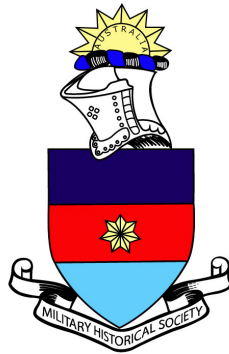


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*Sabretache*



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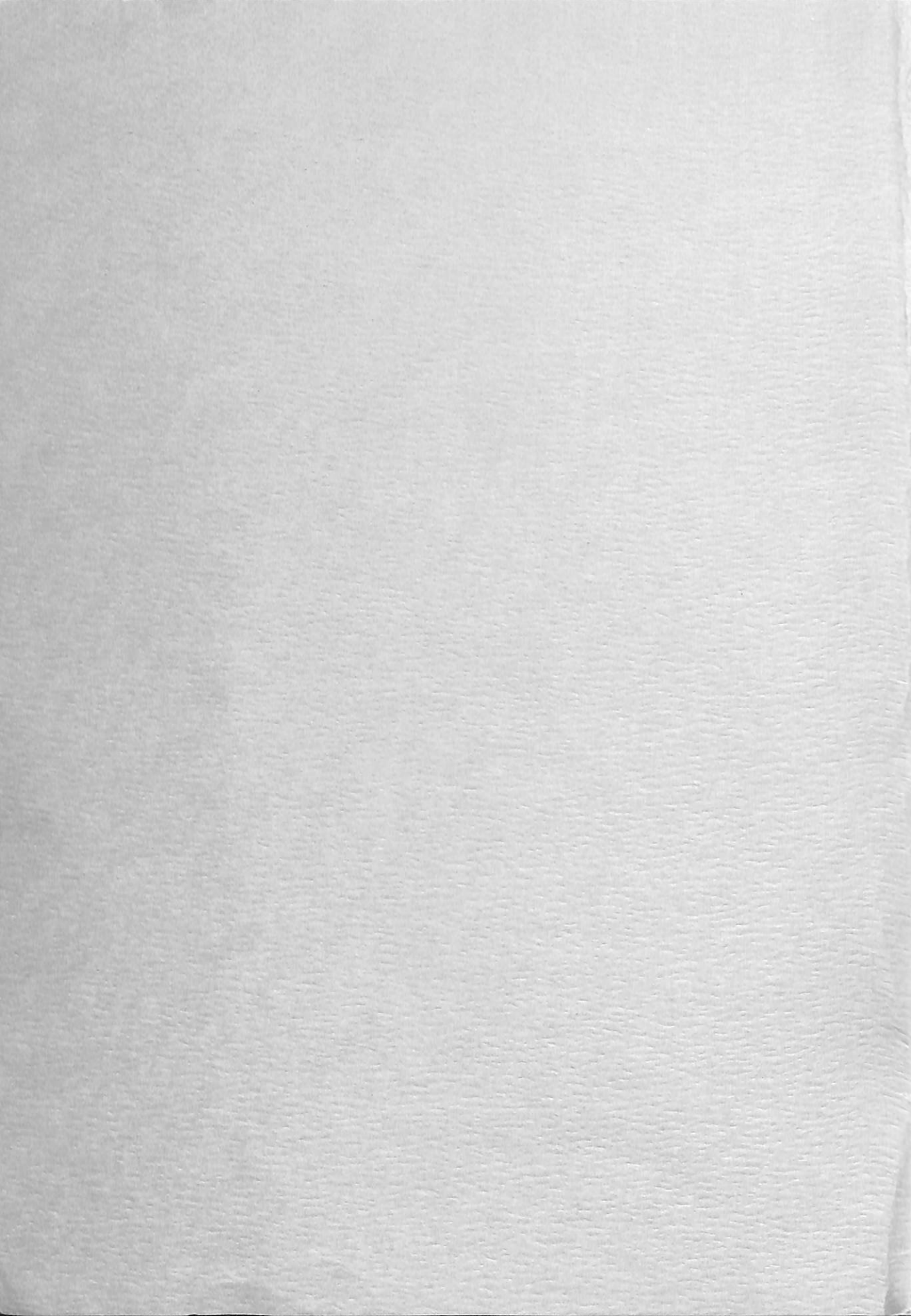
Journal and Proceedings of the MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

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# SABRETACHE

**Vol XXIX January/March 1988 Number 1**

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# SABRETACHE



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

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Contributions in the form of articles, book reviews, notes, queries or letters are always welcome. Authors of major articles are invited to submit a brief biographical note. The annual subscription to *Sabretache* is \$26.

Published by authority of the Federal Council of the Military Historical Society of Australia. The views expressed in the articles in this Journal are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Society.

**Membership Listing** The alphabetical listing of members of the MHSA normally included in the January/March issue will be held-over until the April/June issue. This will allow members additional time in which to revise details of their interests and/or addresses and forward them through branch secretaries to the federal secretary MHSA.

**1989 Australian War Memorial Research Grants Scheme** Members' attention is drawn to the publication elsewhere in this issue of details of the Memorial's research grants scheme for 1989. Further details, and application forms, are available as indicated from the Memorial's grants administration officer, Mr Stephen Allen (a close relative).

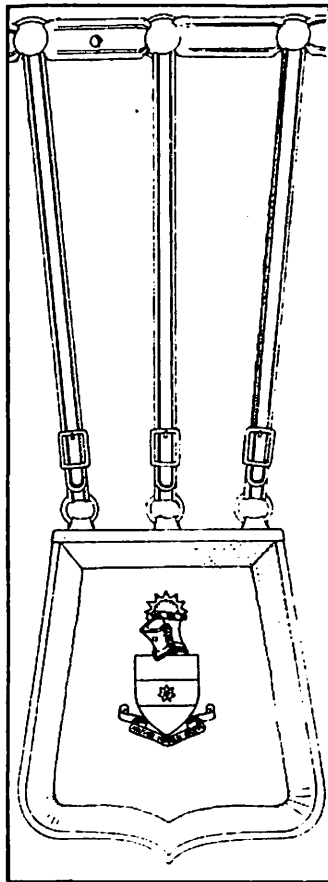
**Chief of Air Staff Historian appointed** Chris Coulthand-Clark has been appointed CAS historian, with the task of completing a history of the RAAF from its inception until the outbreak of the second world war. Chris' previous publications include a history of RMC Duntroon, and biographies of General William Throsby Bridges (founder of RMC) and General H.V. Legge — the latter only recently released.

A member of the Canberra branch of the MHSA, Chris is to be congratulated on his appointment — one of the results of the recently instituted RAAF heritage award scheme — which will result in a work covering a neglected period of Australia's defence history.

**Research group** The third issue of *The Quarterly Return*, the newsletter of the Society's British Army in Australia Research Group, has been distributed to members of the group.

The issue contains the customary mix of news, views, notes and queries. It contains references to recent books on the British army in Australia, an index to military deserters, a note on the Historical Re-enactment Society, and pieces on Chelsea Pensioners, army families, the 28th Foot's back-badger, Governor Darling's batman and British regimental colours in Victoria.

Those interested in joining the group (membership is free to members of the MHSA) should contact the convenor, Peter Stanley, at 152 Majura Avenue, Ainslie, ACT, 2602.



**27 OTU, Lichfield** Mr Eddie Walks of Staffordshire, UK, is compiling a history of RAF Lichfield, in Britain. Lichfield was the station at which No. 27 Operational Training Unit was based. 27 OTU was the main operational training unit for Australian aircrew posted to serve with the RAF's Bomber Command. Any former RAAF aircrew who may be able to assist Mr Walk's research are invited to contact him at 32 Mill End Lane, Alrewas, Staffordshire, United Kingdom.

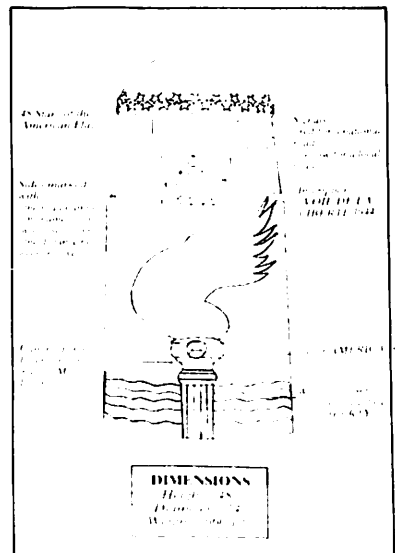
**Want to buy a milestone?** Commemorative milestones, once marking the progress of the US Third Army during the liberation of France in 1944, are now up for sale. The dalek-like bollards, deteriorating after forty years of exposure to the elements (and errant Citroen drivers), are being replaced by tasteful plastic replicas. An enterprising French company has bought the battered originals and is offering them for sale to veterans' groups in the United States — and elsewhere, judging by the fact that *Sabretache* has received the sales brochure. Unfortunately no price has been advised...

**Military Tattoo** As promised in the last issue of *Sabretache*, here are the tour dates and venues for the Bicentennial Military Tattoo:

Sydney, August 19-30, Sydney Entertainment Centre  
 Brisbane, September 10-18, Brisbane Entertainment Centre  
 Townsville, September 26-28, Willows Paceway Sporting Complex  
 Darwin, October 6-8, Darwin Show-ground  
 Perth, October 18-22, Burswood Superdome  
 Adelaide, October 31-November 2, Royal Showground  
 Hobart, November 10-12, North Hobart Oval  
 Melbourne, November 19-30, National Tennis Centre  
 Canberra, December 4-5, National Sports Centre

Organized around the theme of 'Australia's Military Heritage, the Tattoo will involve over 1500 soldiers, and is being supported by both the Navy and RAAF.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENTS :



Peter Stanley

## The Soldiers on the Hill

### Part 9: 1944 Spencer Gulf Fortress

At the end of 1943, with Allied forces unequivocally advancing in the South West Pacific Area, the defences of Australia began at last to be dismantled; though with evident misgivings. At its meeting of 4 January 1944 War Cabinet considered a proposal to increase the number of 5.2-inch dual purpose guns at Port Moresby, Sydney, Fremantle, Port Kembla, Newcastle, Whyalla and Adelaide. In the event, even the Curtin war cabinet realized that the likely danger hardly justified the certain expense and guns were approved only for the first three major bases.<sup>1</sup>

It was time for Australia's anti-aircraft and coast defences to be rationalized. The defences, which from mid-1943 had been manned by Volunteer Defence Corps troops, were to become almost entirely the responsibility of part-time soldiers.

In South Australia the state's VDC battalions were largely re-organized around the defences of Adelaide and Whyalla. The VDC's Central Group was transformed into Adelaide Fortress Area and Western Group became Spencer Gulf Fortress. The change was made officially on 1 February 1944, when Lieutenant Colonel Soden was appointed to command what was to be Spencer Gulf Fortress, while Captain Moorfoot became the officer commanding Fortress Defences. The formation's core was the mixed AIF and VDC 3.7-inch guns of 26th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery (now referred to more correctly as 410 Heavy Anti-Aircraft Troop) the 40mm Bofors of 703 Light Anti-Aircraft Troop and the headquarters, with attached searchlights and GL set, which continued to be known as 26th HAAB. The total establishment comprised five officers and 78 men of the AIF and eleven officers and 226 men of the VDC. A detachment of the Adelaide Fortress Workshop provided technical support following the withdrawal of the Whyalla workshops. In addition four VDC battalions, 5 (based on Wudinna), 6 (Port Pirie), 7 (Kadinia), and 10 (Gawler) came under the fortress command.

Despite some tension which developed at first between the AIF and VDC commanders of the Fortress, two changes were apparent which enhanced the formation's efficiency early in 1944; the formation of 703 Light Anti-Aircraft Troop and the construction of a battery observation post. Late in 1943 Land Headquarters had approved the raising of a light anti-aircraft troop, not so much for Whyalla's defence but 'in order that the training of VDC personnel may be facilitated'. It was to be formed

around a nucleus of AIF gunners from Victoria and South Australia, and in November 1943 the first of two Bofors 40mm guns arrived. Early in January men of Whyalla's VDC company attended a light anti-aircraft gunnery school, and in January and February seventeen VDC volunteers attended courses at Adelaide. By 20 February 703 LAATp school carried out its first practice shoot using live ammunition, firing at a sea target from the blast furnace spit. A second gun had arrived, and it appears to have been issued to the hard working Iron Knob platoon, which nevertheless seems to have regretted what might have been seen as an honour as its commander, Lieutenant Harpur, complained that he possessed no means of housing the gun or its attendant equipment.

Under the command of a Lieutenant J.C. Grant, the troop held a number of practice shoots during the year, and Lieutenant Grant's comments, preserved in the Fortress' war diary, record the gunners' growing competence. In May their shooting was merely 'fair', and the gunners' tendency to keep firing after being ordered to stop earned a commendation to Captain Anderson, who had gallantly volunteered to tow the seaborne target. By early June the troop had a more interesting box kite to use as a target (to Captain Anderson's relief, perhaps) and practices were held on several occasions until October. At the troops' last recorded shoot a visiting senior officer noted the 'the crews knew their drill and...equipment', but found that they were still impetuous in fire discipline — 'more control and firmness could have been shown', he thought.

