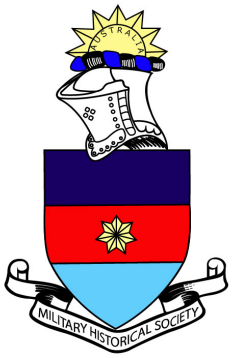
Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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Contributions in the form of articles, notes, queries or letters are always welcome. Authors of major articles are invited to submit a brief biographical note, and, where possible, submit the text of the article on floppy disk as well as hard copy. The annual subscription to *Sabretache* is $26.

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SABRETACHE

The Military Historical Society of Australia

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

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The Federal Council of Australia 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 appear below.

Sabretache

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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 $150 per full page, $80 per half page, and $40 per quarter page. Contract rates applicable at reduced rates. Apply Federal Secretary, PO Box 30 Garran, ACT 2605.

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1 January for January-March edition
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The MIA Issue: An Unnecessary Tragedy

Anthony Staunton

January 1993 will mark the beginning of the next US presidential term as well as the 20th Anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreements that ended US military involvement in Vietnam. It also marks the 20th Anniversary of the myth that not all US servicemen were returned in 1973 and that many are still held against their will in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Ross Perot, in his unsuccessful Presidential campaign this year, seriously raised the issue of the missing in action (MIA) from the Vietnam War. He believes that US servicemen are still held prisoner in Southeast Asia. Many Americans also believe that not all prisoners were returned in 1973. The figure of the 2,500 men listed as MIA has persisted for many years despite the fact that there was never that many men listed as MIA in the first place. Demands for the full accounting of all 2,500 men have continued to be made in spite of the fact that even with the best intentions, which of course have not been shown, the Vietnamese would only have information on a fraction of these men. The United States has more than fulfilled its obligations to the missing servicemen and their families but the Congress, state legislatures, business and private individual continue on a regular basis to fly the POW/MIA flag leaving the false and misleading impression that many Americans are still alive in Vietnam.

The MIA designation was meant to be an interim measure to cover cases where the US had no *conclusive* evidence that a serviceman had been killed or captured. It reflected a lack of knowledge concerning a serviceman rather than a true description of his condition. Most MIAs were either dead or in enemy hands from the day they disappeared and it was reasonable to suppose that those not returned as POWs in January 1973 were most likely dead. Although the MIA issue was first publicly raised as a result of Vietnamese mistreatment of US POWs, the issue has continued because of pressure from the MIA families. The unprecedented length of time that men were maintained in a missing status put unique strains on many surviving family members. They were exposed to frustrations and bitterness of considerable magnitude and the natural healing process of grieving was interrupted. The US Government has continued to press for information despite the fact that, in the great majority of cases, the Vietnamese, even if willing, would be unable to help.

Nearly 2.6 million US military and civilian personnel served in Vietnam. Over 46,000 Americans were killed in action and 300,000 were wounded in Vietnam, but only 2,546 were unaccounted for in January 1973. They were 2,505 servicemen and 41 civilians who were missing in action, unacknowledged prisoners of war, or who were known to have been killed in action, but whose bodies had not been recovered (BNR). This number amounted to slightly over 5 percent of the fatal losses. The comparable figure for the Second World War was 22 percent (78,794 not recovered out of 360,844 killed in action) while in Korea over 25 percent of the 33,629 combat deaths were never found. At the end of the Second World War all battlefields were in allied hands and at the end of the Korean War many of the battlefields were in UN hands. However, even though at the end of the Vietnam War none of the battlefields were in US hands, the number of missing men was a fraction of the previous two conflicts. Furthermore, the great majority of the missing from Vietnam were pilots whose planes crashed into the sea, into rugged country, or exploded at supersonic speed in mid-air. The extraordinary reality of the Vietnam War is that so few men were unaccounted for at the end of the US military presence in Southeast Asia.

In early 1973, 591 military and civilian POWs were released. Of the 2,505 US servicemen unaccounted for at that date, 1,392 men were listed as MIA, the remaining 1,113 were known to be dead, but their

bodies had not been recovered. The fact that 1,392 men were listed as MIA was the result of restrictive casualty regulations and the status determination and review processes of each of the US military services. Although conclusive evidence of death was not needed to declare a man killed in action, the regulations did require that, in situations in which remains were not recovered, the chance of survival had to be too remote to be logically considered. A substantial number of MIA classifications, realistically, should have been KIA (BNR). Although the war was to last for 9 years, virtually no men were removed from the MIA ranks before the 1973 Peace Accord was signed. The common law presumptive finding of death after 7 years without any information that a man was alive did not apply to the military. The MIA wives and families were provided with all of the information available, and, in many cases, the next of kin made the decision that the service concerned could not or would not make — that the husband or son was dead.

Unintentionally, the military raised the expectations of some families of the missing. While common sense and logic indicated that most of the MIAs were dead, the possibility was very real that any one individual MIA would turn up alive. The services did not purposely encourage MIA next of kin into believing that their particular husband or son was alive, but the fact that they treated MIA and POW families in the identical manner inevitably encouraged false hopes among some MIA families. Both MIA and POW families were provided with identical information on matters such as; what sort of things to talk about in their monthly letters; the exact addresses for mailing letters to prisoners in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and Laos; what to include in Christmas and other holiday packages; and how to forward such packages via the US Red Cross.

The POW/MIA issue was not a public issue during the first years of the war. At first it was expected that the war would be short but as the months and years passed, the US Government maintained that publicity would only hinder the release of POWs. In February and July of 1968, six US POWs were released by the North Vietnamese in two groups of three, but the circumstances of these repatriations gave little comfort to the US Government or the MIA families. The POWs were released in a propaganda move to activists opposed to the US presence in Vietnam. In May 1969, the US Government abandoned the diplomatic approach and placed before the public the issue of the POWs' maltreatment and the refusal of North Vietnam to identify their captives. In addition to a genuine interest in the MIAs and their families, President Nixon and his advisers, including Henry Kissinger, saw the issue as a potentially popular one in the face of increasing domestic dissatisfaction with US participation in Vietnam. The POW/MIA issue was one that could rally the vast majority of Americans, even many of those who might oppose the war.

The POW and MIA questions were very closely integrated until the prisoners were repatriated in 1973. The distinction between a POW and a MIA was a fine one, particularly since the US felt that North Vietnam was not providing a complete or comprehensive listing of their captives. As of the end of 1968, the North Vietnamese had neither made public the names of the men they held captive, nor had they allowed many of these men to send letters to their families. The US Government's efforts to avoid publicity had become increasingly futile as the POW/MIA families began to organise and seek outlets for their frustrations. In October 1968, the subject of the sparse POW mail was picked up by the press, and the resultant spate of news stories acted as a catalyst in mobilising the families and spurring communication among the next of kin. The principal family organisation, National League of Families of Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, established a permanent secretariat in Washington in 1970.

In January 1973, there was 344 US airmen listed as MIA in Laos and it was anticipated that an appreciable percentage of these men would be returned. In a shock to everyone involved with the prisoners and the missing, no MIAs were returned from Laos. A very few Americans who had been captured in that country by the North Vietnamese, and subsequently transferred to Hanoi, were released in the North Vietnamese

capital. No Pathet Lao prisoners were ever returned. The US dropped millions of leaflets over Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia promising to pay $5,000 in gold to anyone who could provide information leading to the recovery of a missing American in Southeast Asia. Although thousands of stories and reports were received and are still being received raising false hope for the concerned families, no signs either from the Laotians or through intelligence sources, indicate any US serviceman is alive in Laos. The reasons for the loss of all US servicemen in Laos is difficult to identify with any degree of certainty. A principal factor would have been the fact there was never effective territorial control by any of the conflicting parties in Laos, nor adequate centralised control by one faction over its own members. The Laotians apparently exhibited a terrible brutality toward any US captive.

Following the return of the 591 military and civilian POWs in early 1973, the various military services began the process of reviewing the cases of the men that did not return. Some of these changes were made on the basis of the intelligence gleaned from the returnees, but many were based, not on new information, but on the former prisoners' lack of any knowledge concerning an individual. However, when the services attempted to change statuses based on unofficial information from the enemy, or on the lack of information, some of the MIA families went to the courts to stop the process.

Until the repatriation of US POWs in early 1973, the leadership of the National League of Families had been drawn predominantly from the ranks of the wives of the prisoners and missing. While there were many parents in the League, including some on the Board of Directors, they were in a minority, and most of the leadership positions were held by wives. The wives and the parents had different perspectives. The wives tended to be far more knowledgeable about their husband's military service. The MIA wife wanted her husband back, or wanted to know that he was dead so that she could get on with her life. After the POW repatriations, when it became less and less likely that any more men would be found alive, the wives tended to become more amenable to a change in status than did the parents. The fifth annual convention of the National League of POW/MIA Families of was held in June 1974 and elected a new Board of Directors, a new Executive Director, and liberalised the membership requirements. The new leadership was heavily weighted with parents, and strongly supported the prohibition of status changes unless new information was found. In other words, the passage of time without information was not felt to be a sufficient reason to change an MIA status to KIA. Non-family member POW/MIA activists were accepted into the League's staff and leadership hierarchy.

One of the most pathetic examples of persistent refusal to accept reality involved the family of a Navy pilot who was never carried in either a MIA or KIA status. His F-4 fighter developed engine difficulties immediately following a catapult launch from the aircraft carrier and disintegrated upon impact with the water a few hundred yards ahead of the ship. The aircraft had been airborne for seconds. The crewman in the rear cockpit managed to successfully eject and was recovered. The pilot was briefly and routinely reported as missing (not MIA) while a search by ship and helicopter was conducted of the crash site. Within hours the status was changed to killed, as the search was unsuccessful. At the time of the incident the carrier was approximately 65 miles off the coast of North Vietnam. Although the aircraft was airborne for mere seconds, the parents of the dead pilot have deduced from the earliest given time of the launch and the latest time of the accident reported in the various official and unofficial accounts of the incident that their son's aircraft could have been airborne for as long as 22 minutes, conceivably time to reach the North Vietnamese coast. Despite being shown films of the launch, eyewitness reports, and talking with the surviving crewman the squadron commanding officer, and an eyewitness, the parents could not be dissuaded.

While in a missing status, a serviceman draws his full pay and all the allowances in effect at the time of loss-such as combat pay, and flight pay. In addition he is promoted with his peers, and all of his income that is not paid to his wife is placed in a savings account that pays 10 percent interest. The difference between the benefits available to an MIA wife and those paid to the widow of a KIA is immense. The House Select Committee compared the hypothetical case of an Air Force captain, with a wife and three children, who was declared KIA on 1 July 1966 with the same individual carried as MIA until a presumptive finding of death was made on 1 July 1975. The total benefits paid to the MIA wife exceeded those paid the KIA widow over the same period by just under $100,000. The average difference in yearly income of the two women over the 9 years was $10,900 in favour of the MIA wife. While parents, even if they are primary next of kin, seldom receive any of their son's pay while he is in a missing status — since they are not usually dependants — they stand to inherit substantial amounts when their son is declared dead. Some of the estates of single MIAs are approaching a quarter of a million dollars, and growing at 10 percent per annum above the yearly pay and allowances. In August 1976, when 795 men were listed as MIA, it was estimated that the Government was paying $9 million more, annually, in benefits to MIA families than would be the case if the men were declared dead.

Many pressures, psychological, emotional, and finally political decisions worked in the direction of placing men in a missing status who, realistically, should have been declared KIA. The effective inflation in the numbers of MIAs would tend to restrict the Vietnamese willingness to co-operate in providing an accounting, since it seems clear that they could supply data on only a fraction of the cases at issue, and would be reluctant to engage in an accounting that would put them at a propaganda disadvantage. The unprecedented length of time that men were maintained in a missing status put unique strains on many surviving family members, and unrealistic expectations of the families led to both bitterness and disillusionment on their part. It has exposed them to frustrations and temptations of considerable magnitude and has interrupted the natural healing process of grieving. A minority of the MIA families have become dedicated to the principle of an accounting, regardless of any other considerations.

Five MIA family members filed a class action suit on 20 July 1973. It was dismissed in March 1974 and the Circuit Court's decision was upheld by the New York Supreme Court in November 1974. Because of the adamant stand of the National League, and the rumours of an imminent Presidential Commission and/or a congressional select committee to fully study the matter, the Department of Defense was reluctant to conduct such reviews without next of kin concurrence. When the House Select Committee was formed in September 1975, the Department tacitly agreed to abstain from unsolicited status changes during the committee's tenure. The Select Committee's final report was presented to the House of Representatives on 13 December 1976. Its unequivocal conclusion was that no Americans were still being held alive as prisoners in Southeast Asia or elsewhere as a result of the Vietnam War. It said that because of the nature and circumstances in which many Americans were lost in combat in Southeast Asia, a total accounting was not possible and should not be expected. It also recommended that the military should resume case reviews. Not until the following August did the President order the Department of Defense to begin the reviews of the 712 US servicemen still carried in a missing status, thus ending a virtual moratorium of unsolicited status changes that had lasted for 4 years.

