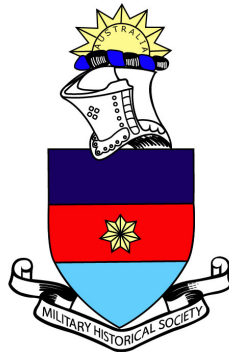


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*Sabretache*



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Journal and Proceedings of the MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

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# SABRETACHE

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# SABRETACHE



**Journal and Proceedings of the  
The Military Historical Society of Australia  
(founded 1957)**

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## SABRETACHE

**A Red Ribbon.** I found it interesting to read that on what was to become the first Anzac Day celebration, in France 25 April 1916, the Gallipoli men of the 4th Brigade wore a blue ribbon on their right breast. In addition a red ribbon was worn by those who were at the landing.

**Dwyer Victoria Cross.** The Dwyer family of Tasmania presented the Victoria Cross and other First World War medals of the late Sergeant John James Dwyer (4th Australian Machine Gun Company) to the Australian War Memorial on Monday 27 September 1982.

The Victoria Cross and other medals of Sergeant Dwyer will be displayed in the Hall of Valour. The Victoria Cross is the highest Commonwealth military decoration. It becomes the 28th Victoria Cross in the Memorial's collection.

Sergeant J.J. Dwyer received this distinguished award for 'most conspicuous bravery when in attack' in Zonnebeke, Belgium on 26 September 1917.

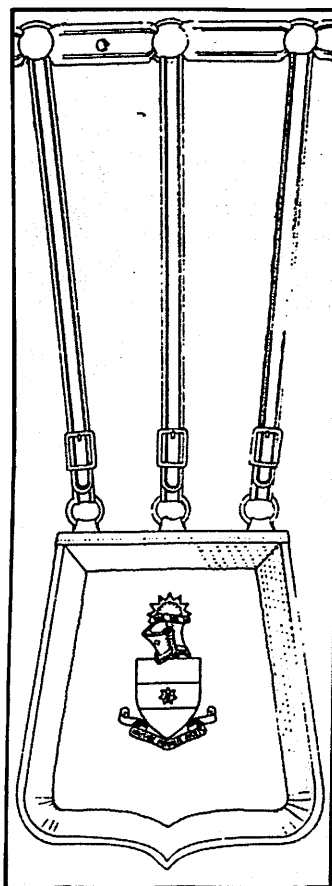
John James Dwyer, born at Lovett Tasmania, enlisted in the AIF in 1915 and first served with the 15th battalion at Gallipoli. In 1916 he went to France as a non-commissioned officer with the 4th Machine Gun Company. He was wounded in June 1917 and rejoined the unit in August. In the following month he earned the VC. In May 1918 he was made a second lieutenant and was given the second star of a lieutenant three months later.

**6 RAR Museum.** The fighting tradition of the Australian soldier was born at Gallipoli, and through successive conflicts that tradition continued to grow.

One unit that continues to nurture the spirit of those early days is 6RAR, based at Enoggera.

The battalion's museum was recently upgraded, and renamed in honour of 6RAR's first RSM — the Major George Chinn, DCM, Museum.

Among the exhibits are many relics from South Vietnam, particularly Long Tan, and the battalion's tour of Singapore.



**The Spitfire.** Britain and France declared war against Russia in 1854. Fearful of Russian raids on their ports, the Australians acting independently of Britain mounted land-based artillery to meet a possible attack. In 1855 New South Wales built the 60 ton *Spitfire* mounting a 32 pounder gun—the first State-owned armed vessel.

**Infantry Badge.** The infantry combat badge was instituted in 1970 for recognition of infantry service in battle. It is a bronze finished badge in the form of a bayonet surrounded by a laurel wreath.

The badge is awarded to serving members of the Army who have, since 1950, given 90 days satisfactory service as an infantry man during operations.

**The Western Front.** The events surrounding the reported death of 25966 Gunner Henry Bishop, 2nd Divisional Ammunition Column, in France on 22 August 1918 are a good example of the frailty of communications during the Great War.

Henry Bishop enlisted in the AIF in February 1916. At the age of 36 years he underwent training at Maribyrnong in Victoria and sailed for England on 1 August where he remained until January 1917 before embarking for France. Seven months later, after being gassed, he was back in England. He returned to France in 1918 and on 7 September his parents were advised that their eldest son was dead.

A week passed before Gunner Bishop's father sought particulars of his son's death. It was due mainly to the efforts of a nephew, Lieutenant Thornton, that Bishop learned that his son was alive and well. Not until 11 November however did the AAG of 3rd Military District HQ, Melbourne advise Bishop by telegram, that his son was in fact alive having returned to regimental duties after illness. Written confirmation was despatched two days later.

Gunner Henry Bishop died in 1950, aged 70 years.

**South African War.** The war of 1899-1902, and Australia's involvement, continues to attract the attention of military historians. Mr J.E. Price, Victorian Branch, is currently researching another book on the Victorians who served and would welcome information. Part of Mr Price's research, relating to Australians who served in units other than the official Australian contingent, appeared in the April-June 1982 issue of *Sabretache*.

**War Memorial Journal.** The first issue of the *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* was released on 28 October in Canberra.

The *Journal*, which will be published in April and October, was created as a forum for the study of Australian military history and to improve knowledge of the Memorial and the historical material of its vast collection of over four million items. The Memorial holds one of the most comprehensive collections of military history in the world and ranks as a major museum of international standing.

*Clem Sargent*

## BARROSA

Because of its involvement in the development of the Colony, the history of the British Army is inextricably bound with the early history of Australia and it is always interesting to find manifestations of this bond. One such example is illustrated here—the Military General Service Medal 1793-1814 awarded to Private Alexander Law, Royal Sappers and Miners, with the bars Barrosa, Nivelles and Toulouse. It is the bar Barrosa which is the link between the British Army and, in this case, the young Colony of South Australia.

In March 1811 a British force commanded by Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Graham, later Lord Lynedoch, fought and trounced a superior French force at Barrosa, near Cadiz in the south of Spain. In 1837 Colonel William Light named Lynedoch Valley and the Barrosa Range to commemorate his friend, Lord Lynedoch, and the battle he had won (1). Of course nowadays we are more acquainted with the township of Lyndoch in the Barossa Valley, one of Australia's finest wine producing areas, both the names, through the passage of time, having been slightly corrupted.

Light served in Portugal, Spain and the south of France from April 1809 to the battle of Toulouse in April 1814 with the 4th Dragoons. He was detached from his regiment for much of his service for duty as a liaison officer with Spanish guerrilla leaders or employed gathering topographical and general intelligence. It was in this latter role that Light came to know Graham, serving on his staff in 1812 when Graham commanded part of the force covering the siege of Badajoz, and then again in 1813 when Graham commanded the left wing of Wellington's advance on Vittoria (2).

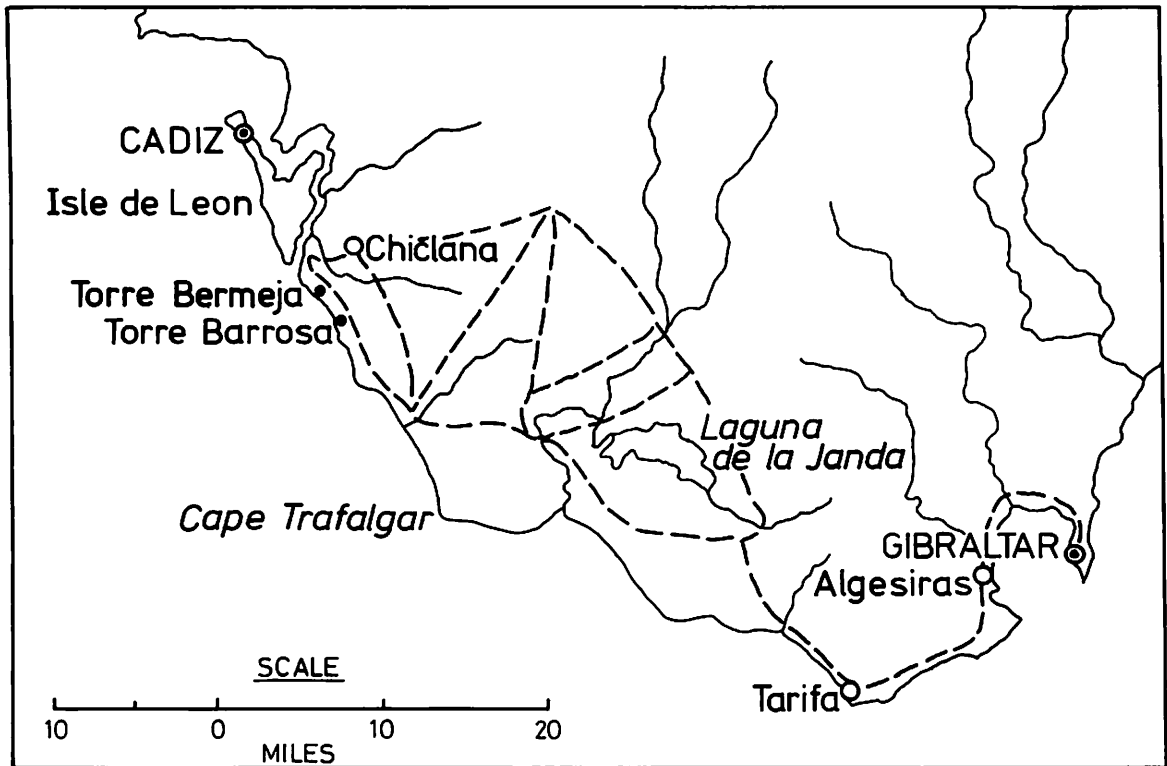
If Light wished to honour his old commander by giving his name to a natural feature in Australia then the choice of Barrosa was very appropriate, for the victory at Barrosa was singularly Graham's. In 1811 Graham commanded an Anglo-Portuguese division at Cadiz where it bolstered the beleaguered Spanish garrison and the Regency. In late 1810 Soult had

drawn off much of his Army of the South from Andalusia to attack Badajoz, a task in which he was successful, but the depletion of his force in the south invited a sortie from Cadiz to attack the French besiegers under Victor.

The plan proposed by the Regency and agreed to by Graham, was to land a combined force east of Cadiz, towards Gibraltar, and to attack Victor from the rear, drawing him off from the siegeworks around Cadiz. A sortie by the remaining garrison could then destroy Victor's siegeworks. Because the Spanish would form the greater part of the force and because he wished to demonstrate the willingness of the British to co-operate, Graham agreed to accept General Manuel La Pena, the senior Spanish officer in Cadiz, as commander of the expedition.

Lieutenant General Graham and his Anglo-Portuguese division, which included fifty Royal Military Artificers (3), arrived at Algesiras by sea on

1. Dutton, G. (1960) *Founder of a City—The Life of Colonel William Light*, Chapman & Hall, London.
- and M. Medwell (1982), The Geographical Names Board of South Australia. Light's private journal and other records were lost in the fire which destroyed in 1839 the wood and reed surveyor's hut in which he lived on North Terrace, Adelaide, waiting for his home to be built at Thebarton. So the primary source of much of his work in South Australia, including perhaps authentication of the reasons for the names Lynedoch and Barrosa, were lost.
2. Dutton, G.
3. Connolly, T.W.J. (1857) *History of the Royal Sappers and Miner's*: Vol I Second Edition; Longman, Brown, Green, Longman's, and Roberts; London.



23rd March 1811 and marched west, re-inforced by a small body from Gibraltar and picking up the 1/28th at Tarifa, where the Spanish landed on the 27th. The combined force then continued the march west (4).

The detachment of Royal Military Artificers, who were customarily only armed with a short sword were, on this occasion, kitted out "with such spare muskets, accoutrements, and ammunition as could be collected, to defend themselves if necessary on the march. They were then placed at the head of the column to remove obstructions and facilitate the advance of the army". (5).

As with Wellington and Cuesta at Talavera, Graham's experience with La Pena proved disappointing, for the latter, after two difficult night marches which exhausted his troops, seemed more intent on getting back into Cadiz than in meeting the French and forcing them to lift the siege. In his hurry he left Graham ultimately to deal with a large French force which Victor had gathered and now menaced the rear guard of the Anglo-Portuguese-Spanish army. That Graham did deal effectively with Victor's force under most adverse tactical conditions was entirely to the credit of the British commander and

the steadfastness of his Portuguese and British troops. They mauled the French who fled from the field of the Cerro del Puerco (Boar's Hill), east of Barrosa, leaving several guns and, for the first time in the Peninsula, losing an eagle—that of the 8th Ligne, captured by the 87th Foot.

A detailed description of the battle is given in Oman's "History of the Peninsular War" but the words of Connolly, historian of the Royal Sappers and Miners are worthy of quotation. "... On the 5th March Barrosa was fought, and the detachment of artificers were present in the battle. Here Sergeant John Cameron gave a manifestation of his zeal by leading to the charge a section of seven men. They pressed where the fight was warmest; and in a few moments lost one private—John Storie—killed and two

4. Oman, C. (1911), 'A History of the Peninsular War' Vol IV Clarendon Press, Oxford.
5. Connolly,

wounded. The blue uniform of the artificers was distinctly seen among the red coats of the line, and Sir Thomas Graham ordered the instant withdrawal of the party to the rear, observing that he might want it for other work. The sergeant was to have been tried by a court martial for taking the men into action without orders; but his bravery saved him". (6)

Graham's concern for the safety of his Military Artificers is understandable—they were mainly skilled tradesmen—carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, miners, trained in the construction of fixed fortifications and works and, from 1812, to oversee the construction of field works by other troops. They were probably included in this expedition so that their expertise could be applied for the most effective destruction of Victor's siege works outside Cadiz. These troops were obviously too valuable to expose to risk in a frontal infantry attack.

The Royal Military Artificers had their genesis at Gibraltar when, by Royal Warrant of 6 March 1772, the Soldier-Artificer Company was formed to overcome the problems met in organising and controlling the work of civilian labour in the fortress. Soldiers were also cheaper. In 1787 a Corps of Royal Military Artificers was established (10 October 1787). This absorbed the Soldier-Artificer Company at Gibraltar; companies were located at Woolwich, Chatham, Portsmouth, Gosport and Plymouth. From the outbreak of the French Revolutionary War detachments of the Corps became part of the British overseas forces and they saw service in the Peninsular from the battle of Rolicca to the fall of Toulouse.

In 1812 a school was set up at Chatham to train the military artificers in, "arts and contrivances, which the corps, in its connection with the engineer department, is likely to be called upon to perform". (7). This included surveying and draughting—skills which were, along with their more accepted trades, to have a significant influence on the Corps' association with Australia. On 4 August 1812 the Master General of Ordnance ordered that the Royal Military Artificers would become known as Royal Military Artificers or Sappers and Miners, and on 5 March 1813 the title of Royal Sappers and Miners was adopted. This title was retained until the absorption of the Corps into the Royal Engineers in 1856. (From its inception the Corps had been under the technical direction of officers of the Royal Engineers.)

The association of the Royal Sappers and Miners with Australia started in 1837. On the 2nd December of that year, Captain George Grey, 83rd Regiment, later to become Governor of South Australia, landed at Hanover Bay at the mouth of the Prince Regent River in the Kimberly area of Western Australia, to explore the North West. In his party there were three Sappers and Miners—Corporals John Coles and Richard Auger and Private Robert Mustard. Grey's

landing was in one of the most inhospitable parts of Australia, in the middle of the wet season, and the expedition, with little real hope of achieving anything of significance, re-embarked in April and returned to Mauritius.