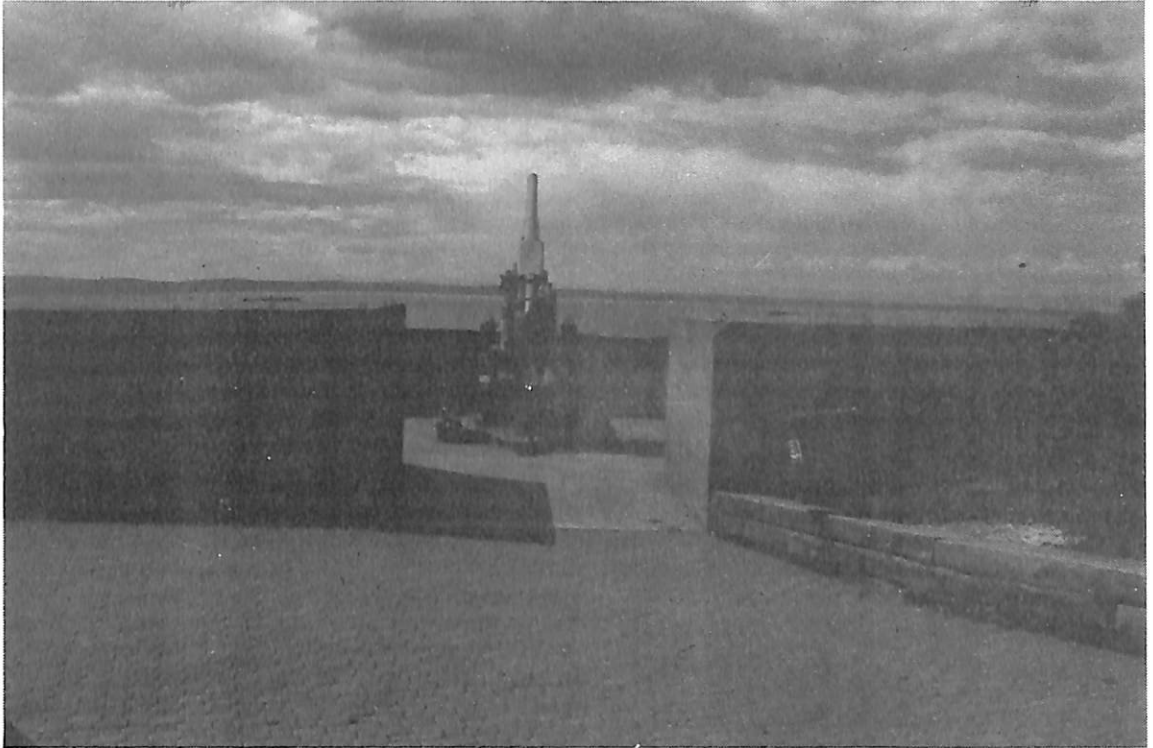
The day after Spencer Gulf Fortress was formed the Hummock Hill position received its last wartime addition when the long-awaited Battery Observation Post was completed and occupied. Plans for the concrete structure had been drawn up in May 1943, but work had proceeded very slowly, presumably because other priorities intervened. The two-storey post was an impressive addition to Whyalla's defences, however, and is today the most prominent reminder of Whyalla's wartime history. At the same time the gun position's original sand-bagged emplacements were replaced by concrete ones using AIF gunners as labourers, a job not completed until mid 1944. Ironically, the new Battery Observation Post, which had been designed to co-ordinate a four — gun dual purpose battery, was barely necessary and was hardly used the fortress was reduced from full-time to part-time before manning later in the year.

Further changes were made to the Fortress establishment during the year. In June Captain Morefoot, who had created Whyalla's defences and commanded them for two and a half years, left to take up a staff position at Land Headquarters. His only regret on leaving was that the unit which he had formed and trained had been posted away and broken up. In July the AIF component was further reduced and in August the introduction of a reduced manning scale saw the end of operational manning. The connection between the region's VDC battalions and the Fortress, never strong despite Colonel Soden's tours of the various units, was rationalized by the creation of the short-lived Spencer Gulf Composite Company. The 'composite company' actually consisted of two companies, 'A' Company with platoons around the eastern gulf; Port Pirie (2) Port Germein and Port Augusta, and 'B' Company with platoons located even more widely around Eyre Peninsula, at Kielpa, Buckleboo, Waddike, Cowell, Cleve and Kimba.

Despite efforts to continue training (with an abundance of equipment, including 2-pounder anti-tank guns, and, in contrast to earlier days, any number of grenades) the VDC members' interest gradually, and not surprisingly, waned, though less on the west than the eastern side of the gulf. During 1944 attendances at parades declined by about 14%, though as in previous years, the troops' interest in the light and heavy guns gave Whyalla a rather better record of attendance than comparable companies across the gulf and 6th Battalion had better attendance figures than any VDC unit in SA L of C Area besides Kangaroo Island and Broken Hill. By November 1944, however, the number of active VDC men had fallen from around 240 earlier in the year to 170. While the units' War Establishments had been reduced, the artillery units of Spencer Gulf Fortress were meeting only about a third of the demands made by headquarters in Adelaide. The result was that the VDC provided too few men to man the guns in a worthwhile sense. The



*The concrete Battery Observation Post on Hummock Hill, as it appeared in 1980, showing its commanding position overlooking Spencer Gulf. Unlike the other emplacements on Hummock Hill, the observation post has not been renovated.*



*One of the emplacements on Hummock Hill showing a 3.7-inch gun which has been installed by BHP in converting the formerly derelict site into a picnic area. This emplacement overlooks False Bay, to Whyalla's north and the peninsula of Point Lowly can be seen across the bay. The Hummock Hill battery's dual coastal and anti-aircraft role is evident in the low front wall of the emplacement.*

conclusion was a sad one, for though the VDC's enthusiasm had in general waned, the commitment of large numbers of individual part-time gunners remained high. As late as September 1944 staff officers from Adelaide Fortress had inspected the Whyalla gunners and reported that following the introduction of weekend manning 'greater enthusiasm has been shown by all and a number of new recruits have been enlisted...the VDC...are at present more enthusiastic...than ever before'.

Enthusiasm was not enough, however, and the Fortress' VDC strength gradually ran down during the second half of 1944 as enlistment in the VDC was restricted and training was curtailed. In October the searchlights and their equipment were removed and at last in November the Fortress (with all other static defences in the mainland except those in Sydney and Western Australia) was placed on reserve.

Almost at the Fortress' last gasp, the defences were galvanized by the last of the several wartime alarms which had occasionally roused Spencer Gulf's garrison. On 11 December, the Fortress war diary recorded, the Naval Officer in charge at Adelaide reported an 'Enemy Sub or Raider'. The guns were prepared for action and a continuous watch was maintained until, the next day, the alarm passed and Spencer Gulf Fortress was allowed to quietly expire. In December workshop troops arrived to dismantle the guns and by mid-January 1945 the 3.7-inch and 40mm guns, the radar and all warlike stores had been shipped to the ordnance depots in Adelaide. The last AIF troops followed. The ordnance troops were able to enjoy Christmas dinner at the Cheer-up Hut, the last wartime Christmas of which catered to around fifty guests.



Even though Britain's Home Guard was stood down in December 1944 Australia's VDC continued to soldier on until 30 September 1945, long after its useful life had ended. Whyalla's company, tenaciously making up for its earlier vicissitudes, it seems, even in April 1945 managed an attendance of 52 per cent of its strength of 131 men.

For Whyalla's defenders the war's final months came as an anti-climax to an active career of some three years. For a year, in 1942, they had justifiably felt themselves to be, if not in the front line (they recognized that Australia's front line was at Ioribaiwa), at least, ready to meet the worst should it happen. That it had not is no reflection on their commitment or competence. Neither the part-time soldiers of the VDC nor the men of the AIF had any choice over their places in the various units which comprised Whyalla's defences, and while their war service was neither as dramatic or dangerous as those who, through the lottery of postings, served in Australia's north, their story is equally a part of Australia's part in the second world war.

*R.G. Nicholson*

## Royal New South Wales Lancers' Museum — Parramatta

Visitors to Sydney should take the extra journey of a few kilometres to Parramatta. Historically interesting itself as the site of the first settlement outside of Sydney Cove in 1788 the City retains a number of heritage buildings. One of these is the oldest military barracks on mainland Australia. Built at the instigation of Governor Lachlan Macquarie and designed by Lieutenant John C. Watts, 46th Regiment, they were completed in 1820. Their first occupants up to the 1850s were detachments of the British Regiments of Foot sent here to guard the convicts and help preserve order in the colony. Built to hold a company, there was a two storey building and two single storey buildings. One of the latter was demolished but its twin still stands and has come to be named 'Bobs Hall'. This usage came about as a tribute to Lord Roberts VC who as Commander in Chief in the South African War, had evoked great admiration and the respect of the Lancers serving under him as part of the colonial contingent. In 1891 the Parramatta Troop (K Tp.) had been formed and soon the name 'Lancer Barracks' had been adopted for the buildings — the name they retain today.

Also in the Barrack grounds is another building of the 1820's, Linden House. This two storey, sandstone,

### Notes

1. War Cabinet Agendum 30/43, 4 January 1944, 732/2/5, AWM 53.

The story of Whyalla's defences in 1944 can be traced from a range of sources which have already been cited in this series, notably the War Diary of 26th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery and that of the VDC in South Australia, 36/1/8 in the Australian War Memorial's series AWM 52, which comprises the war diaries of a number of VDC units, including Spencer Gulf Fortress.

Georgian building was originally erected in Macquarie Street a few blocks away. It had served first as a School of Industry, teaching domestic arts to the daughters of settlers. In the 1830s it became quarters for some of the officers from the Parramatta garrison and about 1840 reverted to school use. For some years it was the local RSL Club rooms until the site was acquired by the AMP Society. In 1963 a committee of members and supporters of the Lancers prevailed upon the Society to give them the building for preservation. Its removal, stone by stone, followed and eventually, in 1966, it was re-erected in Lancer Barracks as the home of the Regimental Museum. The museum, commenced in 1957, now preserves and displays a valuable collection of military relics. They include uniforms, medals, badges, saddlery, weapons, photographs, banners, trophies and equipment. There is an outside display of armoured vehicles. The primary interest of the museum is the history of the Regiment over its last 100 years and that of Australian Light Horse, Armour and Cavalry.

The Royal NSW Lancers Memorial Museum, to give it its full title, is open each Sunday from 11 am to 4 pm, entrance \$1.

*Major Warren Perry*

## Field Marshal Lord Birdwood of Anzac

### An Appreciation

In looking at the address on a letter which I recently received from a friend in Victoria I noticed that he resided in Birdwood Street of the city in which he lived. The name Birdwood is not heard so much nowadays as it formerly was. In recent years the people who personally knew Lord Birdwood in Australia and overseas in the 1st A.I.F. have now sharply diminished numerically. Fame is indeed a perishable thing for it is a fact of life and the way of the world that men forget and are soon forgotten. This short paper may serve to reburnish the name and fame of Field Marshal Lord Birdwood of Anzac and of Totnes who commanded the A.I.F. for almost the whole of the war of 1914–18. He was known to the troops of the 1st A.I.F. by no other name than 'Birdie' and he was so aptly and so accurately described by his Commander-in-Chief at Gallipoli, Sir Ian Hamilton, as 'The Soul of Anzac'.

Birdwood was an officer of the Indian Army and he owed to his old chief in South Africa and in India, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, his appointment to command the Anzac Corps. Kitchener, who looked beyond 'the spit and polish' standards of his time, understood well Australian troops and he chose wisely in selecting Birdwood to command this new though rather ramshackle corps of Australian and New Zealand troops. Anzac Corps had been concentrated in Egypt for further training before going into action and when Birdwood assumed command of it there in December 1914 he said himself that: 'I went among the men as a stranger, yet from the first they accepted my almost as a brother'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, as time went on the Anzac troops came to worship him. In return he idolised his 'boys' as he usually addressed them, even in official orders. His influence grew quickly, it established itself firmly, and it penetrated not only to the extremities of his command but to the families and friends in Australia and New Zealand of the troops he commanded.

It was not quite true to say, however, that Birdwood was unknown in 1914 to Australian and New Zealand troops for he had met some of them earlier in the South African War. When that war began in October 1899, Birdwood was on leave in England from India for the first time in 14 years. By December 1899 he had arrived in South Africa as a 'special service officer' and there he became Brigade Major of Lord Dundonald's Mounted Brigade. Later in that campaign he met Lord Kitchener for the first time when he became an AAG on his staff. In this post Lord Kitchener detailed him to meet the Australian and New Zealand contingents as

they arrived in South Africa. Kitchener added gruffly, 'make sure they are started off on their new enterprises well equipped and in good heart'. Birdwood later said that: 'I have always felt that my close contact with these excellent fellows laid the foundations of my very happy relations with the Australian and New Zealand troops throughout the war of 1914–1918'.<sup>2</sup> In Kitchener's last weeks in South Africa Birdwood became his Military Secretary<sup>3</sup> in succession to Hubert Hamilton (1861–1914) who was to die on the Western Front in Europe in October 1914 while commanding the 3rd British Division.