Vietnam has always insisted it returned all prisoners in 1973. It has returned several hundred sets of remains since. In 1992 the number of Americans still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War is 2,266 men. A presumptive finding of death has been made for all the unaccounted except for USAF Captain Charles Shelton. He was shot down over Laos in April 1965 and is still listed as a prisoner of war as a symbolic gesture of the US's commitment to the issue. Intelligence reports indicate Captain Shelton died in captivity in the mid 1960's.

Despite the POW and MIA categories being publicly lumped together, the Department of Defense has always kept them as separate categories. The Department of Defense listed as POW anyone reported as a possible prisoner anywhere in Southeast Asia at anytime between 1964 and 1973, whether or not there was evidence of capture and even if there was evidence of subsequent death. All but 56 men on the Department of Defense POW list were returned. In January 1973 the Vietnamese handed the American authorities a list of 62 names of military and civilian prisoners who had died in captivity. Several men listed as missing in action were also released. There was really never any doubt that all live Americans were returned. It is possible that some, like Marine Robert Garwood, stayed of their own volition but there has never been any evidence that Vietnamese secretly held back prisoners. What the Vietnamese held back was information on the fate of some men but this number was only a fraction of the unaccounted 2,266 men. The Department of Defense has a list of 135 discrepancy cases, where there is enough information about the last known location of apparently live Americans to suggest that Hanoi knows what happened to them.

There will never be a full accounting of the men missing in Southeast Asia. The US Government did the families, and therefore the lost men, a tragic disservice by encouraging the belief that there could be a full accounting, despite the fact that there has never been a full accounting, or for that matter, a better accounting, in any previous conflict. The truth is that despite the tragedy that no one came home from Laos, there are no Americans wandering around Southeast Asia waiting to be rescued from the tortures of the Laotians, Vietnamese, or others.

Country	MIA	KIA(BNR)	Total
North Vietnam	475	294	769
South Vietnam	541	566	1107
Laos	344	206	550
Cambodia	28	47	75
China	4	—	4
Total	1392	1113	2505

Anthony Staunton is Director of Research and Information at the Veterans' Review Board. He is an acknowledged authority on medals and awards to Australian service personnel, with emphasis on recipients of the Victoria Cross.

The table opposite indicates the situation in 1973 following the return of 591 military and civil prisoners from North and South Vietnam.

Percy Middleton Wells, JP

Don W Pedler

Don Pedler is a South Australian Branch member and a dedicated researcher of many aspects of Australian military history. His particular interest is in worldwide Scottish military units, and is a specialist glass etcher by profession.

Percy Middleton Wells, was not perhaps like WS Gilbert's character, John Wellington Wells, "a dealer in magic and spells", but a very competent, sometimes controversial man. While his background can be traced, it is difficult to establish much in detail. Stories abound regarding his life and work in Goolwa, South Australia, but while they point to a good hearted and generous nature, there is nothing to be found in print about this latter period of his life.

My interest in Wells began when I obtained a framed certificate with the following detail:(1)

WARRANT

To Chief Wardmaster P M Wells

By virtue of the authority given in the *Defence Act 1903-04* and by the Regulations made thereunder, I do hereby constitute and appoint you the said Chief Wardmaster Percy Middleton Wells to be a Warrant Officer in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth (*Militia Forces). You are, therefore, carefully and diligently to discharge your duty as such by doing and performing all things thereunto belonging as required by the Laws and Regulations relating to the Military Forces of the Commonwealth; and you are to observe and follow such Orders and Directions as you shall receive from your Commanding or any other Superior Officer, according to the said Laws and Regulations.

STATION Adelaide — G I Wallach, Colonel
Date 22nd January 1904 — Commandant, CMF, S Aus

*Insert (a) Permanent Forces
(b) Militia Forces
(c) Volunteer Forces

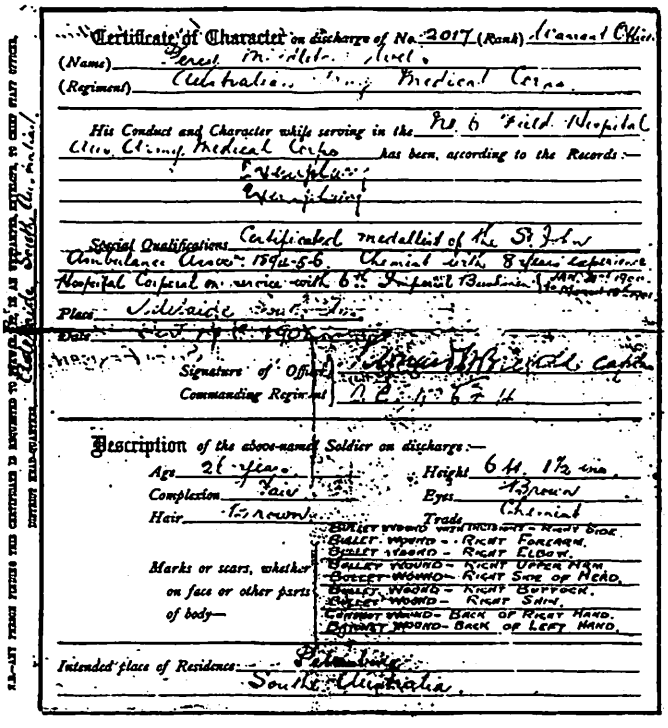
Corporal Percy Middleton Wells

On showing this item to my father, he remarked, "PM Wells, Yes, he was a chemist. He had a shop on the corner of Morphett and Grote Streets in Adelaide. My sister worked for him during the First World War. Wells told her a story about his Boer War service. He was so badly wounded that he was expected to die within an hour. Two men were left to bury him. The would-be undertakers put a pot of stew on a fire and went off somewhere. Wells recovered consciousness and, being

1. Chief Wardmaster. Responsible for administration work and discipline for all divisions of a haspital and is usually a Warrant Officer Class 1. See *Sabretache* Jan-Mar 1992 p.41. My thanks to Mr Ron Montague and Mr David Milne for their assistance.

2. Story related by PM Wells to my aunt, Lydia Pedler

near the fire, tried to get the food, only to spill the near-boiling contents on himself. He was returned to Australia."(2)


Certificate of Character on discharge of No. 2017 (Rank) Warrant Officer
(Name) Percy Middleton Wells
(Regiment) Australian Army Medical Corps
His Conduct and Character while serving in the No. 6 Field Hospital Aus. Army Medical Corps has been, according to the Records:—
Exemplary
Exemplary
Special Qualifications Certificated medallist of the St. John Ambulance Assoc. 1894-5-6. Chemist with 8 years experience. Hospital Corporal on service with 6th Imperial Bushmen JAN. 2nd 1900 to March 10th 1901
Place Adelaide South Aus.
Date Sept 17th 1904
Signature of Officer Commanding Regiment [illegible] Capt.
Description of the above-named Soldier on discharge:—
Age 26 years
Height 6 ft. 1½ ins.
Complexion Fair
Eyes Brown
Hair Brown
Trade Chemist
Marks or scars, whether on face or other parts of body—
Bullet wound with incisions - Right side.
Bullet wound - Right Forearm.
Bullet wound - Right Elbow.
Bullet wound - Right Upper Arm.
Bullet wound - Right Side of Head.
Bullet wound - Right Buttock.
Bullet wound - Right Shin.
Contact wound - Back of Right Hand.
Bullet wound - Back of Left Hand.
Intended place of Residence: Petersburg South Australia.

Extract from PW Wells' discharge certificate

Wells was born on 14 September 1878 to Clement and Sarah Ann Wells (nee Middleton) of Currie Street Adelaide. He had two brothers and a sister. He married Marion Elizabeth Lindschau at St Luke's Anglican Church, Adelaide. There were two daughters, Elsie Marion and Marjorie Rose.

His education was gained at Way College on Greenhill Road. Among subjects taken were English, Mathematics, Physics and Music (Violin). He passed the St John's Ambulance certificate in three years. At some stage, he passed the Pharmaceutical Society examination, gained a first class pass in Invalid Cookery at the School of Mines and Industries and attended the University of Adelaide as a non-graduating student in 1899, 1900 and 1903. He was a believer in "natural medicine" which, it is said, caused annoyance to some doctors.

Wells appears in South Australian Directories as an optometrist and chemist at Morphett Street, Adelaide from 1912 to 1920 and at Goolwa from 1921 to 1956.

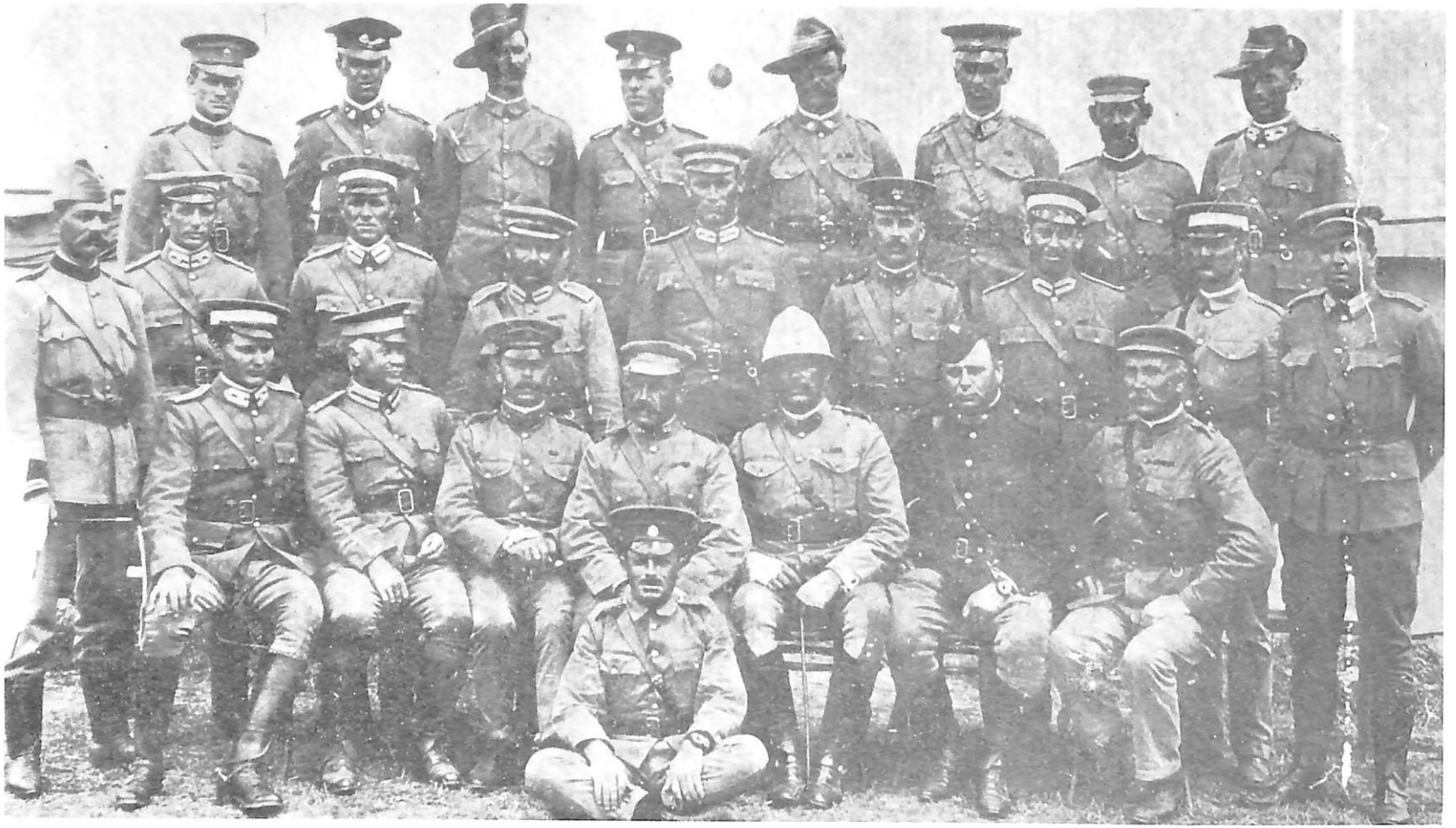
A member of the RSL from 1920 to 1947, he was appointed a Justice of the Peace on 19 June 1930. A keen photographer, his subjects included operations at the Royal Adelaide Hospital and a series of postcards of Goolwa scenes.

Wells served as Chairman of the Corporation of the Town of Goolwa from 1928 to 1929. At that time he owned and drove an Erskine car as well as a vehicle hailed as Australia's first motorised caravan, built by GE Kaesler of Nuriootpa. This is now owned by the National Trust.

