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WORLD WAR 2 AUSTRALIAN ARMY NUMBERS

Graham Wilson

An important aid to researchers and medal collectors is the Army number, i.e. the personal number issued to a soldier on enlistment. The number went on the soldier's pay book and pay records, on his identity discs, on his clothing, inside the sweatband of his hat, on his trunk or kitbag, on a card at the end of his bed, on his mess tin, on his mail, on correspondence on his personal file, on charge sheets and court martial records, on his medals, even, tragically, on his grave marker if he died in service. It is an incredibly important and lasting item. This article examines the numbering system used by the Australian Military Forces (AMF) during the World War 2 and I hope that it will prove useful as a guide for collectors and researchers.

During World War 2 two main separate sets of numbers were issued, one for members of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) and one for members of the Citizen Military Forces (CMF on full-time duty), with a couple of smaller number groups used as well. Theoretically (but see comments below), both main sets of numbers started at 1 and continued on indefinitely. The method of distinguishing between AIF and CMF was by use of alphabetical prefixes. The prefixes consisted of a letter to identify the state of enlistment to which was added the letter 'X' in the case of enlistments into the AIF.¹ The first mention of the use of state prefixes is in Military Board Instruction (MBI) No. 59 of 18 Oct 1939. MBI 59/1939 deals with the raising of the Second AIF and the 6th Australian Division, and states:

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Army Numbers:

23. Each District will commence from Number 1 upwards – each number being prefixed with the Index Letter of the District and the letter 'X' to denote enlistment in the Force² – i.e.,

1 st Military District ..	QX1- upwards
2 nd " " ..	NX1 - "
3 rd " " ..	VX1 - "
4 th " " ..	SX1 - "
5 th " " ..	WX1 - "
6 th " " ..	TX1 - "
7 th " " ..	DX1 - "

Blocks of Army numbers will be sub-allotted to each enlisting officer.

Army numbers will be allotted by the enlisting officer **at the time of attestation only.**

The emphasis in the last sentence, referring to when numbers would be allotted, appears in the original MBI. This directive was obviously designed to ensure that numbers were not 'wasted' by being allotted to a person who might fail the enlistment process for some reason. Although it is not mentioned anywhere in either AAO or in MBI, the use of the so-called 'Index Letters' was also extended to the CMF, although without the use of the 'X' (for AIF) prefix letter. This, however, did not occur until sometime in 1940. As late as April 1940, blocks of pre-war numbers were still being allotted to CMF formations in NSW, VIC, QLD and WA (vide AAO 117/1940). In addition to this continued issue of pre-war numbers, members with pre-war numbers who did not enlist in either the AIF or in the CMF for full time duty appear to have continued to use their pre-existing numbers. In the case of the CMF/Militia, this entailed the use of numbers without any State prefix letter. The use of pre-war numbers was particularly evident in members of the PMF, which is examined in more detail below.

¹ Ibid.

The nearest date that can be confirmed for the introduction of index letter numbers for the CMF is 31 July 1940, when AAG HQ Northern Command issued a memorandum to all CMF units in Queensland concerning allocation of numbers.² The memorandum states:

All present allocation of Army Numbers to Units of the Militia Forces are cancelled.

Army Numbers will be allotted to all personnel on the Active and Reserve Lists of Units of the A.M.F. except Permanent Forces and A.I.F. from block allocated to Units as shown in the attached List.

“Q” numbers at present allotted from Mobilization Blocks to members of Militia Units which have been called up for full time duty for the duration of the War will stand, and, in future, all personnel called up for full time duties will be allotted numbers from the appropriate block in the attached list.

Numbers will be allotted (sic) as follows:-

OFFICERS:

The personal number and index letter will be shown in brackets after the name whenever the name of the officer is referred to in documents or correspondence, i.e.

Major S.A. Evans (Q.30751), 26 Bn.

OTHER RANKS:

The army number and index letter will be shown before the rank of the soldier when the name of the soldier is referred to in documents or correspondence, i.e.

Q.32751 Sgt. T.A. Reid, 31 Bn.

Attached to the memorandum was a table listing all CMF units in Northern Command and showing the blocks of numbers allotted to each unit and the actual quantity of numbers involved for each unit. This list is too large to reproduce here but it both gives an idea of the CMF Order of Battle in Queensland in 1940 and also specifies the army numbers allotted to each unit. Although I have not been able to find any more detail, presumably, similar instructions emanated from the other Command and Military District headquarters.

The table indicates that the command authorities in Queensland, for the CMF anyway, had still not totally abandoned the concept of ‘regimental’ numbers. The table quite clearly shows that every CMF unit in Queensland was allotted its own block of numbers, which seems to be at odds with instructions on the allocation of numbers. However, it cannot be forgotten that recruitment at that stage of the war was still very much at the unit level and thus the allocation of number blocks to units does make some sense. This practice would soon be overtaken by events.

Turning now to the matter of alphabetic number prefixes, known prefixes used are:

Q	Queensland (Citizen Military Forces – CMF)	VX	Victoria AIF
QP	Queensland (Permanent Military Forces – PMF)	VF	Victoria Militia (CMF - Female)
QX	Queensland AIF	VFX	Victoria AIF (Female)
QF	Queensland (CMF - Female)	S	South Australia (CMF)
QFX	Queensland AIF (Female)	SP	South Australia (PMF)
N	New South Wales (CMF)	SX	South Australia AIF
NP	New South Wales (PMF)	SF	South Australia (CMF - Female)
NX	New South Wales AIF	SFX	South Australia AIF (Female)
NF	New South Wales (CMF - Female)	W	Western Australia (CMF)
NFX	New South Wales AIF (Female)	WP	Western Australia (PMF)
V	Victoria (CMF)	WX	Western Australia AIF
VP	Victoria (PMF)	WF	Western Australia (CMF - Female)

² AWM 60/975, ‘Headquarters Northern Command O.C.R. 174/2/416 Memorandum No. 216 “ARMY NUMBERS”’.

WFX Western Australia AIF (Female)	PX Papua AIF
T Tasmania (CMF)	PN Papua Native
TP Tasmania (PMF)	NG New Guinea Militia
TX Tasmania AIF	NGX New Guinea AIF
TF Tasmania (CMF - Female)	NGN New Guinea Native
TFX Tasmania AIF (Female)	UKX United Kingdom AIF
D Northern Territory (CMF)	R Papua and New Guinea Police (armed constabulary)
DP Northern Territory (PMF – from 1944)	B Accredited Philanthropic Representatives
DX Northern Territory AIF	
P Papua Militia	

P and PX for enlistments in the Territory of Papua were used early in the war but discontinued in about 1942. From that date the term 'New Guinea' was used to indicate both Papua and New Guinea and the prefixes 'NG' and 'NGX' were used exclusively (and see below). In the case of 'NG' numbers, most men called up on mobilization were allotted numbers from the '2000' block and taken on strength of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles.¹ This was not totally the case, however, as the World War Two medal cards held by the Department of Defence show that a small number of early enlistments into the CMF in Papua and New Guinea were allotted numbers less than 2000. Numbers known to have been allotted are NG15, NG22 (member later allotted NGX267), NG28, NG64 (member later allotted NGX281), NG67, NG77 (member later allotted NGX408), NG139, NG149, NG162, NG232, NGX239 (member later allotted NGX450), NG240 (member later allotted NGX263), NG252 (member later allotted NGX260), NG267 (member later allotted NGX250), NG504 and NG560.

Although covered by AIFO, which in turn were covered by amendments to *The Defence Act*, technically speaking the issue of AIF numbers was illegal, as this action was not covered by either legislation or regulation. This oversight was corrected in 1942 with the issue of *Regulations and Orders for the Australian Military Forces and Senior Cadets 1927* (as amended 1942). Division 5 of R&O's dealt specifically with army numbers and stated:

DIVISION 5. – ARMY NUMBERS

Every soldier of the Permanent Forces and of the Citizen Forces will be assigned an army number

1272. (1) A single series of numbers will be used for the whole of the Military Forces neither mobilized for active service nor forming part of an expeditionary force.

(2) Army number will be allotted to units mobilized for active service in a separate series in accordance with the instructions contained in the Standing Orders for Mobilization.

1273. The next succeeding paragraphs in this division apply only to the Military Forces when neither mobilized for active service nor forming part of an expeditionary force.

1274. (1) A soldier whether originally enlisted in the Permanent Forces or in the Citizen Forces, or allotted to the Citizen Forces under Part XII. of the D.A., will retain the army number originally assigned to him under this division throughout the whole of his service, irrespective of whether he is subsequently transferred to another corps or branch of the Military Forces.

(2) An ex-soldier who re-enlists or re-engages or resumes service on the expiration of his exemption under Part XII. of the D.A., will resume the army number previously assigned to him.

(3) A soldier convicted by court-martial on a charge of fraudulent enlistment or whose trial for that offence has been dispensed with, will assume the army number originally assigned to him.

(4) A soldier promoted to warrant rank will retain his army number.

¹ Anonymous, 1967(?) *Army Numbers – Method of Allotment*, Army HQ.

(5) The army number of a soldier who dies, or is discharged, or becomes non-effective for any reason, will not be assigned to another soldier.

1275. (1) A block of army numbers will be allotted in A.A.Os. to each formation, &c., for distribution to units and corps.

(2) Army numbers from the numbers so distributed to units or corps will be assigned to soldiers as required on their enlistment or allotment for service under Part XII. of the D.A. The numbers will be assigned in sequence.

(3) Army numbers for all soldiers of the Permanent Forces in a military district will be assigned at District Base Head-Quarters.

Prior to August 1942, while the system of allotment of Army numbers seemed to work reasonably well, there were problems created by the lack of a centralised recruiting system. This was rectified with the creation of Recruit Reception Depots (RRD) vide AMF General Routine Order (GRO) No. A.334 of 24 August 1942. This Order, titled 'Formation of Recruit Reception Depots and Leave and Transit Depots and Reorganisation of General Details Depots' established the RRD and authorised these organisations to take over from the General Details Depots (GDD) the functions of reception and enlistment of recruits, previously the function of the GDD. GRO A.334 authorised the establishment of a RRD in each Lines of Communications Area (L. of C.), except for the Northern Territory and the territories Papua and New Guinea. Northern Territory recruits were handled by the South Australian L. of C. RRD and recruits for the Territories of Papua and New Guinea were the responsibility of the Queensland L. of C. RRD. The various RRD were located at:

Northern Command RRD	Moorooka, QLD
Eastern Command RRD	Addison Road, Marrickville, NSW
3 rd Military District RRD	Royal Park, Melbourne, VIC
Western Command RRD	Karrakatta, WA
4 th Military District RRD	Keswick Barracks, Keswick, SA
6 th Military District RRD	Brighton Camp, Brighton, TAS.

GRO A.334 dealt quite specifically with the subject of Army numbers. Paragraph (A) 7 of the Order states:

Army Numbers:

- 7 (1) Each army recruit received at the R.R.D. will be allotted an army number.
- (2) The army number will appear on all records and official documents relating to the soldier.
- (3) Numbers to be issued to personnel enlisted direct into the A.I.F. will be allotted to the R.R.D. by L. of C. Area Records.
- (4) Numbers to be issued to enlistments in C.M.F. for full time duty (including V.D.C., A.A.N.S., A.W.A.S. and V.A.Ds.) will be allotted by R.R.D., which will maintain a register for this purpose. The commencement of this series of numbers will be determined by H.Q. L. of C. Area and notified to R.R.D. Numbers will be deleted from the register as allotted to individuals.
- (5) Army numbers will be preceded by the initial letter of the Area of enlistment.
- (6) Enlistments in A.I.F. will be distinguished by the addition of the letter "X" following the initial letter of the L. of C. Area of enlistment.
- (7) If C.M.F. personnel volunteer for A.I.F. subsequent to attestation, they will be allotted a new number by L. of C. Area Records Officer, as a recruit enlisted direct into A.I.F.

This order finally regularised the use of State initial letters to distinguish the area of enlistment. Note that AIF numbers were handled centrally by the superior headquarters (L. of C. Area Records Office), while responsibility for management of numbers for members of the part time forces was delegated to the CO of the RRD.

For Part Time Duty (PTD) personnel, numbers were still allocated by blocks to Brigade and Unit Recruiting Areas.² Individual Recruiting Areas were eventually brought together under a single command system, as shown by NSW L of C UT Instruction No. 6/43 of 11 August 1943. The instruction stated:

36. NSW L of C Area Recruiting Staff.
 - (a) As from 11 July 1943, Bde Areas and Areas will be grouped to form one unit, to be known as NSW L OF C AREA RECRUITING STAFF.
 - (b) This unit will come under the direct control of DAAG (R&M2), who will be responsible for its administration.³

Although this instruction applies specifically to NSW L of C Area, presumably the change affected the other L of C Areas as well, since the instruction directs that the new unit would come under the command of an AHQ staff officer.

Officer's Numbers. Prior to July 1942, although AIF Orders always listed the number, with other avenues, particularly AMF Orders, the pre-war practice of not providing an officer's number in reports and recommendations was apparently still prevalent. To counter this LHQ issued GRO A.227 of 24 July 1942, 'Recommendations Regarding Officers – Inclusion of Personal Numbers.' The Order directed:

1. Recommendations regarding officers are frequently received at L.H.Q. without any reference to the personal number of the officer concerned, particularly in the case of first appointment direct from civil life and of appointment from the Reserve of Officers or the Retired List.
2. In future, all correspondence affecting members of the forces the personal number of the officer in question is to be included.
3. Recommendations initiated more than seven days after the publication of this order which do not contain the personal number of the officer concerned will be referred back to the subordinate command concerned for completion. This may result in delay in implementing such recommendations and cause resultant loss of seniority.

Note that the Order refers to officer's numbers as 'personal numbers' rather than 'Army numbers.' Note also that Paragraph 1 refers to officers appointed from the Reserve of Officers and the Retired List. As these officers would have had pre-war service, this again confirms the fact that officers were indeed issued with numbers pre-war. Despite this order, however, the practice of not publishing officer's numbers in orders remained prevalent for the PMF for the remainder of the war (although, presumably, the personal number was provided at the time of the submission of the officer's names for publication!).

² AWM 61 431/1/1135 "Instructions to Area Officers. Recruiting Instruction No. 1/44."

³ AWM 54 834/3/11 "Headquarters NSW L of C Areas Recruiting Instructions February 1943 to February 1946."

The Magic Number '1'. In theory there should have been 20 persons enlisted into the AMF (AIF and CMF) with the number '1'. Records show, however, that the total was actually only 17, these being:

DX1	McNulty, John Albert	Q1	Hartnett, Colin Bruce
N1	Campbell, Peter John	QX1	Archer, John William
NX1	Irving, Ronald Godfrey Howy	SX1	Gully, Richard Alan
NGN1	Tomari	T1	Westwood, John William
NGX1	Burke, Francis Luckman	TX1	Portwin, Donald Edward
P1	Spence, Robert Allan	VX1	Blamey, Thomas Albert
PN1	Samai	W1	Tweddie, John Martin
PX1	Simpson, William Hooper	WX1	Hobbs, Athol Joseph

To that total of 16 can be added James George Beaton (UKX1 – AIF enlisted in Britain, see below), for a grand total of 17 (out of a putative total of 21). There is no one recorded with the number V1, S1, D1 or NG1. For these military districts, the earliest numbers recorded are:

V1001	Stevenson, James Hamilton (later VX128064)
S2	Lott, Andrew Walter (later SX11834)
D3	Fothergill, William Lewis
NG2001	Emery, Robert Eustace

For 3MD/Victoria, it is obvious that the decision was made to commence numbering from the '1000' block. Why this decision was made is unknown. The decision to allocate numbers from the '2000' block for CMF enlistments in 8MD/New Guinea has already been mentioned. It appears that in the case of 4MD/South Australia and 7 MD/Northern Territory, the magic number was either not used or may have been used and then replaced by an AIF number, but the earlier CMF number not recorded. Hopefully further research will solve this small mystery. ¹

Females. Prior to 1942, numbers for females enlisting in both the AIF and CMF, which were taken from the same blocks as males, were indistinguishable from male numbers. In August of that year it was ordered that all female numbers were to be prefixed with the letter 'F' to distinguish them from male numbers.² GRO No. 290 of 7 August 1942 advised:

Distinctive Army Numbers – A.W.A.S.

1. It has been decided to provide distinctive numbers for members of the A.W.A.S. by including the letter "F" in the prefix, inserted after the letter denoting the district of enlistment. Thus, V numbers will become VF, N numbers NF, and so on.
2. Action will be taken forthwith by L. of C. Area Records Officers to amend basic documents; by L. of C. Area Finance Officers to amend Pay records, and all units concerned to amend rolls, pay books, driving licences, records of issues, etc., accordingly.

The distinguishing letter "F" will henceforth be included in the prefix to the numbers allotted to all such newly enlisted members and in quoting numbers of such serving members.

¹ The respective members of the navy and air force were:

RAN:	HV1	Bean,	James John
	W/V1	Crawford,	James
	S1	Grimmond,	George Richard
	S/V1	Harris,	Eric Warren
	W/1	Kite,	William Thomas
	S/P1	Mitchell,	Stanley Cyril
	B/V1	Nagel,	Kenneth George
	WR/1	Provan,	Frances Betty
RAAF:	1	Williams,	Richard

² GRO 290/42 of July 1942.

Thus a female member of the AIF enlisted in Queensland with the number 1234 would have her number changed from QX1234 to QFX1234. Similarly a female CMF soldier from Queensland with the number 2345 would have her number changed from Q2345 to QF2345.

There are no female enlistments recorded for 7MD/Northern Territory or 8MD/Papua and New Guinea. This makes sense when it is realised that the white female populations of these territories were evacuated to the southern states of mainland Australia quite early in the war. Although there are a number of female enlistments recorded that give either 7MD or 8MD as place of birth or place of residence at time of enlistment, all of these enlistments were in southern states and use the prefixes for those states. In addition, there were no enlistments of 'native' females in either 7 MD or 8 MD. Thus the prefixes DF, DFX, PF, PFX, NGF, NGXF, NGNF, and PNF do not exist.