He could not then foresee that in later years in India he would again become Kitchener's Military Secretary and later again, in 1914, serve with Australian and New Zealand troops.

Birdwood went to much trouble to get to know his troops. He said himself that: 'It is not on parade that one gets to know one's men'<sup>4</sup> and so he got to know the Anzac troops off parade. He first met some of them as they sauntered about on leave in Cairo, singly or in small parties, on sightseeing excursions. His interest in these men was genuine. It had nothing of the marks of a candidate for Parliament who is seeking votes from his constituents. When Birdwood met these troops in Egypt, at Gallipoli and later in France he talked to them about what might be called the small personal things of life rather than the big impersonal things. He inquired about their families, their jobs at home, their impressions of the areas in which they were serving and how they were faring in their units. He often told these men too not to forget to write home regularly to their families and friends because, he would add, 'if you don't they'll write to me'. And they did. Birdwood's correspondence with anxious and bereaved parents and wives in Australia — even in his busiest times — was enormous. In consequence many families in Australia were able to produce from family records personal letters which they or their parents had received from Birdwood about relatives who were serving under his command in the A.I.F.

Not all great leaders of armies are cast in the same mould and it is not possible to classify and label Birdwood with the exactitude of an exhibit in a museum. Birdwood's powers of leadership expressed themselves best perhaps in the sphere of human relations rather than in the sphere of technical ability. He was not, for instance, a great tactician. Indeed, Dr Bean has said that he was hardly interested in tactics. It has

been said that he did not personally give the Anzac Corps any training before he took it to Gallipoli. He delegated that task to his subordinate commanders and judged them on the results they produced. In his role of Commander of the Anzac Corps, and later of the Australian Corps, his leadership was based on that kind of sincerity which Field Marshal Montgomery has since described as 'that type of which the man is not conscious — it is there naturally — he just cannot help being sincere'.<sup>5</sup> Birdwood inspired all ranks of the Anzac Corps with enthusiasm and he quickly built up its morale and its prestige. In his recommendation to evacuate Gallipoli, General Monro said that only the Anzac Corps was in a fit condition to carry on. In the administration of discipline all ranks under his command had the greatest confidence in the justice and fairness of his decisions. Moreover, they could rely on his entire disregard of political influence in the management of the domestic affairs of the the AIF and this was in an age when this standard had not been wholly accepted. But, in setting these standards within the AIF Birdwood was helped greatly by the Australian Minister for Defence during the War of 1914–18, Senator Pearce. He also was another great pillar who stood out against political interference in the internal affairs of the Australian Army.

In the Gallipoli campaign Birdwood shared the hardships of his troops. There he mixed freely with his men, in and out of the line, and it was said of him by Sir Ian Hamilton that: 'If he does not know every soldier in his force, at least every soldier in the force believes he is known to his chief'. Birdwood rarely missed an evening swim in the sea at Anzac and many strange stories have been told of things said to him in the water by troops who did not recognise him in a swimming costume.

With the death of Bridges the administrative command of the AIF passed in due course to his successor General J.G. Legge.<sup>6</sup> But when Legge was transferred from the 1st Australian Division to the 2nd Australian Division the Australian Government gave Birdwood the administrative command of the AIF in addition to the operational control of those parts of it that served under his command at Gallipoli, in Egypt and later in France. In this role as the Australian Government's military representative of his forces in the field his tasks were not always easy. They often demanded not the physical courage which he displayed in battle but the other rarer kind known as moral courage, which he also displayed in abundance. He often faced his own British superiors fearlessly when it was his duty to defend or advance Australian interests. At the time of Birdwood's death C.E.W. Bean pointed out that Birdwood's courage and integrity in these situations had not been sufficiently recognised in Australia.

Just before the Anzac troops went to France in 1916 they were organised into two Anzac Corps — one under Birdwood and one under Godley — and so on the Western Front these troops saw less of Birdwood than they had earlier at Gallipoli and in Egypt.

In January 1918 the five Australian divisions on the Western Front were brought together for the first time to form the Australian Corps with Birdwood as its Commander. But in order to meet the wishes of the Australian Government and people he gradually transformed the headquarters staff of the Australian Corps from British to Australian and he himself finally handed over its command to Monash on 31 May 1918.

His farewell to the troops of the Australian Corps in France on this occasion was perhaps unique in British armies. Probably no other senior commander in that war received such demonstrations of loyalty and affection as Birdwood did on this occasion. He arrived on the scene unattended by any staff and that too made a favourable impression on the troops many of whom had marched several miles that day to be there. At the conclusion of Birdwood's farewell speech he was mobbed and carried shoulder high to his car. Then, as he drove off to his new tasks and fresh responsibilities, bystanders noticed a placard on the back of his car which was the greatest honour the troops could give him for it read simply 'Good-bye Digger — the boss Digger'.

Although Birdwood became the Commander of the Fifth British Army on 1 June 1918, with Brudenell White as his MCGS, he did not sever his connections with the AIF, either officially or personally, for he retained its administrative command until September 1920.

The Australian Government invited Birdwood to visit Australia, after the War of 1914–18, and so he came to this country with Monash. He landed in Australia for the first time at Fremantle on 18 December 1919 where he said: 'One of the first objects to meet my eye... was a poster depicting a huge hand — the hand of one of my Diggers — held out to welcome a small figure, representing myself, with the words, PUT IT RIGHT THERE, BIRDIE!'.

Birdwood was greeted wherever he went in Australia with the greatest enthusiasm and warmest affection. He arrived in Melbourne on Tuesday 20 January 1920. Two months later, on 22 March 1920, the University of Melbourne conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws on Birdwood and Monash. Birdwood visited the Royal Military College at Duntroon for a few days in mid April 1920 where, on Thursday, 15 April 1920, he unveiled a memorial to General Bridges, first Commandant of the Royal Military College of Australia and one of Birdwood's divisional commanders at Gallipoli until mortally wounded.

On Anzac Day of 1920 Birdwood led the Anzac March in Sydney. His Australian visit came to an end in Sydney when on Saturday 29 May 1920 he sailed for New Zealand. In a message of farewell the Australian Prime Minister, Mr W.M. Hughes, said:

The Australian people generally, and your former comrades in arms in particular, were delighted, as well as honoured by your visit, and of this their

demonstrations of welcome have, I hope, satisfied you.

But the links Birdwood had forged with Australia remained in good repair until his death 30 years later. One of his daughters had married a station owner in Western Australia, Mr Colin Craig, and he was to return to Australia to visit her on a later occasion.

In March 1925 Birdwood was appointed Commander-in-Chief in India and promoted to the rank of Field Marshal. It is not widely known that his name stood in the Australian Army List, from this time till his death, as an honorary Australian Field Marshal. Five years later he laid down his command in India and returned to England to live. When he was received by King George V he learnt that he had almost been appointed Governor-General of Australia but in the end, on the recommendation of the Australian Prime Minister of the day, the King appointed Sir Isaac Isaacs.

After a brief period of inactivity Birdwood became in 1931 the Master of Peterhouse, the oldest of the Cambridge Colleges, and he held this appointment till 1938. He said:

The University which had conferred on me the honorary degree of LL.D. in 1919, now made me a Master of Arts. After many years of khaki it seemed strange to find myself almost daily in a black silk gown, at times in a scarlet one, and on Sundays in a surplice and scarlet hood.<sup>7</sup>

It was about June 1936 that Birdwood revisited the Gallipoli peninsula. He said that:

Going round some of the trenches again I found a more emotional experience than I had foreseen. The place was full of ghosts, and every corner and gully brought back memories of gallant fellows who had so unhesitatingly given their lives for the cause in which we fought. Now they sleep there at peace; and it pleased me much to see the loving care with which the many cemeteries had been laid out and maintained.<sup>8</sup>

In the New Year's Honours List in 1938 it was announced that Birdwood was raised to the peerage with the title of Baron Birdwood of Anzac and of Totnes. He took his seat in the House of Lords on 2 February 1938.<sup>9</sup>

When the war began in September 1939 Birdwood was 74 years of age and so his fighting days had ended. Yet he still retained a great interest in the Australian Army and an enduring pride in its fighting men. In January 1940 Birdwood sent a message to the reformed AIF, through the Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies, in which he said in part that:

As Commander of our old AIF, from the time of General Bridges' death until the end of the late war, I wish to send my most sincere of all good wishes to all old comrades and to others who have recently joined the new AIF. . .

I feel that every one of you will believe me when I say that I would willingly give all I possess to be 20 years younger and be able to be with you once more. As at my age it would be impossible for me to be with you in the field, I shall at all events hope to look forward to seeing all units when they come to the old country or elsewhere where duty may take them.

God bless you all, and every kind wish to every one of you.<sup>10</sup>

One could ask for no greater proof of an enduring friendship than this message.

Birdwood, who lived for a few years after the war in a state of ill-health, died in London on 17 May 1951 at the age of 85 years. He had outlived most of the leading British naval and military commanders of the War of 1914-18. In Australia Monash had predeceased him by almost 20 years; his 'Marshal Berthier' for almost the whole of the War of 1914-18, Brudnell White, had died on duty in tragic circumstances; and later in the same month of May 1951 in which Birdwood died, Australia's 'only other Field-Marshal' Blamey, died also.<sup>12</sup>

The Chief of the Australian General Staff, Lieutenant-General Sir Sydney Rowell, marked the occasion of the death of Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood of Anzac by saying that 'Lord Birdwood had done much to establish the traditions of the Australian Army'.

And so on this 73rd anniversary in 1988 of the landing of the Anzac Corps of the Gallipoli Peninsula, the name and fame of Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood can be recalled with pride as the Commander of the Anzac Corps, and as a trusted servant of the Australian Governments he served and as a true friend of the Australian people. He did indeed exhibit in its noblest form the spirit of Anzac.

#### NOTES:

1. **Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography.** Ward, Lock & Co. Ltd, London, reprinted 1942, p.323.
2. *Ibid*, p.124.
3. A Military Secretary in the field was a Staff Officer of the Military Secretary's Branch at the War Office, London. His duties were concerned with the promotion of officers, the selection of officers for command and staff appointments and other special work, and with recommendations for Honours and Rewards.
4. Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography*, p.90.
5. Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery. *The Path to Leadership*. Collins, London, 1961, p.17.

6. Warren Perry, "A Glimpse at the Third Commandant of Duntroon: Lieutenant-General James Gordon Legge, CB, CMG, MA, LL.B." *Defence Force Journal*, No. 62, Jan.-Feb. 1987, pp.24-27 and 34-35.
7. Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography*, p.411.
8. *Ibid*, p.421.
9. *Ibid*, p.426.
10. For full text see *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Jan. 1940.
11. For an Appreciation of General Sir Brudenell White, by Lord Birdwood, see *The Australian Quarterly*, Sydney, Dec. 1940, pp.5-7.
12. For further information see Warren Perry, "Australia's only Field-Marshal and Australia's only other Field-Marshals", *Sabretache*, Canberra, July-September 1984, pp.15-20.

James Ritchie Grant

## West Australian Hill South Africa 1900

### *Operations at Slingsfontein, 9.2.1900.*

*The General Officer Commanding wishes to place on record his high appreciation of the courage and determination shown by a party of 20 men of the Western Australians under the command of Captain H.G. Moor in the above operations. By their determined stand against 300-400 men they entirely frustrated the enemy's attempt to turn the flanks of our position.*

**T**he scene of this action was to be known in future as West Australian Hill.

With these words Major General R.A.P. Clements congratulated the members of a small group of soldiers from the Western Australian Company of the First Australian Regiment, who through the defence of a small hill to the south of the main camp, had prevented a major Boer attack from that quarter.

At 4.00 am on 9 February 1900, 100 men of the Inniskilling Dragoons and 37 men of the Western Australian Company, under the command of Captain Haig of the Inniskillings, set out on patrol to the south of the camp. After travelling about five kms large numbers of the enemy were observed among the small hills to the right of the patrol. Captain Haig ordered a retirement as they came under rifle fire, and instructed Captain Moore to take his mounted infantry and hold a nearby kopje, a small detached hill, to delay the enemy advance. Moore, Lieutenants Darling and Parker, arrived at the kopje with about 20 other ranks and after detaching Lt. Darling and four men to hold a small rise on the left flank the rest ran to the top of the hill and made hasty preparations to defend it. This was limited to throwing up small barricades of stones, known as sangars, in front of each soldier.