The failure of this expedition did not deter Grey, he returned to Perth, Western Australia, in September 1838 and after some relatively easy local journeys sailed for Bernier Island in Shark Bay in February 1839 with Coles and Auger again in his party—poor Mustard was worn out and stayed at Mauritius. Grey's second expedition met with as little success as the first and the party was eventually forced to walk from Gantheaume Bay to Perth—not without loss; Coles and Auger both survived. In 1840 the two corporals joined the detachment of Sappers and Miners in Adelaide, Auger later returned to Woolwich but Coles stayed on in South Australia and was discharged in 1843 when he lost his fingers during the accidental explosion of a carronade which Coles was firing in honour of the birth of the Duke of Cornwall. (8) Grey, now Governor of South Australia, had him appointed as an attendant at Parliament House and Coles later became a crown land ranger. (9) (Coles had been a wheelwright by trade). (10)

The party of Sappers and Miners which Coles and Auger joined in Adelaide had arrived in September 1839 under the Command of Lieutenant E.C. Frome, RE. He had been appointed Surveyor General to replace Light who had resigned in June 1838. Frome had chosen three NCO's and twelve privates, mostly from the Ordnance Survey of Great Britain and Ireland, to accompany him in South Australia. The Royal Sappers and Miners were not only employed on triangulation surveys but also on tasks falling within the responsibilities of the Colonial Engineer, an additional appointment taken up by Frome under Governor Grey. They were consequently employed on all the major bridge building projects in the colony.

The detachment was augmented by new drafts from Britain and time expired men returned there or settled in South Australia, in many cases entering the civil departments in similar roles to their military duties until, in 1861-62 the strength of the now 'Royal Engineers' in South Australia was run down completely.

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6. Connolly,

7. Connolly

8. McNicoll, R.R. 1977, 'The Royal Australian Engineers—1835-1902—The Colonial Engineers'. Canberra, Corps Committee of the Royal Australian Engineers.

9. McNicoll

10. Eyre's Journals p13, quoted in McNicoll



While the South Australian detachment had been proceeding with its surveys and works other parties of the Royal Sappers and Miners had been arriving in Australia. In 1850 Captain E.Y.W. Henderson, RE, arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia, with the first 150 convicts sent to the Swan River Settlement, guarded by seventy military pensioners, and with a corporal and four privates of the Royal Sappers and Miners who were to act as supervisors of convicts works. In December 1851 sixty-five members of the 20th Company Royal Sappers and Miners arrived at Fremantle, along with thirty-five wives and eighty-eight children, and thirty more Sappers, their wives and children arrived at the end of January 1852. The main body of the 20th Company were employed on the prison and staff barracks at Fremantle but instructors were stationed at outlying centres. In 1858 the 20th Company even ran to a band which turned out to welcome a detachment of twenty-seven sappers who arrived in Fremantle on 1 January that year.



**Military General Service Medal 1793-1814 to Pte Alex Law, Royal Sappers and Miners. From the author's collection.**

The strength of the 20th Company was allowed to run down as the number of convicts transported to the colony decreased, many taking their discharge in Western Australia. Only thirty-seven men returned to England on 27 April 1862 when the final detachment departed.

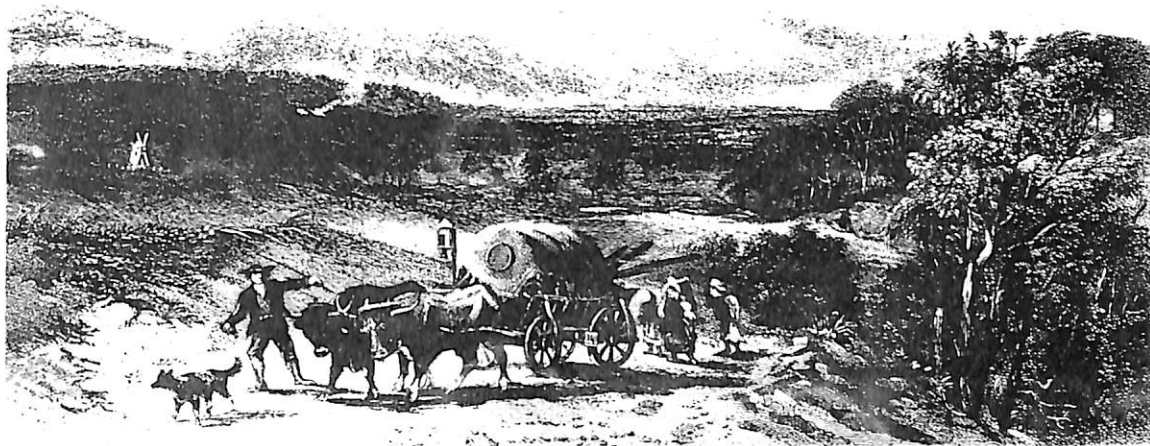
On the eastern side of the continent, in December 1852, a party of fifteen Royal Sappers and Miners arrived in Hobart Town, ostensibly to work on trigonometrical survey, but because of the demand for land, they found themselves surveying land for cadastral purposes. The work of the Sappers and Miners was constantly under attack from those who believed that the survey work should be done by civilian contractors. In February 1856, as a result of this pressure, they were withdrawn to Sydney where they were able to continue with their survey work, not without disadvantage to those who had expected to work in Tasmania until discharge, and who had gathered their families around them there.

In Sydney they joined another detachment which had reached Sydney on 14 March 1854 with the express purpose of making money. They had been selected and trained to establish and operate the Sydney Mint, which they did until 1868 when the Mint detachment was run down. The party from Tasmania—surveyors, were employed on surveys of railway routes, a task they continued until 1861 when the Royal Engineer survey detachment took their discharges, many again continuing in the public service in the same roles.

Lieutenant Andrew Clarke, RE, succeeded Huddle as Survey-General of Victoria in 1853 and almost immediately asked for thirty Royal Sappers and Miners, experienced in the Ordnance Survey, to be sent out from Britain to help him establish a system of triangulation to tie together local surveys. A sergeant, a corporal, four privates, all that would be spared, with wives and children reached Melbourne in 1854, but before that Captain Archibald Ross, who had been appointed Military Engineer to the colony, had arrived in Melbourne on 13 October 1853 accompanied by a second corporal and two privates of the Sappers and Miners.

Ross and his three Sappers and Miners left the colony in February 1855 but the survey detachment carried on with its work until 1869. By that time only four members of the original detachment were still serving and they all took their discharges in Victoria.

Scratchley and a detachment from the 4th Company RE, arrived in Melbourne in 1861 but these were no longer, of course, Royal Sappers and Miners. (11)



From 'Australia Illustrated'. E.C. Booth, ed, c.1870. From the author's collection.

To return to Pte Alex Law and his Military General Service Medal. The bar 'Barroza' was confirmed from War Office Records in the Public Record Office, London, but, in common with other members of the Corps there are anomalies concerning the later bars, Nivelles and Toulouse. Foster, in his Roll of the MGSM 1793-1814 noted: "Many of the medals to this Regiment were issued with less bars than the man was entitled to. There is a letter in the records written in 1850 showing that the Military Board sent down the claims to the Brig Majors additions, and issued the medals without these bars. The battles underlined were those added by the Brig Major, but in most cases the medals will be found without them:.

In Law's case, on the medal roll, in the column headed ACTIONS CLAIMED, are written Barroza, Neville and Toulouse with Vittoria, Pyrenees and Nive crossed through. In another column, headed REPORT AS TO ACTUAL PRESENCE AT ACTIONS, are written Barroza, Nive, Orthes, Toulouse. (12)

11. McNicoll

12. WO 100 Vol 4, 9, 10, 11 Medal Rolls, PRO, London.

13. Gordon, Major LL, (1979), British Battles and Medals, 5th Edition, ed E.C. Joslin, London, Spink and Son Ltd.

T.W.J. Connolly in the preface to his 'History of the Royal Sappers and Miners' mentions that—'In 1847, when medals were granted to the veterans of the last war, Brigade-Major, now Colonel Sandham, observed the readiness with which I spoke of historical events in which the corps was concerned, and of the services of particular individuals who had belonged to it. He also saw the facility with which I supplied the information required to establish the claims of the several applicants for the medals and clasps'.

Only fifteen bars for Barroza were awarded to the Royal Sappers and Miners, fifty-six bars for Nivelles and thirty-three for Toulouse. (13)

So probably both Connolly and Sandham had some part in considering the clasps for Law's medal and, in the light of Foster's comment, it seems likely that the award for Toulouse is certainly correct and Nivelles probably so, although it seems that Sandham and Connolly would have authorised Nive instead of Nivelles and Orthes as well.

The riddle will now never be solved—but a more tantalising question remains for both the historian and the collector—could Pte Alex Law have been one of that section of seven Royal Sappers and Miners who strode manfully up the Cerro del Puerco to face the French with the intrepid Sergeant Cameron on that day in 1811?

*Duncan Russell*

## EVACUATION OF CRETE May—June, 1941.

Even though years have elapsed, many Australian Sixth Division veterans will regard June 1st, 1941 with mixed feelings. For some it meant the beginning of a seemingly endless incarceration in German prison camps, others, more fortunate perhaps, and with the aid of that wonderful backstop, the British Navy, escaped to carry on the fight in Syria, Alamein and later the jungles of New Guinea. The following article has been written from the war-time diaries of Captain Russell.

Landing in Crete after a bomb disputed passage from Greece, troops were marched to reception camps. Weary, hungry and suffering from lack of sleep occasioned through the last hectic days in Greece, the A.I.F. were heartened by the prospect of a square meal. Their hopes, alas, were severely dashed as, after a seemingly interminable wait, the good-humoured Tommies eventually proffered the results of their culinary skill—weak tea and two arrowroot biscuits per man.

Word had been passed round by some mysterious means, that in the morning, each unit was to take up a defensive position but nobody knew where. Blankets were rare and most men doubled up on their overcoats if they had any. The mild night, assisted by

an olive tree to keep the dew off, however, allowed hundreds of thoroughly tired men to have a good sound sleep. Breakfast consisted of a similar repast to the previous night. Troops were too seasoned and had endured too many hardships to be anything but thankful for the meagre fare.

Considerable activity took place after breakfast as staff officers appeared on the scene to establish some sort of order. The troops by units did not exist, but were as inextricably mixed as a fruit salad. Order, however, prevailed after much shouting of orders and each unit leader eventually was given a destination. Had the matter rested there, everything would have been satisfactory, but on the march between the reception camp and Suda Bay, fresh orders were

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*Captain Duncan Russell served in two world wars and saw service in Greece and Tobruk. Sabretache is fortunate in obtaining his first hand account of the allied evacuation of Crete in 1941. Captain Russell died in 1978*



given and countermanded on numerous occasions. By the time Suda Bay was reached the A.Q. of 6th Division Colonel Prior had appeared in a Ford utility, and with the aid of a very obscure map, had given directions as clearly as possible. The map was printed in 1908!!

Of the Australians, the most complete and numerous were the 19th Brigade consisting of the 2/4 and 2/11 Battalions (Bn) and later, half the 2/8 Bn. who had been bombed and sunk on the Costa Rica and instead of going to Alexandria, their original destination, were ferried to Crete in destroyers. The 2/7 Bn. of the 17 Brigade suffered the same fate. Of the others there were 2/1st Inf. Bn and a part of the 2/2 and 2/3 Bns. forming 16 Brigade details. and ancillary troops consisted of 2/1, 2/2 and 2/7 Field Ambulance. 2/1, 2/2 and 2/8 Fd Coys., an artillery group, Australian Army Service Corps, 2/1st M.G.

and some corps troops. Others including 2/1 Tank attack and Divisional Headquarters, together with workshop personnel not required for the defence of the island were sent to Alexandria before the blitz commenced.

The fighting troops were under the command of Brigadier Vasey, Commander of 19 Brigade whilst the specialist troops, were given rifles, together with unarmed troops were under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Cremar of Crete H.Q.'s and during the whole period were never idle. They carried rations, ammunition, troops, Field Ambulance—in fact everything necessary for nearly 4000 troops. The drivers drove the trucks when on shift and slept in the back when off duty.

Early in the campaign, when perfect peace and quiet reigned, troops were kept busy ostensibly on anti-parachute patrols but in reality, it was to get their legs and feet in trim for what was to come. Longer and longer distances were put behind until the boot position became precarious. No Australian-pattern boots were available but an ordnance Major managed to scrounge a pile of English boots which were different sizes from the Australian boot.

Consequently, anyone requiring an 8 received a 9 and those with Australian sizes 9 and 10 had to makeshift with their old boots. To say a goodly number finished up at Sphakia absolutely on their uppers explodes the theory of the small Australian foot in comparison with the Tommies. But maybe those who could not be fitted were born in the Old Country.

As the days went by and the stragglers had thinned out, most units were more or less complete in their own areas. These extended in an arc from Suda Bay through Stylos and Neon Khorion to Kalibes. the area enclosed by this arc and the sea was a flat valley

covered with olive trees and citrus, and it was expected that a parachutist attack here was inevitable to cut off land reinforcements and supplies to Meleme aerodrome—the only one of note on the island. It also was the junction of the only road connecting the south with Suda Bay.

Before the blitz started, rumours were thick and heavy. One fact did stand out, however, and that was the appointment of General Freyberg in command.

Dividing us into groups, he personally addressed all the troops he could get to. Ourselves he addressed in a stubble above Nheon khorion and his square jaw, piercing eyes and military bearing left us in no doubt that, should a fight develop, this chap would not be hard to find. Rather incongruously though, for a man with such a deep chest, his voice was rather thin and we experienced a feeling of surprise that it was a difficult to hear what he said though drawn up in box formation. Those who did, however, heard him say that he had no doubt we could hold the island.

Brigadier Vasey's first job was to dispose of his troops in the very best possible positions for defence.

The 2/4 Bn. was embarked on destroyers at night and sent to Haraklion under the command of their fine C.O. Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Dougherty. The 2/11 Bn. under command of Major Ray Sandover proceeded with the 2/1 Bn. to Retimo—the overall command in that sector devolving in the 1st Bns. C.O. Lieutenant Colonel Ian Campbell.

The 2/8 and the 2/7 Bns. with the 19th Brigade H.Q. moved to Georgepoulis leaving the original arc round Nheon khorion defended by odds and bits under the command of Lieutenant Colonel W. Cremor with an able assistant in Major Victor Burston of 2/3 Field Regiment. Drivers, mechanics, fitters, gunners, engineers, sappers, in fact everyone but medical personnel were formed into companies and armed mostly with American rifles. As army training at that time had not included small arms training for specialists, only a few had handled military rifles but that did not detract in any way from their enthusiasm. They felt their time had come to avenge the terrific hidings they had experienced from Fritz's planes on the roads in Greece, and it was a very slight disability to have a rifle that fired .30 ammunition when our service rifle used .303. With their limited supply at their disposal—about 70 rounds per man—they reckoned they could pay back with interest all they had received.

Further up near Maleme were the New Zealand and English troops. The majority of the later were technicians, mostly Ordnance, but they were later to find themselves in the forefront of the attack.

As already mentioned the days leading up to the full moon were spent in making the men physically fit through a hard marching program. Amenities were nil with the exception of cigarettes, chocolate and a few bottles of spirits, while they lasted, and these were distributed through all the Australian Forces by the 19 Bde. Amenities Officer, Lieutenant Ron Jones who commandeered a 1928 model Ford bus from Stylos for the purpose. Named the Yellow Peril, it afforded yeoman service until cut off at Retimo in the last stages of the battle. (Ron Jones 2/8 Bn. Liaison Officer was captured but escaped later in the war and served with the Yugoslavs).

Each day an N.C.O. with another man was sent to the nearest village to listen to the English session of the B.B.C. and all the outside news of interest was taken down and a resume given to the troops. While it was not much it gave the men an inkling of what was transpiring and something to talk about besides the rumours. At nights, or at least just before dusk, units held concerts, and the talent put into original poems and patter was amazing. One West Australian even produced a piano accordion covered in mother of pearl which was given him at Tobruk in the hope that it would produce better noises than his old one, which, played with vim and vigour but with little technique was the bane of his mates' existence. Later, on the jetty at Alexandria, this soldier was again seen, much skinnier certainly, but still shouldering his beloved infernal machine, together with his pack, rifle and bandoleer of ammunition.

