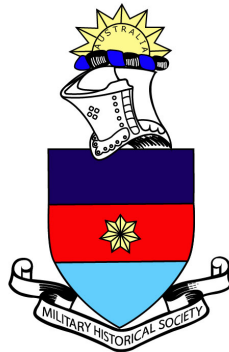


Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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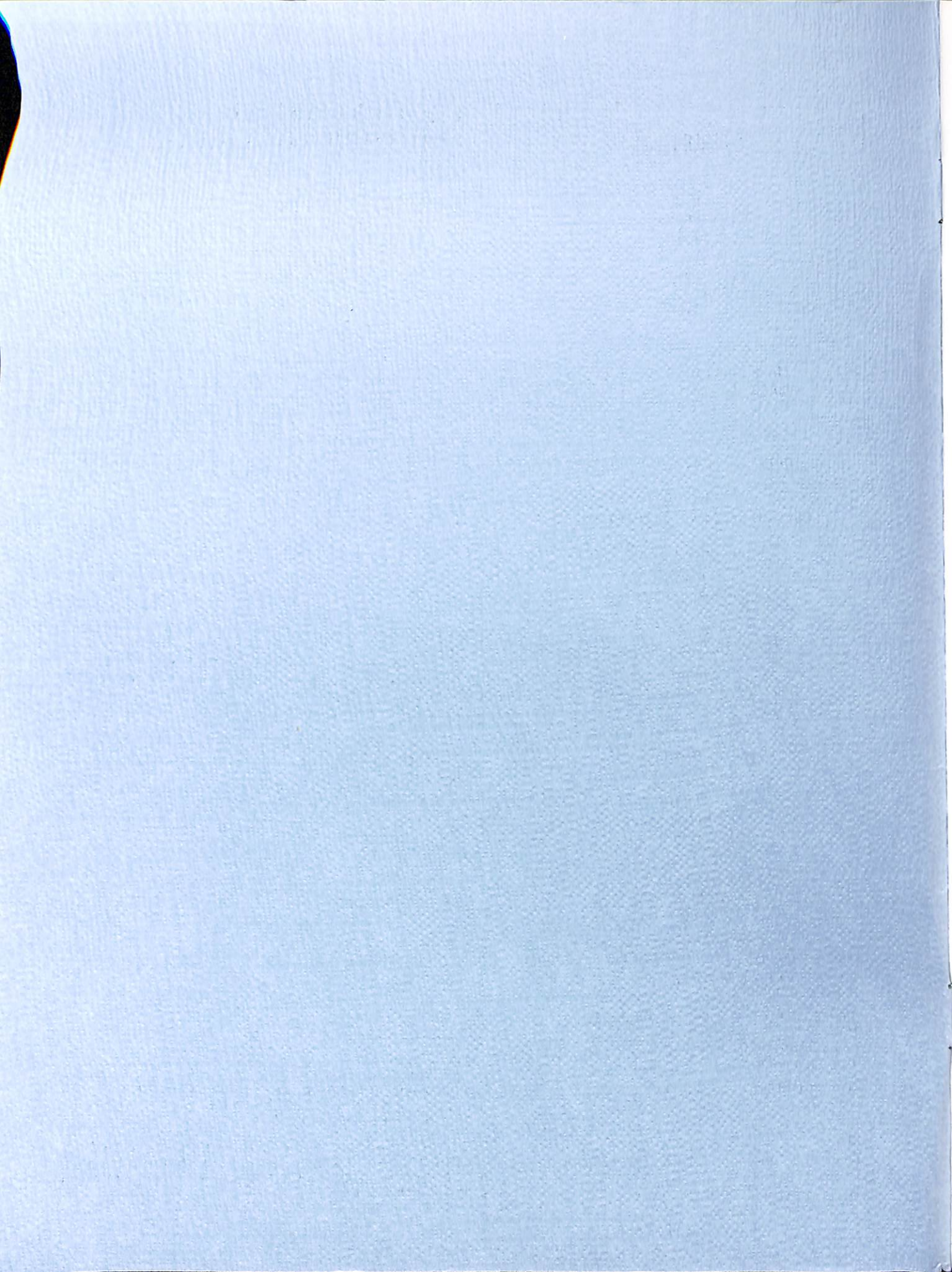
Military Historical Society of Australia
PO Box 5030, Garran, ACT 2605.
email: webmaster@mhsa.org.au

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**The Journal and Proceedings of
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P.O. Box 30, Garran, A.C.T. 2605
Telephone (062) 82 3261

Treasurer

Mr N. Foldi

Editor

Alan Fraser
P.O. Box 85, Deakin, A.C.T. 2600
Telephone (062) 81 3038

Editorial Sub-Committee

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Branch Secretaries

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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.

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SABRETACHE

Editorial note An apology is offered for the late appearance of this issue of *Sabretache*. The editor was called away overseas at short notice and alternative arrangements made for the issue to be completed near time proved to be impractical.

Coastal defences In our April/June 1986 issue we referred to the Australian Coastal Defences Study Group, formed to further authoritative research into the history of Australian naval and military coastal defences.

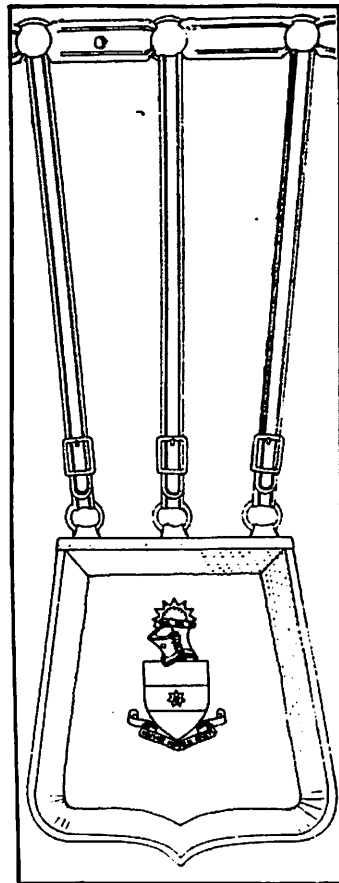
We have received their first Newsheet dated August 1986, which includes illustrated short articles by members on Langwarrin Military Reserve, Fort Queenscliff, South Channel Fort, Point Nepean, restoration of HMS *Warrior* and the possible restoration of the old warship *Cerberus*. The Secretary of the ACDSG is Colin Jones, 13 Park Road, Middle Park 3206.

Historic aircraft The Australian War Memorial recently took delivery of a Hawker Sea Fury fighter/bomber (2250 h.p. Bristol Centaurus) which will ultimately join the Mustang and Meteor of the same era in the Korea war exhibition.

The RAN operated 101 Sea Fury FB-11s in Nos. 723, 724, 805, 808 and 850 Squadrons. The type played a significant part in the Korean war, operating from HMAS *Sydney*. The AWM's machine was *en route* to Korea when hostilities ceased and was later used at the National Building Technology Centre to create artificial wind to stress-test new building materials.

Unit history As part of the recognition of the unit's 21st Birthday and the 20th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan, the Sixth Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment has produced a book depicting the life of the battalion, comprising reproduction of two volumes produced following the unit's tours of operations in Vietnam in 1966-67 and 1969-70, and a third part covering the period 1970 to 1985.

Its title is *A history of the Sixth Battalion Royal Australian Regiment* and is available from the Second in Command of the Battalion at Enoggera Barracks, Military Post Office, Enoggera, Qld 4052, at a cost of \$25 plus any postage.



History Conference The War Memorial's seventh annual history conference will be held in Canberra in July 1987. Previous conferences have been held in February. A varied programme is planned, comprising formal sessions and informal seminars, workshops and work-in-progress meetings, held over several days, ranging over numerous topics in the military history field. Information can be obtained from the Historical Research Section of the Memorial, GPO Box 345, Canberra, 2600 or by ringing (062) 43 4226.

Following the publication of our RAN 75th Anniversary issue, Bruce Turner, Librarian at MHSA member Prahran (Vic.) Mechanic's Institute and Library, drew our attention to *The black one*, the late Air Vice-Marshal J.E. Hewitt's account of the RAN College during the 1914-18 war and his service as a midshipman in HMAS *Ramillies* in the Black Sea during the Russian revolution. Hewitt later joined the RAAF.

Decorations On taking over as adjutant of his battalion in 1918, Guy Chapman, in his *A Passionate Prodigality* (p. 266) had this to say:

During the last twelve months, it had become obvious that the award of decorations was chiefly a matter of penmanship. A barren statement of facts was invariably passed over. As someone had said, scanning the plethoric list in Army Orders of ribbons given to the Australians: 'With so many heroes, I can't think why the war is still going on.' There had been a wry jest about one colonel in the division, whose recommendation for a D.S.O. had been so florid that Corps had sent back to say that the leader of this counter-attack must have the V.C. and asked for the necessary corroborative evidence of eye-witnesses; which had not been forthcoming. Caution, as well as imagination, was therefore desirable. One had no scruples about it. All the men in the line who were decorated had done deeds which in South Africa or on the Indian frontier would have seemed superhuman, but in France were a job of ordinary routine. What might have settled this invidious practice of writing up reports would have been an award such as the French gave, the *Medaille Militaire* or the *Croix de Guerre*, to a whole battalion, entitling the men to wear the *fourragere*, the knot and cordon round the shoulder in the ribbon's colour. Such not being our English habit I wrought and sweated over the bald narratives of heroism, turned in by unimaginative platoon commanders, supplying what I hoped was the necessary trickery of epithet and local colour to catch the eye of the A.G.'s branch.

Chapman served on the western front with the First Battalion, the Royal Fusiliers and as a staff officer.

Journal of the Australian War Memorial The October 1986 issue (No. 9) includes articles on the motives of soldiers joining up in 1914-18 (Richard White), the RAAF's quest for a bomber aircraft, 1934-43 (David Vincent), an attempt by Britain to establish an imperial military force with assistance from the colonies (John Mordike), Commonwealth forces in the Korean war (Jeffrey Grey) and Part 2 of a Red Baron article (Dennis Newton). Notes on the Memorial's collections and book reviews complete the issue.

John Meyers

South African travels

The following article was handwritten by 256 Corporal C.E. Deacon, a member of the 3rd Queensland contingent of the Boer War. He was a member of the Queensland contingent to the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902. Commissioned in 1904 he served in the 3rd Darling Downs Light Horse Regiment prior to the 1914-18 war and was OC of the remount camp in Brisbane in 1916. He was awarded the Colonial Auxiliary Forces Decoration on 5 July 1923 in the rank of major.

A more detailed diary was kept by Deacon during the Boer War, but due to the ravages of time, it is virtually illegible. Unfortunately, for unknown reasons, the following article is not complete. It stops shortly after the relief of Mafeking. Apologies are offered for incorrect interpretations of the spelling of towns and districts.

* * * * *

AS we are now on our way back to Australia on the SS *Morayshire* and having plenty of time on our hands, I intend to write from my diaries an account of our travels in South Africa. For one man to attempt to write or give a lecture on the 'War in South Africa' is simply ridiculous, as there have been so many different columns operating at such great distances apart that without authentic records, no man can write a very truthful account. Even Conan Doyle in his book *The Great Boer War* has made mistakes, to my own knowledge, so how can a man serving in the ranks, without the records which a writer like Conan Doyle would have, speak or write on the whole war in South Africa. How I will get on with this, I do not know, but it will be something to put in my spare time.

At the time that volunteers were called for the 3rd Queensland contingent, the general aspect of the war in South Africa was not a very pleasant one, viewing it from the British side. Buller had been reversed at Colenso, Gatacre at Stormberg, Methuen at Magersfontein. Kimberly, Mafeking and Ladysmith were all besieged. The British were sending out reinforcements as fast as possible, so when the Queensland Government offered the services of another contingent of mounted men, their offer was readily accepted. A very significant fact was that at the time the 1st contingent were offered, the Home authorities were not particular whether mounted or dismounted men were sent. But 'a change had come over the spirit of the scene' and now mounted men only were required.

The other Australian colonies also offered contingents of Bushmen, some of which were raised by public subscription, as in the case of New South Wales, while the others were raised by the governments of their respective colonies. Needless to say, all these offers were accepted. There was one difference between the Queensland contingent and the others and that was while the other contingents were all supposed to be bushmen, the Queensland contingent was not. It was to be the 3rd Queensland Mounted Infantry, chiefly comprised of bushmen and it was just as well that the volunteers were not restricted to bushmen only as some of our best soldiers turned out to be men who were never in the bush. As soon as the work of enrolment commenced, it was easily seen that the young men of Queensland were not to be daunted by the dark lookout that was in front of them at that time.

They came in with increasing rapidity, day by day, but they were a curious mixture, bushmen, miners, lawyers, bankers, station managers, storekeepers, farmers — all coming in willing to do or die for their country. What prompted them is hard to say. Some left good businesses or good billets, just for their Queen and country, others simply for love of adventure, while there were others to whom fate had not been very kind and they hoped that perhaps South Africa would hold something good for them at the conclusion of the war.

As soon as a man came into camp, he was put into training on the system of the Queensland

Mounted Infantry. Horse lines were laid down and it was not long before there were any amount of horses on these lines. Here, I think, there was a big mistake made. It was fully a month before we got away from Queensland and all this time the horses were kept on these lines without getting any grass. They were led off to water and were fed on hay, chaff maize and other dry stuffs. During the day they were continually licking the ground which in the encampment was a very fine gravel and sand. The consequence was that when we got to sea, several died and when we opened them, their stomachs were found to contain a lot of this fine gravel.

At last the contingent was ready to start. The men were chosen, after passing a very severe doctor's test, the horses were all bought, saddles and equipment all ready and nothing remained to do but to get the transport. I may mention that after the required number of men were sworn in, there were still about 200 men left in camp, who formed the foundation of the 4th contingent. The *SS Duke of Portland* was in Brisbane having brought out some emigrants and this was the vessel chosen by the Queensland Government to carry us to the scene of our adventures. It would have been better for us had a proper transport been sent out, as was in the case of the other colonies. On board these boats, there is any amount of room for men and horses whereas on the *Duke of Portland* there was no room to move the horses and not a great deal for the men.

Well, after a few delays, the 3rd Queensland Contingent left Pinkenba wharf on February 28th, being about 320 strong, Major W.H. Tunbridge in charge. All the officers had been or were supposed to have been carefully selected, but although we were a mounted infantry regiment there were not many of the officers who knew much about mounted infantry work. The OC was an artillery officer although he had some experience in mounted infantry work during the shearers' strike in Queensland. Major C.W. Kellie, in charge of 'D' Company, was also an Imperial artillery officer, but three of his subalterns had experience at some time in mounted infantry work, while the other was an infantry officer. In the other Company, however, the officer in charge was a mounted infantry man, Captain R.B. Echlin. But only one of his subalterns was a mounted man. I may as well give a list of the officers of the whole contingent. They were as follows: OC Major W.H. Tunbridge; OC 'D' Company Major C.W. Kellie; Divisional Leaders, Captain J.K. Fowles, Lieutenants Walsh, Harris and Annat; OC 'E' Company, Captain R.B. Echlin; Divisional Leaders, Captain Hockings, Lieutenants Dalgleish, Leask and Annat. (Annat already shown above, possibly should have been Hanly. Hanly was the only officer present but not mentioned.) Adjutant,

Captain H.G. Feilding; Supernumerary officer, Lieutenant MacColl.

We anchored that night in Moreton Bay, but put out to sea on the morning of March 1st. It was not long before several of the contingent were hanging their heads over the rail with the usual sea sickness and the manner in which we found the old *Duke* to roll did not improve them. But there was any amount of work to be done. The horses had to be fed and watered, their stalls kept clean and those who did not suffer from sea sickness had plenty of work to do. For a couple of days, things were rather in a muddle, but after that, everybody started to get their sea legs and settled down to their work which was no light job. I think the cleaning of the stalls was the worst job of all. We had no room to shift the horses and so were obliged to clean all the dung, etc, out of the stalls, with the horses in them. How we sweated down in the holds at this work, but we were young soldiers then, full of enthusiasm and we all worked well.

The sea was not very smooth and coming across the Australian Bight, it was decidedly rough. We made Albany on March 11th, losing about 19 horses on the trip. All hands were allowed a run on shore here and wasn't it enjoyed. 'E' Company were ashore in the morning and 'D' Company in the afternoon. The former behaved themselves very well in the morning, but the latter simply 'painted the town red' in the afternoon. Some were driving about in cabs, some riding bikes up and down the one street, others commandeering horses and galloping about, others kissing every girl they came across and nearly everybody merry. Such a job the non-coms had, to get their men together when the time came to go on board, after having spent a very pleasant afternoon.

Albany is not a very big place. As far as we could see there was nothing to form a big place there. It is simply a coaling station and this seems the only industry of the place. The harbour, however, is very pretty and very safe. Here, our Major purchased 20 horses to replace those that we had lost. These horses were good sorts, being strong, thick low-set animals. Just the sort for a soldier on active service. We left here on the evening of March 13th and the Australian coast passed out of sight on March 14th. How little any of us guessed that it would be fully 14 months before we would see it again. Some of the contingent gazed on it for the last time, but that was what we expected when we came soldiering.