He built and owned the Centenary Hall and imported a "Fotoplayer", a combination of piano, pipe organ and sound effects suitable for silent films. This instrument is now in the Power House Museum in Sydney.

Military service

Wells discharge certificate records that he attested at Adelaide on 14 November 1899 for the Medical Staff Corps, South Australian Military Forces, aged 21 years and was discharged from No.6 Field Hospital, Australian Army Medical Corps on 17 September 1904.



Albury Camp, 1911. Lieut Wells, 3rd from right, top row.

The discharge certificate also records that Wells suffered the following injuries:

Bullet wound with incisions RIGHT SIDE
Bullet wound RIGHT FOREARM
Bullet wound RIGHT ELBOW
Bullet wound RIGHT UPPER ARM
Bullet wound RIGHT SIDE OF HEAD
Bullet wound RIGHT BUTTOCK
Bullet wound RIGHT SHIN
Bullet wound BACK OF RIGHT HAND
Bullet wound BACK OF LEFT HAND

These substantial injuries led to the termination of Wells' South African "adventure" as he described it.

Joining the 6th South Australian Contingent, Corporal Wells hoped to be part of an ambulance section and acted as Camp dispenser prior to embarkation. On learning that no ambulance would be sent, he volunteered to go as a trooper. Civil Surgeon, Dr RS Rogers promised to secure Wells' transfer to the Medical Department

The Contingent left Adelaide on the transport *Warrigal*, arriving at Durban on the 25th of April 1901. Joining with the 5th Contingent, they formed one unit.

In a letter to his former Headmaster, Wells wrote "Dear Sir, I am pleased to be able to drop you a line from our coveted destination, South Africa." The rest describes the trip and personal details.

On the 6th of June 1901 a composite force of 100 mounted infantry and 100 South Australian Imperial Bushmen made a night march to intercept and capture the Boer leader C de Wet's convoy which carried six months supplies. Following the capture, Major Sladen, East Yorkshire Regiment, sent 40 men back to Colonel de Lisle's column. Awaiting the arrival of the column, Sladen positioned the wagons near Graspan farm.

The news of the capture swiftly reached Generals de Wet and de la Rey. Deciding to recapture the supplies, they left with between 300 and 400 burghers. Nearing Graspan, they took Lt Samuel White prisoner. The Boers had been mistaken for Bethune's Mounted Infantry. Stripped of his uniform and clad only in his shirt, White got away and ran six miles to warn de Lisle of the menace to Sladen's force.

Fighting began and continued at close quarters for four hours, the defence being carried out from a kraal and the nearby wagons. The defence held in spite of the recapture of some of the supply vehicles. When de Lisle and his column neared, the Boers retired, taking some of the wagons, all but two of which were subsequently retaken.

The casualties were, British: 20 killed and 25 wounded of which the South Australian 5th and 6th Contingents lost seven killed and seven wounded (one mortally). The Boers lost 14 killed and six wounded. Other casualties were removed.

The following two extracts are from Wells' newspaper cutting book.

"Corporal P M Wells who went to the war with the Sixth South Australian Contingent and returned to Adelaide invalided on Tuesday is a son of Alderman Wells. He was seven times wounded in the memorable battle at Reitz in June last. Cpl Wells fought most gallantly. The back sight of his rifle was blown off by an enemy bullet and he promptly seized a second weapon. He and an old Boer were dodging each other round a wagon, and it was a toss-up who would fall first. In order to expedite the movements of his adversary, the brave corporal drew his bayonet and with this dangerous weapon in one hand and a rifle in the other, he charged. The Boer managed to bring his opponent to earth with an explosive bullet which caused a severe abdominal wound. When the stretcher party came along later they concluded that he could not survive. Corporal Wells, despite his terrible wounds, did not despair. For several days he and others were jolted along to the hospital in a wagon. When the army surgeons saw him, they decided to amputate his right arm. The corporal told the doctors that he would sooner be buried in South Africa than lose his arm. The limb was spared, but will never be of much use. A wound in the groin also causes suffering. Corporal Wells has in his possession the bullet-pierced tunic and hat as relics of his misfortune. As he is maimed for life, the Imperial Government will probably deal liberally with him." (3)

The only record I have found is that Wells was awarded a life pension of two shillings per day.

Travelling to hospital, writing to his father on 17 September, PM Wells said:

"I have now changed my address and am in a hospital situated on the slope of Table Mountain, in Wynberg, eight miles from Cape Town. I started from Kroonstad on September 5. On the way down we stopped at Bloemfontein for a week. The first 750 miles of country were rather flat, but the next 100 miles were over mountains covered with snow. I cannot express the sensation of travelling down there. The train goes at a terrific pace alongside chasms that make you shudder to look down and it rocks from side to side in a terrifying way. Besides these dangers, we had to run the risk of the train being blown up, or the rails blocked. We came from Bloemfontein in a train called the 'Boer Ambulance' which was constructed by the Boers for their own sick and wounded but was captured by the English. We only travelled in the day time and were escorted over the worst part by an armoured train, but were not attacked. I do not know how long I may remain here, but expect it will be a month or two and then I shall return home as I am not considered fit to renew the hardships of trekking for some months yet so I am to be discharged altogether. (4) I rather regretted

3. Cuttings from Wells' notes. No newspaper title or date is given and I have been unable to trace the source.

4. Wells was returned to Australia, arriving 5 November 1901. (Murray, p374)

5. Cuttings from Wells' notes. No newspaper title or date is given and I have been unable to trace the source.

this step at first as it is such an enjoyable life galloping over the veldt, shooting and being shot at. Life in hospital is very dull. We have to pass our time all day reading and sleeping with nothing to worry us but our meals and nothing to look forward to but our letters and I can assure you we value them highly."(5)

As stated, Wells left the Australian Forces in September 1904, residing in a country area of South Australia.

To date, I have found nothing about him at that time, nor how he came to be commissioned as a Lieutenant (provisional) on 12 October 1908 in the Australian Intelligence Corps.

Military Order 413/1910 indicates he was seconded as an Area Officer, Training Area 76B (West Adelaide). The Australian Archives (Victoria) has a nominal roll of officers attending the Albury Special School of Instruction in 1911.(6) Wells' standard in the camp was judged to be good to very good. In later life, he was able to recall the name and service of any cadet in the area under his supervision.

He remained an Area Officer until 31 August 1914 although transferred to the unattached list on 1 August 1914.

Percy Wells died at Wayville, South Australia, on 3 May 1959.

6. Accession series MP84/1 Item 2028/1/297 "Nominal Roll of Officers"1911.

Acknowledgements

Mrs EM Grundy (PM Wells' daughter), Mrs Val Lawrence, Mr Clem Ryan, Mrs Jane Sampson, Mr Allan Box and Mr David Vivian.

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The Australians at the Boer War, RL Wallace, pp.327-328

An Enigma — A Rare South Australian Badge

Anthony F Harris

The badge discussed here is something of a mystery which, while positively identified, is an anachronism totally unsuited to the military head-dress of its period. Before looking at the artefact in detail, perhaps it would be advantageous to understand a little of the background to the organisation for which it was struck.

In November 1878, the *Rifle Companies Act 1878* (No. 118) was assented to by the Governor of South Australia. The Act enabled the formation of an organisation known as the South Australian National Rifle Association (SANRA) which was intended to '... aid in the defence of the Province in time of need'. The SANRA was formed in addition to the Volunteer Military Force (VMF), which had been raised a little over one year earlier. The Association would comprise rifle companies raised in towns or districts across the colony, and the organisation would be administered by a Council responsible to the Governor. The Rifle Companies could elect their own officers, subject to the Governor's approval, and the company members would be required to pay an annual subscription of ten shillings. Arms, accoutrements and ammunition (100 rounds per year) were provided by the government, but uniforms, to a regulation pattern, were to be provided at the expense of the member or the company. The uniform of SANRA, briefly, was of dark blue with scarlet facings, silver lace for officers, gilt buttons and a grey helmet with gilt mounts.(1) No badge details were gazetted. More extensive rules and regulations were gazetted in August 1880, but the only change made to the uniform was that the helmet was to be white instead of grey.(2) Once again, no badge details are given.

South Australian Rifle Volunteer helmet plate, No.18811886

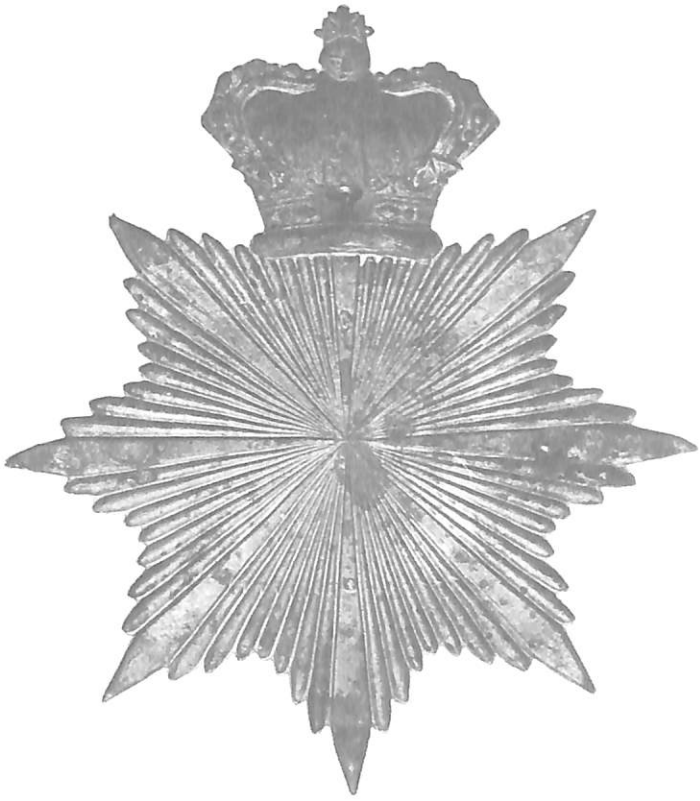
In November 1881, the *Local Forces Acts Amendment Act 1881* (No. 215) was introduced which changed the title of SANRA to become the Rifle Volunteer Force (RVF). There appears to have been little alteration in the functioning of the force, and it is presumed that the same uniform continued to be worn. Three years later however, major changes were made to the dress regulations of the RVF. The colour of the uniform became grey with rifle green facings

edged in black, silver lace for officers, silver buttons and a white helmet with silver mounts. O.R's had the initials RVF embroidered in white on the shoulder straps.(3) In these new regulations the only badge mentioned is that for the forage cap (Glengarry) '...a silver bugle badge on [the] side on [a] bow of rifle green'.(4) The RVF remained embodied until 1886 when, under the terms of the *Defence Forces Act 1886* (No. 390), it was renamed the Volunteer Force (this Act also saw the reintroduction of SANRA, paving the way for the subsequent division between the military forces and the rifle club movement). Thus we see that the Rifle Volunteer Force existed for only five years, preceded for three years by the South Australian National Rifle Association.

The Badge

The first and most striking feature of the badge is its sheer size, measuring 5 5/16 in. high x 4 1/2 in. wide (134mm x 115mm). This makes it comparable in both size and style to the plate for the British 'Albert' type shako of the mid 1840's to mid 1850's.(5) It is made in two parts the star and crown as the base, with the lion and surrounding garter as the second piece. Two wire prongs on the back of the centrepiece are folded through two small holes on the vertical centreline of the star (on the example illustrated the attaching wires have been broken off or corroded away). There are three standard loop-type lugs for mounting the plate to the helmet (one missing). The base metal of the badge appears to be brass, but as it has been severely corroded and some leaching has occurred, it is not known if it was originally gilt or silver plated. The author is of the opinion that it was plain brass, probably predating the 1884 dress regulations when all the uniform embellishments such as buttons and helmet mounts became silver (i.e. white metal).

It is interesting to note that the badge is not shaped to fit the curves of the tropical style helmet but is quite flat, suggesting that it has never been mounted on a helmet. Similarly, no contemporary photographs of the



Reverse view. The two holes for the fixing wires of the centrepiece can be seen along the vertical centre line.

1. South Australian Government Gazette (SAGG), 8 May 1879, pp.1301-1302.

2. SAGG, 12 August 1880, p.616.

3. SAGG, 27 November 1884, pp. 1910-1911.

4. op cit.

5. A. Kipling & H. King, *Head-Dress Badges of the British Army*, Vol.1, p.61, Frederick Muller, London, 1980.

Anthony F Harris is a collector and researcher specialising in the military small arms of the Australian colonies, with particular reference to South Australia. Secondary interests include local pre-Federation military insignia, documents and photographs. He is a public servant with the State government having a background in the printing industry. He has been a member of the Military Historical Society of Australia (SA Branch) since 1968, with several years as branch president and branch secretary.

