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Sabretache



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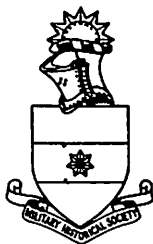
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SABRETACHE



**The Journal and Proceedings of
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those of the Society.

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Naval gallery An interim naval gallery was completed recently at the War Memorial commemorating the role of the navy in Australia's military history until a larger permanent naval exhibition is mounted towards the end of the year.

The interim gallery focuses on Australia's naval history in the two world wars. Prior to federation in 1901, Australia possessed no combined naval force and the individual colonies were responsible for coastal and port defence, while the Royal Navy protected ocean commerce. Although a Commonwealth naval force was enacted soon after 1901, the title of the RAN was not granted until 1911.

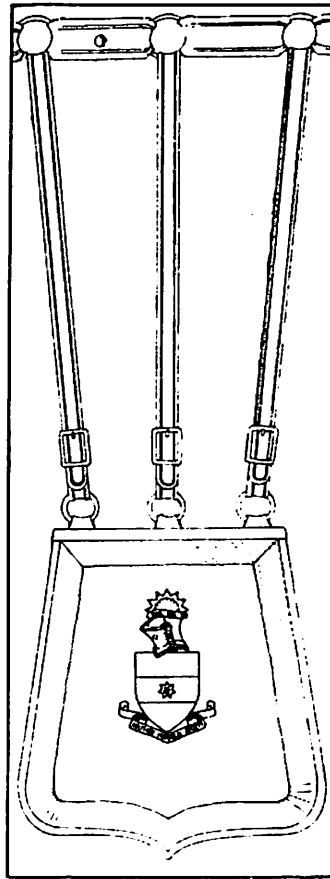
In 1918, the navy had 37 ships and 5000 officers and ratings. By 1945, 40,000 personnel were serving in the RAN — seven times the pre-war figure — including 2600 members of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service. Like other Australian services, the RAN was raised principally from citizen volunteers. Nearly 2000 RAN personnel were killed in action during the first and second world wars.

The gallery contains many fascinating relics from Australia's naval past. Exhibits include male and female naval uniforms and equipment and an extensive range of second world war naval trade badges.

The Coo-ee March A re-enactment of the famous Coo-ee recruiting march of 1915 is proposed for 24 October to 14 November 1987.

When recruiting had slackened in 1915, a recruiting march was staged from Gilgandra, NSW to Sydney, via Dubbo, Geurie, Wellington, Molong, Orange, Blayney, Bathurst, Lithgow, Katoomba, Penrith, Parramatta and towns between. Lacking official assistance, support from people along the way was overwhelming and starting with 26 men the march arrived in the Domain with 263.

As in 1915, the 1987 march will rely on the generosity of private citizens for support. With the route divided into sections, each basically one town or village, assistance for the march and the marchers is being sought from local communities and groups.



The 21st We have received a copy of the April 1987 issue of *The Red and Black Diamond*, official organ of the 21st Battalion AIF Association. The 21st was formed early in 1915 as part of the 6th Brigade and was in action at Gallipoli, Pozieres, Bapaume 1917, Bullecourt, Passchendaele, Broodseinde, Amiens, Hindenburg Line, Mont St Quentin and Beauraivoir. A member of the battalion, Sergeant Albert David Lowerson (1869-1945), was awarded the Victoria Cross for leadership and courage during the capture of Mont St Quentin on 1 September 1918.

The battalion association executive now comprises only three members, Bob Burns, Bert Rea and Allen Gregerson. The list of survivors known to the association numbers thirty one, although there could be some others.

It is heartening to note that the comradeship of the war is still being preserved after some seventy years. The Honorary Secretary of the Association is Allen Gregerson, 1/1 Conway Crescent, Balwyn 3103.

Interested parties can contact Mr Bryan Bywater, Lime Street, Geurie, 2819 (Ph. 068-87 1113), who conceived this idea of following the footsteps of the Coo-ees.

The Garrison Church The Rector and Parish Council of Holy Trinity (the Garrison Church), Argyle Place, Miller's Point, Sydney have requested the pleasure of the company of all interested persons at a service commemorating the *early British regiments* to be held on Sunday, 2 August, 1987 at 10.30 am.

The service will be attended by many descendants of British soldiers who settled in Australia last century. Memorabilia and information about the various regiments will be displayed in the church hall after the service.

Fort Scratchley We have received a copy of the 1986 annual report of the Fort Scratchley Military Museum Society, Newcastle. Formed in February 1982, in less than four and a half years to the date of the report, 30 June 1986, the Society had attracted a membership of 113 and accumulated funds in excess of \$19,000. Extensive work has been carried out on the grounds of the fort and six-inch guns, and a museum of military artifacts and other items, displayed in purpose-built showcases, and a shop for the sale of souvenirs, including some specifically designed and produced for the Society, have been established.

All this has been carried out by Society members in their own time and without official assistance. We congratulate the Society, which is a corporate member of the MHSA, on its remarkable achievements.

(An article on the Fort Scratchley Museum, written by former President, Dick Mort, appeared in the January/March 1985 issue of *Sabretache*. Major Carl Christie, P.O. Box 971, Newcastle 2300, is Hon. Secretary of the Society).

A.E. (Bert) Denman

To France

In the previous issue Bert Denman related his experiences undergoing infantry training on Salisbury Plain, England. He joined a draft for France in March 1918, shortly after his eighteenth birthday.

The first three weeks

We entrained at Codford in the late afternoon of the eighteenth of March and embarked at Southampton that same evening at about eight. It was a small ship of about three or four thousand tons and was crammed with troops, mainly English 'Tommys' and Australians. We were herded up forward into the very bowels of the vessel, with only the shell between us and the sea.

The port was in almost total darkness. The weather was murky and threatening with masses of heavy cloud and the prospect of a choppy sea. The atmosphere below, with its heavy smell of carbolic, was of no assistance to one who was only a passable sailor. By the time we had passed the Isle of Wight and were into the Channel, I was already feeling queasy. I had been talking to a 'Tommy' sergeant who was sympathetic. His well meaning advice, however, to 'put your finger down your throat, chum', misfired for I was awfully sick for the rest of the way.

The choppy overnight trip ended with our arrival at Le Havre, and what a relief to get up on deck and into the fresh air. It was a grey, drizzly depressing day. Our first thoughts were of food, for we had not eaten since late afternoon the day before. An hour or so later we had disembarked and marched to the staging camp on the outskirts of the city, where we were fed.

We staged two nights at the camp and entrained on 21 March for the north of France where we hoped to join our unit. We arrived at Bailleul, after a slow journey, two days later. We had stopped, waited, shunted back and forth several times and had meals at all times and places before it was all over.

We could not have arrived at a worse time. The German army had just begun its big spring offensive and had broken through the British lines. Things were in a state of flux. Our unit had been sent south to the Somme and we were virtually stranded. The camp authorities took us over and we were set to work digging trenches and erecting double-apron barbed wire. This meant marching out some kilometres each day, taking out a cut lunch.

Two things happened during the three weeks that followed which I have never forgotten. It marked the only time I ever dropped out of a route march in two wars, and disobeyed an order (to keep marching).

Marching out to work one morning, I developed a chafe high up on the inside of my leg, probably because of a knot of cotton in my trousers. The further we marched, the worse it got and continued during our digging operations. Later, after lunch and more digging, we formed up for the march back to camp.

We'd gone about a mile and I was in misery. I called to the officer and fell out to the left of the road. He came back and after a few words told me I would have to march on. I tried and after a couple of hundred yards, fell out again. The lieutenant was annoyed, but left me, saying I would hear more of it. I continued slowly, hoping for a lorry going my way. Half an hour later I was picked up by an army lorry, which to my relief would be passing the camp. That lieutenant could'n't have been a bad sort, for I heard no more about the incident.

Several days later, about a week before the end of our stay, the camp sergeant-major told us to strip our equipment down to 'belt and sidearms' (waist belt and bayonet). It was raining steadily, and we were told we would be marching to Strazeele, to form a guard of honour for King George the Fifth.

So, with our hats turned down and our ground-sheet capes buttoned to the neck, we set off at about nine o'clock, partly cross country on an almost four mile march. The rain continued, running off our hat brims and down our rubberised capes as we squelched across the water-logged paddocks.

We formed up on each side of a muddy road leading into the town, with several feet between men, probably to give the impression of a larger number. We were allowed to smoke, but it was a work of art to keep a cigarette alight under such moist conditions. We whiled away our time with jokes and yarns and a few chaps started a small game of two-up. Apart from the odd army lorry, there was little traffic on the road, so a lone farm cart attracted

some attention. The laden cart was one with which troops in rear areas had already grown familiar. The old farmer and his wife, with their belongings, had abandoned their farm and were fleeing at a snail's pace to a safer place until the wretched war was ended. The cart was piled high with household goods, furniture, tools and utensils. There was an iron bed and bedding, chairs, tables, a dresser, a roll of 'oilcloth' and a wardrobe. The four side of the cart were festooned with shovels, forks, rakes, a saucepan, frying pan, tubs, buckets, other utensils, and two hurricane lanterns. A damp, scruffy bedraggled nondescript dog trotted dejectedly beneath the cart, as if imbued with the same mood as his master.

Somebody yelled 'here comes the King'. A few blokes laughed, but the dispossessed elderly couple drove on stolidly. Even the dog did not look up. Poor devils, they had little enough to laugh about. They were homeless and all they possessed was on that heavy laden cart. They epitomized the fate of thousands of other civilian victims of the war.

Many of these unfortunates left everything behind, sometimes in such haste in all that they wore. In many cases meals were left partly eaten as they fled in fear. Household larders were left full, shops, warehouses, factories, estaminets left their stocks intact before the advancing enemy.

Just then a major ambled by on a white horse, calling as he rode, 'when the King comes through the men will cheer and the officers will stand at the salute'. It was still raining steadily. There was a ragged shout from the end of the line, 'Here he comes'. Everyone shuffled into position and waited expectantly. Necks were craned to catch the first glimpse of our Monarch.

Suddenly he was there, actually passing us. He sat behind the driver and on our side of the road, so we saw him clearly from less than ten feet away. As the royal car drove by at a steady pace, his right hand mechanically rose and led to the peak of his gold braided cap as he acknowledged the cheers and salutes of his loyal subjects, most of whom had travelled twelve thousand miles to defend the Empire.

Suddenly it was all over. He had come and gone. The black saloon car disappeared up the road towards the Front.

It was still raining as we reformed ranks to march back to camp. The only grizzles I heard were about the lousy weather. Everyone seemed to appreciate the honour of seeing His Majesty at close range. Once again in the shelter of our tents, we re-assembled our equipment, sat down, talked and smoked as we waited for the whistle to signal that our late lunch was ready.

Our programme of wiring and digging continued for about another week. During our three weeks as

an impromptu labour unit, we were never out of sound of shell fire, and at night we could see the glare of the gun flashes like lightning on the horizon on a dark night.

We entrained at Bailleul on April the eleventh and caught up with the 51st two days later at Corbie, on the Somme.

Villers-Bretonneux — a baptism of fire

With several other reinforcements, I finally 'caught up' with my unit, the 51st Infantry Battalion (WA), 13th Brigade, in the second week of April 1918. They were billeted in the abbey town of Corbie on the River Somme. Living was good, for the population had cleared out at short notice, in many cases leaving partly-eaten meals on the table. Food was plentiful in the town as well as army rations; poultry and rabbit was often on the menu. Many of us were in two and three-storied buildings, sleeping in real beds with blankets and often sheets. There was liquor available for those who wanted it, even champagne and good wine. Corbie had the usual number of estaminets (bars) and several breweries. An army bath unit was in the crypt of the abbey. Several large wooden half-vats were kept part filled with warm water and several men bathed at the same time.

As a young reinforcement, Corbie holds many memories. It was there that I had my baptism of artillery fire. Corbie was shelled every day that I was there, with 'gun fire' (one gun firing at one time). The daily strafe began in the neighbouring town of la Neuville and stepped down the main street and into the main street of Corbie at intervals of about a couple of hundred yards. It was no joke to be playing cards in the cellar when the top floor was demolished by a 'five point nine'. Parades were held each day, when troops were allotted fatigues and other duties. This sometimes meant marching out several 'kilos' to dig reserve line trenches between Heilly and Bonnay or on the west side of the River Ancre.

With many members of the 51st and a few thousand other troops, I saw the beginning of an aerial battle on Sunday, 21 April, several thousand feet above the Somme, between twenty five to thirty planes. It was an important battle as it marked the beginning of the end of the German 'ace', the Red Baron, von Richthofen in his all-red triplane. Due to intervening ground, trees and houses, the end was seen by only a 'handful' as the end came when the Red Baron was less than a hundred feet up.

The following day we marched out of Corbie in summery weather on our way to the village of Querrieu on the Amiens-Albert road and across the Hallue River from Pont Noyelles where other members of our brigade were billeted. The new billets were not as good as Corbie but there was lots

of straw and a number of us were in haylofts and barns. With the issue of an extra Lewis gun, each platoon now had two of these useful weapons, almost doubling its fire power. The weather was fine and the troops enjoyed it but it was too good to last. Early in the morning of 24 April, there was heavy gun-fire on our front and rear areas. A few dropped near us but a high velocity gun fired on Pont Noyelles every three minutes for a couple of hours.

Word was received later in the morning that Villers-Bretonneux had fallen, after a heavy barrage of gas and high explosive shells and assisted by tanks and a heavy ground mist. As soon as the news reached our higher command, orders came for its immediate recapture, as it was vital for the security of Amiens, a key city and important rail centre.

As the 13th was the nearest Australian reserve brigade, we were ordered to carry out the task. With the remainder of the brigade, billeted in Pont Noyelles and Daours, we were ordered to march south at once to assist in the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux. Packs and blankets were handed in and we were told we were to march at a quarter past eleven. It was not long before we were on our way on the part cross-country trek down the picturesque valley of the Hallue River, on our way to the assembly area of Abbe Wood. We encountered a few shells on the way and moved into artillery formation. When crossing the river flats, a lone enemy plane fired on us. We took cover behind the trunks of leafless trees and returned his fire, probably a couple of hundred rifles and a dozen or so Lewis guns.

The higher command had insisted that the town was to be taken that night at the latest. As far as the Australians were concerned it was to be a double counter-stroke, north and south of the town. The 13th Brigade would attack along the south with the 15th under Brigadier 'Pompey' Elliott along the north. A number of British troops would be involved with the 24th Brigade on our right. The 2nd Northants were to mop up the town which was to be shelled by the artillery until eleven o'clock. Our aircraft would also participate in this task.