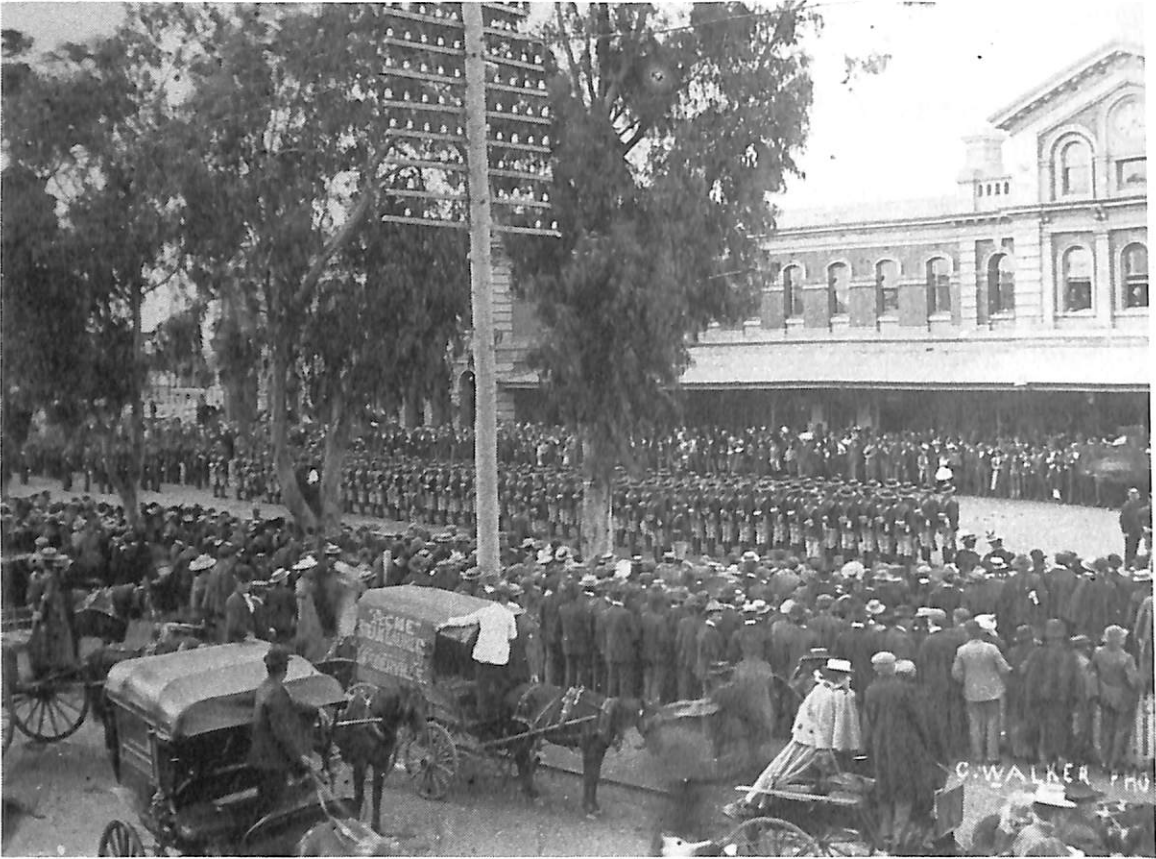
The kopje held by the West Australians was in the open end of a horseshoe-shaped ring of hills, some of which were higher. These were held by the Boers who wasted no time in opening fire on the defenders. This was continued throughout the day, as was shelling; two infantry assaults were also made. These were effectively stopped by accurately aimed rifle fire, which came as a surprise to the attackers who expected 'British' soldiers to fire in volleys to the front of their positions.

The first casualty on the Australian side seems to have been Sergeant G. Hensman who was shot through the hips and legs as he raised himself to get a clearer view of an enemy movement. Privates A. Krygger and Michael Conway went to his assistance, the former bandaging Hensman's wounds and building a sanger in front of the wounded man. He also tried to make some cover from the sun by arranging some branches over the sergeant. Conway was killed, shot through the head, on his fourth trip with materials to assist Krygger. Hensman unfortunately became a target for Boer marksmen during the day and received an additional five wounds.

By 2.00 pm the small flanking party was beginning to run out of ammunition and they had to crawl round to the horse-holders to obtain a further supply. Captain Moor sent a total of five men, on separate occasions, to request permission to retire but, although all got out safely, none were permitted to try to get back although Private J. Messer volunteered to go. Major G.F. McWilliams, the company medical officer, rightly believing that his services would be required, repeatedly asked for permission to go forward but it was not until dusk that his request was granted. On his way to the hill he met the men returning after their breakout.

At dusk, about 7.00 pm, Captain Moor decided that nothing further could be gained by holding the hill through the hours of darkness, the Boers were already starting to slip past, so he ordered a retirement on his own authority. The party successfully descended the hill, collected Lieutenant Darling and his men, and returned to camp.

Later that evening Private Krygger led an ambulance party back to the hill and located Hensman who was brought in. The Boers had found him when they



*First Permanent Infantry Company parading outside Perth railway station prior to departure. (Courtesy of the Army Museum of Western Australia, Inc.)*

had gone over the area after the departure of the defenders and had removed his accoutrements and stolen his watch. Michael Conway was buried at the foot of the hill.

An account of the other side of the action was obtained some time later from a wounded burgher in Bloemfontein Hospital. He stated that there had been 400 Boers in the attacking group and they thought it would be easy to overrun such a small party, "but we did not know the Australians then". Accurate shooting dropped many men and the others realised that they could not continue the attack in that fashion. Some attempted to crawl around the position, but the defenders waited until they had a clear shot and picked them off easily. They also found that shelling the hill only made the Australians shoot straighter!

The Boer Commandant impressed by the bravery of the defenders offered them the chance to surrender but received in reply a show of bayonets over the sangars and cries of 'come and take us if you can'. The young burgher said 'we could do nothing but lie there and swear'.

It would seem that both sides must have greeted the arrival of sunset with some relief.

On reading the accounts of this action one finds that no mention is made of going to the relief of the patrol. The total number of men in Slingersfontein camp is not mentioned but that same day the Tasmanian company was very heavily engaged at Jassfontein and reinforcements were sent there. In excess of 2000 Boers were known to be operating in the area so it may be assumed that there remained insufficient men in the camp to mount a successful relief even if Captain Moor had requested one. There is no mention that he felt that the situation was out of control at any time, and the fact that he could spare five men to go for orders confirms this.

The men who took part in this action were from the 1st Western Australian Contingent, raised for service in South Africa as an infantry company on 13 October 1899. They embarked on 7 November and arrived at Cape Town on the 27th. They were immediately amalgamated with two Victorian, one South Australian and one Tasmanian company to form the First

*Slingersfontein camp, February 1900. Maj. H.G. Moor standing on the right (in slouch hat). (Courtesy of the Battye Library, ref. 713P0.*



Australian Regiment. On 9 December a New South Wales company joined the regiment.

The regiment, under the command of Col J.C. Hoad entrained for the front and moved through De Aar, Belmont, and Rensburg. It was at this camp that the regiment received word that it was to be converted to a mounted corps. This had been accomplished by 6 February 1900 when they were ordered to Slingersfontein.

#### **SOURCES**

John Burrige, *Western Australian Contingents to the South African War*

Lt-Col J. Campbell, *History of the West Australian Contingents serving in South Africa during the Boer War*

Lt-Col P.L. Murray, *Official Records of the Australian Military Contingents to the War in South Africa*

R.L. Wallace, *The Australians and the Boer War*

#### **Known participants at Wester Australian Hill**

Captain H.G. Moor killed-in-action at Palmietfontein 19.7.1900

Lieutenant H.F. Darling

Lieutenant F.W.M. Parker

Sergeant P. Edwards

Sergeant G. Hensman Promoted Lieutenant, 7.3. 1900, with effect from 1.1.1900. Wounded, died of wounds 12.3.1900

Sergeant G.N. Bishop Died of sunstroke, 14.2.1900

Sergeant S.J. Unkles Wounded

Lance-Corporal J.N. Trantham

Private J. Ansel Wounded

Private J. Bird Wounded

Private M. Conway Killed

Private L. France Wounded

Private G. Gifford Wounded

Private A. Krygger Mentioned-in-despatches, 10 and 17 February 1900

Private J. Messer

Private W. Murray

Private W.R. White



A.E. Denman

## Infantry weapons

*Bert Denman describes the weapons and equipment carried by the Australian infantry of the first world war.*

The Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifle, (S.M.L.E.) .303, was one of the best of its kind. In the hands of well trained troops, it was capable of a high and accurate rate of fire and with the bayonet suitable for hand to hand fighting. It was said that the fire discipline of the Regular Army in France in the early days of world war one caused the Germans to believe that the allocation of machine guns had been increased. Training was designed to make every man a steady and accurate shot, even at targets appearing at short intervals (snap shooting). In principle, the same rifle, with modifications had been used for many years, throughout world war one and even into world war two. Modifications in my time included the removal of the 'cut off', on top of the magazine. This eliminated the possibility, during the noise and heat of battle of a soldier firing an empty rifle. Another was the removal of the 'wind gauge' from the back sight. Troops were then taught to 'aim off' to allow for the wind with surprising accuracy.

Musketry courses were fired on rifle ranges in every state. Men who qualified, were classed as marksmen. This allowed them to wear 'crossed rifles' on the cuff of the left sleeve. A number of these received further training as snipers.

Bullets were in clips of five, two being carried in each of the ten webbing pouches. (The magazine held ten rounds.) Two extra khaki cloth bandoliers, each of fifty rounds were also carried into the line, making a total of two hundred rounds for each man. The SMLE was sturdily made and expertly tooled. There was little to go wrong with it, except perhaps a direct hit. It had a high muzzle velocity and a long range. The inside of the barrel was 'rifled' with a number of 'lands' and 'grooves' which spiralled two and a half times along the barrel which gave the bullet its velocity and accuracy. The minimum distance shown on the back-sight was two hundred yards, and up to that distance the range was 'point blank'. Troops were taught to aim at six o'clock on the target, leaving a narrow margin between the top of the foresight and the bottom of the target, as the rifle was so sighted as to hit a little higher than the point aimed at. Men were also taught to aim low, as during the excitement of battle they were inclined to fire high. They were also trained to count the number of rounds, to avoid firing an empty rifle.

The American rifle in world war one was designed to avoid this, by allowing the magazine platform to rise above the level of the bottom of the bolt (when

empty). This prevented the bolt from being closed, which forced the firer to re-charge his magazine.

I heard a Major Cawte, recently back from the Middle-East lecture on the Lee-Enfield rifle at Warra-dale in early 1942. He extolled its virtues to such a degree, that had he been a salesman, he could have sold a rifle to every one present! The bayonet which had not been altered for many years was some 18 inches long. It was placed in position with the aid of a 'sword bar' and bayonet 'boss' on the 'nose cap' of the rifle. It was always 'fixed' during an attack and before 'mounting' as a Headquarter Guard and on other ceremonial occasions. For many years the 10th Militia Battalion (Adelaide Rifles), was the only unit permitted to march through the city with bayonets fixed.

The fixing of bayonets was a ceremonial exercise using a 'fugleman'. With a platoon in line, the 'fugleman', (the right hand man of the front rank) on the command, 'Fix', took three short paces forward, while the rest of the platoon grasped the hilt of the bayonet, inverting, but not withdrawing it, at the same time thrusting out the rifle to the 'stand-at-ease' position (the fugleman also). On the command 'bayonets' every one withdrew and placed the bayonet on the sword-bar and boss. The fugleman raised his left arm to shoulder level, paused a moment then dropped it to his side and pulled the rifle back to the 'order arms' position. The rest pulled back their rifles and the fugleman then took three paces back to his position. The 'unfix' was carried out in a somewhat similar manner, with the fugleman going forward again. Then on the command 'unfix', the catch on the sword-bar was released with the left thumb, with the rifle being placed between slightly bent knees, the bayonet placed in its scabbard, without looking and pushed almost right in. On the command 'bayonets' the blade was pushed fully into the scabbard with an audible click and the rifle replaced at the 'order arms' position. For a company in line, the fugleman took six paces forward.

The .303 Lewis gun (light automatic) was air-cooled, gas-operated and magazine-fed. A full magazine of forty rounds weighed almost 4½ pounds. The barrel was just over 20 inches long, with an overall length of 50½ inches. It had a muzzle velocity of 2440 feet a second. In simple terms, a portion of the gas, which propelled the bullet, escaped through the gas vent, into the gas chamber, both situated a few inches from the muzzle.

The gas brought pressure to bear on the cupped head of the piston rod. As the piston rod was forced back, it wound a strong 'return spring' in its steel casing. The empty cartridge case was ejected and while the trigger remained compressed the action was continued.

A 'spare parts' bag carried by the Section No. two, contained a spare piston rod, a return spring in its steel casing and a combination spring balance stripping tool, with a spike one end and a screwdriver cum jemmy at the other. The spring balance was used to check the tension on the return spring. The Lewis gun was eminently suited for firing from the prone position, or over the parapet of a trench, using the 'bipod' of course. In close-quarter fighting it was a deadly weapon with terrific fire power. It was best used in this situation from the hip, firing 'hose-pipe' fashion, with the gun being pointed, rather than aimed.