The author would be most interested to learn of the existence of any other RVF or SANRA helmet plates or other badges. Contact can be made through PO Box 292 Magill SA 5072.

RVF known to the author show the troops with any badge at all on their helmets. There is little doubt that the size of the badge would have made it most unsuitable to place on the type of helmet worn by the force.

So what is the story behind the badge? The star-shaped shako/helmet plate was used in South Australia from as early as the mid to late 1860's right through to Federation, and about 12 variations are known more if officer's patterns are included. However, these are all of relatively small proportions, generally from 3 in. to 3 1/2 in. (75mm to 88mm) high. A brass star plate of this smaller size has been seen which has a lion centrepiece similar to the RVF plate except that the garter bears the title of the South Australian National Rifle Association. It is believed this plate was probably worn by the members of SANRA in the three years before the name changed to the RVF in 1881. No archival documents have been located which give any details on when, why or how many of either the SANRA or RVF badges were bought.

Very few RVF (or SANRA) badges are known to exist, but the small number of badges extant may perhaps be explained by the fact that the individual members of the force, or the company as a body, had to provide their own uniforms. Maybe only one or two companies decided to buy badges, but this still does not explain why such a large and obviously unsuitable badge was struck. Perhaps the supplier (almost certainly in England) had a surplus of obsolete, blank Albert pattern star plates and simply struck a centrepiece to suit, thus relieving himself of a quantity of by then virtually unsaleable stock? As a guide to numbers in the force, in June 1884 there were in excess of 600 members enrolled in the Rifle Volunteer Force.(6) In the eight years from their formation in 1878 to June 1886, a total of 3,759 individuals plus 277 officers had taken the oath of allegiance in connection with SANRA and the RVF.(7)

The example illustrated here was retrieved from an early metropolitan Adelaide rubbish tip (reputedly not used after about 1900) by a scavenging bottle collector. It is remarkable that the badge has suffered so little damage in all this time, though it certainly bears the scars of its burial. It is considered highly unlikely that any contemporary documents exist which would solve some of the questions created by these few innocuous but challenging pieces of pressed metal. But, perhaps, in an obscure report, or in an old volunteer's diary yet to be discovered...?

6. South Australian Parliamentary Papers (SAPP), No.164, 1884.

7. SAPP, No.87, 1886.

The Waler — A Military History

Major Robert Morrison

1991 finds us ten years from the centenary of Federation, and 106 years into the life of the Victorian Mounted Rifles. The 2nd Cavalry Regiment is conducting trials with the LAV 25, assessing its robustness, and potential for operations in Northern Australia, in spite of that announcement in 1985 by the then Minister for Defence, Mr Kim Beazley, that: "Plans to build an Australian designed, and manufactured armoured vehicle have been shelved. The existing fleet of M113 Armoured Personnel Carriers would be up graded in the light of overseas developments which showed they could satisfy defence needs beyond the year 2000." The decision to purchase the LAV 25 came like a bolt out of the blue, especially to members of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps, who were quite prepared to live with the up-graded M113 when it was eventually rolled off the production line at Bandiana, or wherever else the Defence Department decided that the upgrade would take place.

Mr Beazley, in that same announcement, certainly put to rest Project Waler, the first attempt at an all Australian multi-terrain military conveyance, since the product of sire and dam had introduced to the Armies of the World the original Waler in the early nineteenth century.

Let us now look at that single horsepower original Waler, and in the light of today's creditable contingencies, consider its suitability as a conveyance for a resourceful, well trained, reconnaissance soldier. In addition, we will also look at its ability as a load, and weapons carrier.

After all, the tenet of armoured fighting evolved from a single horsepower unit when the Assyrians developed a separate cavalry arm to support their heavy chariots bearing foot soldiers into battle, not unlike the reconnaissance support provided to a mechanised battle group mounted in today's multi-horsepower armoured vehicles.

The principle of mounted warfare remains the same regardless of the horsepower rating of the conveyance that delivers the mounted soldier into battle. It is in reconnaissance that the single horsepower original Waler could still have much to offer today's battlefield commander.

Background

In March 1981, under the auspices of the 8/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles Museum Trustees, and with the concurrence of the Commander 3rd Division, at that time, Maj Gen Kevin Cooke, a Light Horse Troop was raised, within the Unit, to maintain the historical links with the parent units (the 8th Indi Light Horse Regiment, the 13th Gippsland

Major Robert Morrison enlisted in the ACMF as a gunner with 2nd Field Regiment Royal Australian Artillery in May 1963. He was commissioned into the same Regiment in 1966, then served in a number of regimental postings with 3rd Field Regiment, saw full time duty with 4th Field Regiment in 5th Vietnam in 1970, then served with 13th Field Regiment until transferring to the Reserve of Officers in 1976.

In 1979 Major Morrison transferred to the Royal Australian Armoured Corps and was posted to A Squadron 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles. In 1981 he was tasked with raising the 8/13 VMR Light Horse Troop, which he then commanded for the next two years. Further regimental postings followed, until he assumed command of the Squadron in 1988 on promotion to Major, relinquishing command in August 1990.

The Morrison family are involved in horse breeding and racing, and Major Morrison played Polo for many years with the Adelaide Polo Club. He was also a member of the Southern Command Pentathlon Club where he received his initial military equitation training under the tutelage of Majors Harry Burton, and Peter Gration. Major Morrison has represented the Army as a member of Australian Army Tent Pegging Teams, and has competed at the Royal Adelaide and Royal Melbourne Shows. He was Light Horse adviser to Army Tattoo 88.

Major Morrison has been a member of the Albury/Wodonga Branch of the MHSA since 1979, and has an active interest in the history of the Australian Light Horse in general, and the Victorian Mounted Rifles in particular.

Light Horse Regiment, and the 20th Australian Light Horse Regiment (Victorian Mounted Rifles)), and to foster an interest in the history of the VMR.

At their own expense, the Museum Trustees and members of the Unit sought and obtained original Light Horse uniforms and equipment, much of which required refurbishment before it could be used. Members of the Troop, just like their forebears, were required to provide their own horse, and to maintain it at their own expense. The criteria for training with the Troop was that each soldier who wished to ride, be trade qualified in either the A Vehicle stream, or the Assault trooper stream, and that promotion was not available to any soldier while he was serving as a member of the Light Horse Troop. A ceiling of 20 was placed on Troop membership.

As a result of the formation of the 8/13th VMR Light Horse Troop, many ceremonial occasions have been enhanced by their inclusion, such as the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Beersheba, the Royal Escort provided for the Colonel in Chief of the RAAC His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, the renaming of Canberra ceremony, and during performances of Army Tattoo 88. Also included among these occasions are a number of Vice Regal Escorts at Guidon and Sovereigns Banner Parades, and regular appearances at the annual 3 MD Army Display and Fair, and Albury/Wodonga and Kapooka Military Area Open Days. The Troop also played a significant part during the VMR Centenary celebrations in 1985.

The value of maintaining a Mounted Ceremonial Troop has been demonstrated by the increased public awareness of the 8/13th VMR within the communities where the Unit has Depots. Considerable public relations coverage is also generated for the Unit whenever the Troop appears in public. A rekindled interest in the Regimental Association of the parent Units has also been apparent.

This ceremonial, and public relations role of our present day horse mounted soldiers is both well accepted and recognised. However, I believe that there is an even more important role for such troopers and their mounts in the strategy of layered defence of Australia. Perhaps the lessons of the past can still be applied.

Horses at War

Cave paintings imply that man's earliest relationship with the horse was when he hunted it for food.

The earliest use of the horse in war appears to have been in the drawing of primitive chariots. During the late bronze age the first evidence of bits and bridles occurred. As already mentioned, the Assyrians developed a cavalry arm 1000 years BC, and the Roman Army refined and utilised the cavalry to great effect. At the same time, China was also using the horse for military operations (Marco Polo was much later to introduce to Europe the Chinese invention of the stirrup, an item lacked by Roman Cavalry).

The feudal system that grew out of the ruins of the Roman Empire was based theoretically on the supremacy of a class of professional warriors whose most important piece of equipment was the horse. It was beneath the dignity of a gentleman to fight on foot. The armour worn by such gentlemen became heavier, thus the horses they required had to be stronger and larger to carry the increased load. The great horse of Europe evolved as a war horse.

Like most sound ideas the concept of heavily armoured knights was pushed to extremes, which led to its eventual downfall. When these formidable knights attended the Crusades, they encountered the lightly armed horsemen of the Arab world on their lighter, speedier steeds. The Arab was able to move in on the foe at the gallop, allowing his rider to strike, then withdraw swiftly to regroup for another attack, literally

running rings around the heavier more cumbersome great horses and their equally cumbersome knights. In fact, in a pitched battle the great horse was a menace to his own side, for when maddened by armour piercing arrows the great horse would plunge, turn, and attempt to escape the pain, causing havoc within his own ranks.

The great horse eventually assumed a secondary role as a draught animal, towing wagons and guns. The Light Horse had come into its own as a shock force delivering his rider swiftly into the attack, and just as swiftly allowing him to regroup and strike again. Thus was born the flair and elan of the cavalry.

Mounted Units in Australia

The earliest mounted regiments were formed in Australia during the 1850's as a result of the Crimean War, but it was not until the withdrawal of the British units in 1870 that the Australian Colonies became responsible for their own defence.

A major defence reorganisation occurred in the colony of Victoria in 1885, and as a result, Lt Col Tom Price was commissioned on the 1st of May that year, as the first Commanding Officer of a force to be titled The Victorian Mounted Rifles. This Unit absorbed a number of smaller private mounted troops into its ranks, and also recruited widely from the colonies rifle clubs. Training was based on the principle that it was easier to turn a horseman into a soldier, than a soldier into a horseman. It was during the December of that year that the title, New South Wales Lancers, was first used to designate the mounted troops of Victoria's neighbouring colony.

Men who enlisted in these Colonial Units supplied their own horses; in the main farm bred and raised. Horses are not indigenous to Australia. The earliest forerunners of predominantly Spanish stock were brought from the Cape of Good Hope with the First Fleet in 1788. Later imports of English stock came to the Colony of New South Wales (whence the name Waler derived), and were bred to the local mares. Australian pasture land and climate proved favourable to horse breeding, and the Waler came to be highly regarded as a saddle horse, much in demand as a cavalry remount by the British Army in India. The Walers heyday, as a War Horse, came during the First World War when more than 120,000 were exported for the Allied Armies in India, Palestine, and Europe. The *World Book of Horses* describes the Waler thus: "Origin Australia, height between 15 and 16 hands, of all colours, with a brave and enduring character. An alert head, straight face, wide nostrils, longish ears, neck set on strong shoulders, good depth of girth, strong back and hind quarters, clean legs with plenty of bone and strong hocks."

In her book *Light Horse*, author Elyne Mitchell sums up the action of these Australian horses and their riders in the following passage:

> " This charge of 'Grant's Mob' at Beersheba is one of the greatest actions recorded in the history of Australia's Light Horse. But there was a whole War that went before which was part of the making of the Light Horsemen. The charge at Klip Drift, the furious gallop of 6,000 horsemen through the pass beneath the Boer guns which forced the way through to the relief of Kimberley had happened seventeen years before World War 1 in the South African War, when the colonials [Victorian Mounted Rifles contingents among them] proved their courage and their strength and above all their ability to find their way across unknown country, to scout, to take cover, to outflank, and never waste a bullet.

> The charge of the trenches at Beersheba which was the greatest charge made by mounted men in modern warfare, was only one of many magnificent battles fought by the Light Horse during World War 1. What of the 24,000 horsemen bursting through the Artillery's Gap in the Turkish defences and galloping up the Philistine Plain? What of the desert warfare before they fought their way out of Sinai, the whispering hooves of the horses in the sand, travelling silently through the night, the listening posts, the Cossack posts, the trap into which they led the Turks at Romani, the great battle they fought and won there which saved the Suez Canal from capture by the Turks? What of Magdhaba, the night marches to and from El Arish, the thirst, the victory on Christmas Eve, the long march back to water? What of the first battle of Gaza, almost won with the Light Horse right in the town and then lost because of the order to retreat? These are the tales of endurance, month after month, year after year, of the horses and the men, the trusting affection and dependence between horse and man which have rarely been equalled and never surpassed."

This fine heritage of our mounted forces lives on in the principle of mobility and swiftness of action, inherited from our horse-mounted fathers. The 20th Australian Light Horse (Victorian Mounted Rifles) has the duel distinction of being the first to experiment with motorisation when a light car troop was raised within the Regiment in 1936, and the last to lose its horses after mobilisation during World War 2.