GRO A.290/1942 referred specifically to the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS), not mentioning the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) or the Australian Medical Women's Army Service (AMWAS). This was addressed in January 1943 with the issue of GRO A.77/1943 (published on 22 January 1943), which stated:

A.77 FEMALE MEMBERS OF THE A.M.F. – DISTINCTIVE ARMY NUMBERS

1. The letter "F" will be included in the prefix to the army numbers of all female members of the A.M.F. This letter will be inserted immediately after the letter denoting the district of enlistment. Thus, V numbers will become VF or (if the member concerned belongs to the A.I.F.) VFX, etc.
2. GRO A.290/1942 is cancelled.

Following the end of the war, GRO A.77 was republished as GRO G.5/1946 of 4 January 1946, to cater, it seems, for post-hostilities enlistments into the AMF.

Papua and New Guinea Natives. During the war native inhabitants of both territories, Papua and New Guinea, were enlisted into the AMF. Native troops enlisted in Papua were originally issued with numbers without prefixes.³ Later in the war, some time in 1941, these numbers were prefixed with 'PN'.⁴ The following PN numbers were issued:

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 1 – 999 | to original members of Papuan Infantry Battalion |
| 1000 – 1499 | to RAA Moresby Fixed Defences (last number issued PN1098) |
| 1500 – 1999 | to RAE Fortress Engineers (last number issued PN1521) |
| 2000 – 2499 | to AASC (last number issued PN2069) |
| 2500 – 2999 | to AAMC (last number issued PN2522 plus PN2601, PN2606, PN2628 and PN2638) |
| 3000 – 3500 | HQ 8MD (later HQ NGF) – the only numbers in this block known to have been issued are PN3006, PN3011, PN3027, PN3033 and PN3034. |
| 3501- | Issued to PIB allotted 29 April 1944. Last number issued PN4187. |

Later in the war some native inhabitants from the Mandated Territory of New Guinea were also enlisted. These personnel were issued with numbers with an 'NGN' prefix. The highest number identified is NGN1613.

Permanent Military Forces. As can be seen, the numbering system adopted separated the AMF into two separate armies, the AIF and the CMF. In addition, members of the PMF, as noted above and apparently without authority, began from 1941 to prefix their numbers with the State

³ *Army Numbers*, op cit.

⁴ *Ibid.*

identifying letter of state of enlistment, plus the letter 'P' for PMF after the state letter. For example, a PMF member enlisted in Victoria with the official number 5999 would add the letter prefix 'V' for Victoria and later add 'P' for PMF to give the number VP5999.⁵ The first instance of this usage that has been found occurs in AAO 152/1941, dated 31 December 1941, titled 'Temporary Promotions A.I.C.'

In July 1942 it was decided that members of the PMF (and the CMF) who volunteered for the AIF should keep their original numbers, but modified with the addition of the prefix letter 'X', as was usual for normal AIF enlistment.⁶ GRO A.168/1942, published 10 July 1942, states, at sub-paragraph 1 (e):

Army Numbers

On enlistment in A.I.F. a new number will be allotted. The new number for P.M.F. personnel will be arrived at by adding the letter "X" to the present prefix letters – thus WP459 becomes WXP459. The new number for C.M.F. personnel will be arrived at by adding the letters "XM" to the present prefix letter – thus V1459 becomes VXM1459.

Thus the hypothetical Victorian enlisted PMF member noted above, if he transferred to the AIF, would have the number VPX5999. One of the problems with this system was that a CMF member would end up with an AIF number that could be identical to an already serving member of that force. For example, a CMF member enlisted in Victoria with the number V1000 who transferred to the AIF would have the number VX1000, which was possibly already being used. To circumvent this problem, the Army directed that the prefix letter 'M' would also be added, which would give the hypothetical CMF transferee the number VXM1000!⁷

This clumsy system did not last long, being abolished in August 1942 following the establishment of RRD noted above. GRO A.345 ('P.M.F. and C.M.F. Enlistment in A.I.F.') of 28 August 1942 directed (in line with GRO A.334/1942) that all persons enlisting in the AIF would be given a new AIF number, irrespective of prior service or any other numbers previously held.⁸ Specifically, the Order stated:

Army Numbers:

Members of the P.M.F. and C.M.F. enlisting in the A.I.F. will be allotted normal A.I.F. numbers as set out below.

- (a) All instructions relative to the allotment of XP, XM and X plus one million numbers are cancelled.
- (b) L. of C. Area Records Officers will prepare unit rolls of members numbered XP, XM or X plus one million. and issue special Unit Routine Orders, Part II, allotting new numbers to these members. Fresh casualty returns in respect of such personnel are not required.

The reference to 'X plus one million numbers' is curious and unexplained. A diligent search through AAO, GRO and MBI for the period 1939 to 1942 has not revealed any prior mention of this practice.

As noted above, PMF numbers continued to be published in AAO and GRO for the duration of the war. From the beginning of 1943 onwards, however, when the names of members of the PMF who had enlisted in the AIF were published in AAO, the order would include both the AIF number and the PMF number (in brackets), a very clumsy and confusing practice.

GRO A.168/1942 was amended by the publication of GRO A.494, 'P.M.F. and C.M.F. Enlistments in A.I.F.', published on 23 October 1942. This Order dealt with the subject of Identity Discs and directed:

Identity Discs

5 Ibid.
 6 General Routine Order (GRO) 168 of July 1942.
 7 Ibid.
 8 GRO 345/42 of August 1942.

In order to prevent obliteration and confusion in Army numbers on identity discs, those issued to members of P.M.F. and C.M.F. prior to enlistment in A.I.F., in accordance with G.R.O. A.345/1942, will be withdrawn and new discs issued.

This was a quite sensible move and the practice was probably already in place when the Order was published. However, given the extremely parsimonious nature of contemporary military financial accounting practices, it is almost certain the Order was issued to provide legal cover for units expending Commonwealth funds issuing replacement Identity Discs.

United Kingdom Enlistments. A total of 13 enlistments into the AIF are known to have been made in the United Kingdom, and these soldiers were issued 'UKX' numbers. For obvious reasons there were no CMF enlistments in the UK and thus no 'UK' numbers exist, only 'UKX'. In addition, as there were no female enlistments into the AIF in the UK, there are no 'UKFX' numbers in existence. The majority (10) were Australians living in the UK who either preferred to join the Australian Army or, perhaps, were asked to join. The latter possibility is supported by the fact that in a number of cases the men recruited were technical specialists or professionals. Of the 13 known UK enlistments, nine were enlisted or appointed into the Pay Corps, two were appointed to the Staff Corps, one was an engineer and the last was appointed to the Ordnance Corps. The enlistments and their numbers were:

UKX1	Beatton, James George	UKX27	Scrivener, Francis Linden
UKX2	Beatton, Jack Fletcher	UKX28	Stoodley, Stanley
UKX5	Fox, Stephenson	UKX30	Sutton, Kenneth Henry
UKX6	Robson, Neil	UKX31	Zwar, Charles Joseph
UKX7	Fox, Andrew	UKX32	Coton, Kenneth William
UKX8	Lewis, Brian Bannatyne	UKX33	Piddington, Ralph O'Reilly
UKX25	Ferris, Richard Dyason		

The gaps in the numbers are puzzling. The only explanation that fits is that the vacant numbers were actually issued but later cancelled on the issue of another number. This seems to indicate that there were at least 33 UK enlistments into the AIF, rather than the 13 that are known. However, to date it has proved impossible to locate any record of numbers UKX3, UKX4, UKX9 – UKX24, UKX26 or UKX29, or any UKX number higher than 33.

Accredited Philanthropic Representatives. The prefix letter 'B' was used to identify representatives of various philanthropic organisations – Red Cross, YMCA, Salvation Army, Campaigners for Christ - who had been officially accredited to the AMF. For these personnel, except for those appointed from Queensland, the prefix letter was followed by the number of the Military District they were appointed from, separated from the number by an oblique stroke, i.e. New South Wales B2/123, Victoria B3/123, South Australia B4/123, Western Australia B5/123, Tasmania B6/123. For reasons unknown, philanthropic representatives appointed from Queensland had the letter 'Q' placed in front of the letter 'B', which was followed by the number with no oblique stroke, e.g. QB123. The lowest numbers identified to date are:

QB		
B2/		
B3/01	Glennie	R.E.
B4/		
B5/01	Hanger	I.R.
B6/		

Not all philanthropic representatives were allotted numbers and a particular group who were overlooked were YWCA representatives who had no number allotted. Medal cards for YWCA representatives do exist, however, they do not have service numbers recorded on them.

Retrospective and Posthumous Transfers to the AIF. In 1947 it was decided that all personnel of both the PMF and CMF who had not already enlisted into the AIF and who had been killed or captured

before 1 July 1942 at Rabaul, Darwin, Papua and North East New Guinea or who died subsequent to capture were to be transferred retrospectively to the AIF.¹ Blocks of numbers were taken for this purpose from the same numbers issued to normal AIF enlistees. Numbers used were:²

1 MD	QX64901 – QX64944
2 MD	NX191431 – NX191489
2 MD (AANS)	NFX180285 – NFX180290
3 MD	VX129333 - VX129416
4 MD	SX11442 – SX11467
6 MD	TX4419, TX421, TX4423 and TX6041-TX6043
8 MD	NGX460 – NGX513

In addition to the blocks listed, numbers NX70289, VX55482, VX58852, SX11406, SX11407 and TX16307 were allotted to officers of Lark Force who were taken PW but survived the war. Numbers NFX10285 – NFX10290 were allotted to CMF officers of the Australian Army Nursing Service. All of these women were taken PW and survived the war. Not all numbers were used. Although the blocks for 1, 2 and 3 MD were used in their entirety, for 4 MD numbers SX11443, SX11444, SX11450, SX11451, SX11453 and SX11455-SX11467 were not used. For 6 MD only TX4419, TX421, TX4423, TX6041, TX6042 and TX6043 were used. For 8 MD numbers NGX466-NGX470, NGX479, NGX483-NGX484, NGX488 and NGX507 were not used. There were no numbers allocated for 5 MD (Western Australia) or 7 MD (Northern Territory) - see Appendix 3 for list of names. From the records it appears that QX64944 (Private Ronald Edward Wallis, 8 MD AAOC) was the last AIF number ever issued for 1 MD.

Post World War Two

Following the end of the World War 2 the Australian Army went through a traumatic period of both rapid contraction and violent upheaval. The first was the result of the rapid demobilisation of the war time army. The second was the result of the army trying to find its place in a post-war world that was markedly different to the world before September 1939. The army was to go through a number of reorganisations, all of which would be reflected in its numbering system.

The Interim Army. On 1 October 1945 the Interim Army was formed, alongside the AIF, which was to remain in existence for another two years. Newly enlisted volunteers for service with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan were issued with AIF numbers from the following blocks:

QX500000 – QX501696
NX500000 – NX506387
VX500000 – VX504321
SX500000 – SX500734
WX500000 – WX501345
TX500000 – TX5004173

The last of these Interim Army/BCOF numbers was issued in June 1947.⁴

By late 1946, early 1947, the form of the post-war Army was beginning to emerge and plans were being made to disband the AIF and reconstitute the PMF and CMF as a standing army. Nevertheless, although greatly reduced in size the AIF remained force in being well into 1947 and continued to recruit. On 31 January 1947 MBI 41/1947 was released, titled 'ENLISTMENT IN OR

1 Military Board Agendum No.15/47.
 2 Ibid. Also *Army Numbers*, op cit.
 3 *Army Numbers*, op cit.
 4 Ibid.

SECONDMENT, TRANSFER OR RELEASE TO THE AIF.’ In relation to Army numbers, the MBI stated, at sub-paragraph 3(b):

A volunteer will complete AAF A200 (Attestation Form) and will be allotted an AIF number at the RR&GDD at which he or she is enlisted.

For enlistments and appointments where an AIF number was already held, that number was to be retained.⁵

In July 1947 another block of numbers was issued. Unfortunately, the type of enlistment is not known. Some enlistments are shown as Interim Army and some are shown as Regular Army Special Reserve (RASR).⁶ The numbers were:

QX700000 – QX700220	(221 enlistments)
NX700000 – NX700508	(509 enlistments)
VX700000 – VX700404	(405 enlistments)
SX700000 – SX700122	(123 enlistments)
WX700000 – WX700182	(183 enlistments)
TX700000 – TX700057	(58 enlistments)

Incredibly, some of these numbers (minus the letter prefix) were issued as late as 1960.⁷

The authority given in MBI 41/1947 became moot on 1 October 1947 when it was announced that:

His Excellency the Governor-General in Council has approved of the Military Force designated “Australian Imperial Force” being disbanded on 30th June, 1947, and that all members of the Australian Military Forces serving on continuous full-time duty on or after 1st July 1947, being deemed to be members of a Military Force designated “Interim Army”.⁸

In August 1947 the PMF was reinstated and a new system of numbering was introduced in November 1947, which draws this article to an end as the post-1947 numbering system is a subject for a later article.

Conclusion

As stated at the beginning of this article, the personal number of a soldier is an incredibly useful tool for researchers. This is especially so for medal researchers tracing World War Two Australian medals as Australia was one of the only two Commonwealth countries to name its medals for the war. The fact that the soldier’s number appears on his medals means that the medals can immediately be linked to a particular person and the number can be used to seek out additional detail on the recipients.

It would be nice to claim that the article is definitive; however, that claim cannot be made. Absence of records and gaps in existing records predicate that, despite best efforts, the story remains incomplete. I hope, however, that this article will be of use to my fellow historical researchers.

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5 MBI 41/1947 Sub-paragraph 9(a)

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. 198 of 16th October, 1947 (published with *Australian Army Orders as Gazette Notices Supplement* No. 9/1947.).



WALTER MITTY AND GENUINE HERO

Bob Lowry¹

WX11483 Lieutenant Colonel Donald George Melbourne Matheson MC MM known as George Matheson, or Matty by the Americans, was killed in action at Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville, on 30 January 1944 while seconded to the US Army.

When the Governor of Fiji and High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, Major General Sir Philip Mitchell MC, was told of his death he recorded in his diary on 2 February 1944:

'poor Matheson had been killed in action. Such a man, so intrepid and full of fight, had to be killed I suppose. But it is a very sad loss. DCM and MC in France last war before he was 16, decorated by US in this he has been an inspiration to the 37th [Infantry Division, Ohio National Guard] and Americal Division and to all who knew him.'²

Matheson enlisted in the Australian Army in Perth on 9 April 1941 without mentioning his previous service in WWI. His abilities, however, were quickly recognized. Within weeks he was promoted in dizzying succession acting corporal, acting sergeant and then lieutenant on 10 June 1941 two months after enlistment. He then attended four months of commando and jungle warfare training at Tidal River in Victoria. During this training he was promoted captain and on completion of the course he was promoted major and given command of the 3rd Independent Company, about 330 men.

On 22 December 1941, this commando company arrived in New Caledonia to bolster French defences after Japan entered the war. The company was the major element of 'Robin Force'. When American forces arrived in New Caledonia in mid-March 1942 Robin Force came under their operational command and was quickly called to assist in training the disparate US forces that would eventually form the Americal Division, commanded by Major General Alexander M. Patch.

On 31 March 1942, Headquarters United Forces in New Caledonia announced approval of the promotion of Matheson to lieutenant colonel. Matheson's expertise was so valued that he was seconded to US forces on 11 April as a commando and jungle warfare instructor. In July Patch sent a letter to the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Vernon Sturdee, seeking approval to retain Matheson, even suggesting that he be enlisted in the US Army. Sturdee approved his retention on condition that he remained with the AIF on loan to US Forces in New Caledonia and available for duty as Patch may care to assign him.³ In August Patch requested his promotion to Colonel and Matheson wrote to Sturdee seeking his support for Patch's request on the grounds that he was dealing with senior officers in 'connection with operations and tactical missions'. However, the matter was referred to General Thomas Blamey, Commander-in-Chief Australian Military Forces, who considered his rank appropriate and was not prepared to approve his promotion.⁴

Matheson transferred with the Americal to Guadalcanal in October 1942 to reinforce the Marines who were fighting a desperate battle to defend Henderson Field from Japanese naval, ground and air forces

- 1 The author discovered this story while writing *Fortress Fiji: Holding the Line in the Pacific War, 1939-45*.
- 2 Mitchell Diaries 1942-44 held in the Rhodes House Library, Oxford. Australian Military Forces Appointments, Promotions Etc., Lists Nos. 1-10 Inclusive, Vol. 1, October-December, 1943 list Matheson's WWI awards as MC, MM.
- 3 Radiogram from HQ USAFIA Melbourne 17 July 1942 from Sturdee to Patch.
- 4 Telegram to Sturdee from Matheson dated 31 August 1942 and Radiogram from MacArthur dated 5 September 1942.

sent to evict them. He had visited Guadalcanal before the invasion and was acquainted with the country and the colonial administration.⁵

Matheson did not sit in headquarters awaiting reports from the front. He personally led reconnaissance and fighting patrols to push the Japanese back from the perimeter of the defences.⁶ Once the beachhead was secure, much more knowledge was needed of the terrain and enemy dispositions to prepare an offensive to clear Japanese forces from the island. Matheson led a patrol that was landed on the west coast at Beaufort Bay and made its way across the mountains to reconnoiter Japanese positions on the east coast and later guided bombing runs on Japanese positions they had located in the Kokumbuna area.⁷ Matheson's role in this action was summed up in his award of the Distinguished Service Cross 'for extraordinary heroism during the period December 19 to December 27, 1942', on Guadalcanal:

Lieutenant Colonel Matheson volunteered to lead a patrol consisting of one other officer and four native scouts on a hazardous reconnaissance mission over difficult mountain ranges. The patrol succeeded in locating several trails, each of which was scouted in order to select the best route over the mountains. While enroute the patrol passed through and in the rear of enemy lines, locating, among other things, the position of some one thousand enemy. The area in which the enemy were located could not be reached by artillery or naval gun fire and was concealed from observation. Consequently, the position of this heavy concentration of enemy troops would not have been located had it not been for the efforts of this patrol. This, and much other valuable information obtained by the patrol, after traveling a distance of over ninety miles, were used later and aided greatly in the success of operations in the area...