Our brigade commander, Brigadier Glasgow, insisted that he must gain a clear notion of the situation and be in complete agreement with the plans before beginning such a difficult task. With this in mind he told the divisional commander, General Heneker, he would go forward himself and return to report. At Blangy Wood however he met a young staff officer who was able to convince him on many of the matters he sought. The staff officer had just returned from Cachy and Abbe Wood. The brigadier then returned to Divisional HQ at Glisy to continue the conference. He told the general he intended to attack from a north-south line between the wood and Cachy. General Heneker told him he

could not do it as the corps commander said the attack was to be made from Cachy. The brigadier pointed out that it was against army teaching to attack across the enemy front, adding 'the troops would get hell from the right'. 'Tell us what you want us to do, sir, but you must let us do it our way'. The brigadier wanted no creeping barrage as the enemy positions were unknown and many of the British guns had not yet been 'shot in'. As he was leaving he asked the general about the timing and said he proposed to start at ten-thirty. He was told the corps commander wanted an eight o'clock start. The brigadier's recorded response was, 'If it was God Almighty who gave the order, we couldn't do it in daylight, our artillery is largely out of action and the enemy guns are all in position.' It was pointed out by General Heneker that all the other troops would be in position by eight and asked the brigadier whether eight-thirty, nine, or nine-thirty would suit him. The brigadier finally agreed to concede half an hour and start the attack at ten o'clock. (Author's note. I feel very strongly that the foregoing notes about Brigadier Glasgow are essential to prove just what a fine commander he was and that he had the interests of his men at heart.)

While these negotiations were proceeding we were still marching towards our assembly area. Our CO, Lieutenant Colonel Christie, another fine soldier, had returned to us at eight o'clock from a conference with the brigadier. Our Intelligence Officer and his scouts were ready to go forward and tape the starting line. The company commanders had only ten minutes to instruct the platoon commanders before the march to the start line began.

The taping party moved forward. It was not really dark before about nine and they were surprised to be fired on from inside the wood, which should have been cleared of the enemy. With some help from nearby English troops, four of the scouts lined the edge of the wood and kept the enemy quiet. Luckily darkness came on quickly, the moon in its second quarter being covered by clouds. The tapes were finally laid from the corner of the wood some three hundred yards in rear of the line first intended.

In the meantime, we were on the move in artillery formation towards the jumping-off-mark. It was a quarter to ten when the front of the 52nd reached their tape. We arrived at ours only seven minutes before zero hour. Our CO was there ahead of us and was pushing the platoons into place. An enemy flare went up and a machine gun opened up from the wood to our left.

With many other young reinforcements on the tape, it was my first time under enemy small arms fire. If our hearts beat a little faster, I suppose we could be excused, for this was our initiation to the unknown, our baptism. Whatever happened that

night would be something we never dreamed of nor would ever forget. We were destined to look death in the face many times in the hours that followed, to see our mates fall, some without a sound, others grievously hurt and when daylight came we would see many hanging on our own wire. We would certainly grow older and wiser on this fateful night.

Colonel Christie and Colonel Whitham of the 52nd agreed to delay the start for ten minutes to allow the 51st to deploy. At ten o'clock the British artillery opened up on the town. Five minutes later the German guns replied and shells fell in the assembly area.

It was ten past ten when the order was given to advance. We were to go forward four thousand yards, straight to the old lines beyond the monument. The two leading battalions (51st and 52nd) were to keep close touch with each other during the attack. The two COs would move on the inner flanks and meet at four points along the way. We were to reach the crossroad in front of the monument by eleven o'clock, when the artillery would lift. Speed was essential; the front wave must push on at all costs, leaving trenches to be mopped up by the

second line. All Germans were to be dealt with rapidly. In the words of one company commander, 'The Monument is your goal and nothing is to stop you getting there, kill every German you see, we don't want any prisoners and God bless you'.

Men hurried forward over the soft ground. German flares burst in the cloudy sky above us, men 'froze' where they stood until the bright light died away (to move would have made a deadly target), the line moved on again. We could hear the tap-tap of machine gun and rifle bullets. Some 'cracked' at about head height, others swished viciously at a lower level, while some zipped into the ground at our feet and others thudded into soft yielding bodies. Men dropped, often silently and never moved, others dropped to take cover. More flares cast their brilliant light over the landscape and we froze until they died away. Death marched with us as wicked bursts of light machine gun fire cut swathes through the ranks. The right flank of the 51st was stopped ironically at a double-apron oblique barbed wire near Cachy, which was being enfiladed by machine gun fire. Casualties were heavy. There were 'gaps' in the wire but they were hard to find in the uncertain light.



The ruins of Villers-Bretonneux in May 1918, seen from the window of the South Chateau, then occupied by a light trench mortar battery. The village was the scene of some fighting, chiefly 'mopping up', following the recapture of the position by the 13th and 15th Brigades on the night of 24 April. (AWM E 2154)



The ruined tower of the church of Villers-Brettonneux in France in May 1918. (AWM E 2155).

As I dropped in front of the wire, two others dropped with me, one on each side. I thought I felt the bayonet scabbard of the chap on my right swing over and hit me on the back. We lay for a while as bullets swished into and through the wire and into the grass about us. Suddenly, the other two, both runners, stood up to go forward. As they did, both dropped again, hit by a burst of fire and never moved. Several of us scrambled through the wire and caught up with our company which was disorganised. Our artillery and planes had started fires in Villers-Brettonneux, making a land-mark enabling our officers to reform the company.

We were soon on the move again in artillery formation, but suddenly came under fire from about two hundred Germans with rifles and machine guns. We went to ground and waited for them to get closer. A few moments later a company of the 50th appeared on our left. The enemy decided to run for

it, but they had come pretty close and many of them never got away. Lieutenant Roy Earl led us toward the town to cut off any retreating enemy from the village. Our other Lewis gun section commander, Corporal Cecil Burt and his number two gunner, Reg. Hellyer, suddenly came upon forty Germans carrying four machine guns just before another chap and I came down the slope. Corporal Burt had dropped the gun to his right hip in a threatening manner and demanded in a loud voice that they surrender which they promptly did. They never knew the gun was out of order and could only fire single shots. A bullet had gone through the rear radiator casing, cutting off the gas supply and the back-sight had been shot away by a piece of shell. Both men were awarded a DCM.

Our company had established itself on the line of a sunken road leading out of the town by early morning. We were still being fired upon by machine

guns from the edge of the town and snipers were still busy. We were short of our objective, Monument Wood, by a few hundred yards. Many of us had got closer but it was decided to consolidate on the road. When daylight came we could see the town and monument quite clearly. We had dug ourselves into the side of a cutting facing the enemy in front, but there were still a few snipers in the outskirts of the town. About fifteen of our chaps, all dead, were lying further up the road where they had been caught in enfilade fire. I had not seen my Lewis gun corporal, Jerry Oliver, since before reaching the barbed wire. (He was wounded about first light but I did not know.) I crawled along the road to the group, but he was not among them.

It was only at breakfast time that I found there was little to eat. When rations were issued the previous evening for the attack, my mate took the cheese, the jam and some of biscuits. I carried the bully beef, a quarter of a loaf of bread, margarine and biscuits. We sat down as best we could to eat and I undid my haversack. A first look showed that my ground sheet-cape, carried folded under the straps of the haversack had been hit from the side by at least two bullets. I opened it out and saw that it had been ripped to shreds. I opened the haversack and took out my dixie. Another bullet had gone through it from top to bottom, through the stale bread and the tin of beef. It must have happened ten hours previously when lying in front of the wire. The bully beef and the dixie were useless so I threw them away. The bread was mostly crumbs but we ate it. Later in the morning our Corporal Brown was serving out the rum, which is only about a table-spoonful anyway. While serving it to our platoon in the sunken road he was sniped sideways through the chest and to his credit he never spilt a drop. He recovered from the wound but was a sick man for a long time.

Later that day I found a fragment of minenwerfer shell embedded in the container of my respirator. I had been wearing it in the 'alert' position (on my chest) at the time. At about nine o'clock that morning an officer from a British regiment arrived at the joint Battalion HQ of the 51st and 52nd, with two blindfolded Germans. They had come into a British post, under a white flag. They were blindfolded and led to the Australian HQ. The senior of the two, a sergeant major, carried an amazing verbal message from his commander. Speaking in excellent English the NCO, a big man, said 'My commander has sent me to tell you that you are confronted by superior forces and surrounded on three sides. There are two Guards divisions and another division. He desires to know whether you will surrender and avoid a big loss of life. If you do not surrender he will blow you to pieces by turning the heavy artillery on to your trenches'.

The demand was a complete surprise to the battalion commanders. But it did not seem so absurd to company officers and front line troops, who had seen something of what had been happening. There were Germans on three sides of our 13th Brigade all right. The wood on our left was being cleaned up, but a big force of enemy seemed to be establishing itself behind our right flank. It seemed to the officers and men in our front line area, that there could be a strong enemy counter-attack from that direction. It also seemed that a terrific barrage would be laid on the area recaptured by the 13th Brigade the night previously.

Colonel Witham conferred with Colonel Christie, Colonel Salisbury of the 52nd and Major Foster. He then turned to the German messenger, 'Tell your commander that we thank him for his courtesy, but we have no intention of accepting his offer to surrender'. The officers had doubts about the efficiency of the big NCO's blindfold as he had fidgetted with it several times, so he was told he was being taken prisoner and was sent to our rear.

About an hour afterwards, a German corporal approached the English sector of the line also under a white flag. He carried a written message from his commander. It demanded that the officer in command go at once with the corporal to a spot in no-mans-land. He was also sent to our rear. When the brigadier was advised by 'phone, his reply was, 'Tell them to go to hell'.

The NCO who delivered the verbal demand was court-martialled at Fourth Army HQ on 3 May for his part in 'the misuse of a white flag to cover a military ruse'. It was thought by our senior officers that the demands for surrender were a bluff. This was proved to be so by subsequent events. In the meantime, we were being sniped at from the direction of the threatened attack, and a number of machine guns were being set up in the area. To counter this, eight of our Vickers guns were placed in position. Two British anti-tank field guns opened up on the position and at half past five in the afternoon British 'Whippet' tanks attacked and cleared the threatened area of the enemy.

The events leading up to the demands for surrender were told to us in the afternoon. The big bombardment which everyone had anticipated fell on the whole front line at seven o'clock that evening and continued for an hour. There was nothing to do but keep low until it was over. When it did stop, to everyone's surprise, there was no counter-attack.

Word was received that a French colonial division, Moroccans, were to attack from our position. Half white-half Algerian, the Zouaves were reported to be very fit and anxious to attack. Our CO went to see the French colonel, who told him their barrage would come down on our line, not ahead of it as was

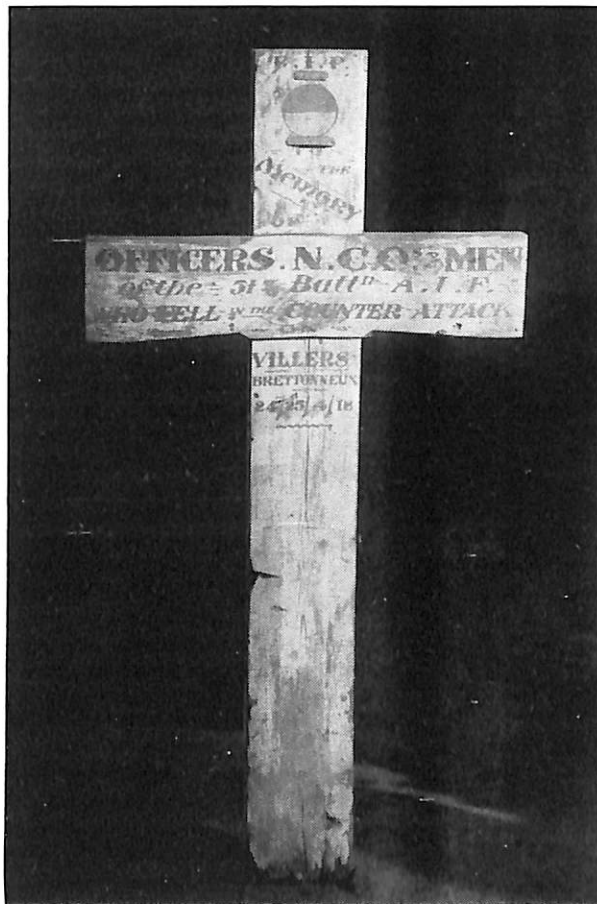
our custom. Colonel Christie was upset and said, 'My men will get hit'. The French CO shrugged his shoulders. He could not help that 'as it was a French custom'. We had to withdraw from our position and take up a new line against a bank slightly to the rear. To make matters worse, it was reported that the Germans were planning an early attack themselves, so to anticipate this, zero hour was advanced from 6am to 5.15. We had to work furiously to dig ourselves new cover, not only from the French barrage, but from the savage back-lash from the enemy guns. We certainly had the powerful incentive of self preservation to spur us on. We desperately dug and clawed at slabs of limestone to get under cover. We made it on time and crouched low to hope for the best.

When the Zouaves attacked all hell broke loose for about half an hour, shells of all calibres screamed across from both directions, some bursting in front and behind. When the barrage lifted and the

Moroccans advanced we retired through their rear elements. Late that night we were relieved by the 47th (12th Brigade) and moved back to Blangy Tronville where we took stock.

The 13th Brigade lost 1005 officers and men killed and wounded. Out of that total our 51st lost 365. Most of our casualties were caused by machine guns firing from the wood and the double-apron wire. The brigade, however, inflicted a greater number of casualties on the enemy and took more than six hundred prisoners. More importantly, it denied to the enemy the high ground in the area overlooking the 'key' city of Amiens. It proved to be the last attempt by them during the war. The counter-attack has been referred to as the most impressive operation of its kind on the Western Front.

Much credit for the operation has been given to our Higher Command. Much of the success, however, was due to the prudence, foresight, wisdom and determination of our Brigadier Glasgow.



Cross erected to commemorate the men of the 51st Battalion who fell at Villers-Bretonneux in the counter-attack on 24-25 April 1918. (AWM J 6243)

Mr Denman's experiences and his observations of life as an infantryman in France in 1918 will be continued in future issues.

Paul A. Rosenzweig

Matthias Ulungura and the capture of Toyoshima Haijame

It has been well acknowledged that an Aboriginal was responsible for capturing the first Japanese prisoner-of-war to be taken on Australian soil during the 1939-45 war, but the nature of the capture has for many years been shrouded in mystery. It is a sad reflection on our nation that the courage and determination of Matthias Ulungura was not rewarded until four decades after the cessation of hostilities; even worse, five years after his death. Less widely known is that this Japanese airman — 'POW No. 1' — a hero of the infamous raids on Pearl Harbour and Darwin, was also a prominent personality at Cowra and was a key figure in the breakout, sounding the bugle calling his countrymen to arms. This is a brief account of the fates of two brave men — Matthias Ulungura and Toyoshima Haijame.