In off moments units held poetry or prose competitions to while away the time—some being particularly good. One Officer had a book of Gilbert and Sullivan's plays and in a very professional manner he plagiarized "Of that there is no possible doubt", etc. and sung it to the troops. *Here it is. . . .*

*"The Cretoliers"—We sailed for Greece all full of cheer etc. . . .*

Fortunately, at the time, most of us had a supply of drachmae and so were able to augment our bully beef rations. In fact, one band of troops perched on the top of a knoll so that they could survey the whole of the surrounding country on their antiparachutist role, established themselves so well that they were called upon each day by a peasant with his donkey and supplies of fresh goat's milk and oranges. Each man had a boulder for a table and being visited each day by their officer would grinningly suggest that they be not relieved as they were *'doing alright!'*

Another man, a chess crank, thinking that his leisure hours could profitably be used to improve his game, secured a piece of pine, inked in the squares then carved a creditable set of chessmen out of common soap. In another part of the unit men were busy with jack knives making pipes. They were simple

affairs made out of a tree like bamboo, cut off at the knots and the pipe stems were pierced with a piece of red hot wire. Even after many years have elapsed the pipe gives an aromatic flavour to almost any tobacco.

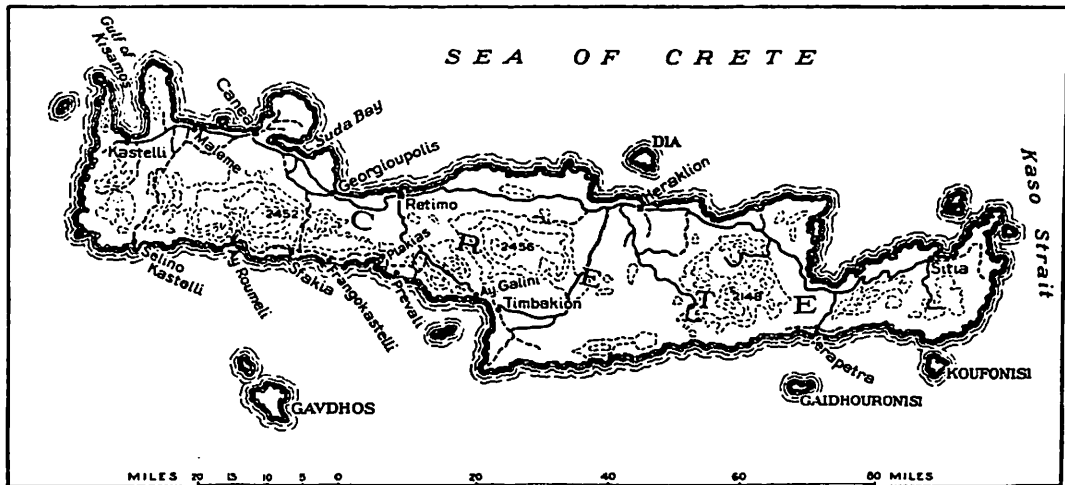
Such were the days leading up to the blitz.

Day by day Haw Haw's broadcasts were becoming more and more alarming although received by the troops with hilarity. Many and varied were the remarks passed on. *"Adolph Hitler's Isle of Doom"*. But it could not be said that our idyllic life in the greenwood (Olive trees) was fast coming to a close.

Planes with yellow noses, the same blighters who gave us the run around in Greece, were becoming more plentiful and by this time, instead of sporadic attacks on sundry targets, seemed to have settled down to a plan of campaign, the ultimate object of which was our obliteration.

Our daily marching patrols had been extended to 20 miles and were to include some mountain climbing, so no comment was made so long as we arrived back covered in sweat, dusty and looking as though we had covered 20 miles. In fact, we had no compass, no maps, no pedometer, nor had we used any motor transport, so if we guessed at the distance we could not be blamed if we were either short of or over 20 miles. To be truthful, we had discovered a track of about 4 miles in length which ended in a stiff climb to the top of the range of hills running parallel with Suda Bay. Daily we found ourselves negotiating this track more easily. We were well repaid when it was made, for we found ourselves with a grandstand seat of the initial German attacks on shipping in Suda Bay and the town of Canea.

For five days we watched ship after ship despatched to the bottom, and as they had not been unloaded we wondered just how it would affect us later on. The guns on the sunken cruiser *"York"* and *"Bofors"* round the harbour were working overtime, and we idly speculated, as infantry men, how long it takes to wear out a gun barrel. We tallied 19 planes down and 11 ships sunk in the five days, so it would appear that the balance was heavily in favour of Fritz, notwithstanding several of the ships were small Greek steamers of between 500 and 1000 tons. There might also have been a greater tally of planes down before we arrived and after we left. In any case the view from about 1500 feet up was unforgettable, and with the brilliant weather and the sun behind us rather made one feel that once again the arenas of the Caesars had come to life only on a much larger scale and with more savage protagonists. Instead of chariots and men of sword and shield fighting on an equal basis, were the Luftwaffes vultures of death against the courage-filled ground forces of the British Empire.



Crete

Map reproduced by courtesy Australian War Memorial

During the days following, various units were despatched to suspected danger points. Intelligence reports from the R.A.F. having disclosed large concentrations of planes and gliders in Greece. Our commanders therefore tightened up on every place suitable for landing planes. The 2/8 and 2/7 Bns went to Georgeiopolis, the 2/11 joined the 2/1 Bn at Retimo leaving the arc Kaitebes, Neon Khorion, Stylos, Suda Bay to the care of the non Infantry units. Companies were formed of artillerymen, mixtures of workshop personnel, A.S.C. and drivers who, by this time, had endured lots of marching and now embarked on weapon training with the main-American .30 Rifles landed from destroyers.

Ordinary merchantmen by this time had proved, by the way they cluttered the bottom of the ocean that Fritz's daylight bombing was too accurate and they were too slow to accomplish the Navy's feat of sneaking into Suda Bay after dark, unloading and then slipping away so that the Luftwaffe could not contact them after daylight. The navy then, overworked but still willing, added to the arduous duties that of supply. But to us what a source of solace what comfort to know that they were still on our side. Even now most clear thinking Australians would instantly vote that the greatest battle winning media of the war was the British Navy. Whether in defeat or victory they carried out their tasks on schedule without fuss and with very little kudos.

Even after Crete when every Australian soldier clamoured for our recognition of the Navy's work, General Blamey's gift of £1000 to their canteen fund was both beggarly and belated considering their losses for one week, were 3 cruisers and 6 destroyers sunk, possibly involving a great loss of life, General Blamey or the Australian Government could have shown a little more gratitude.

It is hoped that from these lines the Australian soldiers thoughts of the British Navy are sufficiently manifest. Sufficient is it to say that when other means failed, Admiral Cunningham brought us supplies of arms, ammunition, tobacco and reinforcements. When we got the tobacco our morale underwent such a rise that it gets a mention before the reinforcements. We then didn't think we required any.

Just before dawn, we awoke to the sound of innumerable plane engines. *Der Tag* surely had arrived. Nor were we mistaken. Within a few moments a fury such as we had never visualised burst over the whole countryside between Canea and Maleme aerodrome. Dorniers and Stukas in formation after formation laid their lethal bombs in pre-selected areas. The earth seemed to belch forth festoons of red brown dust at each convulsive quiver. Near, New Zealanders, British and Australians cowered in slit trenches or hugged their best friends,—the olive trees. Their bomb loads gone, the

planes returned to strafe the aerodrome gun positions and olive tree areas with their multiple guns. Leaves were stripped as by gigantic hail, and grass and crops commenced to burn. For a whole hour, the maelstrom continued then the bombers withdrew. An eerie silence ensued and a heavy pall of dust hung over the dumbfounded troops.

With pained puzzled looks, troops glanced at one another. Is he as shaken as me? Will it come again? At the same time, Retimo and Heraklion were treated in a similar fashion but it was apparent that Maleme was the principal target. It was a large aerodrome near a good port and was the centre of a fair though not a good road system.

Around 7am. the air trembled to a new noise. Those were not the planes to which we were accustomed. After weeks in Greece and the initial opening in Crete each man was a miniature but fairly efficient radar himself. Out of the north and north-east came dozens of four engined planes towing gliders. In formation of three at first and then in single line they flew over the peninsula and up Suda Bay. Others skirting Kalebes came in along the valleys behind the hills, bombed Suda Bay and hopped through the gap to the common destination, Maleme. And most of them came without a shot being fired at them. Not for nothing had Fritz's reconnaissance planes plotted all gun positions. Slow and ungainly these JU 52's would have been an easy target for our Australian Army but, after the blitz of the early morning, many of our guns were not functioning. Small arms and Bofors fire greeted them over the 'drome but the few accounted for in this manner was but a drop in the ocean.

The gliders were uncoupled and they wheeled for their various destinations. One crashed right alongside one of our gun positions, the whole crew of which was massacred. Most of them, however, used the dry river bed near Galatos.

As soon as the gliders were released, the JU 52's were manouvered for their most important part of their mission. From Canea to Maleme the air was suddenly filled with parachutes of all colours. White, blue, black they baled out with their loads. It did not take the waiting British troops long to realize what was transpiring and the German paratroops gave themselves away by firing as they descended. It didn't do them much good. One after another they twitched and were dead before they hit the ground. They hung from trees, telegraph wires and housetops. Others more fortunate perhaps in their landing struck immediate and terrible trouble by dropping in on the Maoris who resented their arrival by instant use of the bayonet.

The reaction of the Empire troops was magnificent. Here was something they could understand and for which they had been trained. Fighting aeroplanes with rifles and bayonets had whiskers on it. That had

been tried in Greece and in an even more concentrated fashion on the boats coming across, but the stopping power of a .303 was too small when compared with the weight of 'crabs' it drew. Certainly it improved the morale to hit back at a plane but not until we had expended thousands of rounds did we find that all the Fritz planes except the JU 52's were armoured with 1/8 inch plate all along the fuselage like the copper sheathing on a launch and so was impervious to our fire except for a fortunate strike on the pilot. Even a shot through the petrol tank at close range hardly drew a drop of petrol on account of the self-sealing compositions they contained.

The fighting on Crete was too scattered and too confused to give a detailed account. Several accounts have already been written but how it is possible without referring to complete English, Australian and New Zealand records and war diaries is not known. War correspondents certainly landed on Crete from Greece but almost as certainly were not there during the blitz. And, with the exception of general knowledge, even Brigadier Vasey who commanded the Australian forces at Georgeopolis and Suda, did not know what was going on at Retimo and Heraklion beyond the fact that at no time was Fritz on top.

To put down actual tactical and strategical moves is not the mission of this writing but rather to give an outline of how our men lived and suffered during the period. Most of us watched the German water borne troops come to grief as also did we watch the Navy's bombardment of the Maleme aerodrome after British bombers from Egypt had done it over. Unfortunately, the German airborne troops had captured key points by this and were gradually forcing the Empire troops to give ground to a narrowed holding line at Suda. Some units fought for six days and nights without sleep and when forced to withdraw, could still think up a wisecrack or two. One company heard of tobacco strewn over the wharf and sent down a dozen men to get some for each man. The tobacco was there alright—8 ounce tins with cigarette papers—and so great was the need that even when a Stuka dropped 1000 lb. bomb on the wharf, each man filled his shirt with as much as he could carry and earned the admiration of his cobbers. For days they had been reduced to coarse tobacco, home-made pipes and cigarette papers cut out of air mail pads—and this source was fast giving out.

In these days of rationing it is amazing to see the meek acceptance of a few cigarettes by men who have risked their lives more than once to obtain the solace of tobacco. It is more amazing still for some politician or bureaucrat to have the affrontery to ration front line troops in any way considering they stand to lose their lives at any time and are living under conditions which no outsider could possibly realise.

After the New Zealand and Australian withdrawal to Suda the rot set in properly. Sleepy, hungry, almost out on their feet, the troops started their trek to

Sphakia on the South Coast. An English Commando had been disembarked from the destroyers the previous night but it was too late to throw them into the fray. They would have had to go in themselves as there were no troops to support them. So they were retained for rearguard actions. During the night the New Zealanders withdrew to the valley near Nheon Khorion and there had their first rest for a week. The Australians followed the next night and the Commandos, a tough looking crowd, took over their role of allowing the overtired troops to make their way to the south without interference.

It was not to be, however. The Luftwaffe, scenting a kill and with no opposition, attempted to round up and obliterate the retreating troops. From early morning until dusk they strafed and bombed any cover troops could use. Movement as units was impossible and it was found necessary to allow troops to make their own way independently to the pre-arranged rendezvous. Usually timed for just on dark, it was very seldom the bulk of the troops had any difficulty in arriving, as by dodging behind trees and boulders, using ravines rather than roads, they kept out of view of the pursuing planes.

A large number of men, however, were caught in semi-open country, making for the bridge crossing the river at Nheon Khorion. At about 2.00 p.m. a number of Messerschmidts, Corniers, Stuka's, even Henschel reconnaissance planes, formed an umbrella over what they thought was a good round up.

Tommies, New Zealand, Australian, Cypriots, Palestinians and Greeks then underwent an aerial blasting for about 5 hours which no participant ever wishes to undergo again.

Bombing with anti-personnel and occasional heavier bombs, they went round and round like a merry-go-round. Finishing with bombs, the machine guns took up the refrain. Trees and crops were soon pouring a pall of blue smoke over the area. Anything moving attracted a burst of machine gun fire and peasants, cattle and donkeys were the worst sufferers. The troops never moved. As ammunition gave out, the planes would hop over the mountain to Malome to refuel, take on more ammunition and return to the one-sided fray. Never more than 400 feet high, the rear gunners could be easily seen and several shots were taken at them. This, however, was courting sudden death. The Passive Air Defence training of all troops was such that "drawing the crabs" was maybe quite alright for the individual who was tired of boring a hole into the ground with his belt buckle, but was not in the best interests of the majority. In any case, continued firing by individuals

would probably have ceased abruptly through the mediums of a .303 rifle manufactured, say in N.S.W. or Birmingham. Soldiers in dire straits are not the sort of people one meets in rehabilitation centres. Nor do they look like the placid listeners to the platitudes uttered annually on Anzac Day by speakers long out of touch with their subjects and whose thoughts of war and combat were kept alive by vivid newspaper imaginations and by thieving passages out of past speeches which may have sounded well in the pacifist days before 1939.

There was one incident which caused a grin to all who heard it. One Australian had taken refuge in a 4 foot drain accommodatingly dug by some farmer to drain a field. After several hours a burst of machine gun fire slapped into the ground near his head. With one bound, he cleared the drain and lay down on his stomach alongside one of his mates. "Got a field bandage?" he said. "Yes, why?" came the reply. "Well I might have been knocked and nobody seen me in that drain and I don't like bleeding to death."

Conversation ended for a moment as the same plane roared over with the over-enthusiastic rear gunner "hose-piping" his guns and plainly in sight. Placing his chin on his hand the dejected one gazed disconsolately at the plane as he recommenced his circle. Watching him go round with guns rattling and ready to come over again he drawled musingly to his neighbour, "Just fancy, some b'ooddy woman loves that bastard up there!"

It is a strange coincidence maybe that after 5 hours of intensive bombing and strafing, hardly a casualty was reported from the whole of that stupefied 100 acres. Which of course proves little. For one thing, Passive Air Defence was proven infallible and, as no band of heroes organized themselves into a definite target in order to shoot down those flying aeroplanes and so become dead heroes, the aeroplanes did no damage except to our feelings. It would appear then, that in the absence of proof that a man with a rifle can shoot down a plane, and that while so engaged, nobody shoots him for drawing the crabs; then the whole incident ended in our favour because what General would consider one bruised feeling as compared with the vast amount of ammunition and fuel expended by the enemy to such little avail?

It is as well that the soldier cannot look into the future. Were it possible thousands would not have bothered to endure the trials and tribulations of the next few days, but would have simply packed up and stayed where they were, or at least would have gone a little better prepared.

Equipment in most cases had been reduced by the men to rifle, bandolier and ammunition, water bottle,



overcoat (if he had one after Greece) and strangely enough, his respirator. As this necessary evil had to be carried, it also served the purpose of a haversack.

