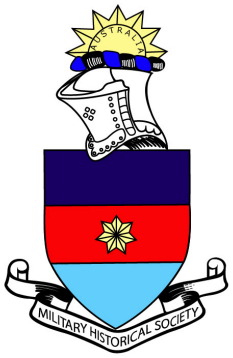
Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



Sabretache policy is that the submission of material gives the Society permission to print your material, to allow the material to be included in digital databases such as the MHSA website, Australian Public Affairs-Full Text, INFORMIT and EBSCO. Reprints to non-profit historical and other societies will be approved provided suitable attribution is included and a copy of the reprint is sent to the author. Copyright remains with the author who may reprint his or her article or material from the article without seeking permission from the Society.

The Society encourages the download and distribution of *Sabretache* for personal use only and *Sabretache* can not be reproduced without the written consent of the Society.

www.mhsa.org.au

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

SABRETACHE

Vol. XXVIII July-September 1987 Number 3

Registered by Australia Post – Publication No. NBH 0187

JULY—SEPTEMBER 1992
VOLUME XXXIII — NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

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.

Published by authority of the Federal Council of the Military Historical Society of Australia. The views expressed in this journal are those of the relevant contributor and not necessarily those of the Society.

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

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.

Organisation

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

The Federal Council is responsible for the publication, quarterly, of the Society Journal, *Sabretache*, which is scheduled to be mailed to each member of the Society in the last week of the final month of each issue.

Advertising

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

Commercial advertising rate is $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.

Advertising material must reach the Secretary by the following dates:
1 January for January-March edition
1 April for April-June edition
1 July for July-September edition
1 October for October-December edition

Queries

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

Branch Secretaries

ACT — Ivan Lomasney, 28 Beasley Street, Pearce, ACT 2607
Victoria —Steve Gray, 12 Player Close, Hoppers Crossing, Vic. 3030
Geelong—Robin Mawson, 25 Allanbee Avenue, Grovedale, Geelong, Vic 3216
Albury-Wodonga—R N Morrison, PO Box 593,Lavington, NSW 2641
Queensland —Mr S W Wigzell, 17 Royal Street, Alexandra Hills, Qld. 4161
South Australia —Mr A R Clark, The Hermitage Drive, Anglsey Estate, Anglevale, SA 5117
Western Australia —Rhonda Grande, 19 Sillman Way, Duncraig, WA 6023

Australian Naval Aviation 1917-1947

(Presentation to the Military Historical Society of Australia 1992 Biennial Conference by Peter Sinfield, MHSA (ACT))

Before commencing this talk, I would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by the RAAF Historical Section in its preparation. It has previously, in slightly different form, been presented to the ACT Branch.

Introduction

At the turn of the century, the world's navies gave little thought to the sky as an arena of battle — the big gun was king and fleet tactics had not changed for 100 years. However, within a generation the aircraft had proven itself as a formidable machine of war, a useful adjunct to operations over land or at sea. By 1914, an effective catapult and satisfactory folding wing had been invented and the basic tools and procedures for launching and retrieval still in use on aircraft carriers had been developed. However, this presentation is not about aircraft carriers as we know them today — they were about to enter RAN service just as this story closes. Rather, this morning's talk will deal with the interesting variety of aircraft associated with our Navy from its earliest days to the formal creation of the Fleet Air Arm in 1948.

Pre 1917

When the brand-new Australian Fleet steamed through Sydney Heads in October 1913, discussions about the formation of a naval air service had already begun. Not unnaturally, the RAN's plans centred around seaplanes, but were conceptual rather than practical — there were no seaplanes in Australia in 1913. These early proposals came to nought, but the issue remained a subject of debate throughout the war and was not finally resolved until the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force in 1921.

Prior to 1917, only two RAN ships had any close association with aircraft. The first Commonwealth military aircraft to be despatched overseas were a Maurice Farman seaplane and a Royal Aircraft Factory BE2a from the Central Flying School at Point Cook. At the end of November 1914, the two planes were crated up, railed to Sydney and embarked in the sloop *Una* (ex-*Komet*). Having loaded the aircraft, *Una* was despatched to the Bismarck Archipelago, where she was used by the Administrator of the Occupied Territories. Ultimately, the two planes were returned to Australia in 1915 — still in their crates!

The other ship — HMAS *Pioneer* — actually observed both the usefulness of aircraft for naval operations and some limitations of seaplanes in the tropics. A small, ex-Royal Navy cruiser, *Pioneer* — at Admiralty request — was despatched at the end of 1914 to German East Africa (now Tanzania) to assist in the blockade of the German cruiser *Konigsberg*, which had taken shelter in the Rufiji delta. Due to the shallow river waters and the Germans' skilled camouflage, the blockading force could not destroy the raider. Seaplanes were called in but their performance in the tropics proved disappointing. Eventually aeroplanes and monitors (slow, shallow draught vessels with heavy main armament) were sent from Britain and, on 11 July 1915, with aircraft spotting the fall of shot, the monitors engaged *Konigsberg* and left her a burning and shattered wreck.

This limited exposure of the infant RAN to the use of aircraft for naval purposes largely reflects the situation in the southern hemisphere, where there was little enemy naval activity after 1914 and which thus became something of a technological backwater, with the major developments occurring in the

European theatre. Coincidentally, however, it was in the Indian Ocean that what can be considered the real start of Australian naval aviation took place.

1917-1919

The first Australian warship to actually operate — as opposed to simply carrying — an aircraft was the Australian-built light cruiser HMAS *Brisbane*. When German raiders became active in the Indian Ocean early in 1917, she was withdrawn from the Mediterranean to serve with the East Indies Squadron based on Colombo. In April, she was equipped with a Sopwith Baby seaplane from HMS *Raven II* to assist her in searching for the raider *Wolf*.

The Sopwith Baby was a single-seat scouting and bombing seaplane with a maximum speed of 100 mph and endurance of a little over two hours. *Brisbane's* Baby (N.1014) was carried at the rear of the ship and was lowered and hoisted over the side by means of a derrick crane, making two flights a day for several weeks piloted by Flying Officer AW Clemson.

Although the search ultimately proved fruitless, it provided the RAN with valuable practical experience in the operation of aircraft from ships and the seaplane's return was much regretted when the cruiser was recalled to Australia in June. The possibilities raised by ships carrying their own aircraft certainly made an impression on *Brisbane's* Commanding Officer, Captain (later RADM) C L Cumberlege RN. In October 1917 the cruiser was sent to the Solomons looking for the German raider *Seeadler*. Faced with the problem of patrolling a large area containing numerous small islands, Cumberlege reported that "[t]he ideal method of watching this part of the world would be by seaplane; the smallest could always find smooth water from which to operate".

As a result of *Brisbane's* experience, the Australian Naval Board submitted a request to the Admiralty for a quote on four Sopwith Babies. Their Lordships wrote back in discouraging terms, stating that "[t]he use of small seaplanes from cruisers is not recommended" and " in any case, the type is dying out" in favour of aeroplanes. The matter proceeded no further.

This comment presumably arose from experiences in the North Sea, where the dependence of seaplanes on good weather and their generally inferior performance led Admiral Jellicoe (C-in-C of the Grand Fleet) to press for the faster and more nimble aeroplanes. He set up a Grand Fleet Aircraft Committee, which came to the view that it was desirable for every warship to carry its own aircraft. Initially, this proposal was strongly opposed by traditionalist naval officers because of the implications of a capital ship leaving the battle line to launch an aircraft. However, Jellicoe was not to be denied and experiments started with light cruisers, the fleet's scouts.

At this time, the battle cruiser *Australia* and the light cruisers *Sydney* and *Melbourne* were serving with the Grand Fleet. *Sydney's* Commanding Officer was Captain J S Dumaresq, an Australian serving with the Royal Navy. Dumaresq was keenly interested in naval aviation, arranging several flying trials and advocating the use of fighters from light cruisers for defence against Zeppelins. His point could not have been made more clearly than by his own ship and HMS *Dublin*, which were bombed on 4 May 1917 in the North Sea by Zeppelin L.43. Neither ship was damaged, but Dumaresq redoubled his calls for fighters.

As a result of his persistence and the decisions made by the Grand Fleet Aircraft Committee, *Sydney* had a revolving flying-off platform fitted on her fo'c's'le in November 1917. Trial launchings the following month with a Sopwith Pup proved successful, and revolving platforms were soon installed in other light

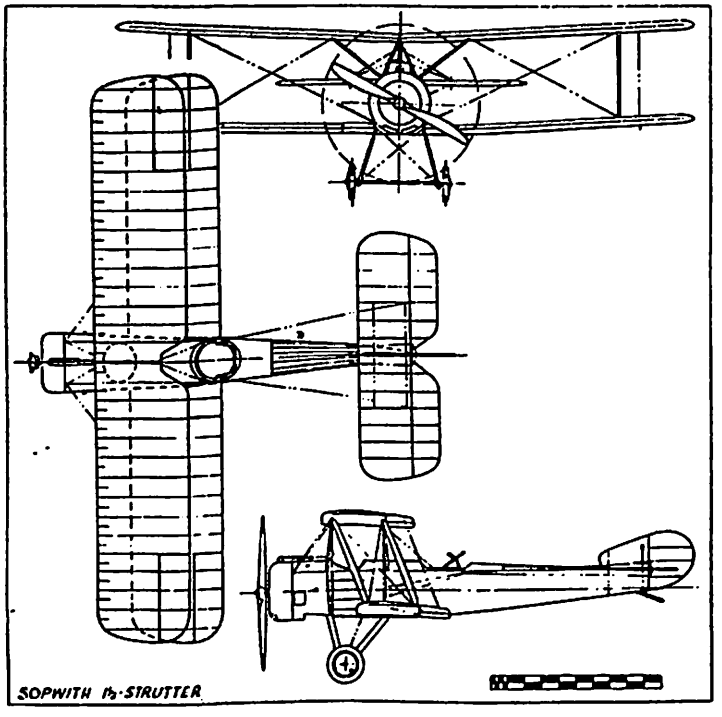
cruisers serving in the North Sea, including HMAS *Melbourne*. The platforms were located just above and to the rear of the forward gun and extended to the bridge structure. *Melbourne's* platform was fitted in March 1918, but she did not launch her first aircraft until 10 May 1918, by which time both she and *Sydney* had been equipped with a Sopwith Ships Camel.

The Ships or 2F.1 Camel was a shipboard variant of the most famous single-seat fighter aircraft of the First World War, with a two-part fuselage and slightly modified armament. Unlike the F.1 Camel, it served only with the Royal Navy, being designed specifically for interception of Zeppelins over the North Sea. The aircraft was generally fitted with a conventional wheeled undercarriage, taking off from the decks of seaplane carriers, platforms on cruisers and capital ships and, experimentally, from lighters towed by destroyers.

Sydney apparently received her Camel in February 1918, with *Melbourne's* arriving in April. It was not long before they were launched on their first operational sortie.

On 1 June, the two Australian cruisers formed part of a strong naval force — battle-cruisers, aircraft carriers, cruisers and destroyers — which set out on a raid into Heliogoland Bight. After the force was well under way, two enemy seaplanes suddenly appeared from a break in the clouds and flew over the cruisers heading for the battle-cruisers. *Sydney* and *Melbourne* "scrambled" their aircraft, which were airborne before the German planes had finished bombing the battle cruisers and had turned for home. Unfortunately, Flight Lieutenant Gibson in *Melbourne's* aircraft lost sight of the enemy as he climbed through the clouds and he returned (one wonders how, and where to!). Seeing this, HMS *Courageous* — a seaplane carrier and presumably part of the force to provide air defence — decided against launching her own aircraft. However, Flight Lieutenant Sharwood chased the enemy for 60 miles in *Sydney's* Camel, gradually closing the gap. Eventually getting within range, Sharwood shot down one of the enemy aircraft and fought the other until one of his guns ran out of ammunition and the other jammed; he then broke off the engagement and headed back towards *Sydney*. Low on fuel and rapidly losing any hope of getting back to his ship, he at last sighted two British light cruisers and their attendent destroyers. One of the ships opened fire at him before he was able to identify himself and ditch in front of a destroyer. This was the only way landplanes operating from ships other than carriers had of returning to their floating bases, and Sharwood knew that the Ships Camel usually turned a somersault when it struck the water and threw its pilot out. However, he was lucky — the aircraft merely stuck its nose into the sea and remained buoyant with its tail in the air. After clinging to the Camel's tail for 20 minutes, Sharwood was picked up by a boat from the destroyer, while the aircraft was salvaged some time later by the light cruiser *Canterbury*.