In early 1943, Matheson was evacuated and hospitalized in the Silverstream US Navy hospital near Wellington, New Zealand, with Blackwater fever and malaria. An Australian Army personnel officer phoned him there on 22 February and noted on his file that his condition was good but that he said little and also noted that orders were being prepared for his repatriation to Australia. During this time Brigadier General Edmund Sebree, who had replaced Patch as Commanding General of the Americal Division, told a reporter that 'No man on this island contributed more to our victory than Matheson. No man has done more to give us high regard for the Australian fighting man'.⁸ This was not just hyperbole for the benefit of the Allied war effort. The Governor of Fiji noted later that he was 'A very good fellow who has done a whale of a job fighting in Cactus [Guadalcanal]'.⁹

Matheson returned to Army Headquarters in Melbourne and provided a report on his experiences on Guadalcanal. In March 1943, he also visited the Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, of which he was a member.¹⁰ Thereafter, he must have convinced General Sturdee that he should rejoin the Americal Division then about to be transferred to Fiji for rest and recuperation and to relieve the 37th Division of its defence responsibilities there. Instead of returning to the Americal he was posted as Liaison Officer and Assistant Operations Officer, Headquarters II Island Command, responsible for Fiji and Tonga, with Major General Charles F. Thompson commanding. The Governor of Fiji got to know him well at this time and Matheson was employed in overseeing the training of Allied forces on Fiji and advised General Thompson on the employment and readiness of the Fiji Military Forces home defences and on the readiness of those being prepared for operations in the Solomons.

5 'Behind Japanese Lines', *The Dominion*, 18 January 1943. Some articles claim that he did a pre-invasion reconnaissance for the marines but there is no record of that although other Australians were involved.

6 Turner, Winston, 'WA Colonel Guides Daring Solomons Patrol', *Daily News*, 23 January 1943. Some of the detail in this article relating to Matheson are incorrect.

7 Turner, Winston, 'U.S. Honors AIF Commando', *The Herald*, 24 February 1943

8 Turner, Winston, 'U.S. Honors AIF Commando', *The Herald*, 24 February 1943.

9 Mitchell Diaries, 24 April 1943.

10 Dew, John, *Mining People: A Century*, The Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, Parkville, Victoria, 1993.



Lieutenant D.G.M. Matheson taken circa June 1942 after he was commissioned.
He is wearing MC MM and two World War 1 campaign medals.

On 1 November 1943, Matheson was transferred from the roll of the 2/3rd Australian Independent Company to the 2/7th Australian Cavalry (Commando) Regiment remaining seconded.¹¹ In December 1943, he was awarded the US Presidential Citation presented to all troops who served on Guadalcanal at the height of the fighting there.¹²

Matheson contrived to have himself posted to the army units sent to reinforce and relieve the Marines in the Torokina beachhead in Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville. He arrived in early-November 1943 serving first with the US 37th Infantry Division before transferring back to the Americal Division after its arrival. On 30 January, he was witnessing the first Army infantry-tank action against a determined Japanese force just outside the Torokina beachhead and was killed by machine-gun fire while going to the aid of several officers and men who had been seriously wounded by Japanese sniper fire.¹³

As intrepid as his World War 2 service was, the stories of Matheson's World War 1 service are true Boy's Own Annual. At 13 years of age he was eager to join the New Zealand forces serving on the Western Front but although he was tall for his age the recruiters sent him back to school. Undeterred he made another attempt to enlist under an assumed name, George Thompson. When this failed he twice stowed away on troopships bound for the Britain. On the first occasion he was put off in Sydney and returned to New Zealand. On the second occasion there are a number of stories as to what happened next.

One story is that he was discovered and handed over to authorities when the ship docked in London whereupon he escaped to France and in Paris teamed up with New Zealand tunnellers.¹⁴ Another story is that he stowed away and was looked after by members of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force's 27th Reinforcement draft and was adopted by them.¹⁵ By the time senior officers discovered his

¹¹ Appointments, Promotions, Etc., pp. 630 and 634.

¹² General Orders No. 67, Headquarters Americal Division, 31 December 1943.

¹³ Cronin, Francis D., Captain, *Under the Southern Cross: The Saga of the Americal Division*, Combat Forces Press, Washington D.C., Third Edition, 1981, p.138.

¹⁴ The WWI story is based on Garland, Ron, Colonel, MC and Bar, *2/3 Commando: Nothing is Forever*, Sydney, 1997. Much of the Matheson story in this book is inaccurate, particularly the description of his death.

¹⁵ 'Valedictory', *The Murchinson Times*, 14 January 1939.

presence the ship had left Albany, Western Australia, and he convinced the officers who wanted to put him off en route that it would be useless as he would only try again. Consequently, he completed the voyage to Britain and was sent to serve with the New Zealand Tunnelling Company.

In any event the stories agree that within a short time he was part of a group captured by the Germans when they inadvertently broke into a German trench. The Germans employed them in trench construction and repair until they were rescued six weeks later by a Canadian Scottish unit. Matheson's actions in the rescue earned him the Military Medal and he was promoted second lieutenant in the field and subsequently won the MC, all before the end of 1917 when he would have been just five months past his 13th birthday.

Who was George Matheson?

George Matheson was the middle of five children born to John Matheson a miner from Victoria, Australia, and Caroline Matheson (nee Williams) from Hastings, New Zealand. He was born at Waihi, New Zealand, on 19 July 1904.¹⁶ The elder children were William and Mary and the younger Gwen and Morris. George attended the Makaretu South School 1911-1916 and Napier Boys and Dannevirke High Schools thereafter. After his adventures in Europe, he returned to New Zealand but it is unclear what he did for the next few years.¹⁷ In his leisure hours he played rugby and was included in a representative team that played the Springboks in 1921. In 1922-24, he found employment as a miner, with his father, at the Muir Gold Reefs mine at Te Puke.

In 1924, at age 20, he travelled to New Guinea where he worked as a miner in the New Guinea Copper Mines Dubuna mine for 12 months before becoming a shift boss in their Laloki Mine. In 1925, he left New Guinea temporarily and returned to Britain to visit the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Park and afterwards worked his way home as ships crew.¹⁸ On 1 October 1925, he was engaged as a coal trimmer on the *Almangora* in Southampton for a one and a half month foreign voyage. Although the destination is not shown it is probable that the voyage included South America which enable Matheson to say he had been there.¹⁹ The report on his 'ability' and 'general conduct' after this journey was 'Very Good'.²⁰

On 12 February 1926, he was engaged again as a coal trimmer on the SS *Mahia* but the engagement was cancelled for reasons unknown and then on 10 March he was engaged as an assistant steward on the SS *Benalla* at Victoria Docks, Southampton, and was discharged in Melbourne on 4 May 1926 with another 'Very Good' report. He then returned to Port Moresby where he resumed his employment with the New Guinea Copper Company and at the end of 1926, despite being penniless, made his way to Salamaua. Not having the money to employ the ten boys normally required for the journey, carried his own meagre possessions on the eight day trek through the jungles into the highlands and the Edie Creek Gold Mine, 6000 feet up and 60 miles southwest of Salamaua as the crow flies.²¹

¹⁶ Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages New Zealand.

¹⁷ One report has him being discharged in England and working his way to South America on a tramp steamer but this probably happened later in 1925, 'Born for War', a newspaper article not yet sourced, probably in the period 19-30 January 1943.

¹⁸ The exhibition ran April-October 1924 and was so popular that it was opened again in 1925 and contained among other things the Palace of Engineering which no doubt attracted Matheson's attention.

¹⁹ However, there is no evidence to show that he worked in a silver mine there as some articles assert.

²⁰ Board of Trade Continuous Certificate of Discharge, R587. As well as his name and date of birth it also gave his height as 6 feet 1 inch with blue eyes, light brown hair, fresh complexion and home address as 181 High St, Dannevirke, New Zealand.

²¹ Matheson, D.G., 'New Guinea Gold: A Brief Description of the New Guinea Goldfields', *Wanderlust Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 2, February 1930, pp.27-44, provides a wonderful description of his Edie Creek venture.



Matheson presented with the US Distinguished Service Cross

He was one of the first miners into the find and was granted a 50 acre claim and rented Papuan boys from another miner to establish his alluvial mine and did well out of it eventually selling his lease to the English company, Edie Goldfields Ltd., in 1929. The following year he ventured further into the interior in search of new gold fields.²²

In the middle of his Edie Creek venture Matheson was sent to Pahang, in the Federated Malay States, to work as an underground supervisor in the Raub Gold Mine for 8 months from June 1927 to January 1928.²³ A photograph album of Matheson's bearing the title 'Prospecting for Gold and Other Metals 1 October 1924 to 13 December 1930' contains photographs of his work and travels.

It is unclear exactly when he migrated to Australia but he held an Australian passport issued at Rabaul on 18 May 1931. He used the passport to visit Japan for 11 days in June 1931 and other places en route and his passport was stamped by Customs on Thursday Island on his return on 28 July 1931.²⁴ Whether he was in transit back to New Guinea or entering Australia is unclear but he did visit his family in New Zealand at some time during the year around the time of the Napier earthquake as there are photographs of the devastated town in his album.²⁵

Thereafter, he moved to Queensland and in 1933 was manager of the Lone Hand Gold Mine.²⁶ He also met and married Vera Mabel Varcoe, a nurse, in South Brisbane, on 25 November 1933 with his father in attendance as a witness.²⁷

In 1934, he was engaged 'reporting on properties', that is, gold prospects,²⁸ and obtained a Mine Managers Certificate. In November, he was employed to verify the gold prospect for the investors in the

²² Matheson, D.G., 'New Guinea Gold: A Brief Description of the New Guinea Goldfields', *Wanderlust Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 2, February 1930, pp.43-44.

²³ A.S. Lilburne, General Manager, The Raub Australian Gold Mining Co. Ltd., letter 'To Whom it May Concern', 30 January 1928.

²⁴ Commonwealth of Australia Passport No. A113815 issued at Rabaul on 18 May 1931. The passport gives his height at 5 feet 11 ¼ inches.

²⁵ 'Behind Japanese Lines', *The Dominion*, 18 January 1943.

²⁶ The outline of his mining experience is contained in his applications for membership of the Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy held by their head office in Melbourne.

²⁷ Queensland Marriage Certificate, Registration Number 1933/016940.

company 'Farrell's Find Pty. Ltd.' Matheson accompanied Mr. Farrell to the prospect in North Queensland but sent a telegram within a couple of weeks that the 'proposition was no good' resulting in the winding up of the company within five weeks of its registration.²⁹ He also became a member of the Masonic Lodge.³⁰

He moved to Western Australia in 1935 and joined the de Bernales organization as the underground supervisor and later mine manager at the Riverina Gold Mine at Menzies, and the Sand Queen Gladstone Mine at Comet Vale from 7 May 1935 until 11 July 1936 when he accepted the position of government inspector of mines, based at Cue. He rejoined the Masonic Lodge two years after moving to Western Australia but took measures to ensure that it was not perceived to influence his workplace relations. Rather than become a member within his jurisdiction, as inspector of mines, he joined the Lodge in Geraldton.³¹

As an inspector of mines he had a reputation for fairness unbounded by his formal jurisdiction. For example, on 14 November 1936, Matheson found that two men had been wrongfully dismissed after refusing an order to work 'before sufficient time had elapsed for the clearing of noxious gasses after firing'. The Western Australian Industrial Registrar doubted that the board had the jurisdiction to decide such matters but filed the record of the decision anyway.³²

On 19 September 1935 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace in Western Australia and his last listing as a JP was on 8 November 1940 in Wiluna. In 1936, he applied to become a member of the Australian Institute for Mining and Metallurgy (AIMM). There was some hesitation because of his lack of formal education but his nomination was supported by other senior miners and he was elected as an associate member on 25 May 1936,³³ and was elevated to 'member' of the AIMM on 31 January 1939.

As Inspector of Mines his area of responsibility was vast covering 200,000 square miles including mines in the districts of Black Range and Wiluna of the East Murchison; Mt. Magnet, Cue, Day Dawn and Meekatharra of Murchison Goldfield; Peak Hill Goldfield, Yalgoo Goldfield, Pilbarra Goldfield and Northampton Mineral Field. Between 5 August and 5 November 1938 he also learnt to fly with the Wiluna branch of the Royal Aero Club of Western Australia and after 15 hours dual and 3 ½ hours solo obtained his private pilot's licence.³⁴

In early 1939, he resigned as inspector of mines and on 7 January 1939, at the Cue Hotel, Matheson was given a send-off by colleagues from the Big Bell mine and the members of the Cue and Reedy sub-branches of the RSL prior to his departure for the Gold Coast, Africa. Present were former members of the British, Canadian, American and Australian forces in World War I engaged in mining in Western Australia. During the send-off the report noted that the event was

indeed a striking tribute to the esteem in which the guest of the evening was held ... Pointing out the tough job Mr. Matheson had in supervising an area covering seven goldfields, various speakers enlarged on the assistance he had always rendered to returned soldiers in the 2 ½ years of his stay here ... He was instrumental in placing 26

28 'Valedictory', *The Murchinson Times*, 14 January 1939. There is no reference to this on his application for membership of the Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy.

29 'Queensland Company lives but five weeks', unsourced newspaper article probably of December 1934.

30 Bennett Lodge No. 174, Eidsvold, Queensland, Certificate No. 18230 dated 18 June 1934.

31 He joined the Victoria Arch Chapter No. 11 WAC on 23 September 1937 and was exalted as a Royal Arch Mason on 23 December 1937.

32 'Dismissals at Big Bell', *The Kalgoolie Miner*, 1 December 1936 and a letter to Matheson from the WA Court of Arbitration dated 5 December 1936.

33 Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, *Proceedings*, Nos. 101-104, Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of 27 April 1936, pp.xlii-xliii

34 He learnt to fly in the DH60 Moth the forbear of the famous Tiger Moth. There were no other entries in the log after his qualification.

Diggers in jobs on various mines and three of them had gone on to executive positions. This proved Mr. Matheson's assertion that there were some Diggers who only needed a little help to get on to their feet ... He appealed to mine managers and shift bosses particularly to give preference to returned soldiers whenever it was possible, as, in his opinion, this was definitely due to them, and the least they could do was to grant them this privilege. He claimed that even a Digger who was not 100 per cent was still better than a "foreigner".³⁵

On leaving the Western Australian Mines Department his certificate of service recorded that he had resigned to take up another position and that 'his work has been entirely satisfactory and it is regretted that the Department is losing his services'.³⁶ He even received a letter from the Secretary of The Eastern Goldfields Federated Engine Driver's and Firemen's Union expressing the Union's 'appreciation of your administration and services' and wishing him every success in his future sphere of life.³⁷ On 23 January 1939, Matheson left Vera behind and sailed for London on the *Ontranto* bound for more mining experience at Tarkwa, on the Gold Coast, West Africa.³⁸ Either coming or going he visited the battlefields of the Western Front and caught up with family and friends in the United Kingdom.³⁹

After a brief stint in West Africa he returned to Australia on the TSS *Esperance Bay* arriving Fremantle on 29 August 1939. On return he was engaged by the Wiluna Gold Mines Ltd as mine superintendent. At this time he reportedly conducted a one man rescue in confined and difficult conditions when the mine general manager, Mr H.H. Carroll, fell off a ladder while descending a winze but was prevented from falling to his death when his foot caught between the ladder and the winze wall severely injuring his leg. Matheson reportedly descended the ladder with a lantern in one hand and freed the 14 stone Carroll from the ladder and lowered him the remaining 60 feet to the next level, such feat only being possible because of Matheson's incredible strength. As a consequence he was acting general manager until Carroll recovered.⁴⁰

However, in late September 1940 he began making a concerted effort to join the Services gathering references from various colleagues and associates to further his applications. A letter from Carroll said his 'work involves a thorough knowledge of mining and the ability to organize and handle a staff of supervisors and a large labour force. In this work he has displayed tact and sound judgment'.⁴¹ Another, from the manager of a machinery company, to the Officer Commanding RAAF, illustrates Matheson's versatility saying he 'had the supervision of the installation of the big National Gas engines at the Sand Queen ... Mine and been in charge of a number of installations throughout Western Australia of Diesel engines' and that 'he is of sterling character, and we have every confidence in recommending him as an Internal Combustion Engineer'.⁴² A stipendiary magistrate wrote of his 'marked ability, general application in all matters, mechanical ability, temperate habits' and his confidence that he would do what his 'conscience dictates, fearlessly and well'.⁴³

He applied to join the RAAF but despite his private pilots licence and engineering skills failed to be accepted, reportedly because he was in a reserved occupation.⁴⁴ He finally enlisted in the AIF

35 'Cue-Big Bell Send-Off to Lieutenant D.G. Matheson, M.C., M.M.' *The Listening Post*, February 1939, p.17.

36 Mines Department, Western Australia, Certificate of Service, No. 179, 20 January 1939.

37 C. Daly, Secretary, Eastern Goldfields Federated Engine Driver's and Firemen's Union, letter dated 10 January 1939.

38 It appears his employer was the Amalgamated Banket Areas Limited.

39 Evident from photographs held by his nephew, Ian Stephens.

40 'Born for War: Unique New Zealander: Connection with this State', unsourced newspaper article of about January 1943.

41 H.H. Carroll, General Manager, letter 'To Whom It May Concern', 4 October 1940.

42 T.C. Fairley, Manager, The Western Machinery Co. Ltd., letter 'To Whom it May Concern', 16 October 1940.

43 L.O. M(surname unclear), Stipendiary Magistrate, Northern Goldfields Division, letter dated 30 September 1940.

44 'Born for War'.

and, not having recorded any previous service on his application form, was enlisted as a private soldier. On enlistment in April 1941, his record of enlistment shows that he was 5'9" tall with a scar above his right lip and that he had an appendix scar. It was also recorded that he had fair hair and blue eyes, was married to Vera Mabel Matheson and was a mine superintendent at the Wiluna Gold Mines in Western Australia.