Rations were supposed to last three days, but 3 trucks of various foods placed on the side of the road 4 miles south of Khorion were in many ways unsuitable. Bully beef the staple diet is small, compact and can serve for a whole day with ease. However, tins of pineapples were bulky and, once opened, had to be eaten. While at that time it was popular, it was unsatisfying and was difficult to divide unless a large number of troops were fed from one central point. Most men then commenced the journey over the White Mountains to Spakia, ill equipped. Various mileages were given ranging from 32 to 57 miles. It seemed like a million at the finish.

And so the trek commenced . . .

Taking advantage of the rendezvous most units formed up and marched through the night to get as good a start as possible so that a certain amount of rest could be obtained if required for a further battle role. In single file on each side of the road to allow for the passage of transport (if any) columns were strung out for miles. Steadily carving the miles out but with rests becoming more frequent and of greater duration, the troops remained in good heart. They were still alive and still had a chance of survival. Planes still droned overhead and now and again a flare would light up miles of country, the troops freezing on the sides of the road.

At Vryses one modern building was blazing fiercely. It had been until that day, Greek H.Q. but by some means Fritz had discovered the fact. The road was lit up like daylight and we lost no time in doubling past the area feeling all the way that some gnome up above was watching us. Complete darkness at times is a great comfort.

The road past Vryses forks. One to the left leads to Georgepoulis, the one to the right to Sphakia. We had no maps but were in no doubt as to whether we were on the right track. There were no guides and no signposts. But curling away above us was what appeared to be a string of fireflies. It was the glow of cigarettes smoked by hundreds of troops marching in single file. The ghost of Sir Walter Raleigh must have smirked as he watched our Empire troops drag their weary legs over the road which led to the navy.

Towards 2 a.m. fatigue set in properly. At first, odd men, then dozens, then hundreds dropped and slept where they were, or flopped on the side of the road, uncovered, no pillows, rifles

still slung and boots still laced. Stong lads with willing hearts and warrior spirits had for the time being reached the end of their endurance. Lack of sleep was the main cause and quite noticeably it affected the younger men considerably greater than the older men, some of whom had seen service in 1914-1918.

A little further up the now ponderous rise, a new difficulty arose. Marching through the night from a part of the island rich in rivers, many of us had drained our water bottles in the belief that water was to be had anywhere. But a turn in the road brought us to a crowd of men hardly seen outside a stop work meeting. Clamouring for water, with parched throats and croaking voices, it brought home to us the fact that the rivers only ran while the snow on the white mountains was melting and the further up the mountains, the less water there was. At the infrequent wells a 12 foot length of string on which to lower the water bottle—there were no buckets as on the side of the island we had left—was wealth untold.

Fritz, however, evidently knew of the dearth of watering points and during daylight hours, gave us little rest with his strafing Messerschmidts. After a while, however, so weary did we become, that to run for cover became distasteful even if the energy to do so still remained.

Keeping to the road after daylight on the first day was rank stupidity until duty demanded it. The road itself wound round the hillsides and besides being devoid of cover was too long. The welcome cover of the stunted trees up the ravines which were used still as donkey tracks by the villagers was too great a temptation for the troops and the roads were thereupon deserted except at night. It made Fritz's job harder to find us but then that was our intention.

Troops in all sorts of disrepair and from all sorts of countries went by. One, a lanky Australian sapper went by holding his hand against his chest. As he passed, a hole in the back of his shirt and a circle of blood told the story. Asked when he got it, he laconically said, "*I dunno, it was over at Suda.*" When it was brought to his notice that it was pretty near his heart, he replied, "*Might be now but not at the time—me heart was in my mouth.*" Having heard most of the wisecracks in 6 Australian Division there is no hesitation in saying this is about the first time what is now a chestnut was uttered. And no honour is great enough for an ordinary everyday soldier 36 hours after he has been hit almost mortally to find him wending his way up a loose-bouldered track, with a grade 1 in 4, without a bandage or a whimper. What a strange country Australia is to produce men like this when almost out of the same wombs are born people

without intestinal fortitude as was evidenced in the year 1942. It would be interesting to study family history to discover how our throwbacks occur.

Three times a day a small English type utility driven by an Australian Artilleryman came backwards and forwards to the front line. He was a chap lucky enough to get a lift across the island, and having nothing to do, fixed an allegedly destroyed track and formed himself into an ambulance. Up to the last night of the evacuation he was still going out to the rearguard and picking up anyone worse than walking wounded. He neither stopped for air raids nor for the pleas of exhausted men staggering along the road.

Night and day he stuck at his self imposed task and it was a weary and gallant man who eventually went off to the Navy with his last load of wounded. He belonged to 2/3 Field Regiment.

Our medical men were also doing an heroic task without instruments, no field dressing and little else except medical knowledge. Aspirin tablets and razor blades they carried on their uphill fight. As each improvised hospital was abandoned to the enemy one of our doctors stayed with the wounded. One field ambulance with a number of single men drew cards to see who stayed, and one doctor who was notoriously lucky in the mess, had only to draw a card above a 3 to retain his freedom and drew—a duece. Their C.O., a single man, when the final moment came for evacuation sent all his Doctors off and went back to look after the wounded himself. Criticism has been levelled at him since, by people who, possibly devoid of the same high principles, thought he should have made his experience available for later actions. But then devotion to duty is a nebulous quality and his sacrifice may have taught a lesson to those he helped, which, if passed on would make this world a much better place in which to live. In any case officers are supposed to set the example for troops and if the latter fall short of a certain standard one very seldom has to look for the reason. As troops become sorely tired and out on their feet with fatigue, it is then that they automatically fall back on the training instilled into them, and come to rely more and more on their officers who had in the past mostly finished their tirades with, *"If you are ever in doubt, see me."* There were to be many who fell down on their jobs in Crete.

But man is only human and even officers feel fatigue, and it is not to be expected that any man, officers included, reach full physical and mental maturity at an age up to 25. When things go wrong either in war or peace it is very easy to blame those in authority without being cognisant of facts. Many criticisms have been levelled against our leaders but then our leaders on Crete had to rely on others outside Crete for supplies of arms, food and aeroplanes which simply were not available. It is impossible to fight wars

successfully even now on human endurance without proper equipment. Men are still as courageous, as long suffering, as idealistic as they were during the Crusades but the high tempo of modern war takes its toll in a shorter period. It says a lot for the spirit of the volunteer soldier who gave up his pleasant life for the call of Empire and the knowledge that a life of hardship and danger were his lot with the ever present feeling that he may not return.

The previous wars were in the horse and buggy days when life was not so full of amenities. One left an oil lamp in the home for a hurricane lamp in the tent. This time the electric bed lamp was left for a blackout. One hears old soldiers say that the young fellows of this war were not as hard nor as tough as the last war. Maybe they weren't but they were better educated, more easily trained and just as efficient and ruthless with their weapons as any previous soldiers. Furthermore the old soldiers gloried in 20 years of reminiscence and possibly will go on till they die, but the younger soldier wants to forget about their experiences and seldom even mentions them. This time it was a total war with all the nations geared up for a supreme effort. When our soldiers returned to a country untouched by war they were greeted by brass bands and a grateful populace. Today, industrial unrest, black markets, few jobs and no homes greet our returning heroes. High prices, inflated currency and civil lack of principle makes returned servicemen's problems too great to sit around and talk about martial moments.

On the southern side of Crete some ten miles from Sphakia is a beautiful valley. The view from the last crest is really lovely. To us it looked like heaven. In a land which seemed to be made up of hill upon hill even on top of a mountain this really did look like the end of the interminable climb. In retrospect, a soldier discoursing in Palestine said that Crete was an island 37 miles uphill on your hands and knees and 7 miles downhill on the seat of your pants. The description is largely correct except for this valley between. A couple of pretty villages nestled under the surrounding hills and at the southern end it ended in a deep ravine, between two towering rocky mountains. On one side ran a bitumen road which must have been literally carved out of solid rock as it overhung the ravine and curved in and out to conform to the shape of the hill. The valley and ravine were utilised to concentrate all the troops not in formed bodies. During the night they were allowed to go to the well at the village for drinking water but, during the day no movement was to be made. The reason was not far to find as daily, Fritz planes came along the gorge firing their guns in the hope that troops would take to their feet and disclose their positions. By this time, however, they had learned their bitter lesson and not even the broiling heat during the day and lack of water succeeded in shifting them.

General Weston, an English marine, had by this time taken over command from General Freyburg who had been ordered to return to Egypt. Faced with the necessity for a rearguard action to ensure the evacuation of troops from the beaches, he established Force H.Q. in a ravine near the coast but left staff Officers to the details whilst he made the immediate H.Q. in a road culvert, not more than 2 feet wide in the centre of his final rearguard position.

Giving orders that the unattached troops should move out of the valley down to the beaches, several road controls were established. Commencing at 9 pm., just at dark, troops moved in single file down the edge of the road leaving the centre clear for transport taking out the wounded. For some two hours they streamed down in orderly fashion except for about one man in every twenty who enquired of every bystander, "*How far to the beach*". Then a N.Z. battalion came through followed a little later by the Australian 2/8 Bn. Some 20 minutes after them marched Royal Marine detachment—the last of the rearguard now between the unarmed men and the Germans. A general hurry-up order was given, ranks were doubled and by 2 am. the evacuation of the ravine was complete. All were now behind the final rearguard in position on the top of the hill leading down to the beach some 7 miles away. The road which ceased some little distance down the hill ran through our battle positions but a road block was formed and covered. All was now ready for the final flutter.

To move off the road required the agility of a mountain goat but the great majority of troops having become used to steep inclines on the way over, did not worry about sharp rocks, spiked bushes and steep descents. As one said, "*All you do is let go and you get somewhere anyhow.*" Water was the great drawcard further down the hills until eventually we came to a well. After a day or two living in close proximity to a common oasis we came to understand why the Arabs in Palestine made their wells a meeting place. Just on dusk, we clambered from our rocky fastnesses and wandered to the well, there to compare notes, retail gossip and wonder how we would get off. All troops were collected into groups of 50 under an officer and ration states were sent in each day to the H.Q. in a village church, presided over by Major Burston. Army habits die hard. The only difference between this place and any other we had ever been in was that, although we conformed to all army rules and requirements, we did not collect any rations.

On the second day without food, hope was raised in our breasts by the bleat of a goat. Scouring all the hideouts round the village produced no results, so at dark the whole of one 50 were placed in strategic positions waiting for just one more goatian love call.

None eventuated so we decided that whoever owned it had applied an effectual muzzle or that the first bleat we had heard had been its last on earth as some hungry blighter pounced on it.

After another dinner of cigarettes and water one of the fellows recalled having seen a donkey sunning itself earlier in the day. Another reported that he had been in a deserted cottage and had seen some onions. That night we planned to eat the next day. At first light half a dozen men infiltrated to the position where the donkey had last been seen and were following a cobbled track to a cottage. A burst of shots from the cottage caused them to investigate there, surrounded by a dozen soldiers was our friend the donkey having his hide effectively removed by a skilful knife wielder.

Stating that they had been looking for the same donkey the skinner paused in his work and said, "*Here, skin the part you want yourself.*" With visions of rump steak and undercut, the new arrival skinned the haunch and triumphantly bore his prize to a cottage wherein lay a black pot hanging over a fireplace not unlike a blacksmith's fire. A steak was spitted and grilled but it was so tough that it was decided to make a broth. Piling in the cut up donkey and also the strings of onions the whole 50 of us waited in pleasant anticipation. Hour after hour boiled by before the cook announced the meal ready for consumption. Filing by with dixies in good old army style, we were apportioned our 2 or 3 cubes of donkey swimming in pale coloured fluid. A couple of ribbons of onion made up the meal. Starving though we were, not one of us consumed our ration. With no salt the flavour was indescribable and one and all voted it the worst meat they had ever experienced.

Later in the day word got around that evacuation would begin this night. Another rumour was that only officers were being taken. Then later still the "*official*" news came that only a nucleus of units was being provided for first. These consisted of officers and key men so that they could provide the core of a new unit if one had to be built up on arrival in the Middle East.

All of this scheme was apparently provided by the senior officers when it appeared to them that to take everyone off the island would be an impossibility. Gathering so many artillery, A.S.C. and other units did not present much difficulty as they were readily available but to decide who to leave behind was a different proposition.

To give an idea of the difficulties encountered in deciding on numbers, the Officer-in-Charge came from Force H.Q. with the information that only one destroyer capable of holding 750 men was available that night. This number was to be made up of 250 New Zealand 250 British and 250 Australian Officers and men. That was at 3 pm. In reality 6 cruisers and

destroyers arrived to pick up thousands, but the shore organisation 'flopped' and the Navy made what proved to be the last trip to Crete and returned to Egypt with comparatively empty ships.

This proved to be a disaster of the first magnitude. The 2/7 Bn entrusted with the final flutter in the rearguard was cut off by the surge of leaderless men on the beach and only a small fraction got away. It is difficult to apportion the blame, as so far no official statement has been made. Nor has any inquiry been made public.

It was understood by us, however, that Major General Weston wished to surrender with his troops when it became known to him that the chance of survival was remote but a Sunderland flying boat brought orders for him from General Wavell to hand over to a more junior Officer and return in the Sunderland. Brigadier Vasey in charge of the Australian troops embarked only a few minutes before the Navy sailed after seeing that almost all his fighting troops had gone off and in fact he would have completed his mission had not the 7th Battalion been cut off on the beach. That there was chaos there is no doubt. Three-quarters of a mile from the beach at Sphakia on the top of a near cliff down which it was necessary to clamber to safety, thousands of leaderless men, hungry and desperate, were left to become prisoners when they could have been handy to the beach and could have been removed to safety, with a little better planning.

One British private was heard to say, "I'd shoot every . . . Officer on the island." When taken to task by an Australian Officer who heard him, he added apologetically, "Well, Sir, I should have said every Officer not on the island. There are 300 of us here and we haven't had a meal or seen an Officer for 3 days."

The Crete campaign remains as one of the most unique in the Second World War. 

## AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

### HISTORY CONFERENCE

**8-12 February 1983**

The Council of the Australian War Memorial is conducting the Memorial's third annual military history conference from 8-12 February 1983. As in previous years its theme will be the history of Australians at war and the impact of war on Australian society. Owing to renovations at the Australian War Memorial the 1983 conference will be held at Burgmann College, Australian National University.

### *Military History Workshop*

The Military Historical Society of Australia is sponsoring a workshop entitled 'Researching Military History', to be held on the morning of Saturday 12 February. The workshop is designed to be a practical session of assistance to the amateur historian and will deal with research techniques and sources, particularly in relation to the period before 1900. The workshop will be addressed by a researcher currently undertaking a military history project and by representatives from Central Army Records Office, Melbourne, the Australian Dictionary of Biography and the Australian War Memorial library.

The Conference registration fee of \$30 for employed persons and \$10 for students, retired and unemployed persons will include attendance at the workshop. For those wishing to attend any single session, or the workshop only, a sessional fee of \$5 will apply.

*Kimberly Lindsay*

## COLONEL LINDSAY : CITIZEN SOLDIER

Framed and hanging in our dining-room is a parchment document, signed by the Governor-General Sir Ronald Ferguson, appointing William Frederic Lindsay to the rank of Second Lieutenant with effect from 1 March 1914. He was to serve Australia with distinction first as a Second Lieutenant in the Great War and then the between years until his death in 1940.

William Frederic Lindsay was my grandfather, and he was born near Wollongong, 'in the Colony of New South Wales',<sup>1</sup> on 27 December 1880. William's parents, George and Eliza Lindsay, were born in New South Wales, but his great-grandfather came to Sydney with his family in 1841, from Northern Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

An elderly Second Lieutenant, he was commissioned into the 41st Infantry Regiment (Citizen Military Force), and was sent with a detachment of 11 Other Ranks to guard the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow.