"The Horse Still Has A Place In War"

In 1941 Lt Gen Sir Harry Chauvel submitted an article with the above title. It was published at the time when the Australian Light Horse Regiments were undergoing motorisation. Much of his advice, given in the article, still holds true:

> "Now turn to the immediate problem of the defence of Australia and the use of Light Horse divisions for the purpose. Nothing has happened to alter my long considered judgement that the Light Horse is the most valuable arm of the land defences of Australia. They are the most mobile of the fighting forces, and must still be employed in the sort of country which would not suit mechanised units. That, incidentally, is the sort of country we are quite likely to have to fight in, if we have to fight at all. In certain circumstances, mechanised units would add considerably to the fire power of cavalry divisions, but the main body must still be deployed on horses.
>
> "I cannot think it likely that any army invading Australia could bring sufficient tanks and armoured cars here to compete with the mobility of our mounted divisions. There is no possible parallel between the invasion of Poland by German tanks and armoured cars against Polish cavalry and the uselessness of our cavalry in the defence of an island continent such as Australia. Any invasion of this country must come from over the sea.
>
> "Cavalry training is still the best war training for any soldier. It creates wideness of outlook and encourages resourcefulness, individuality and enterprise. A troop leader has often to accept responsibility and give quick decisions which in other arms would fall only to the lot of very senior leaders. It does not matter to what other arm the cavalry trained man goes, he has a ground work in military training which will fit him in all the essentials of a soldiers life."

Perhaps in the low level conflict sense we may never again see the like of the Beersheba charge, but the mobility and stealth afforded to the horse mounted soldier, with additional fire power provided by pack horse teams, could be a valuable adjunct to the reconnaissance gathering resources available to an Australian Field Commander. Wherever a force may be committed to an area of Australia, that force must

have adequate resources for gathering information about the enemy, and the ground. Reconnaissance information should never be provided from only one source, but from a combination of sources, both ground and air obtained.

Area and sector reconnaissance are particularly suited to horse mounted troops. A Light Horse Troop, consisting of four sections of 8 men per section, is capable of conducting Area reconnaissance by deploying each section independently. Such deployment allows good coverage of the area, and great mobility is provided by the horse. At the slowest gait (the walk) a horse mounted section can cover 7 kilometres per hour, at the trot 15 to 17 kilometres per hour is possible, and 30 to 35 kilometres per hour can be sustained by fit horses and men at the canter for a period of up to two hours before needing considerable rest. Using the time honoured method of riding for 40 minutes in the hour, leading for 10 minutes, and resting for 10 minutes, with a combination of the various gaits of the horse, large areas of ground could be covered in a days march.

For sector reconnaissance it would be possible to deploy the troop in line. Spaced at the maximum distance of 200 metres apart the troop would cover a frontage equal to six kilometres in length. Moving at the slowest pace, forty odd grid squares could be traversed in an hour. Even so dispersed the troop still has the ability to converge either by sections, or as a troop, according to the threat. If necessary the troop is also capable of conducting a dismounted action.

Deployment of additional fire power in the form of pack saddled GPMG's and MRAAW's would provide the troop with the ability to conduct a limited fight for information, should the situation require it.

Stealth and concealment are the keynote of reconnaissance, and the horse offers a means of transportation that is relatively fast, hard to detect from the air, difficult to track in comparison with tracked or wheeled vehicles, difficult to detect from the ground until in close proximity, and has the ability to move across country in relative silence. Add to this the horses ability to live off the land to a large extent, and a horse mounted unit could provide a valuable source of reconnaissance information.

Conclusion

There are two reasons for considering a return to the original Waler as a means of soldier transportation: first, the public relations aspect that such a unit provides, and secondly, the ability of horse mounted soldiers to conduct reconnaissance, and thereby provide a Field Commander with an additional source of information about the enemy and the ground.

The financial consideration in maintaining a Light Horse Unit is less than that required to maintain a mechanised one. The ability of both horse and man to live off the land to some extent lessens the logistic problem, and by employing pack horses additional fire power can be provided to the Unit should it need to fight for information.

As military history has proven the single horse powered Waler is adaptable through both breeding and training. This adaptability combined with a well trained and resourceful reconnaissance soldier could provide an additional resource so far over looked by Australian military planners, and commanders.

Project Waler may have been supplanted by the LAV 25, however the product of sire and dam so well combined with a resourceful soldier in the past, could continue to satisfy a need in Australian defence well beyond the year 2000.

The Military Road Builders of Western Australia

Malcolm Higham

Malcolm Higham has been a member of the Western Australian Branch for the past four years since his retirement from active farming in the district of Williams, 160 Km from Perth along the Albany Highway. Both he and his coresearcher, had farms close to each other, and both are on the Old King Georges Sound Road, the subject of this article. Both became interested in this road because they were both engaged in a joint research on the Explorations of Capt Thomas Bannister, who passed through the area in 1830. The Old Road was marked on early maps, but has not been used since 1856. Malcolm is a collector of British Military Rifles and Ammunition, and is currently Secretary of WA Arms and Armour Society and of the WA Ballistics Association. He is also a Councillor of the Royal West Australian Historical Society, and does part time work there, and also at the WA Military Museum.

Following Captain Stirling's settlement of the Swan and Canning Rivers in 1829, it was quickly realised that there was insufficient land useful for farming along the banks of these two rivers. If the colony of Western Australia were to survive at all, more land had to be found that was suitable for agriculture. Ensign Dale(1) was sent eastwards over the Darling Range before the end of 1829, and in December, 1830, Captain Thomas Bannister(2) was sent overland to King Georges Sound to report on the land to the southward. Both of the expeditions found excellent land along the inland rivers. These expeditions resulted in land being taken up very quickly in the Avon Valley, where the town of York was established in 1831. Following Bannister's expedition, land which he discovered along the Williams River was taken up between the years 1832 and 1836. In both these areas, and in the settlements along the lower west coast, new roads had to be built to facilitate the movement of flocks and settlers between Perth and the hinterland.

Military Stations were established for the protection of the farmers and their stocks from the activities of the natives. Apart from their military duties, the men at these stations were engaged in road clearing(3), building creek and river crossings, and providing a stable road surface for the badly needed communications of the Colony. Along the York Road, Military Stations were set up at Mahogany Creek, York, and Newcastle to provide for the settlers along the Avon Valley. Stations at Kelmscott, Pinjarra, and Leschenault performed a similar duty for the settlers along the West Coast.

Due to the exposed anchorages on the coast at Fremantle, particularly in winter, mails and stock were generally delivered to Albany, on the magnificent and safe harbour at King Georges Sound. From the colonies of New South Wales and Tasmania, it was prudent to off load at Albany, rather than face the hazardous trip around Cape Leeuwin. By March 1837, a road overland from Perth to King Georges Sound had been marked out by the efforts of Captain Stirling, Surveyor General Roe, Dr Joseph Harris(4), and Alfred Hillman, the Assistant Surveyor, on their various expeditions.

Along this Old King Georges Sound Road, Military Stations were set up at Williamsburg, Kojonup, Warriup and Plantaganet. The men at these Stations were soon busily engaged in the building of the new road. There were men stationed continuously at Williamsburg and Kojonup from November 1837(5) until the troops were withdrawn in 1847. At Williamsburg, the original barrack was built of wattle and daub, with a

1. Volume 1 Explorations at the Alexander Library, Perth.

2. Volume 1 Explorations.

3 Colonial Secretary's correspondence to the Officer in Command, at the State Archives, Perth.

4. Dr J. Harris — report of a Journey overland from King Georges Sound to Williamsburg, to mark a new line of road, *Perth Gazette*, March 1837.

5 The Williamsburg Military Station, papers at the Royal Western Australian Historical Society.

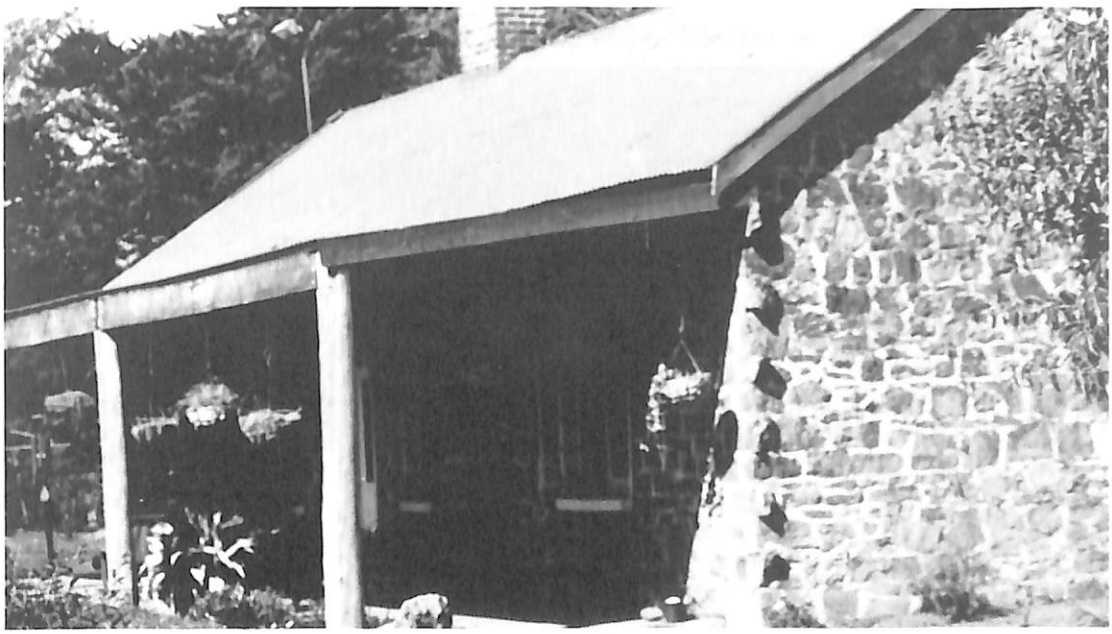
thatched roof, but this was burnt down not long afterwards, and a new barrack of stone was built further down the river at the new town site of Williamsburg(6) where the road crossed the river, and the barracks was assured of a good water supply. This site is now known as Boraning, and it is possible that an old house on the site incorporates the old barrack building. Men of the 21st Regiment of Foot were stationed at Williamsburg from 1837 until the Regiment was replaced by the men of the 51st Regiment in June 1840. The 51st remained there until the Station closed on 12th March, 1847(7). These men were under the command of Ensign J. Pegus, who was in overall charge of the stations at York, Pinjarra, Kojonup and Rottnest. Returns for January, 1845 show that the Station at Williamsburg had a strength of eleven men under a Sergeant.

The Old King Georges Sound Road generally follows the route of the present Albany Highway, except for two places. The old route travelled eastwards up the valley of the Canning River from Kelmscott for about four miles, and then crossed the river to met the present Albany Highway at the junction of the road to Canning Dam. Parts of this section are still marked on Metropolitan road maps, and it is still used as a fire access road. The second and major deviation is 24 kilometres north of Williams(8), where the old road turns almost due south, to go directly to Williamsburg, which is thirteen kilometres west of the present town of Williams, where the Albany Highway crosses the Williams river. After leaving Williamsburg, the road runs in a roughly Southeast direction to the next Military Station at Kojonup. It crosses the Arthur River about

6. Colonial Secretary's Correspondence to J.R. Phillips, Government Resident at Williamsburg, November, 1837.

7. R.W.A.H.S. papers.

8. Personal research of Mr W.G. Petchell of Willlams, and the author, between 1989 to 1992.



Old Boraning House. The front part of this house could be the second Williamsburg Barrack, built after the wattle and daub barrack burnt down.

twelve kilometres southeast of Darkan, and then continues on for a further ten kilometres, to cross the Beaufort River about four kilometres east of Bokal Siding. The road then crosses the Beaufort Plain, and on into Kojonup. About twelve kilometres south of the Williamsburg Station, the Old King Georges Sound Road is met by the road from York. The old York Road passes through the present town site of Williams, travelling slightly cast of north to York about one hundred and twenty kilometres away. Another road went out south west from Williamsburg to Bunbury, but this road was marked out by Mr Clifton from Australind.

When the new line of road was brought into use in 1856, the old road gradually fell into disuse. The new Albany Highway, built by convicts under the direction of Lt Crossman, not only shortened the road, but dodged the very steep hills north of the Williams River, and avoided the milkes of deep sand along the Beaufort Plain. These old sections were used for some years by local traffic, but with the coming of railways in the 1920's, and improved motor trucks, they fell into total disuse.

Over the past sixty years, they have almost passed from living memory. The old Road can still be followed as most of the creek and river crossings are still intact, and are still used as farm crossings. In many cases, the present owners are unaware of their historical origins. Much of the road surface can still be followed, as this is used as all weather tracks on farms, and even where it is not being used as a track, sheep pads along the firm surface give a clue as to where the road runs. In uncleared sections, it is still possible to follow the road quite easily. The gravel and stabilised surface still provides a comfortable travelling surface after 140 years.