Vale Matty

After his death Vera received the usual formal condolences from King George V and General T.A. Blamey, Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces. But others were not formally required including telegrams from Les Woolf, paymaster at the Wiluna mine and neighbour, who wrote 'I together with thousands of West Australians share your sorrow today George was staunchest friend a real man and the Whitest ever',⁴⁵ and the Governor of Fiji via the Minister for the Army 'requests that the sympathy of his government be extended to you in your recent bereavement'. The most heartfelt came from the Major General John Hodge, Commanding General of the Americal Division still heavily engaged in battle on Bougainville saying:

I have purposely delayed writing to you about the death of your husband, Lt. Colonel Matheson, in order to ensure that you have received official word and in order better to compose my thoughts after my own first keen feeling of personal loss.

Matty joined the Americal Division before it went to its first combat at Guadalcanal and except for a short absence, served with the division since that time. He was known, loved and respected by every man and officer from the division commander to the last joined recruit. Although a member of the Australian Army, he was as much a part of this division as any American member. I feel entirely truthful in saying that Matty's loss to the division is felt more generally and deeply than that of any other individual could have been.

He was completely a man's man; brave without being foolhardy, and without any question one of the finest of nature's noblemen that I have ever met. He fitted perfectly into all situations and all conditions from the most formal official function to the most savage fighting against our arch enemy, the Japs. For his splendid action at Guadalcanal he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which is our most coveted decoration. During his entire service with the division, Matty was an outstanding source of inspiration to all men and officers both in training and in their bitter struggles with the enemy.

There is little I can say to soften the blow of his death or to lessen our grief, but I do wish you to know that I often think of you and wish that I could talk to you in person and try to complete the picture of the fine service Matty has given to his fellow man. He died as I know he would have wished to die in case death approached. He died fighting in a bitter struggle against a strong Jap position. In the mind of the true soldier such as Matty was, such a death, while not welcome, is a death that he would not have feared. Personally, I felt his loss more than that of any fellow officer in my entire service in two wars. I enjoyed his companionship, his splendid spirit, his fine sense of humor and high morale more than I have words to express. You may know without question that Matty's spirit will continue to live in this division so long as it remains an organized unit, and that his memory will be carried in the hearts of all officers and men who knew him, as long as they live. Sincerely yours.⁴⁶

Walter Mitty?

Although Matheson's World War 2 service is well documented and much is known of his life between the wars, no primary source has been found to confirm his World War 1 service. The official biography cards compiled by the Australian War Memorial contain a note "landed Gallipoli at age of 14" but that is manifestly incorrect and another note on 4 November 1946 says that no trace of him had been found in the AIF, AMF or British Army list for WWI. Another note indicates that they had also checked the New Zealand records without success. Consequently, although Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial,

⁴⁵ The latter term is not used nowadays because of its racist overtones but in this case meant 'the best of the best'.

⁴⁶ John R. Hodge, Major General, United States Army, letter to Mrs G. Matheson, 8 March 1944.

Canberra, bear the inscription MC, MM, the scroll commemorating his sacrifice in World War 2 issued to his next of kin, Vera, is simply inscribed, Lieutenant Colonel D.G.M. Matheson DSC.⁴⁷

Matheson's story has not been recorded in his own hand. In his Wanderlust article he described himself as 'a wanderer, prospector and miner almost since I climbed into my first pair of long pants' but there is no mention of his being a soldier in WWI. It is at least curious that he would have omitted mention of such service as it would have been his first experience of mining.

His claim to have served in World War 1 was widely known in Western Australia and he was an 'active and conscientious' member of the RSL although he was only a financial member for one year.⁴⁸ A set of miniature medals including a military cross and military medal engraved with the name 2nd Lieutenant G. D. Matheson, NZEF [New Zealand Expeditionary Force], 1917, confirms his claim.⁴⁹ The miniature medals were not engraved with a regimental number. Such number might be engraved on the full-scale medals but the family recollection is that these were stolen from a hotel room in Perth in the late 1930's when George and Vera were attending Anzac Day ceremonies. Matheson also used the post-nominals MC and MM and wore the ribbons during World War 2. All the newspaper coverage of Matheson from the late 1930s through to his death re-tell the story of his World War 1 service and awards. Although the stories vary they all claim that he served with the New Zealand tunnellers of which there was only one company.

In researching this story the New Zealand Defence Force Personnel Archives and the custodians of the British Army records could find no entries for Matheson and there is no record of him being awarded the MC or MM in the *London Gazette*. The official New Zealand record of all officers who served in the NZEF in World War 1 does not contain his name nor does the extensive history of the New Zealand Tunnelling Company that Matheson claimed to have served with.⁵⁰

It is possible that he enlisted under a false name but only one of the numerous newspaper articles make any reference to him having enlisted under a false name apart from a failed attempt to do so in New Zealand. The sole article claimed that 'in an interview he admitted that he stowed away on the troopship under an assumed name'.⁵¹ A cross check of the lists mentioned above found 10 combinations of 2nd Lieutenant, MC and MM but none of them served in the Tunnelling Company.

When he enlisted in the AIF in April 1941, contrary to some newspaper reports, he did not try to hide his employment for fear of being rejected as being in a 'reserved occupation' but plainly listed his former employment as Supervisor of the Wiluna Goldmine. Consequently, he had no reason not to declare his World War 1 service or his decorations. His school records also cast doubt on his claims. He was enrolled as a student at the Napier Boys High School on 18 February 1918 before transferring to the Dannevirke High School in May 1918. So although he could have stowed away to the UK in mid-1917 he had certainly been sent home by early 1918.

The report that he left with the 27th Reinforcement draft is not consistent with the detailed records of the tunnellers. The tunnellers last two drafts of reinforcements sailed from New Zealand on 26 April and 26

47 The National Archives of Australia has letters relating to the loss of the scroll and a request for a duplicate but there are no letters querying the absence of the MC, MM.

48 'Valedictory: RSL Function at Cue: Farewell to Mr. G. Matheson', unsourced newspaper article of January 1939.

49 The miniatures are held by Matheson's nephew on Vera side, Ian Stephens, because George and Vera had no children.

50 This has been verified by the New Zealand Defence Force Personnel Archives and by cross checking Studholme, John, *New Zealand Expeditionary Force Record of Personal Services During the War of Officers, Nurse and First-Class Warrant Officers and Other Facts Relating to the NZEF*, Wellington, 1928 and J.C. Neill, Ed, *The New Zealand Tunnelling Company 1915-1919*, Whitcombe and Tombs Limited, Auckland, 1922.

51 'Wiluna Gold Mines', *The Murchinson Times*, 9 September 1939.

July whereas the 27th Reinforcement sailed on 13 June and 16 July 1917 and none of these were commissioned in the unit. Moreover, from May 1917, the tunnellers were not engaged in mining operations but were instead employed on road making, construction of dugouts and machinegun posts, trench mortar posts, observations posts and underground communications.⁵²

Given that the history of the tunnellers records that one of their number was lost after wandering into the German lines in October 1917, it is most unlikely that the capture and rescue story mentioned above would not also have been recorded in their history. It is also unlikely that a boy without any previous mining experience, or engineering skills or qualifications would have been promoted to officer rank in the tunnelling company no matter how intrepid and brave his actions might have been.

The probability is that he did not serve in World War 1 but it is possible that he stowed away to Britain at that time. Whether he served on the Western Front and, if so, whether he was promoted to officer rank and awarded the MC and MM are claims that have yet to be proven. So how might such an obviously intrepid and talented man have created a story of daring do and been able to carry it off without discovery until his death?

It is quite possible that he created a fictional story of his wartime exploits for consumption when he returned home after World War 1, or, more likely around the campfires in his early days in New Guinea, and having created the story could never go back without being mocked. He lived the myth having the medals, being an 'active and conscientious' member of the RSL in Western Australia, and attending Anzac Day parades wearing his medals.⁵³

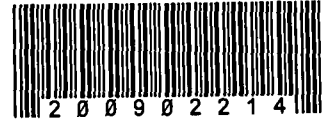
The failure to mention previous service in his World War 2 enlistment documents indicates that the claim was false. The mention of previous service would have required him to give his previous regimental number that would have made it easy to verify his claims. Nevertheless, he could not escape his past as he was soon spotted in uniform and his World War 1 service claim made known. Indeed, one of his referees for enlistment in the forces was an army intelligence officer who had been a miner. So he had to keep living the story and could carry it off because of his familiarity with military matters through the stories of veterans, his membership of the RSL, his familiarity with rifles from his time in New Guinea, his varied bush experience, his mining expertise and his extensive leadership and management experience in a tough industry, and the military training he received once enlisted for World War 2.

It would have been quite easy to verify his claims because the New Zealand officer records were printed in 1928 and even if he had served under a false name it would have been easy to verify his claim if it had ever been challenged. However, in the middle of a war and in the absence of any reason to do so, it appears that nobody queried his story before he was killed. Nevertheless, his exploits between the wars and his World War 2 service leave no doubt that he was an 'intrepid' and courageous natural leader of men.

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⁵² Neill, p.83.

⁵³ He was a member of the Cue-Big Bell Sub-Branch of the RSL. His membership card lists him as having Badge No.8828, being a member of the NZEF, and paying one annual subscription on 16 May 1938. Although provided for on the membership card, no regimental number, rank or unit was included.



THE CONCEPT OF COURAGE AND ELITE FIGHTER PILOTS

Keith Richmond

Courage is a term often loosely used in relation to military endeavours. We usually associate courage with extraordinary acts of bravery and boldness,¹ yet discussions on the meaning of the term seem empty and sterile. What passes as analysis always seems to be a jumble of concepts somehow disconnected from reality. French fighter ace, Pierre Clostermann, said after analysing reams of material on air combat that the “skill of human hands and the bravery of human hearts disappear in a cold-blooded study of materials and techniques”.² We are left asking the same question that Socrates posed to Laches all those years ago, “Tell me if you can, “Tell me if you can, what is courage?”³

I

Any discussion of courage hinges on analysis of the concepts of fear and fearlessness.

While philosophers have grappled with the notion of courage for centuries, the concern here is to examine its core aspects in a military setting.⁴ To begin we need to recognise the changing nature of man’s assessment of courage. Until the time of the American Civil War, it was generally believed that in battle, every soldier had the ability to be courageous, to show his manliness, be independent and to act without fear. With the coming of total wars fought with massed guns and night-time bombardments, a soldier soon learned that whatever his own beliefs concerning fear and manliness, he was unlikely to change the course of events. By the time of World War II, Dwight Eisenhower stood the traditional concept of courage on its head by saying that heroism was “the uncomplaining acceptance of unendurable conditions”, a comment unlikely to have been appreciated by soldiers of an earlier age.⁵ This demonstrates how far the face of war had changed (even though Eisenhower only looked at a single aspect of courage).

Time has brought with it other changes including the way fear is perceived. Experience of unremitting warfare in the twentieth century along with the inevitable batteries of psychological testing brought the realisation that soldiers openly accepted feelings of fear and that even after prolonged exposure to battle, fear was still present. This has been demonstrated in Dollard’s study of Spanish Civil war soldiers, the mammoth study by Samuel Stouffer and associates of the American soldier in World War II, and in the experiences of soldiers in Vietnam.⁶ Once this was understood by those in charge of training recruits for war, it was openly admitted: *Army Life*, the US Army’s official handbook for the inductee in World War II, stated that “You’ll be scared. Sure you’ll be scared....If you say you’re not scared you’ll be a cocky fool”. The next stage was

- 1 *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977 at page 234 under ‘courage’ provides little guidance other than listing ‘bravery’ (which they interpret under ‘bravery’ on page 119 as brave conduct) and ‘boldness’ (which they interpret at page 109 under ‘boldness’ as courageous, enterprising) so it all becomes quite circular
- 2 Pierre Clostermann, *Flames in the Sky*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1969, page 9
- 3 SJ Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, WH Freeman and Co, San Francisco, 1978, page 223
- 4 For a philosophical examination but using many civil and military examples, see Douglas Walton, *Courage: A Philosophical Investigation*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 1986
- 5 Gerald Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War*, Free Press, New York, 1987, pages 17-18
- 6 John Dollard, *Fear in Battle*, Greenwood Press, Westport CONN, 1977, pages 2-3 and passim; William Miller, *The Mystery of Courage*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MASS, 2000, page 64 and passim; Samuel Stouffer et al, *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath*, Volume II, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1949, Chapter 4 at page 196

to show the recruit could deal with fear and overcome it: men were taught fear was normal and that a soldier could still perform well despite his fears and in time, the fear would lessen.⁷

The nature of courage and its application in battle situations has long been examined. A classic study was published by Lord Moran, who combined his own experiences in the trenches of the Great War with his observations as a medical practitioner in World War II. He suggested courage was willpower, that every man drew on a finite stock of willpower like a bank balance, and that after drawing down on his resources a man is finished. As he said, "Men wear out in war like clothes", and many researchers have agreed in general terms with this analogy.⁸ A contrary notion was expressed by a Vietnam veteran who said that in battle one might accumulate courage and at an appropriate time it might be expended,⁹ although there seem few who support this line of thinking. What is sometimes seen is the slow deterioration of men under fire but when called on to resist the enemy they continue to do so and this has been suggested as another form of courage.¹⁰

It follows that many have determined the essential factors that make up courage. Dinter created what he called the star of courage, a construct with trust at the core and radiating out the key elements including hope and beliefs, the personality of the soldier, physical fitness, training, leadership, and group integration.¹¹ This represents the more commonly listed characteristics although researchers have added other elements such as willpower, a willingness to fight, hope, the presence of humour, the lack of fatigue and monotony,¹² the presence of adequate materials,¹³ high morale,¹⁴ confidence,¹⁵ the capacity to control one's fear,¹⁶ and being in contact with others in battle.¹⁷ Bloodless concepts they may be, but perhaps they provide a foundation for this review.

The concept of fearlessness shows little resolution. Writers often debate whether those in battle can be fearless or not, so for example Billiere said that he did not believe any man was truly fearless,¹⁸ while Rachman took the opposite view and accepted fearlessness as a rare trait.¹⁹ In

7 Stouffer et al. *The American Soldier*, *ibid*, page 196

8 Lord Moran. *The Anatomy of Courage*. Constable, London, 1946, pages x, 70. Some have said that WW II showed a deficiency in Moran's work as continued stress undermined all men – Henry Gole, 'Reflections on Courage', in *Parameters*, US Army War College Quarterly, Winter 1997-98, pages 147-157 at page 148 and Mark Wells, *Courage and Air Warfare: The Allied Aircrew Experience in the Second World War*, Frank Cass, London, 1995, page 75. Also see Richard Holmes, *Firing Line*, Pimlico, London, 1994, pages 213-220 for the decline of men under battle conditions and John Ellis. *The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II*, David and Charles, London, 1980, pages 250-255

9 Miller, *The Mystery of Courage*, *op cit*, page 64

10 Ellis, *The Sharp End*, *op cit*, page 253

11 Elmar Dinter, *Hero or Coward: Pressures Facing the Soldier in Battle*, Frank Cass, London, 1985, page 72. S Tellow, 'Incorporating Human Factors in Simulation: A British Army View' in M Evans and A Ryan (eds) *The Human Face of Warfare: Killing, Fear and Chaos in Battle*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 2000 at page 27 offers his schema that look to be close to Dinter's approach to courage. Also see Arthur Smith, 'Fear, Courage and Cohesion', *Proceedings of the US Naval Institute*, Vol 120, November 1994, pp 65-69 at page 65

12 Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, *op cit*, *passim*

13 Dollard, *Fear in Battle*, *op cit*, page 3

14 Frederick Manning, 'Morale, Cohesion and Esprit de Corps', in R Gal and AD Manglesdorf, *Handbook of Military Psychology*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1991, page 467

15 Andrew Boyle, *No Passing Glory: The Full and Authentic Biography of Group Captain Cheshire, VC, DSO, DFC*, Collins, London, 1972, page 238

16 Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, *op cit*, page 248

17 RV Jones introduction in MRD Foot, *Six Faces of Courage*, Eyre Methuen, London, 1978, page 13

18 Peter de la Billiere, *Supreme Courage: Heroic Stories from 150 Years of the Victoria Cross*, Little Brown, London, 2004, page 28

19 See Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, *op cit*, pages 234, 248

effect they are posing a dichotomy between those who could be fearless where the terrors of the average person are unknown, and the rest who feel fear and in some cases actually surmount such feelings. We have seen above how the acceptance of fear has come with modern battle conditions and to many, it takes courage to overcome the inevitable. Dollard wrote that "Courage is not fearlessness, it is being able to do the job even when afraid"²⁰ while Eschel suggested "It is conquest of fear that is the real heroism".²¹ Rachman said that if a person practised courageous behaviour he could attain a state of fearlessness²² (he suggested that veteran parachutists eventually lose all fear when jumping). Max Hastings said "Men who act bravely in war do so because they dread succumbing to fear more than they dread the risk of being killed."²³ It is clear that the concept of fear is the pivot around which much of this discussion needs to be based.

Whether a person can actually be fearless is still widely debated: however, it may be possible to accept the approach of theologian Paul Tillich. He suggested that every animal has a balance between courage and fear although humans are able to surmount feelings of fear by their own individual intent.²⁴ Following this line of thinking, Ellis quotes a soldier who in writing an epitaph of a friend, railed against writers who said the dead soldier was fearless: "Of course he knew what fear was...he knew how to overcome it, that's all....Can't they see that the whole point is not that he *didn't* know what fear was but that he *did*?"²⁵

One fairly fruitless pursuit has been research into useful categories of courage. Moran offered a four-stage model, listing men who had no fear, men who felt fear but did not show it, men who felt fear and showed it but did their job, and men who felt fear, showed it and then shirked their responsibilities. This as Moran admitted, all depended on the objective assessment of both feelings as well as displays of fear.²⁶ Rachman accepted the split between fearlessness and those who persevered despite admitting fear, and went on to suggest that the latter type was the most courageous – and among those shown to be outstandingly brave were groups such as submariners, pilots, firemen and police. A modern group that joins this list is that of the astronaut, highly intelligent men and women who understand the odds, yet persevere because they believe they have the skills to overcome any problem.²⁷ Deb suggests there are three forms of courage: it can be acquired by training, it can be instinctive as in a desire for self-preservation, and it can be obtained by following the example of a brave leader.²⁸ Billiere in his study of Victoria Cross winners said that physical courage could be subdivided into two types, hot courage as shown by an infantryman in a charge or a pilot in a dogfight, and cold courage as shown by bomber crew who flew over Germany, inviting death every time they flew.²⁹ Yet the value of any of these categories must be whether they can help us understand the meaning of courage, and this aspect has yet to be proved.