Nothing eventful occurred after leaving Albany, with the exception of an examination for non-commissioned officers, until our arrival at South Africa. Just the ordinary, dull routine and work which got very monotonous towards the end. The coast of Africa appeared in sight on March 31st

and on April 2nd, we dropped anchor in Table Mountain Bay. Then speculation became rife as to our destination. How we all guessed at where we would be sent and how few of us guessed our real destination? As soon as we anchored, the Major reported to headquarters and was informed that we were to go to Beira. This came as an awful surprise to us all, as we could not understand the reason for this move at all. Most of us were rather disappointed too, as the majority of our contingent had friends in either the 1st or 2nd contingents whom they were anxious to see and of course there was no chance of seeing them by going up there. At this time the war bore a slightly different aspect to what it did when we left Australia. Roberts was in Bloemfontein, having captured Cronje and his men on the way; Ladysmith was relieved and things looked far better than when we volunteered. A great number went as far as to say that we would never see a shot fired. Although the British were so far up, reinforcements were still arriving and Table Bay at this time presented a very pretty sight. Ships of all descriptions were anchored in the Bay, while the wharves were so crowded that we could not get in to them for a few days.

Capetown looks very pretty from Table Bay, especially at night. Table Mountain stands at the back of the town with all its grandeur, while the town nestles at the foot. At night, with all the lights flashing, it makes a very pretty scene. After waiting a few days in the Bay, we steamed into the wharf, to coal up for our trip to Beira. My impression of Capetown from the wharf was not favourable. There were too many niggers about, the wharf being simply alive with them, mostly coal lumpers. We took on board here about 600 tons of coal and it was all carried on in bags by these black beggars. They are big strong sturdy fellows, merry as school boys, but awfully dirty. We would chuck them a bone from the ship, for which they would scramble like a crowd of dogs. Work, however, is quickly done by them, but of course they have a boss over them, who is a trained nigger driver and he makes them work. They form a regular black stream passing up one gang way with coal on their backs and then off the other. Laughing, quarrelling, playing all the time, seems to form part of their work.

Another point which naturally struck all Australians was the poor quality of the horses and the apparently neglectful way in which they were treated. The contingent were given a chance to stretch their legs here by a march on shore up the main street. We found that Capetown did not improve on this slight acquaintance. It struck me as dirty and far behind the times, not being as up to date as Brisbane. I visited the soldiers' wet canteen at the barracks and was very much astonished and amused at the way in which drink

is served. There were five of us went in for a drink and we all called for beer. The barman filled a large tin pot which he placed in front of one of our chaps. I was thinking to myself, that if one of those was given to me too, how would I manage to get through it, as I was a very light drinker, when I suddenly found, this was for the five of us. One takes a drink and then it is passed round until all have drunk their share. I was informed that this was the English soldier's style of drinking and I must say I prefer the Australian style.

On Monday, April 9th, we finished coaling, received our stores and necessary equipment and that afternoon we steamed out for Beira. As soon as we left on this trip, the first thing we noticed was the difference in the tucker, to that we had been receiving up to this time, which had been very good, although at times it was badly cooked. Now we were put on Imperial rations, which formed a marked contrast to our former rations. But our sea trip was drawing to a close and after plenty more hard work at which we perspired more freely than hitherto, as we were now nearing the tropics, we steamed into Beira Bay on Easter Monday, April 16th.

There were a good many boats in the Bay when we came in and nearly all were transports. The coast here is very low and covered with mangroves, coconut palms, etc. There being two other transports in port when we came in which had not unloaded their horses, it was some days before we could start on our horses, or rather what was left of them, as we had lost between 40 and 50 since leaving Queensland. The unloading business was very slow, as the transports were unable to run right up to the wharf and the horses had to be taken ashore in lighters, which was necessarily very slow.

While waiting for the other transports to finish their unloading, we had a kit inspection and a nice job we had of it. Our kit, including our saddlery, at this time was pretty considerable. A great difference between it then and at the time we were chasing DeWet. Nobody, either, had any experience in putting on puttees, which we were parading in and to see the chaps struggling with about 4 or 5 yards of this khaki stuff was very funny. After waiting a couple of days, the lighters were available for us and we soon took our horses off. The poor things were awfully relieved when they found that they could stretch their legs once more. Where we landed them was a small paddock of sand in which they enjoyed a roll immensely. When they had stretched themselves, we led them down to a large grass paddock, securely fenced and tied them up to the fence. That night, my division was on horse picquet and I don't think they kept a very close watch on the horses, as before morning, they were all heartily enjoying a camp in the grass. Perhaps the picquet let them

go and who would blame them! An Australian's sympathy is always with his horse and after being seven weeks on their legs, they surely earned a rest. The *Duke of Portland* was still our home and one division would go ashore daily, to do duty with the horses. At night the mosquitoes were very troublesome and one would see little columns of smoke ascending in various places. On arrival at this smoke, one would discover the horse picquet sitting in the smoke to keep the mosquitoes away. After we had been in the Bay for a few days, the transport *Columbia* came in with Sir Frederic Carrington and 'C' Battery, R.C. Artillery, on board. Beira at this time presented a very busy appearance. The NSW Bushmen were being despatched as fast as possible with their horses to Bamboo Creek, en route to Marandellas. Carpenters were hard at work putting trucks together for conveyance of men and horses. The horse trucks were made fly proof on account of the belt of tse-tse fly country through which we had to pass. It was very interesting to many of us who had never been away from Australia before to watch the different customs of other nationalities, of which there were many in Beira. Although we were in Portuguese territory, we found the predominating nationality British. The railway contractors were a British firm and this I think, had a great deal to do with so many British being there. We found the Portuguese officials to be very excitable, especially the policemen, who were very fond of flashing their knives and pistols. Several times I thought that we would have trouble with them, but each time our little differences, chiefly caused through our mutual ignorance of the other's language, were settled amicably. The most important event of the next few days was a visit from the Portuguese Governor, to whom we all turned out in fine style and gave him the usual present arms.

However, some of us were soon destined to turn our backs on Beira, as an order arrived within the next few days, for 100 of us to escort the 'C' Battery, R.C.A. to Marandellas. A rumour was also flying around, that the final destination was Mafeking. Nos. 1, 3 and 4 Divisions of 'D' Company were ordered to prepare to go with these guns and this was the real beginning of all the jealousy which existed between the two companies, almost to the end of the campaign. We were not chosen to fulfil this duty because we were better men, but, simply on account of our being the senior company and commanded by the senior officer, Major Kellie. All could not be sent, as 100 only were wanted. On the morning of April 24th, the 100 of us left the old *Duke* for good and for all. With swags, kitbags and six days rations, we jumped into the open trucks on the narrow gauge railway.

This line at this time was only 2'6" gauge, with small engines, and it looked more like a toy railway

than anything else. However, it was surprising to see the loads that they could pull. Each train would be drawn by two or three engines. I may say that this narrow line only extended as far as Bamboo Creek. After waiting three or four hours, which seems the usual thing on all South African railways, we steamed out of Beira and in a few hours reached Bamboo Creek without mishap for which we were very thankful, as it is no unusual thing for the engines to run off their line. In fact, the niggers who form the navying gangs on this line were real adepts at getting engines on the line again. These niggers are fine, big strong boys, coal black and are mostly Zambesi boys. The work they do in Beira is simply astonishing and made us fairly open our eyes. On arrival at Bamboo Creek, we tumbled out of our train and camped alongside the railway line. Next morning we entrained on the broader gauge railway line which commences here. The Canadians also had their guns, horses and ammunition on board with us and it was our duty to guard these. Nobody in Beira does any hard unskilled work, these niggers doing it all. A truck load of horse feed was brought down to us and we promptly went to work to unload it, which caused the niggers immense amusement, as they could not understand a white man doing any work. It was a sight that they had never seen before. However, before we left Africa, we quite understood the ways of niggers and did no heavy work, if there were any niggers about.

Owing to the steep grades between Bamboo Creek and Umtali, we were divided into three trains here, one division to each train and about 3pm we steamed out of the small but now very busy station of Bamboo Creek. Before we had gone far, however, we found that our troubles were just commencing. The engines all burn wood on this line, of which there is any amount all along the route and a great scarcity of coal. Wood causes sparks and these would fly back from the engine on to us, who were riding in the open trucks behind and a nice mess they made of us. They would alight on our clothes and the first intimation we would have of their presence would be our mate putting out the fire on our clothes somewhere, or else the hot spark on to our bare skin. By the time we got to Marandellas, we were in a nice plight, as there were very few of us whose clothes were not in holes. Travelling all that night, we arrived at Mundegas, which is only a small convict station, about 9am next day and that night we arrived at Umtali, the first station after crossing the Portuguese territory. The country we had passed through was very pretty, rich in all tropical grasses and shrubs. Here one can find grasses growing beautifully thick and dense. Gangs of niggers can be seen here and there cutting and stacking wood for the engines. Everything looked fresh and green, and gazing on the beautiful hills and valleys I could not help thinking that it would

make splendid cattle country, but after being in South Africa for 12 months, I changed my views on the subject. There are too many diseases in this part for cattle country.

On crossing the Portuguese territory, I could not fail to notice the small fort, with an equally small gun on it, which guards the Portuguese boundary. We were very much struck with the difference between Umtali and the other stations through which we had passed. The place was British in every way and it had an altogether different air about it than the miserable Portuguese stations. Here the three trains were joined together and the following morning we steamed out for Marandellas, where we arrived at 11.45pm. Next morning saw us all hard at work detrainning and getting to our camping ground.

Several divisions of the New South Wales Bushmen were already here with their horses, whereas we had no horses. Here we were first introduced to cavalry terms and found ourselves known as 'D' Squadron, divisions as troops and privates as troopers. It was now known for certain that the battery was destined for Colonel Plumer, to assist him in his operations round Mafeking; but would we be the chosen escort, or would the New South Wales men with their horses be sent? However, all doubts were set at rest by Major Kellie receiving orders to have 16 men and one officer ready to proceed on April 30th, as escort to two guns and one ammunition waggon to Bulawayo.

Arrangements had been made with Mr Zeiderberg, the well known South African coach proprietor, to convey us all to Bulawayo by coach with all possible speed. He was also supplying mules to take the guns along with us. As all our kits were to be taken with us on the coaches, orders were issued that one kit bag only would be allowed to every four men, beside our blankets. This we thought a terrible hardship, but how little we knew about such things at this time. In a few months we were to travel without any kit bag at all and do it cheerfully too.

On Sunday, April 29th, the mules were inspanned into their coaches which were loaded up as an experiment. Things worked smoothly and on Monday, April 30th, the first lot, consisting of one officer and 16 men of the Queenslanders, and about the same number of Canadians, with two guns and one ammunition wagon, left Marandellas amid the cheers of their comrades for Bulawayo, en route to Colonel Plumer. The Queenslanders were No. 1 Troop, under Captain J.K. Fowles. The following morning, the same number from No. 3 Troop, under Lieutenant Harris, with the Canadians under Lieutenant King, set out with one gun and two ammunition waggons. As I was one of this lot, I can only give

our own movements to Bulawayo, where we all joined together again, the remainder of the Queenslanders and Canadians following in detachments of equal strength. We were divided into three coaches, with a gun or a wagon in front of each. I was riding in the first coach and for a few hours all went 'merry as a marriage bell' but just before outspanning for dinner, we heard a sharp whistle behind us and on glancing round, I saw Lieutenant Harris, who was in charge of the second coach, signalling to us to come back. The coach was immediately stopped and we doubled back, taking good care to take our rifles with us, as we were very suspicious at this time. But when we arrived up to our comrades, we soon saw what was wrong. Nothing more serious than a capsized coach, which we soon righted. A doctor was with us and I had a bottle of Ellimans Embrocation, for which there were plenty of bruises to apply it to. One chap's head required stitching, but it was not long before we were sailing merrily on our way once more. The road here was very sandy and heavy to pull through. In fact, not until we had left Charter well behind us did we come into what may be termed a fair road.

Our mules could not go very fast in this sand and although we had fresh relays of mules, it was not until the following morning that we drew rein at Charter. The last few miles had been extra heavy sand and these we had done on foot to ease the mules as much as we could. Needless to say we were very thirsty and were awfully pleased to find that the kind-hearted publican had provided milk for all hands free of charge. Charter is a very small place, only consisting of a store, public house, police huts and a couple of other houses. Here some of our chaps got their first taste of Cape brandy, or 'smoke' as it is commonly called and it soon had some of them reeling.

After leaving here, which we did that same afternoon, we struck the coach road to Bulawayo and consequently moved over the ground a little faster, as the road was much better than hitherto. The next place of any importance we struck was Enkeldoorn. This was a far more important place and bigger in every way than Charter. We found some very up to date shops here, but groceries were very expensive, as they were all through Rhodesia and the Portuguese territory. After staying here a few hours, we started off again and did not stop much anywhere until we reached Gwelo. This we found to be the largest and nicest place we had yet come to. Everything here was up to date and we spent a few splendid hours here.

The people were very patriotic and knowing that we were going to assist Colonel Plumer in his attempts to relieve Mafeking, they made our short stay very pleasant to all of us. Here we drew more rations, as we had travelled very slowly and our supply had run out. The coaches which had

hitherto been travelling together, were divided and we started out at intervals of a couple of hours. Lieutenant King went with the first gun and coach, I had the second coach and one ammunition waggon, while Lieutenant Harris had the remaining coach and wagon. This was to enable each coach to get the other's mules at the different stages and so travelled until the morning of May 7th, when we arrived at Fountain Hotel, about 6 miles from Bulawayo, having done the last two stages by bullocks. There we all halted together.

It was on this little trek on our own that I first noticed the looting and commandeering propensities of our Canadian comrades. We had halted for breakfast, expecting to have the usual Maconochie's Rations and biscuits when suddenly one Canadian came out with a couple of fowls, while another produced a couple of hind legs off a buck. Where they came from, I did not know, nor did I try to find out, as they were very nice. In the early morning we saw some jackals and having no officers with us to trouble us we had a few shots at them with our rifles, but without success. The morning after leaving Gwelo we passed a monument which had been erected to the memory of several white people who had been massacred by the Matabeles in their last rising. The night before we arrived here we passed the Shangani River, a little lower down than where Wilson made his last stand.

The country all through Rhodesia is only fair, but it is beautiful. However, if Cecil Rhodes brought us through there in the hopes that we would settle there eventually, he made a big mistake, as no Australian would leave the splendid pastures of Australia to settle out there, unless it was for gold. I fancy there is plenty of gold to discover, but it is not the country for grazing or agriculture. Leaving the quality of the land out of the question, there are too many diseases, for both man and beast. Men get the fever, horses the horse-sickness and cattle the rinderfeest, so what is there to encourage any stockkeeper to come out here. All the horses do not die of horse-sickness and those who get over it are known as salted horses. These are worth considerably more than the unsalted horses. I've seen horses sold in Queensland for £2, which, if salted in Rhodesia, would be worth £80.

The British South African Police are responsible for the good behaviour of the Matabeles and Mashonas. They are stationed in twos and threes all over Rhodesia and have a miserable life of it. No society but niggers, and no amusement of any sort to divert their mind from the daily monotonous patrols. Can one wonder that most of these young fellows turn to drink and gambling to pass their time away! But one meets some fine fellows in the men who have come from England in search of adventure and joined the BSA Police

to get it. Their headquarters are at Bulawayo, where they have splendid barracks. The pay they get is 5/- per day and found and this does not go far in Rhodesia.

I fancy that I have said enough about Rhodesia. After waiting a few hours at the Fountain Hotel, we inspanned and drove into Bulawayo, drawn by bullocks. It seemed very funny to be in *mail coaches* drawn by *bullocks*. Bulawayo struck us as a very nice place. It is a fairly large place and is rapidly rising. The buildings are fine and large and everything up to date. Here we first noticed the market square, which is common to all South African towns. We found everything very expensive here, but that was only natural, as everything had to come through Beira to Salisbury to be brought by ox wagons to Bulawayo. This was owing to the Boers having the railway line from Capetown blocked. We passed several of these convoys, when coming from Marandellas. There is one thing that I have forgotten! When coming through Rhodesia, we passed a lot of men and niggers going out to proceed on the extension of the railway from Bulawayo. It is this that the Cape to Cairo railway is gradually going on. One hears very little about it, but the work is going on quietly all the same and we will see one of these days a small cablegram in our papers announcing that the line is opened to Salisbury and there is another step farther towards the completion of this great scheme.