I wonder how many people who travel the present Albany Highway, or the York Road from Perth, give a thought to those men of the 21st and 51st Regiments who toiled along these roads. How they must have hated those lonely outposts, and the work which they undertook was more in the nature of navvying, rather than the soldiers' life they would have expected when they joined up. Perhaps when you travel along these roads, you will give a little thought to these forgotten men.

Old King George Sound Road, Beaufort River, four kilometres south east of Bokal Siding.

The Flag

Brigadier A R Roberts

The National Flag, its status, history, and future are topical issues. In the interests of informed debate and to assist MHSA members who may wish, or be asked, to give information on this subject, the following factual and historical material has been extracted from the Department of Administrative Services publication, *The Australian National Flag*(1).

Brigadier Roberts is the Federal President of the Military Historical Society of Australia

Description

The Australian National Flag has a dark blue field with the Union Jack occupying the canton(2). There is a large white seven-pointed star (the Commonwealth Star) in the lower hoist(3) and five white stars(4) in the form of the Southern Cross in the fly(5).

The Australian Army is the protector of the Australian National Flag, by which it is represented.

There are three Australian Ensigns:

- The Australian White Ensign, on a white field with dark blue stars. It is reserved for use by the Royal Australian Navy;
- The Royal Australian Air Force Ensign is light blue with white stars and includes the RAAF roundel with the leaping kangaroo in the fourth quarter; and
- The Australian Red Ensign, on a red field with white stars.

Guidelines for flying flags

The Australian National Flag is the correct flag to be flown on land by individuals, private and commercial organisations. It may also be flown on government ships, fishing vessels, pleasure crafts and small craft. The Australian Red Ensign is the proper flag to be flown by Australian registered ships. As an alternative to the Australian National Flag, it may also be flown by government ships, fishing vessels, pleasure craft and small craft. No ship may fly both the Australian National Flag and the Australian Red Ensign simultaneously.

History of the Flag

Before Federation, the Australian colonies made use of the flags of Great Britain — the Union Flag and the Red, White and Blue Ensigns. On 1 January 1901, the six colonies united under the name of "Commonwealth of Australia".

1. Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, third edition, 1988.

2. The half of a flag nearest to the rope by which it is raised and lowered is called the "hoist".

3. The lower half of the hoist — also called the third quarter.

4. Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta Crucis, all seven-pointed; and the smaller Epsilon Crucis, which is five-pointed.

5. The half of the flag furthest from the halyard. The upper half of the fly is called the second quarter and the lower half, the fourth quarter.

6. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 29 April 1992 reported that this prize would be worth between $80,000 and $90,000 today.

7. The 14-year old son of Evan Evans, who started in business as a tent-maker in 1877 after he was shipwrecked on Victoria's western coast. Evan Evans Flags of Melbourne are still one of Australia's leading flag makers. (*The Canberra Times*, 1 May 1992.)

Shortly before the opening of the first Parliament, it was decided to hold a world-wide competition to obtain designs for two Australian flags — one for official and naval purposes and the other for the Merchant Navy service. The competition was conducted in conjunction with a newspaper, *The Review of Reviews*. On 3 September 1901, the designs were displayed in the Exhibition Building, Melbourne. Over 30,000 designs were submitted and five were selected as being of equal merit. The prize of £200(6) (£75 from the Commonwealth, £75 from *The Review of Reviews* and £50 from the Havelock Tobacco Company) was divided among five persons: Mrs Dorrington of Perth, Mr EJ Nuttall of Melbourne, Mr Ivor Evans(7) of Melbourne, Mr Leslie Hawkins of Sydney, and Mr W Stevens of Auckland. On the day that the winners were announced by the then Prime Minister, Mr Edmund Barton, a large flag embodying the designs was flown on the Exhibition Building, Melbourne. Photographs of the day show it as having a design quite similar to that officially proclaimed later. Under the Union of the British Blue Ensign was a large white star with six points representing the six states. In the fly of the flag were five white stars representing the Southern Cross.

In February 1903, it was announced in the Commonwealth *Gazette* that King Edward VII had approved a design for the Flag of Australia and also one for the Flag of the Merchant Navy. Both designs were shown in colour plates in the *Gazette*.

In 1908, the Government decided that a seven-pointed star, symbolic of the six states and the Territories, should replace the large six-pointed star shown in the original design of the flag — to represent the Territories and to conform with the Star of the Crest of the Coat of Arms granted that year.

For many years, the Commonwealth Blue Ensign was regarded as the official flag, and its use on land was restricted to Government establishments. In February 1947 the Prime Minister, Mr J B Chifley, issued a press statement encouraging the application of a directive given in 1941 by the then Prime Minister, Mr R G Menzies, that there should be no restriction on the flying of the Commonwealth Blue Ensign. Its greater use on public buildings, by schools and private citizens was encouraged provided it was flown in a manner appropriate to the use of a national emblem. Australian merchant vessels were to continue to fly the Commonwealth Red Ensign.

In 1951, King George VI approved a recommendation by the Government that the Commonwealth Blue Ensign be adopted as the Australian Flag.

The *Flags Act 1953* (Act No.1 of 1954) was passed by the Commonwealth Parliament in November 1953, proclaiming definitively the Australian Blue Ensign as the National Flag and the Australian Red Ensign as the proper colours for merchant ships registered in Australia. Act No.58 of 1954 corrected a slight error concerning the outer diameter of the large star in the design of the Australian National Flag. The correct terms now for these flags are the "Australian National Flag" and the "Australian Red Ensign". Act No.9 of 1981 removed reference to the *Navigation Act 1912* in subsection 4(1) and moved the description of the Australian Red Ensign from subsection 4(2) to a revised First Schedule.

By a proclamation under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953*, the Governor-General appointed the Australian White Ensign to be the ensign of the Royal Australian Navy. This was announced in *Gazette* No.18 of 1 March 1967.

Similarly, by a proclamation under section 5 of the *Flags Act 1953*, the Governor-General appointed the Royal Australian Air Force Ensign to be the ensign of the Royal Australian Air Force. This was announced in *Gazette* No.S89 of 6 March 1982.

Books Reviews

Crises and Commitments, the politics and diplomacy of Australian involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts 1948-1965, Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton

This official history is the first volume of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts in the period 1948 to 1965. It is the first of seven volumes to be published over five years. The other volumes will cover further political and diplomatic aspects and the operational aspects of the period.

This book has been written in the tradition of Australian official war histories, established by CEW Bean and continued by Gavin Long and Robert O'Neill. The author has had access to all relevant Australian government documents. The author has also been granted to access to the records of a number of foreign governments, and other documents. These are acknowledged in the bibliography at the end of the book.

Having lived on the periphery of military planning throughout the period covered by this book, I found reading of the many events and the Australian reactions and policies fascinating. In the main, the book refreshed my memories of the times, but it also surprised me concerning some aspects of the policies of the day. For example, I was not aware that until as late as 1952 when two RAAF squadrons were sent to Malta that international (Commonwealth) planning to meet a hot war would require Australian support in the Middle East.

The book documents the effects of Communism on Australian policy. It details the Petrov defection and the attempted outlawing of the Communist party. It details Australia's dilemma regarding the French campaign in Vietnam when the USA was eager and Britain was very conservative concerning intervention to help the French. The book, in chapter eight, gives a very clear exposure of the problems of foreign affairs and international diplomacy which most Australians take for granted and which they do not fully understand.

For the reader who is interested in the origins of ANZUS, SEATO and the Far East Strategic Reserve, the book will provide information together with a history of the Geneva accords which were intended to find a solution to the Vietnam problem.

From mid 1954 it appears that Australia's interests were firmly directed towards developments in Southeast Asia and away from the Middle East, and planning became SEATO-oriented. From this time on, the Menzies government adopted their "forward defence policy" and the Labor opposition, following its internal split, ceased to provide much opposition on the international and defence fronts. Australia was to end its ostrich-like isolation and go forward with its allies to defend Australia from abroad. Australian forces were located in Malaya (Malaysia) from 1955 primarily as part of the Far East Strategic Reserve. Throughout this period, the public was not always fully informed as to what was involved.

Australia's relationship with Indonesia and her worries about the security of Papua New Guinea should Indonesia gain control of West New Guinea were not helped by the attitude of the USA. The tensions in Laos and the varying attitudes of the USA and Britain forced Australia to choose to throw our lot in with SEATO, or with the USA if the British backed down. These were just some of the diplomatic and defence problems exercising the government at the time.

1962 saw an increase in activities. A start was made to establishing American bases in Australia and US officials were advising that a stand against communism must be made in Vietnam. The number of American advisers in Vietnam was increasing and Australia sent her first 30 advisers. A half squadron of the RAAF was sent to Thailand. At about this time, Indonesia started its campaign of confrontation with Malaysia. At this time the Australian public was more concerned with defence against Indonesia than the communist problem in Vietnam. The security of Papua New Guinea remained a potential worry. Australian forces were committed in Borneo against the Indonesian confrontation.

In 1964 the British were preoccupied with Indonesia, the USA were concerned with Vietnam and Australia was attempting to bridge the gap in the diplomatic field, while realising that to ensure American support we must be seen to be providing forces in the field. The Cabinet decided upon a "compulsory selective national service scheme", to provide the forces needed. The Cabinet may have realised the forces would be needed in Vietnam. The public was still more apprehensive about Indonesia who had now withdrawn from the United Nations and aligned herself with China who had just exploded her first atomic bomb.

Throughout the years from 1948 to 1965, Australia had found herself playing a role of go-between, between the British and the Americans with her support for the American attitude becoming greater in her own self-interest. This movement towards America culminated in the offer of a battalion of infantry for service in Vietnam. The battalion offer was "an act of faith and because of its political significance".

As Peter Edwards says in his final chapter, these days we tend to forget the problems and worries we had over Indonesia and we cannot consider the period of 1948 to 1965 without being aware of the final outcome of the Vietnam war. This book presents the problems and the worries that existed in a full but easily digested form, and if Peter Edwards' warning is taken, the reader will find this book very informative and very satisfying.

If I have any criticism, it is that the biographical notes contain some errors. I do not know many of the persons listed, but of those I do know, I have found several mistakes which a serviceman would pick up. — R L Hughes

Burfitt, James. *Against All Odds, The history of 2/18th Battalion 2nd AIF*, 2/18th Bn (AIF) Assn, Frenchs Forest, NSW, 1991, 296 pp, illus, 10 maps

This manuscript was originally presented as a Master's thesis and has now been published by the 2/18th Battalion Association. The author, unlike many historians of similar units of the 2nd AIF, has no military experience. This lack of military background has not diminished the value of the work although it is irritating at times. For instance, the British had no Hudsons in Malaya, they belonged to the RAAF. (page 39)

Soldiers invariably identify with that part of the Army in which they serve. In the United States Army, it is the Division; in the British Army, it is the Regiment. In Australia, soldiers identify with their Battalion. The author portrays the bond within the Battalion that its members carry long after their discharge, a bond which help sustain them during their period of captivity in various parts of Asia and in the years that followed.

Over 1,300 officers and men served with the 2/18th which formed at Wallgrove, New South Wales in June 1940. The creator of the battalion's ethos was its initial Commanding Officer, Lieut Colonel Arthur Varley who had served as a Captain in the 1st AIF and commanded the 35th Battalion at the outbreak of war. Over 75% of the battalion came from North-Western New South Wales, where Varley was a Stock & Station Agent.

After initial training in New South Wales, the battalion sailed aboard RMS *Queen Mary* for Malaya as part of the 22nd Brigade, 8th Division. The ship arrived in Singapore on 18 February 1941 and the battalion then moved to Port Dickson to commence more rigorous training, which included jungle training.

The 2/18th Bn's initial contact with the Japanese was made by four members of its members who had joined Roseforce, commando-style group formed to carry out raids behind enemy lines. On 28 December 1941, Roseforce ambushed a Japanese road convoy near Ipoh, destroying a number of vehicles including a Major General's staff car. Back in the Mersing area, two Japanese airmen were captured by a battalion patrol on 3 January 1942.

The 8th Division was stationed in Johore and did not see action until late January 1942 after the Japanese had defeated the British and Indian troops defending northern and central Malaya. The 2/18th Bn, on the east coast, was ordered on 27 January to withdraw in line with what was happening on the west coast, However, it did stage a major ambush of the advancing Japanese at Nithsdale Estate. The battalion lost nearly 100 killed in action but the Japanese losses were much higher. In the defence of Singapore Island, the 2/18th Bn was positioned along the north west coast of the island, and took up positions on mud flats. After General Percival, GOC Malaya, gave the order to surrender, the battalion went into captivity.

The author has compiled the story of three years of captivity from the personal diaries that were kept at the time and by interviews of survivors. Throughout the book he has successfully used archival material, published recollections, unpublished dairies and manuscripts, oral interviews and letters. Secondary sources include books, articles and an unpublished thesis.