20 Quoted in Linderman, *Embattled Courage*, op cit, page 18

21 David Eshel, *Bravery in Battle: Stories from the Front Line*, Brockhampton Press, London, 1999, page 8

22 Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, op cit, page 234

23 Max Hastings, *Warriors: Extraordinary Tales from the Battleground*, HarperCollins, London, 2005, page 255

24 'Paul Tillich' at www.escapefromwatchtower.com/tilgroung.html

25 Ellis, *The Sharp End of War*, op cit, page 253

26 Moran, *Anatomy of Courage*, op cit, page 5

27 Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, op cit, pages 234-238

28 PB Deb, 'The Anatomy of Courage', *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, Vol 127, October 1997, pp 403-406 at page 403

29 Billiere, *Supreme Courage*, op cit, pages 24-25

Some suggest that courage need only be separated into two parts, physical and moral courage.³⁰ Moral courage is the decision to make a stand on the basis of one's moral principles, and that may or may not require some act of physical courage to implement. (For moral courage, Walton gives the example of a German soldier required to shoot innocent civilians, and on refusing to continue, he was shot himself.³¹) Sir William Slim said physical courage was an "emotional state, which urges a man to risk injury or death" whereas moral courage was "a more reasoning attitude, which enables [a combatant] coolly to stake career, happiness, his whole future on his judgement on what he thinks is either right or worthwhile".³² General Omar Bradley said "Physical courage is important but moral courage is ten times as hard and ten times as important".³³

In general, moral courage is seen as a more important albeit a rarer commodity than physical courage. A number of writers seem to agree with Slim that once there is moral courage then one can with ease demonstrate physical courage³⁴ although intuitively this reasoning seems weak as there will not necessarily be an overt physical response amounting to bravery after one takes a moral decision. Thus, in the example cited above of the German soldier, there is only a limited physical response involved in the decision not to continue firing even though there is a commitment to action. We might ask how often moral decisions merge with decisions requiring physical courage on the battlefield – it would seem that many decisions made on moral grounds might on closer study be decisions made for patriotic or ideological reasons - and these are not necessarily the same as moral reasons.

After this fleeting review we find there are formative elements that are found in many analyses of courage – such as training, hopes and beliefs, physical fitness and the levels of group cohesion. But whether any individual has the capacity to demonstrate physical and moral courage remains an unknown until the testing time arrives.

It might be useful to interpolate here a comment on the way that some suggest fear can be overcome in battle: for the officer it might be concern with those under his command while for other ranks it is the concern for members of the squad. Smith suggests that soldiers don't fight for God and country "but for their comrades, for their leaders, and for their own reputation with both".³⁵ Concern for one's fellows is often what prompts men to undertake both reckless and considered acts in order to protect them – such as falling on a grenade, or in the case of Pilot Officer RH Middleton, turning a stricken Stirling bomber out to sea and away from populated areas.³⁶ We need to factor this element into our considerations.

30 See YU Chandar, *The Art of Military Leadership*, Jaico Publishing House, Bombay, 1979, page 37 and Kevin Lunday, 'Where is Courage', *Proceedings of the Naval Institute*, Vol 124, December 1998, pp 37-39 at page 37

31 Walton, *Courage*, op cit, page 107

32 Billiere, *Supreme Courage*, op cit, page 24

33 Senator John McCain's introduction in Harry Maihafer, *Brave Decisions: Moral Courage from the Revolutionary War to Desert Storm*, Brassey's, Washington DC, 1995, page xvi. Also see John F Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*, Harper Perennial, New York, 1964

34 Billiere, *Supreme Courage*, op cit, page 24

35 Smith, 'Fear, Courage and Cohesion', op cit, page 67

36 This area of discussion is widely reviewed. See Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, op cit, page 243, Holmes, *Firing Line*, op cit, pages 302-308, Eschel, *Bravery in Battle*, op cit, page 8, Stephen Ambrose, *The Wild Blue: The Men and Boys Who Flew the B-24s Over Germany*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 2001, page 228, John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1978, pages 191-192, 280-281 and 303, and Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence*, Pimlico, London, 1984, page 246

Walton provides a change of tack when he suggest courage is a bit like a version of the British notion of 'muddling through' – "keeping one's head and doing a creditable job of deliberately acting sensibly and appropriately despite dangerous, painful or very adverse circumstances."³⁷

Intuitively, there are other aspects of bravery that can be suggested – in addition to selfless acts where men or women undertake some action in order to save others, we might list total recklessness where a daredevil spirit takes over; obligation or duty where they keep on going regardless of their personal safety such as bomber crews; obligation or duty where there is no glory or reward other than doing a job such as aircraft ground crew in a forward area; and obligations or duty where men and women go on an operation where the chances of returning are low and the training inadequate, such as special forces going on a mission. But are these any more than versions of hot and cold courage? More appropriately perhaps, we might see every aspect of courage as differing facets of the same - and still vague - phenomenon

II

In discussions on courage the airman represents a special case.³⁸ In this article the focus is on elite fighter pilots in World War II - they are often highly visible as personalities, and the prospect of uncovering something about the concept of courage from this group would appear to be high. This is not to deny the levels of extreme courage demonstrated by bomber crew or Catalina or Lysander pilots, all of whom deserve much more attention.³⁹

Spick says that fighter pilots are special because of the glamour surrounding them - they are young, almost unscathed by life and represent the modern equivalent of gladiators jousting, one man of honour against the next. They are also different because their exploits are visible to others, whether on the ground watching the results of an air battle, or in terms of the numbers of victories they achieve and which are publicly recognised. An infantry machine gunner might well eliminate more of the enemy than any pilot, yet he is virtually invisible and anonymous, and lacks the magic of the fighter pilot.⁴⁰

Yet there is a darker side: in aerial combat "the penalty for failure tends to be more severe, which puts a premium on courage, or more correctly self-control". Put bluntly, if they lose the engagement they are shot down and if they win they are awarded a 'victory', meaning they have downed, possibly killed, another man.⁴¹ Airmen are lonely warriors, and despite an overall discipline, they are independent in battle and it can be a case of every man for himself. They leave from an ordered and usually comfortable base, fly some distance into battle, then return to base with its empty bunks and reminders of losses from the day's engagement. Then they face the same challenges when they fly again and again on mission after mission.⁴² There is a cost to this duality, the contrast of being the knights of the air and also being killers: it is little wonder

37 Walton, *Courage*, op cit, page 2

38 We might query, however, the comment of Edward Puryear, *Stars in Flight: A Study of Air Force Character and Leadership*, Presidio Press, Novato CA, 1981 at page 253 where he says "Courage is an indispensable aspect of character. It is to an airman what life itself is to a man". In the discussion below, while references are often made to males the comments apply to both genders

39 Robert Jackson, *Air Heroes of World War II*, St Martins Press, New York, 1978

40 Mike Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces: The Air Combat Tactics and Techniques of World War II*, Greenhill Books, London, 1997, pages 10, 14

41 Clive Caldwell for one was blasé about this aspect and at one point admitted to killing a thousand men in the air or on the ground: Jeffrey Watson, *Killer Caldwell: Australia's Greatest Fighter Pilot*, Hodder, Sydney, 2005, page 57. Also see Joe Noah and S Cox, *George Preddy: Top Mustang Ace*, Motorbooks International, Osceola WI, 1991, page 9

42 Eschel, *Bravery in Battle*, op cit, page 8

that all airmen and bomber crews in particular are seen to be typical of groups in battle that are gradually worn down by fear, tiredness and a feeling of depression.⁴³

It is hard to convey the immediacy of the battle or the danger that is inherent. Pappy Boyington said that in reading tales of air war and “getting along to the monotonous, repetitious twenty-fourth kill or so I became so bored and confused that I hoped to God someone would shoot him down and get it over with”.⁴⁴ This contains some truth for much writing on air battles is the stuff of repetition – of waiting, locating serviceable aircraft, scrambles, the search for height and position, the sighting of the enemy and the confusion of the melee in which death and glory are mixed, then the return to base to begin again.⁴⁵ This awful repetition tests the continuing courage of the airman in the overcoming of ennui and fear in order to conquer one’s own demons and triumph over the enemy. Those that succeed are those that do it better, do it more calculatingly, and survive long enough to kill before they are killed. Eschel comments that “Fear is the inevitable companion of the flyer...it is the conquest of fear that sets the flying man apart from other mortals...”⁴⁶

To be a fighter pilot requires a potent mixture of skills including technical mastery over the aircraft and in fighting technique, outstanding personal skills such as coordination, self-control and good reflexes, an awareness of the enemy and how to remain beyond his reach, and the luck to be presented with opportunities while remaining outside the range of enemy aircraft or anti-aircraft fire. And the elite level of pilot needs to possess a determination of a very high order - coolness under fire and an ability to pursue the enemy and force the battle to advantage.⁴⁷ It is not too surprising that there were numerous similarities between the characteristics of the best pilots on all sides.

III

To better demonstrate some characteristics of elite fighter pilots, a small number have been selected to illustrate some key features. Many outstanding pilots have been omitted, such as Pierre Closterman (26 victories), Gunther Rall (275 victories), Marmaduke ‘Pat’ Pattle (34 victories), or Thomas McGuire (38 victories) along with hundreds of others.⁴⁸

With the public focus on the Battle of Britain and Spitfires, RAF pilots are the most visible. Douglas ‘Tin Legs’ Bader was a natural athlete and skilled pilot who lost both legs in a flying accident pre-war. An inspiring leader and tactician, dogmatic and opinionated,⁴⁹ Bader remains

43 Rachman, *Fear and Courage*, op cit, page 242, Billiere, *Supreme Courage*, op cit, page 25, and Moran, *The Anatomy of Courage*, op cit, pages 78 and 109. There is an interesting parallel between the Civil War soldier who whether winning or losing, had always a personal price to pay, and bomber crews who, according to Rachman, “experienced worse psychological effects than the bombed” – *Fear and Courage*, op cit, page 242 and Miller, *The Mystery of Courage*, op cit, page 61. Also a number of pilots suffered badly from the sights they had seen and turned to some form of relief, or suicide. For this see Eschel, *Bravery in Battle*, op cit, page 9 as well as footnote 112 below

44 Gregory Boyington, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, Bantam Books, New York, 1977, pages 38-39

45 For example, see Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces*, op cit; Peter Firkins, *The Golden Eagles*, St George Books, Perth, 1980; Robert Jackson, *Fighter Pilots of World War II*, Arthur Barker, London, 1976; Jackson, *Air Heroes of World War II*, op cit; and Lex McAulay, *Six Aces: Australian Fighter Pilots 1939-1945*, Banner Books, Melbourne, 1991

46 Eschel, *Bravery in Battle*, op cit, page 8

47 Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces*, op cit, pages 14-16

48 Where the number of victories is given, all figures come from one website to make the numbers consistent. There is clearly little agreement on kills and various websites and books claim to have the true numbers. See ‘Fighter Pilot Ace List’ at www.csd.uwo.ca/~pettypi/elevon/accs.html which is a 67 page compilation for all countries from the Great War onward.

49 For a nice example of Bader’s obstinacy, see Larry Forrester, *Fly for Your Life: The Story of RR Stanford Tuck DSO DFC and Two Bars*, Frederick Muller, London, 1973, pages 215-218 where Bader, Sailor Malan and Stanford Tuck “debated” the value of the machine gun versus cannons

the personification of courage in the air for many (22 victories). Johnnie Johnson became the leading RAF ace of the war with 38 victories, demonstrating his talent by flying offensive missions with a short-range aircraft.⁵⁰ Some see Johnson as the outstanding fighter pilot of the war. Stanford Tuck, a debonair and aggressive pilot achieved fame in the Battle of Britain with 29 victories.⁵¹ Other pilots to gain prominence during that Battle were Sailor Malan with 35 victories, George 'Screwball' Beurling with 31 victories, JH (Ginger) Lacey with 28 victories, and Paddy Finucane, shot down in July 1942 with 32 victories.

Perhaps the best known US pilot was the colourful Gregory 'Pappy' Boyington who flew Corsairs from Efate. He was shot down in January 1944 with 24 victories. Two pilots became household names flying out of Guadalcanal, both winning the Medal of Honour - Joe Foss (26 victories) and Harold 'Indian Joe' Bauer (11 victories). US Navy pilot Edward 'Butch' O'Hare achieved fame and a Medal of Honour for shooting down five Japanese aircraft and saving the USS *Lexington* (12 victories). Francis 'Gabby' Gabreski became the highest scoring ace in the European theatre with 28 victories. Richard Bong was the leading American ace with 40 victories – an instructor said that Bong was the finest natural pilot he had met.

The Soviet Union produced a number of pilots who achieved more victories than any other Allied nation. Ivan Kozhedub flew from March 1943 after acting as a training instructor (62 victories). Alexander Pokryshkin was an avid student of Great War air battles and pursued a highly scientific approach to combat (59 victories). Alexander Klubov flew from August 1942 and joined the same squadron as Pokryshkin flying P-39s, scoring 50 victories. He was described as "brave, determined and full of initiative."⁵² The Soviets also had a number of highly effective women fighter pilots including Lilya Litvak (12 victories) and Katya Budanova (11 victories).⁵³

German pilots were engaged from the Spanish Civil War onwards. They also tended to fly until killed. Erich Hartmann was based on the Eastern Front and became the leading ace of the war - he advocated shooting from very close, scoring 352 victories. Walter Nowotny also flew on the Eastern Front. He was the first pilot to pass 250 victories, eventually reaching 258. Gerhard Barkhorn was the first pilot to record 1000 missions, and was shot down nine times (301 victories). Adolf Galland was an inspiring leader as well as a talented pilot. Almost blind in one eye after a 1935 crash, he continued to fly with panache – often smoking a cigar – with a Mickey Mouse emblem on his plane. He scored 104 victories and was promoted to General of the Fighter Arm. Hans-Joachim Marseille was a non-conformist and innovator: Adolf Galland said of him that "His achievements were previously considered impossible".⁵⁴ Known as 'The Star of Africa', he was killed in 1942 with a score of 158 victories.

Australia produced a small number of high scoring pilots. Clive Caldwell fought in the desert war where he developed the 'shadow shooting' approach to deflection shooting. An aggressive and talented pilot, Caldwell survived the war as the leading Australian ace, scoring 29 victories. Keith Truscott was a well known football player in Melbourne who fought over Britain and later returned to Milne Bay, Darwin and Exmouth. He was killed in 1943 after scoring 17 victories. Charles Scherf was a grazier who flew Mosquitos in Europe on intruder missions. He was known

50 For the distinction between offensive and defensive engagements, see C Shores and C Williams, *Aces High: The Fighter Aces of the British and Commonwealth Air Forces in World War II*, Neville Spearman, London, 1966, page 10

51 Tuck was awarded his 30th in 1981: <http://home.tiscali.be/ed.ragas/awshistory/awstruck.html>

52 www.elknet.pl/acestory/klubov/klubov.htm

53 See Robert Jackson, *The Red Falcons: The Soviet Air Force in Action 1919-1969*, Tandem, London, 1970 at pages 7, 8, 92, 98, 99, 104, 111-112, and 124

54 www.2worldwar2.com/marseille.htm

for his independence of action and his willingness to take on extra flights even when on leave (23 victories).

The true numbers of victories for Japanese pilots remain in doubt as personal totals were combined with the group. One pilot for example claimed a score between 27 and 350 depending whether he was drunk or sober.⁵⁵ Hiroyoshi Nishizawa was the leading Japanese ace with 87 victories (although he also might have had 20 or 202).⁵⁶ Known as the 'Devil of Rabaul', he was an excellent pilot with an interest in aerobatics. Saburo Sakai is perhaps the best known Japanese ace.⁵⁷ An excellent pilot (64 victories), he was a leading member of the famed Tainan air group that was said to have shot down more aircraft than any other Japanese unit. Toshio Ota also flew with Tainan and was reckoned as a very good pilot (34 victories). Tetsuzo Iwamoto was known as the 'Richtofen of Rabaul' with his 80 victories. Satoshi Anobuki was an aggressive pilot, clearly influenced by the teachings of Bushido that encouraged him to attack at all times (51 victories).

These quick glimpses of leading pilots are meant as no more than a hasty guide. When Pappy Boyington said "Just name a hero and I'll prove he is a bum",⁵⁸ he was speaking of some pilots – there certainly were the glory-seekers, those who boasted of their ability to be a top ace or that they would win a medal, but these were balanced by those who eschewed the road to glory but went where duty called.⁵⁹

The prospect of choosing a brave person from the ruck is well-nigh impossible. If we leave aside those pilots who could have been ruled out as fighter pilots because of age (such as Douglas Bader, Adolf Galland, Clive Caldwell, Joe Foss, and Pappy Boyington), or gender, (including Lidia Litvyak and Katya Budanova), there were many who might have been screened out earlier and stopped any flying career. To take some examples, Johnnie Johnson was almost dismissed from the RAF because of Lack of Moral Fibre as an old football injury to his shoulder caused him to experience problems controlling his aircraft. Pappy Boyington and Hans-Joachim Marseille were often in trouble for disciplinary issues, Gerhard Barkhorn flew 120 sorties before making his first kill and must have been considered a poor risk, Saburo Sakai was a weak student and gained entry into flying school with difficulty, Gabby Gabreski, Pappy Boyington, Paddy Finucane, Stanford Tuck and Bluey Truscott were indifferent student pilots needing a number of re-checks (Truscott apparently never mastered the landing of an aircraft),⁶⁰ while Saburo Sakai, Adolf Galland and Douglas Bader should have been grounded for having disabilities. Yet all these pilots conducted themselves admirably in the air.