While Sharwood's exploit seemed to prove the value of aeroplanes at sea — despite its ignominious ending — the strong opposition to capital ships carrying aircraft continued. The solution eventually adopted was the fitting of a flying-off platform on the roof of one of the turrets, then training it into the wind for launching. After experiments with a Sopwith Pup aboard HMS *Repulse* in October 1917 proved the feasibility of this arrangement, efforts were made to carry two-seaters which were better equipped for reconnaissance. An unsuccessful trial aboard Repulse took place in March 1918, followed by a successful take-off from HMAS *Australia* several days later. British capital ships soon carried two flying-off platforms — a short one aft for fighters and a longer version over the forward turret for two seaters. The platforms extended on a framework fitted above and clear of the guns of the forward turret, but over the tail of the after turret in order to be able to point the aircraft more nearly ahead and to reduce the necessary training of the turret to a minimum. First mention is made of *Australia* having a flying-off platform in February 1918 and she embarked a Ships Camel about the same time as *Sydney*. In March and April she was involved in the two-seater trials mentioned above, using a Sopwith Ships Strutter, a reconnaissance



fighter/bomber with a top speed of 106 mph and an endurance of 4 1/2 hours. The first Strutters entered service in early 1916 and, although widely used in all theatres by both the RNAS and RFC, by 1918 they were no longer front-line aircraft.

The usual arrangement of flying-off platforms fore and aft was modified in *Australia* and her sister-ship HMS *New Zealand*, which had two of their four turrets arranged *en echelon* amidships. *Australia*, therefore, usually operated her Strutter on P (port) turret and the Camel on Q (starboard) turret, although on at least one occasion — in October 1918 — she operated two Camels.

Meanwhile, some of the destroyers of the Australian flotilla were becoming intimately involved with aerial operations of a different kind. After hard war service in New Guinea, Australian and Malayan waters, all six were ordered to the Mediterranean in mid-1917, where they were based on Brindisi as part of a naval force blockading a strong German and Austrian submarine and surface fleet in the Adriatic. Despite the patrol's best efforts, enemy submarines continued to slip out into the Mediterranean and early in 1918 at least *Huon*, *Parramatta* and *Yarra* were fitted with additional anti- submarine equipment, including balloon winches. With hydrophones in their infancy, the balloon observer's job was to detect shadows indicating possible submarines and direct their ship towards them. The destroyers worked in pairs, with the second vessel acting as the "killer" once firm contact was made.

Despite frequent mishaps, the balloons accomplished their intended purpose of sighting submarines on at least two occasions (once in *Parramatta* and once in *Huon*). It is not known how long the balloons remained in service, but they were presumably disembarked shortly after the Armistice.

As the Australian ships prepared to return home, some thought was given to the future employment of their aircraft. On 9 December 1918, the Australian Naval Board decided to purchase the aeroplanes

attached to *Australia*, *Sydney* and *Melbourne* (ie, three Camels and one Strutter); however Admiralty advice was that, unless the establishment of a local naval air service were planned, it would be bad policy to retain the aircraft due to lack of facilities in Australia. Acting on this advice the Naval Board rescinded its decision and the aircraft were landed before the ships left for home early in 1919. The destroyers, too, had their balloon winches removed and their original gear restored in Malta when the flotilla was on its way back to Australia.

Inter-war years

While Australian ships were thus learning at first hand the ins and outs of operating aircraft, Navy and Army leaders at home were arguing the aviation needs of their respective services. Both services submitted proposals, Navy's including three airship and two seaplane stations, an aeroplane and a seaplane school, and 2,000 officers and men. The loan of a seaplane carrier — complete with aircraft — was also to be requested of the Admiralty (that later replied that no such vessel could be spared). Whatever their other differences, however, both plans contended that Australia should be self-sufficient in the manufacture of aircraft.

The negotiations, arguments and political machinations went back and forth for nearly three years. In the end, it was decided to create a combined air force to serve the needs of both navy and army, with representatives of both services on its controlling board. Thus the Royal Australian Air Force — only the second independent air force in the world — was established on 31 March 1921. With its formation the RAN lost any hopes it may have had of controlling its own air policy — control which was not returned for nearly 30 years.

However, the Navy had been no idle spectator during the evolution of the RAAF. In 1919, Dumaresq — his passion for naval aviation unabated — had been promoted Commodore in command of HM Australian Fleet. In July of the following year, an Avro 504L was embarked for trials in his flagship *Australia*. The 504L was a seaplane variant of the ubiquitous Avro 504K, of which 20 were ordered by the AFC as elementary trainers in 1918, a total of 51 serving with the RAAF until 1928. The 504 series, which first appeared in 1913 as two-seater bomber/reconnaissance aircraft, became the RFC/RNAS standard trainer and remained so until the late 1920s.

Australia's loan aircraft was stowed between the funnels amidships, being hoisted in and out by the battle cruiser's coal derrick. Preliminary operations off the south-eastern coast were favourably reported when, for reasons unknown, the Avro was returned in August. Disregarding the Admiralty advice of 1917 concerning the operation of seaplanes from light cruisers, a second 504L was allocated to *Melbourne* for further trials at the end of September 1920. The Avro was a much bigger aircraft than the Sopwith Baby carried by *Brisbane* and, despite the technological advances made during the war, the seaplane did not perform well in the tropics. It was subsequently landed in November. However, it appears that the earlier trials were encouraging, as six Fairey IIID seaplanes were ordered late in 1920, to be flown from the cruisers and for survey operations. Although having been developed from a proven design, the IIID was a new type, the prototype having only flown for the first time in August 1920. It was a three-seat spotter/reconnaissance aircraft with a range of 550 miles and a top speed of 106 mph. The first RAN aircraft was launched by Mrs Hughes in August 1921, with all six delivered by November. They arrived in Australia wearing ANA (for Australian Naval Aircraft) serials 1-6, but the Government's decision to create a combined air force saw them taken over by, and spending their brief careers as part of, the newly-formed RAAF. From 1926, they were gradually replaced by Supermarine Seagull IIIs. Curiously, this sequence was reversed in the RAF, where the Seagulls entered service in 1923 and were replaced by

the IIIDs in 1925. Only two of the Fairey seaplanes are noteworthy. Most famous was A10-3, in which two RAAF officers made the first flight around the Australian continent in 1924. Of more direct interest to the topic of this talk was A10-2, which was attached to the sloop HMAS *Geranium* as an aid to her surveying operations. Employed in surveying the Great Barrier Reef from 1923, she embarked the Fairey IIID in 1924, stowing it aft and hoisting it in and out using the ship's derrick. This is the first recorded instance of an aircraft being used for hydrographic survey operations, but these seaplanes ultimately proved unsuitable for such work because, and I quote from Sir Richard Williams' autobiography *These are Facts*:

> "they were fitted with wooden floats and could only be handled in and out of the water without damaging the floats where special facilities, such as cradles and some sort of slipway, were available. These existed only at Point Cook. They were unsuitable for operation on the Great Barrier Reef where the survey ship was almost constantly on the move."

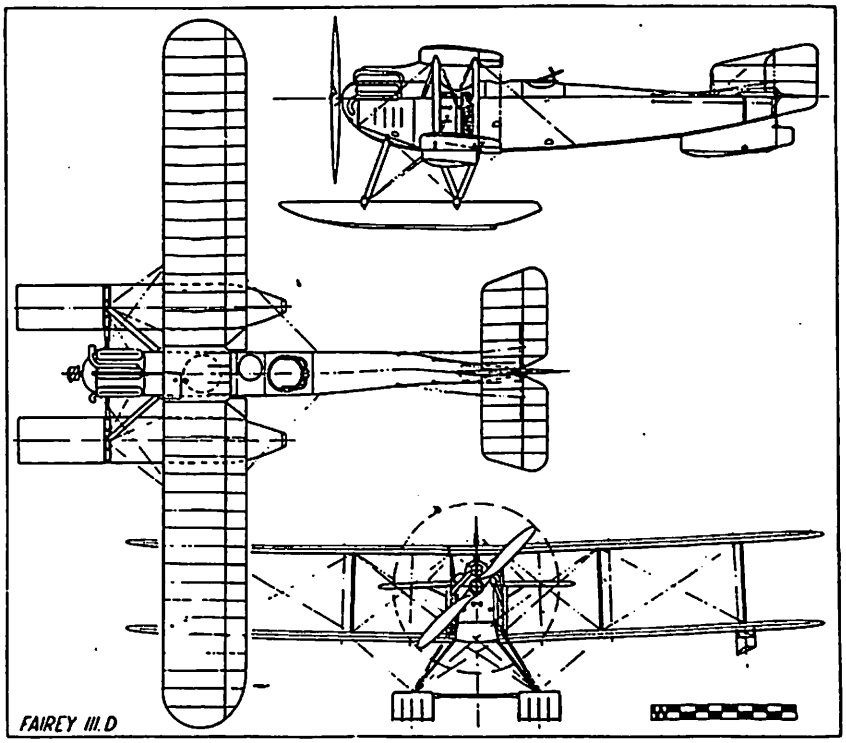
Nevertheless, the aircraft remained attached to *Geranium* until the ship was joined by HMAS *Moresby* in late 1925.

In the meantime, other significant events had taken place. In May 1923, the RAN had instituted a specialist Observer branch and also made allowance for a small number of personnel to be trained as pilots. This formally created the structure that remained in force until 1948, with most of the pilots embarked on RAN cruisers during World War Two being either RAAF or RN. The term "Observer" implies the original function of naval aircraft, and is still used in the Fleet Air Arm today. Also in 1923, the Naval and Air Boards agreed that aircraft would not be carried on or flown off turret platforms due to the adverse effects on the plane.

In 1921, the British Government had decided to build its Naval Base at Singapore, and the so-called "Singapore strategy" became the cornerstone of Australian defence policy between the wars. Work commenced in 1923 but was suspended the following year after the election of the McDonald Labour Government in the UK. This delay was, of course, rather alarming to Australia and, in June, the Government announced world-wide tenders for the construction of two large cruisers and two ocean-going submarines. The contracts were ultimately awarded to British dockyards, thereby saving £1,000,000 but leading to a public outcry, with the Labor opposition demanding that the vessels be built in Australian yards. In order to placate Australian workers and dampen the controversy, the Governor-General announced at the opening of Federal Parliament in June 1925, that the Government had decided to build a seaplane carrier at Cockatoo Dockyard in Sydney.

This announcement took everyone by surprise. Williams, then Chief of the Air Staff, first learned of the Government's decision in the morning paper; the Opposition castigated the plan, pressing for a much larger vessel in view of Japan's latest carrier (the *Akagi*, of 27,000 tons and 60 aircraft); and, most peculiar of all, the RAN had no plans to build such a vessel. The Directorate of Naval Construction in London was approached for a suitable design, the only known specifications being a speed of 21 knots and a maximum cost of £1,000,000! This lack of detail led DNC to make some arbitrary decisions about, among other things, the type and number of aircraft to be carried. As the Fairey IIID was then in RAAF service, it was selected as the basis for the design.