The hollow leg of the bipod, slipped over a bolt, embedded in the top of a post, gave the gunner 360 degree traverse, which was most effective against low flying aircraft. 'Tracer' bullets were often spaced in the magazines as an aid to direction. It was fascinating to be behind a gun, firing tracer bullets and to realise there were four other bullets between each tracer. On the other hand, knowing the same things, it was a pretty awful sensation when one was on the receiving end. Ricochets, including tracers whistling, and whining off barbed wire entanglements and iron screw pickets at night were demoralizing, especially when lying only a few feet away.

The gun could fire an average of ten rounds a second. But a well trained gunner, allowing for the changing of magazines could fire 150 aimed rounds a minute. It was a mobile weapon as it took only one man to handle and fire it so long as the ammunition could be kept up to him. It was carried by the Section Commander, who also carried a pistol in a holster. The number two gunner, carried the spare parts bag and often a pistol as well. Each of the other members carried two panniers of ammunition, and a rifle.

In April 1918, each infantry platoon, was issued with a second Lewis gun, almost doubling its fire power. A platoon at that time, commanded by a Lieutenant, consisted of two Lewis gun sections, a grenade section and one of riflemen, each of about 15 men.

The infantry was the only arm of the service which could capture a position and afterwards hold it.

Another very effective infantry weapon was the No. 36 Mills grenade. Somewhat oval in shape and nearly a pound and a half in weight, it was segmented to facilitate fragmentation. It was fitted with a five second fuse for using as a hand thrown, or a rifle grenade. The T.O.E.T. was to throw or over-arm it into a six foot circle at 25 yards, so that the thrower was in almost as much danger as the enemy, depending on the situation; thrown from or into a trench or in the open (in which case the thrower would take cover). A

nine inch rod was screwed into the base plug of the grenade and a 'ballistite' blank cartridge was used as a propellant. The grenade discharger cup, or more aptly, basket, could only be used while the bayonet was fixed. It was a metal skeleton framework of light hoop iron. The range was obtained by raising or lowering the inverted rifle barrel (magazine upwards) and was a matter of trial and error.

A modification in my time was the rejection of the old cup, which was replaced by a solid metal discharger cup which could be used without the bayonet. It fitted snugly over the muzzle and revolutionized the Mills, by doubling its range as a rifle grenade to 200 yards. The grenade itself was not altered but a seven second fuse was necessary to compensate for the extra range. This then meant that if no mans land was less than 200 yards, wide, (and it often was) the enemy front line came within range of this fearsome little weapon. The range, with the new cup was still obtained by raising or lowering the inverted rifle, and a ballistite cartridge was still used. A base-plate, with a diameter just less than that of the inside of the new cup was screwed into the base-plug of the grenade and the nine inch rod was discarded.

The seven second fuse had one problem according to the Powers that be, and an instruction was issued, where hand grenades were needed and only seven second fuzed were available. The thrower was to withdraw the safety pin, letting the lever fly off, then hold the grenade in the hand while he counted to two, before throwing. It sounded quite stupid to me, for what enemy would take the risk not knowing whether it was a five or seven second fuze. Another modification followed shortly afterwards. The addition of a 'gas port' near the base of the new cup, which simplified range finding. The rifle barrel was still inverted, but at a constant angle of about 80 degrees and the gas port manipulated accordingly.

Other rifle grenades were made and we trained with them in England. One I particularly remember was the 'Hales'. About an inch and three quarters in diameter and eight inches long. Fitted with a 15 inch rod, it was fired at a lower trajectory than the Mills. It was also deeply segmented to allow for fragmentation, but I never heard of it being used in France.

The Mills, however, was the most effective of the British grenades and was also used in world war two. Rolled down the steps of an enemy dugout during an attack, it was guaranteed to clear the area in record time. Every infantryman carried two primed grenades into the line. Extra grenades were carried in narrow boxes of a dozen and primed in the front line. Each box carried a round tin which held 12 igniter sets, packed in sawdust, a five or seven second fuse, attached to a detonator, and a cap. The detonators contained a sensitive explosive, 'fulminate of mercury'. Pliers were provided to crimp the detonator to the fuse. One or two ex-miners proved themselves, by crimping them with their teeth, but the thought of it made my blood run cold.

When training with live grenades, there was the occasional 'blind' (Apparent dud). The officer in charge, in theory, waited for one minute and the blind was then retrieved. In theory he was then to collect the 'blind', remove the base plug and disarm it, by extracting the igniter set. In the couple of live throws in which I participated, it never happened, much to my relief and probably to the relief of the Officer in charge. It was a simple matter to unscrew the base plug with a number eight gauge wire 'key' but most were easily unscrewed with the finger and thumb, and tightened with the key. Each grenade contained ten ounces of 'ammonal' a powerful explosive, a mixture of ammonium nitrate and aluminium powder.

The defensive or passive parts of the equipment were also important to the infantryman. One which got little mention was the 'entrenching tool', but which, under some circumstances could afford a soldier protection or even save his life. Carried in its special webbing pouch, worn just above the buttocks, was this strongly made and very useful tool. Alongside the bayonet scabbard and attached to it, was a strong hickory handle about 15 inches long, circled at the top by a heavy metal ferrule, which could have doubled as a very effective 'cosh'. Both items could be easily reached even when lying down, and fitted together, even in the open and when under fire. If 'pinned down' by enemy fire a soldier could begin to create an individual defensive position, firstly by scraping together head cover which could be improved later as opportunity offered. The tool had a spade blade at one end which came to a blunt point. The other end came to a narrow, slightly curved chisel point about an inch wide.

In the hands of a number of energetic troops, spurred by the incentive of self preservation, brought about by being under fire in the open, excellent use could be made of the entrenching tool. The jack-knife was not a weapon in itself, but a useful item of equipment. Fitted with a strong blade, tin opener and marlinspike, it was a combination tool of some value.

The 'field dressing' was purely defensive and most certainly saved many lives. It was carried in a special pocket inside the lower part of the jacket which was not to be used for any other purpose, in the forward area. It consisted of a long bandage, a couple of lint pads, a small phial of iodine and two large safety pins. These items were sewn up in a khaki bundle. To open it the stitches had to be broken.

Probably the most important item of passive defence was the gas mask or the 'box respirator'. We trained in England with the old 'P.H.' helmet. It was a hood which completely covered the head. Made of a blanket like material, it was impregnated with chemicals through which the wearer had to breathe. To exhale he used a mouth piece, which on the outside, ended with a flat 'flutter valve' of rubber which opened to emit the stale air. The hem, or loose ends of

the hood were tucked into the top of the tunic. There was no way, however to clean the eyepieces from the inside.

The 'P.H.' was superseded by the box respirator, which was much more effective in every way. In fact the new 'mask' gave complete protection to the eyes, nose, throat and lungs, although it covered the face only. The eyepieces could be wiped by lifting the edge of the mask and inserting a cloth with the fore-finger. Accumulated dribble could also be disposed of in a similar manner, by lifting the edge near the chin and flicking it out with a finger — ugh! The new respirator was carried in one of two positions, the 'carry' at the side like a haversack with a long strap. The other was the 'alert'. The strap was shortened by using a metal stud, further up the strap and wearing it on the chest. The flap was left undone for instant action.

Today's makers of world war one films often show front line troops wearing the respirator at the carry. This is stupid as it could have led to a self inflicted wound charge in reality. The TOET was 13 seconds to remove the steel helmet put on the facepiece, adjust the tapes and elastic bands over the head while holding the breath. There was no way it could be done from the 'carry', as it would have had to be adjusted to the 'alert' first. The effects of some gases were cumulative, so a little now and then over a protracted period was dangerous. A short flexible hose led from the top of the container to the wide mouth-piece, (wide, so that it would not easily come out of the mouth, in which case the wearer would not be able to breathe.) A nose clip, operated from outside the mask, forced the wearer to breathe in and out through the mouth-piece. The container itself was of tin, with a filter at the bottom through which all air, or breath passed, and was filtered by a number of ingredients including charcoal. At Villers-Bretonneaux, the writer had a jagged fragment of Minenwerfer shell embedded in the front of his container. It was not discovered for a week, so it must have been wedged in tightly enough to stop the entry of any outside air.

All troops were put through a tear gas chamber with the respirator on and later without it for a short period only to experience its effects. At all anti-gas schools or courses in world war two, imitation gas smells were issued in tubes to trainees, and decontamination of affected areas was also taught. The Author attended two such courses in the early years of world war two at Keswick and Melbourne.

There were a number of gases used in world war one. Chlorine was apparently first used against the Canadian and the French when there was no protection at all (in 1915). Men were instructed to urinate on a sock and breath through it. Crude respirators, issued later, prevented the gas from being so effective and out of all this, eventually came the P.H. helmet. The main gases used in my time were the 'blister' variety, 'mustard' and 'lewisite', lachrymatory (tear gas), and

'phosgene', choking gas. Mustard gas, a yellow brown liquid was usually sent over in shells, (yellow cross). It was a persistent gas which if splashed in the eyes quickly caused redness and was often followed by permanent blindness. It had a smell of garlic or onions. Exposure to the vapour, was less severe, but was followed by redness and temporary blindness. The vapour also attacked the sensitive areas of the body, armpits, lips, genital area and buttocks. Shell craters often became contaminated and troops used them as lavatories, often unaware of the danger. Many became casualties as a result and warnings were often used. Lewisite was also a persistent gas with a smell of geraniums. It had most of the symptoms of mustard gas but was not quite so severe in its effects. The writer once saw a man completely covered with big angry blisters. It would have been impossible to place the blunt end of a lead pencil on any part of his body without touching a blister.

There was also non-persistent 'sneezing' gas, less harmful than the others, but it was one that I never experienced. Tear gas shells contained a sweet smelling compound, which rapidly affected the eyes. It was non-persistent, but extremely painful, causing a copious flow of tears to the point of temporary blindness. Once the gas had cleared away, however, the effects wore off but left the eyes quite sore for a while. Phosgene (green cross) was non-persistent, a choking gas which caused coughing and affected the heart. The coughing often ceased, but came on again as a delayed action. Choking gas casualties had to be kept warm and given warm sweet tea. Smoking and alcohol were not allowed. Gas was sometimes discharged from cylinders in the front line providing the wind was favourable. Mostly, in my time, it was sent over in shells; such shells on their own were detected by a pop or plop and if close enough gas could be seen rising from the spot. However if it (the gas) was mixed with the contents of high-explosive shells they were difficult to distinguish as such.

Every infantryman in France would have worn his respirator on a number of occasions for varying periods of up to an hour or more. He would have also experienced the various smells. (Phosgene smelt like new-mown hay). Even though we knew our respirators were good, nothing was more uncomfortable or frustrating than wearing one for a protracted period. But it was essential to keep it on until someone gave the all clear because of its sometimes cumulative effects. It was even worse wearing it if the weather was inclement, or at night or in a fog or mist. Visibility in any case was greatly impaired, but the hearing was not affected as the ears were not covered.

The knowledge that our respirators were effective against all the then known gases was good for the morale of the troops. It was good too that we had confidence in all our offensive weapons. We reckoned our rifle was as good as any and we knew 'Fritz' didn't like the thought let alone the sight of the

bayonet. Our Mills grenade was better than most at the time, but especially since the new discharger cup had doubled its range as a rifle grenade. Our Lewis gunners were good and we now had a second one in every platoon.

*Bert Denman's reminiscences of service will be continued in forthcoming issues of Sabretache.*

Chris Fagg

## Military Cross Awards to Australian Aircrew, 1914–1919

**P**rior to the institution of the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), by Royal Warrant on 3 June 1918, by King George V, to reward certain airforce ranks

for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty performed whilst flying in active operations against the enemy

such actions by British and Commonwealth airforce personnel were recognised by the award of the Military Cross (MC).

Thirty-one MCs were awarded to Australian personnel serving with the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) during the first world war, together with 3 MC first bar awards. In addition to these figures, a further 13 MCs, 1 first bar and 1 second bar were won by Australians serving in either the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) or the Royal Flying Corps (RFC).

By adopting a rather liberal interpretation of the various actions for which the MCs were awarded, the following 'classifications of actions' can be made.

Figure 1:

| Action Classification for AFC Personnel |           |
|---|-----------|
| Classifications                         | Number    |
| Low Flying Actions                      | 5         |
| Crew Rescue                             | 2         |
| Aerial Combat                           | 8         |
| Flying Skill                            | 7*        |
| Escape                                  | 1         |
| General Listing                         | 9*        |
| Not located                             | 2         |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>34</b> |

\* includes bars in the total

The distribution of these MCs was spread throughout the whole of the first world war period, with the bulk of them being awarded in 1918.