We camped at the BSA Police camp during the short time that we were there and had a very pleasant stay. At that time the people of Bulawayo were very enthusiastic in their patriotism and were we not going to attempt to relieve Mafeking! If that would not rouse their patriotism, I don't know what would. Apart from the fact that the gallant little garrison had held out so bravely, against such odds, it was a serious thing to the Bulawayo inhabitants, to have their chief line of communications blocked. The BSAP also did all in their power to make us comfortable and our stay enjoyable. We were not destined, however, to remain long here, as the remainder of our men and the Canadians arrived the morning after we did, doing the fastest time of the lot, it only taking them 3 days and 4 nights, to do the 300 miles; rather fast travelling, when one considers the difficulty of transport through that country.

That evening we were given a smoke concert by the BSAP stationed in Bulawayo and this was done in true South African style. Everything was of the best and a very enjoyable evening was spent by us all. Next morning, reveille was blown at an early hour and before daylight, the camp was all stir and bustle, for we were to entrain that morning for the front, which meant Plumer's column and if we were lucky, the relief of Mafeking. At about 8am, we marched to the Bulawayo railway station,

the town band playing us down with the usual patriotic airs. The station was crowded with townspeople, who came to wish us good luck. We entrained into 'carriages' first and second class and left Bulawayo on May 9th, amidst hearty cheering and heaps of good wishes from the Bulawayo people, whose kindness I shall never forget.

Our railway journey was very pleasant, as we were rather tired and took full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the comfortable carriages to have plenty of sleep and we needed it later on. When we arrived at Gaberones we halted for the night, as it was not considered safe to travel any farther, except in daylight. Next morning, we steamed on again, only this time we were preceded by an armoured train. However, for this we had no need, as we arrived safely at Ootsi, as far south as we could then travel by train. On our way from Gaberones, we saw several traces of Boer handiwork, such as bridges blown up. We arrived at Ootsi about 10am on May 11th and about 4pm we started for Plumer's camp, we of course being on foot.

All of were very soft in condition and not very fit for marching. We marched on until about 10pm, doing 12 miles, a rather good march for men who had never done much walking and were mounted troops. A halt until 2am and then on for another 12 miles. We camped then until 6pm and another short march of six miles ended that day's work, for which we were very thankful. We did not move on next morning and as it was Sunday, we held a church parade, the Bishop of Mashonaland officiating. He addressed us very nicely. At about 4pm, we left here and a heavy night's marching brought us to Plumer's camp, Sefeteli, on the morning of May 14th. When we arrived in camp, Plumer's men came down in a body and welcomed us with the heartiest cheer that it has ever been my lot to listen to. How they did cheer! I think their reason for such hearty cheering was that they knew it meant a shift for them from their present camp, and they needed it.

They were on very short rations, the water they were drinking was nothing more or less than green slime, sickness was prevalent and many of their comrades had died. I shall always maintain that the men under Plumer were, at that time, as badly off, if not worse, than those defending Mafeking. We were not destined to remain long here, as at 2pm, all the available men in camp left again and all that long weary night we marched, arriving at Jan Masibis about 8am, on the morning of May 15th. What a march that was! There were very few of us who kept going that night. Numbers had to fall back and be picked up by the convoy following after. We were to meet Colonel Mahon at this place and never was a junction better timed.

On reaching the meeting place, we looked to the opposite ridge and saw Mahon's advance guard and ten minutes later we were all in the one camp. That day we were given a rest and we needed it, after the 28-mile march of the previous night. We were now about due west from Mafeking, but between us and there were the Boers. Next morning, daylight found us fallen in our ranks and shortly after we marched out to relieve Mafeking.

Our position was escort to the Canadian guns. Plumer's column was on the right with Mahon's on the left. The two columns marching in line with, of course, the advance parties out, moving across the rolling veldt made a very pretty sight. We marched due East, until about 1.30pm, when we halted for dinner, which we were never to have, as just as the halt was called, the scouts brought in word of sniping and the order was advance.

Punctually, at 1.45pm, the guns opened and from then until 6pm the fight was fast and furious. The Canadian guns galloped into action and were soon hard at it. Most of their fire was directed to a white house from which a pom-pom and another 12-pounder were blazing for all they were worth. The fire was hot all round. The convoy came in for a great deal of attention from a gun on our right, but little damage was done, although the shells fell thick and fast.

Forty of our squadron were detailed to reinforce Captain Bird's party on the right, who were pouring in a heavy rifle fire on the enemy entrenched round the white house. Those of us who were escorting the guns had to suffer a heavy artillery fire, without replying much. However, the ground being very loose and dusty, the shells did little damage, as the majority of them failed to explode, which was a good thing for us. This state of things continued until dark, the Boer main body, however, moving to our right. When darkness fell, we marched on a few miles and laagered up (as we thought) for the night. However, we were disappointed here, as our Squadron was ordered to march back and reinforce the Royal Fusiliers, who had taken the white house position. Tired as we were, that march back to the white house seemed interminable and it was not until 11.30pm that we arrived at our destination.

The first thing we rushed for was water, as here was a splendid stream and we'd had no water since dinner. After mounting a guard, we stretched out for a sleep until morning, but once more we were disappointed as we were aroused up, in about 2 hours time, with orders to march into Mafeking. That march was the climax. I saw several fellows fall down sound asleep on the way, but we managed to struggle on until we came to some barb wire which was promptly cut.

This was some of the Mafeking defences and we had the honour of being the first body of troops into Mafeking. This, I suppose, ought to have been some recompense to us for all our wearisome marching. But little we thought of that, when our one desire was sleep; hang the honour, give us some sleep, was our thought. However, from here to the town, was only a short distance and we were soon fast asleep. As soon as the sun was well up, however, we had to shift again, as our position was exposed to some Boer snipers. This was only a short march, however, and we were once more soon fast asleep. Never have I seen men more tired. The majority would not get up, even for tucker.

Thus ended our first engagement with the enemy and we thought if we were to have 12 months of this, we would have an awful life. Mafeking was only a small place and we thought it scarcely worth all the trouble we had. Still, the people in Mafeking must have had a real bad time during that siege. Most of them were living underground, which was the only safe place. The hospitals were all pretty full and the convent had been turned into a hospital, with the nuns as nurses and splendid nurses they were, doing splendid service right through. The convent came in for a good deal of knocking about during the siege, as several shells pierced its walls and bullets innumerable could be taken out of them.

The next day we had our first glimpse of the then world famous Colonel Baden-Powell. We were paraded before him and he addressed us thus: 'Officers and men of 'D' Squadron, QMI. It gives me the greatest pleasure to be able to say a few words to you today. I cannot find words to express my gratitude at being instrumental in relieving me and this gallant little town. Lord Roberts, about January 14th, a little over 4 months ago, sent me a message, asking me if I could hold out. I told him, I had enough provisions to last 4 months and he sent word back, he would relieve me by May 18th; it is now May 17th and you have relieved me a day ahead of the day he laid down 4 months ago. How punctual you are and the days of forced marching and the nights without sleep you have passed, to be punctual! Why, it is a marvellous performance, a record in the annals of the British army in South Africa, your march from Beira to Mafeking. Major Kellie, what sort of stages did you do it all?' Major Kellie replied, 'All sorts of stages, sir!'

Baden-Powell then stated: 'I had a cable message from Queensland containing greetings and a hope for a speedy relief. I had no idea you were making such wonderful efforts to be here to relieve me, so I am indeed proud of you Queensland and doubly interested in you. Major Kellie, kindly introduce me to your officers.'

I had the pleasure of tasting the mule hide brawn and seeing the cake that the inhabitants of Mafeking were living on. The brawn was not half bad, but the cake was like a piece of dry cowdung. So things could not have been too pleasant there.

The next morning found us fallen in about 5am, under orders to march to Ramathlabama, a place about 18 miles north of Mafeking, on the line, at which place we duly arrived for dinner, pretty tired too.

Here we stayed until June 1st and a real bad time we had too. The place was only three or four houses, no farms about and we were on short rations. A cup of flour and one pound of fresh beef including bone were our daily rations and I can say that is cutting things very fine. We had nothing to do here except sleep and feel hungry. Sometimes we would get the mealies from the mules and at other times, when a fatigue party was loading rations for Mafeking, a haul of mealie meal would be made. However, none of us were sorry when we found ourselves embarked on the armoured train at 5pm bound for Lobatsi.

We arrived there the same night and struck a nice little camp, beautifully sheltered, with plenty of wood and water. We stayed here until June 3rd and the principal thing we'll remember this place for is the consternation created in camp by the discovery of lice on all hands. One chap found some, mentioned it quietly to his pal, who also found some and the word going round, we all found some. At that time it was awfully disgusting, but we were destined to get accustomed to them.

A.E. (Bert) Denman

Unusual guards

The security guard

ON 25 August 1939, nine days before the declaration of war, 'C' Coy, 10th Militia Battalion (the Adelaide Rifles), was called up to form a security guard on the State's two most important river crossings, situated at Murray Bridge.

The new sub-unit had been formed only six months previously, as a result of the intention to double the militia forces in Australia.

A public meeting was held in the Mayor's parlour at Murray Bridge on Tuesday 14 February. Chaired by the Mayor, Mr C.C. Cooke, it was attended by a number of enthusiasts, including several 1914-18 war veterans and a representative of the Department of the Army. After some discussion it was resolved to form a sub-unit in the town. So a new 'C' company of the 10th Battalion came into being.

Great enthusiasm was shown for the project in the towns and settlements along the Lower Murray. Two days later, the first prospective recruits were medically examined and enrolled, including five returned soldiers. The Mayor, ex-Sergeant C.C. Cooke, DCM, MM and Belgian Croix de Guerre, was appointed Company Sergeant Major. Another old soldier, Bert Sharrad, was our first CQMS. The first parade night was held just one week after the town hall meeting and was well attended by a number of eager young recruits, many of whom were sons of 'Old Diggers'. Uniforms, rifles and other items of equipment were issued.

After a further month of well attended weekly parades, the new Company went into its first Woodside camp together with the remainder of the unit, most of whom came from the metropolitan area.

Members of the Security Guard entered into the spirit of their new role, pitched camp on a rise near the western approach to the old road bridge and immediately began their duties.

Both structures, the old road-rail bridge opened in 1879, and the new rail bridge (1925), were patrolled for the full twenty four hours. Posts and sentries were inspected by day and by night by one of the two officers, a Sergeant or the CSM. Crossing the narrow wooden foot-way of the rail bridge was a hazard at any time; more so in the dark or in rough weather, but not to the OC Guard, Captain Ken McEwin, later Colonel and OC Adelaide Metropolitan Troops. During the day at least, he scorned the handrail and strode across as if on the parade ground. One sentry lost his rifle in the river from the foot-way. Second in command of the Security Guard was Captain J.G. McKinna, later Lieutenant Colonel commanding an infantry battalion and later still South Australian Police Commissioner.

In the early days of our tour of duty and prior to the establishment of messing arrangements, the Sergeant of the guard, the author, also an old



Officers of the guard. Left, Captain K. McEwin, OC; Right, Captain J.G. McKinna, 2/iC. Both officers subsequently attained the rank of Brigadier and McKinna became the South Australian Police Commissioner.



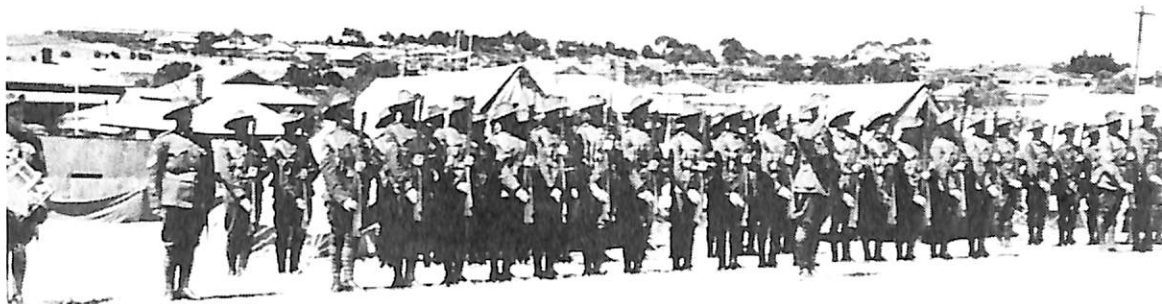
The two bridges and the town of Murray Bridge, looking west.

soldier, recalls marching off-duty members up to a main street cafe for a bacon and egg breakfast (shades of WWI Army rations).

A couple of weeks after first mounting, the guard moved camp a couple of hundred yards to the future site of the RSL bowling green in South Terrace. Above it, really, for a great deal of soil was later excavated to form the main green and to build the clubhouse. A number of elderly bowlers still have memories of those days, having been members of the Security Guard themselves.

There were a couple of night alarms during our stay. The guard was turned out, only to find the reports were false.

We were without a bugler for some time, but the RSL had an old gramophone and a record of bugle calls. There is a photograph in existence which shows Sar-Major Cooke sitting in a wheelbarrow with the gramophone on his lap, playing reveille, being pushed along the company lines by Captain McKinna.



The changing of the guard. The garrison relieving the militia on 18 October 1939.

'C' Company was relieved of its Security Guard duties by a company of the Garrison Battalion. The Lieutenant commanding the in-coming guard was an Anzac, ex-Warrant Officer 'Raggie' Holland, Regimental Sergeant Major of the original Tenth Battalion. His son Arthur was a member of 'C' Coy. Warrant Officer Holland was a member of the Coronation Contingent which went to England in 1934.

The Captains' guard

Together with a number of other Draft Conducting Officers, I embarked on the *Queen Mary* at Port Tewfik on 23 November 1941, en route for Australia. Our first duty after settling in was to search about twenty civilian prisoners of war who had been 'taken' in the Middle East over the previous few months. They were angry men; it was their third search in two days. They were mostly professional men, geologists, industrial chemists, ministers and businessmen.

In the main they were big, well built fellows, spoke excellent English and each had in his possession currency of more than one Middle East country. Each was equipped with a stout rucksack with numerous zippered pockets and was well dressed. They were regarded as fifth column and one was particularly annoyed as he had been taken in Egypt and handed over to the British authorities.

A week of luxury travel followed, with excellent meals and conditions. I shared a de-luxe three berth cabin with two South Australian majors, Howard Scudds MC and bar (WWI) and Griff Place, a chiropodist in private life. We had no duties at all and had full use of the ship's swimming pool, barber's shop and amenities. Pictures were shown in the spacious saloon, viewed from the depth of voluptuously upholstered lounge chairs. Swimming, sun-bathing, reading from the ship's extensive library and bridge fully occupied our time.

A week after leaving Port Tewfik we arrived at the land-locked harbour of Trincomalee on the NE coast of Ceylon (Sri-Lanka) and transhipped to the *Queen Elizabeth*. What a contrast! One of my *Queen Mary* de-luxe cabin mates, Major Place, and I shared a ten bunk area and were the only occupants. The ill-lit tiered bunk area, in spite of air-conditioning was far from salubrious. It had been previously occupied by American troops. The *Queen* carried about six thousand of them on its last trip. There were on board with us three hundred or more prisoners of war, Italians and Germans, and they had to be guarded of course, day and night.

Like all other officers, the possibility of again doing sentry-go never ever crossed my mind. The last time for me was as a member of the Camp HQ guard at Codford, Salisbury Plain early in 1918. But all of us were in for a rude awakening. You see, there were no 'other ranks' on the *Queen Elizabeth* and no lieutenants, only Draft Conducting Officers — Captains and Majors. So the captains were formed into a guard to watch over the prisoners.

It was the most unusual, even unique, guard that any of us had ever been on. It was of necessity most informal, there was none of the pomp and ceremony associated with a normal headquarters guard. We were never paraded as a guard or inspected for dress and 'turnout'. There was no guard-room and no guard commander that I knew of. Sentries were never marched to their beat and regularly 'posted'. Each Captain made his way independently to his post on a sort of honour system, for no one ever called us. We carried no rifle and/or bayonet, but we were 'armed to the teeth', so to speak. I did many tours of duty on only two posts. One was at the foot of a companionway leading to the POW quarters. The other was on the bridge at the 'head' or top of the larboard side companionway leading up from the boat

deck. I was posted here several times with an armoury of weapons. There was a Vickers gun mounted on the rear rail of the bridge, ready to fire. On the decking of the bridge nearby was a Lewis machine gun without a mounting (bi-pod), but with a full magazine of forty seven rounds in place. All that was needed was to strike the magazine with the ball of the hand and pull back the cocking handle. Being without a bipod, it would have had to be fired 'hose-pipe' fashion from the hip. On my right hip I carried a .38 automatic with a full seven-shot magazine.

The bridge overlooked the boat deck, part of which was enclosed by a 'high wire' security fence where the POWs exercised or sun-bathed during the day, partly in view of the sentry on the bridge. The field of fire, however, was restricted particularly with the life-boats swung in-board as

they mostly were. The substantial davit arms greatly interfered with the view. Ricochets from the machine guns off the network of angle iron would have created an extreme hazard for the gunner and the POWs alike. Fortunately for all concerned we never had occasion to use our weapons. Members of the Captains' guard had a constant task, one day off and one day on. This continued throughout the whole trip from Trincomalee to Sydney. Incidentally, the big *Queen* steamed through history during those two weeks. Japan came into the war; we passed through wreckage purported by some of the ship's officers to have been from the *Sydney*, but not confirmed. For a few days the *QE* zig-zagged up to 60 degrees due to the close proximity of an enemy raider in the Indian Ocean. Some of these items of news were published in the Ship's Journal.

