinions) for the study of those localities.
4. Data for study of the Army.
5. Condition of internal communications by land and by air.
6. The territories which connect the Northern parts [of Australia] with the south eastern part.
7. Capacity of military support to Java and Singapore.<sup>5</sup>

The Consul's letter also advised that the Japanese were aware that the notebooks had been seized, and that the Netherlands East Indies Government knew their content, and could not complain. He also advised that the Dutch authorities feared reprisals if they handed over the documents to the British, and Hashida was then arrested on British territory a spy, the Japanese would know that the Dutch had provided the British with the information.

Hashida was deported to Japan aboard the Nichiran Maru on 21 March 1941. His notebooks and sketches, together with the Dutch translation, were sent to Australia. The Department of External Affairs sent a copy of the British Consul-General, Batavia's, letter to the Minister for the Army, for comment. On 21 April 1941, the Chief of the General Staff (CGS) advised his Minister playing down concerns about the sketch maps. He wrote that they were of areas around Darwin and do include some of the new works there, but that the Japanese would already have obtained these details. He also wrote 'It is known that the Japanese have some very clever men resident in Darwin. Further, these notes and sketches could have been compiled by any alien from various

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4 NAA (Vic) 796/6, Item 29/401/434, HM Consul Batavia to The captain on the Staff S'pore, 19 Mar 1941  
5 Ibid.

vantage points in and around this town.<sup>6</sup> On 4 April the Director of naval Intelligence (DNI) had sent a Most Secret classified message to the CGS indicating, based on 'information received that the Japanese Consul-General, Batavia, to Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs dated 22 March containing conclusive proof of our belief that Major Hashida sent to Australia expressly for military espionage...If Japs start a press campaign NEI Authorities will publish contents of notebooks and diagram of aerodrome and notes of despatches of Australian troops to Java.'

Both books and sketches were subsequently sent to Australia and Hashida's translated notes were listed in point form. Some of these do indicate that the CGS might not have had the full story when he wrote his minute of 21 April 1941. There are too many notes to cover in this paper, but a few, written as recorded, will indicate the type of content.

19/1/41 Studied Sydney Harbour & Manly Bridge measurements, anchorages, Naval bases, Qantas area, Middle Head guns. Saw A/Carrier...

24/1/41 Mascot Aerodrome facilities, Reservoir and aqueduct, topography between Sydney and Canberra Duntroon and RAAF station, RMC 300 pupils.

28/1 NEI ship 15,000 tons loading explosives and weapons at Sydney. Also. Things finished to send along with "Canberra Maru".

1/2/41 Aquitania in harbour. Dispatch of soldiers abroad. Army and ---? Divs. For Singapore, Africa or elsewhere.

1/2/41 "I must be careful".

2/2/41 "Queen Mary" loading, probably NZ Tps.

2/2/41 "Almost discovered (Chas. Wall)

4/2/41 Finished report with YANASE. "We have left alone the material gathered with much difficulty, because it was not yet arranged; decided to send it to the General Staff. Last letter sent to Dept. Head".

13/2/41 Walker forbids car ride to Geelong. This ignored.

8/3/41 Port Headland - Broome - Beaches and water depth. Landing grounds.

11/3/41 Broome tidal notes.

12/3/41 Wyndham - landing grounds. Darwin, Harbour facilities, oil tanks, RAAF establishments, health, Army and Air activities.

Of the five sketch maps on file only one is identified, Wyndham Harbour. So they were not all of Darwin as mentioned in the CGS communication of 21 April 1941. At this point is interesting to note that Broome, Port Headland and Darwin, visited by Hashida were all bombed in 1942.

By August 1941, the Commonwealth Government's view of Hashida's activities in Australia took on a more positive tone. A cable sent by the Department of External Affairs to the British Consul-General at Batavia on 21 August 1941 reveals the following: 'It is clear Hashida came to Australia on espionage mission...little of real value collected.' His true mission appears to have been to place espionage on a better footing, to contact existing agents and arrange for an extension of activities. Numerous contacts in the notes are probably the most valuable portion.'

The Department of External Affairs cable was sent in answer to a request from the Japanese Government to the NEI Authorities for the return of Hashida's notebooks. In reply to this the cable continues, 'Glad if you would reply to Netherlands Authorities on the lines that as the notebooks contain matter which is prejudicial to the national interests of their allies in the present war they should not be returned.' Major Hashida's notebook and the sketches are preserved in the National Archives of Australia.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid CGS to Secretary Depart of the Army, 21 April 1941.



## Obituary

### **Kenneth (Ken) Richard White** **22 July 1928 - 5 April 2004**

Older members of the Military Historical Society of Australia will remember Ken White as Secretary/Treasurer of the ACT Branch and Secretary of Federal Council.

We first met in Second Year (now Year 8) at the Famous Fort Street Boys High School in Sydney. We joined the school Cadet Corps and by 1946 were both sergeants. We later enlisted in the CMF, 30th Infantry Battalion (NSW Scottish). Ken subsequently transferred to the Intelligence Corps and was commissioned Lieutenant. The then National Service system saw him on full time duty with a training battalion.

We met again in Canberra in late 1963 and he quickly introduced me to the ACT Branch of MHSA.

His service to the Society is difficult to detail in a small space. He was an enthusiastic collector of Australian Militia badges but this interest was put aside when he conducted the business of the ACT Branch and Federal Council. At the same time he established MHSA Books as a seller of books on military history with profits supporting Federal Council.

On retirement from an active business life he settled the accounts of MHSA Books with the Society and commenced trading as K R White Military Books as a seller of books with emphasis on Australian military history. This venture became well known throughout Australia and overseas. Declining health caused him to dispose of the business but he retained his interest and his substantial personal library.

Ken was my close friend and I hope that the Society continues to attract members of his calibre.

He is survived by Wyn, his wife, daughters Jenny and Robyn, Jenny's husband Trevor and grandchildren Hannah and Hayden.

Neville Foldi