In preparation for *Albatross* — for such was to be the vessel's name — No.101 (Fleet Co-operation) Flight was formed on 1 July 1925 at Point Cook, moving a few months later to Richmond. A call for RAN volunteers was made, and those selected underwent a four-year training course with the RAAF. Thereafter,



No.101 Flight and its successors (No.5 Squadron 1936-39 and No.9 Squadron 1939-44) were manned by a mixture of RAAF and RAN personnel.

At the same time, consideration was given to replacing the aging Fairey IIIDs. The fragility of their floats and the lack of facilities in North Queensland waters led Williams to conclude that what we needed was an amphibian which could work from the water in co-operation with HMAS *Moresby*, as necessary, but could bring itself ashore by "walking up the beach" so to speak, use either land or sea facilities for its operations and could take itself to and from, as necessary, our workshop facilities which were inland at Richmond. (Williams, p.176) As a result, an order was placed for six Supermarine Seagull IIIs. Despite unfavourable reports from the United Kingdom, this aircraft was selected because it was the only British service amphibian then in existence and, as stated above, amphibious capability was vital for the machine's intended use. They were not specifically acquired for service in *Albatross* as it was considered that improved types would be available by the time the ship would be commissioned.

The Seagull III, a three-seater "tractor" amphibian, was of wooden construction, with a top speed of 108 mph and four hours' endurance. Only a small number of production aircraft were built, equipping only one Fleet Reconnaissance flight in HMS *Eagle* for two years.

The Seagulls arrived in 1926 and shortly thereafter moved from Richmond to a base at Bowen in Queensland. From here — and working in conjunction with *Moresby* — No.101 flight was continuously employed on the Barrier Reef survey until the end of 1928. After the Royal Navy had declared the Seagull obsolete, Australia was offered (and bought) a further three in 1927 for scrap value, allowing survey operations to be extended to New Guinea.

Albatross was commissioned on 23 January 1929, only weeks before the last of the aircraft which she had been designed to carry — the Fairey IIID — was phased out of RAAF service. She was an ungainly-looking vessel, her conning, propulsion and accommodation facilities of necessity all being placed aft. The high freeboard was necessary to allow the three huge hangars forward, which had a capacity of nine aircraft. However, when the Seagull III was phased out of Britain's Fleet Air Arm, the spotter amphibian, as a class, disappeared from the Royal Navy for a decade. Consequently, when *Albatross* entered service there was no suitable replacement available as the RAAF had forecast when they purchased the amphibians. It was only pure good fortune that the IIIDs and Seagulls were of almost identical dimensions, although it was still a tight fit getting the latter through the aircraft hatch.

Provision had been made on *Albatross'* fo'c's'le for the installation of a catapult, but the Seagulls were not stressed for this type of launch and the catapult was not fitted until 1936. Instead, the three cranes mounted on the periphery of the "flight" deck were used to hoist aircraft up from the after hangar, lower them over the side for take-off, retrieve them after they had landed alongside and return them to the hangars.

Albatross embarked her normal complement of six Seagulls on 25 February 1929 and commenced her working-up exercises, during which her aircraft operated as a reconnaissance element for the two new cruisers which had been the reason for her construction. In July and August, she embarked Lord Stonehaven (the Governor-General) and his party for a vice-regal cruise to New Guinea and the islands. Another interesting passenger on this trip was the Wackett Widgeon II, embarked for tropical trials. This aircraft, one of two, was a general-purpose amphibian designed and built by the RAAF Experimental Section for civil use, but later used by the Air Force for training seaplane pilots.

Meanwhile, Air Commodore Williams had initiated action to replace the Seagull IIIs. Obtaining *Albatross'* hangar dimensions and crane capacity, Williams and his Director of Technical Services drew up a detailed specification for a three-seater amphibian of metal construction, strengthened for catapulting and with folding wings and dimensions suitable for operation from *Albatross*. The specification was sent to all British aircraft manufacturers, who generally showed little enthusiasm. Given the extensive design work required and the seemingly tiny market, their feelings were probably summed up by the editor of *The Aeroplane*, who wrote "The Australians want everything but the little black boy to boil the kettle".

Ultimately, however, Supermarine took on the job and the prototype Seagull V first flew in 1933, 26 production aircraft eventually being built (two of which went to Argentina). With only slight modification it was also adopted by the RN and RAF in 1935 and became famous during World War II as the Walrus. Nearly 750 Walruses were built, of which 37 served with the RAAF. The Seagull V/Walrus was all that Williams had demanded of it, being powered by a Bristol Pegasus "pusher" which gave it a top speed of 135 mph and a range of 600 miles (proximately six hours' endurance). It flew in every climate — from the Antarctic to the tropics — and performed a remarkable range of duties. It was the first British service aircraft to have a fully retractable undercarriage and was also the first to be catapulted with a full military load.

1930 brought the full effects of the Depression to the RAN — the Naval College was shifted from Jervis Bay to Westernport, recruiting ceased, and the fleet was reduced to the new cruisers *Australia* and *Canberra*, *Albatross* and one destroyer on rotation. Time brought no relief and with the Depression worsening, *Albatross* was paid off into reserve in 1933, although she continued to provide a base for the operations of No.101 Flight. Ironically, the Seagull V flew for the first time almost two months to the day after the carrier for which it was designed was placed in reserve.

Aircraft having proven their value for reconnaissance, *Canberra* had been used during 1931 as a trials ship, embarking a Seagull on loan from *Albatross*. When the carrier was decommissioned, the Naval Board instigated the permanent embarkation of an aircraft on the cruisers. However, as no catapult had yet been fitted and the Seagulls weren't stressed for such launching anyway, the amphibians had to be hoisted out for launching, and in after recovery. These operations were, as they had been in *Albatross* and for the seaplanes, subject to kindly weather and suitable sea states.

In August 1934 the Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) announced an order for "24 Seagull V seaplanes, made to RAAF specifications".

With the arrival of the new aircraft it would be possible to recommission HMAS *Albatross* and equip her with modern aircraft in place of her obsolete Seagulls. In addition the cruisers of the RAN Squadron and the *Albatross* were being fitted with catapults. Catapults had been fitted in battleships and cruisers of the RN from 1930 — despite there being no suitable aircraft in service or planned at that time! It was therefore not surprising that *Australia* (which was on exchange) and the new light cruiser *Sydney* (just completed) were the first Australian warships to be equipped with catapults, in 1935. They subsequently took their brand-new aircraft (A2-1 and A2-2 respectively) to the Mediterranean, where they saw service during the Abyssinian Crisis of 1935-36.

As the remainder of the Seagull Vs became available during 1936 and 1937, they were shipped directly to Australia for service with No.1 Seaplane Training Flight and No.5 (Fleet Co-operation) Squadron. This unit was created when No.101 Flight was re-equipped with Seagull Vs in April 1936, but the major tasks remained the same — continuing aerial surveys (of Gippsland, North Queensland and the Northern Territory in conjunction with HMAS *Moresby*) and provision of an aviation capability for HMA ships. On 1 January 1939, the unit became No.9 (Fleet Co-operation) Squadron — a title it retained until disbanded in 1944.

Also in 1936, catapults were fitted to *Canberra* and *Albatross*; despite trials carried out in August, however, the latter remained in reserve. Finally, in July 1938, the carrier sailed for the UK, where she was transferred to the RN in part payment for the new light cruiser *Hobart*. She served as an aircraft carrier until 1943, operating Walruses in the South Atlantic and off West Africa and Madagascar, before being converted to a repair ship. Torpedoed off the Normandy beaches in 1944, she was sold in 1946. Converted again — this time to a transport vessel for post-war migrants and renamed *Hellenic Prince* — the ex-seaplane carrier was finally broken up in 1954.

World War Two — War Service

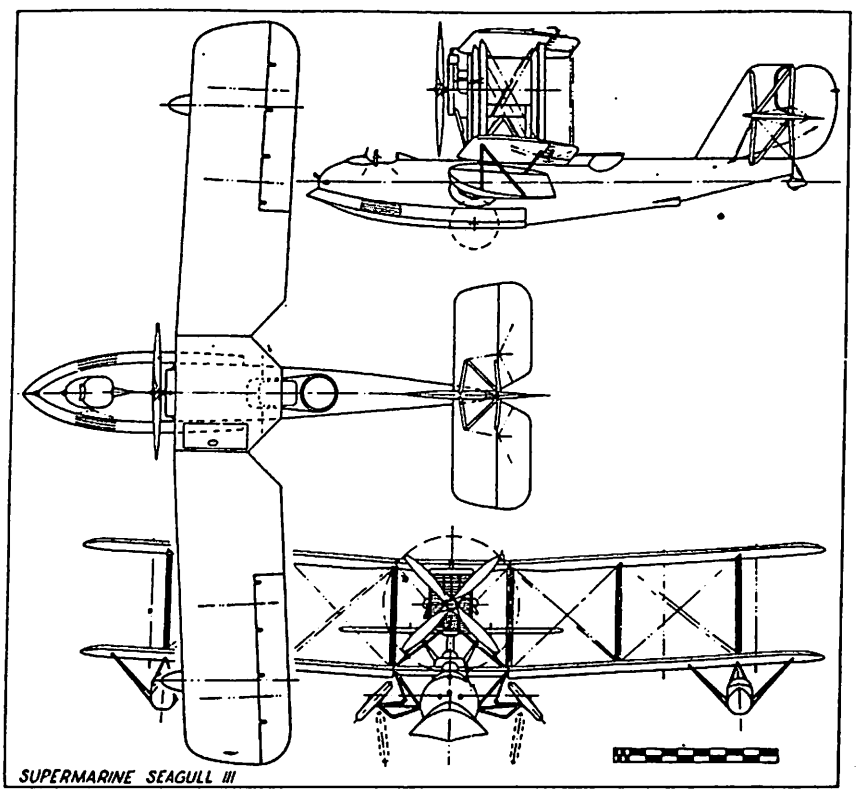
The outbreak of the World War Two saw the major vessels of the Australian Fleet placed under Admiralty control and scattered widely. In October/November 1939, the five destroyers of the famous "Scrap Iron Flotilla" sailed for the Mediterranean, followed by the heavy cruiser *Australia* to the South Atlantic and light cruiser *Sydney* to the Mediterranean in May 1940. The light cruiser *Perth* was on the America and West Indies Station when war began, while her sister ship *Hobart* was despatched to the northern Indian Ocean in November 1939.

In those early days, when carrier and land-based aircraft were few and radar was not widely fitted, even in capital ships, the Seagulls embarked in the cruisers provided the only aviation and long-range reconnaissance capability the vessels — and the convoys they often escorted — had. Therefore, it was imperative that capability be maintained, and when *Hobart's* Seagull was damaged in a night-landing

accident, it was replaced by a Walrus from the RAF base when she arrived in Singapore en route to the Arabian Sea.

The absence of the other cruisers from Australian waters left only *Australia's* sister ship *Canberra* and the old *Adelaide* — a First World War type and near sister to the first *Sydney*, *Melbourne* and *Brisbane* — for coastal patrols and ocean escorts. As in all the Commonwealth navies, this gap was filled by requisitioning and arming twin-screw passenger liners, then commissioning them as Armed Merchant Cruisers (AMCs). The best-known of these were *Kanimbla* (commissioned into the RN, but manned by Australian reservists), *Manoora* and *Westralia*. The two latter vessels were requisitioned in October and November 1939 respectively and, as part of their conversion to AMCs, were equipped with facilities for carrying an aircraft. However, no catapult was fitted and the Seagull/Walrus had to be hoisted in and out by derrick.