Stolen medals

Mr S.C. (Sid.) South of 42 Stirling Highway, Nedlands, WA 6009 (Tel. (09) 386 7283) has asked us to publish the following list of stolen medals, which are his property:

1. A group of seven medals to R.O. Marton, consisting of a CMG neck badge; DSO (Victorian); QSA 4 bars — Cape Colony, Orange Free State, Johannesburg, Diamond Hill; KSA 2 bars — 1901 and 1902; 1914 Star and bar, War and Victory medals with palm.
2. A group of three medals to Edward Downes Law: Baltic 1854 (Naval Cadet. HMS *Colossus*); China 1857, bar Canton 1857 (Mid. HMS *Highflyer*); Ashanti War 1873-74 (Lt/Cmdg. HMS *Coquette*).
3. Military General Service Medal with 8 bars: Talavera, Busaco, Fuentes d'Onor, Badajos, Vittoria, Pyrenees, Orthes, Toulouse. To Sgt. Allen, 14th Light Dragoons.
4. Group of three to W.R. Kennedy: Crimea, bar Sebastopol (W.R. Kennedy HMS *Rodney*); China 1857, 3 bars — Fatshan 1857, Canton 1857, Taku Forts 1858 (Unnamed); and the Turkish Crimea medal.

John E. Price

The Merchant Navy Memorial, Melbourne

The first official wreath laying

*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;
These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.*

Psalms 107:23-24

WHEN the World's Trades Centre was completed, the Port of Melbourne Authority very thoughtfully, and generously, allocated a space close to the landing stage for a memorial to honour those of the Merchant Navy who had died on War Service. It was an appropriate site for, from this location, thousands of young men left to join merchant vessels and go to war, many never to return.

It was only a few years ago that North and South Wharfs, as well as the other quays, in what was the Melbourne Harbour Trust's domain, would be crowded with shipping from every maritime nation on earth. In these days of containerisation and fast trade routes used by aircraft, the adjacent stretch of the River Yarra is strangely quiescent; the only vessels to be seen are pleasure craft.

At about 2.30 on the bright autumn Saturday afternoon of 15 March 1986 many distinguished guests, ex-Merchant Navy personnel, their wives and families, together with representatives of associated organisations, gathered on the Trade Centre's forecourt to witness the first official wreath laying ceremony by His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen, AK, KCMG, KCVO, KBE to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Merchant Navy War Service League.

Amongst the official guests were:

Senator Barney Cooney, representing the Prime Minister of Australia.

Right Honourable the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Cr T.S. Lynch.

Mr Tony Vella, OAM, Chairman of the Port of Melbourne Authority.

Commodore T.A. Dadswell, AM, Naval Officer Commanding Victorian Area.

Captain S.J. Benson, CBE, OStJ, RD*, Patron of the Merchant Navy War Service League.

Major General J.D. Stephenson, AO, CBE, (RL) National Chairman Order of Australia Association.
Sir W. Keys, OBE, MC, National President of the Returned Services League of Australia.
Mr B.C. Ruxton, OBE, State President of the RSLA.

Mr L.S. Blease, AM, MBE, President of the Merchant Navy War Service League officiated, ably supported by his committee members, amongst whom it was good to see fellow MHSA Victorian Branch members Ron Bergman and Gus Guthrie. Herb Brown and I represented the Society.

Len Blease welcomed His Excellency and Lady Stephen and invited the Governor-General to lay the wreath after which Last Post and Reveille were sounded by a naval bugler. His Excellency gave an address which was responded to by Captain Benson. Although the speeches were short there were a few poignant moments as memories were revived. There were impeccable displays by the Naval Cadets of Victoria and the girls from the Excelsior and Templestowe Marching Team.

At the conclusion of the ceremony the distinguished and official guests, the Merchant Navy War Service League members and their families were invited to a sumptuous afternoon tea which had been organised by the Port of Melbourne Authority. Over refreshments memories were revived, anecdotes retold and acquaintances renewed. It was a pleasant close to what had been an unforgettable afternoon, when one was, for a short while, reminded of the price paid by the men and women of the Merchant Marine whose unenviable task it was to ply the sea lanes fetching and carrying the vital supplies to speed the war effort. The appendices give some idea of the cost.

Appendices

War casualties to vessels in Australian and New Guinea waters involving loss of life during the 1939-45 war

			Casualties
1940			
7/11	<i>Cambridge</i> (UK)	Mined off Wilsons Promontory, Vic.	Sank 1
8/11	<i>City of Rayville</i> (US)	Mined off Cape Otway, Vic	Sank 1
5/12	<i>Nimdin</i> (Aus)	Mined off Norah Head, NSW	Sank 7
1941			
26/3	<i>Millimual</i> (Aus)	Mined 40 miles NE of Sydney, NSW	Sank 7
1942			
20/1	<i>Herstein</i> (Nor)	Bombed Rabaul, New Guinea	Sank 1
19/2	<i>Neptuna</i> (UK)	Bombed Darwin Harbour, NT	Sank 11
	<i>Manunda</i> , (Aus)	Bombed Darwin Harbour, NT	Damaged 22
	<i>British Motorist</i> (UK)	Bombed Darwin Harbour, NT	Sank ?
	<i>Don Isidro</i> (US)	Bombed North of Bathurst Island, NT	Burnt/Stranded 11
	<i>Florence</i> (US)	Bombed Marie Shoal, Nr Cape Van Diemen	Sank 3
	<i>Mauna Loa</i> (US)	Bombed Darwin Harbour, NT	Sank ?
	<i>Meigs</i> (US)	Bombed Darwin Harbour, NT	Sank 1
	<i>Portmar</i> (US)	Bombed Darwin Harbour, NT	Beached/Salvaged 1
21/2	<i>Zealandia</i> (Aus)	Bombed Darwin Harbour, NT	Sank 2
3/6	<i>Iron Chieftain</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed 35 miles NE of Sydney, NSW	Sank 12
4/6	<i>Iron Crown</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed 44 miles SSW of Gabo Is, V	Sank 38
17-18/6	<i>MacDhui</i> (Aus)	Bombed Port Moresby, Papua	Burnt/Wreck 10
22/7	<i>William Dawes</i> (US)	Torpedoed near Cape Howe, V	Sank 5
23/7	<i>Allara</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed off Sydney, NSW	Towed to Newcastle 5
3/8	<i>Dureenbee</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed off Moruya, NSW	Surface Fire/ Aband. 3
6/8	<i>Mamutu</i> (UK)	Torpedoed off Port Moresby, Papua	Sank 7
6/9	<i>Anshun</i> (USA)	Torpedoed Milne Bay, New Guinea	Sank/Refloated 1
15/12	<i>Period</i> (Aus)	Bombed Thursday Is./Darwin (Timor Sea)	Damaged 4
27/12	<i>Heemskerk</i> (Dut)	Bombed Merauke, New Guinea	Damaged 3

1943				
18/1	<i>Kalingo</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed Sydney-New Plymouth, NZ	Sank	2
	<i>Mobilube</i> (US)	Torpedoed Sydney-San Pedro, US	Towed to Sydney	3
8/2	<i>Iron Knight</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed off Eden, NSW	Sank	36
7/3	<i>S. Jacob</i> (USA)	Bombed Trooping New Guinea coast	Sank	3
28/3	<i>Masaya</i> (USA)	Bombed Trooping New Guinea coast	Sank	2
11/4	<i>Regina</i> (Yug*)	Torpedoed near Newcastle, NSW	Sank	32
	<i>Hanyang</i> (USA)	Bombed 13 miles off Oro Bay, New Guinea	Damaged	1
17/4	<i>Van Outhoorn</i> (US)	Bombed near or at Milne Bay, New Guinea	Damaged	8
24/4	<i>Kowarra</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed off Bundaberg, Qld	Sank	21
26/4	<i>Limerick</i> (UK)	Torpedoed off Cape Byron, NSW	Sank	2
29/4	<i>Wollongbar</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed off Port Macquarie, NSW	Sank	32
5/5	<i>Fingal</i> (Nor)	Torpedoed off north NSW Coast	Sank	12
9/5	<i>Islander</i> (UK)	Bombed near Cape Arnhem, NT	Damaged	1
14/5	<i>HMAS Centaur</i>	Torpedoed off Cape Moreton, Qld	Sank	Crew 45
16/6	<i>Portmar</i> (US)	Torpedoed off North NSW Coast	Sank	Crew 1
6/8	<i>Macumba</i> (Aus)	Bombed Thursday Is/Darwin (Arafura Sea)	Sank	3
1944				
31/1	<i>Stephen Crane</i> (US)	Bombed Langemark Bay, New Guinea	Damaged	1
25/12	<i>Robert J. Walker</i> (US)	Torpedoed 95 miles NNE of Gabo Is, V		2
1945				
9/1	<i>Van Heutz</i> (Dut)	Bombed Oro Bay, New Guinea	Extensive Damage	2

Notes: The date is that of casualty to ship and not necessarily the date of loss of life. Lives lost included merchant seaman only, irrespective of nationality and/or race.

War casualties to vessels in Australian and New Guinea waters not involving loss of life during the 1939-45 war

1940				
7/12	<i>Hartford</i> (UK)	Mined off Neptune Is, SA	Towed for Repairs	

1942

19/2	<i>Barossa</i> (Aus)	Bombed Darwin harbour, NT	Slight Damage
20-21/2	<i>Koolama</i> (Aus)	Bombed 21 miles NE Cape Londonderry	Sank at Wyndham, WA
2/3	<i>Narbada</i> (UK)	Submarine Gunfire Geraldton-Fremantle, WA	Slight Damage
16/5	<i>Wellen</i> (USSR)	Submarine Gunfire off Newcastle, NSW	Slight Damage
4/6	<i>Barwon</i> (Aus)	Torpedoed 35 miles SSE of Gabo Is, V	Slight Damage
9/6	<i>Orestes</i> (UK)	Submarine Gunfire off Jervis Bay, ACT	Slight Damage
12/6	<i>Guatemala</i> (?)	Torpedoed off Sydney, NSW	Sank
20/7	<i>G.S. Livanos</i> (Grk)	Torpedoed off Jervis Bay, ACT	Sank
21/7	<i>Coast Farmer</i> (US)	Torpedoed off Point Perpendicular, NSW	Sank
29/8	<i>Malaita</i> (UK)	Torpedoed off Thursday Is, 7 injured	Extensive Damage

1943

22/1	<i>Peter H. Burnett</i> (US)	Torpedoed off north NSW Coast	Damaged
10/2	<i>Starr King</i> (US)	Torpedoed off north NSW Coast	Damaged
28/3	<i>Bantam</i> (Dut/USA)	Bombed Trooping on New Guinea Coast	Burnt Out
11/4	<i>Noora</i> (US Small Craft)	Bombed Port Harvey	Damaged
14/4	<i>Gorgon</i> (?)	Bombed Milne Bay, New Guinea	Damaged
17/4	<i>Van Heemskerk</i> (USA)	Bombed at or near Milne Bay, New Guinea	Damaged (fire)
27/4	<i>Lydia M. Child</i> (US)	Bombed off North NSW Coast	Sank
11/5	<i>Caradale</i> (?)	Torpedoed off Caloundra, Qld (failed to explode)	Some damage
12/5	<i>Ormiston</i> (?)	Torpedoed off North NSW Coast	Damaged
2-3/7	<i>Time</i> (?)	Strafed en route Thursday Is-Darwin	Slight damage
22/9	<i>Theofano Livanos</i> (Grk)	Bombed Buna, New Guinea	Damaged

1944

29/1	<i>George S. Stirling</i> (US)	Bombed Megum, Langemark, New Guinea	Damaged
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War casualties to vessels beyond Australian and New Guinea waters involving loss of life of Australian seamen

			Casualties
1940			
18/11	<i>Lillian Moller</i> (UK)	Torpedoed North Atlantic	Sank 1
1/12	<i>Port Wellington</i> (UK)	Raider between Durban & Fremantle	Sank 1

1941

June/ July	<i>Penang</i> (?)	Not in Admiralty list of ships lost or damaged		
26/6	<i>Mareeba</i> (Aus)	Raider Indian Ocean E of Ceylon	Sank	25

1942

25/3	<i>Narragansett</i> (UK)	Torpedoed Atlantic Ocean near Bermudas	Sank	1
10/5	<i>Nankin</i> (UK)	Raider 1360 miles W by N Fremantle	Taken in prize	POW 6
12/7	<i>Hauraki</i> (UK)	Raider mid-Indian Ocean	Sank	POW 1
13/8	<i>Waimarama</i> (UK)	Bombed mid-Mediterranean	Sank	1
22/9	<i>Port Phillip</i> (UK)	Gun exploded in practice on derelict pontoons		1
6/12	<i>Ceramic</i> (UK)	Torpedoed north of mid-Atlantic	Sank	22

1943

2/4	<i>Melbourne Star</i> (UK)	Torpedoed Atlantic Ocean, SE of Bermudas	Sank	4
17/6	<i>Ferncastle</i> (Nor)	Raider Indian Ocean	Sank	1
Sept.	<i>Bramora</i> (Nor)	Left Persian Gulf 4/9, assumed sunk near Chagos		1
Sept	<i>India</i> (Dan)	Disappeared South Pacific, bound for Sydney, NSW		1

1944

27/3	<i>Tulagi</i> (UK)	Torpedoed Indian Ocean SE of Chagos	Sank	13
June	<i>Garoet</i> (Dut)	Torpedoed East Coast of Africa	Sank	1
29/6	<i>Nellore</i> (UK)	Torpedoed Indian Ocean NE of Chagos	Sank	6
15/7	<i>Tanda</i> (UK)	Torpedoed off west coast of India	Sank	3
	<i>Sianat</i> (Dut)	No Record		1

Notes: The date is that of casualty to ship and not necessarily to loss of life. Lives lost include Australian merchant seamen only.

Merchant Navy casualties during hostilities 1939-45

	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Japan</i>	<i>Total</i>
Killed	28,748	1,500	30,248
Missing	30	4,624	4,654
Wounded	4,457	240	4,707
POW	4,675	1,045	5,700
Total	37,920	7,409	45,329



The Merchant Navy Memorial.

Notes and acknowledgements

Nationality of Registry:	(Aus) Australia	(Dut) The Netherlands
	(Grk) Greece	(UK) Great Britain
	(US) United States of America	(USA) United States Army
	(USSR) Soviet Union	(Yug*) Yugoslavia Under Charter
	(?) Nationality not listed	(Nor) Norway
	(Den) Denmark	

My thanks to Mr Leonard S. Blease, AM, MBE, President of the Merchant Navy War Service League of Australia, who supplied the above information.

Acknowledgements to Mr Jack Loney, author of *Ships and Seamen off the South Coast*.

Edited by Peter Stanley

Witness to history

A diary of the Sydney-Emden battle

THE engagement between the Australian cruiser HMAS *Sydney* and the German raider SMS *Emden* was the Royal Australian Navy's first major action, and its most dramatic during the 1914-18 war. Martin Stewart, an employee of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company was stationed on Direction Island (Cocos Islands) during the episode. His diary, now in the possession of Mr P.H. Miller, provides an unusual and, it seems, a hitherto unknown, contemporary account of the circumstances surrounding the engagement.

Mr Miller has selected and transcribed the entries from the diary and has kindly allowed *Sabretache* to publish them as part of its contribution to the commemoration of the RAN's 75th anniversary.

Little is known of Mr Stewart's life. He was born in South Australia on 14 June 1891 and was raised on a property near Yankililla, south of Adelaide. Mr Miller met Mr Stewart when they worked together for BHP at Whyalla during the second world war and had borrowed the diary from its author shortly before his death.

* * * *

The Diary

From entry under 'Memoranda' at the beginning of the 1914 diary:

Arrived Cocos 6th January 1914.

Entry, Friday, 17 July 1914

Decided to stay at Cocos till June 1915. (Fixed by Service)

Monday, 3 August 1914

War and rumours of war. Censors in most of the Co's offices[?].¹ Only plain language allowed in all telegrams.

Tuesday, 4 August 1914

Ken and I in 'Ayasha' for dinner with Matey. Very slack. Everything censored. Armed sentries round

the Se. [Singapore], Ad. [Adelaide?], Pth [Perth] offices. At Cocos, one man patrolling on look out for German ships. England declared war on Germany on latter's invasion of Belgium. Special arrangements made in case a passing German ship comes in to interrupt communications.

Wednesday, 5 August 1915

Still O.K.