Figure 2

| Year         | Annual Distribution of MC Awards |           |          |          |          |          |
|--------------|----------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
|              | Military Cross                   |           | 1st Bar  |          | 2nd Bar  |          |
|              | AFC                              | RFC/RNAS  | AFC      | RFC/RNAS | AFC      | RFC/RNAS |
| 1916         | —                                | 2         | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| 1917         | 5                                | 6         | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| 1918         | 22                               | 5         | 2        | 1        | —        | 1        |
| 1919         | 3                                | —         | —        | —        | —        | —        |
| N/K          | 1                                | —         | 1        | —        | —        | —        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>31</b>                        | <b>13</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>—</b> | <b>1</b> |

AFC Australian Flying Corps  
 RFC Royal Flying Corps  
 RNAS Royal Naval Air Service  
 N/K Not known

Not only did these 43 Australians gain a total of 43 MCs with 4 first bar awards and 1 second bar award, but they went on to collectively gain a further 29 gallantry awards plus 2 first bars, 1 second bar, 1 order and 1 knighthood, making 34 awards in total. As well they also gained 2 foreign awards.

Figure 3

| Other Orders, Decorations and Medals gained by Australians |           |           |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Awards   | AFC       | RFC/RNAS  |
| KBE  | 1         | —         |
| OBE  | —         | 1         |
| DSO  | 1         | 6*        |
| DFC  | 9*        | 4         |
| AFC  | 5         | 3         |
| DCM  | 1         | —         |
| MM   | 1         | 1         |
| Order of El Nahda 4/c                                      | 1         | —         |
| Croix de Guerre  | 1         | —         |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>20</b> | <b>15</b> |

\* includes bars in the total

Between them, in gaining these awards, these Australians destroyed a minimum of 223 enemy aircraft. (This figure quoted doesn't include the aircraft destroyed by 16 Australians because to date, details of their kills haven't been located by me.)

Figure 4

| Enemy Aircraft Destroyed Listing |            |                       |              |
|----------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| AFC                              |            | RFC/RNAS              |              |
| Austin R.A.                      | N/L        | Allen L.W.            | 5            |
| Baillieu R.F.                    | N/L        | Brearley N.           | N/L          |
| Brown C. le B.                   | N/L        | Brownell R.J.         | 6            |
| Coates W.A.                      | N/L        | Champion de Crespigny | N/L          |
| Cole A.T.                        | 9          | Coningham A.          | 9            |
| Duigan J.R.                      | 1+         | Drummond P.R.M.       | 5+           |
| Ellis A.W.L.                     | N/L        | Gordon J.R.           | 5            |
| Fraser H.L.                      | N/L        | Hamersley H.A.        | 11           |
| Gordon J.R.                      | 5          | Howell C.E.           | 19           |
| Holden L.H.                      | 5          | Hughes G.F.           | 5            |
| Howard R.W.                      | 9          | King-Cowper A.        | 18           |
| Jones A.M.                       | 7          | Kingsford-Smith C.E.  | 5            |
| Jones E.J.                       | 1+         | Mitchell W.G.S.       | 5+           |
| Kenny E.P.                       | 7          | Pentland M.A.         | 20.5         |
| Lee O.M.                         | N/L        |                       |              |
| Malley G.F.                      | 6          |                       |              |
| McCloughry W.A.                  | N/L        |                       |              |
| McKenzie R.W.                    | 5          |                       |              |
| Phillips R.C.                    | 15         |                       |              |
| Robertson A.E.                   | 5          |                       |              |
| Scott F.J.                       | 4          |                       |              |
| Smith F.R.                       | 14         |                       |              |
| Smith R. MacP.                   | 9          |                       |              |
| Sutherland L.W.                  | N/L        |                       |              |
| Taylor H.                        | 1+         |                       |              |
| Tunbridge J.V.                   | N/L        |                       |              |
| Wilkins G.H.                     | N/L        |                       |              |
| Wilson G.C.                      | N/L        |                       |              |
| Winter-Irving S.I.               | N/L        |                       |              |
| Huxley F.G.                      | 1+         |                       |              |
| Malone J.J.                      | N/L        |                       |              |
| <b>Total</b>                     | <b>110</b> |                       | <b>113.5</b> |

The following list is a list of all Australian AFC personnel together with their RNAS/RFC brethren who gained the MC. The rank shown was the rank that they held at the time of the award.

Figure 5

| AFC MC Recipients Medal Roll |        |                        |
|------------------------------|--------|------------------------|
| Name                         | Rank   | C'wealth Aust. Gazette |
| Austin, A.A.                 | Lt     | 7.8.1918               |
| Baillieu, R.F.               | 2 Lt   | 27.8.1917              |
| Brown, C. Le B.              | Lt     | 30.8.1918              |
| Coates, W.A.                 | Lt     | 30.8.1918              |
| Cole, A.T.                   | 2 Lt   | 20.12.1917             |
| Duigan, J.R.                 | Capt   | 4.2.1919               |
| Ellis, A.W.L.                | Capt   | 18.4.1918              |
| Gordon, J.R.                 | 2 Lt   | 27.11.1918             |
| Holden L.H.                  | Lt     | 27.6.1918              |
| Howard, R.W.                 | Lt     | 27.6.1918              |
| Huxley, F.G.                 | Lt     | 27.11.1918             |
| Jones, A.M.                  | Capt   | 21.8.1917              |
| Jones E.J.                   | Capt   | 4.2.1919               |
| Kenny, E.P.                  | Lt     | N/K                    |
| Lee, O.M.                    | Lt     | 30.8.1918              |
| Malley, G.F.                 | Lt     | 27.11.1918             |
| Malone, J.J.                 | Lt     | 23.5.1919              |
| McCloughry, W.A.             | T/Capt | 8.11.1917              |
| McKenzie, R.W.               | Lt     | 24.10.1918             |
| Phillips, R.C.               | Capt   | 27.6.1918              |
| Robertson, A.E.              | Lt     | 27.11.1918             |
| Scott, F.J.                  | Lt     | 27.11.1918             |
| Smith, F.R.                  | Capt   | 27.11.1918             |
| Smith R. MacP.               | Lt     | 27.8.1917              |
| Sutherland, L.W.             | Lt     | 12.12.1918             |
| Taylor, H.                   | Lt     | 27.6.1918              |
| Tunbridge, J.V.              | 2 Lt   | 18.4.1918              |
| Wilkins, G.H.                | Lt     | 7.11.1918              |
| Wilson, G.C.                 | T/Capt | 27.6.1918              |
| Winter-Irving, S.I.          | Capt   | 23.5.1918              |
| 1st Bar Award                |        |                        |
| Phillips, R.C.               | Capt   | 27.11.1918             |
| Smith, R. MacP.              | Lt     | 7.8.1918               |
| Wilkins, G.H.                | Lt     | 1919                   |

| RFC/RNAS MC Australian Recipients Medal Roll |      |                |
|--|------|----------------|
| Name   | Rank | London Gazette |
| Allen, L.W.                                  | Lt   | 26.5.1917      |
| Brearley, N.                                 | Capt | 26.9.1916      |
| Brownell, R.J.                               | Lt   | 4.3.1918       |
| Champion de Crespigny, H.V.                  | Lt   | 16.5.1916      |
| Coningham, A.                                | Lt   | 16.8.1917      |
| Drummond, P.R.M.                             | Lt   | 16.8.1917      |
| Hammersley, H.A.                             | Lt   | 22.6.1918      |
| Howell, C.E.                                 | Lt   | 16.9.1918      |
| Hughes, G.F.                                 | Capt | 13.5.1918      |
| King-Cowper, A.                              | Lt   | 22.4.1918      |
| Kingsford-Smith, C.E.                        | Lt   | 26.9.1917      |
| Mitchell, W.G.S.                             | Maj  | 1.1.1917       |
| Pentland, M.A.                               | Capt | 26.9.1917      |
| 1st Bar Award                                |      |                |
| King-Cowper, A.                              | Lt   | 22.6.1918      |
| 2nd Bar Award                                |      |                |
| King-Cowper, A.                              | Lt   | 22.6.1918      |

At least 6 of these Australian Aircrew MC recipients continued their careers with the airforce, rising to high rank and gaining further Orders, Decorations and Medals. Such persons and their respective awards were —

Figure 6

| Australian MC Recipients who remained in the Airforce |         |  |
|---|---------|--|
| Brownell, R.J.  | A/Cmdre | MC 1918; MM; CBE 1945                                    |
| Champion de Crespigny, H.V.                           | AVM     | MC 1916; DFC 1918; Croix de Guerre 1918; CB              |
| Cole, A.T.  | A/Cmdre | MC 1917; DFC 1919; CBE; DSO                              |
| Drummond, P.R.M.                                      | AM      | OBE 1921; DSO 1918, Bar 1918; MC 1917; CB 1941; KCB 1943 |
| Coningham, A.   | AVM     | DSO 1917; MC 1917; DFC 1919; CB; KCB; KBE; AFC           |
| McCloughry, W.A.                                      | AVM     | DSO 1919; MC 1917; DFC 1919; CB                          |

## REFERENCES:

1. Royal Warrant 3/6/1918.
2. Wide Bay Military Antiques, Catalogue No. 14, April 1987.
3. London Gazettes as cited.
4. Commonwealth of Australia Gazettes as cited.
5. *Naval and Airforce Honours and Awards*, Hayward, reprint edit. 1980.
6. *The Battle Below*, 3 Sqn AFC, Wrigley, H.N.
7. *Australian Airmen*, 4 Sqn AFC, Richards, E.J.



R.D. White

## A Flag with a History

Displayed behind glass in the foyer of the Essendon Civic Centre, Victoria, is an Australian flag with an interesting World War II history. Presented at Puckapunyal on 23 August 1940 by councillor W.L. Llewellyn, Mayor of Essendon, to the newly formed 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion, it became their battle flag. On 15 April 1984 it was handed back to the City of Essendon by the Battalion Association for safe-keeping.

Although Pioneer Battalions had done excellent work during world war one, they were allowed to lapse, so it was necessary to recreate them in 1940. Their role was to work as engineers, but also to be capable of use as infantry in an emergency. Subsequent events were to prove that there always seemed to be an emergency.

The 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion was formed in May 1940, and commanded initially by Lt. Col. N.F. Wellington MC, VD, who was Town Clerk of the City of Essendon and also CO of the 58th Battalion, (Essendon Rifles) from 1934-38. Other strong links were forged with the Essendon district, and a large number of officers and men were enlisted from that area.

The flag went with the Pioneers through Puckapunyal and Balcombe, on the *Queen Mary* to the Middle East, thence to Syria. It was raised above the walls of Fort Merdjayoun after the defeat of the Vichy French forces and saw action again at Damour and Mazraat Ech Chouf.

Early in 1942 it was taken to Java with the battalion on the *Orcades*. When the Allied forces capitulated on 8 March to the numerically superior Japanese, a total of 865 of the 2/2nd Pioneers became prisoners of war, and spent the next three years working on the infamous Burma-Thailand railway and elsewhere. In captivity many were led by their CO Lt. Col. J.M. Williams, whose steadfastness in adversity and courage provoked the admiration of the enemy. In those bad days, the flag was secreted from the Japanese and used in the burial of many of the 258 members of the battalion who died as POWs.

At the time of surrender in Java, a small number of the Pioneers, together with baggage, stores, ammunition and transport, were able to reach Australia. The battalion was reformed to serve with distinction in New Guinea at Lae, Nadzab and the Ramu Valley. Its final campaigns were on the beaches of Tarakan and Balikpapan.

When the war ended 2/2nd Pioneers were recovered in seven different locations — Thailand, Japan, Java, Indo-China, Singapore Island, Sumatra and Borneo — not to mention nine survivors of a POW ship torpedoed on its way to Japan, who were picked up by an American submarine and had reached Australia prior to the end of the war.