These, then, were the seven RAN vessels — *Australia*, *Canberra*, *Hobart*, *Perth*, *Sydney*, *Manoora* and *Westralia* — in which Seagulls or Walruses were embarked during World War Two. (The heavy cruiser *Shropshire*, presented to the RAN as a replacement for *Canberra*, had her aircraft and equipment removed before transfer). However, detachments of No.9 Squadron (which moved to the seaplane base at Rathmines in December 1939) were also attached to HMNZS *Achilles* and HMAS *Warrego* for brief periods before the squadron was disbanded on 31 December 1944. The squadron's shore-based activities included anti-submarine (A/S) patrols, AA practice, drogue towing, air-to-air gunnery training, and travel and communications flights.



The embarked aircraft also performed an amazing range of duties, including both level and dive-bombing of shore objectives, shadowing and action observation, spotting for the ship's guns, A/S patrols, photographic flights, reconnaissance of enemy harbours, trade protection patrols, ocean searches, air-sea rescue and the carriage of mail, despatches and passengers. In April 1940, a Walrus from HMS *Warspite* even bombed and sank a U-boat off Narvik!

The absolute dependence of all sea-going aircraft (except those embarked in carriers) on the weather and sea state was underscored two days after Italy entered the war on 10 June 1940. At a vital stage in the pursuit of the Italian merchantman *Romolo* north of the Solomons, *Manoora* tried unsuccessfully three times to launch her Seagull. After wasting an hour, a wing float collapsed and the machine had to be hoisted in again.

The first aircraft to see action was *Hobart's* Walrus. On 19 June 1940, she dive-bombed the Italian wireless station and facilities on Centre Peak Island in the Red Sea, where the ship was operating as part of the Royal Navy's Red Sea Force. Two days later, *Sydney's* Seagull was set upon by three fighters — thought to be Italian CR42s — while spotting for the cruiser during the bombardment of Bardia, about 70 miles east of Tobruk. After the attackers broke off the attack — due in no small part to the efforts of the Telegraphist/Air Gunner (T/AG) — the pilot nursed the badly damaged aircraft back towards the forward British outpost at Sollum. However, the ground there was too rough for a landing and the ailing amphibian had to struggle on another 130 miles to Mersa Matruh where she landed on a tarmac still smoking from an Italian air raid. It subsequently transpired that this was a case of double mistaken identity — the fighters turned out to be British and thought the unfamiliar biplane amphibian was Italian! (My own assumption is that they were Gloster Gladiators, which look similar to the CR.42.)

No replacement aircraft had been allotted by the time of *Sydney's* famous duel with two Italian cruisers off Cape Spada (Crete) in July. However, a Walrus was furnished as a temporary replacement soon after, and was airborne for spotting during the bombardment of Makri Yalo airfield on Scarpanto Island (in the Dodecanese) on the 4th of September. After the ship had finished firing, the aircraft went on to add her bombs to the general devastation. Later in the same month, *Australia* suffered the first loss through enemy action during the attempt to occupy Dakar, in French West Africa. On the morning of 25 September, *Australia* and HMS *Devonshire* were ordered to attack French cruisers and other ships in Rufisque Bay, the Australian ship's Walrus being launched to spot the fall of shot. After a brief but fierce engagement — during which *Australia* was twice hit by 6" shells, the two cruisers were ordered to withdraw. While doing so, an aircraft was observed to be shot down astern by three Vichy fighters — this subsequently proved to be the ship's own Walrus, which was lost with all her crew.

Towards the end of 1940, the German raider *Pinguin* entered the Indian Ocean. After capturing and sinking a number of merchant vessels, *Pinguin* and a consort made for Australian waters and laid mines between Sydney and Newcastle, off Hobart and Adelaide, and in both approaches to Bass Strait. They then fled westward, back into the vastness of the Indian Ocean. Their handiwork soon became apparent, and a hunting group, including *Canberra* and *Westralia*, was quickly organised. Although the ships searched thousands of square miles of ocean, and were assisted considerably by their embarked aircraft in this regard, their efforts were in vain.

Canberra was more fortunate early the following year, however, when her Walrus was instrumental in the destruction of two enemy ships off the Seychelles. The German vessel *Coburg* had escaped from the Red Sea in February to act as a supply ship for the German raiders then in the Indian Ocean (*Atlantis*, *Scheer* and, later, *Pinguin*). On 4 March she had rendezvoused with the captured Norwegian tanker *Ketty*

Bibliography

——Desert dogfight, *Naval historical review*. March 1975, p.33

——HMAS PERTH loses her Walrus, *Naval historical review*, December 1975, pp.13-19

——Pusser's bus, *Naval historical review* December 1974, p.12

——Seaplane pictorial, *Naval historical review*. Vol.3 No.2, June 1981, p.35.

——The 1929 cruise of ALBATROSS, *Naval historical review*. September 1974, pp.41-45.

BASTOCK, John. *Australia's ships of war*. Sydney : Angus and Robertson, 1975.

Department of Defence (Navy). *An outline of Australian naval history*. Canberra : AGPS, 1976.

GILLET, Ross. Australian naval aviation. *White Ensign* Vol.42 No.3, Spring 1988, pp.55-60.

GILLISON, Douglas. *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*. Canberra : AWM, 1962. (Australia in the war of 1939-1945. Series 3, Volume I).

IRELAND, Bernard. *The aircraft carrier : an illustrated history*. Secaucus, NJ : Chartwell Books, 1979.

ISAACS, Keith, First of the line. *Naval historical review*. Vol.1 No.6, October 1977, pp.3-19.

ISAACS, Keith. *Military aircraft of Australia 1909-1918*. Canberra : Australian War Memorial, 1971.

JONES, Ray. Australian naval air power from the beginning. *The Navy*. Vol.44 No.4, October 1982, pp.29-35.

Brovig to transfer fresh water. The cruisers *Canberra* and HMNZS *Leander* were in the vicinity, searching for possible raiders, when *Canberra* catapulted her aircraft shortly after lunch. Three hours later, the Walrus reported an armed raider and a tanker. The two enemy vessels parted company, and *Canberra* went for the supposed raider *Coburg*. The Walrus chased *Ketty Brovig* and forced her to stop by dropping bombs close to her. Both ships — *Coburg* now ablaze from *Canberra's* salvos — now took scuttling action and were abandoned by their crews. Seeing this, the aircraft landed alongside the tanker, where the observer swam the twenty yards or so to her. He later wrote:

"I regret that the sensible course of using the rubber dinghy did not occur to me, and for my own peace of mind I did not see the several sharks that were cruising around until I was safely back in the aircraft."

After a hasty survey and collecting what papers he could, he swam back and signalled *Canberra* that the tanker could be saved if a salvage party were sent immediately. Although *Leander* arrived and stood by *Coburg* while *Canberra* despatched such a party, it was not possible to save either of the merchantmen and both sank.

The next loss occurred back in the Mediterranean, where *Perth* (which had replaced *Sydney* at the end of 1940) lost two aircraft within four months. On 1 January 1941, her Seagull was landed at Suda Bay (Crete) for A/S patrols and other duties while not required to be embarked. Employed on these duties, she had just flown to and landed at Heraklion airfield when two Italian CR42 fighters arrived. After sizing the situation up, they proceeded to strafe the airfield and attack *Perth's* aircraft. Little damage was done, but the Seagull was rendered unfit for operational flying and had to be returned to Alexandria. The temporary replacement, a Walrus, didn't last long. On 28 April, she was "jumped" by two Dornier bombers while on dawn patrol near Antikithera Island. After an unequal struggle (the Dorniers were armed with cannon) lasting twenty minutes, the Walrus was shot down into the sea. Luckily, the crew managed to get out and, after spending all day and half the night in a crowded raft, were picked up, eventually, by a destroyer.

Shortly after, the only known fatality due to catapult failure occurred. Having sailed to Wellington to pick up an important Middle East convoy, *Hobart* and then *Australia* catapulted their aircraft just before entering the port on 6 May. However, *Australia's* Seagull failed to rise and crashed into the sea. The pilot was killed, but:

"the prompt action on the part of the pilot of *Hobart's* aircraft in landing in the vicinity of the crash was instrumental in saving the lives of the Observer and Telegraphist Air-Gunner, who although injured threw themselves into the sea when their aircraft began to

sink after the impact. By the time that *Australia* had turned and lowered a lifeboat, the two survivors had been picked up by *Hobart's* aircraft."

Sydney's Walrus was also lost in November, when the ship was sunk with all hands off Carnarvon by the German raider *Kormoran*. The aircraft was seen to be on the catapult with her engine running when she was hit by *Kormoran's* fifth salvo. In December, *Westralia's* Seagull provided A/S protection for the escort of the troopship *Zealandia* to Timor and the subsequent landing of "Sparrow" Force (2/40 Battalion group) at Koepang. The aircraft in both *Perth* and *Canberra* were lost when those vessels were sunk by Japanese surface forces in March and August 1942, respectively.

The isolated incidents presented above largely reflect the type of warfare in which the RAN was engaged during the first two years of the war. As it:

> "progressed, cruiser-borne aircraft were increasingly replaced by alternatives but during the commerce warfare of 1940 and 1941 ... [they] were invaluable in sweeping large areas of ocean for raiders. After Japan entered the war, cruiser aircraft performed valuable service in the Pacific [, for example,] during the Guadalcanal landing, all A/S air protection for the amphibious force was provided by aircraft embarked in Australian and American cruisers. Increasing availability of aircraft carriers reduced the value of cruiser aircraft and they were removed in the latter years of the war." (Jones, p.30).

By VJ Day, Australia had only four Seagulls and 15 Walruses — mostly in storage, reserve or for disposal.

World War Two — Developments

During the war, there were a number of developments which, while not central to this presentation, were destined to be of great significance to the RAN's Fleet Air Arm formed in 1948. During the early years of the war, the light fleet carrier was conceived — a hybrid between the much larger fleet carriers and the converted merchant escort types. The vessels were built in two classes — "Colossus" of ten ships and "Majestic" of six. At the end of the war, work was suspended on all new construction, pending decisions about future needs. Australia eventually purchased two of the vessels laid down in 1943 and they were commissioned as HMAS *Sydney* (III) and HMAS *Melbourne* (II) in 1948 and 1955 respectively.

Also in 1943, the Fairey Firefly and the Supermarine Sea Otter entered service with the RN, with the prototype Hawker Sea Fury flying the following year. The Firefly was a two-seat fighter-A/S reconnaissance

JOSE, Arthur W. *The Royal Australian Navy 1914-1918.* 3rd Ed. Sydney : Angus & Robertson, 1935. (The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918 ; Volume IX).

LIND, L.J. and PAYNE, M.A. *HMAS Hobart : the story of the 6 inch cruiser HMAS Hobart 1938 — 1962.* Sydney : Naval Historical Society of Australia, 1971.

MUNSON, Kenneth. *Fighters and bombers of World War II 1939-45.* London : Peerage Books, 1983.

NICHOLL, G.W.R. *The Supermarine Walrus : the story of a unique aircraft.* London : G.T. Foulis, 1966.

NORTHCOTT, Maurice P. *Renown and Repulse.* London : Battle of Britain Prints International, 1978. (Ensign; 8).

ODGERS, George. *The Royal Australian Air Force : an illustrated history.* Brookvale, NSW : Child & Henry, 1984.

PAYNE, Alan. *HMAS PERTH: the story of the 6 inch cruiser 1936-1942.* Sydney : NHSA, 1978

PENTLAND, Geoffrey and MALONE, Peter. *Aircraft of the RAAF 1921-78.* New ed. Melbourne : Kookaburra Technical Publications, 1978.

STRACZEK, J.H. HMAS *Albatross* — maid of all work. *The Navy.* Vol.44 No.4, October 1982, pp.13-23.

THETFORD, Owen. *Aircraft of the Royal Air Force since 1918.* 7th ed. London : Putnam & Co, 1979.