Monday, 24 August 1914

Nasty rumour from Hong Kong and Mngr. Se. [Singapore] that German warship or raider on its way to attack Cocos. If so we are all helpless but hope for the best. Most of the fellows are very quiet but just slightly depressed.

Tuesday, 25 August 1914

No German ship yet; all wondering what will happen. Advices say ship is going to shell Cocos. No War Convention, none of us should get hurt, though the cables may be interferred with Xx sgs. [?] flying around galore.

Wednesday, 26 August 1914

Still O.K. and no sign of a ship. Something should happen tommorrow re. German ship but beyond a few suppositions over a few drinks, we are all quietly waiting to watch events. If the ship arrives and only interrupts the cables, we should have a fair holiday but we all hope there'll be no violence as we are absolutely helpless. Now for a good night's rest; perhaps the last.

Thursday, 27 August 1914

No ship yet but all beginning to think it's an unnecessary scare on the Supt's part. No one allowed off the island.

Friday, 28 August 1914

Griffin worked a good joke by jumping on the roof. All stopped work thinking we heard the report of a gun. Had a bit of a wireless scare and Mr Farrant panicked. He comes in for adverse criticism from the senior members of the staff because, through his panic, he scared some of the juniors.

Tuesday, 1 September 1914

Ken and self on 'Ayesha' for dinner.² Just after dinner, a Malay saw lights of a seamer. We dashed ashore but nothing been heard on wireless. Informed Supt. boat very close to Horsburgh [Island] and seemed to be dangerously close. Caused great excitement. Most of us on rooves [sic] and barrier head lights easily seen. Went out suddenly. Later in evening heard two British cruisers talking. Think there are three or four of them after something.

Saturday, 5 September 1915

'Ayesha' left for Bv. [Batavia] about 11am. Very rough.

Sunday, 6 September 1914

About 11a.m. steamer sighted just off island. Caused great excitement. Looked a nasty grey. Was only tramp 'Umzumbi' wishing to be reported to owners.

Saturday, 19 September 1914

'Ayesha' arrived at Bv. [Batavia]. Heard welcome news that she would wait for our mails from Se. [Singapore].

Tuesday, 22 September 1914

Great excitement about 10a.m. Steamer sighted

on horizon. Expected to be the Japanese battle cruiser 'Ibuki' but turned out to be the old 'Umzumbi' again. She signalled '550 officers and men on board', which is a mystery to us. Nothing known of her in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, [or] Se.

Thursday, 24 September 1914

'Ayesha' left Bv. [Batavia].

Tuesday, 29 September 1914

At 7.45 'Ayesha' was sighted. Caused plenty of excitement.

Sunday, 11 October 1914

Steamer 'Vermont' passed in close. Flew the red ensign but did not signal. Caused a fair amount of excitement.

Monday, 12 October 1914

Heard that the 'Umzumbi' was carrying reliefs from Timor (Portuguese), that accounts for the 550 officers and men.

Monday, 9 November 1914

4 a.m. 'Emden' arrived unnoticed.

6 a.m. 'Emden' discovered.

6.30 a.m. landing party took possession.

9.30 a.m. 'Emden' pushed off on account of arrival British Ship.



Staff of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company watch the engagement between **Sydney** and **Emden** from Direction Island, 9 November 1914. Martin Stewart may well be among this group. Smoke from the ships can be seen on the horizon at the centre of the photograph. (AWM E392)

10 a.m. Watching naval scrap from Barrier [Island] with Griffin, Redfern and Eddington. All others hauled back and placed under martial law.

11 a.m. Boats out of sight so we gave ourselves up. For next two hours, all were in the Boat Shed. Then we were all dismissed to get clothes, food, etc. for the landing party. O.I.C. said, if 'Emden' didn't return by sundown he was going away in 'Ayesha' but if a British boat came in, he was going to fight and would order all of us to another island. Just before dark they hoisted the German flag on 'Ayesha', then cheered us. We replied and the old 'Ayesha' was towed away in the darkness. We were all treated very well.

Tuesday, 10 November 1914

6 a.m. Another ship sighted. When she came close in, found she was flying Australian flag. Thought she was another boat besides the two that fought. When the party landed we cheered a treat but when they said they fixed the 'Emden' we went mad. We couldn't see a mark on the 'Sydney', only two or three shots had hit her and those early in the scrap. Captain Glossop highly spoken of by 'Jacks' as being clever and resourceful etc. Through to Rz [Rodriguez]³ early. We[?] and Rz uncut.

Grappling for Pth [Perth] all day and through by 5 p.m. on 10th. In 24 hours all cables working. Two boat's crews drank beer with us as only Australians can.

Went out to 'Sydney' in 'Pup' Mr Stewart's boat with Ken and Griff. My boat got towed away and

we were left on board. Just as 'Sydney' left we jumped like fools into shark infested water, 'Sydney' had taken our Doc.⁴ and a photographer across to Keeling where 'Emden' was on a reef. After 'Emden' was on the reef, Sydney chased collier 'Buresk' and sank her then returned to 'Emden' but she would not haul down her flag so Capt. Glossop reluctantly let go three broadsides. Then the flag came down.

Wednesday, 11 November 1914

'Sydney' returned with 30 wounded, 170 prisoners, including the Captain and Prince Francis [Franz] Joseph of Hohenzollern. About 180 had been killed. 'Sydney' landed Doc. Ollerhead and Cos.[?] Ross then rushed off to meet 'Empress of Asia' who is to take the wounded and prisoners.

Friday, 13 November 1914

Looting party to North Keeling — a great failure.⁵

Saturday, 14 November 1914

'Empress of Asia' arrived. Is staying around the islands until H.M.S. 'Cadmus' arrives in a few days time.⁶

'Empress of Russia' took off prisoners and wounded from 'Sydney'.

Tuesday, 17 November 1914

'Cadmus' arrived. Three ships in Entrance. Totalling about 20,000 tons of shipping.

Friday, 27 November 1914

H.M.S. 'Cadmus' left.

Notes

1. The superintendent of the telegraph station was F. de H. Farrant, whose report of the events of 9 November 1914 appears as an appendix to A.W. Jose's official history, *The Royal Australian Navy*.
2. *Ayesha*, a schooner belonging to the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company based in the Cocos Islands. The *Emden's* landing party escaped in the vessel after the loss of the cruiser, and eventually reached Arabia in it.
3. Rodriguez Island, 700km east of Mauritius.
4. Dr H.S. Ollerhead, the telegraph station's medical officer, who assisted *Sydney's* surgeons in dealing with *Emden's* wounded.
5. Captain von Muller of the *Emden* had driven his ship on North Keeling Island, 30 kilometres north of the Cocos group.
6. HMS *Cadmus*, British sloop.

B.J. Videon

The Women's Air Training Corps

A World War 2 women's auxiliary

THE RAAF Official History, Vol. 1 *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42* by Douglas Gillison, records that the Women's Air Training Corps was formed in Brisbane early in 1939 by Mrs Mary Bell, to coordinate the efforts of a number of girls who were trying to train themselves, at Archerfield, to be ready in the event of war to undertake work with aircraft. Mrs Bell was a pilot, a licensed ground engineer, and the wife of Group Captain (later Air Commodore) John Rennison Bell, OBE, ps. She had been associated with the RAAF, through her husband, since its formation in 1921.

When Group Captain Bell was posted in September 1939 to Melbourne, Mrs Bell accompanied him, and there she was asked, by an organisation called the Womens Voluntary National Register, to form a Victorian division of the WATC. This she did early in 1940 and the division soon had a strength of about 1000 members, organised into 10 squadrons of some 100 members each. Two squadrons trained with motor transport, and one each in wireless telegraphy, stores, cooking, etc, photography and drafting, clerical, as aircraft hands, on aero engines, and in miscellaneous duties.

Divisions were then formed, successively, in Tasmania, New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. Mrs Bell became Australian Commandant and each Division had its own State Commandant and staff. The members of the Corps gave much help to the RAAF, as drivers, clerks, hospital aids and so on; and Mrs Bell has said that, although the WATC was never a part of (or controlled by) the RAAF, being a purely civilian and voluntary body, the RAAF made a great deal

of use of it, quite apart from the purely training role of the Corps. All funding came from the girls themselves, who paid sixpence per head per training period (usually at least two nights per week). Prior to the formation in 1941 of the WAAAF, members of all WATC squadrons used to work, in their spare time, at various RAAF depots, and in almost every kind of duty which was required, in support of the very short manpower of the Air Force in those early days. It was stated by Mrs Bell that some girls working as motor drivers even used their own vehicles.

Because of the private status of the organisation, there were no commissions or warrants and the first few officers were appointed by Mrs Bell. As the Corps grew, State Commandants made their own appointments, down to Squadron Officers and Under Officers.

The Deputy Australian Commandant was Mrs Gwen (later Lady) Risson, wife of Major General Risson. In Victoria, in 1940, the State Commandant was Freda Thompson, and the Chief Drill Instructor was Sylvia Letts. Constance Gepp, who worked at *The Herald*, was Public Relations Officer, and also Squadron Commander of No. 3 Squadron; it is understood that *The Herald* was ever willing to publish material on the activities of the Corps in that State.

A photograph shows the Lady Mayoress of Melbourne inspecting No. 3 Squadron at Merton Hall early in 1941. This shows the standard uniform for members, a simple blue-grey belted dustcoat, worn with a blue beret and scarf. The corps badge, worn on the beret, was a blue enamelled map of Australia, flanked by silver wings, with the Corps initial letters on a blue scroll below. A cloth version



Inspection of Women's Air Training Corps' No. 3 Squadron, Victoria by the Lady Mayoress of Melbourne. Squadron Commander Constance Gepp at the Lady Mayoress' right.

of this badge was worn as 'wings' by members who were qualified pilots. Senior officers, and foundation members of the Corps in Queensland, wore khaki skirts and shirts, with a blue tie and forage cap. For officers, a khaki jacket was added, with which could be worn a blue belt. Rank was worn on the shoulders of jackets, and on the sleeves of dustcoats. Khaki boiler suits were worn by aircraft trainees and by motor mechanics, etc. Blue overall dresses were worn by members working in RAAF hospitals.

Rank insignia for wear with the full uniform were as follows:

Australian Commandant: Navy blue shoulder straps with 4 x ½-inch silver bars;

Deputy Australian Commandant: As above but 3 silver bars;

Members of Australian Commandant's staff—

Chief Instructor	As above,
Chief Drill Instructor	2 x ½-inch and
Chief Records Officer	1 x ¼-inch
Chief Accounting Officer	bars;

Secretaries to the Australian Commandant: as above, but 1 bar.

The above rank insignia all betokened membership of the Australian Headquarters Staff. Later, certain ladies whom the Corps wished to honour were made Honorary Officers and they were authorised to wear the above uniform with blue shoulder straps, without bars. Few officers below the rank of Deputy wore the full uniform; instead they usually wore the dustcoat uniform with rank in blue ribbon on the cuffs.

State Commandants, by virtue of their appointments, were members of the Australian Council and wore full drab uniform, with drab shoulder straps, and 3 x ½-inch blue ribbon markings.

Deputy State Commandants wore the standard dustcoat uniform, with 2 x ½-inch and 1 x ¼-inch blue ribbons around the cuffs — they also had a curl in the top ring, as did Senior Squadron Commanders.

Members of the State Board, additional to the foregoing, were:

Squadron Commanders	As above,
State Instructor	but no curl —
State Drill Instructor	2 x ½-inch and
State Records Officer	1 x ¼-inch blue
State Accounting Officer	rings on cuffs
State Secretary: 1 blue ring on cuffs	

Squadron Officers (All States):

Squadron Commander: 2 x ½ and 1 x ¼-inch rings

Deputy Squadron Commander: As above

Flight Commander: 2 x ½-inch rings

Senior Under Officers: 3 chevrons

Under Officers: 2 chevrons

Junior Under Officers: 1 chevron

A wartime photo shows a group of girls in uniform, including some wearing sleeve rank insignia; ranks were worn on both sleeves. The

following rank insignia not mentioned above are evident:

Two (possibly three) chevrons, in the 'Vee' of which is a vertical bar of the same tape; and

On the cuff, one chevron, in the 'Vee' of which are two short vertical bars.

It has not been possible, at date of writing, to ascertain the significance of these variants.

Other WATC insignia included silver buttons bearing the Corps badge design, and silver metal shoulder titles 'WATC', for wear on khaki jackets, while woven cloth oblong patches with the same initials were worn on the breast of working dresses. The Victorian Cap badge was distinguished by a letter 'V' in the centre of the map of Australia; all others appear to have been without state abbreviations. It is not known why the Victorian insignia were so differentiated, but there may have been relevance to Mrs Bell's location, as Australian Commandant, in this State.

Mrs Bell was appointed on 24 February 1941 as Acting Director of the WAAAF, and on 10 March six more officers were appointed, five of whom had been senior officers of the WATC. Mrs Bell did not remain in the WAAAF, however, and later in 1941, after the appointment of a permanent Director of the WAAAF, she appears to have returned to the WATC.



Badge for working uniform



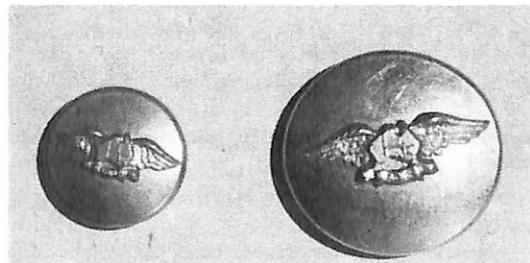
Shoulder title, WATC: c.1940



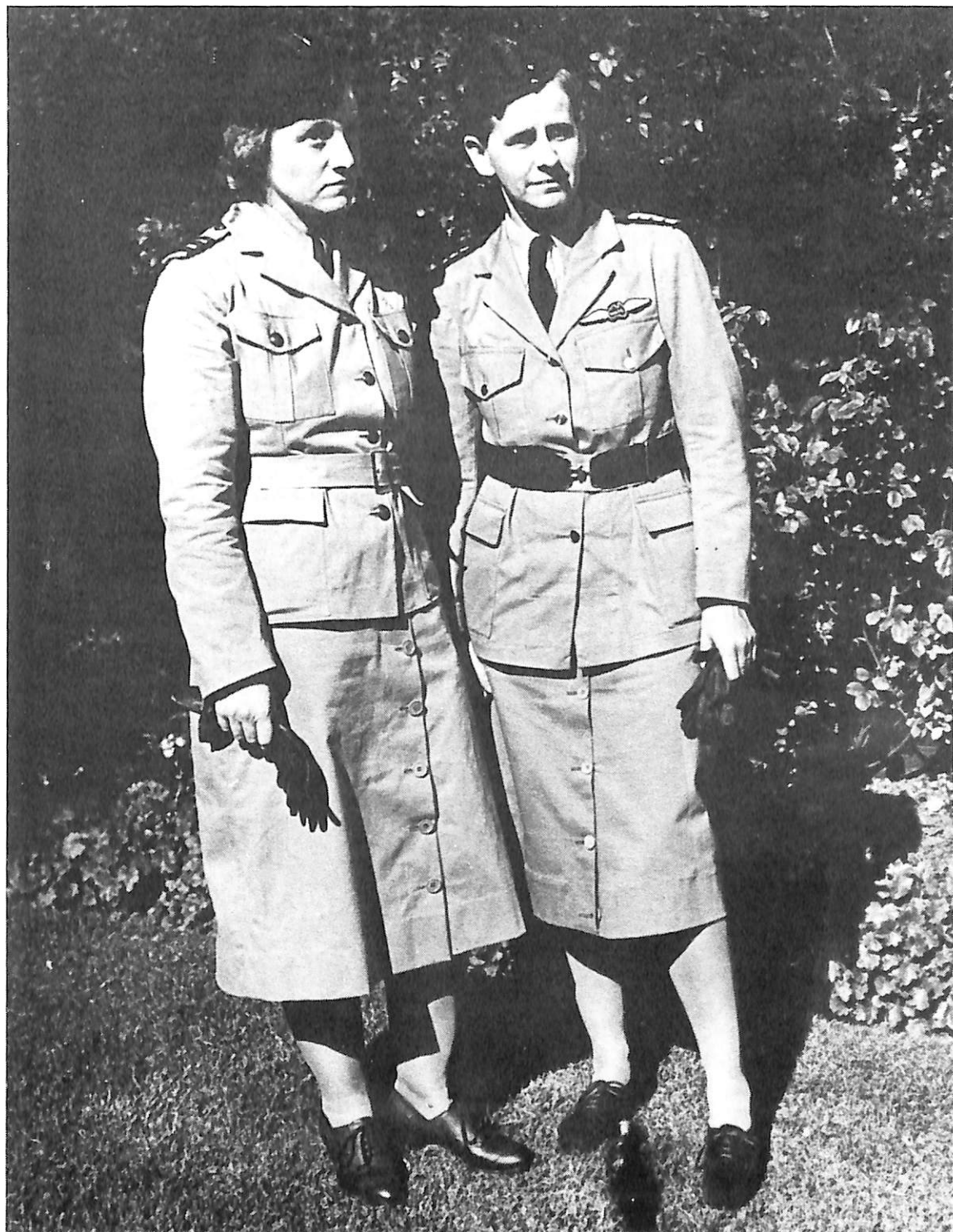
Cap badge, WATC: Victoria



Cap badge, WATC: general



Buttons of WATC



Women's Air Training Corps officers

Left: Victorian State Commandant Freda Thompson Right: Australian Commandant Mary Bell

The majority of the girls of the WATC hoped they would be able to join the RAAF, but it seems to have been mainly due to the fact that the trained wireless operators of the Corps were in demand that the War Cabinet agreed, reluctantly, to women joining the Services at all. When the Womens Auxiliary Australian Air Force was formed, in 1941, those girls who could join, did so. *The Herald* of 9 August 1941 included a brief report of 'another muster' of 37 girls being called up for service in the WAAAF, mostly coming from the WATC.