The Cowra breakout, the most serious POW escape attempt in Australia, occurred on the night of 4/5 August 1944 at No.12 POW Compound. This was composed of four camps, each with accommodation for 1000 prisoners, 2.4 km north of the NSW town of Cowra, 319 km west of Sydney. In B Camp (Japanese) prisoners kept arriving until by mid-1944 there were 1104 of them, creating a most explosive situation.

The decision to relieve tensions by shifting the private soldiers to Hay only infuriated the Japanese and made them more determined to stage a mass breakout. Having been informed by the Commandant on 4 August that the move would occur three days later, the prisoners held a meeting at which it was decided to attempt the escape that night. The Official History records that 'At about 2 a.m. a Japanese ran to the camp gates and shouted what seemed to be a warning to the sentries'.¹ This attempt to warn the guards is also well documented by Carr-Gregg² and Timms³ (then a major, commandant of neighbouring C Camp).

Timms further recorded that 'the four men of the quarter-guard raced for the southern Broadway gates, and got there only just in time, for even as they ran could be heard the thin notes of the Japanese bugle sounding the attack'.³ This was the signal for a frenzied rush at the wire by the prisoners who were armed with a remarkable assortment of crude home-made weapons.

The threat of hordes of Japanese unleashed on the peaceful township of Cowra prompted many instances of gallantry amongst the Australian guards of the 22nd Garrison Battalion, Australian Military Forces. None so great however as that demonstrated by Privates Benjamin Hardy and Ralph Jones who 'punched their way through the prisoners, manned a Vickers gun and fired it until they were knifed and clubbed to death'.⁴ The escapees were eventually killed, wounded or captured; 31 killed themselves while sixteen of the wounded showed signs of

attempted suicide. The garrison received several commendations, while the courage of the two guards on the Vickers gun was recognised some six years later with the award of the George Cross to their next-of-kin.⁵ But what of the Japanese who gave the signal for the breakout — the bugle call which aroused his comrades to rebellion in the early hours of 5 August — Toyoshima Haijame?

He had been brought to Cowra having been taken prisoner following the first air raids on Darwin on 19 February 1942 — the first acts of enemy aggression on Australian soil. He was immediately accepted by his countrymen as the Camp Leader both for his ability to speak English and for his reputation gained during the raids of December 1941 and the following February. It was during the latter raid that he crashed his disabled Zero fighter on Melville Island to the north of Darwin, near Pickataramoor (now a Conservation Commission Forestry 'township'). Unable to destroy his aircraft as it was out of fuel, he set off in search of food and water, stumbling upon an aboriginal camp.

Here he met a number of Tiwi women and, bowing to one of them, the airman took one of the babies — perhaps as a hostage. The child's mother, Mena Puantulura, later wrote a letter to her friends describing the events of that day: 'when one boy saw the Japanese he yelled. Then that Japanese came to me and he salute me. I got properly big fright alright'.⁶ Gathering her friends, Mena set off after the pilot, recovering her three month-old son Clarence who is today a lorry driver on neighbouring Bathurst Island.⁷

Witness to this abduction at Tuyu was Matthias Ulungura together with his wife Marie Assumpta and younger brother Gregory, and Mena's husband Aloysius Puantulura. The following day, alone and unarmed, Matthias captured Toyoshima Haijame by surprising him as he walked past a tree behind which the 21 year-old Matthias had been patiently

and silently awaiting him. Douglas Lockwood quotes Matthias' account of his capture: 'I heard a noise and I saw this strange man. He had a big overall on and inside these I could see a big lump that told me it was a revolver. "Japanee", I said to my friends, so we moved out into the thick bush around the camp and waited for him to come up. I crept up behind a tree and when he passed I put the handle of a tomahawk in his back and I say "Hands up!" ... We took off his clothing, everything except his under-pants'.⁸

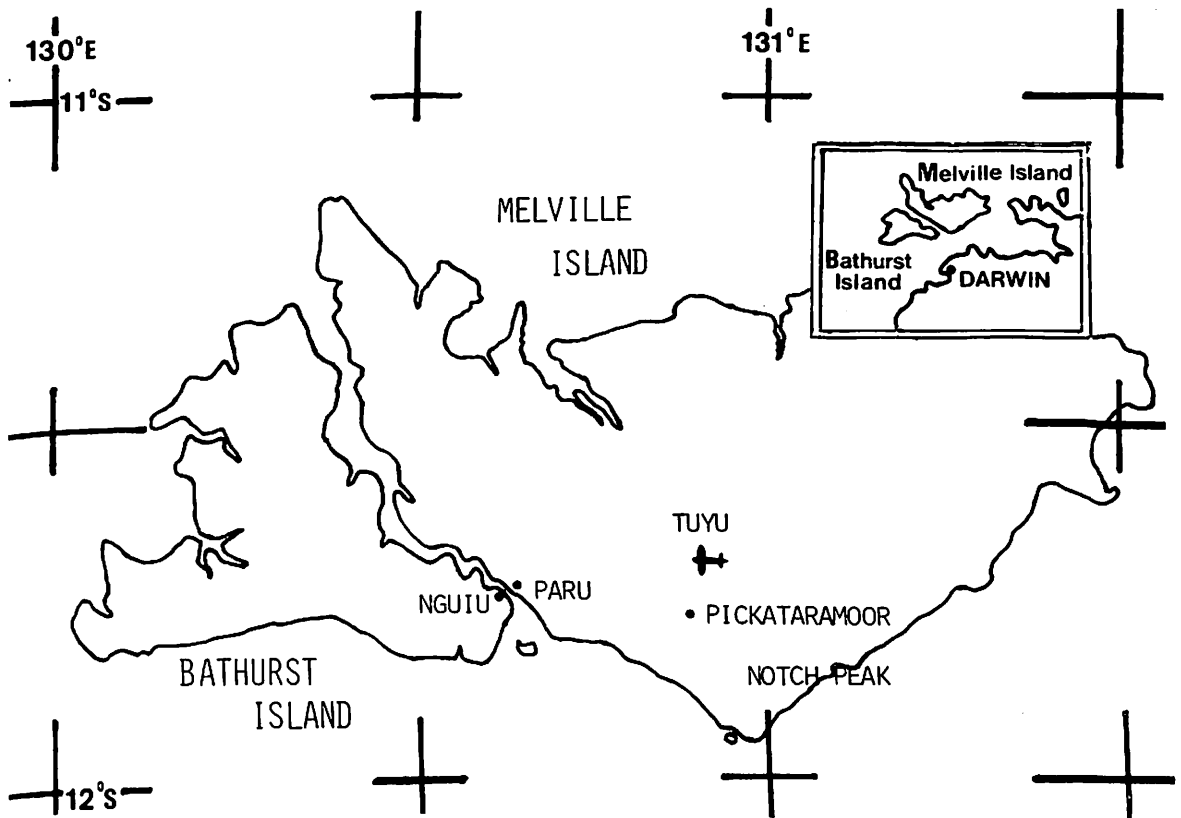
Stripping his prisoner, Matthias took possession of the pilot's papers, map, camera and revolver, securing these valuable items high in a tree. Meanwhile he had called upon three Tiwi men, Young Tiger, Big Barney and Paddy the Liar, to come and guard Toyoshima, nulla nullas at the ready.

Matthias himself held the pistol, the operation of which he had by this time mastered. It took until early next day to move the prisoner to Bathurst Island, Matthias spending a sleepless night guarding his captive. Upon arrival at the small village of Paru opposite the Bathurst Island mission settlement (now known as Nguiu), Toyoshima balked when he saw the American star on a wrecked DC-3, but a few jabs with a revolver soon urged him across the narrow Strait.

At the settlement Toyoshima was handed over to Sergeant Les Powell of the 23rd Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, who in turn passed him into the custody of Flying Officer Moore who commanded the RAAF barracks there. Matthias watched with some bemusement as his prisoner was taken into the barracks. 'I could not understand it. They took the Jap inside and gave him a number one good tucker. I thought they would shoot him after what he did to Darwin.'⁹ He further commented, 'All I could do was have a good laugh with Father McGrath when he rode up on a horse and said Yirri-Kiling-ar-par. That is, "he has an ugly face"; his face and foot were badly cut when he landed in the bush'.

Matthias later took RAAF technicians to Pickataramoor to examine the wreckage, and parts were removed for further study in Canberra. Other parts have subsequently been recovered by the Northern Territory Aviation Museum for local display.

Attempts to reward Matthias floundered in a sea of bureaucracy. Foremost in the attempt to see Matthias honoured was Doctor David Carment of Darwin when he was a member of the staff of the National Trust of Australia,¹⁰ with the able assistance of Senator Bernie Kilgariff. Finding Canberra and



Map of Bathurst and Melville Islands and (inset) the Darwin area.

the Commonwealth unwilling to honour Matthias on a national level he approached several politicians, eventually gaining support within the Territory. The project was well supported by the Chief Minister of the time, the Honourable Paul Everingham, while his successor, the Honourable Ian Tuxworth, enthusiastically followed it to its fruition. David remarked that he was most unfortunate not to have been present at the unveiling of the memorial, his work commitments precluding a flight to Bathurst Island.

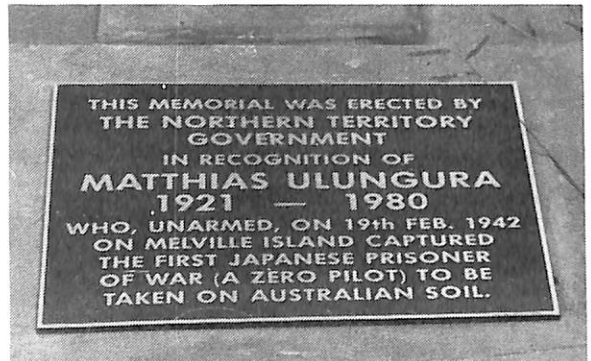
The memorial, a ceramic totem standing on the grass verge at the gateway to Nguuiu airstrip, was unveiled on 24 May 1985 with Brother John Pye, MSC, a member of the Catholic Missionaries of the Sacred Heart order and long-term resident of Bathurst Island, delivering the address honouring Matthias ('Let's get it right'): 'There is a trite saying or prayer "God make the nice people good and the good people nice". Matthias Ulungura the man we are honouring today was both good and nice; added to that he was courageous'. Brother Pye went on to say 'His courage has written a line in Australian history that can never be effaced.'⁴ The *NT News* recorded the spectacle of the ceremony in which six Bathurst Island men performed the 'Bombing of

Darwin' dance: 'The painted dancers — mimicking Japanese bombers with their arms spread and faces stern — thrilled hundreds of spectators ... The planes — in the dance — were all shot down. And the dancers played dead. And everyone laughed'.⁷

Matthias was not present at the ceremony. He had died in 1980 after a long battle with cancer. His wife Marie was present however, as were Mena and Aloysius Puantulura and their son Clarence. 'The visitors can meet these people today' Brother Pye concluded, 'and they can fill in on my effort'.

* * * * *

Carr-Gregg notes that once taken into captivity the Japanese would refuse to volunteer their true rank and name as an indication of their withdrawal from society. Referring to the work of Goffman in asylums and other institutions, she considers that this process of 'self-annihilation' and 'role dispossession' was a means of saving their family and government great embarrassment. By falling captive or surrendering they had 'failed' so it was preferable that their personal details were not recorded, leaving their family and government with the belief that they had died honorably in battle instead of having breached the Military Field Code.



Memorial to Tiwi aboriginal Matthias Ulungura at the gateway to Nguuiu airstrip, Bathurst Island.

She further notes that 'often the prisoners assumed the names of famous warriors or culture heroes to hide their real identity'.¹¹ Once in the custody of the Australians, Toyoshima Haijame gave his name as Tadao Minami, telling his interrogators that he was a sergeant-major in the air force and had been an air gunner in a high level bomber from Ambon.¹² The name Minami may have come from a famous Japanese leader during the Manchurian Incident a decade earlier in which the Kwantung Army invaded and occupied Manchuria. The commanders of this elite force, Generals Minami and Kanaya, engaged the Chinese on the night of 18 September 1931 without prior notification or approval from the government of Tokyo.

Indeed by the time Emperor Hirohito heard of this situation in China he was faced with a *fait accompli*, the generals arguing that operational necessities had prompted action contrary to orders from Tokyo. They were of course reprimanded by the Emperor, but now Japan controlled Manchuria and the social, political and military ramifications of this action are well documented.

Toyoshima, in the guise of Tadao Minami, claimed his plane had caught fire, and he had bailed out, swimming ashore to Bathurst Island. Lockwood finds fault with this explanation, recording that 'Minami's name is not included in the Japanese records of the action, nor was a prisoner captured on Bathurst Island ... at that time'.¹² Nevertheless, the first POW sent south from Darwin is listed in the records of the Australian War Memorial as Sergeant-Major Tadao Minami,¹² and it was under this name that he entered No.12 POW Camp at Cowra.

Upon the arrival of Sergeant-Major Kanazawa, Minami relinquished his position as camp leader, although he was still very prominent in the hierarchy of the camp. When told of the decision to move the private soldiers to Hay, Carr-Gregg records that it was Minami who complained to the commandant, 'Very bad business. Why can't we all go?'¹³ Back in their huts they held a midnight conference, Minami and Kanazawa inspiring their countrymen to revolt, with Minami calling them to arms with his bugle on the morning of 5 August.

The leader of both the Pearl Harbour and Darwin raids, Mitsuo Fuchida, later revealed to Douglas Lockwood that he had broken radio silence to advise his admiral of their success and also to report Toyoshima's crash on Melville Island. It is a little known fact that the Japanese actually came ashore on Australian soil at this time, a floatplane landing a rescue party who were unable to locate the pilot.¹⁴ It is interesting to reflect that had Toyoshima made for the coast his chances of rescue would have been far greater, and subsequent events may have been vastly different. Toyoshima Haijame died under the name of Tadao Minami — he was shot three times

during the Cowra melee, and while wounded took his life in the traditional ritual of *hara-kiri* so that his honour might be preserved and his family and government not disgraced.

Pickataramoor revisited

The location of Toyoshima's aircraft on Melville Island today remains unclear. Conservation Commission workers based at Pickataramoor vary in their opinions as to its whereabouts but none have actually seen the wreckage, although they acknowledge that little would remain after many years of tropical humidity and rain and regular burning-off.

Two Tiwi workers from Pulumpi (Garden Point) also know of Matthias' bravery and of the aircraft, but again the site of the wreck is unknown. Some place it towards the south-eastern tip of the island some 8km from Pickataramoor along a ridge which terminates at Notch Peak: here, regular burning-off would have reduced the Zero to little more than rubble. Others have placed the site further north near Danyaru — a small settlement on the Tjipripu River, a suggestion which seems more credible as this is not far from Tuyu Creek, near which was during the 1939-45 war the aboriginal settlement known as Tuyu.