At about this time, Lindsay became a father for the third time, his daughter Joan being born on 4 May 1914. Married to Alice Selina Spence in 1903, they already had two sons: William Gordon Spence (born 1904) and John George (born 1908). John was to gain distinction with the Second AIF in the Middle East in 1941.<sup>3</sup>

Promotion to Lieutenant came through on 1 July 1915. On 16 March 1916, having volunteered for overseas service, he was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant in the Australian Imperial Force (from

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*Kimberley John Lindsay was born in Sydney on 21 July 1944, and is a fifth generation Australian.*

*Educated at various private schools in Melbourne, Perth and Sydney, he studied at the National Art School, East Sydney Technical College, in the early '60s.*

*At the time he served with 3RNSWR (CMF) and also learnt to fly.*

*He is in the advertising business, and now lives in West Germany where he is married and has one son.*

*Kim Lindsay has also written about his father, the late Major John George Lindsay, MC, (SC), and these articles have been published in the Orders and Medals Research Society Journal (London), as well as 'Sabretache' (Vol XXII, Nos. 3 and 4).*

Citizen Military Force commission) and posted to the 53rd Battalion.<sup>4</sup>

Lieutenant Lindsay sailed on the troopship 'Ceramic', arriving in England on 21 November 1916. After a brief period of training, he crossed over to France on 2 February 1917.

At this stage, the Green and Blacks, so called after their Regimental Colours, 'had no respite from line work. The same hopeless trudging in and out from front line to intermediate line, then back to a muddy shell-exposed camp (Fricourt, on the Somme battlefield), forward again to the line, and never out of the zone of fire'.<sup>5</sup>

Commanding Officer of the 53rd Bn was an English Lieutenant-Colonel named Oswald Croshaw, who had seen service during the Boer War and on Gallipoli. After seeing a sentry who had polished his helmet shiny with whale-oil (used for trench feet), Croshaw instructed his officers to order that all the helmets be treated in the same way. Thus, the battalion came to be known as "Croshaw's Whale Oil Guards".<sup>6</sup>

According to the unit Chaplain. . .

*'our routine of duty was much the same as in February. We usually spent about four days at a time in the front line, then were relieved and marched out to the intermediate line for a few days, then back to the advance camps, and the same over again.*

*'During those three months, March, April and May 1917, Lieutenants Lang, Cooper, Hill and Jackson distinguished themselves as officers in charge of patrols and reconnaissance parties in pursuit of the enemy.*

*'On 14 March, a young and gallant officer, Captain Francis, MC, was killed. On the same day, in fact by the same shell, RSM Monro, one of the bravest soldiers in the battalion, was laid low.*

*'On 17 March we moved forward, and entered Heaven Trench at 4.15 am., just as the enemy was leaving the same trench; and so we established our front line on the old enemy Beaulencourt-Transloy Line.'<sup>7</sup>*

This seems to marry up with the contents of a letter sent home by Lieutenant Lindsay, only a part of which—written in blue pencil—survives:



**Lieutenant William Frederic Lindsay, Australian Imperial Force—circa 1916.**

1. Birth Certificate No.50 in the District of Wollongong in the Colony of New South Wales. Register No.5983. William Frederic, born at Charcoal (later Unanderra), near Wollongong, 27 December 1880. Parents: George Lindsay, Publican, Farmer's Hotel, Charcoal; 22 years, born, Charcoal, married 17 February 1880, Wollongong. Eliza, formerly Cochrane, 18 years, born Berkeley, near Wollongong. George Lindsay later became Town Clerk of the Central Illawarra District. He was a noted rifle shot, and represented Australia at Bisley, England, in 1903, where he won the King's Prize.
2. N.S.W. Archives. The Lindsay family were included in the 'List of Immigrants, British Subjects, introduced into the Colony of N.S.W. by Messrs A.B. Smith & Co., in pursuance of the authority granted to them on 19 December 1839; and who arrived at Sydney on 14 May 1841 by the ship "Orestes" from Liverpool'. They came from Fintona, County Tyrone. Four generations of the pioneering Lindsay family are buried at the Church of England cemetery, Dapto, N.S.W.
3. NX182 Major John George Lindsay, MC,(SC),1908-1975. See 'Sabretache' Vol XXII, No. 3, pp.14-19 and No. 4, pp.28-31.
4. Central Army Records Office, Melbourne.
5. J.J. Kennedy, DSO,CF. 'The Whale Oil Guards', Dublin, 1919, p.98.
6. Ibid, pp.100-101.
7. Ibid, p.102.

'On the night of the 16th I was detailed to take out my first patrol. I went out about midnight to some old gun pits well in front of our line and there found two other patrols; all of us under a Captain.

'After trying to find out information in the usual way, we were all sent out in turn to make a diversion. I, was the last sent out. I had orders to do a certain thing which I accomplished with my heart in my mouth. I was then ordered to push into the enemy trench, so I started off feeling very scared, but luckily for me the Hun went out as we came in, and we had the satisfaction of capturing the trench we had been pounding at all winter.

'I found out afterwards that the other two patrols had got in about half an hour before me. I had charge of that portion of the trench for a few hours till my Coy. Commander came up with reinforcements and took over, when the Bn advanced about a mile.

'We were relieved that night, and next day I was sent back in charge of our Details Camp for a rest, much to my satisfaction, as I had had a rather strenuous time continuously ever since I joined up. I stayed there about a fortnight and was then sent to a Lewis Gun School at Le Touquet—near Etaples.

'During the time at I was away we made a further advance and had some scrapping, during which poor Harry Fair was killed. I had a good time at the School, and thinking I had no chance of the job did not work too hard. Judge of my surprise on coming back to find that our Lewis Gun Officer was going to the Training Battalion, and that I was detailed in his place.

'I forgot to mention that when we entered Le Transloy, we found several notices left by the Germans and written in English—"Welcome to the conquerors, much pleasure" (evidently a delicate hint that the town wasn't much good to us as there was scarcely one brick standing on another). "It's a nearer way to Tipperary than it is to Berlin", and on the telegraph line, "Take this line and you go to Berlin".

'On joining up from the School, I found the Battalion at Bancourt out for a spell—as we thought for a few months. We occupied the mornings at training and most of the afternoons at sports—football, etc., and had Battalion sports for prizes on Anzac Day.

Later on we had Brigade sports for running events, etc., and another day for a Horse Show, both very successful.

'However, we were done out of our spell. I had got leave for Amiens, and had got far as Albert. I got to bed in the Officer's Rest Hut, thinking to catch the first train in the morning. An orderly came along with a horse, and woke me up to tell me to report back at once, as we were moving up to the line first thing in the morning.

'We were under the impression that we were only going up in Support for a few days, but came in for the hottest 18 days I ever wish to have. I can't say anything much about it just now. However, we are now under canvas near our old friend Le Transloy, and making our second attempt at a spell. If all goes well we are to go back further in few days. We are having a lazy time at present, reorganising and refitting, and I personally haven't done anything yet.

'I forgot to mention that one of the rotten things we had last time was 5 hours with our gas respirators on. It wasn't a regular gas cloud attack, but they sent over thousands of gas shells to make it pretty uncomfortable for us, especially as we hadn't had much sleep for some nights and were worn out. However, very little damage was done, as we had taken due precautions.

'The other day, Lieutenant Lang, MC (one of the patrol leaders on 17 March), and myself, went for a walk over the old ground and found it very interesting. The country is looking beautiful now, and it is very strange to go over country you have left barren, desolate and a quagmire of mud, to find grass above our ankles and a profusion of buttercups and other wild flowers. The trees too and hedges are out in beautiful green leaf, and everything behind the line, except for ruined villages, looks too beautiful and pretty for war. How I wish it were over and that we could get back to dear old Australia again.

'We had an open air concert last night, and it was great to be on the grass and listen to the performers. It is quite light here till 10 pm., and quite warm. Climatic conditions are perfect just now. This afternoon we had boxing contests, which are to be continued tonight.

'I have put in for 7 day leave to Paris. It is impossible to get English leave for some time, and anyway I would hate to say I'd been in France and hadn't seen Paris.

'I received a letter from George<sup>8</sup> today, saying he had joined the 61st Bn. He hadn't heard from home for some time'.

This *'hottest time he ever wished to have'* was the unit's participation in the battle of Arras—which was only a limited success, with many casualties.<sup>9</sup> The sector occupied by the battalion was the ridge in the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt, and immediately in front of Riencourt-les-Cagnicourt.<sup>10</sup>

On 15 June 1917, the 53rd Battalion moved to Bouzincourt, for a rest. Promotion to Honorary Captain in the Australian Imperial Force came through on 3 July, for the thirty-seven year old Lindsay.<sup>11</sup>

The unit moved forward on 6 July, but not into the trenches. There was special training to be carried out by each brigade. The ground most suitable for the manoeuvres was near Mailly. The battalion lived comfortably in huts near the town.<sup>12</sup> The C.O. returned to the unit after having been wounded.

The 53rd Battalion moved from Maily-Maillet on 16 July, arriving at Arques (near St Omer, in Belgium), on 30 July. From there they marched to Lynde, a distance of seven miles. In this village they were billeted until 17 September 1917.

*'The happiest time of our service was spent at Lynde. The village folk among whom we lived were simple, kindly people, who welcomed our coming and appreciated our stay among them. There was ample time for rest, recreation, training and reorganisation.'*<sup>13</sup>

The unit moved towards the Ypres salient, skirting the infamous Zillebeke lake, on 21 September. Several officers had been sent back to the divisional detail camp, in charge of the portion of the battalion detailed to remain out of the line. On 26 September, after suffering many casualties in the support trenches, the battalion attacked Polygon Wood and reached its objective. Unfortunately, Colonel Croshaw was mortally wounded by a shell bursting short. He was buried near the ruined schools of the Menin Road outside Ypres.

It is not clear if Captain Lindsay took part in this, the battalion's contribution to the Third Ypres (Passchendale) battle. However, at about this time he had his horse blasted from underneath him by a shell. There remained no trace of the horse, but Lindsay was not hurt.<sup>14</sup>

The battalion came out of the line on 30 September 1917, for a few days rest. The new C.O. was an Australian, Lieutenant-Colonel W.J.R. Cheeseman, MC, Legion of Honour, (later DSO, despatches). He was only 24 years old, and obviously a gallant and

capable officer. He led the unit in further operations on the Flanders front and in France, on the Somme front; was gassed but survived the war.

Father Kennedy, DSO, was compelled to sever his connection with 53 Bn towards the end of December 1917, due to ill-health. Colonel Cheeseman wrote to Kennedy from France, on 19 October 1918: 'The battalion has had a tremendously hard time lately and has suffered severe casualties, losing some splendid officers and men, a number of them, unfortunately, being old hands.

*'The officers killed were Captain Johnson, MC, Captain Wilson, MC, Lieutenants Shearwood, Lamerton, Davies, Anslow, Althouse and Ralph. It was poor Althouse's first stunt.*

*'I can't tell you how upset we all are over these splendid fellows going west, but it is the fortune of way and has to be borne. Indeed, they can never be replaced.*

*'Against the terrible losses, one has to count the magnificent honours the battalion has gained, and the tributes of praise from all the commanders—from Army down.*

*'In two stunts we captured about 400 prisoners, 100 machine-guns, 8 field guns and several minenwerfer.*

*'Among the many honours gained are Major Murray, DSO, Captain Smith, bar to MC, Lieutenant Waite, bar to MC, and there are a number still to come. Roberts has been awarded the French "Croix de Guerre". We have two men recommended for the VC, and expect word about them any day.*

*'From the above, the severity of the fighting can easily be judged, and when I tell you that two of our stunts were the capture of Peronne*

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8. His younger brother George Lindsay.
  9. Leon Wolff. 'In Flanders Fields', London, 1959. pp.80-81.
  10. 'The Whale Oil Guards', op. cit., p.105.
  11. Central Army Records Office
  12. 'The Whale Oil Guards', op. cit., p.109.
  13. 'The Whale Oil Guards', op. cit., p.121.
  14. Recollection of Maj. J.G. Lindsay, as told to the author in 1965.



and the smashing of the Hindenberg Line south of Le Catalet (both of which were done at 3 hours' notice), you will be able to imagine what we've been doing.

'I can say without fear of contradiction that the battalion has never been better, both from the point of view of morals and military efficiency.'<sup>16</sup>

It appears that Captain Lindsay was not well known to Father Kennedy. At any rate, he was included in 'the number of honours still to come', having taken part in one of the 'stunts' mentioned by the Colonel: the capture of Perrone. Lindsay was wounded in action on 1 September 1918, and was subsequently awarded the Military Cross for the action in which he was wounded.<sup>16</sup>

He was wounded in the left leg, which necessitated convalescence in a wheel chair in a hospital in England. Meanwhile, the first sign of official recognition came through in December, signed by the 53rd Battalion Adjutant, Lieutenant A.C. Elliot:

#### SPECIAL ORDER

by

Lieutenant-Colonel W.J.R. Cheeseman, DSO, MC,  
Commanding the 53rd Battalion, AIF.

December 13th, 1918.

His Majesty the King has approved of the award of the following Decorations:—

Victoria Cross

1584a. Pte. Curry, W.M.

Under authority from His Majesty the King, the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief has awarded the following Decorations:—

Distinguished Service Order.

Major J.J. Murray, MC

Bar to the Military Cross.

Captain W.E. Smith, MC

Lieutenant W. Waite, MC

Military Cross.

Captain W.F. Lindsay.

Lieutenant W. Bevan.

Lieutenant J. Dexter.

Lieutenant A.W. Cooper.

Lieutenant A.J. Tofler.

Lieutenant G.A. Young.'

Further decorations to the battalion, listed in this 'Special Order', were seven Distinguished Conduct Medals, two Bars to the Military Medal, nineteen Military Medals, a 'Mention' to Colonel Cheeseman in the Australian Corps Routine Order No. 48 of 17 October 1918, and a 'Mention' to six Other Ranks.<sup>17</sup>

Actually, the day before, on 12 December 1918, Headquarters, Fourth Army issued two scrolls to Captain Lindsay, which were sent to Australia, and it is unlikely that he saw them for some time.

The first scroll, printed in colour, shows the 'Army Orders' by General Sir H.S. Rawlinson, Bart., GCVO, KCB, KCMG, Commanding Fourth Army. Under the heading 'IMMEDIATE REWARDS', for 'gallantry and devotion to duty in action', Captain W.F. Lindsay, Australian Imperial Force is listed as having been awarded the Military Cross, together with 32 other Australian officers. The six MC winners included in Colonel Cheeseman's 'Special Order' of the following day, are in the list, G.A. Young, appearing as Second Lieutenant.

The scroll is signed by the DA and QMG, Fourth Army, Major-General H.C. Holman.

The second scroll, half the size, and also in colour, (a royal crest) is dated 12 December 1918. Headquarters, Fourth Army. 'To Captain W.F. Lindsay, Australian Military Force. I congratulate you on the gallantry and devotion to duty for which you have been awarded The Military Cross. H.S. Rawlinson. Genl. Commanding Fourth Army. (Facsimile signature). On the border of the scroll one can see 'Printed in France by Army Printing and Stationery Services'.

On 1 February 1919, almost four months after the end of the war, and when Lindsay was still in England, his award was gazetted on page 1731 of the Supplement to the London Gazette, together with a Citation.<sup>18</sup> A month later, General Sir William Birdwood, GOC Anzac Corps, wrote a letter to Lindsay, this being a slightly better written version of the Citation already published. The general signed the letter in black pencil; it was no doubt a nice souvenir.

15. 'The Whale Oil Guards', op. cit., pp.134-136.

16. Central Army Records Office.

17. 'The Whale Oil Guards', op. cit., pp.141-143.

18. Supplement to the London Gazette, 1 February 1919. Page 1731.

'Capt. William Frederic Lindsay, 53rd Bn., Aust. Infy.

During the attack on Peronne on 1st September, 1918, when the advance of the flank of the battalion was delayed by very intense machine-gun fire, he got his company into position in the open, and bringing well-aimed fire to bear, dispersed the enemy with peculiarly important losses, and the advance proceeded. His gallantry and judgment were conspicuous, and his opportune and skilful action greatly contributed to the success of the battalion.'