The WATC pre-dated by two years its male counterpart, the Air Training Corps, which was created in 1941 as an element of the wartime RAAF, and which has continued on until the present day (although, since 1975, as an element of the Cadet Forces). Mrs Bell wanted the WATC to amalgamate with the ATC and thus get better status as a part of the RAAF but this did not eventuate, and the ATC remained an all-male organisation until the early 1980s.

It is understood that the WATC was disbanded soon after the end of the war, and that, during its war service, its members were not only those girls of pre-WAAAF age, waiting to get into the WAAAF, but also included some who were unable to do so, for whatever reasons, but who wanted to continue to give their spare time in a voluntary capacity in an area of their choice. The contribution of the girls of the WATC was as generous, and as untiring, as any during the war. So that the Corps' contribution shall not be overlooked by history, an effort is being made to include a small WATC exhibit with Air Training Corps items in the RAAF Museum at Point Cook.

References

Douglas Gillison, *Australia in the war of 1939-45, Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, Canberra 1962.

Correspondence with Mrs M. Bell.



Members of the WATC at No. 1 Stores Depot, RAAF, Tottenham, about 1940.

Peter J. Wilmot

No ordinary man

ARNOLD Mercer Davies, No. 454 in the Third Victorian Bushmen's Contingent, served in the Boer war, the 1914-18 war and died on active service in the 1939-45 war. He had the honour of serving his country in three conflicts, the last of which took his life at the age of 67 years.

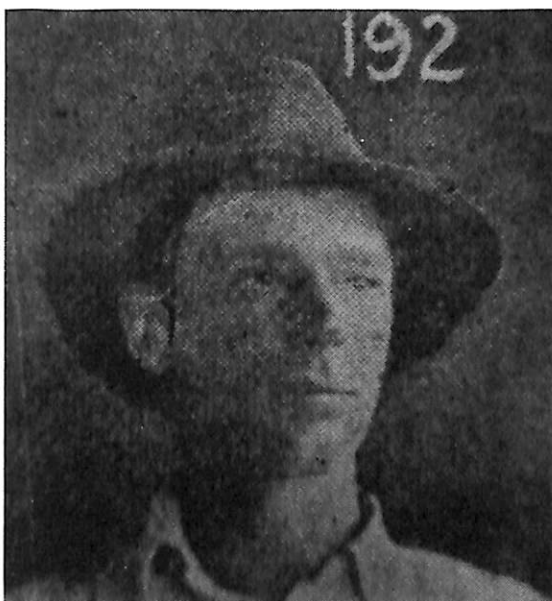
Davies was born on 11 February 1876, the son of Melbourne solicitor Sir Matthew Henry Davies, and was educated at Melbourne Grammar. At the age of 24, then a grazier at 'Lockwood', Narre Warren, he was selected to join the 3rd Victorian Bushmen's Contingent for the Boer war. The contingent, of 15 officers and 261 men, left on the transport *Euryalus* on 10 March 1900 and arrived at Beira, South Africa, on 3 April. Davies saw service as a trooper in Rhodesia and Transvaal returning to Melbourne on the transport *Morayshire* on 6 June 1901.

On 6 November 1914 he again enlisted to serve his country and embarked on HMAT *Eastern* on 28 November as No. 139 Corporal, C Company, 3rd Battalion, Special Tropical Corps, Australian Naval and Military Forces for New Guinea, serving in the garrison force and remaining there for several years promoted to sergeant. He returned to Australia on 7 April 1918 and was discharged on 9 May. The 3rd Battalion, or Tropical Force, was made up of volunteers of many men past their military prime. Many had previously been rejected by the AIF.

Davies later married Millicent Beatrice Yvile and returned to New Guinea and became a planter.

In the 1939-45 war he again offered to serve his country, enlisting as a private in the Citizen Military Forces at Paddington, NSW on 8 September 1942, being allotted army number N435502. Taken on strength of the General Details Depot, Sydney on 8 September 1942, he had attained the age of 66 years. He was discharged at Sydney on 3 October 1942 but Army records do not indicate the reason.

One would think that that would have been the end of his military service, but he then enlisted in the New Guinea Home Defence Force. It is possible that he had asked for a discharge so as to join that force but there is no guidance on the matter in records held in Australia or in the National Archives and Public Records of Papua and New Guinea.



Arnold Mercer Davies. The date of the photograph is unknown.

This last movement in his military career was to be his last. While serving with the NGHDF Davies was taken by the Japanese. He had served his country to the best of his ability even in old age and now was a prisoner of war. Where he was stationed at the time of being made prisoner or what engagement he may have been involved in is not known. Embarked on a POW ship bound for Japan, he lost his life when the ship was sunk by allied action in 1943. It was hardly a fitting end for a man who had served his country well to die not from enemy action but by the hand of people he had fought for.

Arnold Davies' known medal entitlements are the Queen's South Africa with Rhodesia and Transvaal bars and the British War Medal 1914-18. There is no record of his New Guinea service due to the loss of records during the war but he would have been entitled to the 1939-45 Star, Pacific Star, War Medal and the Australian Service Medal.

* * * *

The author would be grateful for additional information about Arnold Mercer Davies, his medals and the unit history of the NGHDF.

Paul A. Rosenzweig

The role of the RAN and Captain Eric Johnston in the recovery of Darwin, 1974-75

WHILE the emphasis at present is heavily upon recalling the Royal Australian Navy's exploits in times of conflict, we should also be aware of its contribution to the nation when our security has been breached, not by armed aggressors but by the elements. The Navy's efforts in Darwin in the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy in late 1974 is testimony to how valuable and worthwhile military training can become in times of peace and security, when disaster can rapidly shatter the complacency of a community.

Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974, and at 1400 Central Standard Time the Naval Officer Commanding North Australia (NOCNA) Captain Eric Johnston, OBE, received a warning call at HMAS *Melville*, one of Darwin's two shore establishments.¹ At 1630 the Operations Room was destroyed completely, with NOCNA and his three staff trapped within the ruins — all but one escaped, the other staff member being dug out at first light. The damage which Tracy wreaked on the city of Darwin was exceeded in magnitude only by the Navy's clean-up effort under the guidance of Captain Johnston.

In its biggest peace-time naval operation, a task force was on its way to Darwin within hours — the carrier HMAS *Melbourne*, destroyers, stores vessels, helicopter squadrons, diving teams, and nearly 3000 men, despatched by Navy Headquarters in Canberra in under 24 hours.

The Director-General of the Natural Disasters Organisation, Major General Alan Stretton, appointed Eric Johnston chairman of the Port Committee, giving him operational command of the port and its approaches. First to arrive were HMA ships *Brisbane* and *Flinders* (on 31 December) while a further ten vessels arrived in the next four days. The diving team had arrived on 26 December and were already on the job, cleaning up around the wharves and removing the wreckage of the patrol boat HMAS *Arrow*. HMAS *Attack* had been blown ashore during the cyclone, while *Advance* and *Assail* had sustained only minor damage.

The three helicopter squadrons used the old Darwin oval as a landing pad, and Admiralty House became Naval HQ, the actual headquarters build-

ings on the Esplanade having been destroyed. These were rebuilt in 1981 as offices for the Administrator of the Territory — appropriately Eric Johnston, Commodore, RAN Retired.

Darwin was host to a great flotilla — HMA ships *Balikpapan*, *Betano*, *Brisbane*, *Flinders*, *Hobart*, *Melbourne*, *Stalwart*, *Stuart*, *Supply* and *Vendetta*, as well as the supply vessels *Brunei*, *Tarakan* and *Wewak*. Eric Johnston co-ordinated the recovery effort from the 6th floor of what became known as 'HMAS MLC', the Mutual Life and Citizen's Assurance (MLC) building in Smith Street. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the Military Division² 'for outstanding leadership, exemplary conduct and steadfast performance of his duties while exposed to the dangers of Cyclone Tracy and for his dedication and tireless efforts towards the restoration of Darwin's defence and town services'.

Eric Johnston had become Darwin's hero: little wonder then that the Darwin public was delighted when the Chief Minister announced in the Legislative Assembly on 27 November 1980 that he was to become the new Administrator of the Northern Territory with effect from 1 January 1981.

He had been a regular naval officer since 1950 and had served with distinction in Vietnam, being decorated by both the USA and Australia. He was born in Shanghai in Kiangsu Province of China on 29 July 1933, and entered the RAN College in 1947 as a Cadet Midshipman. Upon graduation he served with such ships as *Australia*, *Tobruk* and *Culgoa*, as well as HMS *Devonshire* and HMS *Maidstone*. He later specialised in Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Damage Control.

During the Indonesian confrontation he served in HMAS *Melbourne* (1964-66), earning the General Service Medal with bar 'Malay Peninsula', and with HMAS *Vendetta* in 1966-67. Promoted Commander in 1967, he commanded *Vendetta* on operational service with the US Seventh Fleet in South Vietnamese waters in 1969-70. This was a notable command for several reasons: *Vendetta* was the first Australian-built warship to serve in Vietnam, and it was the first Daring-class destroyer to be engaged in the role for which they were primarily



Commodore Eric Johnston, AM, OBE, K St J.

built, that of naval gunfire support. For his service Eric Johnston was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the Military Division in 1971, and received an American CINCPAC (Commander-in-Chief, Pacific) Commendation.

He attended a naval command course at the US Navy War College at Rhode Island in 1970-71, was Chief of Staff to the SEATO exercise director in 1971-72, and Director of Personnel Services 1972-73, being promoted Captain in 1973. In December of 1973 he was appointed Naval Officer Commanding Northern Australia (NOCNA) based in Darwin. Under his command, the sailors of the naval task force cleared the debris from the streets after Cyclone Tracy, in intermittent rain and sun, saving both vital government documents and personal effects. As well as the rubble of demolished houses, the streets were littered with Christmas presents, many unopened.³

Leaving Darwin in 1976, he was appointed Commanding Officer of HMAS *Perth*, a guided missile destroyer which had earned the US Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation in Vietnam. He was a member of the military staff of the Strategic and International Policy Division of Defence Central in 1978-79, during which time he also served as a member of the Australian delegation to the United Nations Law of the Sea conferences in Geneva and New York. He was subsequently promoted Commodore and appointed Director of Public Information with the Department of Defence.

Johnston retired from the RAN in December 1980, and was appointed Administrator of the Northern Territory for a term of five years. His services to Darwin only a few years previous were recalled upon his intensely warm welcome back to Darwin, an appointment in which he has earned the greatest respect and admiration from the entire Territory population. He holds a vast array of honorary titles by virtue of his office, one of the more remarkable ones perhaps being Commodore of the Tennant Creek Yacht Squadron, founded in late 1981 in the Centralian town on the fringe of the Tanami desert.

The Administrator strikes an impressive figure in his naval white uniform bedecked with gold braid and medals, although he has been seen on occasions in a khaki uniform with Sam Browne and slouch hat, being the first Honorary Colonel of the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE).

As well as the AM and OBE, Commodore Johnston holds the GSM (Malay Peninsula), Vietnam pair, Defence Force Service Medal with Bar and the National Medal. In addition, he wears the insignia of Commander of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, although his promotion to Knight of Grace was announced in February 1985.



Case and insignia of Member of the Order of Australia in the Military Division.

Both Eric Johnston and the Royal Australian Navy brought credit upon themselves for their conduct in Darwin in the recovery and reconstruction days after Cyclone Tracy. It was the Navy's greatest peace-time operation and certainly the greatest disaster to befall Darwin since the Japanese raids and invasion threat some 32 years previous. It was most fortuitous that Darwin had as NOCNA in 1974-75 a man of Eric Johnston's character — his 'outstanding leadership, exemplary conduct and steadfast performance of his duties' forever endearing him to Territorians young and old. It should not be surprising then that the Territory population should go to great lengths to see him serve a second 5-year term as Administrator.

Notes

1. The other being HMAS *Coonawarra*.
2. In the first Honours List of 17 June 1975. The Order of Australia has only been conferred upon Navy personnel for service in the NT on three occasions, the other two recipients being WO E.R. Graham, OAM and WO H.E. Watling, OAM (both in 1977).

3. Cyclone Tracy was detected 470 km north-east of Darwin on 21 December 1974. At 1230, the Bureau of Meteorology's Regional Director for the NT, Ray Wilkie, issued flash cyclone warning number 16 — the threat to Darwin had become imminent. The cyclone intensified and by 0100 on the 25th gusts of up to 130 km/h were recorded. The full force of Tracy struck Darwin at 0300, with a gust of 217 km/h being recorded before the airport's anemometer was destroyed. Ray Wilkie was one of the few to distinguish himself during and after Tracy — he received the OAM.

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But little glory

Mr D.C. Yarrow, Secretary/Manager of the Yeronga (Qld) Services Club (Members, MHSA) noted from the above Society publication that the Egypt Medal presented to Private F.G. Aitken, NSW Ambulance Corps, is regarded as unaccounted for. He has advised that the medal is included in the Club's collection.

It was found in an inner-Sydney house bought for re-development and came into the possession of Mr Yarrow's brother, a club member,

who presented it to the club. When found, the medal bore the tattered remnants of the ribbon of the Khedive's Star but the star itself was not located.

The Egypt medal, with others in the club collection, were sent out for mounting for display, but in the process the originals were retained and forged medals substituted. Criminal action taken on the matter was successful.

T.C. Sargent

A Gallipoli Royal Navy medal group

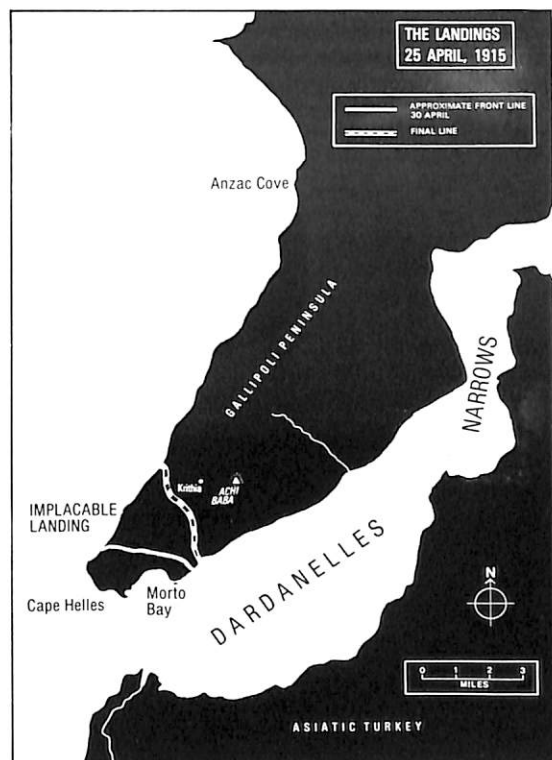
THE Australian pre-occupation with landings at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915 tends to blind us to the involvement of large numbers of British, Indian and French troops on other parts of the peninsula and also to the part played by the Royal Navy in support of the land forces. We overlook, all too frequently, the heavy casualties suffered by those other contingents and also the losses suffered by the Navy.

This group of medals, the 1914-15 Star and the War and Victory Medals, awarded to the next of kin of Able Seaman James Horgan, RN, are a small reminder of the part played by the Royal Navy in the Gallipoli campaign.

James Horgan, as a seventeen year-old from St Michaels in Pembroke, South Wales, joined the Royal Navy over 100 years ago at Plymouth on 10 January 1882 as a Boy 2nd Class in HMS *Impregnable*. He spent only eleven days on that ship before being posted to the *Ganges* where he remained until 31 March 1883. It is not clear from the records whether this was the P & O ship *Ganges* on which casualties in the Sudan were evacuated from Suakin. From the *Ganges* he moved to the *River Adelaide* in September-December 1883 and to a small cruiser, the *Dryad*, in December 1883. From then on his service was mostly in heavy ships — the *Kingfisher* 1884-88 — the small cruiser *Medea* in 1889 — the battleship *Collingwood* 1889 and ultimately the capital ships *Thunderer* 1899-1900 and *Renown* 1900-July 1903, when, after 21 years service, he went onto the Royal Navy Reserve.