From this area, Toyoshima could have moved in a southerly direction some 15km, being captured a short distance from the settlement of Tuyu, now a forestry reserve and pine plantation. Searches of the area on two occasions failed to locate the aircraft, although the dense vegetation of the island may have long ago engulfed the wreckage obscuring it from all but the most proximate observer.

Notes

1. Long (1963) p.624.
2. Carr-Gregg (1978) p.70.
3. Timms (1946) p.178.
4. Long (1963) p.624.
5. Wigmore (1963) pp 283-284.
6. Lockwood (1966) p.183.
7. *NT News* 25 May 1985.
8. Lockwood (1966) p.183.
9. Brother J. Pye, MSC, Pers.Comm. 5 Sept 1986.
10. Dr D.S. Carment, BA Hons, PhD, currently foundation member of the University College of the Northern Territory (History Department), Pers. Comm. 8 Dec 1986.
11. Carr-Gregg (1978) p.35.
12. Lockwood (1966) pp 220-221.
13. Commonwealth Archives Office, Canberra AA1973/254 p.6, in Carr-Gregg (1978) p.69.
14. Lockwood (1966) p.221.

References

- Asada, T. (1970) *The night of a thousand suicides*. Angus & Robertson.
- Carr-Gregg, C. (1978) *Japanese Prisoners of War in revolt. The out-breaks at Featherston and Cowra during WW2*.
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- Goffman, E. (1970) *Asylums*. Penguin.
- Long, G. (1963) *Australia in the War of 1939-45, Series 1 (Army), VII, Appendix 5 pp 623-624*.
- Lockwood, D. (1966) *Australia's Pearl Harbour*. Rigby.
- MacKenzie, K.S. (1969) *Dead men rising*. Pacific Books.
- Timms, E.V. (1946) 'The blood bath at Cowra' in *As You Were!* AWM Canberra, pp 175-180.
- Wigmore, L. (1963) *They dared mightily*. AWM Canberra.

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Brother John Pye, MSC, of Bathurst Island for kindly providing a transcript of his address delivered at the unveiling of the plaque to Matthias Ulungura. I would also like to thank Dave Benson and Ian Williams, NT Police at Pularumpi (Garden Point) for their assistance, as well as Micky Hill and Claude Tipungwiti, and Dr David Carment of the University College of the NT.

Formation of research groups

Federal Council recently endorsed a proposal for the establishment, within the MHSA structure, of special interest Research Groups. The aims of the research groups are to bring together members of the MHSA and others with interests in specific fields of military history, to develop contact between those members and to create awareness of work being undertaken in these specific interest fields.

A research group on the *British Army in Australia* has been set up, initially for one year, as a pilot scheme to assess the viability of encouraging and developing further groups on such subjects as the colonial military forces, Australia in the Boer war, aspects of WW1 and WW2, Australian uniforms and military heraldry.

Each group will have a convenor who will be responsible for producing and distributing a quarterly newsletter to interested libraries, archives and kindred organisations as well as to the group membership. Newsletters will serve as a register of group members, provide a forum for queries and items of interest (not articles — it is hoped that articles generated as a result of group activities may be submitted to *Sabretache* for publication), and also give information on published and unpublished sources.

Membership of the pilot group — *The British Army in Australia* — is open to all Society members at no cost and to non-members at \$5 per year. The

conditions of operation of the group, including financial and membership arrangements, will be reviewed at the end of the first year of operation.

The convenor of *The British Army in Australia* Research Group is Peter Stanley; if you are interested in participating in his group write to him:

C/o Australian War Memorial
PO Box 345
CANBERRA CITY ACT 2601

The first issue of the research group's quarterly newsletter, *The Quarterly Return*, was published on 1 June.

If you wish to become a member of a research group in some other military historical area of interest please let the Federal Secretary know, as soon as possible, your specific interest and also whether you would be prepared to act as convenor of a group. A convenor must be able to produce and distribute his group's newsletter and will need access to suitable resources for that purpose.

In research groups the emphasis will be on active individual participation and interaction with fellow members, not passive membership. Research groups present an opportunity for branch and particularly corresponding members to become involved in the range of Society activities.

T.C. Sargent
Federal Secretary

B.J. Videon

The Young Workers Patriotic Guild — The War Effort of the Children of Victoria in the Great War

RELICS of the war effort of the school children of Victoria differ from those produced in South Australia (*Sabretache*, January/March 1986, p23), in that the symbols of membership and reward were less elaborate, comprising mainly certificates instead of enamelled badges, although well-struck medallions and badges were sold as fund-raisers. Some of these relics remain in existence, but some might not be recognised at first as being relative to the war effort.

The war effort of the Victorian Education Department had its beginning on 15 August 1914, a few days after the outbreak of the war itself. On that date, a meeting instigated by women teachers of the Department was held, with the Minister of Public Instruction, the Hon. Thomas Livingston, MLA, in the chair. Arising out of this meeting, the Education Department's War Relief Organisation was formed, with the first office-holders being:

President — The Minister
 Chairman — The Director of Education, Mr Frank Tate
 Vice-Chairman — an Assistant Chief Inspector, Mr W.F. Gates
 Organising Secretary — Miss M. Cox, with three assistants and
 Treasurer — the Department's Accountant, Mr C. Witton, in association with Mr C. Loftus.
 (In May, 1915, a Finance Committee was formed.)

A memorandum was sent to all schools, asking teachers to brief students on the causes and effects of the war, and on the formation and objectives of the War Relief Organisation.

In the week after 15 August, a central depot was set up in the Montague Street school, South Melbourne, to receive materials and special garments and comforts for soldiers. A recording system was devised and a liaison established with the Victorian Railways, for collections and deliveries.

The first 'raw materials' purchased were 48 skeins of knitting wool; from this modest beginning, at war's end, 155,875 skeins had been made into warm garments of all kinds for soldiers in battle areas, in hospitals and in prisoner-of-war camps. Children also sewed shirts, handkerchiefs and other garments for the same purposes.

The first shipment to the Front went with the 1st Division, AIF, and comprised 12,500 articles of

clothing, 1,000 books and magazines, hospital foods and soap, and 350 lbs of tobacco. These comforts were distributed to the troops in Egypt, where they were received with gratitude and pleasure.

After a conference with Defence Department officials, woodwork teachers in schools were briefed on the needs of wounded soldiers, and were given specifications from which to manufacture splints, crutches, walking-sticks, bed-rests, cupboards and other useful items. Thousands of these items were produced during the war by students, their families and friends, in their spare time.

In August 1915, the War Relief Organisation received approval for its comforts to be delivered through the agency of the newly-formed Australian Comforts Fund, thus streamlining delivery to the intended recipients. In 1915, too, two motor ambulances were delivered through the offices of the Agent-General in London, to the troops in the Middle East, and these were put into immediate use, performing valuable service throughout the rest of the war.

In town and country schools, children worked with great diligence to support the War Relief Fund. Funds were raised in numerous ways — gathering and selling firewood, running bazaars, holding flower shows, growing and selling vegetables, and the like. One small lad even caught leeches, which he sold to the local chemist, donating the proceeds to the Fund! Others collected frogs for use in research at medical centres. At Elsterwick, a carnival was held, under the auspices of the school committee, the teachers and pupils, and this included a procession through the streets, and a sports programme on the school sports ground. Other carnivals were held, following the success of this one.

Melbourne High School then (as now) was active in the performing arts and produced a musical and dramatic show in the Melbourne Town Hall, which remains the venue for the School's Annual Speech Day.

In 1916, at the suggestion of the State Schools Horticultural Society, the League of Young Gardeners came into being, and, under the Department's Supervisor of School Gardens, children cultivated gardens at their homes, growing and selling flowers and vegetables for the War Relief

Fund. Soon there were thousands of gardens, and even school grounds soon boasted larger gardens, where crops such as potatoes were cultivated.

Flower shows, held annually from November 1916, were popular, with children growing, exhibiting and selling their flowers; also on sale were fund-raising buttons and badges and many items of fancy-work. The Melbourne Town Hall was made the Central Receiving Depot for these Flower Days, and children in decorated vehicles sang to the good citizens of Melbourne, to enlist their support.

A development of the League was the Young Workers Patriotic Guild, which thereafter incorporated the League in its umbrella organisation. The aims of the Guild were (a) to augment the War Relief Fund; (b) to develop in students a zeal for social service; (c) to promote habits of industry and add to the productive capacity of young workers; (d) to give a practical application of manual skills taught at schools; and (e) to stimulate children to think how to utilise their opportunities to assist the war effort.

In recognition of their achievements, certificates were issued to those children who raised at least £1; if they raised £5, a gold seal of the Department was added, and another seal for each additional £5. Members could purchase, for one penny, a metal badge to denote their membership of the Guild, and for a like sum, a card on which their earnings were recorded by the teacher responsible. The badge designer was Mr. P.M. Carew-Smyth.

Members of the Guild thus raised their funds by the sale of either labour or commodities and activities involved included rabbiting, raising live-stock for sale, tilling the soil, making toys, collecting scrap materials, and even making boot-polish! Rabbit skins were in fact requested for use as cold-weather clothing for soldiers in action in Europe and the work of gathering them soon became popular. Substantial support was also given to the Red Cross, to which, in 1917, £30,000 were donated. In response to a call from the Front, sandbags were also produced on the childrens' sewing machines.

During the war two excellent medallions were struck for sale in aid of the War Relief Fund, and these each bear the Department's name or initials; the first was the Anzac Medallion of 1916, with the King's head on the obverse, and a wreath surrounding the word 'ANZAC' on the reverse; the second was the Anzac Medallion of 1918, with a soldier's head on the obverse, and a scroll and wording on the reverse, with the letters EDV (Education Department, Victoria). This medallion was made in bronze, silver-wash, sterling silver, and in gold (not known whether pure gold or gold plated), and two ribbons have been seen, one red/white/blue longitudinal stripes, the other with half its width so

decorated, the other half with small Union Jacks embroidered on it. A specimen of the 1916 Anzac Medallion was presented to the Governor-General, who thereupon made a donation to the Fund, enclosed in a letter of appreciation.

The children also sold the fund-raising badges mentioned earlier, and these included flat celluloid types, more substantial circular ones, and also some in metal and enamel. These are not uncommon to this day, and can sometimes be found in collections or 'junk-shops'.

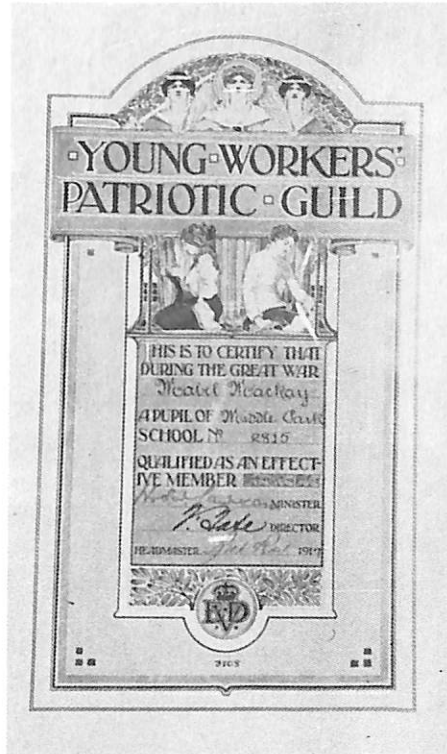
During the Great War, and up to December 1920, the Victorian Education Department's War Relief Fund had collected some £438,000, in respect of which a fully accounted and audited report was presented. Apart from the two ambulances mentioned earlier, grants had been made to numerous worthy wartime causes and funds, including repatriation, to a total of about £307,000, costs of materials and freight amounted to some £36,000, and the balance was held in investments. *The Age* reported: 'No other patriotic organisation in Victoria can claim achievements to equal those of the Education Department's War Relief Fund. No other organisation has inspired the same personal sacrifice, cheerful direct giving, and patriotic fervour ... The record of patriotic effort ... is one of the brightest chapters in the story of the Great War.' Two schools were recorded as having raised over £2,000 for the War Relief Fund — these were Warrnambool No. 1743 (over 800 pupils) with £2,369.15.2 and Elsternwick No. 2870 (600-800 pupils) £2287.7.6, while 37 schools or colleges each raised over £1,000, including some with less than 100 students!

It is clear that the school children of Victoria rallied to the call for support in a magnificent fashion; their contributions are well worth recording in militaria collections.

When peace was concluded, on 28 June 1919, celebrations were held throughout the Empire, and all school children received from the Defence Department a Peace Medal, the designer being Mr C. Douglas Richardson.

Reference.

The Education Department's Record of War Service 1914-19.



Membership certificate of Young Workers Patriotic Guild, issued 1917.



Obverse



Reverse

Victorian Education Department Anzac Medallion of 1918.



Reverse

Victorian Education Department Anzac Day Medallion of 1916.



Patriotic button sold in 1916 at physical culture display.



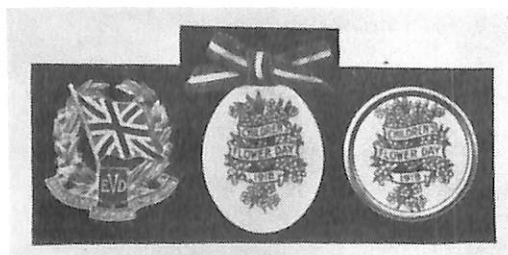
YWPG badge design.



'Busy Bee Award' badge, believed to be of 1914-18 war period.



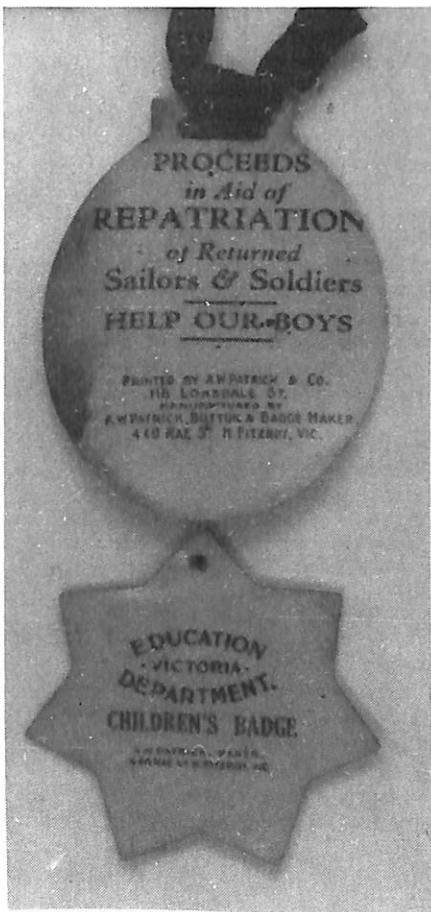
Patriotic badge sold at Defence Department carnival, 1918.