⁵⁵ www.billybishop.net/ijnaf.html

⁵⁶ www.acesofww2.com/japan/Aces/Hiroyoshi_Nishizawa.htm

⁵⁷ See Saburo Sakai et al, *Samurai!*, Ballantine Books, New York, 1967, Henry Sakaida, *Winged Samurai*, Champlin Fighter Museum Press, Mesa AZ, 1985, and healthy sections of Masatake Okumiya et al, *Zero! The Story of the Japanese Navy Air Force 1937-1945*, Cassell, London, 1957

⁵⁸ Boyington, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, op cit, page 374

⁵⁹ Examples are Thomas McGuire who wanted the Medal of Honour (and got it posthumously) and Neel Kearby (killed when he had 22 victories) who set out to be the top ace in the Pacific – www.acepilots.com/usaaf_kcarby.html and www.acepilots.com/usaaf_mcguire.html Clive Caldwell admitted he wanted to get medals in order to improve his peacetime employment prospects – Watson, *Killer Caldwell*, op cit, page 90. There were also men such as Richard Bong, 'Indian Joe' Bauer and Dan Roberts (14 kills) who were seen to be ideal American boys, with Bong a teetotaler and non-smoker and Roberts not drinking, smoking or swearing – www.acepilots.com/usaaf_pto_aces.html Bader was another teetotaler as was Beurling.

⁶⁰ It is interesting that Truscott's fellow school pupil and VFL player, Keith Miller of cricketing fame, was also not a particularly good pilot yet both were clearly above average in hand-eye coordination and agility – see Roland Perry, *Miller's Luck: The Life and Loves of Keith Miller, Australia's Greatest All-Rounder*, Random House, Sydney, 2005, page 93. Miller could also join Boyington and Marseille with his continuing disciplinary problems

IV

We turn now to some of the distinguishing elements of the very best of the fighter pilots.

First, a small number of pilots recorded most of the victories.

Of the 70,000 aircraft shot down, we know that a disproportionately small number of pilots was responsible and most agree that those 'aces' shooting down five aircraft or more accounted for about half of the total number of victories. Spick has brutally summarised this fact by saying: "The gulf between the average fighter pilot and the successful one is very wide. In fact it is arguable that there are almost no average fighter pilots; just aces and turkeys; killers and victims".⁶¹ (Of course, numerous factors were of importance – the number of times a pilot flew in battle in an aircraft without mechanical difficulty, the number of sorties flown, the number of times the enemy was seen and engaged, and the number of victories achieved.) This emphasis on the few achieving much meshes neatly with a long-observed characteristic among soldiers of only a small number of men shooting their rifles or leading in engagements with the enemy.⁶²

Spick says that only about five per cent of the total number of pilots ever achieved ace status by shooting down five aircraft, and less than half of this select group went on to make ten kills - about 50 per cent of pilots never shot down an aircraft.⁶³ Similarly, Shores and Williams in speaking of the British and Commonwealth pilots note that during the war the aces scored "something over 60 per cent of all confirmed victories...these 1000 odd pilots represented about 5 per cent of all fighter pilots..."⁶⁴ Bergerud, in discussing the American involvement in the Pacific war, shows that the aces scored a disproportionate number of enemy kills, often with about 90% of the kills of a squadron being attributable to pilots with more than one victory.⁶⁵ In some circumstances there was simply no opportunity to make kills as the war had moved away⁶⁶ yet for many pilots there was a lack of luck or being in the right place whereas their more favoured colleagues continued to score one victory after another.

Over 100 Luftwaffe pilots achieved a score of over 100 victories. Of the 25,000 odd victories against Allied aircraft in the West, more than half were shot down by less than 500 pilots. ⁶⁷ In that theatre against the well-trained Allied forces, eight German pilots shot down over 100 aircraft.⁶⁸ In North Africa, of 1294 victories, 674 came from the actions of 15 pilots. ⁶⁹ On the Eastern Front, it was estimated 30,000 of the 44,000 Russian aircraft shot down were destroyed by 300 pilots! Similarly in night-fighting operations against the Allied bombers, a small number of pilots made the majority of kills "while hundreds of 'green' pilots landed night after night

61 Mike Spick, *The Ace Factor: Air Combat and the Role of Situational Awareness*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 1989, pages iv and v

62 See Eric Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky: The Air War in the South Pacific*, Westview Press, Boulder CO, 2000, page 508 and Hastings, *Warriors*, op cit, page 243

63 Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces*, op cit, page 14

64 Shores and Williams, *Aces High*, op cit, page 11

65 Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky*, op cit, pages 507-511

66 Bergerud, *Fire in the Sky*, *ibid*, page 512. He also discusses aces at pages 513-515

67 There is an ongoing debate as to whether the Luftwaffe pilots could have shot down the hundreds of aircraft they claim. Their rigorous demands of proof on kills as well as their almost unlimited opportunity to shoot down planes, especially on the Eastern Front, lead to the belief that their best pilots were extraordinarily good and their figures as reliable as those on the other side. For some discussion on this see Christopher Shores, *Air Aces*, Presidio Press, Novato CA, 1983, page 7 and Trevor Constable and Raymond Toliver, *Horrido: Fighter Aces of the Luftwaffe*, Arthur Barker Ltd, London, 1968, pages 15-16

68 Edward Sims, *The Fighter Pilots: A Comparative Study of the Royal Air Force, the Luftwaffe, and the United States Army Air Force in Europe and North Africa 1939-1945*, Cassell, London, 1967, pages 154, 173

69 Sims, *The Fighter Pilots*, *ibid*, pages 119, 128

without a kill, even at the height of the 'Battles' in 1943-44".⁷⁰ Many pilots were ineffective: in a study of one Geschwader comprising approximately 120 aircraft, there were 80 pilots lost in one period and of these 60 had not obtained a single victory.⁷¹ With the demands on German pilots, it should be noted that many of the highly regarded 'Experten' failed to live out the war and only about half of the top ranking pilots survived.⁷²

The skill level of the best pilots was amazing. Perhaps the most incredible statistic is that Hans-Joachim Marseille (with 158 victories) was said to have averaged 15 bullets for every victory.⁷³ Of interest as a comparison, Butch O'Hare flying a Wildcat, shot down five Japanese bombers seeking to destroy the *USS Lexington* in February 1942 and averaged 60 rounds for each victory, still an excellent result.⁷⁴

Secondly, the ratio of victories to sorties (operational flights) by the elite was very impressive.

Of the Luftwaffe pilots, Gerhard Barkhorn flew 1104 sorties and shot down 301 aircraft, Walter Nowotny flew 442 sorties for 250 victories, and Erich Hartmann engaged the enemy on about 800 occasions for his more than 350 victories. Most Allied pilots had far fewer sorties and opportunities: the USAF's Richard Bong in two years fired at 88 aircraft, hit 58 and was awarded 40 victories, while the RAF's Johnnie Johnson hit 59 aircraft for 38 victories, all of them enemy fighters.⁷⁵ 'Ginger' Lacey of the RAF had 28 victims in 81 sorties. Of Soviet pilots, Alexander Pokryshkin flew 560 sorties and had 59 victories in 156 engagements,⁷⁶ while Ivan Kozhedub took part in 126 engagements and obtained 62 victories.⁷⁷ Clive Caldwell claimed 21 German aircraft including three German 'Experten', while flying the inferior Tomahawk.⁷⁸ Each of these achievements is noteworthy, and the province of a very small number of talented and brave men.⁷⁹

Thirdly, we turn to an examination of some characteristics of the elite pilots to see whether any single feature distinguishes them from the rest.⁸⁰

⁷⁰ Max Hastings, *Bomber Command*, Book Club Associates, London, 1980, page 238

⁷¹ Sims, *The Fighter Pilots*, op cit, page 156

⁷² Sims, *The Fighter Pilots*, ibid, page 129. 'Experten' was a term applied to pilots by their peers for overall excellence – they did not use the concept of 'ace'. S McFarland and W Newton, *To Command the Sky: The Battle for Air Superiority over Germany, 1942-1944*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington DC, 1991, pages 211-212 shows that the Luftwaffe in a three month period from March to May 1944 lost 28 aces who between them had accounted for 2118 enemy aircraft! Also friendly fire from January 1943 to January 1944 downed a further 264 German aircraft – ibid, page 261

⁷³ Constable and Toliver, *Horrido*, op cit, page 84 has a quote validating the 15 shots per kill. Franz Kurovski, *German Fighter Ace: Hans-Joachim Marseille: The Life Story of 'The Star of Africa'*, Schiffer Military History, Atglen PA, 1994, makes little of this aspect - but see page 156

⁷⁴ www.acepilots.com/usn_ohare.html Johnnie Johnson flew with a pilot who shot down two FW-190s with 26 rounds of shell fire, and this approaches the amazing Marseille feat, albeit for two planes only – Johnnie Johnson, *Wing Leader*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1956, page 236

⁷⁵ Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces*, op cit, page 17

⁷⁶ Tomas Polak, *Stalin's Falcons: The Aces of the Red Star*, Grub Street, London, 1999, page 254

⁷⁷ www.elknet.pl/acestory/kozedub.htm

⁷⁸ Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces*, op cit, pages 197-199

⁷⁹ There is no intention to posit any form of "ace of aces" or some such claim. All we can do is to give some indication of relative merit and indicate the flying ability which is shared only by the elite.

⁸⁰ In addition to references elsewhere in this paper and material on the internet, there are dozens of books of interest, with multiple biographies of Galland, Hartmann and Bader for example. See Henry Sakaida, *Imperial Japanese Navy Aces 1937-1945*, Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 1999; Ikuhiko Hata and Yasuho Izawa, *Japanese Naval Aces and Fighter Units in World War II*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 1989; RF Toliver and TJ Constable, *Fighter General: The Life of Adolf Galland*, AmPress Publishing, Zephyr Cove NV, 1990; RF Toliver and TJ Constable, *The Blond Knight of Germany*, Acro, Blue Ridge Summit PA, 1985; U Hartmann, *German Fighter Ace: Erich Hartmann: The Life Story of the World's Highest Scoring Ace*, Schiffer Military History, Chester PA, 1992; Doug Stokes, *Paddy Finucane: Fighter Ace*, William Kimber, London, 1983; David Baker, *Adolf Galland:*

We look first at sporting ability. Douglas Bader represented the RAF at cricket and rugby, and later played a fine golf game after his flying accident that cost him his legs. Clive Caldwell was a state champion in javelin and hurdles, Pappy Boyington wrestled and later became a wrestling referee, Adolf Galland was a pre-war glider pilot and instructor, Erich Hartmann was an aggressive skier, Paddy Finucane excelled at rugby, boxing and rowing, Keith Truscott played AFL with the Melbourne club in two pre-war premierships, Charles Scherf played football and tennis in local competitions, Hiroyoshi Nishizawa excelled at judo, Johnnie Johnson and Ginger Lacey played rugby, Stanford Tuck was a first class athlete and was recognised as a good swimmer and boxer, while 'Indian Joe' Bauer was outstanding at athletics and played football for Navy.⁸¹

Some elite pilots hunted and were reckoned as good shots with a rifle or gun – Stanford Tuck, Joe Foss, Johnnie Johnson, Adolf Galland, Paddy Finucane, Richard Bong and Charles Scherf among them. Johnnie Johnson was quick to appreciate the link. He said that “the principles of deflection against wildfowl and aeroplanes were exactly the same except that aeroplanes could sometimes return your fire. The best fighter pilots were usually outdoor men who had shot game and wildfowl”.⁸² In another place, Johnson said that the importance of good deflection shooting was clear: “the kills in any squadron always seemed to fall to the same few pilots while the others usually scored a probable or a damaged”.⁸³

Many were seen by their peers as very good marksmen in their aircraft. Sims reviews them and gives top marks for shooting ability to Stanford Tuck, Richard Bong, Adolf Galland, Johnnie Johnson, and Clive Caldwell.⁸⁴ Often mentioned in this context are Erich Hartmann, Sailor Malan and Hans-Joachim Marseille.

Numerous pilots devised new techniques to achieve greater success. To cite some examples, Clive Caldwell developed his shadow shooting, Sailor Malan, Douglas Bader and Walter Nowotny devised new flying formations, Erich Hartmann, Alexander Pokryshkin, Hans-Joachim Marseille and Johnnie Johnson devised effective personal methods of attack, while many including Alexander Pokryshkin, Ginger Lacey, Clive Caldwell, and Sailor Malan tinkered with their aircraft armament. Alexander Pokryshkin was said to have applied a scientific approach to his flying ⁸⁵ while Hans-Joachim Marseille spent vast amounts of time working out the best way to down an enemy – he may have been the ultimate technician.⁸⁶

Many pilots were aggressive and tried to get very close to the enemy aircraft – Johnnie Johnson, Screwball Beurling, Joe Foss, 'Indian Joe' Bauer, Erich Hartmann, Stanford Tuck, Clive Caldwell, Richard Bong and Sailor Malan. Some airmen such as Stanford Tuck, Richard Bong and Joe Foss got in so close they often returned to base with their aircraft riddled with bullet holes. Hartmann's philosophy was quite simple – “Get close...when he fills the entire

The Authorised Biography, Windrow and Greene, London, 1996; Paul Brickhill, *Reach for the Sky: The Story of Douglas Bader DSO DFC*, Collins, London, 1969; George C Kenney, *Dick Bong: Ace of Aces*, Zenger Publishing Co, Washington DC, 1960; Francis Gabreski, *Gabby: A Fighter Pilot's Life*, Orion Books, New York, 1991; and Russell Braddon, *Cheshire VC: A Story of War and Peace*, Evans Brothers Limited, London, 1954. Very rarely do any of these books provide great insights into what courage is even though bravery may be demonstrated on every page.

81 www.acepilots.com/bauer/usinc_bauer1.html

82 www.mishalov.com/Johnson_Johnnie.html Also Johnson, *Wing Leader*, op cit, page 126 on shooting pheasants and deflection: “The outstanding pilots were invariably excellent game-shots”.

83 Edward Sims, *Fighter Tactics and Strategy 1914-1970*, Cassell, London, 1972, page 158

84 Sims, *The Fighter Pilots*, op cit, passim

85 www.clknet.pl/acestory/pokri/pokri.htm

86 www.2worldwar2.com/marseille.htm provides a neat summary of Marseille's training program

windscreen...then you can't possibly miss".⁸⁷ Sometimes this close-quarter combat had a sorry end - Gerald Barkhorn was shot down 9 times, and Erich Hartmann was shot down 16 times. (If we keep these figures in mind, Johnnie Johnson's feat of flying over 500 sorties and being hit only once with a single cannon shell seems amazing as is Erich Hartmann's claim that in 1400 sorties he was never hit by bullets from an enemy aircraft although flak and bombers forced him to crash land 14 times!) According to Spick, Marine pilot Joe Foss was known as a 'bar-room brawler' for his aggressiveness (after nine kills he had brought home four aircraft too badly damaged to be used again⁸⁸), Clive Caldwell was described as 'the fightingest pilot of the Desert War', Douglas Bader was 'courageous to the point of folly' and Pappy Boyington was seen to be more than aggressive in that 'he was positively belligerent'.⁸⁹

Some pilots were acknowledged as having very good eyesight that allowed them to see the enemy before anybody else. Those mentioned most by their peers or later historians are Hiroyoshi Nishizawa, Erich Hartmann,⁹⁰ Hans-Joachim Marseille⁹¹ and Saburo Sakai.⁹² Oddly, some of the leading aces had almost no sight in one eye, including Mick Mannock in the Great War, Adolf Galland from 1935 and Saburo Sakai from 1942 - although it has been suggested this trio probably had better sight in one eye than most pilots did with two.⁹³

Again these comparisons have distinct limitations. We see that some standard measures such as sporting prowess may not mean very much in the air - yes, a sportsman such as Bader was used to teamwork and discipline and in directing his wing, but it is not necessary for a pilot to have been a first class sportsman to show expertise in the air (there is no great evidence that most Japanese or Soviet aces, for example, excelled at sport although we might assume that all achieved some level of competence in team sports at Flying School). And yes, mastery of deflection shooting was a gift to Clive Caldwell or Johnnie Johnson, but did Erich Hartmann or Gerhard Barkhorn need to practice grouse shooting to be the masters they undoubtedly were?

What we may need to accept is that it is natural ability - a form of Factor X - that distinguishes the few from the many. As an example, Eduard Neumann, Hans-Joachim Marseille's squadron leader, said of Marseille that "...he was as near the perfect composite fighter pilot as one was ever likely to see. The features were all there - acute eyesight, instantaneous reflexes, a very quick perception of an opportunity, an innate 'feel' for an aeroplane, and, in addition to this, plenty of panache. He had style, dash and courage. He was an excellent marksman".⁹⁴ It is striking the similarity with a comment on Johnnie Johnson: "...unusual skills as a marksman...his shooting was superb. He was cool and clear-headed in battle, naturally gifted as a pilot, and had both courage and determination".⁹⁵ High praise indeed, but again we might assume that similar things were said of the elite across all countries.

V

When looking for some understanding of courage we find when reading the often lyrical adventures of the elite fighter pilots that there is little analysis of how the pilots actually felt when engaging the enemy. There is almost always a recitation of pilot log book entries such as "I

87 www.acepilots.com/misc_hartmann.html

88 www.acepilots.com/usmc_foss.html

89 Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces*, op cit, pages 92, 133, 160, 184

90 Jackson, *Fighter Pilots of World War II*, op cit, page 125

91 www.2worldwar2.com/marseille.htm

92 Spick, *The Ace Factor*, op cit, page 117

93 Spick, *Allied Fighter Aces*, op cit, page 15.

94 Laddie Lucas (ed), *Thanks for the Memory: Unforgettable Characters in Air Warfare 1939-1945*, Grub Street, London, 1998, article by Eduard Neumann on Marseille, page 265

95 Sims, *The Fighter Pilots*, op cit, page 216

aimed at the first bomber and gave him a short burst” (Alexander Pokryshkin). Less often we might get a comment on obligations, so Johnnie Johnson: “There never was any euphoria in shooting down a plane. You just felt you had acquitted yourself well”.