Horgan then settled in the vicinity of Bridgend, in Glamorgan, South Wales, where he found work as a coal miner but he could not adapt to the claustrophobic working conditions in a coal mine and soon obtained employment more suitable for an old tar, as a steeplejack. As a reservist he was recalled to the Fleet on 2 August 1914 by orders issued by the Admiralty at 1.25 am that day in the move to mobilise the Fleet in response to the growing threat of war from the German-Austro-Hungarian axis. James Horgan joined HMS *Goliath*, a 12,950-ton battleship, with four 12-inch guns as main armament, commissioned in 1898. It had a complement of 750 men.

The *Goliath* formed up with the 8th Battle Squadron at Portland in August 1914 and was deployed with the squadron to cover the crossing of the British Expeditionary Force to France. At the end of August the ship was ordered to the Indian Ocean to give protection to shipping threatened by the German raiders *Konigsberg* and *Emden*. The *Goliath* arrived in India late in 1914 and escorted the main force of the German East African Expedition to Africa, arriving at Mombasa on 1 November 1914. Here defects were found requiring extensive overhaul, making a refit necessary. Following the refit the *Goliath* sailed for Simons Bay in South Africa before returning to East Africa on 25 February 1915. The ship operated along that coast until ordered to the



The landings, 25 April 1915.

Aegean Sea to join the naval force forming up to support the military invasion of the Gallipoli Peninsula which followed the abortive naval attempt to force the Narrows on 18 March. The *Goliath* was allotted to the 1st Squadron covering the landings by British troops on the toe of the peninsula, providing covering fire from 'X' or Implacable Beach to Cape Helles.

In May, when French troops holding the right of the Allied positions at the toe of the peninsula came under strong Turkish pressure, two battleships took up position off Morto Bay every evening to give fire support for the French. On the night of May 12-13 the ships detailed for duty in Morto Bay were the *Goliath* and the *Cornwallis*. The capital ships were covered by a screen of destroyers.

That night was very dark — there was no moon — and about midnight a fog began to roll down from the Asiatic shore of the Strait. Under cover of darkness and the fog a Turkish destroyer, *Muavanet-i-Millet*, commanded by a German officer, Lieutenant Commander Firle, crept down the Strait, successfully avoiding the destroyer screen and launched three torpedoes against the *Goliath*. All three struck the old battleship which quickly turned turtle and plunged to the bottom taking most of her crew, including Able Seaman Horgan, with her. In spite of a pursuit by the screening British destroyers, the Turkish ship escaped. Of the *Goliath's* complement of 750 men, 570 were lost. Lieutenant Commander Firle was to survive two World Wars and died in Bremen in July 1969 at the age of eighty-four.

The loss of the *Goliath* was discussed at the British War Council meeting of 14 May 1915 and had some bearing on the Council decision to continue the Dardanelles enterprise as a military operation with Royal Navy support. This decision was to lead to the resignation of the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Fisher, who, as a result of the decision, found it necessary to allocate vessels he had planned to deploy in the North Sea to further support the Dardanelles operations. It was a decision with which Fisher strongly disagreed. Had his views prevailed, thousands of casualties would have been spared but it was too late, in any case, for Able Seaman Horgan.

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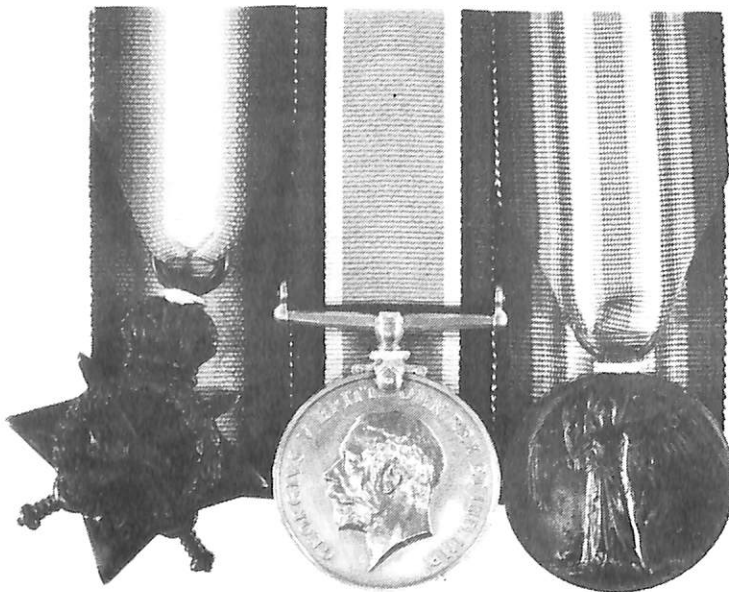
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AB James Horgan's medal group.

Review Article

Sir David Hay, *Nothing Over Us: The story of the 2/6th Australian Infantry Battalion*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1984. pp.XII + 604 including illustrations and maps. \$29.95.

Captain Cyril Falls, sometime Professor of the History of War in the University of Oxford, set out some useful thoughts for writers, readers and critics in his essay 'The Problems of War History'. Unit histories were, he said, bounded by several limitations because of an undue proportion of the available space is allotted to one subject then there is less space for other subjects and the history becomes unbalanced. Falls pointed out that the unit historian must portray the soul of the unit. This involves recording something of the daily life of the unit in action and out of action in rest areas, at training exercises, and on social occasions. He has to indicate the spirit that animates all ranks and he has to explain why at one time this spirit is one of elation, at another time one of depression, and at other times again why it may be something in between these two extremes. War sometimes imposes conditions on a unit which make it unrecognisable later in a different situation.

These remarks indicate problems that confront an author in attempting to write an accurate and realistic history of a unit — in this instance the 2/6 Australian Infantry Battalion. A reviewer's task is the simpler one of relating how well and how adequately the author has completed his task.

Readers will readily find for themselves that in this instance the author, Brigadier Sir David Hay, DSO, has done his job well and that all aspects of the proud record of the battalion's history have been given their proper place in the sun.

The official date of the raising of the battalion in Melbourne was 25 October 1939 and its first CO was Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey, a militia officer who had gained a MC in the 1st AIF. The battalion was a unit of Brigadier Savige's 17th Australian Infantry Brigade which was a brigade of Major-General Iven Mackay's 6th Australian Division.

From this time onwards the battalion was obliged to do in weeks what should have been spread over the years since 1919 — a peacetime process known as 'preparations for war'. This process should normally end immediately before or immediately after a declaration of war and be followed by the order to mobilise.

Contrary to a widespread belief, there is a place for ceremonial parades, even in wartime, as General Monash demonstrated more than once. So on 24 January 1940 the 2/6th Battalion took part in a ceremonial march of the 17th Infantry Brigade through the City of Melbourne. The Governor-General, General Lord Gowrie, VC, took the salute from the steps of the State Parliament House.

The battalion embarked at Port Melbourne for overseas service on 14 April 1940, but it was still incompletely mobilised. It disembarked on 18 May 1940 at El Kantara where it entrained for Beit Jirja in Palestine. There the battalion settled into a camp and began a programme of intensive training. But the need to improvise continued as in Australia because of the deficiencies in specialist personnel, in weapons and in equipment.

The battalion did not complete its mobilisation until just before it entered its first campaign late in December 1940 in the Western Desert, when it took part in the attack on Bardia, a town which had been heavily fortified by the Italians. Bardia was captured on 5 January 1941. This was the battalion's single biggest military operation of the war and in terms of battle casualties the most costly. For his leadership in this battle Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey was awarded a DSO.

The attack on Tobruk, in which the battalion distinguished itself again, began on 21 January 1941. There was a change in command about this time. Godfrey was promoted and transferred and handed over to Major S.H. Porter, later to become a major-general and Chief Commissioner of Police in Victoria.

Porter's first operation in command was the capture of Derna on 1 February 1941. On the 14th, on his way to London for talks with the British Government, the Australian Prime Minister, Mr R.G. Menzies, visited the battalion.

When the battalion reached Benghazi it was detailed for garrison duties including the pleasant task of guarding the brewery.

Towards the end of February 1941 rumours circulated that the unit was to be sent to Greece where a new front was to be opened up. The battalion began its retirement from the Western Desert on 10 March 1941 by motor transport, reaching Tobruk the next day where it spent about six days resuming its rearward movement on 18 March. Another change in command took place on 27 March when Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh Wrigley took over from Major Porter, appointed to command of the 2/31st Battalion.

The advanced guard of the 2/6th, commanded by Major W.T. Muhlan, sailed from Alexandria on 1 April 1941 for Greece. It was followed by the main body of the battalion which embarked at Alexandria on 9 April.

The shortlived Greek campaign was a disaster for the British Empire forces and especially the Anzac forces. The campaign was initiated by a bad political decision in London.

Headquarters, 17th Australian Infantry Brigade, on or about 22 April 1941, ordered its units to withdraw from Greece. About this time the GOC, 6th Australian Division was also ordered to return to Cairo. The date fixed for the 2/6th Battalion to evacuate Greece was 28 April 1941; it returned to Egypt. It had no orders to go to Crete. The chaos connected with this evacuation from Greece was in no way comparable with the orderly and methodical evacuation of the AIF from Gallipoli in December 1915. For exponents of the doctrine 'History does not repeat itself' here is an instance in support.

In due course the remnants of the 2/6th Battalion assembled in the 17th Australian Infantry Training Battalion area in Palestine and there they established a camp at Hill 69 where, by 18 May 1941, the battalion could muster only 19 officers and 343 other ranks.

The story of Sir Iven Mackay (p.205), during an inspection of this camp, giving a squad of NCOs instructions in rifle drill recalls a story about General Petain in WWI. Soon after the Americans began to arrive in France in 1917 he visited General Pershing at his headquarters where, on arrival, he was greeted by an American Army band playing the *Marseillaise*. Later, he mentioned tactfully to General Pershing that his band was not playing it correctly and would he mind if he gave the band some instruction in how to play the French National Anthem properly. General Pershing assented. Later, Pershing's headquarters staff were treated to a rare spectacle on its parade ground of the French C-in-C on the Western Front conducting a US Army band at a rehearsal of the *Marseillaise*.

After the devastating campaign in Greece the 2/6th took about 7 months to re-build itself into the unit it was when it first entered that campaign.

The battalion arrived in Syria on 4 December 1941. Three days later Japan opened hostilities without any previous declaration of war, as had also been the case in February 1904 when it entered the Russo-Japanese War 1904-5. On 7/8 December 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and concurrently invaded Malaya. The immediate effects of this aggression were twofold; it brought the USA into WWII and it brought the war closer to Australia.

In mid-January 1942 Colonel Wrigley was promoted and transferred, and he handed over command of the 2/6th to another of its originals, Lieutenant-Colonel F.G. Wood.

As part of the Australian Government's policy of recalling its overseas troops to Australia the 2/6th embarked at Suez on 10 March 1942. After doing garrison duty in Ceylon for about 4 months, it sailed for Australia where it disembarked in Melbourne on Monday, 3 August 1942.

From a disciplinary point of view the return home had an unsettling effect on members of the battalion. The rate of AWL and the numbers of illegal absences increased and it took some time to restore the troops psychologically to conditions in a wartime infantry battalion.

After some severe training in jungle warfare in Victoria, NSW and Queensland, the battalion embarked at Brisbane on 13 October 1942 for New Guinea. It disembarked at Milne Bay on 20 October and marched into camp in the Gilli Gilli Plantation. In its early months in New Guinea, the battalion suffered severe casualties through malaria.

The former commander of the 17 Infantry Brigade, Brigadier Savige, became a major-general on 7 January 1942 and was appointed to command the 3rd Australian Division. The original GOC of this division when it was formed in England in 1916 was Major-General Monash, so in this command Savige was one of his successors. Monash had set a unique standard as GOC of the 3rd Division but Savige was a worthy successor. He was industrious; he was competent; and he was always on the job. Moreover, like that divisional commander of the 1st AIF Major-General Sir Charles Rosenthal, Savige was articulate; he had a wide range of interests and he was a 'front-line' general who was known by his troops.

On 23 April 1943 the 3rd Division opened its headquarters at Bulolo and took over operational command of the area from Brigadier Moten's Kanga Force. Now, in the words of the official history, Kanga Force 'ceased to exist'. But it did not explain how it was disposed of. This force had been the 17th Australian Infantry Brigade plus attached troops; it was an independent force; and it was under the direct command of Headquarters, New Guinea Force. The 2/6th Battalion was one of its units. With the re-appearance of Kanga Force as the 17th Infantry Brigade it passed to the command of Headquarters, 3rd Division.

With the capture of Komiatum on 19 August 1943 the New Guinea campaign ended for the 2/6th Battalion for that year. It withdrew on 24 August to Tambu Bay from where it sailed for Milne Bay which it reached on 16 September 1943 leaving on or about 21 September.

After disembarking at Cairns on the 23rd the battalion moved to Wondecla on the Atherton Tableland. There it was to camp, train and rest. The new Guinea campaign had been an arduous one for the 2/6th and it was in desperate need of rest and recreation. During the campaign its casualties had been heavy; the terrain over which it had operated had made excessive demands on the physical and mental resources of all ranks and the climate had been one of the most exhausting that the battalion had had to endure throughout the war.

Towards the end of November 1943 most of the battalion's leave parties had returned to camp at Wondecla. Training then began in earnest. In an infantry battalion training is a never-ending occupation, especially in wartime, for all ranks. But it is a means to an end; it should never become an end in itself; and it should be conducted imaginatively by skilful instructors with a sense of humour, if monotony and boredom are to be avoided. In these respects the battalion seems to have been fortunate.

Another feature of the history of the battalion is the number of company commanders it had with the rank of captain. Some readers may wonder why these company commanders were not granted at least the temporary rank of major while they were doing the job.

In September 1944 the 2/6th was warned at Wondecla for movement to an operational area. At last, on 1 December 1944, the battalion embarked at Cairns for Aitape which was reached three days later. There its operational area, as part of the 6th Australian Division, was bounded on the northern edge by the coastline from Aitape to Wewak and it was known as the Aitape-Wewak campaign.

This particular campaign served no useful military purpose. The 2/6th Battalion, one of Australia's best fighting units at that time, was 'used up' in this backwater of the war in futile platoon and company operations against a stubborn and tactically well disposed enemy who only fought back at this stage if attacked. But the fate of the 2/6th Battalion in this campaign was not one for it to reflect on. Its sole duty was 'not to reason why' but 'to do and die'.

One silver lining in this campaign occurred almost at its end. On 8 August 1945 the battalion's longest serving CO, Lieutenant Colonel F.G. Wood, was hurried out of the unit with such speed that there was little, if any, time to accord him the ceremonies that are normal on such occasions. He went to 7th Australian Division to take up the well-deserved appointment of commander of the 25th Infantry Brigade with the rank of brigadier. The battalion's new CO was Lieutenant-Colonel D.A.C. Jackson who had come from the 2/11th Battalion.

Hostilities ceased in the Pacific on 15 August 1945. From that date the war was over as far as the fighting soldier was concerned. Likewise, the shouting and the cheering 'as the troops marched by' died away rapidly.

Headquarters, Victorian Lines of Communication issued the order, dated 10 January 1946, to disband the 2/6th Infantry Battalion. Soon the remainder of the officers and other ranks, as an organised fighting force, dissolved and dispersed forever.

The story of the 2/6th has been written with skill and clarity and is well illustrated with interesting pictures and useful maps. The maps have been drawn in accordance with the mapping conventions of the period to which they belong — red lines indicate our own troops and blue lines those of the enemy. In present-day practice these colours are reversed. Some may consider it wise to have adopted mapping practices of the period to which the maps belong. In an instance of this kind there is no golden rule to apply. It is regrettable, however, that the book has no index. This omission robs it of much of its usefulness as a reference.

But notwithstanding this omission the book is a moving and inspiring study of courage and resourcefulness in adversity, of trials and triumphs, and of great skill and tenacity in military operations. It is a monument to these who did not return to be demobilised and who now sleep their eternal

sleep in lands far from Australia. But it is more than a monument to them and to the battalion to which they belonged. It is a means for those members still living to refresh their memories of the comradeship of all ranks in the battalion. In these recollections old comrades arise from these pages as they were on the march, at training exercise, in battle and on leave now almost fifty years ago. This history of the Battalion sets a standard for coming generations of Australian soldiers and private citizens to emulate in times which demand in behaviour fortitude, decisiveness and resolution.

Warren Perry

Book Reviews

Ralph Sutton, *Soldiers of the Queen: War in the Soudan*, New South Wales Military Historical Society and the Royal New South Wales Regiment, Sydney 1985, pp.321, illus, maps. RRP \$34 PB.

Following the appearance of Ken Inglis' *The Rehearsal* and MHSA's own publication *But little glory*, what, one might be tempted to ask, is there left to say about Australia's first (and shortest) military campaign — especially sufficient to fill another book of over 300 pages? Well, in this book the reader is given something other than an analysis of the events which led to 760 Australians being organised to take part in one of imperial Britain's more obscure military enterprises, and of the troops' despatch, service and return. What Ralph Sutton has produced is a celebration of the centenary of the New South Wales contingent's involvement in the Sudan in every sense of the word 'celebration'.