Victorian Education Department Children's Flower Day badges, 1918 and 1919.



Second Prize certificate for bowl of roses, Children's Flower Day, 1917.



Victorian Education Department Children's Flower Day badges, 1918.

John Meyers

Reinforcements for the Ninth

Introduction

THE main text of this article is a letter which outlines the movement of the 1st Reinforcements to the 9th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, Australian Imperial Force from when it left Enoggera, Queensland, to when it arrived at Mena in Egypt, written to his wife of only one day at time of departure, by Lieutenant F.B.T. Koch, officer commanding the 1st Reinforcements.

Felix Bernard Theodor Koch was born at Bundaberg, Queensland on 10 September 1879. He served with the 3rd (Queensland Mounted Infantry) contingent in the Boer war and was promoted corporal on 17 February 1900 and sergeant on 21 July 1900. He was slightly wounded at Koster River on 22 July 1900. Koch transferred to the 5th (Queensland Imperial Bushman) contingent on promotion to lieutenant. He also served with the 7th Australian Commonwealth Horse, which left Brisbane on 19 May 1902, and returned without seeing any action.

He served with various militia units until he went onto the Reserve of Officers on 15 August 1910. In the 1914-18 war he spent several months on Gallipoli and was returned to Australia on 11 April 1916 due to illness. He appears to have served in the Australian Military Forces, probably as an officer in a recruiting battalion, for some time after his return. He died on 24 March 1924 and is buried in the Ipswich Cemetery, Queensland.

Koch's father, Felix Bernard Theodor Wilhelm Koch, was born on 8 June 1855 and was appointed a lieutenant in the Queensland Defence Forces on 4 February 1880. He was awarded the Colonial Auxiliary Forces Officers Decoration on 1 August 1902 and retired on 14 December 1913 with the honorary rank of colonel.

Medals awarded to Lieutenant F.B.T. Koch were the Queen's South Africa with four bars, King's South Africa with two bars, 1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory Medal and Gallipoli medallion.

The diary

On the 7th November 1914 at 6.30 am I left Enoggera Camp with my party of 99 men for Enoggera Station and there we were joined by the Light Horse reinforcements. We left the station at 7.00 am arriving at Central Station, Brisbane at 7.20, leaving again at 7.30 and arriving at Toowoomba at noon. After a stay at Toowoomba of 20 minutes we

were again on our way, arriving at Wallangarra at 6.00 pm, calling at Warwick on our way. It was raining very heavily when we arrived at Wallangarra, but after a substantial meal we left the Queensland train and joined the New South Wales train en route for Sydney. We arrived at Newcastle in time for breakfast next morning at 9 o'clock. After all had had breakfast, we were again on our way to Sydney, arriving there at midday. As we were not leaving Sydney until 7 o'clock that evening, I marched my party up to Victoria Barracks where I met Major Saddler, one time Sergeant Major Saddler of the permanent forces in Queensland, and with whom I lunched. After lunch the men were given a few hours leave but were told to be back at 5 o'clock as I was going to leave at 6 o'clock, so as to leave plenty of time for us to march down to the station and entrain.

Punctually at 6 o'clock we left the barracks and arrived at the station with good time to spare. There we were joined by Lieutenant, now Hon. Captain, Harry Webb. I had seen a great deal of Webb in Melbourne, he being in the same mess as I was. I also met him again in Egypt. Leaving Sydney at 7.15 we arrived after an uneventful journey at Spencer Street, Melbourne at noon the next day. After a weary wait of about three hours, we entrained for Broadmeadows, where we were to camp before embarking for abroad. We arrived at Broadmeadows at 5.30 pm and marched to the camp, a distance of about a couple of miles.

There a disappointment awaited us, as our arrival was quite unexpected, and no preparations were made for us in the shape of a meal. We all felt keenly disappointed, but as we were soldiering we looked on the bright side of the matter and tried to feel cheerful. However, Lieutenant Orbell who was in charge of the Tasmanian reinforcements came to our aid, and proved himself a very worthy friend indeed. We only managed to obtain 5 tents that night, and these I had put up at once, putting the men who were suffering from colds in them. It was a very difficult job pitching these few tents as there was a bitterly cold wind blowing that night, it being pitch dark. We felt the cold very much, coming as we did from a warm climate. However, at daylight next morning all were astir, and anxious to get the balance of the tents up, as the men had been promised leave for the rest of

the day after this work had been finished. At 10.00 am everything was in apple pie order and leave was granted as promised. At Reveille next morning the usual routine work was carried on.

After being in camp for about a week I was joined by Sergeant Major Hicks who joined me for the purpose of giving instruction to the men. I found him a very great help. During our stay in camp we had a bathing parade at St. Kilda. Obtaining the services of two motor buses, we left the camp at 1.30 pm, arriving there at 3 o'clock; we had a splendid time. I must mention here that one of my men, Brereton (commonly known to the men as 'Brer Rabbit') who belonged to the society of 'the never have been washed for some time', was induced to sport his lordly frame in the water and he did not forget to mention the fact to me, for as I was having some afternoon tea with SM Hicks, he came and told me that he had had a *hot* bath. Of course this event had to be celebrated by me having to purchase him some tea as well. The lordly Brereton is now with the battalion as a private. He was at one time a Captain in the Indian Army and comes from a good old English family.

On Friday the 18th December I received orders that we were to embark on the following Monday. Everybody was happy to know that we were to be on the move once again. On Monday morning we were all up before daylight and it was raining very hard. However, we were at the station in good time and entrained for Port Melbourne arriving at that place at 11.00 am. We immediately embarked on the *SS Themistocles*, a fine clean boat. It was here that I found SM Hicks a great help in getting the men into their messes. After all were settled in their places and Hicks was preparing to leave the ship, the men presented him with a sum of money to enable him to purchase something as a memento of the happy days he spent amongst us. Unfortunately, at the last minute I received a telegram from Headquarters saying to discharge Private Geo. Sharp. His parents objected to him going abroad, as he was under age. A keen disappointment for one so near and yet so far. However, at 2.00 pm we cast off, everybody being ordered down below.

After an uneventful voyage we arrived at Albany, WA on Boxing Day, spending Christmas Day in the Great Australian Bight. On the 30th December I had to discharge Private Fontaine of Nundah, one time a Labour Agitator and a clever rogue. This man refused to be inoculated against enteric fever, saying that he did not believe in it. This was not his reason; he was suffering with what we call here, Cold Feet, otherwise known as Mauseritus, as per South Africa; you will know what that is.

On the 31st December we left Albany accompanied by 18 other transports, sailing in line of convoy. It was a very impressive sight, so that on

the last day of the year we saw our last glimpse of Australia for perhaps some time. On the 2nd January we had the misfortune to lose our Bosun. This was our first death at sea and he was classed as a Petty Officer. He was buried with naval honours. Two days later we buried a private soldier and after another two days we buried another soldier. These men were from the 10th and 11th Infantry Battalions. Altogether we had 8 deaths on the boat due to pneumonia. I am very glad to say that I lost none of my men, although I had one very bad in the hospital with the same complaint.

On the 13th of January we arrived at Colombo, nobody of course being granted leave. This did not deter the majority of our Australian boys (who had been on the boat for about 4 weeks) from paying a visit to the town. They hailed the bumboats which were plying in the vicinity of the ship, let down ropes over the side (being assisted by the ship's crew) and swarmed down like bees. Things got so hot that Major H.R. Carter (who was OC Transport, from the 15th Battalion) had several officers in boats with revolvers, waving them wildly in the air, warning the men to go back. No doubt it was amusing.

On the 14th January we steamed out to sea for the purpose of burying two men, leaving about 50 still ashore at Colombo. These arrived per launch sometime that afternoon, the balance the following morning. The next day I was busily engaged signing crime sheets against the men of my unit who broke ship. The following day was a gala day for Major Carter, for he fined the men £5 and £2/10/-.

I am very pleased to tell you that Colonel W.H. Lee remitted all these fines after I had explained to him the whole situation. It was certainly a very unjust judgement of Carter's. However, after leaving Colombo, the usual routine being carried on, all were vaccinated about this time; I being amongst the first to be done on the boat, so that I am now both vaccinated against fever and smallpox. On the 23rd January we arrived at Aden, and as no bumboats were allowed near the boat, nobody ventured ashore. Here we had a fancy dress carnival, photos of which I have sent you together with a list of limericks sung at the concert held that night. At 6.00 pm the same day we left Aden, passing through Hell's Gates at 9 the next morning, meeting the auxiliary cruiser *Empress of Asia* on our way.

On Thursday the 28th January we arrived at Suez. Here I had an attack of the influenza, and was told by the Medical Officer to go to bed and rest for a few days. I was detailed for guard duty that night and although I had sent word to Major Carter advising him of my condition and the MO's instructions, nothing was done to relieve me. Why I do not know, because I am absolutely sure

that Carter knew my condition. However, I got through my duties somehow, but I had to go down to it the next day as I was very ill. Had I been relieved when I should have been, no doubt I would have been alright.

We left Suez the following morning at 10.00 am passing through the Suez Canal, the people on the banks waving to us all the way. The banks of the canal from Suez to Port Said are safely guarded.

We arrived at Ismailia at 6.00 pm and anchored for the night. The next morning we saw several aeroplanes scouting over the desert. We weighed anchor again that morning and arrived at Port Said at about 5 that afternoon. Here we had a great reception from the people on the quay. We again saw a number of aeroplanes. There were a great number of minstrels playing and singing around the boat.

At 11 o'clock that night we left Port Said for Alexandria and arrived at that place at 2.00 pm the next day, which was Sunday. There a crowd of natives kept coming up to the boat and gazing at us with curious eyes. It was very amusing to see the police chasing them away with sticks and whips. Next morning we disembarked and entrained for Cairo at 8.00 am and arrived at that place at 3.00 pm. We immediately marched to Abbassia which was to be our camping ground. This was our first introduction to the sand. As soon as we arrived we pitched our camp straight away and scraped up what food we could as nobody seemed to know anything as to where or how it was to be obtained. However, in a few days everything was in working order and things were going again alright. After being in camp for a few days and seeing the men settled, I paid a visit to Mena Camp where I met George (George Hilfers Koch, brother to FBT. He served with the 5th (QIB) Contingent in the Boer war with the rank of lieutenant and served in the militia between the wars. In the 1914-18 war, he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the 9th Battalion, AIF and returned to Australia on 22 October 1918).

We then paid a visit to the world renowned Pyramids and the Sphinx, the history of which is very interesting, the pyramids themselves being a marvelous piece of work. In the big pyramid which is called Cheops, pronounced Ke-ops, there is the Kings Chamber and the Queens Chamber. There is another small chamber which was set apart for the Princess, but she was buried in the Pyramid of Mankara. The third pyramid is called — but this one I did not enter. I also paid a visit to the Temple of the Sphinx and saw the wonderful pieces of stone that had been transported from — and also portions from Jappa. Here George and I had a camel ride, for which I paid some piastres, and met Colonel Tunbridge on the way back from the Sphinx, also Captain Whitehouse of the old 7th

Battalion ACH (Australian Commonwealth Horse). We had a few minutes chat together and he said that he was not surprised to see me on service again. From there we mounted our camels again and I proceeded to Camp Abbassia.

While in camp I paid several visits into Cairo which was a few minutes ride from camp. My impressions of Cairo are very mixed. It is a most immoral place and I am satisfied that Australia is a clean country and Australians, though they have the name of being an immoral people, are absolutely clean compared with these natives of the old world. It would make the heart of an ordinarily fairly clean Australian absolutely bleed to see some of the immoral filth that goes on in this country. Thank God I am an Australian. On the 28th February I received orders to report to the CO, 9th Battalion at Mena Camp, which I did and the men were distributed amongst the different companies of the regiment. I was very sorry to lose them, as we were a very happy crowd together. However, after leaving Mena Camp we proceeded to —.

This is all the information until next writing.

* * * * *

It would appear that after handing over the Reinforcements, Lieutenant Koch was given command of A Company which he trained and led at the landing at Gallipoli on 25th April 1915.

(In the interests of clarity, some minor changes have been made to the text of Koch's letter but the substance is quite unchanged. **Editor.**)

Mark Clayton

Boston recovery

The October/December 1985 issue of *Sabretache* reported the circumstances of the loss and subsequent recovery of an American bomber ('Gloria') from the jungles of Papua New Guinea. That episode marked the beginning of a salvage operation which must rank as one of the most ambitious and praiseworthy operations of its kind attempted in recent years.

Royal Australian Air Force Chinook heavy helicopters returned to Papua New Guinea and retrieved yet another Douglas A20. Since 1983, the RAAF and the PNG National Museum have recovered the substantial remains of six Douglas Bostons thus effectively doubling the world Boston population. The first five aircraft lifted from the New Guinea jungles were all United States Army Air Force A20Gs. However, this latest operation has brought to light a unique A20C with a fascinating operational history.

Whereas the A20G and subsequent variants were used in large numbers throughout the South-West Pacific, relatively few A20Cs ever reached the Pacific theatre. Many of those that did arrived by default, as is the case with this particular A20C.

The machine recovered by the RAAF last February was built to a Douglas DB-7B specification and classified by the Royal Air Force as a Boston III. Although it was never actually delivered to the RAF it was allocated the Air Ministry serial AL907. Repossessed by the USAAC it was assigned instead to the Royal Netherlands Navy and even today, the markings 'KON MARINE 240' are discernible below the port cockpit. Dutch military resistance in the Netherlands East Indies had ceased altogether by March 1942, and it seems unlikely therefore that this particular machine would have been used operationally by the Dutch Navy. The Dutch military and civilian aircraft that survived the Japanese advance were evacuated to Australia where they were redistributed amongst the RAAF and the USAAF. In this manner the RAAF's No.22 Squadron received thirty-one A20Cs, including the much travelled AL907. Re-serialled as A28-8, it was also allocated the RAAF code letters DU-J. By late 1942 No.22 Squadron had transferred to Port Moresby from whence it commenced 'intruder' operations against the Japanese.

Flying Officer Harry Rowell was assigned to one such operation on 24 May 1943. The target was a wrecked ship on the beach near Lae, which, it was

suspected, the Japanese were using to store supplies and unload submarines. 'Five aircraft took part in the mission and just before dawn broke the aircraft made a gliding approach on the target, passing over the wreck from bow to stern. The bombs exploded on the wreck which caught fire.'

However, having failed to sight the target during the initial run, Flying Officer Rowell decided to attack again alone. Unfortunately, a searchlight from the ground illuminated his aircraft as he approached the target at a height of 250 feet. Anti-aircraft weapons then opened heavy fire, killing his gunner, severely wounding his wireless operator and damaging the aircraft. By skilful handling Rowell managed nonetheless to return safely to Port Moresby.