Casualties of the Battalion were very high:

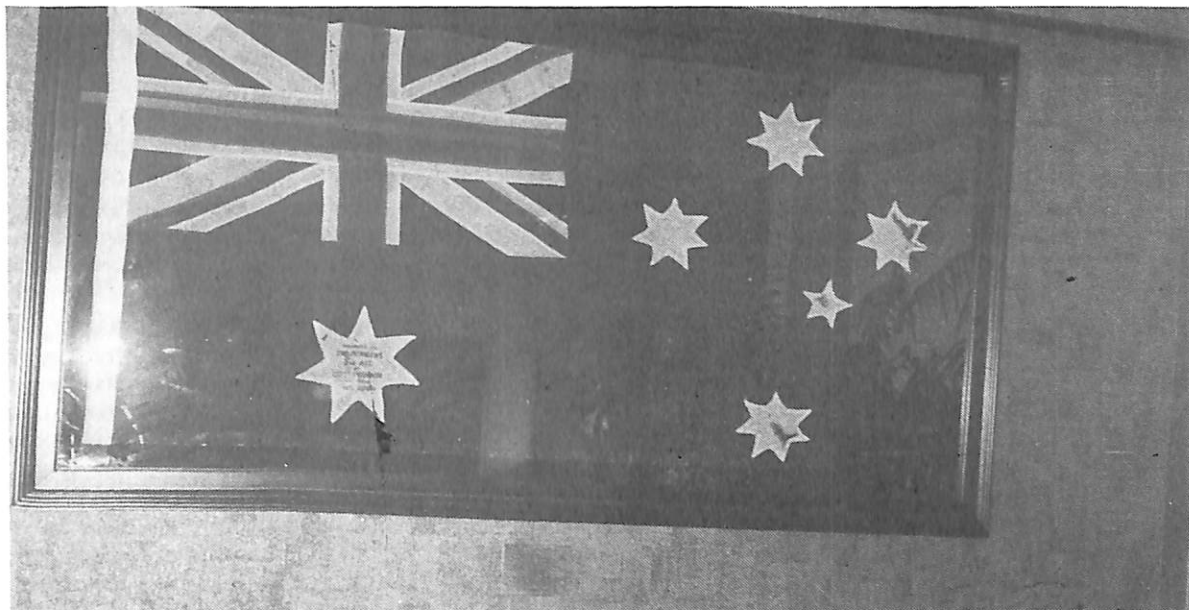
|                            |                          |     |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----|
| Middle East                | Killed or died of wounds | 76  |
| Java                       | "                        | 34  |
| New Guinea                 | "                        | 5   |
| Tarakan                    | "                        | 3   |
| Died while Prisoner of War |                          | 258 |

Decorations awarded to members of the Battalion were:

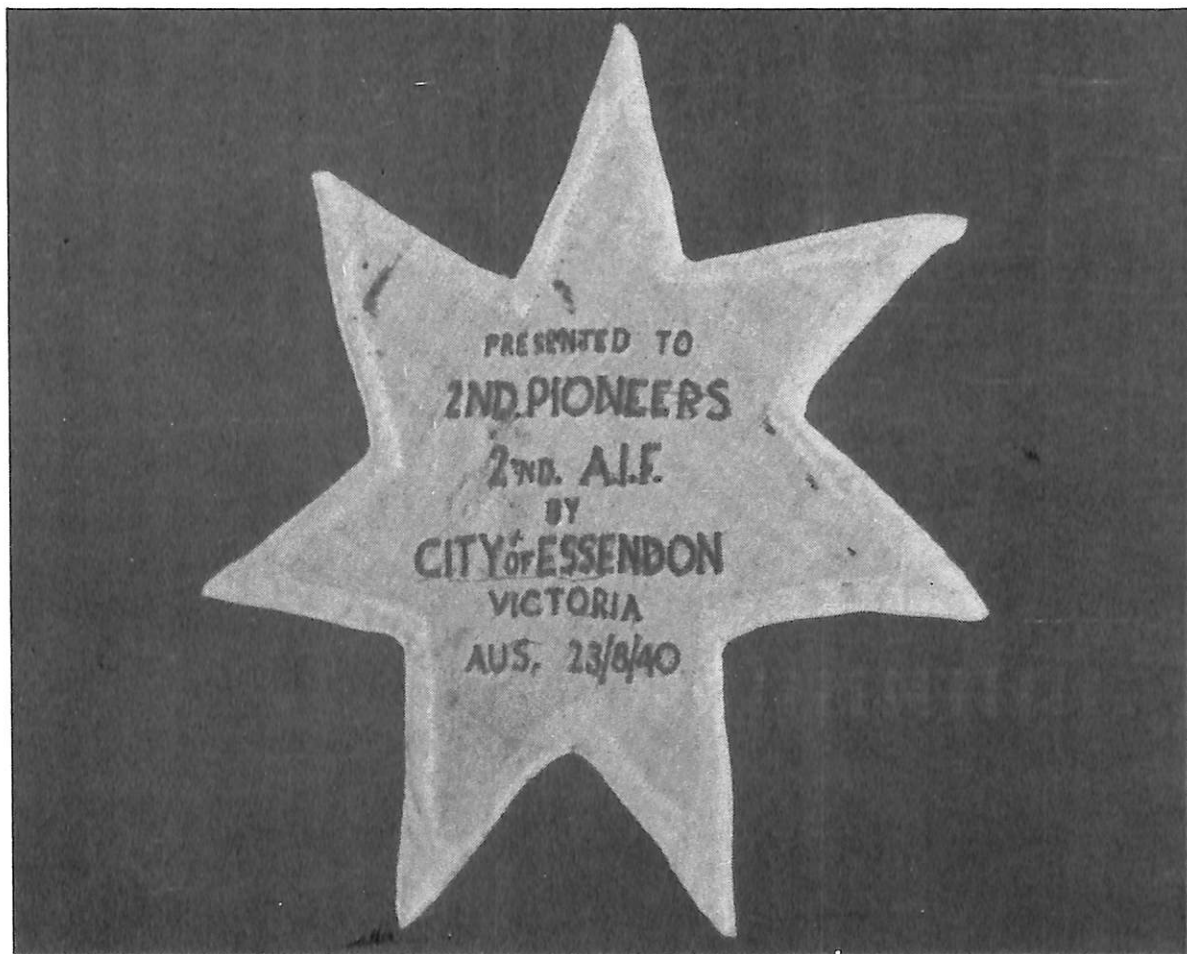
|     |    |
|-----|----|
| DSO | 2  |
| OBE | 2  |
| MBE | 3  |
| MC  | 2  |
| BEM | 2  |
| MM  | 13 |

The years have taken their toll of the 2/2nd Pioneers, and only about one tenth are alive today. However, most still meet as members of a strong and loyal Association. They also take part in the annual Civic Ceremony for Anzac Day at Essendon, where many of the Battalion's foundations were laid.

For information in this article, I am indebted to Mr Ted Hansen and Mr George Murphy, president and secretary respectively of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion Association, and to the book, *The Story of the 2/2nd Australian Pioneer Battalion*, by E.F. Aitken, Melbourne, 1953.



The battle flag of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battallion, displayed in the foyer of the Essendon Civic Centre. (Courtesy R.D. White.)



## Book Reviews

Philip Haythornthwaite, *British Infantry of the Napoleonic Wars*, Arms and Armour Press, London, 1987, 104 pp. Distributed in Australia by Capricorn Link.

Philip Haythornthwaite is a well known British authority on the armies of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. His latest book is useful as far as it goes but is somewhat disappointing in that it fails to give sufficient details on a subject which has hardly been neglected over the years and could easily have been treated more comprehensively.

The book deals not just with the war against Napoleon from 1802 to 1815, but also with British infantry engaged from 1793 to the Peace of Amiens. It contains a good brief summary of the organization, recruitment, social life and tactics of British line infantry, and a sketchy mention of the army's auxiliary corps and the foreign corps recruited to supplement the regulars. The former could have been more informative, though the quality of what is given is high, while the latter could have been omitted to devote more space to the main interest of both the author and, I suspect, the majority of readers.

The bulk of *British Infantry of the Napoleonic Wars* consists of an interesting selection of some 140 black and white and 23 contemporary prints. The illustrations are accompanied by authoritative captions, and will remind all who read them to be wary of making anything other than statements of probability in discussing the uniforms of the period. At the same time, such is the variety of the primary material, and so much does it vary from the dress regulations which those of us unfamiliar with the reality might otherwise take as gospel, that experts such as Mr Haythornthwaite could well have discussed the evidence. Is it possible, for example, that many of the contemporary artists whose work is reproduced had not interest in recording uniform details exactly, not realizing that two centuries hence the uniforms would become a subject of attention? It could also be that the circumstances under which the prints were produced contributed to the inclusion of incorrect details; engravings, for example, were often actually 'engraved' by artists who had not seen the original subject and who worked in isolation from the original observer. These questions ought to interest those who present pictorial evidence such as this, and, while Mr Haythornthwaite may have dealt with it elsewhere I think that he could have dealt with it in this book for the benefit of those unfamiliar with other works on the subject.

The book's focus is on line regiments and foot guards rather than on volunteer or militia, foreign or colonial corps. Indeed, the 'chapter' headed 'The Colonial Regiments' consists of only one print, a depiction of the death of Sir Ralph Abercromby in Egypt. This is of no relevance to its ostensible subject, but it does provide an interesting sidelight on the uniform of the New South Wales Corps, Australia's own colonial corps. The familiar cartoon depicting Governor Bligh's notorious (and in fact fictional) arrest by the corps (in which he is depicted as being pulled from under a bed) shows an officer in the corps as wearing what looks to be a top hat. A number of illustrations in Haythornthwaite's book, including the Abercromby print, show officers in similar 'round hats', and they were, it seems, commonly worn by the officers of colonial corps, or by line officers in tropical or extreme climates.

The only other reference to the New South Wales Corps unfortunately perpetuates its unsavoury reputation as a receptacle for men who had been convicted of military crimes. The validity of this view has been contested in recent years and may be finally refuted when George Parson's long-awaited book on the corps appears later this year.

*Peter Stanley*

Squadron Leader W H Brooke RAAFAR *Demon to Vampire The story of No 21 (City of Melbourne) Squadron*, Demonvamp Publications, Melbourne 1986, 343 pp, b/w and colour photographs, appendices, index, h/c, \$37.00.

This book was written to commemorate the 50th year of No 21 Squadron. This is a Citizen Air Force Squadron, formed in 1936 by the Air Board to operate in conjunction with the fixed-gun defences on a cadre basis. It was based at Laverton and consisted of one third permanent Air Force and two thirds Citizen Air Force. The reason for the formation of such squadrons was the awareness of increasing tension in Europe, the announcement of the formation of the Luftwaffe in 1935, and a growing concern about Japan.

The squadron's initial equipment consisted of four Demons, two Wapitis and three Gypsy Moths, and personnel totalled 176. At the outbreak of war in 1939 the complement of aircraft had been upgraded and expanded and personnel consisted of 27 officers, 183 airmen and four cadets.

Throughout the war the squadron saw service in the Pacific area, in the defence of Malaya and in many areas of New Guinea, the islands and the Northern Territory. They flew a variety of aircraft including Wirraways, Ansons, Vengeances, Buffaloes and Liberators.

At the end of the war the squadron reverted to its role of reserve unit and flew Mustangs and Vampires until it finally ceased flying operations in 1960. Since then it has operated as a support unit for the RAAF.

The author is a senior lecturer in the Department of Anatomy at Monash University, but also joined No. 21 Squadron as a medical officer in 1974. Amongst the recent rash of unit/battalion/squadron histories being written this book compares very favourably and is an extremely well researched and produced study. It has over 200 black and white photos, 22 colour plates, 15 maps and thorough index and appendices.

For those interested in squadron histories or Australian flying generally, this book is very good value.

**Julie Russell**

## **Australian Naval History Seminar — July 1989**

The Australian War Memorial is to hold a three day Naval History Seminar in Canberra from 1 to 3 July 1989. The Seminar will be a precursor to the next in its regular series of Military History Conferences which will take place from 4 to 7 July 1989.

The Naval History Seminar will deal with aspects of the history of the Royal Australian Navy as well as the other Navies in and with Australia. Speakers are expected from Canada and the United Kingdom and it is hoped that the Seminar will attract considerable international attention.

Topics already included in the Seminar programme include the origins of the RAN, naval administration of the 1939-45 conflict, naval aviation, the RAN's involvement in Korea and Vietnam and many other subjects.

Proposals for additional papers on these and other topics are welcomed and should be addressed to:

Lieutenant Commander J.V.P. Goldrick, RAN  
73 Middle Head Road, Mosman, NSW 2088, AUSTRALIA

Those wishing to register their interest in attending the Seminar and/or the Conference and seeking further information should write to:

Stephen Allen, Conference Secretary  
Historical Research Section  
Australian War Memorial  
GPO Box 345, CANBERRA ACT 2601  
AUSTRALIA

## **Announcement**

**The Military Historical Society of Australia**

*will present*

### **Symposium: Australian Military History 1788–1988**

**Queen's Birthday Weekend  
Saturday 11 June 1988 to Monday 13 June 1988**

**HQ 3RNSWR, Werriwa Training Depot  
Allara Street, Canberra City**

This symposium will formally commence at 1.30 pm on the Saturday of Queen's Birthday weekend and will conclude at noon on the Monday. These times are to give interstate members and friends time for travel. There is no registration fee and there is accommodation for those who are interested at both the Werriwa Training Depot (sleeping gear required) and at HMAS Harman.

The program will include displays as well as the symposium. Interstate members and friends are encouraged to bring both display items and photographs. Trestle tables and some display cases are available. It would be helpful for those bringing displays to contact either their branch secretary or the convenor.

The symposium will cover a number of subjects including the British Army in Australia, the South African War, the Australian Light Horse, the Australian Flying Corps, the Royal Australian Air Force, the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army, Military Museums, Badges, Medals and Colour Patches as well as Canberra's Military History.

All members and friends of the Military Historical Society of Australia, kindred societies and anyone interested in Australian Military History is welcome. This is a great opportunity to visit Canberra and the Australian War Memorial during the Bicentennial year.

Please advise branch secretaries or the convenor as soon as possible if attending.

**Convenor — Anthony Staunton, PO Box 354, Woden ACT 2606 Telephone (062) 81 6975 (H)**

## Letters

5 Lisbon Close,  
Singleton, NSW 2330  
30 Jan 88

Dear Sir,

I am writing to seek your assistance with an interesting question posed to me by an elderly lady of the local community. She has given me a photo of an artilleryman's grave on Thursday Island and asked can I give her any background to the matter (the deceased was of her family).