Here we are presented with a miscellany of information on people and events connected with the campaign, before, during and after the involvement. It is an approach which makes sense of the inclusion of such things as the words and music of contemporary songs and poems of 1885, details of the issue of a special postage stamp in February 1985, of the centenary parade held at Victoria Barracks in Sydney on 3 March 1985, and of the lineage and subsequent history of the Royal New South Wales Regiment which otherwise has no relevance at all to the events in Sudan. In short, the book is in so many ways a souvenir of the event it commemorates. Two fold-out maps and a nominal roll of the contingent's members, together with some excellent black and white illustrations (including photographs) and a number of very handsome colour plates, add to the collector-value of the book arising from the fact that it has been published in a limited edition of 1,000 numbered copies.

In his research Sutton has unearthed some diverting sidelights of the Sudan campaign. It is surprising, for example, to discover that Lieutenant-Colonel Robert de Courcy Coveny, one of three senior British regular officers killed at the battle of Kirbekan in February 1885 was an Australian (his parents were benefactors of St Mary's Cathedral and St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney), and the pamphlet *Suakim and the Country of the Soudan*, specially written for the contingent by the former African explorer A.T. Holroyd, was surely the first intelligence handbook ever locally-produced for Australian troops, even if — as one suspects — the pamphlet's style meant the majority of troops were unlikely to have actually read it. Sutton's eye for this sort of detail led me to hope he may even have been able to shed light on the unspecified 'personal reasons' which caused the contingent's second-in-command, Lieutenant-Colonel W.B.B. Christie, to withdraw as soon as the force arrived at Suakin, but unfortunately that mystery remains.

While the attempt to encompass a great many detailed aspects of the campaign and the Australian involvement is one of the book's strengths, it unfortunately leads to one of the major criticisms which can be made. A failure to clearly focus on the events of real importance to the book's subject results in the inclusion of too much irrelevant and distracting detail. At the same time, Sutton's heavy use of contemporary accounts for descriptive purposes (entailing quotations which are pages and even chapters long), while producing a narrative flavour thoroughly redolent of the times, is without any attempt at providing balancing historical analysis or judgement. When one considers the essentially instructive purpose behind the study of history, there are obviously risks to taking 'players' in historical events at their own word or estimation.

Chris Coulthard-Clark

Peter Stanley, *The Remote Garrison: The British Army in Australia*, Kangaroo Press Pty Ltd, Kenthurst, 1986, 76pp, B&W, coloured illus, appendices, bibliography, index, 220mm x 300mm, recommended retail price \$29.95.

Peter Stanley needs no introduction, a long time member, editor of *Sabretache* through 1981, *But little glory* in 1985 and a continuing member of the Editorial Sub-Committee of the MHSA, known also for his work on Australian War Memorial publications as a Senior Research Officer in the Historical Research Section of the AWM, his latest work is directed toward general readers and family historians with military ancestors who served in Australia.

The book meets the aim, giving a brief outline of the service of the regiments with some few activities highlighted — the Eureka Stockade, the fight against bushrangers and the now popular social historians' concept of a 'war' against the aboriginals — a theory not accepted by most military historians. No coverage is given to the explorations undertaken by soldiers and little recognition of the successful establishment of new settlements, each one a microcosm of the initial settlement in 1788. There are a few minor errors, the worst of which is the perpetuation of R.H. Montague's mistake in his *Dress and Insignia of the British Army in Australia and New Zealand 1770-1870* that the Royal Staff Corps were messengers and orderlies. They were artisans, the field engineers of the Commander-in-Chief, and they were brought to Australia to supervise convict works.

The illustrations by Lindsay Cox, another well-known MHSA member, are colourful and effect some realism. However, it would be valuable to the military historian to have some references in support of the various colonial variations on authorised forms of dress.

The appendices provide the real value for the family researchers, giving details of the research resources in this country and in the Public Record Office at Kew in England. One small point which needs clarification — Appendix I, the years during which the regiments served in Australia — the official dates for arrival and departure are the dates on which the headquarters of the regiment arrived and departed. This is essential to know because regimental records moved with the headquarters and the detail to be found in them is more detailed and likely to be more correct when the headquarters was in this country.

In the absence of a definitive history of the Imperial Garrison in Australia, Peter Stanley's book provides the researcher with a starting point for more detailed work. It is a valuable contribution towards filling the gap in this long neglected aspect of Australia's military history. A useful acquisition for the Australian history shelves in libraries and for those with an interest in Australian military history from 1788 to 1870.

T.C. Sargent

'VFX4777' (Compiler), *A Brief record of the Australian Army Nursing Service 1939-45*. Illustrations and map. Available from Anzac House, 4 Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic. 3000. Cost \$6.00 including postage. Proceeds to the Australian Army Nursing Service Benevolent Fund.

This slim volume gives a short account of the work performed during the 1939-45 war by those gallant 3,477 members of the AANS, 53 of whom never returned to their loved ones.

The first chapter provides a run down on the history of military nursing since its official recognition, as an essential arm, during the Crimean war. Attention is drawn to the 30 Australian Army nurses — my records list 41 — the spearpoint of the Service who served in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer war, one dying of disease.

We are told in ensuing chapters of the Service in the Middle East, duties in Britain, India and Ceylon, the tragedy of the fall of Malaya and Singapore, the horrors of prisoner-of-war experiences and of Rabaul and the South West Pacific campaigns.

Australian Army medical units operating within Australia and overseas are catalogued, as well as Hospital and Troop Ship listings. The photographs are excellent, including two coloured, and relevant to the work, especially one of an AGH in Palestine which appeared in a wartime issue of the *Australian Womens Weekly*.

The beautifully coloured world map would have enhanced any geography classroom wall but was of little value in pin-pointing the places where the Australian Army nurses served and won 137 awards, including 82 Mentions in Despatches.

The nine blank pages might have been utilised better; either in text or providing space for area maps. However, having firsthand knowledge of the problems of book printing, this may have been out of the author's hands.

Nevertheless I congratulate the author upon her achievement for it represents a labour of love in compiling this vital information, much of it gained at first hand.

To everyone who wishes to read of the trials and tribulations of our sisters in arms it is a worthy addition to their bookshelf.

John E. Price

Lindsay C. Cox, *The Galloping Guns of Rupertswood and Werribee Park*, Coonans Hill Press, Pascoe Vale South, Vic, 1986. ISBN 0 958068 0 7, pp.208, illus, bibliography, 5 appendices. \$30.00.

Sometime during the late 1960s I made a rubbing off a plate affixed to a field gun located near the centre of Sunbury. For many years that artillery piece has been the sole tangible evidence of an extraordinary military unit. It had been patriotically raised by a wealthy landowner, Sir W.J. Clarke, Bart, for the defence of the Colony of Victoria plus the subtle purpose of stifling any thoughts of armed insurrection.

With the publication of *The Galloping Guns* Lindsay Cox has resurrected the regiment by relating its full story from inception as the Rupertswood Battery of Nordenfeldt machine guns on the 30 December 1884, through its conversion to horse artillery in March 1889, and its enlargement, for a short period, by a half battery situated at Werribee Park, this being disbanded in the year that the Victorian Horse Artillery gained undying glory when 14 members travelled to Britain to participate in the Royal Islington and Dublin military tournaments. The tour's culmination was its escort role at the wedding of the future King George and Queen Mary, plus a reception by Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace. All this had been achieved in spite of a fiscal-conscious Government.

At first sight *Galloping Guns* is very pleasing, maybe perhaps a little on the hefty size, but once opened it becomes obvious that the subject matter would have suffered had the format been smaller.

The reviewer is fully aware that the writing of a regimental history can be frustrating with all the worries of missing nominal rolls, or the absence of important data. Nevertheless Lindsay Cox has achieved a gigantic task, for not only has he compiled the fascinating story of the VHA but given us an insight into the family life of one of Victoria's landed aristocracy plus a little of the Colony's social history which admirably slots into the overall tapestry.

The book is profusely illustrated containing some 60 hitherto unpublished photographs, four colour plates and well over 400 line drawings, the majority being executed in Lindsay's inimitable style. *Galloping Guns* is a treasury of minutiae listing *inter alia* the quantities of rations consumed during the 1891 Easter instructional camp, or the heart out-pourings of one, Gunner Percy Rumley, who was smitten by the beauty of the Governor's consort.

Reading through the pages a glimpse is caught of a vanished age when patriotism was a noble word. Of men, often after a hard day's work, willingly taking the tedious return train journey, 45 nights a year, from Melbourne to Sunbury or Werribee, to receive instruction to prepare them for the defence of their homes should the need arise. Although the battery never fired a shot in anger, for many that preparedness paid off whilst later serving actively on the South African veldt.

To everyone interested in Australian military history, especially genealogists, or those who love a rattling good yarn, I heartily recommend *Galloping Guns*.

John E. Price

Bede Nairn and Geoffrey Serle (eds), *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 10. 1891-1939, Lat-Ner*, Melbourne University Press, 1986. pp.680, index of authors, \$35 HB.

This volume of the ADB contains biographical details of some 650 notable Australians whose surnames commence within the Lat-Ner range.

The period of this series, 1891-1939, is an important one militarily, taking in people who served in the colonial as well as the Commonwealth forces in the Sudan, South Africa and both world wars.

The subjects are, as usual, a mixed lot, the many politicians, business men, lawyers, soldiers and clerics being joined by some unusual characters such as Marconi, the goanna oil manufacturer, Kate Leigh, the Sydney brothel owner and sly grog dealer (described as a 'crime entrepreneur'), Lennie Lower, the humorist and a host of others, 'baddies' as well as 'goodies', as the selectors have been known to put it.

Entries range in length from about 500 to over 5000 words and comprise details of the subject's birth and parentage, education, military and civilian career, honours and awards, marriage, issue and date and cause of death. (All the people in this series of the ADB are deceased.) The value of these potted biographies to the military researcher varies somewhat according to the number of words allotted for the entry. John Monash, with some 5000 words by Geoffrey Serle, heads the large number of those who served in the armed forces. Winners of the VC are automatically included (I can count eight in this volume, including Joe Maxwell, VC, MC and Bar, DCM); others include the Leane brothers, J.G. Legge, Dame Maud McCarthy, J.W. McCay, Chaplain William (Fighting Mac) McKenzie and Lenehan and Morant of the Bushveldt Carbineers (Handcock appeared in Volume 8) — to name a few.

Others having an impact on military matters include Daniel Mannix (conscription), Keith Murdoch (war correspondent), A.E. Leighton and Essington Lewis (munitions) and the Longstaffs and McCubbin (war artists).

These brief biographies have been carefully researched and are an excellent foundation for more detailed and comprehensive examinations of the subjects' careers. There are two volumes to come in this 1891-1939 series. So far, the Dictionary has over 7000 entries prepared by more than 2500 contributors. Writers published in Volume 10 who are identified as members of the MHSA comprise Peter Burness, Max Chamberlain, Chris Coulthard-Clark, Bob Courtney, Matthew Dicker, Alan Fraser, Garry Garrisson, Matthew Higgins, Ronald Hopkins, Bill Land, Warren Perry, Anthony Staunton, Ralph Sutton, Phil Vernon and Hans Zwillenberg.

Contributors are not paid and that is no doubt reflected in the price of this volume, at \$35 wonderful value for so much of worth and interest.

Alan Fraser

Society Notes

Office bearers

The following were elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Albury-Wodonga Branch held on 3 September 1986:

President: Mr Don Horne
 Secretary/Treasurer: Mrs Cheryl Johnson
 Publicity Officer: Mr Robert Morrison
 Assistant Publicity Officer: Mr Russell Johnson
 Committee: Messrs A. Dunscombe, P. Beaucroft,
 I. Dicking and D. Campbell.

It is with deep regret that we record the death on 31 December 1986 of Betty, wife of our Federal Secretary, Clem Sargent, after a long illness. The executive and members of the Society and the editorial sub-committee of *Sabretache* offer sincere condolences to Clem and the family.

Chris Fagg of Pollards Road, Rocky Cape 7321 has provided some further information on the medals awarded to Captain M.J. Herbert, referred to in Paul Rosenzweig's article 'Furthest inland at Gallipoli', which appeared in the April/June 1986 issue.

Captain (Hon. Major) M.J. Herbert, UL, South Australia, was one of only 272 Australians to receive both the Colonial Auxiliary Force Officers Decoration (CAFOD) and the Colonial Auxiliary Force Long Service Medal (CAFLSM). His CAFLSM was promulgated in C of A Gazette No. 67 of 25 September 1924, p.1845 and his CAFOD in Gazette No. 94 of 5 November 1925, p.1713.

Only 872 George V CAFODs were awarded to Australians, 46 of them in 1925. Australians received 1102 George V CAFLSMs including 58 in 1924.

The Royal Warrant dated 9 May 1925, LG 22 May 1925, authorised all recipients to use the letters 'V.D.' after their name. This is the same post nominal lettering as used for the Volunteer Officers Decoration and often confuses people in determining a recipient's actual award when only the post nominals are known. Herbert received the CAFOD and not the Volunteer Officers Decoration.

MHSA member A.G. Batten is Chief Executive of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Western Australia Incorporated and has advised that the Society has a shop containing a 'largish' range of militaria, including Australian and British cap and collar badges, head gear ranging from metal helmets through to blue cloth helmets, caps, etc., medals, books and so on. There is no catalogue but they would welcome specific or general requests. The address is Jackson House, Clontarf Boys Town, 295 Manning Road, Bentley, WA 6102.

Member Lieutenant Tom Frame, RAN has taken over as the Director/Officer of the Museum of HMAS *Cerberus* in Victoria. Significant and growing improvements are being effected in the exhibition and display methods and an archival section holding a variety of source material on the establishment and the RAN in general is also attached to the museum. Society members wishing to use the facilities or resources of the museum at any time should contact Tom at the Museum of HMAS *Cerberus*, Westernport, Vic. 3920.

Would the member who renewed his subscription on 11 November 1986 with a money order for \$26 issued at Morningside, Qld Post Office, but who overlooked enclosing his name with the payment please contact the Queensland Branch Secretary, Mr Syd Wigzell, so that the renewal can be correctly attributed.

Members' wants

Dr. Philip Green of 237 Bathurst Road, Blackheath, NSW, 2785, is seeking details regarding the 'Royal Durrani order of the crown of Amanullah' which was conferred by the ex-kings of Afghanistan. A photograph would be appreciated, or information re availability of a replica.

Notes on contributors

John Meyers has been a member of the MHSa for over six years and was a medal collector prior to commencing Wide Bay Antique Militaria at Gympie, Queensland. He specialises in Australian medals, badges, books, etc.

Albert (Bert) Denman joined the AIF at 17 and served in France on the Somme with the 51st Battalion in 1918. He was wounded and later gassed and embarked for home just after his 19th birthday. Joining the militia in South Australia in early 1939 he was called up for guard duties and was commissioned in 1940, later serving in other states and overseas. He was in charge of training in the 3rd Infantry Training Battalion as second in command to Major H.W. Scudds, MC and bar and also served periods administering command of the 3rd, 9th and 32nd Training Battalions in NSW in 1944-45.

Peter Wilmot is a collector and researcher of Australian Boer War and RAN medals and has been a member of the Victorian Branch since 1978, serving on the committee for five years, including three as Treasurer. He is author of the family history *The Wilmot story* and is active in the boy scout movement as a Scout leader.

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

Paul Rosenzweig is a medal collector and a frequent contributor to *Sabretache* and other journals. Resident in Darwin, he is Reconnaissance Troop commander of NORFORCE. The biography of Commodore E.E. Johnston is taken from Paul's unpublished manuscript 'For Service...' on awards of the Order of Australia for service to the Northern Territory.

Barry Videon is a founder member of the Society and was the first editor of *Sabretache*, also occupying various committee positions. A keen promoter of and writer on military collecting and history, he is currently working on a book on badges for wear by civilians or on civilian clothing. Barry recently retired from public service and from command of the Victorian Squadron of the Air Training Corps.

John Price is a regular contributor to *Sabretache*. He has wide interests in history and is the author of a number of books and articles.

Clem Sargent, Federal Secretary of the MHSa, has torn himself away from his preoccupation with the Peninsular War and the Peninsular veteran in Australia to present an article on the service of a Royal Navy forebear. However in a forthcoming issue he is reverting to form with an interesting hypothesis on the first military medals to be awarded in Australia — to Peninsular veterans, of course.

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Details may be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to:

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GPO Box 478, ACT 2601.

Completed application forms and reports from three referees must be submitted by Friday, 27 February 1987.

52919



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

Apr.-Jun. edition mailed last week of June

Jul.-Sept. edition mailed last week of September

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 April for April-June edition

1 July for July-September 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:

Julie Russell, 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

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

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