THETFORD, Owen. *British naval aircraft 1912-58.* London : Putnam, 1958.

WILLIAMS, Sir Richard. *These are facts : the autobiography of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams KBE, CB, DSO.* Canberra : Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Printing Service, 1977.

aircraft, considered to be the best British specialized shipboard aeroplane produced during the war. The Sea Otter was a replacement for the Walrus, and very similar to the earlier aircraft. The Sea Fury was a single-seat fighter-bomber, the last piston-engined fighter to serve with the RN. All three aircraft equipped the new carrier *Sydney* when she arrived in Australia in May 1949 and went with her to Korea where, in October 1951, they made a record 89 sorties in 24 hours.

Post World War II

There were only two post-war operational deployments of aircraft with the navy before the creation of the Fleet Air Arm, both of which were associated with the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition 1947-1948.

A Vought Sikorsky Kingfisher (one of 18 which had come from the Dutch East Indies in 1942) was embarked in HMAS *Wyatt Earp* prior to the ship's sailing from Adelaide on 13 December 1947. After a false start, the expedition finally sailed from Melbourne in early February, but due primarily to bad weather off Antarctica, the aircraft was only able to make two flights. The Commanding Officer later reported

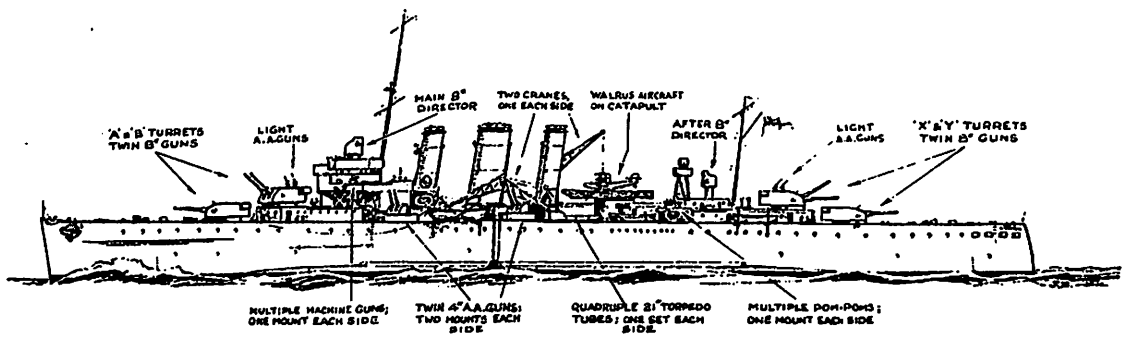
> "Experience has proved that *Wyatt Earp* [at 135 ft and 400 tons] is too small a ship to carry an aircraft such as the Kingfisher for operational use from the ship, as the movement of the ship is so lively that perfectly calm water has to be found before working the plane. In addition, once it is assembled, the aircraft is difficult to house safely against the ship's violent movement in a seaway."

Despite the brevity of the aircraft's operation, its reconnaissance proved the impossibility of reaching the mainland due to pack ice, and course was set for Melbourne via Macquarie Island. On 20 March *Wyatt Earp* reached the island, to find HMA LST 3501 there on her second Antarctic expedition. After a brief stay, the ship sailed for Melbourne where she arrived on 1 April 1948.

Built in Canada, LST 3501 was presented to the RAN with five sister — ships in 1946 after service with the RN. In 1947 she was painted bright yellow and fitted out for service in the Antarctic, a role which she performed until early 1951. After embarking a Walrus — also painted bright yellow — the ship left Melbourne on her first voyage in mid-November 1947 and called at Fremantle before arriving at Heard Island on 11 December. The Walrus was landed along with the scientific parties, but on the 21st a gale with 120 mph winds hit the island, completely wrecking the aircraft and nearly driving the LST ashore.

Thus closed, violently, a long chapter in Australia's naval and aviation history.

H.M.A.S. AUSTRALIA ("KENT" CLASS CRUISER)



Mobile Columns During the 2nd Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902

John Price

Sunday, 31 May 1992 was the 90th anniversary of the signing of the Peace Treaty at Melrose House in Pretoria, thus ending the 2nd Anglo-Boer War. Shortly after the cessation of hostilities, the Queen's South Africa medal (QSA) was awarded to those who had participated in the conflict that had commenced on 11 October 1899. Although the QSA had 26 clasps, no one could claim entitlement to more than nine, and although a few clasps are extremely rare, the others appear regularly in medal dealers' lists. The commonest being the three "State" clasps: Cape Colony, Orange Free State and Transvaal, plus the two "Date" clasps: South Africa 1901 and South Africa 1902.

From 1930, when as a small child I listened with rapt attention to the reminiscences of a group of Boer War veterans, until 1975 when my researching into the latter stages of the war occupied much leisure time, I was guilty of assuming that these common clasps had been given "just for being there". It is interesting to recall that others, including soldiers and sailors who ought to have known better, shared similar opinions. Yet these, almost scorned, clasps were gained, in most cases, for service during the guerrilla phase of war, a period that continues to interest, absorb, fascinate, and generally frustrate many historians.

During the era, it is fair to say that the majority of those who participated in the tracking down and elimination of the commandos regarded their task as utterly soul-destroying. However, before I enlarge on the column's activities, it is important to "recap" on the events leading up to the necessity of pouring men, horses, and supplies into a region that strongly resembles the outback of Australia.

From October until the end of 1899, the British army in southern Africa had suffered a series of major set-backs. It became imperative that a strong leader was needed to bring the conflict to a speedy conclusion. Therefore, Field Marshal Viscount Roberts, VC was dispatched to the Cape to assume overall command of the South African Field Force. Accompanying Roberts was his Chief of Staff, Major-General Lord Kitchener, who had served with distinction in the Soudan. A swift reorganisation followed their arrival in South Africa, and, by skilful use of mounted troops with a planned mobility, the British Army pushed northwards to occupy Bloemfontein, the Orange Free State capital; to place the gold rich city of Johannesburg firmly in British hands; and to achieve a crowning glory when, on 5 June, Lord Roberts witnessed the raising of the Union Jack over the Radszaal, in Pretoria.

Sources

South Africa and the Transvaal War, vols vi and vii, Louis Creswicke, TC & EC Jack, Edinburgh, 1901

The Times History of the War in South Africa 1899-1902, vol. v, Erskine Childers (ed), Sampson Low, Marston & Co Ltd, London, 1907

A Military History of Perthshire 1899-1902, Marchioness of Tullibardine (ed) & Jane CC Macdonald, RA & J Hay, Perth, Scotland, 1908

Illustrated History of the Boer War, Cassell & Co

The Australians at the Boer War, RL Wallace, Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976

The Great Boer War, Byron Farwell, Penguin Books, London, 1977

The Encyclopaedia of Military History, RE & TN Dupuy, Jane's Publishing Co, London, 1977

Drummer Hodge, M van Wyk Smith, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978

Southern Cross Scots, (unpublished) John E Price, Cheltenham, Victoria, 1992

By September 1900, when British troops had reached the Portuguese East African border, everyone, especially the General Staff, assumed that, 'apart from the shouting' the war was over.

Transvaal President, Paul Kruger, hurriedly departed South Africa to go into self-imposed exile, sailing from Delgoa Bay aboard the Dutch cruiser *Gelderland.* The Boer governments of the Transvaal and Orange Free State were also in flight, constantly pursued by British cavalry. Travelling by ox-wagon, Cape carts and on horseback, the twin legislatures met only whenever it was possible so to do.

For the time being, the commandos were in disarray, with many burghers dispersing to their homes to await further orders, thus Afrikaanerdom was split into two groups: the Handsoppers who, having surrendered their weapons and vowed allegiance to the monarch, had resumed farming in the hope that hostilities might pass them by, and the Bittereinders whose credo was identical to every terrorist group, "oppress the weak and flee from the strong", were determined to continue their struggle, futilely hoping that those foreign governments, sympathetic to the Boer cause, would intervene with troops and, more importantly, supplies and cash.

In December 1900, after leaving Kitchener to oversee an assumed transition to peace, Lord Roberts left for London to be honoured by an adoring Queen and advise a grateful nation that the war was finally over and the soldiers would soon be home.

Shortly afterwards, a Boer poet scribbled down the following lines:

"Lord Bobs went back to England and said the war is o'er,
The Transvaal, the Freestate and the Boers exist no more,
Just fancy his surprise my friends when he stepped onto England's shore,
To hear that those Boers had invaded Cape Colony once more."

Having been appointed Commander-in-Chief, India, a post that he coveted and was most anxious to assume, it is understandable that Kitchener wished to quickly quit the African scene. Thus, by introducing several measures, he planned to completely eliminate the guerrillas and swiftly bring the belligerent parties to a peace Conference table.

Farm burnings had been introduced by Roberts to destroy the commandos' supply and information gathering centres. However, under Kitchener, this practice increased with the hapless residents, mainly women and children, being herded into concentration camps. While, initially, this was intended as a humane measure that, to a minimal extent, received some burgher support, things began to go horribly wrong and an estimated 20,000 innocent victims were to die of disease and neglect. This tragedy not only stiffened the Bittereinders' determination to force the British Empire to sue for peace, but it also caused many Handsoppers to waver, as well as raising the anger of the anti-war lobby, particularly among foreign nations. Memories of this particular system still raises bitter resentment in modern-day South Africa.

Further remedial action resulted in the erection of blockhouse lines, not unlike those used by the Spaniards during the Cuban insurrection of the late 1890s to isolate the insurgents and protect the rail and communication lines. These eventually barbed wire entanglements stretched the length and breadth of central South Africa. It was usual for an infantry battalion to defend a lengthy stretch of line with smaller detachments, of section strength, manning tiny strong-points, each one about a mile apart.

Life for the soldiers in these outposts was boring in the extreme. The men had nowhere to go and, in their off-duty periods there was little to do except eat, play cards, argue and sleep. At night, the search lights swept the darkened veldt attempting to pick out hostile movement and, occasionally, excitement might ensue when a springbok herd crashed through the defence lines or, while attempting to escape a pursuing column, a commando might attack a particular fort and, if strong enough, occupy it, thereby letting many of their comrades slip through an encirclement. However, these were rare events so that, by the end of hostilities, the garrisons evolved into edgy, trigger-happy soldiery.

With the blockhouse lines firmly established, GHQ then divided huge tracts of land into districts, each commanded by a major-general. These districts were then mapped out into squares, rather like a chessboard, with one to three movable columns being designated to each block. Each column's task was to thoroughly comb its allocated zone then having traversed one direction, return to its starting base by an entirely different route. The general idea being to make contact with enemy groups and, should they prove elusive, push them towards the blockhouse lines.

A journey or trek usually lasted for about three months and, apart from when a column reached a rail-head or deserted town, there were few rest spells. Sunday, always regarded as a working day, was, according to may written accounts, busier than the other six.

While out on the undulating veldt, a column was virtually cut off from the rest of the world and extremely vulnerable. *The Times History* cites several instances of successful attacks by Boer commandos when a "weak" column and its troops were severely mauled. As happened to the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles at Wilmansrust on 12 June 1901, or the predominantly Australian 2nd Scottish Horse at Bakenlaagte, four months later.

The size of a movable column varied from 750 upwards to about 3,500 men, each formation being commanded by an officer of field rank, ranging from a major to brigadier-general. Irrespective of a column's size, the composition was identical. The transport element, or convoy, consisted of numerous wagons, including Cape carts, all carrying fodder for the animals, stores, bedding and supplies for the men, as well as mail for the troops on the blockhouse lines.