For some pilots, there was a joy in realising that they had finally found the key to success. Marseille realised that if he applied himself he could easily achieve victories and is said to have made the comment “I believe now I got it” when all the factors meshed together. South African ‘Pat’ Pattle wrote a letter to his family in which he described his flowering as an elite pilot over a period of time – he began as “plainly nervous about my own safety”, then entered “the reckless stage” then became nervous about less experienced pilots and tried to protect them, and “Now I regard it as a science...” and then went on to describe his calculated approach to air engagements.⁹⁶ He had apparently overcome fear and entered the next stage of approaching mortal combat as merely a technical operation.

J Glen Gray has discussed what he terms the ‘tyranny of the present’ by which he sees the battle zone as all-embracing, past and future are irrelevant, and time and space are compressed. The soldier is aware his chances of survival are low and they “possess only a finite amount of courage and endurance and that their lives are always at risk”.⁹⁷ Similarly, air battles create most intense situations. A few pilots have articulated their thoughts on air engagements and have emerged with similar words. Ivan Kozhedub said that “Everything happened in a twinkling. It was only on the ground, among my friends, that I recalled the details of this battle”.⁹⁸ Paddy Finucane was more expansive saying “Before going off on a trip I usually have a funny feeling in my tummy, but once I’m in the aircraft everything is fine. The brain is working fast and if the enemy is met it seems to work like a clockwork motor. You don’t have the time to feel anything... You come back from a show and find it very hard to remember what happened... [later] you lie there re-living the combat... everything happens so quickly in the air that you crowd a tremendous amount of thinking, action and emotion into a very short space of time, and you suffer afterward from mental indigestion.”⁹⁹

Perhaps unsurprisingly when we consider the often flamboyant knights of the air we have been discussing, we have scant references to fear and courage (although Finucane’s clockwork motor and Pattle’s epiphanic path might come close). Pappy Boyington in a typically self-deprecatory manner says “...I wouldn’t go so far as to say I have never been brave, but most of the things for which I had been given credit for bravery were nothing but daredevil stunts.... My definition of bravery is when a person does what he honestly believes is the best thing for him to do at any particular time.”¹⁰⁰ Adolf Galland expressed the view of others when he said “I am not ashamed to admit that before each sortie I was in a state approaching terror. As soon as I got up to a few thousand feet my fears vanished”.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Laddie Lucas (ed), *The Wings of War: Airmen of All Nations Tell Their Stories 1939-1945*, Grafton Books, London, 1985, page 170

⁹⁷ Michael Evans, ‘Close Combat: Lessons from the Cases of Albert Jacka and Audie Murphy’, in Evans and Ryan, *The Human Face of Warfare*, op cit, page 39

⁹⁸ www.elknet.pl/acestory/kozhedub/kozhedub.htm

⁹⁹ www.acesofww2.com/UK/Finucane/Paddy_Finucane.htm However, Johnnie Johnson said that Douglas Bader could provide a clear exposition of the engagements once he had landed – Johnson, *Wing Leader*, op cit, page 108

¹⁰⁰ Boyington, *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, op cit, pages 284-285

¹⁰¹ Adolf Galland, *The First and the Last: The German Fighter Force in World War II*, Methuen and Co, London, 1955, page 117. Also see Kristin Alexander, *Clive Caldwell, Air Ace*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2006. page 56 and Peter Dorman, *Nicky Barr: An Australian Air Ace*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2002, page 32

Leading air historian Mike Spick, has said that “Many fighter aces have been described as fearless; this is simply not true. What they have to do is control their fear, which demands a high degree of determination”.¹⁰² This comment finds some support in the writings on the elite pilots. Peter Henn, a Luftwaffe pilot, admitted to his colleague that he was frightened. The response from his battle-hardened friend might neatly summarise what must have been a common response: “I’ve sweated more often with fright in my cockpit than you’ve ever done in your life, but no one ever had an idea that I was scared. The main thing, you see, is to overcome the obstacle...to master your instinct...It’s a tough job and it cost me a lot to learn”.¹⁰³ Johnnie Johnson said: “We all knew the meaning of fear, and felt it according to our temperaments and training. I never knew a pilot who fell outside this category: our simple duty was to control this fear and prevent its natural transition into panic. Once you let it give way to panic, you were finished”.¹⁰⁴ Stanford Tuck’s biographer says that after a crash, even the brash Tuck “knew too, that he was not immune to fear”. He realised that it was crucial “never to let fear approach again, to hold it away by sheer aggressiveness”.¹⁰⁵ Joe Foss said “we were frequently scared and admitted it...But a man must be able to conquer that fear somehow: a fellow who stays scared doesn’t belong in this business”.¹⁰⁶

There is a neat symmetry with these articulations of suppressing fear from the most decorated US soldier of World War II, Audie Murphy, who said “I have a deadly hatred of fear...Fear is a blot on the thinking process crippling the individual’s capacity to act. I am not brave. I simply perform first and think later”.¹⁰⁷

VI

Courage is an almost indefinable thing. A capacity to overcome fear and demonstrate dominance over a situation under extreme conditions is confined to a small number of special individuals. We might choose to agree with Professor Phillip Zimbardo that each of us contains within us the capacity to be a hero depending on how we are impacted by situational forces,¹⁰⁸ or we might want to accept that true courage is the preserve of a treasured few, the “uniquely glorious”.¹⁰⁹

The focus of this paper has been the experts of the air. Some excelled over many years - including Saburo Sakai or Erich Hartmann - while some gained their country’s highest medal for bravery following a single momentous display - Butch O’Hare’s saving of the *Lexington* is a fair example. ¹¹⁰ We can only guess at what drove some pilots to achieve their feats and the resources they had to draw on, in pursuing the enemy. ¹¹¹ We recognise the traumas that battle brought and the sufferings that each must have endured.¹¹²

¹⁰² Spick, *The Ace Factor*, op cit, page iv

¹⁰³ Peter Henn, ‘Luftwaffe Attitude’ in Lucas (ed) *Wings of War*, op cit, pages 393-394

¹⁰⁴ Johnson, *Wing Leader*, op cit, page 187*

¹⁰⁵ Forrester, *Fly for Your Life*, op cit, pages 66 and 101

¹⁰⁶ Walter Simmons, *Joe Foss: Flying Marine*, Zenger Publishing, Washington DC, 1943, page 89

¹⁰⁷ Hastings, *Warriors*, op cit, pages 255-256

¹⁰⁸ www.edge.org/q2006/q06_index.html

¹⁰⁹ Ian Warden, *Canberra Times*, 5 August 2006, page B7

¹¹⁰ Miller, *The Mystery of Courage*, op cit, page 68 looks at this question. Numerous medals were awarded to pilots for bringing the aircraft home despite heavy damages

¹¹¹ Respect is owed to the attempts by many former pilots including Saburo Sakai, Pappy Boyington, Adolf Galland, Douglas Bader and Stanford Tuck to forge the brotherhood of the air by meeting again as comrades since the ending of hostilities.

¹¹² There is only limited information on post traumatic stress disorder. We know that some Japanese pilots resorted to alcoholism, and that Charles Scherf’s death by crashing his car into a tree is usually seen as self-inflicted. Leonard Cheshire, bomber pilot extraordinaire, was released from the RAF with a disability pension for psycho-neurosis. Michael Evans, ‘Close Combat’, op cit, discusses Albert Jacka and Audie Murphy, and both, but especially Murphy, were traumatised by their experiences.

And what of our factors of courage discussed earlier? It all appears to revolve around fear and fearlessness, once factors such as training methods and equipment are taken as a given. Intuitively there seems to be a truth in the statement of Eschel that conquering fear is the real heroism, and the scant references to fear in relation to air aces in the previous section tends to bear this out. We cannot know whether our sample of pilots was brave, fearless, simply performing well as a duty, or some combination of all these.¹¹³ Nor can we accept that courage is merely a form of 'muddling through' – it is far more than that. Maybe John Wayne was close when he said "Courage is being scared to death – and saddling up anyway".¹¹⁴ Similarly, looking at categories of courage has provided little of value. Perhaps 'hot' and 'cold' courage mean something but once again 'fear' and 'fearlessness' are more instructive. Given we are dealing with flesh and blood, and examples at the extreme of man's capacity, it would be surprising if artificial constructs of courage provided much guidance, and this is so here.

And what of the notion of courage being extraordinary acts of bravery and boldness? Like the earlier examples of the heroes, the police, civil defence workers, submariners and astronauts, that is, those who understand the odds but persist nonetheless, our pilots repeatedly took on missions accepting that it could be their last.¹¹⁵ They were special people: they knew they were loading the dice of death against their chances of survival. And they did so because of their belief in their own capacities, their belief in the case for which they were fighting, and because of their bond with their fellow combatants. We may not understand it - we can but admire those who could conquer fear and demonstrate courage for whatever reason and fight for their country with determination.

But, is there an answer to the seminal question of 'what is courage'? Undoubtedly, but we realise in grappling with the concept that courage comes from within, an elemental force that can be drawn on by some if the conditions warrant. Just as Socrates sought the answer aeons ago, a credible explanation is still wanting - it is unlikely we can get to the essence of what courage actually is. We can only agree with Leonard Cheshire's biographer that "Courage is a singular virtue harder to define than to recognise".¹¹⁶ Perhaps it is better that way.

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Nightmares were common, being experienced by among others, Caldwell and Beurling (see Brian Nolan, *Hero: The Falcon of Malta*, William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1982, page 121). The cricketer, Keith Miller, who flew a few battle missions in a Mosquito, suffered from survivor guilt and it is likely he was but one of many – see Perry, *Miller's Luck*, op cit, pages 85, 91, 100, 129, 433-434

¹¹³ Leonard Cheshire as a bomber pilot – winning the VC for 104 missions over 4 years – is a special case. See the comment by Air Vice-Marshal C Foxley-Norris on Cheshire suggesting he overcame his fears in 'Leonard Cheshire' in Lucas, *Thanks for the Memory*, op cit, page 22. For a view suggesting he was 90% fearless and 10% courageous, see the comment of a Harley Street neurologist in Boyle, *No Passing Glory*, op cit, pages 237-238. Cheshire said he was too busy with flak and enemy fighters to pay any attention to fears – see Braddon, *Cheshire VC*, op cit, page 116. Reading the various biographies on him as well as his own *Bomber Pilot* (Hutchinson, London, 1942) reinforces this impression of near-fearlessness.

¹¹⁴ <http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Courage>

¹¹⁵ See Michael Evans, 'Close Combat', op cit, pages 39-40.

¹¹⁶ Boyle, *No Passing Glory*, op cit, page 237



Is it Anzac Day or ANZAC day?

Dr John Moremon

What was once commonly 'Anzac Day' is nowadays often referred to as 'ANZAC Day' (in homage to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps). Which is the more correct?

The official historian, Charles Bean, who knew more about Australians in the Great War than anybody, wrote of a day in early 1915 when a staff officer arrived at HQ seeking a code name for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. Having noticed 'A&NZAC' stencilled on cases and also rubber stamps bearing this mark, a clerk suggested:

'How about ANZAC?' Major Wagstaff proposed the word to the general, who approved of it, and "Anzac" thereupon became the code name for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.¹

As a proper noun, as well as acronym, 'Anzac' entered the vernacular of the Diggers and Kiwis. At Gallipoli, they called their position, simply, Anzac; and the famous cove, Anzac Cove. They started referring to each other as Anzacs too. Eventually, any Australian or New Zealander who served in the war could be called an Anzac—although to them a true Anzac was a man who served at Gallipoli (later issued a brass 'A' to stick onto their unit colour patches).

On 25 April 1916, when people paused to observe the first anniversary of the landing and pay solemn tribute to those who had died at Gallipoli, by common accord it was Anzac Day, in honour of the men (*not* ANZAC Day, in reference to the corps.) The NZ Returned Soldiers' Association, for example, had an 'Anzac day sub-committee'; the King sent a message to be published 'on Anzac Day'; and songs and poems honoured 'Our Anzac Boys'. As many more died on the Western Front, the day evolved to honour *all* Australians and New Zealanders in the war (that is, not just those of the ANZAC, which actually ceased to exist after Gallipoli). Later still, Anzac Day encompassed every other conflict.

The modern penchant for 'ANZAC Day' may reflect the influences of the Australian War Memorial and the RSL whose websites and publications now consistently refer to 'ANZAC Day' and to 'the ANZACs'. Many people do not realise that the acronym is one which has only an initial capital and that this usage is enshrined in The Protection of the Word 'Anzac' Regulations. This is the word gifted to us by the men who forged the Anzac legend.

The ANZAC landing on 25 April 1915 gave us a legend and a date of commemoration, but the day has long been about so much more of our history and so many more of our people. This day is for all Australians to honour *all* who have served and died for our nation in the Anzac tradition.

'Anzac Day' reflects the history of this special word and the true meaning of the day. What is important is that the remembrance continues to be observed.

¹ C. E. W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, Vol. 1., *The Story of Anzac: The first phase*, (Sydney, 1941 edn), pp.124–25



NEW STATUE AT SAS HQ HEREFORD

Anthony Staunton

A life-sized statue of Lieutenant-Colonel Blair 'Paddy' Mayne, a founding member of the Special Air Service (SAS), will be erected at the SAS headquarters in Hereford, England. There is currently a statue of Mayne at Newtownards in County Down, about 15 kilometres east of Belfast, from which the new statue will be cast. Mayne, who was born in Newtownards, studied law at Queen's University in Belfast. While at university he took up boxing, and became Irish Universities Heavyweight Champion in August 1936. In 1938, he was selected for the British Lions Tour of South Africa. In early 1939 he graduated from Queen's University and joined a Belfast law firm.

Mayne enlisted in the territorial's, the British Army part time reserve, in March 1939. After the outbreak of war he transferred to the Royal Ulster Rifles and then joined the 11th (Scottish) Commando when it was formed. On 9 June 1941, he first saw action during the commando landing in support of the 7th Australian Division at the Litani River during the opening days of the Syrian campaign. Following the Syrian campaign Mayne was recruited by Captain David Stirling for the SAS. From November 1941 until the end of 1942, he participated in many raids behind enemy lines in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, where the SAS wrought havoc by destroying hundreds of German and Italian aircraft on the ground.

In January 1944, Mayne was given command of the 1st SAS Regiment and promoted lieutenant colonel. He led the SAS in the final campaigns in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany in 1944–1945. In the spring of 1945 Mayne was recommended for the Victoria Cross for his part in rescuing SAS troops trapped by heavy gunfire near the town of Oldenberg, Germany. After the men became pinned down and sustained casualties, Mayne destroyed the enemy gunners in a nearby farmhouse and helped rescue the wounded. Although the Victoria Cross was not granted Mayne was awarded a third bar to the Distinguished Service Order, just one of only two such awards to the British Army and one of seven to British officers from the three services during World War 2.

It has been suggested that the abrasive attitude of Mayne to some of his superiors or the Army hierarchy's disapproval of the concept of Special Forces may have influenced the recommendation process. Neither suggestion has merit since if discipline was an issue he would never have been promoted lieutenant colonel and given command of a SAS Regiment much less awarded four Distinguished Service Orders. As to the Army hierarchy's disapproval of awards to Special Forces, three of the ten Victoria Crosses awarded to the British Army in 1945 were to Special Forces officers - Lieutenants George Knowland of No 1 Commando and Claude Raymond of D Force for Burma and Temporary Major Anders Lassen of the SAS in Italy. All three awards were posthumous and only one of the ten British Army Victoria Cross recipients of 1945 survived the war which compares unfavourably with Australian Army Victoria Cross recipients of 1945 when four of the six recipients survived the war.

Despite Mayne ending the war as one of the British Army's most highly decorated soldiers there is, of course, a campaign to award him the Victoria Cross. In this case there is no argument as to whether a Victoria Cross recommendation was actually raised. However, all such campaigns, no matter how commendable, ignore 150 years history of the Victoria Cross in which no award has been granted more than six years after the action being commended. Unlike, the United States Medal of Honor where more than a quarter of all awards have been granted ten years or longer after the Medal of Honor action including 31 World War 2 awards in the last ten years the Victoria Cross has no tradition of belated awards. The six Victoria Crosses sent to the next of kin

in 1907 were not belated awards but represented a change in policy on posthumous awards. In all six cases, including two dating back to the Indian Mutiny, notices had appeared in the *London Gazette* shortly after the deaths of the recipients stating that they would have been awarded the Victoria Cross had they survived. With the policy change in 1907 to approve posthumous awards there was no reason not to send the next of kin the actual medals. However King Edward VII was still reluctant and eventually only agreed to the issue of medals on the understanding that there was only six cases and the issue of these medals would not lead to belated awards.

In June 2005 by Ian Gibson, Labour MP for the Norwich North, tabled in the British House of Commons, with the support of more than 100 MPs, the following motion:

This House recognises the grave injustice meted out to Lt Col Paddy Mayne, of 1st SAS, who won the Victoria Cross at Oldenburg in North West Germany on 9th April 1945; notes that this was subsequently downgraded, some six months later, to a third bar DSO, that the citation had been clearly altered and that David Stirling, founder of the SAS has confirmed that there was considerable prejudice towards Mayne and that King George VI enquired why the Victoria Cross had 'so strangely eluded him' ...

It is understandable that facts are sensationalised for publicity purposes but calling the award of a fourth DSO a "grave injustice" is slightly absurd. It is not in dispute that Mayne was recommended for the Victoria Cross but stating in the House of Commons motion that he "won the Victoria Cross" is irritating. That "the citation had been clearly altered" undoubtedly means that the citation for a fourth DSO is different to the recommendation for the Victoria Cross. This is quite normal since while a citation and a recommendation describe the same events they are written by different persons at different levels of the awards process. The claim that there was "considerable prejudice towards Mayne" is more than balanced by the claim of supporters that the recommendation was approval by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery and the interesting statement in the House of Commons motion that "King George VI enquired why the Victoria Cross had 'so strangely eluded him'".