It is very probable that most decorated Australian officers never bothered to look up their entry in the London Gazette; whereas a letter of congratulations from Birdwood would have been a prized possession.

On 14 March 1919, the thirty-nine year old Captain W.F. Lindsay, MC, had sufficiently recovered from his leg wound, to return to Australia. He had spent over two years at the Front, and was indeed lucky to have come through so well. His brother George was a Lieutenant in the AIF, and survived the Western Front, however his brother Walter was invalided home from the Light Horse in Egypt. A younger brother, Thomas Francis Lindsay, was Killed in Action, Palestine, 14 July 1918, with the Light Horse.<sup>19</sup>

William Frederic Lindsay's appointment with the Australian Imperial Force terminated on 1 May 1919, and he reverted to his Citizen Military Forces lieutenancy.

Apart from being reunited with his wife, 15 and 11 year old sons, and his five year old daughter, Lindsay also returned to his pre-war occupation with the Portland Cement Company. However, he retained a vigorous interest in military matters, and was appointed Lieutenant in the 5/20th Battalion (Militia), being promoted to Honorary Captain on 16 September 1919.

It is recorded that he was 'awarded The Military Cross on 3 June 1919 for the action in which he was wounded'.<sup>20</sup> This is possibly the date on which the decoration was forwarded, or presented to him. The MC was un-named and un-dated as issued, and was privately engraved 'Capt. W.F. Lindsay 53rd Bn. A.I.F.' He also received the British War Medal 1914-18 and the Victory Medal 1914-19.



**Captain W.F. Lindsay, MC. Probably taken in Australia—circa 1920.**

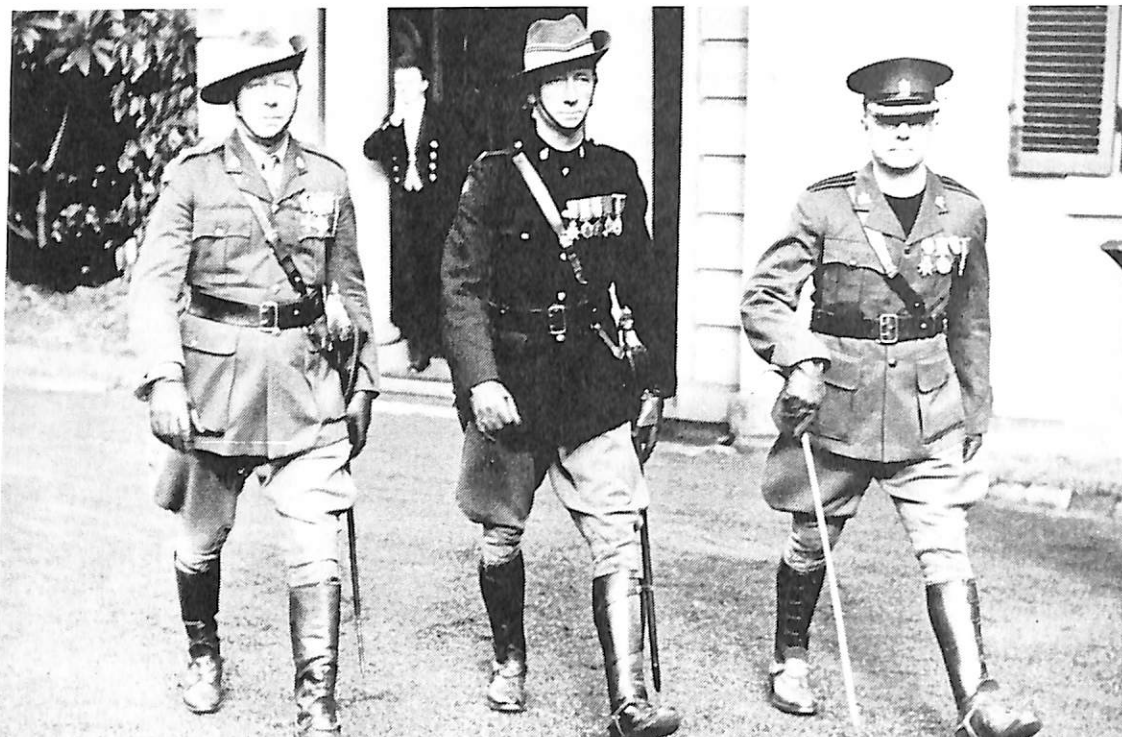
19. Lieutenant George Lindsay, 53 Bn., A.I.F. (1886-1968).  
Walter Lindsay, (1888-1958).

Tpr. Thomas Lindsay, 2962. 1st Australian Light Horse. Killed in Action, 14 July 1918. Age 27. Son of George and Eliza Lindsay of Unanderra, N.S.W. Thomas Francis Lindsay is buried in the Jerusalem War Cemetery. (Probably killed during the only attack of the German 'Asia Corps', which took place in the Jordan valley and was repulsed. It is described by Dr C.E. Bean in 'Anzac to Amiens', p.502).

20. Central Army Records Office.

On 31 March 1921, Lindsay was promoted to Captain in 5/20 Battalion, and transferred to the Reserve of Officers exactly one year later.

This withdrawal from military activity possibly coincided with his move from Portland, to the Sydney Head Office of the Commonwealth Portland Cement Company. After six years (he was by now forty-eight) Captain Lindsay transferred from the Reserve of Officers, to the 53rd Battalion, on 1 May 1928. He was appointed a Staff Officer at 2 Division from 1 July 1930 to 31 March 1932.



Lieutenant Colonel W.F. Lindsay, MC, ED (left) at Admiralty House, Sydney, June 1937.

Promotion to Major in the 55th Battalion came through on 31 March 1932; the first real promotion since his captaincy in 1917. Major William Frederic Lindsay, MC, transferred to the 20/54th Battalion on 13 June 1933, and was appointed Temporary Commanding Officer eighteen days later. This unit is also referred to as the *'Parramatta Regiment'*. On 1 February 1934, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel. Apart from this, his appointment was confirmed as Commanding Officer of 20/54th Battalion from 1 July 1933.

Lieutenant-Colonel Lindsay was awarded the George V Efficiency Decoration (ED), with bar *'Australia'*, on 31 May 1937. This was presented at a Vice-Regal investiture at Admiralty House, Sydney, by the Governor-General, Lord Gowrie. On 12 May 1937 Lindsay received one of the 90,279 George VI Coronation Medals awarded throughout the Empire.

Shortly thereafter, having reached the age of retirement, Lieutenant-Colonel Lindsay relinquished command of the 20/54th Battalion. The next day—1 July 1937—he was placed on the Reserve of Officers. Lindsay was gazetted as a Lieutenant-Colonel on the Regimental Reserve List of the 20/19th Battalion, on 1 September 1939. His son John is also to be found on the list of Lieutenants, having volunteered for the 2nd A.I.F.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously Colonel Lindsay was keen to take part in military activities concerned with war. However, it is equally clear that, although only 59, his health was deteriorating. He was photographed at the family property *'Kilbirnie'*, on 17 February 1940. This was the diamond wedding anniversary of his parents, George and Eliza Lindsay, of Unanderra. In this photo, he has aged noticeably, since seeing his son off only one and a half months before.

He marched on Anzac Day 1940, leading the 53rd Bn through Sydney. He wore his full medals, properly mounted: Military Cross, War Medal, Victory Medal, Coronation Medal, Efficiency Decoration,<sup>22</sup> all of which can be seen clearly in the photograph. He became seriously ill five weeks later, and died at his home at 208 Wentworth Road, Burwood, on 11 June 1940.

One and a half years after his death, The Military Cross was again published in the London Gazette to Captain Lindsay—his son John.

21. *'White over Green'*—the 2/4th Infantry Battalion, Sydney, 1963. pp.341-342.

22. The ED was un-named and undated as issued, and was privately engraved *'Lieutenant.-Col. W.F. Lindsay, M.C. 20/54 Bn.'*

A group of miniatures was also properly mounted, at that time.

*Michael Downey*

## AUSTRALIAN MOUNTED PIONEERS : South Africa 1900

"Parrotts Flying Sappers" were formed early in 1900 to provide a unit of mounted engineers to support the infantry division commanded by Lieutenant General Ian Hamilton.

To match the fast moving Boers required a mounted division with high mobility and this included its' engineers.

Colonel T.S. Parrott of the N.S.W. Engineers had left for South Africa in January 1900 as a Special Service officer. He had served with the N.S.W. Contingent to the Sudan in 1885 and was a consulting engineer in civil life.

In April he was given the task of organising the pioneers, selecting his men from the many corps that made up the division. The unit was a mixture of British, Australian and Canadian troops and its title chose to ignore these diverse origins of the men.

Leaving Bloefontem on 1st May they saw action at the Vet River, Kroonstadt, the Vaal River, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

On 11/12 June they fought at Diamond Hill—the last major battle of the war. They then moved South to protect the railway from Botha's force in Eastern Transvaal and as casualties increased and the

mounted division declined in strength they were ultimately disbanded in Pretoria, the men rejoining their parent unit.

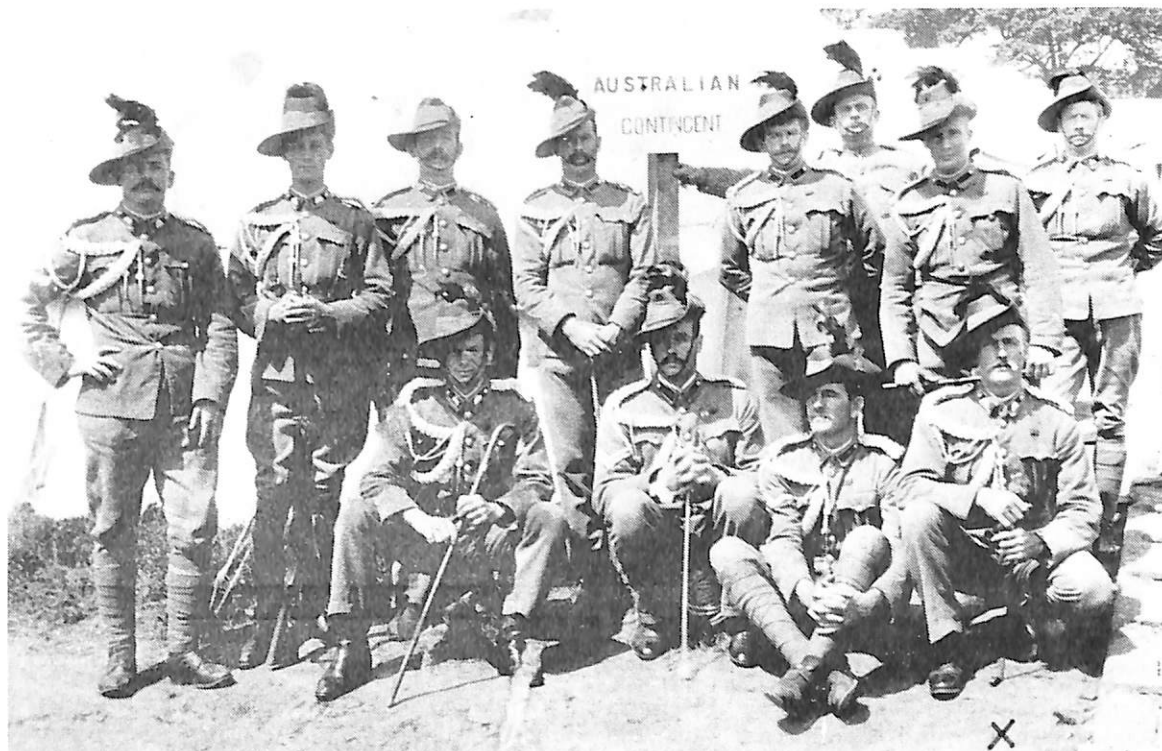
Parrott returned to Australia in January 1901 and resumed command of the New South Wales Engineers.

He prepared the roll for the unit in August 1901. The majority of the names on the roll have been crossed out indicating a claim for the medal on another roll—no doubt that of the original unit the men transferred from.

This also applies to the columns on the roll for the relevant clasps to the Queens South Africa Medal. With a couple of exceptions all of the men are listed for the clasps "Cape Colony", "Orange Free State" and "Transvaal" with their original unit. Most gained the clasps "Johannesburg" and "Diamond Hill" with the Mounted Pioneers.

I doubted if any medals existed named to the unit however a recent discovery of two medals to Private M.J. Dew have confirmed that some members received their Q.S.A. actually named to the Mounted Pioneers.

Number	Rank	Name	Orig. Unit	Comments
	Lt/Col	T.S. Parrott	N.S.W. Eng.	CC/OFS/ J'burg/Dia. Hill Issued 29.7.07
	Capt.	H.P. Copeland	R of O	(From N.S.W. Engineers)
	Lt.	R.G. Earle	R.E.	Now in Delhi
	Lt.	C.C. Hogg	R.E.	Now in Dum Dum
63	Sgt. Maj.	E.J. Comus	Canadian M.R.	
12	Sgt. Maj.	H. Grace	N.S.W. M.R.	
48	Q.M. Sgt.	J. Dockrell	Sth. Aust. M.R.	
205	Sgt.	A.E. Cradick	N.S.W. M.R.	
386	Cpl.	A.K. Parrott	N.S.W. M.R.	Also received clasp "Belfast"
239	Cpl.	H. Podmore	N.S.W. M.R.	
22	Cpl.	R. White	Sth. Aust. M.R.	
502	Cpl.	J. Young	N.S.W. M.R.	
2412	Cpl.	W.G. Wilson	Cornwalls Mtd. Inf.	
4936	Cpl.	E. Carter	Yorks Mtd. Inf.	
25243	Cpl.	H. McBride	R.E.	
342-	L/Cpl.	H. Carter	Vic. Mtd Rifles	
26201	Spv	F. Webb	R.E.	
1145	Spv	G. Hobley	R.E.	
29908	Spv	P. Sweeney	R.E.	
27778	Spv	W. Moorefield	R.E.	
1064	Spv	A. Beatson	R.E.	
29822	Dvr	C. Camish	R.E.	
	Dvr	Murch	R.E.	
173	Pte	H. Bayley	Vic Mtd Rifles	Also entitled to clasp "Belfast"
223	Pte	E. Payne	Vic Mtd Rifles	
339	Pte	M. Shaw	Vic Mtd Rifles	
260	Pte	J. McNulty	Vic Mtd Rifles	
2580	Pte	J. Ambridge	Yorks Mtd Inf.	
2703	Pte	W. Evans	Yorks Mtd Inf.	
3804	Pte	Stephenson	Yorks Mtd Inf.	
5227	Pte	F. Wright	Yorks Mtd Inf.	
3030	Pte	J. Darorany	Cornwalls Mtd Inf.	
3283	Pte	E. Woolcock	Cornwalls Mtd Inf.	
4059	Pte	W. Bray	Bedfords Mtd Inf.	
364	Pte	J. Bennetts	N.S.W. Mtd Rifles	
583	Tpr.	W. Sinclair	N.S.W. Mtd Inf.	Servant to Col. Parrott.
—	Pte	Schofield	—	Officers Servant
72	Pte	E. O'Brien	West Aust. Mtd Rifles	
23	Pte	J. Kennerly	West Aust. Mtd Rifles	
87	Pte	M.J. Dew	South Aust. Mtd Rifles	
300	Pte	J. Scott	Canadian Mtd Rifles	
209	Pte	P. More	Canadian Mtd Rifles	
222	Pte	A. McKinley	Canadian Mtd Rifles	
221	Pte	J. McGeachy	Canadian Mtd Rifles	
246	Pte	F. Pointen	Canadian Mtd Rifles	
132	Pte	D. Dalstone	Rifle Brigade	
312	Pte	J. Lander	Victorian Mtd Rifles	Also served in Aust. Com. Horse Transport
	Conductor	J. De Villiers	Interpreter	



The South Australian Contingent to the Coronation of King Edward VII. Pte M.J. Dew is kneeling down in the front row on the right.