Rowell was less fortunate though when, four months later, in very similar circumstances, he was forced to crash-land his Boston at Vivigani on Goodenough Island. On that occasion, No.22 Squadron had assigned four Bostons to bomb Gasmata. Two of these failed to return while the third, A28-8 piloted by Flying Officer Rowell, was hit in the cockpit by anti-aircraft fire. Once again Rowell managed to nurse the crippled aircraft back home although the nose-wheel collapsed during the landing, causing irreparable damage to the fuselage. Although the crew escaped uninjured, the aircraft had to be written off. Stripped of spares, it was soon forgotten by advancing allies.

Vivigani is a relatively isolated location which, combined with the New Guinea Government's heritage legislation, has served to protect the aircraft from vandals, souvenir hunters and would-be salvors. The outer wing panels, fin and rudder have long since disappeared and no doubt the RAAF are hoping these components are interchangeable with the A20G.

Once an important RAAF base, Vivigani is still dotted with military aircraft wrecks. Indeed, it was during the initial attempt to lift the A20C that the fuselage was blown sideways into that of a RAAF Bristol Beaufort. Eventually however, A28-8 was transferred to a RAN landing craft and shipped south to the RAAF Base, Richmond (NSW) where it is presently being examined. It is hoped that at least one Boston can be restored by the end of this year, in time for the bicentennial celebrations.



Lift off for the old RAAF Boston bomber - minus its wings which took off earlier - flying out of Goodenough Island, Papua New Guinea, for the last time under a powerful Chinook helicopter of No.12 Squadron, Amberley RAAF Base in Queensland. The Chinook - biggest type of helicopter in Australia - carried the old aircraft and its wings to HMAS **Tobruk** for a journey back to Australia. (Photo by RAAF Public Relations)



Air crew and ground crew get together for final rigging preparations before the Chinook helicopter lifted 'Jessica' from the World War II 'graveyard'. From left: Warrant Officer Adrian Shepley, 12 Squadron loadmaster; Army Warrant Officer John Ryan from RAAF Richmond; Sergeant Ian Walters, 12 Squadron flight engineer and Squadron Leader Andy Pulford, RAF exchange pilot with 12 Squadron. (Photo by RAAF Public Relations)



Military Historical Society of Australia

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Military Historical Society of Australia will be held at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 18 August 1987 at the Returned Services League National Headquarters, Constitution Avenue, Campbell, A.C.T. All members are urged to attend.

T. C. Sargent
Secretary

Christopher M. Fagg

An analysis of some bravery medals and decorations awarded to Australians

Imperial Awards

Albert Medal

There has been a total of 24 Albert Medals (AM) awarded to Australian recipients between 1887 and 1970. From that total 5 were exchanged for the George Cross (GC) on 12 July 1972 and 5 others were awarded posthumously.

The details of the service distribution, grading and classification are as follows:

Era	Distribution	Grade	Type
WW1	Army 3 Navy 1	1 Gold 2 Bronze 1 Bronze	Saving life on land. Saving life at sea.
WWII	Navy 1	1 Bronze (posthumous award)	Saving life at sea.
Peace-time	Navy 2 Army 1 RAAF 1 Civilian 13 Merchant Navy 2	2 Bronze (both posthumous awards) 1 Bronze 1 Bronze 3 Gold, 3 Bronze 7 Bronze 2 Bronze	Saving life at sea. Saving life at sea. Saving life on land. Saving life at sea. Saving life at sea.

Incident Classification

- 2 awards were for incidents involving grenades in France
- 6 awards were for actions during disasters at sea involving sinking vessels, the vessels being HMAS *Voyager*, MV *Frista*, MV *Noongah*, *Rakuyo Maru*, HMML 356.
- 1 award was for actions at a burning aircraft crash at Hamilton, Victoria.
- 2 awards were for actions during flood disasters. They were at Charleville, Qld and Roper River, NT, respectively.
- 7 awards were for shark attack rescues. All were in NSW.
- 2 awards were for rescues during mine disasters in WA, the mines being Westralia and East Extension Mine and the Lake View Consols Mine.
- 1 Award was for actions during an Antarctic expedition rescue — the Shackleton Trans-Antarctic Expedition 1914-17.
- 1 award was for a train disaster rescue.
- 1 award was for saving life from a burning

building after a munitions explosion. This was in England.

- 1 award was for actions after a bomb explosion at sea at Sydney.

The following medals were also awarded to the Australian Albert Medal recipients for their actions:

- 2 Royal Humane Society of Australasia's Clarke Gold Medal
- 5 Royal Humane Society of NSW Gold Medal
- 1 Polar Medal and two clasps
- 1 Colonial Auxiliary Forces Long Service Medal
- 1 OBE

Edward Medal

A total of 8 Edward Medals (EM) was awarded to Australian recipients between 1909 and 1925, 2 posthumously.

All awards were for actions involving saving or attempting to save life during mine disasters. 3 were silver awards and 5 were bronze.

The following medals were also awarded to Australian Edward Medal recipients for their actions.

- 1 Royal Humane Society of Australasia's Clarke Gold Medal
- 2 Royal Humane Society of Australasia's Silver Medal
- 1 Royal Humane Society of NSW Bronze Medal

George Medal

A total of 118 George Medals (GM) has been awarded to Australian recipients between 1940 and 1982, comprising 114 Medals and 4 bars.

Details of the service distribution and incident classification are as follows:

Era	Distribution	Type
WW II	RAN 9 + 3 bars Army 12 RAAF 22 SOE 1	10 mine disposal, 1 torpedo disposal, 1 underwater salvage operation 3 mines, 1 explosives, 2 survival at sea, 5 fire, 1 other 19 aircraft crash, 2 fire, 1 other Partisan actions

Korean war	Army 1	Casualty evacuation across flooded river
Vietnam war	Army 2 RAAF 1	1 aircraft crash, 1 explosives 1 explosives fire
Peace-time	RAN 3	1 Voyager collision, 1 Evans collision, 1 explosives fire
	Army 13	5 sea rescue, 1 armed offender, 1 fire, 5 grenades, 1 other
	RAAF 4	2 aircraft crash, 1 sea rescue, 1 fire rescue
	Police 30 + 1 bar	29 armed offenders, 1 fire rescue, 1 other
	Civilian 16	5 aircraft crash, 2 sea rescue, 3 armed offender, 2 mine rescue, 4 other

Australian Bravery Decorations

These constitute the new medals forming the Australian National Honours and Awards System instituted in 1974.

Star of Courage

There has been a total of 27 Star of Courage (SC) awards between 1975 and 1 January 1987.

Army	1
RAAF	1
Police	1
Civilian	18 (3 female)
Children	5 (1 female)
NZAF	1

Incident Classification

- 6 awards were posthumous
- 1 award was for a shark attack rescue
- 3 awards were for burning aircraft crash rescues
- 2 awards were for actions during an aircraft hijacking
- 1 award was for a train disaster action
- 1 award was for a crocodile attack rescue
- 1 award was for a poisonous gas rescue
- 1 award was for a minefield rescue
- 1 award was for a wild boar rescue
- 9 actions are not researched to date

Bravery Medal

A total of 121 Bravery Medals (BM) was awarded between 1975 and 1 January 1987.

RAN	8
Army	3
Police	26
Civilian	80 (4 female)
RAAF	3
USN	1

- 7 were posthumous awards

Commendation for Brave Conduct

There has been a total of 178 Commendations awarded between 1975 and 1 January 1987.

RAN	6
Army	3
Police	43
Civilians	125 (9 female)
USN	1

The Australian Honours System

In the January/March 1986 issue we printed a slightly abridged version of the official announcement of the institution of new awards in the Australian honours system and recorded that a competition would be held for the design of the new series of eleven medals for Defence Force personnel. The new awards are intended to recognise gallant and distinguished service in action and conspicuous service in non-operational situations and will be common to all ranks and services.

In stage 1 of the competition all Australian residents and Australian citizens abroad were invited to submit design sketches for the new awards, of which three entries would be selected for prizes of \$1000. At the same time, suitably qualified Australians

were invited to register interest in Stages 1 and 2, from whom ten would be asked to submit a detailed design proposal for one award.

The three winners in the open section were announced in December last and the design concepts and ideas presented by them were to be put to the ten qualified designers, sculptors and engravers. Again, from these, as Stage 2, three were to be selected to submit detailed designs for the eleven new awards.

It is expected that the winning designers will be announced in June 1987, but it is understood that the designs themselves may not be made public until they are considered and approved by Her Majesty the Queen.

Peter Stanley

The Soldiers on the Hill: the defence of Whyalla 1939-1945

Part 8: 1943 'How much more entertaining this is'

The men of Captain Charles Anderson's Volunteer Defence Corps company had spent the first six months of 1943 becoming increasingly frustrated with the contribution they were making to Australia's war effort. The VDC spent one day each week, usually a Sunday, in training. Having spent most of 1942 in basic exercises, learning how to drill and shoot, they were ready for more complex training.

Volunteer Defence Corps men were becoming skilled; they were already receiving more training than pre-war citizen soldiers, devoting half their time to rifle drill, a quarter to 'fieldcraft' and the remainder to 'tank-hunting', night operations and bayonet practice. In order to maintain their interest a rifle competition was held in May between the Whyalla Miniature Rifle Club, and VDC, the soldiers on a hill and the Naval Auxiliary Patrol. The civilian club came first and the VDC second.¹

In 1943 the volunteers acquired a mortar. In excitement the entire company went down to the rifle club range south of the Cowell Road to practice with it. The mortar was fired southwards, towards the mangroves, and all went well until a bomb became jammed in the barrel. There was consternation until it was carefully extracted then blown up with some gellignite obtained from BHP.² Such incidents helped to keep up the enthusiasm of the VDC, but it was often hard to get men to give up their precious leisure time, especially when most were working a full day of ten hours at the shipyard or the blast furnace. By the end of 1942 45 men had been dismissed from the Whyalla company for missing too many parades. But the VDC's enthusiasm continued to ebb slightly. On 6 June a senior officer from Adelaide inspected the men's training. It is not hard to detect the rather wistful sound of the comment in 'B' Company's war diary on that day, which recorded the fact that the highlight of the visit was 'Two grenades exploded'.³

The Whyalla Volunteer Defence Corps company's difficulties were increased because Captain Anderson's company was the only one in the 6th Battalion on the western side of Spencer Gulf. It often seemed to be forgotten by headquarters in Port Pirie, or to forget to inform headquarters what it was doing. In December 1942 Lieutenant Colonel Trimmer, the battalion commander, visited Whyalla to instruct

the Whyalla officers on the correct method of running a company. In spite of the reminder the battalion war diary records several times 'no report received' from 'B' Company.

One incident which was certainly not communicated officially to battalion headquarters was the narrow escape of Mr Charles ('King') Holmes, who almost became the only casualty inflicted by the Whyalla VDC during the war. On 11 April the Volunteer Defence Corps gathered, as usual on Sunday mornings, for training at the BHP Band Hall in McBryde Terrace. The unit had been issued with German machine-guns captured in the first world war, and Sergeant Hugo Ehrke, who from Monday to Friday managed a local shoe shop, put his men through their drill. They performed some part of the drill incorrectly so Sergeant Ehrke put them through the procedure, which ended with the word 'fire', once again. But as he said 'fire' the gun, which should have been firing blanks, sprayed five live bullets in the direction of the main street.

A bike race was just starting near the police station and 'King' Holmes was leaning against a fence in Forsyth Street waiting for the race to begin. Two bullets passed through his hat and a third grazed his scalp. 'King' sagged to the ground, bleeding profusely, while a crowd gathered about him. The *Whyalla News* reported that King appeared to be the calmest man present. Someone remarked that if he had been as tall as his brother he would have been killed. Holmes 'humourously remarked' that if he had been as short as his sister he wouldn't have been shot at all.⁴

To overcome the lack of equipment the Whyalla VDC attempted to make some of its own weapons. In this it was fortunate to possess a large number of skilled tradesmen and engineers in the company. At work some men made steel re-usable hand grenades and signal equipment, while early in 1943 a cup discharger — a grenade launcher — was produced.⁵

Through the efforts of its officers and sergeants the 6th Battalion, of which the Whyalla company was a part, maintained an average attendance of 62% in 1943, a figure similar to the average attendance for the ten South Australian VDC battalions. It was agreed at the time that the number of men attending parades was a reflection of how the war

was seen to be going; in times of crisis, as in early 1942, attendances increased, but from the start of 1943 when it became clear that the Allies were winning, they gradually declined.

That the VDC in Whyalla remained relatively enthusiastic is partly due to the character of the men who were enlisted in the company. An examination of the records preserved in the 6th Battalion war diary reveals that the company was overwhelmingly drawn from the older established eastern end of the town, from men who had lived in Whyalla for some years, who were deeply attached to their community and who wished to do something to defend it. The newcomers in the west, who were often pre-occupied in building and establishing new homes, and who had not yet become so committed to the town, were less enthusiastic. Almost a fifth of the company's members lived in Cudmore and Donaldson Terraces, for example, indicating that joining the Volunteer Defence Corps was not simply a display of patriotism, it was also a demonstration of an attachment to a local community. It is also notable that while an average of one in ten of Whyalla's professional, commercial or business men joined, that only one in twenty of the town's labourers or tradesmen were enrolled. This still meant that tradesmen and blue-collar workers made up the majority of the unit, but the support of 'middle class' groups was certainly more significant than would be expected on the basis of population.⁷

In June 1943, when it might have seemed to some that the Volunteer Defence Corps was no longer necessary since the danger of invasion had passed, the company was given a boost, and men began to join again 'now that the work is to be more interesting'.⁸

1943 saw the Allies on the offensive in all theatres of war, with Australia making advances in New Guinea. With the additional demands for industrial and agricultural production, the drain on the nation's 'manpower' was severe. The danger of invasion, while not entirely eliminated was greatly reduced, and so, therefore, was the need for thousands of men manning defences in the safer southern parts of Australia. In January 1943 army headquarters decided that the Volunteer Defence Corps should begin to take over the anti-aircraft defence of places in southern Australia which were less likely to be attacked, including Whyalla. This change came about in August, when drafts of gunners began to leave Whyalla for more active areas to the north.⁹ The first large draft to leave Whyalla was recorded prosaically in the battery's war diary:

Battery Order 163. 19 August 1943.
Reveille 0300, move out 0400, cocoa and biscuits 0330. 3 x 3-ton trucks, 1 30-cwt lorry to transport men and equipment to Port Pirie.

The men of 26th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery left Whyalla with mixed feelings. They had become increasingly restive as the prospect of action receded, and the battery's routine orders disclose minor difficulties with matters such as dress regulations and saluting, as the boredom inseparable from garrison duty became apparent. The prospect of action, or at least active service (which many would see in New Guinea and the islands) was greeted with enthusiasm.