Ten years after the war, aged just 40, Mayne was killed on 13 December 1955 not far from his home at Newtonards. Mayne was driving home in his sports car at 4 am when he collided with a parked lorry. Three books, with differing accounts of his personality and drinking, have been written. The first is *Colonel Paddy* by Patrick Marrinan (1960). *Rogue Warrior of the SAS: the Blair Mayne legend* by Ray Bradford and Martin Dillon (1989, updated 2003) and *Paddy Mayne* by Hamish Ross (2004). A History Channel documentary *SAS Warrior* was produced in 2004.¹

Correction - Australian Victoria Cross presentations

'Australian Victoria Cross presentations' *Sabretache* Vol XLVIII No. 2, June 2007, stated:

On 22 June 1943 an investiture was scheduled to present medals to aircrew from the successful air raid against the Ruhr dams the previous month. However George VI was ill on the day and delegated the duty to his wife Queen Elizabeth who presented the medals including the Victoria Cross to Wing Commander Guy Gibson. This is the only occasion when a Victoria Cross was presented by the consort to the monarch.

Doug Arman from Bendigo, a fellow Victoria Cross researcher, informs me that the King was not ill on 22 June 1943 but was away in North Africa reviewing troops at the time. Doug is correct that the King was reviewing troops overseas. I thank him for the correction.

¹ In 2003, Camp Blair Mayne in Kuwait was named after him. It was occupied by the 1st Battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins, and it was here that Collins gave his celebrated address to his troops before going into battle



THE CALDER BOYS

Peter Harvey

Jack and Bill Calder were identical twins who served in the AIF in World War I with distinction.

John Bricknell (Jack) Calder and William Cormack (Bill) Calder were born at Glenelg, the South Australian beachside town, on 23 November 1891.

They were not typical big bronzed Anzacs – on enlistment Jack was just over 5 feet 6 inches tall and Bill just under 5 feet 8 inches. Jack, a licensed surveyor, enlisted on 6 August 1915, not long before their 24th birthday. He was given the number B4513 and, after initial training, spent 6 weeks at the NCO school at Mitcham Camp and then a month at Officers' School. After passing to qualify for appointment as an officer, he was promoted to sergeant and posted to the 13th reinforcements of the 10th Battalion AIF.

On 8 December 1915, he applied for a commission which was granted eight days later. He was then posted as a 2nd Lieutenant to the 5th reinforcements of the 32nd Battalion and left with those reinforcements for the Middle East on 25 March 1916. There is a photo of Jack on Page 39 of *Second to None*, Roger Freeman's Memorial History of the 32nd Battalion. In Egypt, he spent a short time with the 8th Training Battalion and, on 13 May 1916, transferred to the 4th Pioneer Battalion. About three weeks later, Jack having been promoted Lieutenant, the battalion left Egypt for the Western Front, arriving in Marseilles on 11 June 1916. Perhaps Jack's expertise as a surveyor might have been a reason for his transfer to the pioneers.

What was a pioneer battalion? Pioneer battalions stemmed from Lord Kitchener's experience in India where he saw the valuable contribution that pioneers could make to an army in general. In 1914, when organizing his New Army, he made provision for new British divisions to include pioneers units. Pioneers were trained to carry out such military works as road building and repair, trench making, wiring and the construction of strong points. They were less skilled than engineers but more than infantry. Early in 1916, Australian pioneer battalions were formed, one for each infantry division. Although organized as infantry, they were not intended, except in emergencies, to live and fight in the trenches. Usually they came up to the line daily, or nightly, for their particular task, returning to their camp or billets when it was completed.

To form these units, every AIF battalion had to provide about 50 tradesmen and "pick and shovel" men. Some battalion commanders took the opportunity, traditional among old soldiers, to pass on to the pioneers some of their "hard cases". However, other COs transferred their most qualified men. The 5th Pioneer Battalion, for example, was formed in Egypt in March 1916 with 14 officers and 600 men, about 100 of whom had seen active service on Gallipoli. Later in the war, there were as many as 1100 in the battalion.

The command of these new pioneer units was usually given to a major from the infantry with at least one officer from the engineers. These new commanding officers had the task, among others, of breaking down the notion among the men that the battalions were not merely labour units. In time, a high spirit was created in the Australian pioneers with them being regarded as akin to engineers. Pioneers suffered losses and were awarded their share of decorations. Again, as an example, the 5th Battalion lost 5 officers and 220 men killed and was awarded 4 DSOs, 12 MCs, 10 DCMs, 33 MMs and 31 MiDs.

But back to the Calder twins, what had been happening to Bill while Jack had been training? Bill, who was employed as a shipping clerk, enlisted on 4 October 1915, about two months after Jack. Given the number 2576, he spent time with the 2nd Depot Battalion and with some 32nd Battalion reinforcements. Then from 1 January 1916, he spent six weeks at an NCO School before transfer to the 12th reinforcements of the 27th Battalion and then to the 5th reinforcements of the 32nd Battalion. As mentioned above, those reinforcements left for the Middle East in March 1916. The detachment consisted of four officers and 94 men. One of the four officers was Jack – so after different experiences in training, the twins had come together in the same unit but with different ranks.

However in Egypt, they parted ways again. As mentioned, Jack had joined the 4th Pioneers and gone to France, arriving on 11 June 1916. Bill, with the 32nd Battalion, left Egypt for the UK, not France, arriving at Plymouth on 16 June. Jack and his pioneers moved to the Western Front and into action at Pozieres, where the German shelling was some of the heaviest and most sustained of the war. For his conduct on the night of 4/5 August 1916, Jack was recommended for the French Croix de Guerre and later for the Order of the Crown of Italy. The recommendation in each case reads as follows:

This officer is recommended for general gallantry and steadiness under fire, and especially for his conduct on the night of 4/5 August at Pozieres. When bringing his men up to relieve a working party digging a communication trench between our old front line and O.G.I (Old German Trench), the party was cut off by a very heavy enemy barrage on a section of the communication trenches along which they were advancing, the men immediately in front and behind Lieut. Calder being killed.

Lieutenant Calder first took the front portion of the men on to the works and then came back and individually collected and led the remainder of his men a few at a time through that portion of the trench which was literally being blown to pieces, gradually getting all his men in to the works, which were completed before daylight, thereby enabling food and ammunition to be taken up to the captured trenches at an early hour of the morning."

Neither of these recommendations were approved. However, he was promoted captain on 7 August and given a Special Mention in Haig's dispatch of 9 April 1917. The recommendation for the Mention reads as follows:

For general good work and devotion to duty. This Officer has set a splendid example throughout by his coolness under trying circumstances, and in this way has greatly increased the efficiency and discipline of the company of which he has recently been put in charge.

On 12 June 1917, after taking part in the Battle of Messines, he was recommended for and subsequently awarded the Military Cross. The recommendation by his commanding officer reads:

On the night of the 7/8 June 1917, he with his company dug about 500 yards of communication trench past Despaigne Farm near Messines out beyond the outpost line. This work was carried out after dark under continual machine gun and rifle fire.

Throughout the night he personally handled his men, showing fine leadership, courage and determination. On the following night he completed the work under greater difficulties owing to the increased shelling. He has on this and all occasions set an excellent example to the officers and men under him.

After a short leave in August 1917, Jack was promoted major in October and then spent six weeks at the 2nd Army School. Later he spent more leave in Nice before returning to his pioneers in February 1918.

And now back to Bill. After arriving in the UK in June 1916, he spent some time training at a signal school in Chelsea. He had been transferred to the staff of the 8th Training Battalion and also served with the 14th Training Battalion. During that time he was appointed Extra Regimental Corporal. Then he went to France where, on 23 October 1917, he was taken on the strength of the 43rd Battalion as a private. He spent a few days at the 11th Brigade School before being promoted to Lance Corporal.

Then, in early January 1918, Bill was selected for officer training and in February returned to the UK and joined No 4 Officers Cadet Battalion at Oxford. It became a family joke that Bill "had gone to Oxford". A confidential report issued by the Officer Commanding the Cadet Battalion stated that Bill's standard of knowledge was good, his military knowledge was fair and that his powers of command and leadership needed improvement. If commissioned, Bill stated that he would like to be posted to the 43rd, 50th or 48th Battalion in that order of preference. It is interesting that he didn't include the 32nd in that list.

Having qualified for a commission in the infantry, Bill spent time with the 9th Training Battalion and was promoted to Extra Duty Pay Sergeant on 9 August 1918. Then, later that month, he was appointed a 2nd Lieutenant and proceeded to the Australian Infantry Base Depot in France early in September. However, he wasn't posted to an infantry unit but joined Jack's unit, the 4th Pioneers on 11 September. Perhaps the brothers had hoped to serve together and Jack had been able to arrange Bill's transfer. Whatever the case, once again the twins were reunited, this time both as officers.

When Bill joined the 4th Pioneers, Jack was only just back from leave in England. The twins were not together long before the Battalion was in action near St Quentin, resulting in Bill being recommended for and being awarded a Military Cross. The citation reads:

This officer was in charge of a party laying direction tapes and erecting signboards South East of Le Verguier on 18 September 1918 and was responsible for establishing communication by this means between Brigade and Battalion Headquarters. In spite of a heavy enemy barrage, he succeeded in following the assaulting troops from objective to objective, arriving with his direction line within a few minutes of the establishment of Battalion HQ. From an early hour in the morning he carried out this work with only one man as the remaining ten men of the party had become casualties. When reinforced, he carried out other work of a similar nature.

It is impossible to speak too highly of this officer's courage and devotion to duty.

So within a week of joining the battalion, Bill had won an MC as Jack had done at Messines in 1917.

On the same day and in the same general location where Bill had earned his MC, another South Australian, Pte James Wood of the 48th Battalion, was awarded the Victoria Cross. Wood and three other men attacked a heavily defended post, killing one German and capturing six machine guns and then holding off fierce counter attacks.

The Calder twins, Major Jack and 2nd Lieutenant Bill, remained with the 4th Pioneers for the remaining few weeks of the war. Shortly after the Armistice, Jack spent time in hospital with the flu before going on leave in Paris in January 1919. Then, after cooling his heels in France and England for a while, he embarked on the *Swakopmund* on 15 June 1919 to return home to Australia. He was second-in-command of the troops on the ship and arrived back in Adelaide on 30 July. His appointment in the AIF was terminated on 21 September 1919.

Shortly after the Armistice, Bill was made a full Lieutenant. He had leave in the UK and, after returning to his unit in France for a short time, he went back to London in late

February 1919 for the investiture of his MC by King George V. Again he went back to France for about a month until in early April he returned to England preparatory to returning to Australia. He left the UK in the *China* and arrived back in Adelaide on 6 June 1919, some three weeks before Jack. Bill's appointment in the AIF was terminated on 21 July 1919.

Jack and Bill Calder served their King and Country with distinction – like many others they helped to win the AIF's great reputation as a fighting force. The writer thinks their AIF service is unique – identical twin brothers who enlisted in 1915, although not at the same time, who were commissioned, who eventually served in the same unit and who were decorated with the Military Cross for courage and devotion to duty in separate actions .

References:

Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18 by CEW Bean – Vol. 111
The Story of the 5th Pioneer Battalion AIF" by FH Stevens

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ARTILLERY UNITS AT KELVIN GROVE A tribute to their guns and gunners

Kelvin Grove Barracks Artillery Historical Group, Brisbane, 2006

Beginning with a militia setting just before the World War I, this easy to read story traces the gunner units' histories through World War I, between the wars, World War II, National Service in the 1950s, the Vietnam War period to the last RAA Band unit in 1988. It is intermingled with topical events of the time such as Defence policy and reorganisations, the opening of new firing ranges, training for war and managing the additional manpower from National Service schemes. The history includes changes to unit titles, commanding officers, weapons, uniforms, horses and vehicles.

The authors, the Kelvin Grove Barracks Artillery Historical Group were assembled by one of the first National Servicemen of the 1950s' scheme, Rex Kirkham, to produce a written record of the guns and gunners who had been such an integral part of the barracks since 1915. Other members of the group had also been RAA National Servicemen from the 1950s – Dave Burgess, Rob Collins, John Duncan, Gerry Keates, Con Lucey and Nigel Stevens. The final author who also undertook the editorial and publishing tasks is Arthur Burke, originally a Kelvin Grove gunner before accepting a Regular Army commission and currently the Colonel Commandant RAA in Queensland. Arthur's attributes as an acknowledged RAA historian and the others' soldier, NCO and officer experiences over many years in the Citizen Military Forces across field, anti-aircraft and searchlight units proved invaluable in recording this artillery history of a north Brisbane suburb.

With the financial support of the Brisbane City Council and the encouragement of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village Project, this 48 page booklet (including eight pages of images) is a pleasant trip down memory lane for old gunners and a must for any artilleryman's personal collection.

Artillery Units at Kelvin Grove is available for \$6:00 including postage from:

Gunner Signallers' Club
312 Webster Road
STAFFORD QLD 4053

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VICTORIAN VOLUNTEERS

Tom Corfmat¹

There have been a small number of articles and books written on the early defense forces of Victoria, and while these are good in that they focus on the units that were in existence at that time, I have been unable to locate any work on the men who were enrolled in these units. It is the men themselves who make up the units that perhaps give us an insight to the social climate at the time that these units were in existence. Men like Sir Redmond Barry, who is probably most well known as the Judge who sentenced Ned Kelly to hang, but among his other accomplishments we find that in 1860 he was the Captain in charge of the Fitzroy Rifles. Or the young Corporal by the name of John Monash who is listed in the 1884 muster rolls of D (University) company of the 4th Battalion, and again in the Victorian Government *Gazette* in 1887 as a Lieutenant, and in 1896 as Commanding the North Melbourne Artillery. This same John Monash went on to become one of Australia's best known generals of World War I.

The concept of a local volunteer force to supplement the Imperial troops stationed in the colony was first raised in an article that appeared in *The Melbourne Patriot* in June 1842; however this offer was rejected by the Governor in Sydney. The idea did not go away and in the period of tension between Britain and France with Russia that preceded the invasion of Crimea, the first volunteer corps was officially formed in 1854. At this time Victoria was garrisoned by 700 Imperial troops, but was wholly without coast or harbor defenses. On Wednesday, 7 June 1854, a meeting was held at the Mechanic Institute for the purpose of raising a "Melbourne Rifle Corps."

November 1854 saw the first officers promulgated in the Victorian Government *Gazette* to the new corps then being raised, and it is from the gazette that we are able to learn who were the officers of the corps, as there are very few surviving official records. The pre federation era can be divided into two distinct periods with regard to the defense forces. The volunteer period which ran from 1854 to 1883, where the local forces were not paid and actually had to pay for the privilege to serve, and the militia period which ran from 1884 to federation in 1901 and is still in existence today as the Australian Army Reserve where the local forces are paid for their time that they devote to training.

My research to date has been focused on compiling indexes of the members of the local forces, the citizens of Victoria who freely gave up their time and money to become part of the Victorian Defense Force. My efforts have resulted in a few different indexes' being created from unique sources, and it is these that I will focus on now. *The Victoria Review* was a newspaper that was in circulation for a short period in 1860–61. This paper dedicated a lot of space to the volunteer movement in Victoria, giving notice of parades, results of shooting matches etc, and it published nominal rolls of all the volunteer corps in Victoria at the time. As the existing muster rolls held by the National Archives of Australia start at 1863, this paper is probably the only source of information regarding members of the Volunteer movement.

I have indexed all the names, corps and locations from the nominal rolls as a guide to the members of the local forces at that time, not as an index to the *Victoria Review*. This index does not list rank, and is available at the State Library of Victoria to browse or to purchase.

The Victoria Government Gazette index 1854 – 1901. This Index deals with the appointments and dismissals from the local forces that appeared in the Victorian Government *Gazette*. This source lists Name, Rank, Regimental number, Corps and Location, including the year of

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publication and the page number of the gazette. I have found names on the rolls for the local forces that should have been included here that apparently were not. This index mainly lists Officers, but some Other Ranks are listed, mainly those who were dismissed from service for one reason or another.

This index will shortly be available on the State Library of Victoria's Genealogy gateway website as a searchable database

The next index that I wish to mention here is one that I have compiled on Victorians in the Anglo - Boer War of 1899 to 1902. While I have no desire or inclination to duplicate the efforts of other researchers who have compiled index's in the past, most notably Murray, what I have undertaken is to compile a index of those members who enlisted in Victoria and if they had their photograph published in the *Leader* newspaper, the date, page number and photograph number of the individual. In 1899 with the first contingent being raised for service in South Africa, the *Leader* published a head & shoulder photograph of most of the men who enrolled. This practice was continued for most of the subsequent Victorian Contingents, with the exception of the 4th (Imperial) contingent, where only a few of the officers were photographed and for the 6th Australian Commonwealth Horse, which was photographed by squadron, without individuals being named.

It is now over 100 years since the war ended, and for researchers trying to find information on an individual whether it is for family history or to put a face to the name on the medal that you have from the conflict, a source to photographs of the men who enlisted would be of assistance. For this Index I have utilized the following sources, the original list of names as published in the *Leader* at the time of publication, showing the photo number and the name and town of the individual and whether they were married or single. Where possible I have confirmed details by referring to the original muster rolls for the first 5 contingents, and finally I have also used Murray for the details of the 2nd and 6th ACH. As with any records involving data entry by hand I have found discrepancies between the 3 different sources, and in most cases I have left the different spellings in place.

National Archives of Australia Muster Rolls: - The NAA has the original muster rolls of the local forces from 1863 to 1901. The problem here is that these rolls are not indexed, and for a researcher attempting to locate a person they will need to know the year and the location of the person, otherwise it is a arduous task of reading through all the rolls, and in line with most documents surviving from that era, the handwriting can be difficult to read.

To the best of my knowledge only one other researcher has attempted to index the names of the members of the local forces. Bob Marmion has indexed the names of the men who were serving in the various units around the goldfields during the Volunteer period. He has included the roll with his book *Riflemen form.* as yet unpublished. I have started to index these rolls, but due to the sheer number of entries, it will be a work in progress for some time yet. If anyone knows of previously published indexes that I haven't mentioned here I would like to hear about them to stop me from duplicating the work.

If anyone has a name that they want checked I can be contacted at vcia.iimetro.com.au

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