The day of a column on trek usually began at 3:30 in the morning, when the men were roused and, if lucky, given some sort of breakfast. Then the oxen would be yoked and the wagons out-spanned ready to move out at first light — some time at about 5am. The leading troops, Bushmen, Mounted Rifles or regular cavalry, would leave to act as skirmishers, ranging far and wide in an attempt to forestall any frontal attack as well as to protect the convoy during river, or drift, crossings. Eventually, the main column would move from its camp-site, the wagons travelling four abreast, partly to lessen the convoy's length but primarily to maintain an easily defensible formation — not unlike a long sluggish caterpillar moving across the veldt, the convoy's pace being determined by its slowest component.

Detachments of infantry marched alongside the wagons to provide immediate defence. These soldiers were virtually welded to the convoy and, while on the march, never allowed to leave their positions, even to forage for supplies. The few opportunities for them to obtain supplementary food, or luxury items, were from the rail-head canteens.

Added protection was provided by an artillery component of one or more field guns, plus a Pom-Pom section armed with Vickers-Maxim guns that fired rapid bursts of one pound shells in belts of 25 rounds.

In his diary, Bruce Hodgson, a Scottish Horse trooper, described their sound as "similar to a kid with the whooping cough". As the Boers also had Pom-Poms it was impossible, from a distance, to identify whose guns were being used. Squadrons of Mounted Infantry or Imperial Yeomanry paced the convoy, at a distance of about 1,000 yards, to guard its flanks and rear. As the majority of these men were either foot-soldiers recently converted to horse-back, or Reserve troops newly arrived in South Africa, it was always questionable as to how they might fare in combat. Yet their role, as "buffer" troops, was invaluable.

Dependant on whether there were any geographical obstacles to negotiate, such as a range of kopjes, a river, or defile, the column's daily journey might be twelve miles so that, by noon, or no later than 2pm, the convoy would halt for the remainder of the day. After the wagons had been placed into a defensive circle, and sentries posted, the mounted men could groom their horses, catch up on a meal, or try to sleep.

If the convoy had parked close to a farm-house, a mounted patrol would pay a call, generally to gather information but also to purchase items such as eggs, poultry, fruit — in fact anything that might be available. Usually, the occupants were fairly pleased to deal with the soldiers who brought news from the surrounding area and money, because, in the main, the soldiers were honest and generous spenders. Occasionally, there could be cups of coffee and the chance to flirt harmlessly with the womenfolk, when some of the bolder members of the patrol might swap stamps, coins, or even addresses.

Sometimes, however, it was known for troops to enter a farm-house and encounter a group of distraught women around a coffin, whereupon an inexperienced commander, respecting their grief, would order his men away. A more seasoned officer, familiar with the wily Boer, would order the coffin to be opened up, ignoring the vehement protests and lamentations. Invariably, his suspicions would be confirmed when rifles, ammunition, blankets, and provisions were found stacked inside. Then the unsavoury task of burning down the farm-house would follow, and the removal of the occupants to a concentration camp. Leaving a farm-house, however friendly, was always fraught with danger, because patrols could be ambushed with the survivors being stripped naked, by the insurgents, and sent back to the column on foot.

At 6:30pm the night's activities would commence when the pickets of mounted troops, officers included, would go out to nearby kopjes and sit until dawn watching for enemy activity. The more proficient riders might be briefed for a night raid, often involving a 35 mile ride, on some suspected hostile farm-house or known enemy laager site. the idea being to reach their destination by 3:30 in the morning just before the commandos began to move, for it was an accepted fact that the Boers hated being hustled and relied heavily upon rest periods which, if eroded, made them sluggish and thus prone to capture. Frequently, however, the raids were useless exercises when weary and dispirited troopers, having reached a deserted farm-house or having gazed at the dying embers of a camp fire, realised that their prey had eluded them.

On the other hand, darkness proved to be the Scout's best element for these men, both European and native (the latter mainly Zulus), usually operated singly, seldom coming into contact with human beings during their nightly forays. Yet, dependent on their background, they efficiently ferretted-out vital information, during their traversing or the countryside. Whenever possible, they would report to the column Intelligence Officer advising: "How many farms there were in the area ahead", "the loyalty of the occupants", "whether any insurgents had passed through recently", "what the grazing was like", "the proximity of water". Each of these accounts would be analysed and processed for future use. The Scouts took enormous risks, especially the natives who, if captured by a commando, were often flogged with sjamboks then, dependent on the whim of the Field-Cornet, executed.

Occasionally, a Scout might not report in, then a wagon, with a couple of armed soldiers, would be sent out to look for him. As standard equipment, a couple of spades would be carried in the wagon. After observing the movements of vultures or jackals, the missing man's body might be found and a grave dug. The perfunctory burial that followed would be in a similar vein to that described by Thomas Hardy in *Drummer Hodge*:

"They threw in Drummer Hodge, to rest
Uncoffined — just as found:
His landmark is a kopje-crest
That breaks the veldt around."

Other casualties would be the horses, who died in their thousands, for they were overworked, underfed, and performed tasks far in excess of that which had been expected of them. With an insatiable demand for steeds, the entire world was combed for remounts. Horses were purchased from as far afield as both of the Americas, the plains of Hungary, the Caucasus, Mongolia, India and Australia. Even African ponies, used by the Boers, were pressed into service. their skeletons scattered the landscape wherever there had been troop movements. In Port Elizabeth CP, there is a wonderful memorial to those gallant and faithful beasts.

Feed for the animals was in constant demand, so again the world's markets were scoured, with much fodder being purchased in Argentina. the hay was carried in the rat-infested holds of merchant ships and, upon arrival, transported to base depots by open railway trucks. If the chaff and seeds were not carried far and wide by gusty winds, then the horses made good distributors with their droppings being deposited over an entire subcontinent. In present-day South Africa there may be found a legacy of the war — a pungent smelling noxious weed that covers much of the landscape. While officially, it is classified under the botanical name *Althermarathera achyrantha*, the plant is generally known as "Khakibush".

Inevitably, by sheer attrition, the Boer resistance crumbled. As each district was cleared of its guerrilla band, the columns were diverted to other areas so that, by mid-1902, the High-veldt was swamped with troops but with few insurgents to chase.

On 11 April 1902, at Roodeval in the Western Transvaal, a number of hard-line commandos made one last show of strength when, for probably the first time in the war, the Boers used classic battlefield tactics. To any Soudan veterans present, it was a repeat of Omdurman, for the ensuing fight was uneven and, to all intents and purposes, the last combat of a three year war.

Had the Boer leaders any intentions of carrying on the struggle, Roodeval put paid to them. Peace negotiations began in earnest so that by 31 May 1902, the war was over, with the participants returning to their peaceful lifestyles: at least for another twelve years!

Some Little Known Australian Badges

D P Legg

The badge die collection of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra contains some unusual types which, in all probability, were of either limited issue or were never issued for general wear. Books on Australian badges such as Jeff Cossum's *Australian Army Badges 1900-03* do not illustrate any of these badges with the exception of the 71 Infantry, which is shown as a line drawing in Fesberg's *Badges of the Australian Army 1903-30*.

Trial badges would have been made and possibly passed on to the various units for approval and perhaps some were issued in limited quantities. This happened with at least the 71 Infantry and probably the 28 Light Horse. In the case of the 2 ALH, an entirely different badge was adopted for use.

The illustrations are photographs of silicon impressions made from the dies. Dimensions for each badge are given below under badge descriptions. Unfortunately, the dies themselves are incomplete and no longer suitable for manufacturing actual badges. My thanks for the assistance of the AWM staff for making the dies available for examination.

I also have illustrated another rare badge, namely an officer's enamelled 25 WAMI LH of the 1912-18 period. Finally, in my article on Australian band badges (Sabretache Vol.XXX, No.3, 1989), the NSW Scottish badge illustrated is actually a sword belt badge and has no band connection. Additionally, the Adelaide University Regiment band has recently adopted a large version of the normal hat badge for wear. This badge is in gold finish for pipe and drum majors and silver finish for bandsmen. The badge is 65 mm high and cast (see illustration).

Badge Descriptions

2 ALH (NSWMR): 1903-12 period. Height 58mm. Hat badge consisting of a wreath enclosing a cross with a leopard's head in the centre flanked by the letters MR. Above the head is the title 2ALH. Beneath the head is the battle honour SOUTH AFRICA. A scroll is at the base with the motto TOURJOURS PRET. A king's crown is on top. Silicon cast.

2 ALH (NSWMR) Hat Badge

28 LH (Illawarra LH) Hat Badge

71 Infantry (City of Ballarat) Cap Badge

28 LH (Illawarra LH): 1912-18 period. Height 53mm. Hat badge consisting of a wreath of waratah surrounding a circle bearing the title ILLAWARRA 28TH LIGHT HORSE. In the centre is a horse rampant. Beneath the circle is a scroll with the motto VIRTUS IN ARDUIS. Under the scroll are two sword hilts. A king's crown is on top. Silicon cast.

Note: Vernon, in *The RNSWL 1885-1985* (1986) states that this badge, although made, was probably not issued for general use. He also mentions that the badge was in brass and green enamel and was made in England. However, the AWM die is from Stokes and Son, Melbourne. Rumours of the existence of 28 LH badges have been around for many years.

71 Infantry (City of Ballarat): 1912-18 period. Height 39mm. Cap badge consisting of a wreath of gum leaves and gumnuts enclosing crossed boomerangs on which is the title CITY OF BALLARAT INFANTRY. Centrally, an eagle's head under which is a scroll with the motto FORTIMER INCEDIMUS and a circle with 71. A king's crown is on top. Silicon cast.

Note: Trial strikes were reported to have been in the possession of the CO of the regiment, but the badge was never issued for general use.

70 Infantry (Ballarat Regiment): 1912-19 period. Height 39mm. Cap badge consisting of an eagle's head over crossed boomerangs bearing the title 70 INFTY on the upper and SWIFT & BOLD on the lower. Silicon cast.

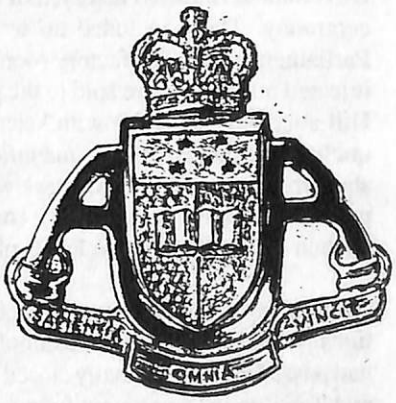
Note: This badge may have had a limited issue. It is difficult to tell whether photographs of soldiers wearing a cap badge around this period are wearing this badge or the similar sized 7 AIR cap badge of the earlier 1902-12 period. Cossum incorrectly gives the dimensions of this badge as 27mm.

25 LH (WAMI): 1912-18 period. Height 52mm. Actual badge is illustrated. Four piece construction, crown and wreath silver or silver-plated voided centrally, scroll gilt, black enamelled swan attached to sterling silver circular backing plate which is stamped STOKES and ST. SIL.

Adelaide University Regiment Band: Current. Height 65mm. Design as for normal hat badge. Cast construction in silver and gold finishes.

70 Infantry (Ballarat Regiment) Cap Badge

25 LH (WAMI) Hat Badge



Adelaide University Regiment Band Hat Badge

A Link with Melbourne's Military Heritage

Lieutenant Colonel Neil Smith

The part played by aging Clifton Hill premises in early Australian military history has been identified by the Victorian Branch of the Military Historical Society of Australia. Prompted by Branch member, Murray Duckworth, the premises of the National Can Company will boast shortly a bronze plaque bearing the testimony to the importance of the buildings when they constituted the Commonwealth Government Harness Factory.

When the 20,000 strong Australian Expeditionary Force landed in Egypt on 2 December 1914, less than four months after the declaration of the Great War, it was equipped with much high quality material manufactured in a small factory in Clifton Hill. The little known factory had been operating only for three years but responded admirably to the frenetic rush to dispatch Australian troops overseas.