Private Dew left for South Africa with the first Contingent from South Australia. I believe he may have been a carpenter before enlistment and his trade probably was his ticket into the Pioneers.

He received three clasps Cape Colony/Orange Free State and Transvaal from the medal roll of the 1st South Australian Mounted Rifles and these are the only clasps on the medal.

There is a pencil note on the Pioneer roll that states "*Transvaal to be recovered, Johannesburg and Diamond Hill issued.*" This was never done.

Private Dew served with the South Australian Contingent to the coronation of King Edward VII. He received the bronze Coronation medal.

The Queens South Africa Medal is engraved as follows:

87 PTE. M.J. DEW AUS: MTD: PNR: CPS

I would suggest that all the men from British units listed on this roll received their Queens South Africa medal named to their parent unit.

There is a possibility that some of the Australians received their medals named to either their original unit or the Australian Mounted Pioneers. I welcome further comments from members who may have a Q.S.A. in their collection that appears in this roll.

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References and Acknowledgements.

W/O Roll 100/289

The Royal Aust. Engineers Vol. 1 by McNichol

Aust. Contingents to Sth. Africa by Murray.

*T. Turner*

## W. J. SYMONS : From Militia to VC

Whilst travelling from Melbourne some time ago, I happened upon a small antique shop in the Victorian country town of Euroa. It was here I discovered, and purchased, two photographs of great interest. The first I recognised as being Lieutenant W.J. Symons, winner of the third Victoria Cross to an Australian in World War One. Symons won his VC in the trenches of Lone Pine, at Gallipoli, during the night of 8 and 9 August, 1915.

This photograph is the same as the one that appears between pages 32 and 33 of Lionel Wigmore's, *They Dared Mightily*. This particular photograph is, however, a reproduction, though not of current manufacture, but of the original era. The photograph is 21cm x 15cm, upon a light cardboard backing. The picture itself is a reasonably clear, and defined, studio portrait. It shows Symons as a captain of the first AIF. The ribbon of the Victoria Cross is clearly visible on his left breast. Also visible is the brass A, for Anzac, upon his colour patch. Unlike most old photographs, this picture bears no studio or photographers stamp, or any distinguishing mark.

The second photograph is a 10cm x 15cm picture, also on a cardboard backing, of a group of soldiers posing before the entrance of an open tent. The central characters include an officer, (centre, second from right), and a sergeant, (centre, third from right). This whole photograph has the air of Militia men in "camp", at about the turn of the century, or just after. In fact, two of the older members of the group are wearing what appears to be the ribbon for the Queens South Africa Medal. This photograph bears the studio mark of James Colquhoun, Donald Street, Prahran.



**Captain W.J. Symons VC.**



Although identification has not been confirmed it is believed that Symons is the sergeant in the centre of this photograph.

At first I thought nothing more than being extremely lucky in obtaining two rare, and interesting, old photographs, and at such a cheap price. However, upon much closer examination, it is revealed that the sergeant in the group photograph bears a remarkable resemblance to Lieutenant Symons, of the first.

William Symons was born at Bendigo, Victoria, in July, 1889. He later worked as a commercial traveller in Melbourne, and lived in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick. Symons served for a period of eight years in the Militia, with both the 5th and 60th Battalions, before his enlistment in the AIF on 17 August 1914.

He was then posted as Colour Sergeant to the 7th Battalion. On the 18 October 1914 he embarked, along with his Battalion, from Melbourne aboard the *SS Horoata*. Prior to the landing at Gaba Tepe, on 25 April, 1915, Symons was appointed, temporarily, Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant. On the day after the landing he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. Promotion to Lieutenant came on the 2 July 1915, and captain on the 1 May 1915. Symons returned to Australia, after receiving his VC, in March 1916. He left Australia with the 37th Battalion, on 3 June 1916, as a company commander, and served with that unit until the end of the war. William Symons married in August, 1918, settled permanently in England after the war. He died in London on 24 June 1948.

Confirmed, positive identification of the sergeant in the group photograph as being Symons has not been possible, to date. However, it is reasonable to believe that with eight years service in the Militia, Symons should have attained some rank, and that, upon his enlistment into the AIF, he was immediately posted as a Colour Sergeant, would serve to confirm this.

If any society member has a copy of these photographs, or can throw any light on to the identification of any of the group members, I would very much like to hear from them. I can only surmise that some old comrade of Symons, from his militia days, and probably present in the group photograph, obtained a copy of the official portrait, after Symons had received his VC. He may have, himself, served in the first AIF. Finally, the lady attending the shop at Euroa informed me that both photographs came from the same estate, but could not recall the name, nor when they were acquired.

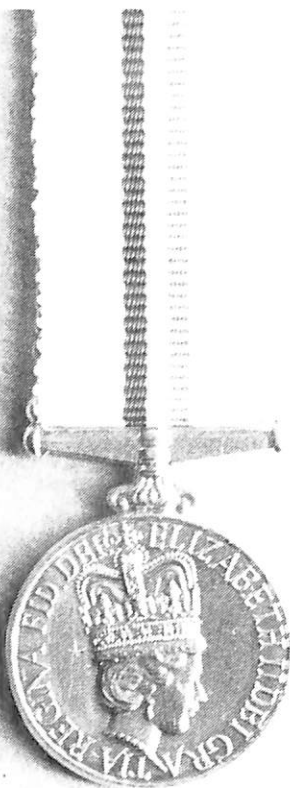
However, whatever the history of these two photographs, they now provide a more than interesting link with one of Australia's great soldiers, and an event that has become legend in Australian history, Gallipoli.

References: *Official History of Australia in The War 1914-18*, Vol. I, pages 555, 557, 558, 559, 560, 562, 564. *They Dared Mightily*, edited by Lionel Wigmore, AWM, 1963. Pages 38, 39, 40.



*Christopher Fagg*

## THE RHODESIA MEDAL 1980



The medal was instituted by Queen Elizabeth II in August 1980, for issue to all members of the Commonwealth Monitoring Force (C.M.F.) who took part in the supervision of the ceasefire and Independence elections in Rhodesia, (Zimbabwe) in 1980.

The medal is circular in form and made from cupronickel, and produced by the Royal Mint in Wales. On the obverse of the medal is the Crowned Effigy of Her Majesty, on the reverse is an antelope surrounded by the words "The Rhodesia Medal 1980".

The ribbon is light blue in colour, with three, thin, equal sized, vertical, central stripes of red, white and blue, in that order.

The medal is granted for service in Rhodesia between 1 December 1979 and 20 March 1980.

The conditions of eligibility varied slightly between the armed services and the civilian organisations. Basically the qualifying period of service was:—

- (i) armed forces personnel—14 days service on the posted strength of a unit or formation in Rhodesia between 1.12.1979 and 20.3.1980
- (ii) civilian personnel—14 days service in Rhodesia on their respective committees, staff, or advisory boards.

The medal is available for issue to all the respective Commonwealth Countries' contingents who participated in the exercise. Such countries being Australia, Fiji, Kenya and New Zealand.

Provision was made for the medal to be granted to personnel who did not complete the qualifying period of service due to death or injury received whilst serving in Rhodesia.

Personnel eligible for the medal were drawn from the following areas:—

1. Respective Naval Force Personnel
    - (i) Royal Marines
  2. Respective Army Personnel
  3. Respective Air Force Personnel
    - (i) aircrew
    - (ii) ground crew
  4. The Governor
  5. Election Committee Staff
  6. The Police Advisor
  7. Respective staff members of 4, 5, & 6
  8. Police Officers
  9. Ministry of Defence civilian personnel
- The medals order of procedure:—

Britain — immediately after the Civil Defence Long Service Medal.

Australia — after the National Medal and/or any other Long Service or Meritorious Awards, and before PNG Independence Medal, U.N Medals and

the Vietnam Campaign Service Medal  
New Zealand — is worn after the Long Service Medals of the N.Z. Services.



Reverse.

#### Notes

1. Ministry of Defence U.K.
2. A.D. Hamilton & Co U.K.
3. Ministry of Defence N.Z.
4. Ministry of Defence Aust.
5. Committee on the grant of honours Decorations & Medals U.K.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Winter, Denis, *The First of the Few*, Allen Lane, 1982. pp. 223, (illustrated) \$14.95.

The Royal Flying Corps was founded on 13 May 1912—scarcely more than two years before the outbreak of the Great War. On 1 April 1918 the RFC and the Royal Naval Air Service were combined to form the Royal Air Force.

The young men who were the airmen of the Great War occupy a unique place in military history in that they were among the first to fight a war in a machine of the technological age. Even so, this small group of individuals was described by Lloyd George as 'the knighthood of this war (who) recall the legendary days of chivalry not merely by their exploits but by the nobility of their spirit'.

Denis Winter is probably best known for his recent book, *Death's Men*. This is a scholarly investigation of the soldiers of the Great War and the book which resulted in the award of a Visiting Fellowship at ANU. In *The First of the Few* he was attempted to examine the world of the fighter pilot from a similarly academic viewpoint—the aim being to provide the reader with a new assessment of the role and achievements of the RAF in the war of 1914-1918.

To date, most studies of the war in the air fall into a few basic categories: technical descriptions of the aircraft, personal reminiscences of participants, narratives and chronological accounts based on particular well known events such as 'Bloody April'. Winter, however, attempts to go beyond such essentially limited approaches. Consequently the book sets out to encompass all aspects of the life of the fighter pilot from enlistment and training through to active service on the Western Front. Appropriately, the final chapter is devoted to a subject all too often neglected by writers—the experiences of the participants during the years that followed Armistice.

*The First of the Few* presents the reader with a broad range of material that offers new insights into the world of the fighter pilot. Winter argues that despite the commonly held image that 'the RFC fought a cushy war' the reality of the way in the air was, in many cases, the underlying cause of an inordinate degree of personal stress and tension. A picture emerges of young men in their early twenties who look middle aged, a high rate of war neuroses and of 'Shaking hands unable to pick up cups of tea. Twitching eyelids. A double Dubonnet before a patrol. Lapses of memory and blurred vision. Meals returned untouched (and) sudden flareups showing the hint of hysteria behind the calm'. (p. 145).

The book suggests that despite the relatively pleasant living conditions enjoyed by these early flyers, the basic tensions, the physical strain and the immediacy of death (particularly being burned to death) resulted in a series of unpleasant psychological and physical side effects that occurred with greater frequency than in the infantry. Even contemporary medicos believed that '50 per cent of pilots developed serious neurosis during their tour of duty'. (p. 146).

A disappointing feature of what is otherwise a splendid book is the omission of footnotes and the failure to acknowledge source material quoted in the text. However, on balance *The First of the Few* is a valuable work of scholarly analysis which captures the spirit such air classics as Victor Yeats' autobiographical novel, *Winged Victory* and Cecil Lewis' evocative personal account *Sagittarius Rising*.

Laffin, John, *The Australian Army at War 1899-1975*, Osprey Publishing, 1982. Price \$9.90.

Many very useful small books on military history, uniforms, weapons, and insignia have been produced in the last few years. The Osprey Men-at-Arms series, and books from Blandford Press have been prominent among those.

Several of these books have included references to the Australian Forces. However a single compact publication dealing with the composition and history of the Australian Army and featuring illustrations of uniforms and insignia has been notably absent until now.

*"The Australian Army at War 1899-1975"* provides text, colour illustrations by Mike Chappell, and photographs, in a similar Osprey 40-page format. The text by ex-patriot Australian, John Laffin, is lively and the style will be familiar to readers of his earlier and larger work, *"Digger"*. This type of publication was long overdue.

The book is pleasing to the eye, but on examination many errors become evident. A photograph of men of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles (page 4) bears an incorrect caption which describes the uniform of the earlier New South Wales Mounted Infantry. The Orders for Battle for the 1914-18 War (page 9) and the 1939-45 War (page 18) contain errors which can probably be blamed on the printer. So too, I presume can the nonsensical sentence on page twelve.

I found some other errors, although minor, also annoying. I was confused by the reference to a sculpture of Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick and his donkey by W. Leslie Bowles as a caption to a photograph of the medallion designed by sculptor Ray Ewers which was first distributed for the 50th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign. The author also uses the word "Anzac" when describing the four Australian divisions fighting in 1917 (page 14). They were not Anzac divisions and the use of the word must irritate New Zealanders. An old photograph is reproduced of some of the uniforms displayed in the Australian War Memorial (page 16) with a caption which says the cavalry officer is wearing a scarlet armband. I guess it is not very important in a black and white photograph to know that he is actually wearing the blue (brigade) armband.

Errors continue in the coverage given to the 1939-45, and later wars. The A.I.F. did not adopt the British spike bayonet and the No. 5 Jungle Carbine was virtually unknown to the Australians in the Second World War (page 17). The 2/27th Battalion did not serve on Crete (page 18) and the gallant Tom Derrick VC. DCM. was killed in action in 1945, not 1944 (page 19). The photograph of Corporal F.R. Smith, described as being of the 2/31st Battalion on the Kokoda Trail, is actually the well-known member of the 2/33rd Battalion photographed at Gona (page 21).

Men of the Second A.I.F. wore two identity discs, not three (page 26). The 2/13th Battalion was not part of the 7th Australian Division (pages 34 and 35) and the Royal Australian Regiment wore its own hat badge during the 1960s not that of the Corps (page 37).

The uniform illustrations are very good. However the uniforms and insignia shown are not entirely "typical" and to claim that they are is misleading. There are also errors in the descriptions of the badges. The account of the evolution of the "Rising Sun" badge (page 24) is not one that I favour. More importantly it is not true to say that there were three patterns of the hat badge worn by the battalions of Australian Commonwealth Horse. There were only two patterns and the author describes the second pattern collar badge to produce evidence of a third. It is also not true to say that only the A.I.F. wore the curved metal AUSTRALIA title, as many currently serving soldiers could confirm (page 38). The colour-patch of the 59th Battalion A.I.F. is incorrectly described as that of the 55th Battalion on page thirty-eight. Finally, I found the repeated statement that the Australian Light Horse wore "ostrich" feathers (why not the Australian emu?) in their hats possibly the most irritating error of all.

*"The Australian Army at War 1899-1975"* will find a willing market in this country at least, and I am sure that it will prove popular with many readers. I think it should be better.

Webb, Monty, *Australian Military Uniforms 1800-1982*, Kangaroo Press, 1982. Size 30 x 22, 144 Pages, including index. 40 coloured Plates, and numerous line drawings. Hard covers, with illustrated jacket. Price \$25.00.

Having been involved, in a small way, some 20 years ago, in helping Monty Webb with his set of "Golden Fleece" uniform cards of which this book is a logical development, I was delighted to be invited to review it. My own experience in co-producing a book on colonial military uniforms gives me an added awareness of Monty's achievements in bringing this one to publication.

Monty has done a terrific job, particularly with his line drawings, which show, in clear detail, different aspects of uniform embellishments and accoutrements, so essential for collectors and for military modellers. His sketches, showing front and rear views of a variety of figures, are most appealing.

A very entertaining text traces outline histories of Forces and units illustrated, with mentions of a number of outstanding personalities who were associated with milestones in their development.

There is evidence of research into the many Dress Regulations, and the few previous works that have come to light over the last 20-30 years in this field, before which, very little was generally known about Australian uniforms. The resulting information is well co-ordinated and gives a picture that is as correct as possible, having regard to the many irregularities in uniforms of the Colonial era. Some questions however will remain unanswered and will require reference to dated, identified photographs, read in conjunction with the matching Dress Regulations.

The purist will find the few inevitable errors—on Page 43 the "Royal South Australia Regiment" is named the "The South Australian Rifles", and the shako badge on Pages 42 and 43 is not that shown on Page 44.