Against All Odds includes the nominal roll of the battalion but on at least one page service numbers are out of alignment with names. The regimental numbers are correct in the appendices listing the various Forces and Camps that the prisoners were allotted. Regrettably there is no index. However, *Against All Odds* is a fine tribute to the 1300 men who formed this proud Australian battalion.

Against All Odds can be obtained from the Hon Secretary, 2/18th Bn (AIF) Assn, 30 Holland Crescent, Frenchs Forest NSW 2086 for $45. — Stan Pyne

The Desert Harassers: Memoirs of 450 (RAAF) Squadron 1941-1945, Leonard L Barton, 118 pages, Hardback, maps, photographs

During the 1939-45 War, 20 RAAF Squadrons served under RAF Command in the Middle East and Europe. Len Barton of NSW Military Historical Society who served with the RAAF in the Middle East has written the history of the 450 Squadron, the first of the 18 RAAF Empire Air Training Scheme squadrons formed. 450 Squadron began forming at Williamstown in February 1941 and embarked for the Middle East in April. 450 Squadron was a fighter squadron and flew Kittyhawks throughout its existence.

It went into action in February 1942 and flew at El Alamein and then supported the victorious Eight Army across North Africa to Tunis, Sicily and Italy.

238 pilots served on the Squadron which suffered 62 war dead including four ground staff. The squadron was stationed at 55 locations in the Middle East and Italy. As well as the story of the air crew, the story of the ground crew is also related. It is noted that four ground crew served with the squadron from April 1941 until September 1945 a total of four years and five months overseas. Appendices include an honour roll, a nominal roll, and list of gallantry decorations won by the squadron.

This is an excellent history of an RAAF Squadron in the Middle East and Italy and was printed in a limited edition of 500. Copies are available from the author Len Barton at 4/6 Gladstone Avenue, Mosman 2088 at $45 which includes postage.

Tokyo Calling: The Charles Cousens Case. Ivan Chapman, Hale & Iremonger, 1990, illus, index, 388 pages, soft cover

Major Charles 'Bill' Cousens who had been captured with the 2/19th Battalion at the fall of Singapore in 1942 returned home in 1945 to face a special investigation. A former Sydney Radio 2GB announcer he was charged with treason for assisting the broadcast of Japanese propaganda.

Cousens was committed for trial but before the case came to court the charge was thrown out by the NSW Attorney-General who did not believe that the evidence justified filing an indictment of treason. The Army stripped Cousens of his Commission and terminated his service. His critics contended that he let Australia down by broadcasting for the Japanese. Cousens argued that he probably would have broken down after a day or two of torture. He did not believe that the Australian Government would have required him to submit to torture.

Ivan Chapman tells the Cousens story from his birth in a British military family in India, to education in Sandhurst, to service on the North West Frontier to his resignation from the army and move to radio journalism in Australia. After the outbreak of war in 1939, Cousens enlisted in the AIF and on 17 February 1942 he marched with the rest of the 2/19th Battalion to Changi.

After a brief move to Burma, Cousens was brought to Tokyo in July 1942 and ordered to broadcast Japanese propaganda. The author, using post war statements from Cousens and his captors, treats in great detail the circumstances that led to the first such propaganda broadcast. Cousens spent the rest of the war in Japan. As well as details of the war-time broadcasts and editorial work for the Japanese, the author describes how the broadcasts were picked up in Australia and how Japanese language broadcasts were eventually beamed back to Japan through Radio Australia.

In September 1945, Cousens left Japan and got as far as Manila before being ordered back to Tokyo for interrogation by American and Australian military authorities. He returned to Australia in November 1945 and was summonsed the following July. After the charges were dropped he returned to radio in February 1947 and was a newscaster of Channel Seven Sydney from 1957 to 1959. He died at the age of 60 in 1964.

The Cousens case is an unusual prisoner-of-war and legal story. Ivan Chapman has told the story in great detail It is part of Australian military story and the fate of one man and how he survived in captivity is well told.

Gunfire!: A History of the 2/12th Australian Fields Regiment 1940-1946. Max Parsons, 2/12th Australian Field Regiment Association, 1991. illus, index, 342 pages

The 2/12th Field Regiment began forming as the 2/2nd Medium Regiment. Because of the lack of medium guns it was converted to a field regiment in October 1940. The Regiment served in four campaigns; Tobruk in 1941, El Alamein in 1942, New Guinea in 1943-1944, and North Borneo in 1945.

Permanent, militia and civilian volunteers began forming the regiment in May 1940. It was stationed at Puckapunyal until it sailed for the Middle East in HMT *Stratheden* on 18 November. In February 1941, when the AIF was reorganised in the Middle East, the 2/12th Field Regiment was allotted to the 9th Australian Division and served with that Division in all its campaigns.

The Regiment sailed to Tobruk on Australian destroyers on moonless nights in May 1941. It moved into action without guns or equipment and had to equip itself from salvaged and captured guns. The 2/12th was the only Australian field regiment to serve in the Tobruk siege. It was evacuated in September 1941, again by Australian destroyers on moonless nights in. The chapter on the siege of Tobruk, like all the chapters dealing with combat operations, ends with a list of the Regiment's casualties. It suffered 25 KIA or DOW and 46 WIA at Tobruk. The list, like all the lists in the history, is very detailed with regimental numbers, full Christian names and dates of killed or wounded.

After Tobruk, the Regiment moved to Palestine for reinforcements, re-equipment and retraining. In January 1942, the 6th and 7th Divisions returned to Australia and the 9th Division moved to Lebanon where it remained until the situation in the desert deteriorated in June 1942. The Regiment served at El Alamein from July until November and played its part in the massive bombardment that preceded the infantry attack on 23 October. The Regiment suffered 71 battle casualties in Egypt.

The 9th Division including the 2/12th Field Regiment returned to Australia in February 1943. The Division marched though Melbourne on 31 March and after training in Queensland from April to July moved to New Guinea. From September 1943 until March 1944 the Regiment was continually in action supporting the 9th Division in the Huon Peninsula campaign. The Regiment suffered 55 battle casualties before returning to Australia.

After rehabilitation and retraining the Regiment moved with the 9th Division to Morotai in preparation for its final campaign, the invasion of North Borneo. The gunners landed in North Borneo on 10 June and suffered one KIA and two WIA in the campaign. The Regiment continued until March 1946 when the last men marched out at Puckapunyal. The 2/12th was deployed overseas for more than 1,300 days and of the 2,135 men who served with the Regiment, 310 served in all campaigns.

The story of the Regiment follows a chronological thread and is interspersed with many observations and reminisces of unit members. There are some brief observations from the enemy's point of view. The text is well written, concentrating on individuals and daily life as well as more intense combat periods. It is never too technical although an appendix illustrates and lists the guns the Regiment fired.

The rolls in this history are some of the best and most informative published in any unit history. The consolidated Honour Roll includes the place of burial. The nominal roll not only has regimental number and full Christian names but date taken on strength and date marched out. Incredibly the names of each ship that each man travelled on is also included in the Nominal Roll. There are Nominal Rolls for attached troops. Honours and awards are fully listed in an appendix and many of the citations are in the text. The history is well illustrated and concludes with a comprehensive index. This is a very good history of a distinguished field regiment. — Anthony Staunton

Tid-Apa, the history of the 4th Anti Tank Regiment, 1940-1945, Lt. Col. Neil C. Smith AM

Introducing the long awaited history of the 4th Anti Tank Regiment of the 8th Division. The history, now nearing completion is written by Lieutenant Colonel Neil C Smith AM, a military historian and former Regular Army officer with active service experience in South Vietnam.

Tid-Apa traces the story of the 4th Anti Tank Regiment from the early days in Puckapunyal to the repatriation of Prisoners of War. The continuing role of the Unit Association and the part played by friends and relatives of the Regiment are also highlighted.

The unit history addresses the Regiment's part in preparing for and fighting the Japanese thrust to Singapore. Similarly the tale of the 14th Battery operating in Australia is related. Some emphasis is also placed on the lives of the many 'anti tankers' who suffered the trials of imprisonment under the Japanese.

Neil Smith has placed much reliance on input from veterans of the 4th Anti Tank Regiment. Where appropriate, official records have been consulted. *Tid-Apa* also includes a list of all members of the Regiment with detail of honours, awards and casualties. A name index enables quick reference to hundreds of veterans mentioned in the history.

Tid-Apa will be available in October 1992 at a cost of $35. The book will be hard bound and comprise about 200 pages. This advance notice of publication affords intending buyers the opportunity to prepay for their copy at the reduced rate of $30.

Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred, A Memorial History of the 50th Battalion AIF 1916-1919, Dr Roger R Freeman, Peacock Publications, 1991, Norwood, SA, 360 pages, hard cover, $100

I first learned of Dr Freeman's history of the 50th Battalion, 1st AIF, in early 1990. At that stage the book was still being written, and being a former South Australian, I had a special interest in the 50th Battalion. One of my relatives, Lt ETJ Rule, was an "original" of the 10th Battalion who transferred to the 50th upon its formation in 1916. He was killed in action on 2 April 1917 in the 13th Brigade's attack on Noreuil, along with four other officers and 95 O.R's. One of those O.R's, Pte L Eglinton, happened to be one of my wife's relatives. Another relative, Pte EH Topperwien, was captured on 13 September 1918, in some of the last action seen by the 50th Battalion. Given these links with the 50th, I contacted Dr Freeman, a radiologist, who was most generous in his assistance with my own research.

I anxiously awaited the book and was not at all disappointed when it arrived. It is coffee-table book size and is the most lavishly illustrated AIF battalion history I have encountered. There are hundreds of photographs of individual members (nearly 1,400 individuals are identified), many group photographs, and nearly two dozen Anzac day and reunion group photographs from 1919 to 1982. Clearly, the book has been aimed, primarily, at former members and their relatives and at historians interested in biographical detail and personal accounts of service in the First World War.

Each of the significant actions in which the 50th participated is briefly introduced and then related through personal accounts of events from numerous diary and letter extracts. The Battle Honours of the 50th battalion include Pozieres, Bullecourt, Messines Ridge, Polygon Wood, Passchendale, Ancre, Villers Bretonneux, Amiens, and the Hindenburg Line.

The book contains 360 pages, is divided into 34 chapters, and has nine appendices, including: a complete listing of all honours, awards and recommendations together with the citation from the *Gazette* for each one; the honour roll; a diary of events; information on all officers; a complete nominal roll; an index to photographs of individuals; and dates of death of a large number of those who survived the war.

The book is a remarkable memorial to the men of the 50th Battalion. It captures the camaraderie, humour, bravery, suffering and personal feelings of the members of the Battalion like no other battalion history has done, notwithstanding that it was written over 70 years after its disbandment. However, it is unlike many other battalion histories, in that the military action is not discussed at a strategic level in any detail, but appears to rely almost entirely on personal accounts of the action. Nevertheless, to supply such strategic detail possibly would be to merely repeat what has already been done by CEW Bean.

The book deserves to be on the shelf of every South Australian — the 50th being one of three 1st AIF battalions composed almost entirely of South Australians (the 10th and 27th were the others, their histories were written shortly after the war) — and every military historian who already knows the strategic history but who wants to obtain several different personal perspectives on particular battles in which the 50th Battalion participated, or obtain details on some of the famous personalities in the Battalion, e.g. Lt Col NM Loutit DSO & Bar, and Lt Col AG Salisbury DSO & Bar, CMG, Legion of Honour, and Cpl JC Jensen VC. — Bruce Topperwien

Guilty or Innocent? The Gordon Bennett Case, Mark Clisby, Allen & Unwin, 1992

Major General Gordon Bennett's decision to leave Singapore on 15 February 1942 and return to Australia has been the subject of a Military Court of Inquiry, a Commission headed by Mr Justice Ligertwood, a number of books and articles, and considerable on-going controversy. Mark Clisby's contribution to the debate as to the propriety of Bennett's action helps clarify the issues and explain the history.

Mr Clisby is a barrister and a Captain in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. He approaches the subject in an analytical manner, setting out the factual background, the case for, and then the case against Bennett. The last, brief chapter is entitled "The verdict", yet it does not give one. That chapter is, however, reminiscent of the summing up and instructions given by a judge to a jury before it retires to consider the verdict. The reader is left in the position of that jury. The reader has heard both the undisputed and the disputed facts, and has had the benefit of a concise and clear exposition of the relevant law. Mr Clisby has explained the legal arguments that have been put in the past by qualified commentators as well as the judgment of the Court of Inquiry and the Ligertwood Commission. In other words, the reader virtually has had the benefit of hearing from counsel for the prosecution and counsel for the defence.

Like all members of a jury, the reader should attempt to leave his or her preconceptions and biases behind before reading the book, and give proper attention to the known facts, and reasonable inferences that can be drawn from those facts, and then determine, in accordance with the law as explained by the judge (Mr Clisby in his case), whether the Crown has presented its case such that the reader can be satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that Bennett was guilty. If the reader cannot be so satisfied, then he was innocent.