The introduction of universal military training in Australia in 1911 gave rise to a large demand for saddlery, harness and leather goods for mounted troops and the developing field artillery. Other leather and canvas accoutrements such as bandoliers, leggings, belts and packs were also required by the infantry. These sudden demands were met by the establishment of Government factories including the Commonwealth Government Leather Accoutrements Factory at the corner of Roseneath and Groom Streets in Clifton Hill, Victoria.

This rather controversial factory operated from 1911 to 1923. It not only complied with the Commonwealth Government's policy that goods for the Australian Military Forces, especially during the Great War 1914-18, be obtained and produced within Australia, but it also produced an incredible amount of high quality equipment totalling over £1,000,000. The genesis of the factory really was in 1910 with a meagre allocation of £2,000 from Commonwealth coffers to raise the facility. Mr George Crowe, an Adelaide saddler, was appointed manager. In the event, Mr Crowe proved to be an excellent choice and remained as manager throughout the life of the factory.

The building, a former boot factory, lent itself to extension and quickly was modified for its new role. On 13 September 1911, the factory was officially opened. Testimony to the importance of the Commonwealth Government Harness Factory, as it was finally called, was the presence of several dignitaries at the opening ceremony. These included no less than five Federal Government Ministers and a number of State Parliamentarians. The factory soon gained a reputation for excellence. Only the best leather was used and rejected materials were sold to the public at regular intervals. No doubt the nearby bootmakers of Clifton Hill attended such sales with keen interest. Not only did the factory demonstrate its worth by the high quality and standards of its manufactured articles, it also had an influence on the maintenance of similar standards by private contractors when wartime needs exceeded the factory's capacity. At the peak of production, in 1916, the factory employed 441 staff. However, as wartime requirements started to wane, so then did the production levels of the factory.

After the war, the factory produced mail bags for the Post Master General's Department. Other product lines were also pursued, for example, leather goods for soldier settlers. Sadly, the real need for the factory had passed and it was finally closed on 26 February 1923 following a Federal Cabinet direction. The Home and Territories Department found that sale was not a simple matter, and a purchaser was not located for

many months. Finally, in June 1924, the factory was sold to Mr William Bourke, Boot Manufacturer, for £10,000.

In 1934, the former Commonwealth Government Harness Factory became home to the Zig Zag Paper (Australia) Pty Ltd Company, manufacturers of cigarette paper. In 1956, the premises changed hands again and became the property of John Dickinson and Co (Australia) Pty Ltd. Today, the building still stands as the Head Office of the National Can Company which has occupied the premises since 1972.

The significance of the site and premises has been recognised by the Military Historical Society that undertook to place an appropriate plaque near the entrance to the factory early in1992. The Society has completed similar projects in the past, such as the Caulfield Returned Services Club in Elsternwick that was the home to significant elements of the Volunteer Defence Corps during World War Two. In conjunction with the National Can Company, the plaque was unveiled at 10:00 am on 28 November 1992. Further details are available from the contributor on (03) 555 5401.

Image and Attitude: Australia and the Boer War

Dale James Blair

In a letter to a friend, John Monash, a senior officer of militia, wrote of the outbreak of war in South Africa:

> "This is certainly not an occasion where patriotism demands the making of any personal sacrifices. It simply amounts to this, that to anyone who aspires to military experience in the field, whose private circumstances permit, and who allows himself to be moved by sentiment, an opportunity is now offered."[1]

For John Monash the Boer War was clearly not emergency enough to deem participation necessary. Indeed, many that did volunteer did so for personal rather than patriotic concerns. Lieutenant-Colonel D L Henry (retired) who acted as an enrolment and disembarkation officer for the Victorian contingents believed that some had volunteered through sentimental patriotism while others did so as a means of personal betterment and of escaping the drudgery of life in Australia.[2]

Whatever the motivation of the volunteers the general public embraced them as defenders of a *cause célèbre* and turned out in their tens of thousands to send off the first contingents. Drawing on the Spartan tradition, New South Wales' Chief Justice, Sir Frederick Darley, declared to the troops, "Whether you come back with your shields or on your shields, I know you will bring back the honour of the Colony".[3] No doubt this Homeric rhetoric was designed to add an extra dimension to the "bushman" image the colonials carried to war as well as appealing to general notions of manhood.

The first contingents sailed with the great expectations of the various colonies hanging over them. The New South Welshmen were told "they had become soldiers of the Queen" and, expressing a generally held belief, an Australian uitlander wrote, "I hope the Australian contingent will come. Every bushman is worth three soldiers because they can take care of themselves besides fighting".[4] It was widely believed that the "bushcraft" of the Australians, their "natural" ability to shoot and ride would be sufficient to make competent soldiers of them.

While few doubted the ability of the volunteers to succeed at the game of war support for the conflict was by no means unanimous. An outspoken anti-war campaign was waged by some of the country's popular press led principally by the *Bulletin*. In 1900, the Peace and Humanity Society was founded by various religious leaders appealing to the belief that the support of war was a betrayal of Christianity while Sydney University's professor of history, G A Wood, presided over the Australian Anti-War League.[5] Jeffrey Grey in his book, *A Military History of Australia*, makes the following observations on popular attitudes to the war:

> "In so far as generalisations can be made, it is clear that the ALP was strongly opposed, but it is not necessarily the case that working-class opinion mirrored this opposition. The radical nationalist school centred on the Bulletin was opposed vociferously, but... their influence was confined largely to those already convinced ... Irish-Catholic opinion ... does not lend itself to simplistic classification either. Class was an important factor, but so to was the issue of native-born versus Irish-born; the clergy were largely Irish born, and this was an important determinant in their opposition... Whether such 'official' opinion can be regarded as representative of the views of those whom it seeks to represent is a problem of both pro- and anti- war cases".[6]

It is almost certain that support for the war cannot be defined along class divisions. It is hard to imagine shearers and maritime workers, who experienced the intervention of local militia in the strikes of 1890, mustering much enthusiasm for the men that had been ordered, if needs be, to "fire low and lay the bastards out".[7] On the other hand many of the flag-waving 200,000 that turned out to farewell the New South Wales contingent most certainly represented both the working and middle classes.

For the majority the simple motto "the Empire, right or wrong" was justification enough to enter the fracas. The dissenting voices though few in number were a little more circumspect. Billy Hughes declared the war to be "ill-advised, ill-judged and immoral". William Holman declared, "Whilst my country is fighting in a just cause I hope I shall be as ready to support its claim as any other member. But as I believe from the bottom of my heart that this is the most iniquitous, most immoral war ever waged with any race, I hope that England may be defeated". Both Hughes and Holman were Labor politicians and, although against the war, were fully supportive of the notion of Empire.[8]

The bloodline which connected the colonies and Britain was remarkably strong. The popular view of England as the "mother country" was given added credence by the indomitable presence of the aged but still reigning monarch, Queen Victoria. There were, however, two strands to the bind. The view of the predominantly English rulers, of the colonies being subservient to England was one shared by colonial officialdom. The majority of volunteers carried a somewhat different view into the field. The 1880s and 1890s had seen a radical and jingoist nationalism emerge in the colonies. Promoted by editors such as William Lane and John Archibald a strong sense of national identity had been evoked. It stressed egalitarianism as a fact of Australian life and was rooted firmly in the Australian bush. It lauded the virtues of mateship and praised the bushman's resilience and adaptability. It was almost exclusively a celebration of Australian manhood. The colonial volunteers undertook their military duties enamoured by these perceptions and of their self-worth.

The selection of the Australian contingents was based firmly on that bush ethos. Volunteers were almost wholly drawn from country areas where the much vaunted bushman supposedly existed in abundance. The term "bushman" was in fact incorporated into the names of many of the contingents. For the most part they performed creditably and early reports seemed to support the notion that the bushman was, in fact, a valuable military commodity.

"Banjo" Patterson had excitedly proclaimed Australia as entering the sisterhood of Nations through its participation in the conflict but withdrew from that position a short time later.[9] Nor did the general public venture to make any similar proclamations. It is important to remember that the Australian states entered the war as separate colonies and as such the various contingents tended to be attached independently to British formations. Federation did not occur until late in the war and the Commonwealth formations saw little active service. The early contingents were little more than company strength, casualties were light and, with the exception of Elands River, no truly "national" action took place.

Other events, however, conspired to erode any ongoing adulation the public may have maintained for the returning troops. The war had acquired a particularly ugly face with Australian troops participating in the burning of farms and homes and the herding of Boer women and children into concentration camps. Furthermore a series of events late in the war both embarrassed and enraged the Australian public and authorities. The first was an engagement at Wilmansrust in which the 5th Victorian Contingent were routed and captured by a commando of Boers one third their number leading a British officer to brand the Victorians as "a lot of white-livered curs".[10] Following this three Australians were arrested,

courts-martialled and sentenced to death for inciting mutiny. On protest their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.

Not long after the war news of the execution of Lieutenants Morant and Handcock, for the shooting of Boer prisoners and a German missionary, further undermined Australian confidence in both their soldiers and in the summary and arbitrary nature of British military justice.

Add to these incidents the burning of newspaper offices in Cape Town and the riot aboard a troopship and it might be argued that the notoriety of the Australians overshadowed their undoubted worth.[11] Spartan discipline was unknown to them and, instead, their egalitarianism often translated into a disdainful and belligerent attitude toward British military authority. Larrikinism had combined with the bush tradition to create quite a different character type to that which had first been envisaged of Australian soldiers.[12]

If Australian aspirations of acquiring recognition of nationhood on the battlefield had been compromised then those that had desired such a grisly baptism did not have long to wait. HB Higgins, in a Federal parliamentary debate raised the following pertinent points in relation to the sending of more troops:

I apprehend that the Prime Minister is making a very difficult position for himself and his successors in connexion with future wars... Are we, without going into the causes of the wars of Great Britain, to adopt the principle that we should side with Great Britain, no matter what is done? The adoption of such a course will commit Australia to the principle that she must aid the Imperial Government in all wars with her young lives...although she has no voice in the negotiations which precede war, and is not consulted in regard to its expediency or necessity.[13]

If the much cherished notions of Australian manhood and nationhood had not been vindicated on the veldts of the Transvaal then Australia would have to wait, as one person sagely noted in 1902, "until the Great War comes".[14]

End Notes

1 Geoffrey Serle, John Monash: A biography, Melbourne University Press, 1982, p. 160.

2 John Barrett, Falling In: Australians and 'Boy Conscription' 1911-1915, Hale & Ironmonger, Sydney, 1979, pp. 23-24.

3 R. L. Wallace, The Australians at the Boer War, The AWM and the Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976, p. 35.

4 ibid., pp. 35-37.

5 Barrett, p. 98.

6 Jeffrey Grey, A Military History of Australia, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1900, pp. 56-57.

7 Allan Box, Saddle & Spur, The LV Printers Pty Ltd, Traralgon, 1989, p. 33.

8 Gavin Souter, Lion and Kangaroo: Australia: 1901-1919 The Rise of a Nation, Fontana, Collins. Australia, 1978, pp. 63-64.

9 Bill Gammage, "The Crucible: The establishment of the ANZAC tradition, 1899-1918", in M. McKernan & M. Browne (eds), Australia Two Centuries of War & Peace, p. 147.

10 ibid., p. 156.

11 ibid..

12 L. L. Robson, "The Australian Soldier: Formation of a Stereotype" in McKernan & Browne, Australia Two Centuries of War & Peace. pp. 318-319.