At the same time, the young soldiers had made many friends in Whyalla and they, and those in the town associated with the Cheer-up Hut and with football, cricket and swimming clubs, viewed their departure with regret. The Cheer-up Hut in particular had done much to make the soldiers on the hill welcome, and in August 1943 the father of Gunner Bleckly (who in 1942 had complained that the lads had been 'shot off to Whyalla') wrote to the *Whyalla News* that:

These boys had never before been away from their homes, and it has been a constant source of comfort to parents to know that their sons were received so hospitably and cared for by Whyalla folk.¹⁰

The gunners' departure was also noted by the Superintendent of BHP Whyalla, R.T. Kleeman, who suggested to the company's head office in Melbourne that:

the Company should prepare a scheme for training these men for post-war employment either at Whyalla or elsewhere.

I would advise that quite a number of the permanent forces likely to be retained at Whyalla have reached high standards of education, and if trained on appropriate courses they would be an asset to us here for employment after the war.¹¹

The suggestion was not taken up. Had it been adopted, the links between the soldiers on the hill and the people of Whyalla would have been stronger still.

A small number of gunners remained to maintain the equipment and train the Volunteer Defence Corps, but from the spring of 1943 responsibility for the defence of the town fell to part-time soldiers.

In an effort to stimulate interest in his company's new role, Captain Anderson placed 'some undeniable facts' before readers of the *Whyalla News*. 'The Japanese', he claimed, 'still constitute a menace to Australia ... the VDC is as essential as it ever was'. His men, moreover, had reached 'such a state of efficiency in their elementary training' that they were now able to assist in manning the guns.¹²

The VDC became enthusiastic students of the 3.7 inch anti-aircraft gun. Captain Moorfoot began to

lecture them on the subject in July, and they began training shortly after.

The volunteers, many of whom were tradesmen and engineers, found that operating the guns was, as Mr A.M. Jeffrey recalled, 'a piece of cake' once they had been shown. They learned quickly, though inevitably some mistakes occurred. Once, while loading, a shell fell from a gun. The entire crew dived over the sandbagged walls for cover except for one man who continued to wind the wheel he operated.¹³

'How much more entertaining this is, than squad drill' commented the *Whyalla News*, perhaps remembering the 'King' Holmes incident, 'and exercises with machine guns'.¹⁴ By early 1944 over 300 Whyalla men were taking their turn in the gun emplacements. The unit lost only 3% of its strength between August and December 1943, far less than the Port Pirie or Port Germein units, which had no guns to maintain their interest.¹⁵

Whyalla's defenders continued to experience problems. The need for fit men in more active areas meant that largely 'B' class, or less fit men, were left in Whyalla. So many men had been posted away that Captain Moorfoot once again became concerned about the effectiveness of his force. In November he complained to headquarters in Adelaide that he had so few men that he could not man even one gun full time, and could not properly train the VDC.

This has resulted in VDC enthusiasm being considerably dampened, whilst the effect on the local civilian population has been a lowering of morale, a slackening of production and the forming of an impression, which is rapidly spreading, that the war is almost over.¹⁶

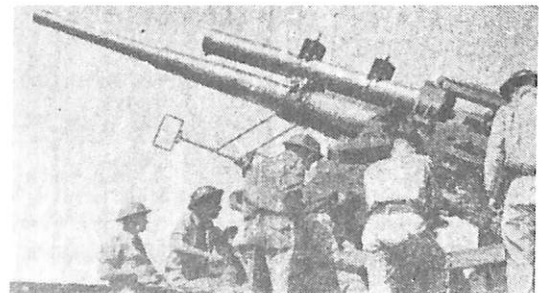
The difficulties which Captain Moorfoot detected were apparent, too, in Whyalla's responses to war loan campaigns in the latter part of the war. Though

the slackening of production (for which there is no direct evidence) could not be ascribed solely to the problems which 26th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery experienced in training, Moorfoot's comments support the view that while the VDC did not make much difference to Australia's military war effort, its existence helped to remind civilians that they were at war and that their contribution counted.

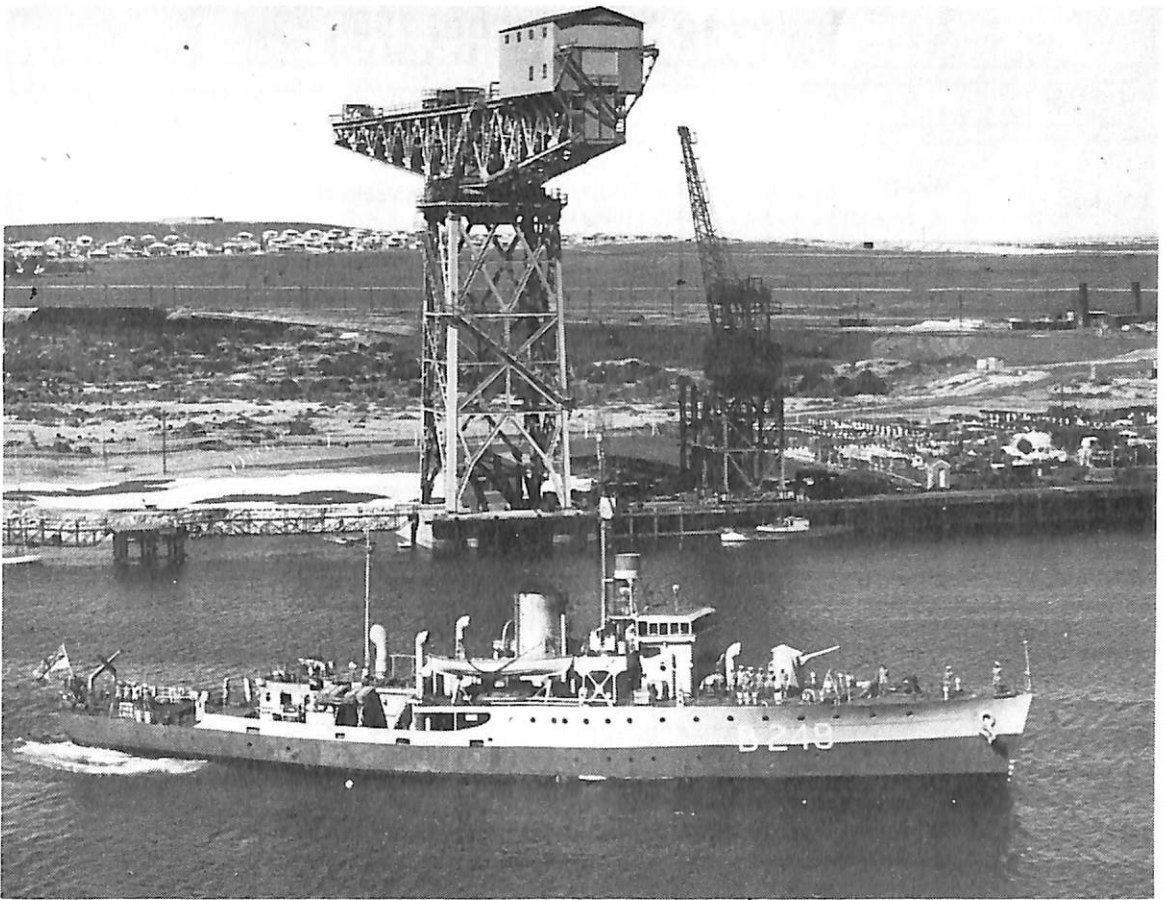
Despite these problems Captain Moorfoot continued to instruct the VDC, until in December 1943 he considered them sufficiently well trained to conduct the first practice with live ammunition. This was carried out just prior to Christmas, before Lieutenant Colonel T.R. Mellor, the commander of the South Australian Volunteer Defence Corps Artillery Group (to which the battery had just been attached). Colonel Mellor watched the battery fire 56 rounds at a target towed by an RAAF aircraft from Port Pirie. 'Good shooting', he commented.¹⁷

Notes

1. AWM 54, 36/1/8, War Diary, South Australian L of C Area Volunteer Defence Corps, Quarterly Training Report, January-March 1943; *Whyalla News*, 21 May 1943.
2. Interview, Mr J. Nicholson.
3. AWM 52, 36/1/8, War Diary, 6th Battalion, VDC SA, June 1943.
4. Interview, Mr Hugo Ehrke; *Whyalla News*, 16 April 1943.
5. Interview, Mr Ben Dempsey; *Whyalla News*, 30 October 1942.
6. War Diary, SA VDC, Quarterly Training Report, January-March 1943.
7. War Diary, SA VDC, Nominal rolls of Whyalla company; *Electoral Roll, Commonwealth Division of Grey, State Assembly District of Stuart, Roll of Electors for the Subdivision of Whyalla, 1937, 1938, 1941, 1943.*
8. *Whyalla News*, 25 June, 1943.



Men of the Volunteer Defence Corps 26th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery at Whyalla training on Hummock Hill early in 1944. (*Whyalla News*).



The corvette HMAS *Pirie* in the Shipyard Basin at Whyalla. Many of the men of Whyalla's Volunteer Defence Corps unit worked at the shipyard, and their major contribution to the country's war effort was seen in the construction of warships like this. HMAS *Pirie* was the last of four RAN corvettes to be built at Whyalla, being launched on 3 December 1941 and completed on 10 October 1942. (BHP Whyalla).

9. AWM 52, 31/2/29, 'Defence Schemes — Anti-Aircraft-Scale of Training and Reorganisation of A.A. Units 1943, 1944'.
10. *Whyalla News*, 27 August 1943.
11. Superintendent, Whyalla to Chief General Manager, 6 July 1943, A9/5 (Emergency precautions — steamers: correspondence re defence equipment, convoys 12 Sept 1938 — 17 1943). (BHP Archives).
12. *Whyalla News*, 3 September 1943.
13. Letter, Mr A.M. Jeffrey; Interview, Mr George Lilley.
14. *Whyalla News*, 11 February 1944.
15. War Diary, SA VDC/6th Battalion VDC SA, Parade states, August 1943-January 1944, May 1944.
16. AA AP 613/1, 57/1/15, Army Correspondence File, 'Defence of Whyalla', HQ SA L of C Area to Land Headquarters, (?) October 1943.
17. AWM 54, 36/1/8, War Diary, 3rd Battalion, VDC SA, December 1943. The 'Artillery Group' to which 26th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery was transferred in December 1943 comprised the coastal artillery battery at Fort Largs, 12 HAAB, a light anti-aircraft troop and 203 Searchlight Battery (all around Adelaide) and, at Whyalla, Captain Anderson's 26 HAAB and 703 Light Anti-Aircraft Troop. Whyalla Defences as a whole continued to be commanded by Captain R.L. Moorfoot.

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Review article

Lieutenant Colonel David Brook (ed), *Roundshot to Rapier: artillery in South Australia, 1840-1984*, publ. by the Royal Australian Artillery Association of South Australia. Investigator Press, Hawthorndene, SA. 349 pages incl. annexes, bibliography, glossary, illustrations, index. \$20 Aust. Postage \$5 extra. Obtainable from the RAA Association (SA), C/o 48th Field Battery, RAA, Keswick Barracks, Adelaide 5035.

It should be said at the outset that this book is an important contribution to Australia's military literature. The narrative has been written and edited with skill and with professional understanding of its subject matter and provides a firm basis for further research and writing on those aspects of artillery with which the book deals.

In 1981 Colonel S.N. Gower's *Guns of the Regiment* was published and *Roundshot to Rapier* was published in 1986. Both books have similarities and differences. One main distinction between them lies in the scope of each. *Guns of the Regiment* is in scope Australia wide; on the other hand, *Roundshot to Rapier*, although it covers almost one hundred and fifty years of history of artillery, is fundamentally, although not exclusively, a history of artillery in South Australia since 1840. Nevertheless, this limitation is perhaps more apparent than real, for artillery, wherever it may be located geographically, is still artillery. *Roundshot to Rapier* should therefore have an appeal to gunners and former gunners in all parts of Australia. I have myself never served in South Australia but I have found much of interest on almost every page of this book.

It is not my purpose here to use the allotted space by paraphrasing what has been so ably set out in the book itself. Instead a number of matters will be commented on which have been selected at random.

The narrative of *Roundshot to Rapier* is not a unified one as in, say, Colonel Mander-Jones' *The History of Coast Artillery in the British Army* (1959). Instead, *Roundshot to Rapier* has the organisational features of a symposium. This is imposed on the narrative by the present day division of artillery into many branches, each of which has a history of its own.

Therefore, *Roundshot to Rapier* has to cover field artillery, garrison artillery, which is a wider concept than coast artillery as an inspection of Mark Severn's *The Gambardier* (London 1930) shows, anti-aircraft artillery, anti-tank artillery, searchlight batteries, air defence units, and many of the other related aspects of the general subject of artillery.

One usually associates a symposium with more than one author as is the case with *Roundshot to Rapier*. The names of the authors in this instance are set out in the book on pages 9 to 17. Few, if any, are authorities nowadays on all branches of artillery. So the various authors in *Roundshot to Rapier* add authoritativeness to the work.

But, as that famous American critic, Henry L. Mencken, once pointed out, 'With everything you want you get a lot of things you don't want'. So different authors for various parts of a book usually create a need for an editor to do two things. First, to reduce the narrative as a whole to a state of uniformity in matters of layout, punctuation, spelling, standardisation of terms used, style, and the use of capitals and so on. Second, to give consistency and smoothness to the flow of the narrative. All these things the editor, who is also part author of the book, has done well.

When one considers the wide coverage of *Roundshot to Rapier*, one can only conclude that it is a masterpiece of compression without damage to clarity, which is sometimes the price that is paid for brevity.

The book describes well units, their weapons, their training and their operational roles, in some instances, at home and overseas. It also places these units in their positions in larger organisations of field forces and garrison troops.

But systems of organisation, with their units, their field formations and their garrison troops, are inert things until they are infused with vitality by the officers and other ranks who operate them. The book has explained that this personnel aspect of the history is less developed because much of the documentary evidence relating to personnel has in the past been destroyed.

This loss of historical evidence is regrettable. Happily, more effective measures have been brought into existence since the war of 1939-45 to prevent this destruction, as in the past, by persons with neither the training nor the experience to enable them to make judgments on non-current records for their systematic disposal or preservation.