Given the fate of the 8th Division, many of the arguments, on either side of the debate, that are given in the book are more emotional than legal. Samples of these are that: his primary duty was to Australia; he was the only field commander with experience fighting the Japanese and Australia's national interests were going to be better served by his return; soldiers have a duty to escape and fight again; he shot through and left his troops in the lurch; his primary duty was to the welfare of his men; he abandoned 15,000 Australians in their moment of need; his troops needed someone to stand up for them and fight for their rights; he could have deputised other senior officers to return to Australia to carry out the tasks that he felt he had to undertake. While examining these and other arguments in some depth, Clisby rejects them as basically irrelevant to the essential legal questions as to: the time of the surrender; when did Bennett become a prisoner of war; and the duty of a soldier when he no longer has the capacity to resist the enemy. These questions are all important because if it is established that Bennett escaped before the surrender took place, then he was not a prisoner of war and cannot rely on the defence of a prisoner's duty to escape (Justice Ligertwood held that Bennett was not a prisoner of war when he escaped). However, if he escaped after the surrender, then neither he nor any other Australian soldier had a duty to remain on Singapore Island.

General Percival signed a document of surrender at 5pm on 15 February 1942. It foreshadowed a general ceasefire at 8:30pm that day, which occurred. Bennett escaped at 10:30pm. The Japanese first entered the AIF perimeter at dawn on 16 February, but the Australians had already handed over their ammunition and had begun stockpiling their weapons. There was no formal surrender ceremony. The Australians marched to Changi prison on the morning of 16 February. Given these basic facts, which are discussed in detail by Clisby, and in the arguments concerning military law, was Bennett guilty? The book does not answer the question, but it is well worth reading and unclouds many issues.

— Bruce Topperwien (a Director in the Legal Services Group, Department of Veterans' Affairs).

Books Received or Noted

Smugglers and Sailors, Dr David Day, AGPS, a 544-page history of Customs in Australia from 1788 to 1901, will be published in early October.

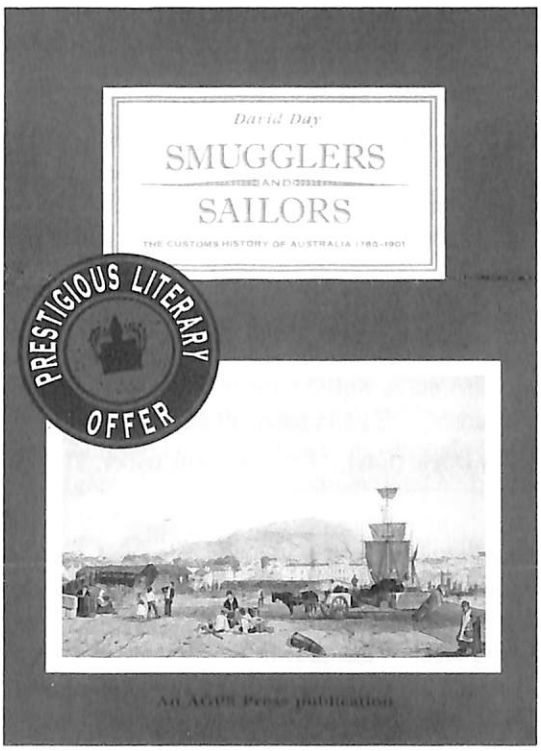
The book has been written by prominent Australian historian Dr David Day and is the first in a set of two volumes. The second volume, which relates the history of Customs from 1901 to the present day will be published in late 1993.

The publisher, AGPS Press, describes Smugglers and Sailors as 'a story of truly epic proportions'. It tells the story, not only of the Australian Customs Service, but of Australian society as seen through the windows of the Customs House.

The publisher says: 'Smugglers and Sailors begins its tale amidst the social turbulence of a developing nation, whose roots remain buried in lawlessness and poverty. Alcohol provided one of life's few pleasures, and regulation soon became a social necessity'.

'This early colonial society with its population of convicts and soldiers, and dependent upon supplies from Britain, offered seemingly endless profits from smuggling and market-place corruption. The taxation of undesirable substances also offered Government its first source of independent income'.

'These were the desperate foundations of European society in Australia'.



The book is described as a scholarly work which introduces Customs officers by name and, more amusingly, by habit. It draws readers into the world of early settlement and transports them over the years into a regulated, productive and forward-looking Australia.

In addition to the standard casebound edition, a special limited edition of 500 leather-bound copies will also be published. The limited edition will be signed by Dr Day and the present Comptroller-General of Customs, Frank Kelly, and will be available on a first-come first-served basis.

By special arrangement, the publisher is providing a special pre-publication offer; for orders lodged with AGPS before 18 October 1992, the prices will be $34.95 (casebound) and $150.00 (leather-bound). Subsequent recommended retail prices will be $59.95 and $194.95 respectively.

Australian Brass: The Career of Lieutenant-General Sir Horace Robertson, Grey, Jeffrey, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 320 pp, 28 halftones, 6 line diagrams, hardback, $49.45

Sir Horace Robertson was one of Australia's most colourful and controversial generals. His career spanned forty years and two world wars, as well as a lengthy period in both Japan and Korea between 1946 and 1951. Jeffrey Grey in *Australian Brass* charts the life and career of the man known to his compatriots as 'Red Robbie', using Robertson's career as a vehicle to trace the development of the Australian regular army and professional officer corps. *Australian Brass* also gives a unique account of the occupation of Japan as Robertson was Commander-in-Chief of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force.

Jeffrey Grey is senior lecturer in history at the University College, Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra. He wrote *A Military History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, *The Commonwealth Armies and the Korean War*, 1988 and is co-author of *Vietnam Days: Australia and the Impact of Vietnam*, 1991. At present he is writing the official history of Australian involvement in 'Konfrontasi' with Indonesia.

Horner, David. *The Gulf Commitment: The Australian Defence Force's First War*, Melbourne University Press, 1992, 248 pp, illus, 10 maps , paper, $24.95.

Australia's involvement in the Gulf War was an important event in our defence history. It was particularly important in the history of the Australian Defence Force, because in the Gulf War it faced its first test. The ADF was created in the 1970s, reflecting new defence priorities. The ADF's role in the Gulf tested the defence policy and how that policy has translated into organisations, force structure, equipment, training and procedures.

David Horner examines the question of how well the ADF performed and how quickly it could respond to the demands of the government. How well does the strategic policy-making machinery work? Does the ADF have the capability to operate in the high threat environment of the modern battlefield? *The Gulf Commitment* provides an inside view of the workings of the ADF and its performance under battle conditions.

Available for $24.95 plus $5 postage from the Publications Officer, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, GPO Box 4, Canberra ACT 2601

Vietnam: War, Myth & Memory, Jeffrey Grey & Jeffrey Doyle (Eds), Allen & Unwin, paper, $19.95

This book investigates how and why Australia became involved in the Vietnam War and examines prevailing public opinion. It offers essays by distinguished Australian, American and New Zealand diplomatic historians on the manner in which each nation came to the Vietnam War. It surveys the cultural impact of the 1960's and carefully documents the development of the antiwar movements in Australia and the United States. The most important aspect of *Vietnam: War Myth & Memory* is its willingness to argue with cherished assumptions on the subject. Dr Jeffrey Grey and Jeffrey Doyle lecture at the Australian Defence Force Academy.

The Devils' Garden: Solomon Islands War Diary, 1945, Peter Pinney, University of Queensland Press, 1992, paper, $15.95.

This is the third and final volume in Peter Pinney's trilogy of Johnno's war diaries follows on from the *Barbarians* and *The Glass Cannon*. In his new book, Peter Pinney carries the story into the black man's domain, where the individual heroism of tribal guides, the deadly payback conflicts between Siwais and Buins, and the devious methods of deceit confuse Johnno and his anxious Australian mates. From Johnno's illicit diaries come Peter Pinney's very personal account of the New Guinea-Bougainville fighting during World War II and the confusion, death, ignorance, and loneliness that is linked to fighting a war overseas, a long way from home.

Peter Pinney joined the army in 1941, trained briefly in the Middle East with an artillery regiment. He served with an Independent Company which was later renamed a Commando Squadron in the Wau-Salamaua campaign and on Bougainville in the Solomons, where this story takes place. After the war he spent fifteen years travelling Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas on a shoestring, working in subsistence jobs when possible. He wrote *Dust On My Shoes* in Calcutta, *Who Wanders Alone* in Zanzibar, and *Anywhere But Here* in London. Other titles include *The Lawless and the Lotus, Lotus, Restless Men* (north Australia), and *To Catch a Crocodile* (New Guinea). He spent five years diving for cray in Torres Strait, then sold his boat, married the cook, and wrote *Too Many Spears* with her. He began writing television scripts, took up residence in Brisbane and is still happily married to his deckie.

Making the Legend. The War Writings of C E W Bean, Denis Winter, University of Queensland Press, paper, $19.95

Charles Bean, official war correspondent and official historian First the First World War, has a unique place in Australia's history. Not only did he risk his life walking the battlegrounds with the men of the AIF, but he also observed the fighting first hand. His awareness of what actually happened at Gallipoli and the Western Front was unrivalled. His reports on the war were charged with emotion, with harrowing news of death and destruction.

Making the Legend. The War Writings of C E W Bean is a selection of the best of Bean's six volume Official History, along with some of his diary entries and letters home. Selected by Denis Winter a British writer whose special area of interest is the First World War. After studying History at Cambridge University, he was a visiting fellow at the Australian National University, Canberra. Since 1986 he has been associated with the Australian War Memorial, first as the Charles Bean Scholar and then as Special Project Fellow. His published books include *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War, The First of the Few: Fighter Pilots of WWI*, and most recently, *Haig's Command: A Reassessment.*

Letters to the Editor

Transfer to the Retired List

The Commonwealth *Gazette*, No. 3 of 9th Jan 1919, page 30, shows W.O. George Henry Goodall transferred to the Retired List with the honorary rank of Lieutenant with permission to retain such rank and wear the prescribed uniform.

Was a grant made to purchase the uniform or was it up to the individual? Also, did such appointments appear in the Army Lists? Goodall was in the 3rd Light Horse and the promotion was for meritorious service.

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Burwood Vic 3125
Phone 03-889 7924

Medals to the Connaught Rangers, 1799-1922 (the old 88th and 94th Regts), whether it is an MGS or a single WWI Victory — the man counts. I am also interested in other Irish Regts, such as the Irish Guards, Royal Munster Fus, Royal Dublin Fus, Royal Irish Regt, Leicester Regt etc. Medals name to Hynes also wanted.

Peter J Power-Hynes
PO Box 1557
Barnet Herts EN5 4PW
England
Phone & fax (081) 361 4020

Anzac Ship Names Announced

The Chief of the Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ian MacDougall, chose the Navy's 81st birthday to announce the names selected for the Anzac frigates, the first of which will be delivered in 1995 and the rest at a rate of about one per year. The frigates will be collectively known as ANZAC Class and individual ships will be named, in order of commissioning, *ANZAC*, *ARRERNTE* (pronounced Ar-rrun-da, with a rolled 'r'), *WARUMUNGU*, *STUART*, *PARRAMATTA*, *BALLARAT*, *TOOWOOMBA* and *PERTH*.

Vice Admiral MacDougall said that the names of RAN ships are carefully chosen to promote the relationship between the Navy and the Australian community and to provide a tangible link with the past. He said:

> "These names, all of which have been borne by previous ships of the RAN, have a proud place in our nation's history. They reflect not only Australia's great military heritage but also the strong links between the community and the Navy. In keeping with the process of reconciliation, we are especially proud to honour the Arrernte and Warumungu peoples. The name ANZAC, more than any other, symbolises the spirit of our nation's character. It also reflects the bilateral nature of the project and will be seen as an enduring symbol of the close defence relationship between Australia and New Zealand."

The spelling of *ARRERNTE* and *WARUMUNGU* (formerly *ARUNTA* and *WARRAMUNGA*) conforms to modern usage and is preferred by the peoples of those tribes. The *ARUNTA*, a Tribal Class destroyer, was commissioned in 1942, and within six months became the only RAN ship to single-handedly sink a Japanese submarine, the R033, off Port Moresby. It took part in the largest naval battle of all time, the Battle of Leyte Gulf, and also the last major surface engagement of the Second World War, the Battle of Surigao Strait, in which the Japanese lost two battleships and three destroyers. The *WARRAMUNGA*, like the *ARUNTA* joined the massive Allied force for the Philippines campaign. It supported many island landings and escorted the damaged cruisers *AUSTRALIA* and *HONOLULU* to Manus Island for repairs. While under air attack, it took in tow the transport USS *BROOKS* which had been hit by a Kamikaze, towing it for nearly a day to safety. It was present at Tokyo Bay for the final Japanese surrender.

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