The impression is given, too, that there were only two Colonial Naval Forces, the Victorian and the New South Wales, and that they amalgamated to become the Australian Navy. That is not quite correct, if intended, as there were four Colonial Navies (the Victorian Navy, the South Australian Navy, the Queensland Navy and the New South Wales Naval Brigade) plus some Tasmanian small craft. After Federation these forces continued under the command of a Naval Commandant in each State, until 1904, when the Naval Forces of the Commonwealth came into being. In 1911 these became the Royal Australian Navy.

In the same way, perhaps mention could have been made of the true forerunners of the WAAF & WAAF (Page 119)—these were the women of the Royal Flying Corps and the Womens Royal Air Force who, in the 1914-18 War, really showed the ability of women in an aviation-oriented force.

These and other minor criticisms do not detract from the value and interest, however, of the book. It is very readable and excellent value for the money.

Congratulations Monty Webb, and Kangaroo Press.

Compton-Hall, Richard. *The Underwater War 1939-45*. Poole, Blandford Press, 1982. Recommended Price \$24.95. Our copy from Australia and New Zealand Book Company Pty Ltd.

This reviewer has never set foot on a man-of-war, let alone a submarine, nor does he know anything about naval warfare. Yet he found this book to be a fascinating account of submarines and underwater warfare generally. The author attempts to show, and in this reviewer's opinion, very successfully "what submarines were able to achieve and not achieve" and to demonstrate the nature of submarine warfare with at times quite critical comments about published and unpublished claims and success stories. Thus the book, only 160 pages but well illustrated with pictures and diagrams, reasonably well indexed and foot-noted provides a concise primer for persons who are interested in acquiring an all-round basic layman's knowledge of the subject.

The book is exceedingly readable with occasional humour and naval jargon to lighten the at times relatively hard-to-follow description of a complex technology. The book addresses itself to aspects of order of battle, mechanics, living conditions when submerged, navigation, communications and weapons systems. The chapter on mechanics is probably the least satisfactory. For instance, the author might have explained in greater detail the development and modus operandi of the various submarine propulsion systems.

Two chapters dealing with attack on surface ships and the dangers facing submarines are followed by chapters on submarine warfare in various theatres of war and on the submarine forces of the major contestants. There is an interesting section on midget submarines and on special operations and missions, such as "the man that never was".

A little more care might have been exercised in editing so as to avoid some spelling errors. For instance, on page 140 the name of the German submarine base, Kiel, is spelt Keil. Similarly, on page 100 the German rank of Oberleutnant is abbreviated Olbt instead of Oblt. This reviewer feels that a glossary of technical terms and a list of abbreviation, acronyms and comparative naval ranks would have enhanced the value of the book quite considerably.

Otherwise, *The Underwater War 1939-1945* is a superb book and well worth the recommended price of \$24.95.

H.J. ZWILLENBERG

C.E.W. Bean, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Volumes I-IV, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1981, 1982, \$14.95 (paperback), \$30.00 (clothback).

The first four volumes of the long awaited re-issue of the twelve-volume series, *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, are now available to a new generation of Australians. Dr Robert O'Neill is general editor of the re-issued series.

The original publication of the twelve-volume series represented an outstanding accomplishment by its six authors and its general editor, Dr. C.E.W. Bean. On first publication, the individual volumes won recognition as major sources in the field of modern Australian history, and the series gained an international reputation as one of the most accurate, perceptive and unvarnished accounts of any nation's experience in the War of 1914-1918.

Much has been written of Charles Edwin Bean and his epic of Australians at war. Many, including myself, find it difficult to describe adequately the contribution Bean made to our understanding of a generation in search of adventure, national identity and nationhood. And the defence of an empire.

Bean was unique: born an Englishman he became an Australian, first as a lawyer then a journalist; he withstood the privations and struggles of a soldier, as a civilian, and became Australia's finest military historian. He was unable to accept a Military Cross for his actions at Gallipoli and refused knighthood. Notwithstanding this he was to record both the majesty and tragedy of war and the actions of ordinary men.

In all Bean wrote the first six volumes and edited the other six of the original twelve-volume series. Over the course of years numerous printings were made of the various volumes of the series. Many of these were simply reprints, but some incorporated minor changes of fact as they came to the attention of Bean and the author of the particular volume.

Volume I, *The Story of Anzac*, of the current University of Queensland Press re-issue is a facsimile of the printing of the 1942 edition. It is a towering work. With a great sense of adventure it follows the events from the outbreak of war to the end of the first phase of the Gallipoli Campaign, 4 May 1915.

Bean's aim in writing the history was to answer a series of questions he posed to himself: of which all were to focus on the character of Australians. There was however a pre-conditioning to what Bean was to write. In Volume I he was to comment, "the staff with which the 1st Australian Division sailed was the most brilliant that any Australian general had at his disposal during the war; indeed it may be doubted if any better existed among the regular divisions of the British Expeditionary Force". Bean was to never doubt himself nor his belief in Australians. And so Bean relates the landing at Gaba Tepe and the tragedy and heroism that was to follow. He concludes that while the Australian soldier, "had not yet the astonishing mastery of the soldiers craft which marked him in 1918", there was no lack of discipline that made him ineffective.

Volume II, *The Story of Anzac*, continues, and ends, the campaign on the Gallipoli Peninsula, a campaign that was contained by the opposing Turkish forces with the attacking Australians in fact becoming beleaguered garrisons. In the cramped cluster of ridges and gullies the front extended a mere two and a half kilometres and its greatest distance from the beach little more than nine hundred metres. Although Bean's work is a reflection of the era in which he lived, and reported, his work lacks little; his goal being a sincere desire to record and portray war as a reality, not with undue colour, and disregard of the common soldier, as written by historians of earlier eras.

Although he regarded the landing at Gaba Tepe a failure, Bean saw the birth of Australian nationhood; "never was a campaign richer in pure heroism and conscious self-sacrifice."

It was with this image that the AIF moved to the Western Front for two and a half years; the Somme, Passchendaele and a lost generation to perish in formless mud, and despair.

The freedom of spirit that marked Bean's first two volumes is missing from Volumes III and IV, *The AIF in France*. Appalled by inept generalship, and leadership, Bean grimly reflects on the incredible losses and the, very very grim—and drawn faces" of the Australian soldiers at the extremities of endurance. The war in France was vastly different to that experienced on the Gallipoli Peninsula. And yet my lasting impressions are not about grand strategy and tactics but rather about men—graziers, cooks, bankers and doctors. For these are the real subjects of Bean's magnificent series. It is a tribute to ordinary Australians who achieved great things.

General Gough was to write of the Australians, after the Third Battle of Ypres, in June-July 1917, they "earned the admiration and praise of all".

Volume IV climaxes with the Ypres offensive in which Australia lost 38,093 officers and men. The volume reveals one of Bean's weaknesses in that 1917 is relatively neglected. Yet in 1917 the AIF suffered its worst defeat, lost most prisoners, lost most casualties in a single battle and probably suffered more casualties than any other year of the war.

The re-issue series are reprints of the originals and overall the production is excellent allowing that some sharpness, and detail, is lost in the photographs. I enjoyed very much the fine introductions written by Ken Ingliss (Vol I), Alec Hill (Vol II), P. Pedersen (Vol III) and Bill Gammage (Vol IV). Their summaries contribute greatly to a better understanding of each volume.

Superb value.

Bruce, Anthony, *A Bibliography of British Military History from the Roman Invasions to the Restoration 1660*. K.G. Saur, Munich, 1981.

The bibliography is a compendium volume to an earlier work entitled *An annotated bibliography of the British army 1660-1914*, New York 1975. The aim of the present volume is "to provide a representative survey of the published primary and secondary sources of British military history from the Roman invasions to 1660." The bibliography has 3280 entries and covers systematically works published up to the end of 1977, although a few 1978 publications are also included.

The bibliography has a comprehensive index of authors, editors and translators. A useful form approach has been achieved by grouping into Part I, guides, indexes and "sources", meaning serial publications surveys and collections of primary records. The subject key to the bibliography are Parts II-IV. Part II in fact constitutes a general introduction into military history and comprises warfare and strategy, early works on the "art of war", general army studies followed by a section mainly devoted to corps's and regiments, including a chapter on military music and on army chaplains and religions.

Part III "Organisation, Campaigns and Military Leaders" contains the bulk of the bibliography with 2163 entries. In this part a basically period approach has been adopted, namely Roman Britain, Celtic Britain and Anglo-Saxon England, Norman Invasion to 1485, Tudor England and Early Stuarts and the Civil War. Within each chapter a more or less common pattern of subdivision has been adopted ending with a listing of corresponding biographies. Part IV with 318 entries concerns itself with "Fortifications, Castles, Weapons and Uniforms, Equipment and Awards."

The compiler has adopted the sensible approach of not listing the same entry more than once and instead has provided a simple but quite efficient system of cross references. The criteria for selecting an entry have been explained in the preface, but comments are difficult to make in the absence of a spot check of the citations listed. However, two aspects might be mentioned. The author has aimed at listing in respect of distinct subjects several works published at different periods thus providing "hopefully an indication of the progress of research and of the evolution of conflicting theories in a wide range of subject areas. "This is a very good thing, but what is perhaps not so good is the listing of works which the compiler himself considers not worth serious study. Into this category fall some works he calls "popular accounts" and some other works on which he passes value judgements which are of little help to the student of military history. Entries 33 (Higham), 1888 (Harold II) and 1892 (Henry II) are cases in point.

In summary, this bibliography is a "must" for any serious student of the military history of the period covered by this work, provided he is not looking for too many sources on fortifications and weapons. This part appears to be somewhat light on. For instance, one might have expected to find an entry for the printed version of the excellent BBC series on British castles by De Guingand of the middle sixties. Also, the Australian student might be very frustrated when he comes to have a look at the cited works in Australian libraries and collections. Nevertheless, bearing in mind the tremendous amount of painstaking effort that must go into an endeavour of this nature. the bibliography is well worth the recommended price of \$17.46.



## SOCIETY NOTES

### Dress Authority—Loyal Parramatta and Sydney Association

This body, the first formed group of volunteers in Australia, was initially established according to various authorities in 1800 but disbanded in August 1801; it was re-embodied subsequently in December 1803.

It is desired to determine the distinctive dress worn by the Association in the period 1800-1801. Various sources offer suggestions basically that the uniform of the NSW Corps was worn, but with distinctions in facings, or hair styles, and even 'a distinctive work'; no detail however, with a clear authority, has been forthcoming.

The Army Museum (Victoria Barracks) NSW seeks advice, which should be addressed to the Chairman, Management Committee.

### Albury-Wodonga Branch

At the Annual General Meeting on 8 September 1982 the following members were elected to office:

President—Mr Don Campbell  
 Secretary/Treasurer—Mrs Cheryl Johnson  
 Archivist—Miss M. Bowman  
 Committee—Mr Don Horne  
                   —Sgt Russel Johnston

### Letter to the Editor,

Sir,

I have a copy of Osprey's "*The Australian Army at War 1899-1975*" the text having been written by John Laffin, who is, I believe, a member of our society.

It is a good publication in general, but what a pity that there are so many inaccuracies.

- The NSWMR did not wear red piping—they wore black. Their "sergent-Major" is actually a major.
- The Order of Battle 1914-18. Why were the ALH brigades not properly shown in their divisions?
- The Order of Battle 1939-45. How could one totally ignore the great armoured establishments, and all the militia and other AIF Divisions. This is a particularly bad mistake, and will give a very false impression abroad of our efforts during this war.
- Why did Mr Chappell invent the grey tunic?
- The Anzac sergeant of the 27th battalion is not wearing his red chevron, to which he is entitled. The WO II is wearing a Military Cross—had he been reduced in rank? The 2/14th Bn captain is wearing the epaulettes of 1946, in 1942. The Commando is wearing a Divisional Cavalry beret, when he should be wearing khaki or green twill.
- All the recent men are back into grey.

J.C. Gorman

### Letter to the Editor,

Sir,

Reference: Sabretache Vol XXIII page 20.

In the reference, 385 Pte G.G.H. STUART is mentioned, in the text and as footnote 33.

The information shown re Royal Guards and Mounted Police is correct but I question the spelling of the surname. My roll shows the surname as STUARD. Someone may like to check this from the Attestation Form held by the AWM. My information is from a nominal roll compiled from a number of sources, including attestation forms which I borrowed (officially, of course) from the AWM.

This is only to show that I;

- a. am still around,
- b. do read Sabretache, and
- c. still have an interest in checking some things.

G.R. Vazenry

### OBITUARY

*The Victorian Branch was sad to lose, on 25 November 1982, one of its best known founder members, Alfred Nicholas Festberg, who passed away at the age of 61 years, following seven weeks of treatment at the Alfred Hospital.*

*Born in Brunswick, Germany, of Russo-German parentage, he migrated at the age of 17 to England, where he joined the British Army. He served during the War of 1939-45 in both the British and Australian Armies, and settled in Melbourne after his discharge. He worked in a variety of jobs before joining the Australian Public Service, from which he retired on invalidity approximately 2 years ago.*

*He was keenly interested in heraldry and in military history, and while working in the Department of Defence, he became increasingly aware of the general lack of appreciation, in most Australians, of their military history. He took every opportunity, thereafter, to stimulate this interest, both within and outside his Department, frequently causing discomfort for those, whose apathy or neglect hindered him in the pursuit of facts which he considered essential for a specific case.*

*His approach to research was both professional and thorough, and he did not hesitate to "go to the top", at the outset, for access to material.*

*As a result of his enterprise and diligence, he produced and published several books on Australian Army Badges, Colours and Standards, and on the lineages of the Australian Regiments. These were all both relevant to, and essential in, the study of the rather complex histories of units of the Australian Army since Federation. In addition to his Army books, he produced one on the heraldic badges of the RAN, one on Australian military clothing of the 1939-45 War, and had almost completed, at the time of his death, books on unit badges of the RAAF, Civic heraldry in Victoria, heraldry of the Catholic Church and several other works.*

*Alfred Festberg was remarkable because his objective in producing his books was the spread of knowledge rather than the pursuit of profit, and in most cases his books barely covered the cost of production. He was always seeking some form of financial backing to ensure that his books could be produced locally, without costing him money he could not afford.*

*He was the first person in Australia who had the courage and enterprise to produce books on his chosen subjects, despite a small and unwilling market, and without his stimulus, it is safe to say that interest in these subjects would be far behind what it is today.*

*His friends mourn his passing. He is survived by two daughters to whom we extend our deepest sympathy.*

BARRY VIDEON

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Tunic, Trousers, puttees, felt hat.

He offers in exchange the following French WWI items:

a 'blue horizon' tunic, 'blue horizon trousers', puttees and a 'blue horizon' cap or helmet.

If any members are interested in this exchange they should write directly to Mr Dujardin.

**THE MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA**

The aims of the Society are the encouragement and pursuit of study and research in military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment and kindred matters; the promotion of public interest and knowledge in these subjects, and the preservation of historical military objects with particular reference to the Armed Forces of Australia.

**ORGANISATION**

The Federal Council of the Society is located in Canberra.  
The Society has branches in Brisbane, Canberra, Albury-Wodonga, Melbourne, Geelong, Adelaide and Perth. Details of meetings are available from Branch Secretaries whose names and addresses appear on page 2.

**SABRETACHE**

The Federal Council is responsible for the publication quarterly of the Society Journal, *Sabretache* which is scheduled to be mailed to each member of the Society in the last week of the final month of each issue. Publication and mailing schedule dates are:  
Jan.-Mar. edition mailed in the last week of March. Jul.-Sept. edition mailed in the last week of Sept.  
Apr.-Jun. edition mailed in the last week of June Oct.-Dec. edition mailed in the last week of December.

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- 1 July for July-September edition
- 1 April for April-June edition
- 1 October for October-December edition

**QUERIES**

The Society's honorary officers cannot undertake research on behalf of members. However, queries received by the Secretary will be published in the "Queries and Notes" section of the Journal.

**SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS**

Society publications advertised in *Sabretache* are available from:

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**THE MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA**

Please address all Correspondence to:

The Federal Secretary, P.O. Box 30, Garran, A.C.T. 2605, Australia.

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