I do have some knowledge of the history of the defence force activities on Thursday Island but not in any detail at unit or personnel level. The photo is clear enough and the inscription reads:

Sacred to the memory of  
Bombardier Walter O. Hyde  
Late Bandmaster No 9 Coy R.A.A.  
who departed this life on the  
25 February 1905  
Erected by his comrades  
of No 9 Coy R.A.A.  
RIP

The grave has a large artillery shell at each corner and a lyre badge on the obelisk.

Some points I find intriguing are:

- a. the term Coy not Bty,
- b. the fact that at age 19 (from family info) he was both a BDR and the bandmaster of his coy.

Is there someone in your society who has made a study of this area of our history or can you direct me to an artillery history group who may be able to assist?

Yours sincerely  
Maj. J.D. Johnstone

### Assistance sought for hospital history

Audrey Mulder, (Victorian branch, MHSA) is preparing a history of the Macleod Repatriation Hospital, Macleod, Victoria.

Audrey is seeking reminiscences of former patients or their relatives. The present hospital has developed from a cluster of first world war hospitals and medical treatment centres on the site of Mont Park Hospital. These consisted of No. 16 Australian General Hospital, No. 1 Military Sanatorium, No. 14 AAH Convalescent Hospital, Military Rest Camp, Light Duties Camp, Strathallan Rest Home and Curative Workshops.

Any information that readers of *Sabretache* might be able to add to the history of the hospital, particularly concerning photographs or other relics of the hospital and patients, would be gratefully appreciated.

Ms Mulder can be contacted on (03) 458 1448 at:  
31 Cherry Street  
MACLEOD VIC 3085

Mr Athol Chaffey (MHSA Tasmania) would like to locate the following medals:

1. 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star, War, ASM, awarded to A. Cowan RAAF (NSW),
2. WWI Pair to Second-Lieutenant James Wiltshire Frith (Imperial Service),
3. General Service Medal (1918-62) Clasp N.W. Persia (GV issue to 4737333 W. Moore (York and Lanc. Regiment),
4. WWI Trio F.H. Hibberd Rating RN and War and ASM 399 Boatman 2nd class RAN, and
5. WWI Medals to Thomas John Murphy, Merchant Navy.

Mr Chaffey's address is:  
29 Laura Street  
WEST LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

## Society Notes

### Wyalkatchem & Districts War Service 1899-1976

With the publishing of his book *Wyalkatchem & Districts War Service 1899-1976*, Western Australian branch member Paul De Pierres has achieved what many of us only think about.

The town in the West Australian wheat belt, Wyalkatchem, where Paul has his farm, is an unusual instance of a country town not having a traditional war memorial and this moved Paul to embark on a project of a personal nature to have this partly rectified. As a result of his book, I understand the town will now build a war memorial.

The book started some years ago as a humble list of names of those servicemen and women from Wyalkatchem and surrounding districts. Possible through the suggestion of another W.A. branch member, John Burridge, Paul decided to work towards a publication which would be widely circulated and be of a more permanent personal shrine to recall the efforts of our servicemen and women (from the introduction of the book).

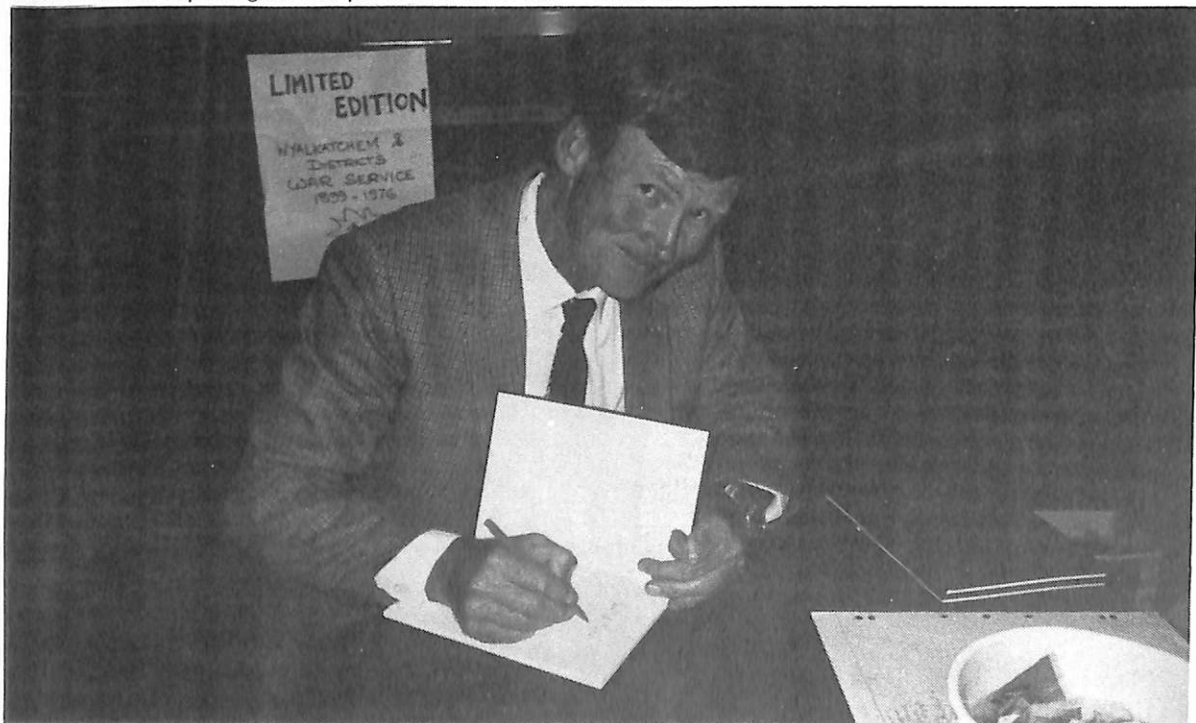
The book is produced in a hard green cover form with gold block lettering, and in its 102 pages has in excess of 300 'portrait' photographs each with brief service details depicting service personnel from the

Boer War to Vietnam. He also lists those who have no known photographs and where service details were not known. There are photographs of various related Roll of Honour boards and other memorial plaques. The book is a marvellous pictorial reference and good value at the price of \$30.

Paul can be contacted through P.O. Box 75, Wyalkatchem, W.A. 6485 (ph. [096] 38 1048) for further information.

The W.A. branch assisted Paul's book launch held at the Wyalkatchem Vintage Tractor and Machinery Fair by arranging a display of their various collections. The standard of display was very high with over 17 display cases on view and additional displays of firearms and edged weapons. It proved our most successful exhibition to date.

We enjoyed a very pleasant BBQ tea and evening at Paul's farm before retiring to the minus 1 star accommodation of the old farm building (we know know why it is no longer used!). The following morning was spent firing most of the weapons used during the previous day's display before returning to Perth. In all 10 branch members displayed with 2 members from Arm & Armour.



Western Australian branch member Paul de Pierres autographs copies of his book *Wyalkatchem and Districts War Service, 1899-1976*.

### Volunteer Defence Corps Plaque Unveiled

An all too rare glimpse of Melbourne sunshine was enjoyed by a group of Victorian Branch Military Historical Society members, friends and representatives of the Returned Services League on Saturday morning, 4th December 1987 to witness the unveiling of a bronze plaque dedicated to the Volunteer Defence Corps.

In handing over the plaque to RSL State Vice President, Mr Ross Watson, the President of the Victorian Branch of the Military Historical Society Mr Robbie Dalton noted that the Branch had recognized the contribution made to Australia's defence by the Volunteer Defence Corps throughout World War Two and the use by the Corps of the premises still occupied by the Caulfield RSL Sub Branch at St George's Road, Elsternwick. This recognition had resulted in the Victorian Branch arranging for a suitably inscribed bronze plaque bearing the badges of both the Volunteer Defence Corps and the Military Historical Society to be fixed at the entrance to the Caulfield RSL Sub Branch's premises.

Before unveiling the plaque on behalf of the State President of the RSL of Victoria, RSL Members and former members of the Volunteer Defence Corps. Mr Watson commended the Victorian Branch of the Military Historical Society on their initiative in presenting the plaque which highlights the magnificent contribution and service given by members of the Volunteer Defence Corps to our country in time of national emergency during World War Two. Mr Watson added that for the Caulfield RSL Sub Branch the plaque would record their contribution to the

membership strength of the Volunteer Defence Corps and the use of the Sub Branch's premises as a Regional Headquarters; furthermore the plaque would symbolize, for posterity, the Australian desire for recognition of heritage and national tradition.

Mr Watson in referring to RSL documents of the time drew attention to the humour and serious dedication of the early members of the Volunteer Defence Corps who, armed with little more than a broomstick and grim determination were prepared to stand firm as Australia's very last line of defence in the uncertain days of 1940 and 1941. The dim memory of those times was made all the more poignant by the presence of Mr Frank Robinson a former member of the 5th Battalion Volunteer Corps based at the St George's Road premises. Before unveiling the plaque Mr Watson called for silence and led the Ode of Remembrance.

The unveiling formalities were concluded by Mr Hedley Moore the President of the Caulfield RSL Sub Branch who expressed the appreciation of the present Club membership and accepted charge of the plaque.

For the Military Historical Society of Australia the plaque does more than record the contribution of the Volunteer Defence Corps during World War two. The plaque is representative of the Australian readiness to meet adversity when needed and to overcome; it will stand as a token of commitment by the Military Historical Society and others who will not forget.

### Notes on Contributors

Peter Stanley is a noted writer on military history and has published a number of books and articles. His latest book is *The remote garrison: The British Army in Australia*.

Major Warren Perry, MBE, ED, MA(Melb), BEc(Syd), FRHSV, RL was formerly Federal President of the Military Historical Society of Australia and editor of the *Victorian Historical Journal*. He is a regular contributor to historical journals including *Sabretache*.

Bert Denman served in the army in both the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars. He is currently contributing a series of articles to *Sabretache* on his experiences as an infantryman in England and France in WW1.

James Ritchie Grant has been a long time member of the MHSA, currently being a member of the W.A. branch. He has contributed several articles for *Sabretache*, which a particular interest in pre- and post-federation military history.

Chris Fagg is from Tasmania and has a special interest in medals of the British Commonwealth. He is a frequent contributor to *Sabretache*.

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## Australian War Memorial

# Research Grants Scheme 1989

The Council of the Australian War Memorial sponsors a research grants scheme which assists researchers in the field of Australian military history and related areas such as biography, technology, art, and the impact of war on Australian society.

The following forms of assistance are available:

### **Grants-in-aid**

Grants-in-aid, to a maximum value of \$4000, are offered for one year to cover costs such as travel, photocopying and typing incurred during the actual year of the grant. These awards are generally made to researchers who intend to produce manuscripts based on their research. Where satisfactory progress is made a continuing grant of up to \$4000 may be awarded for a second year.

### **Post-graduate scholarship**

A post-graduate scholarship, similar in remuneration and conditions to those offered under the Commonwealth post-graduate scheme, is offered for a scholar undertaking supervised research in a tertiary institution in the area of Australian military history. The scholarship is tenable for a period of three years.

### **Special project fellowship**

A senior research fellowship, comparable to a university post-doctoral fellowship, is offered for a person with a proven research and or publication record in military or Australian history. The fellowship is tenable for one or two years. The Memorial gives preference to projects which draw heavily on its collections and which are judged as being likely to fill a gap in Australian military historical research. The successful applicant is expected to live in Canberra. Public Service conditions relating to temporary employment apply. In the absence of a suitable applicant the Memorial reserves the right not to appoint.

### **Research Centre fellowships**

Research Centre fellowships are offered for professional librarians, archivists and others to undertake projects related to the intellectual organization of the Memorial's collections, with a view to the preparation and, in some cases, publication of guides to these collections. These fellowships can be awarded for any period from three months to one year and carry a level of remuneration commensurate with professional salary levels. Research Centre fellows will need to reside in Canberra for the duration of the award.

Intending applicants for grants-in-aid and the post-graduate scholarship should write for application forms and information to:

Historical Research Section  
Australian War Memorial  
GPO Box 345  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Intending applicants for the Research Centre fellowships should, in the first instance, discuss possible projects with:

Paul Macpherson (library and archival collections)  
Bill Fogarty (audio-visual collections)

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**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 the title page.

**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 last week of March

Jul.-Sept. edition mailed last week of September

Apr.-Jun. edition mailed last week of June

Oct.-Dec. edition mailed last week of December

**ADVERTISING**

Society members may place, at no cost, one advertisement of approximately 40 words in the 'Members Sales and Wants' section each financial year.

Commercial advertising rate is \$120 per full page; \$60 per half page; and \$25 per quarter page. Contract rates applicable at reduced rates. Apply Editor.

Advertising material must reach the Secretary by the following dates:

1 January for January-March edition

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 'Notes and Queries' section of the Journal.

**SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS**

Society publications advertised in *Sabretache* are available from:

Ken Kindness, G.P.O. Box 1052, Canberra, A.C.T. 2601.

Orders and remittances should be forwarded to this address.

**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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