But despite this handicap, the authors have been able to tell readers something about some of the officers and other ranks who have played parts in South Australia's artillery since 1840. Glimpses can be had here only of some of those gunners as they move, figuratively speaking, at the double across pages of *Roundshot to Rapier* and thereby awaken memories for some of the gunner readers. The first name at this 'Roll Call' is Lieutenant Colonel W.D. Claxton. He was a prominent pre-Federation gunner officer in SA who died on 6 February 1898. Major General W.A. 'Wacky' Coxen was well known to earlier SA gunners for he became the head gunner of the 1st AIF. The two Dykes, Lieutenant Lewis Campbell Dyke (1886-19??) and Major General L.G.H. Dyke (1900-84), a Staff Corps gunner, were probably son and grandson respectively of Colonel Lewis Dyke (1859-19??) also a SA gunner but not mentioned in *Roundshot to Rapier*. Colonel George Ferguson (p.37) represented the SA Artillery at the funeral of Major F.W. Ind, RA (1858-87) at Queenscliff in Victoria in June 1887 and he died himself in Adelaide on 18 June 1914 — far from Hobart where he was born on 12 July 1846. Lieutenant Colonel H.B.L. Gipps (1880-1970) is mentioned several times in *Roundshot to Rapier*. His place in history belongs to the strictly scientific side of artillery — the manufacture and the proofing and experimental aspects of guns. Additional information on him will be found in the Centenary history of Melbourne's Naval and Military Club. Major General M.F. Downes (1834-1923), Major General J.M. Gordon (1856-1929) and Colonel L.B. Mathews (18??-1904) are names necessary for the completion of any pre-Federation history of artillery in SA. Brigadier General L.H. Kyngdon (1860-1923) — not Kingdon — was the uncle of Colonel C.W.T. Kyngdon, a retired Staff Corps officer, now residing in Melbourne. When Major General O.F. Phillips (p.70), sometime Base Commandant of 4 MD, SA, died in Melbourne on 16 May 1966, a press report said he was the last surviving original battery commander of the 1st Divisional Artillery of the 1st AIF.

Lieutenant Colonel (later Brigadier) H.B. 'Jan' Sewell was the first CO of South Australia's 2/14th Field Regiment, RAA and his 2 i/c was the South Australian Major (later Lieutenant Colonel) R.B. Hone. This 'Roll Call' must finish with the names Major General A.G. Wilson (p.295) and Brigadier G.E.H. Bleeby (p.298), who were two distinguished gunner officers of South Australia and now occupy places in its more recent artillery history.

An editorial note on p.57 is of interest to all regimental officers for it points out difficulties which the AFA had to contend with on the Western Front during the war of 1914-18.

The 50th anniversary of the official opening of the Artillery Depot at Keswick Barracks, Adelaide will occur in December 1989. But before that, sometime in 1988, the 75th anniversary will occur of the Army's occupation of Keswick Barracks.

One reads on p.18 of *Roundshot to Rapier* that 'In some instances, War Diaries were not commenced until well after the start of the Second World War'. This is a case of not having learnt from the experience of the war of 1914-18. It should be part of the mobilisation procedure to take war diaries into use.

During the inter-war period, 1919-39, *Instructions for Training* made no provision for sending Militia officers overseas for training. It was interesting therefore to read on p.161 that Captain (now Colonel) L.T. Olsson in 1959 made 'a liaison visit to the US Army in Hawaii' and that 'This visit was of a month's duration and was most beneficial'.

Much useful and interesting miscellaneous information is set out in the various annexes of *Roundshot to Rapier*. Annexe I — 'Aspects of Regimental History' (p.307) should be read and re-read. The more a soldier knows about the history of his regiment the better soldier he usually becomes.

Annexe L — 'Artillery Place' (p.325) has special historical interest. Regrettably it is unsigned and undated and its source is not quoted.

This hardback book is physically attractive and has avoided the present fashionable 'coffee-table' trend. It is well bound, its paper is of good quality and it is printed with a pleasing variety of type faces and type sizes. However, in a spirit of constructiveness, a few comments of a technical character are submitted.

Page numbers could be printed in bolder type and in a larger size and the space increased between the bottom line of the text and the page number. Chapter numbers and chapter headings need more space between them. More space is also needed between the chapter heading and the first line of the text below. There are advantages in having the preliminary pages numbered in Roman numerals. The 'Notes on Sources' could be incorporated into the bibliography (p.327 ff). The glossary and the

abbreviations may be better as separate lists. The abbreviations on page 19 and pages 337-340 could be consolidated into one list. The acknowledgements should be a separate list and in a more developed form.

Sir Edward Cook's *Literary Recreations* includes an essay entitled 'The Art of Indexing' and it opens by saying: 'There is no book in the general category of literature so good that it is not made better by an Index, and no book is so bad that it may not by this adjunct escape the worst condemnation'. But there is a conflict nowadays, in the making of indexes for books, between cost and efficiency and, in the case of *Roundshot to Rapier*, cost seems to have triumphed. On the other hand, the index to, say Brigadier O.F.G. Hogg's *Artillery: Its Origin, Heyday and Decline* (1970) indicates that in that conflict the result was reversed.

In this last scene of all in this review something should be said about the meeting for the launching of *Roundshot to Rapier* at Keswick Barracks, Adelaide. It was a memorable occasion for all those who attended on that delightfully sunny afternoon on Sunday the 31 August 1986. The proceedings were conducted under the chairmanship of the President of the Royal Australian Artillery Association in South Australia, Major G.S. Laurie.

The book was launched by the patron of the Book Committee of the Association, Lieutenant Colonel Sir James Irvine, OBE, ED, FRAIBA, etc, and a former Colonel Commandant of the RAA in SA. He launched the book in the presence of the Chairman of the Book Committee, Lieutenant Colonel David Brook, RAA and its members and about three hundred guests.

The guests included the Commander of 4th MD, Brigadier T.F.H. Walker; the Colonel Commandant of the RAA in SA, Colonel the Hon. Mr Justice Trevor Olsson; the OC, 48th Field Battery, RAA, Major K.D. Noel, RAA; Lieutenant Colonel S.G. Kingwell, MBE of the RAA Association in SA and member of its Book Committee; and Major Warren Perry, MBE, ED, MA (Melb), BEc (Syd), RL, Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, and former Federal President of the Military Historical Society of Australia, came from Melbourne to attend.

An absent friend from this gathering of gunners and former gunners, assembled from near and far to witness Lieutenant Colonel Sir James Irwin's launching of *Roundshot to Rapier*, was Brigadier Sir Thomas Eastick, Kt, CMG, DSO, ED who, because of illness, was unable to attend. He was the most distinguished gunner officer of South Australia to emerge from the war of 1939-45. It has been said that 'his community service was widespread' and that 'he is a shining example of the successful citizen and soldier'. He is a former Colonel Commandant of the RAA in SA. He was knighted in 1970. Today he is regarded as the 'grandfather' of the present generation of gunners in South Australia.

Warren Perry

Regimental medals handbook, 1745-1895, Part 1, Regular Army

This book was reviewed in *Sabretache*, January/March 1987 and, as mentioned in the same issue, the Society is the Australian distributor.

Stocks are now available at a cost of \$17 each including postage.

Orders, with payment, should be placed with the Federal Treasurer, Neville Foldi, at 9 Parnell Place, Fadden, ACT 2904.

A must for medal collectors.

Letters to the Editor

Juniper Cottage
5 Ravensthorpe Drive
Loughborough
Leics LE11 OPU
England

15 May 1987

Dear Mr Fraser,

Congratulations to Colonel Sargent for his fine article and detective work on the 48th Foot medal (*Sabretache* Vol XXVIII, No.1). Although medals were shipped great distances even in Napoleonic times, I think that the evidence is overwhelming that in this case it was the silversmith who was 'shipped'.

May I add a couple of points. As soon as medals appeared, the problem arose of how to get them off their ribbons for cleaning. The wire spring suspender illustrated on the McLoughlan medal (Australian War Memorial) was ingenious but too delicate, and I have now seen enough of them, whole, broken and adapted, to be convinced that it is the original.

As to the ribbon, presumably stocks of the Waterloo ribbon would have been available through 'Q' channels as soon as the medal itself was issued. This is common practice now, and some things don't change much over the years. Special supplies would have been unnecessary — just a bit of misappropriation from the Q Stores!

Now, if I may, a bit of pure speculation. Although many regiments sought permission for their awards, can we assume that the 48th felt that they were sufficiently far away from authority to go it alone? This might explain the failure to find a request for permission, or the C-in-C's standard, grudging approval. Certainly, the Governor General of New Zealand was rebuked for going it alone in 1869 over the institution of the New Zealand Cross.

What about the John Briggs Medal? It may be a later fancy, but there is another possibility.

At least two engraved medals exist which are similar to struck regimental medals — to the 94th Foot and to the 2nd Breadalbane Fencibles. In the latter case, it is now accepted in expert circles that the engraved medal was an essay for the struck pieces, and I am inclined to think that this is also the most likely explanation of the 94th medal. In both cases, changes were made before the dies were made. Possibly, then, the Briggs medal could be an essay for a struck medal, with 'John Briggs' being no more significant than John Doe or Joe Soap, simply showing where the medals were to be named.

I don't know enough about Australia in 1819 to say why the medals were eventually engraved instead of being struck, especially as there were so many potential recipients. Maybe the facilities did not exist, or maybe Samuel Clayton produced a more competitive quotation.

However, to engrave so many in a relatively short space of time, Clayton would have had to do them in his own style, similar to the specimen, but with the detailing he could do most quickly. This would explain the similarity of concept but the differences of execution. The 'Briggs' style would have produced a good looking struck medal, but the Clayton medals probably suit engraving better.

All this is pure speculation, but not beyond plausibility.

Lastly, what happened to the remaining 200-plus medals? Many are likely to have been lost as the regiment moved around and as the recipients died. However, I expect a few more will turn up. Some may still be in family hands, some buried in bank vaults, and, who knows, some may just have fallen off that weak suspension awaiting the arrival of the metal detector in NSW! Certainly, as 'The first medal to troops in Australia', it's worth setting out to find them.

Yours sincerely
JL Balmer

18 April 1987
5 Elder Terrace
Glengowrie 5044

Dear Sir

Regarding the article "Our Boys Noble Deeds" — War and the School' by Ronald White which appeared in the January-March 1987 edition of *Sabretache*, in it was stated that many army recruits received some military experience through the Junior Cadet system which was active in schools in the pre-war era. The fact is that compulsory naval and military training was brought into force in 1912 for both the Senior Cadets and Citizen Forces. The age for Senior Cadets was from 14-18 years and for the Citizen Forces from 18-26 years. There was no compulsory training for Junior Cadets. So it can be easily understood why so many recruits had military training before enlisting in the 1st AIF. The junior cadets were not issued with uniforms nor was service compulsory in the Junior Cadets.

Yours faithfully
Robt Gray

Society notes

MHSA Convention, 1988

The 1988 MHSA Convention will be held in Canberra over the Queen's Birthday weekend, 11-13 June, and will be sponsored by the ACT Branch of the Society.

The theme of the convention will be 200 years of military history in Australia. Unlike previous conventions the focus will be a number of talks related to military history. Topics will have a strong Australian bias and will cover both pre- and post-Federation military history as well as segments on air and naval history. Speakers will be asked to prepare papers on their topic which will be distributed to those attending, so a registration fee will need to be charged to help defray costs.

More details of the 1988 Convention will follow in future editions of *Sabretache*.

The Geelong Branch elected the following Branch Committee at its Annual General Meeting on 13 March 1987:

President	Mr J. Maljers
Secretary	Major I.L. Barnes, RFD, ED, RL
Treasurer	Captain J. Titchmarsh
Senior Vice President	Mr J. Gardiner
Committee	Mr J. Hill

The current Federal Secretary (Lieutenant Colonel Clem Sargent) will be overseas for a protracted period during 1987/88. Bronwyn Self has accepted nomination for the position of Federal Secretary. Bronwyn can be contacted care of (062) 883337 (home) or PO Box 481, Dickson, ACT 2602.

Members' wants

In the January/March 1987 issue Peter Huxley, PO Box 131, Red Hill 4059 sought the location of the medals of his grandfather, Lieutenant Colonel John Herbert Huxley, ED. He has now advised that Jack Huxley served with the 12th Light Horse in WW1 and during WW2 was with HQ Northern Command and served as Brigade Major, 29th Brigade Area and 7th Brigade Area. His miniatures as worn include the 1914/15 Star, British War Medal, Victory medal (with MID Oak Leaf), 1939/45 Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, Australia Service Medal, Efficiency Decoration and George V Jubilee Medal.

Greg McGuire, 12 Bernice Avenue, Underwood 4119 advises: As a request from the family, I am seeking details of service of 349 Trooper A. Lidster of the NSW Citizens Bushmen, who served in the Boer war, and information on his entitlement or the whereabouts of his medal/s.

Chief Inspector H.J. (Bunny) Storer, Victoria Police Academy, Viewmount Road, Glen Waverley, 3150 wishes to locate the Royal Humane Society of Australasia Bronze Medal awarded to Constable John Carrigg, Queensland Police, in 1910, Case No. 2591.

Michael Fogarty, 18 Foxall Street, Holder, ACT 2611, wishes to contact two MHSA members who were referred to, but not named, in an article by 'Medalman' in the April 1978 issue of *Sabretache* (page 127) as attempting to compile a medal roll of awards of the Naval General Service Medal to members of the RAN. He is updating the provisional roll.

The article also mentioned that a two-bar NGS medal had come to the notice of the Society. Mike says, 'I suspect this would probably have been a combination of 'South East Asia 1945-46' and 'Minesweeping 1945-51'. He wishes to contact the members concerned urgently as he needs the information to complete an article. He also seeks information on the award of bars for 'Cyprus', 'Arabian Peninsula' and 'Brunei'.

MHSA member Leo Walsh of Scarborough, Queensland has brought to notice that Flight Sergeant James Perkins, Irish Army Air Corps, of 26 Elton Court, Leixlip, Co. Kildare, Ireland has the largest collection of military insignia in Ireland, with over 5,500 items on display. Flight Sergeant Perkins wishes to add Australian Army shoulder titles to his collection, and military insignia from the Far East, especially from Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and the Philippines. He is willing to swap Irish or European military insignia for them.

Notes on contributors

Bert Denman served in the army in both the 1914-18 and 1939-45 wars. He is currently contributing a series of articles to *Sabretache* on his experiences as an infantryman in England and France in WW1. Mr Denman lives in Murray Bridge, South Australia. An outline of his career appeared in the January/March 1987 issue.

Paul Rosenzweig is a secondary college teacher and a collector of military decorations and medals. He is a lieutenant in the Army Reserve and is a regular contributor to *Sabretache*.

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.

Mark Clayton studied at James Cook University in Townsville and at Sydney University before joining the staff of the Australian War Memorial in 1980, after which he became Curator of Aircraft and Technology. In recent times he has been involved in development of the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame and Outback Heritage centre in Queensland. He has previously contributed to *Sabretache*.

John Meyers has been a member of the MHSA for over seven years and is a regular contributor to *Sabretache*. He is proprietor of Wide Bay Antique Militaria, of Gympie, Queensland, and is presently in the United States promoting the production of medal boards of US Decorations.

Christopher Fagg is a medal collector from Tasmania with a special interest in medals of the British Commonwealth. He is a frequent contributor to *Sabretache*.

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



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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
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