13 Souter, p. 66.

14 Gammage, p. 157.

US Medal of Honor: Recent Developments

Anthony Staunton

The last ten years has seen some extraordinary developments in the story of the United States Medal of Honor. Five awards rescinded in 1917 have been restored, President Bush posthumously presented a Medal of Honor for gallantry in 1918 and some exceptional research has been done into double Medal of Honor recipients. Since March 1981 when there were 273 living recipients of the Medal of Honor the number has dwindled to just over 200.[1]

Background

The United States Medal of Honor may only be earned by a member of the United States Armed Forces for most conspicuous gallantry and intrepidness above and beyond the call of duty in the presence of an armed enemy. There must be a clear risk of life and at least two eye-witnesses must attest to the deed. Today's strict guide-lines have been developed over the 130 year history of the decoration.

The Medal of Honor evolved during the winter of 1861-62 which followed the outbreak of the Civil War. The Chairman of the Senate Naval Committee, Senator James W Grimes of Iowa, proposed the creation of a 'medal of honor' for sailors and marines who distinguished themselves through gallantry in action. The bill instituting the Medal of Honor was signed into law on 21 December 1861. Two months later Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts introduced a similar proposal for the Army which was signed into law on 12 July 1862. In March 1863 the Medal of Honor was extended to Army officers and made retrospective to the beginning of the Civil War. In 1915 Naval officers finally became eligible for the Medal of Honor but it was not until 1963 that the Navy Medal of Honor became a purely combat award.[2]

The last Naval non-combat award was a posthumous award to Boatswain's Mate Second Class Owen Hammerberg. He was a diver who lost his life in rescue operations at Pearl Harbour on 17 February 1945. The 25 July 1963 amendment restricted Medal of Honor awards for actions:

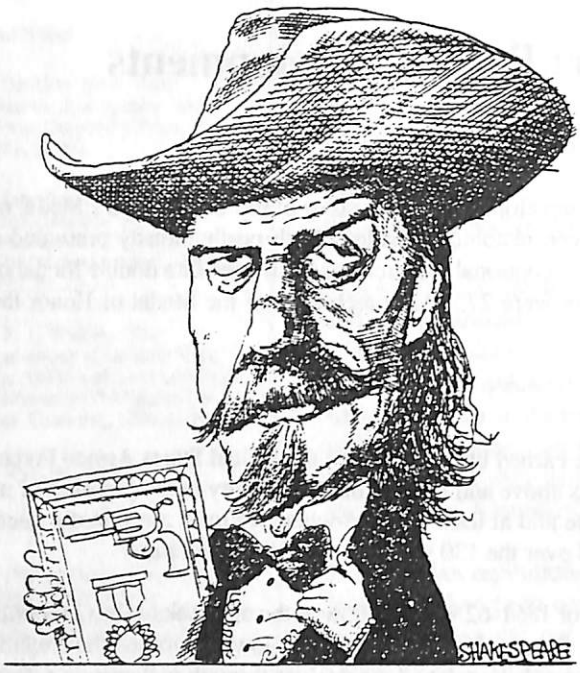
1. while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;

2. while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or,

3. while serving with friendly forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

Rescinded Awards

Although the Navy can no longer award the Medal of Honor for non-combat service, the men who were awarded the Navy medal under the previous criteria are still regarded as Medal of Honor recipients. However, the US Army in 1916 convened a Review Board to examine all Army Medal of Honor awards up until that time. Following the Review Board's recommendations in January 1917, the US Army rescinded 911 awards as not meriting the decoration.[3] The awards deleted included 864 medals to the 27th Maine Volunteers and 29 medals to the members of the Honour Guard on President Lincoln's funeral train.[4] Six of the remaining sixteen medals rescinded were awards to civilians including the award to Dr Mary Walker the only woman to receive the Medal of Honor. Dr Walker, a contract surgeon with the



Caricature of William Cody (Buffalo Bill)

Union Forces, was granted the Medal of Honor by President Andrew Johnson in 1865. Her award, rescinded in 1917, was restored in 1977 after a review by the Army.[5] The other five civilians including William Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill, had rendered distinguished service in action as army scouts and in the opinion of the Review Board fully earned their medals. However since civilian scouts were not eligible to receive the Medal of Honor the Review Board was forced to recommend that the five awards also be rescinded. Its recommendation that the law be amended to allow the army scouts to retain their medals was ignored.

Less than two months after William Cody and the four other scouts had their awards rescinded because they were civilians a similar situation was played out in the North Atlantic. In March 1917, British Merchant Marine Captain Archibald Bissett-Smith in command of the SS *Otaki* refused to stop when called to do so by the German raider *Moewe*. The outgunned *Otaki* scored several hits of *Moewe* but after twenty minutes Bissett-Smith ordered his crew to abandon ship but he himself went down with his ship. It was universally agreed that his actions merited the Victoria Cross but like Cody and the other scouts, Bissett-Smith was a civilian and so was ineligible to receive the Victoria Cross. During the 1914-18 War, the Royal Navy adopted a typically sailorly method of dealing with the situation of recognising gallant acts performed by members of the Merchant Navy. When a Merchant Navy officer appeared to merit the Distinguished Service Order or the Distinguished Service Cross, a Royal Navy Reserve commission was antedated to the day before the action of gallantry. However, in Bissett-Smith's case, some doubt was raised as to the propriety of this course of action in respect to the Victoria Cross.[6]

The Admiralty took the matter up with the Committee redrafting the Victoria Cross warrant and it was agreed that the Merchant Navy would be included in a new warrant which was signed by King George V in March 1919. Publication of the new warrant was delayed at the King's request until the formal ending of Britain's state of war. However, the Admiralty saw no need to await the warrant's formal publication before bringing forward awards for Bissett-Smith and another Merchant Marine officer, Frederick Parslow who had lost his life when his ship, the *Anglo-Californian* had been attacked by a German submarine on 4 July 1915. Both were given Royal Naval Reserve commissions antedated to the date before their acts of gallantry and both awards were gazetted on 24 May 1919.

Seventy years later, the United States Department of Army's Board for the Correction of Military Records came up with the same sailorly solution. In a memorandum signed by Deputy Assistant Secretary John H Matthews on 12 June 1989, the records of William Cody and the four others were corrected:

1. by showing that as an exception to policy each was properly enlisted in the Army of the United States as a scout, on the day preceding the date of the action which resulted in his receipt of the Medal of Honor:

2. by showing that each continued to serve on active duty until he was honourably discharged, on the day following the date the Medal of Honor was issued to him.[7]

Belated Awards

The first Medals of Honor were awarded to former prisoners of war who had been captured in the famous Andrews Raid also known as the Great Locomotive Chase. The raid was intended to disrupt Confederate rail lines in Georgia in April 1862. The following year, six of the survivors were paroled from a Confederate prison and on the 25 March 1863 appeared before Secretary of War Edwin M Stanton in Washington, DC who presented each man with the Medal of Honor. By the end on the Civil War, 330 soldiers had been awarded the Medal of Honor. In the year following the end of the war another 49 soldiers were decorated for gallantry in the Civil War and in the following ten years another 38 received the award. Eventually nearly 1200 Army awards were made for the Civil War, most in the 1880s and 1890s with the last seven being honoured in 1917.

The tradition of awarding the Medal of Honor years after the event was continued by President George Bush when he posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor to Corporal Freddie Stowers seventy-two years after he died in 1918 attacking German machine-gun nests on the Western Front in France. In White House ceremonies on 24 April 1991, President Bush posthumously presented the Medal of Honor to Stowers' two sisters Georgian A Palmer, 88, and Mary Bowens, 77. Stowers is the 79th black to receive the Medal of Honor and the first black to be so honoured for service in either world war.[8]

President Bush awarding, posthumously, the Medal of Honor to Cpl Freddie Stowers.
His sister, Mary Bowers, centre, accepted the award.

Stowers was born in Anderson County, South Carolina, in 1897. Like others in his family he worked on a farm growing cotton and, "anything else that would grow", according to his sister Georgiana. She recalls him as a "nice boy who never gave his father any trouble". He enlisted in the US Army in October 1917 and was assigned to Company C, 1st Battalion, 371st Infantry, an all-black unit organised at Camp Jackson, South Carolina. The regiment became part of the all-black 93rd Infantry Division which moved to France in April 1918. The Medal of Honor citation states:

> "Corporal Freddie Stowers distinguished himself by exceptional heroism on 28 September 1918 while serving as a squad leader in Company C, 371st Infantry Regiment, 93rd Infantry Division. His company was the lead company during the attack on Hill 188, Champagne Marne Sector, France, during the first World War. A few minutes after the attack began, the enemy ceased firing and began climbing up on to the parapets of the trenches, holding up their arms as if wishing to surrender. The enemy's actions caused the American forces to cease fire and to come out into the open. As the company started forward and when within about 100 meters of the trench line, the enemy jumped back into their trenches and greeted Corporal Stowers' company with interlocking bands of machine-gun fire and mortar fire causing well over fifty percent casualties. Faced with incredible enemy resistance, Corporal Stowers took charge, setting such a courageous example of personal bravery and leadership that he inspired his men to follow him in the attack. With extraordinary heroism and complete disregard of personal danger under devastating fire, he crawled forward leading his squad toward an enemy machine-gun nest which was causing heavy casualties to his company. After fierce fighting, the machine-gun position was destroyed and the enemy soldiers were killed. Displaying great courage and intrepidity, Corporal Stowers continued to press the attack against a determined enemy. While crawling forward and urging his men to continue the attack on a second trench line, he was gravely wounded by machine-gun fire. Although Corporal Stowers was mortally wounded, he pressed forward, urging on the members of his squad, until he died. Inspired by the heroism and display of bravery of Corporal Stowers his company continued the attack against incredible odds, contributing in the capture of Hill 188 and causing heavy enemy casualties. Corporal Stowers' conspicuous gallantry, extraordinary heroism, and supreme devotion to his men were well above and beyond the call of duty, follow the finest traditions of military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army."

Stowers was buried at the American Battlefield Monuments Cemetery at Mouse-Argonne. He was originally recommended for the Distinguished Service Cross but the recommendation was subsequently upgraded to the Medal of Honor. However, no action of any kind was ever taken on either recommendation and his story remained unknown until 1988. The US Army, sensitive to criticism that no blacks received the Medal of Honor during either World War solely because of discrimination began a review of all award recommendations for blacks during this period. It was found that four black soldiers had been recommended for a Medal of Honor for bravery in 1918 and that three of the soldiers ultimately received Distinguished Service Cross for their heroism. The fourth, Freddie Stowers, received nothing. The US Army, after extensive research determined that the award for Stowers had been overlooked. After reviewing the original documentation the Army review board determined that Stowers' actions merited the highest of all awards. Until the review process began Stowers family knew nothing of his heroism in battle. His wife and daughter both died, never knowing he had died a hero.

Double Medal of Honor recipients

The War Department strongly opposed the deployment of Marines to France in the First World War. Major General George Barnet, the Marine Corps Commandant, appealed directly to President Woodrow Wilson

who personally intervened. One of the stipulations, however, was that the army would exercise overall command of all American forces employed in France. Marines and their Navy medical and dental officers and corpsmen came under direct control of the Army. As a result marines were awarded US Army gallantry awards. Five marines, Gunnery Sergeants Louis Cukela and Ernest Janson, Sergeant Matej Kocak, Corporal John Pruitt and Private John Kelly were awarded the Army Medal of Honor in recognition for their gallantry. In 1920, each was also awarded a Navy Medal of Honor for the same action.

Fourteen soldiers, sailors and marines have been awarded two Medals of Honor for separate acts of gallantry. For forty years it was believe that, including the five First World War awards, the nineteen double awards were made up of five soldiers, seven sailors and seven marines. Exceptional research by Ray Collins of the Medal of Honor Historical Society has revealed that one of the army cases is actually two men and that an eighth sailor was awarded two medals.[9] The nineteen double Medal of Honor awards now includes four soldiers, eight sailors and seven marines.

The Two Patrick Leonards

The first reference to Patrick Leonard as a double recipient appears in *The Medal of Honor* published by the Department of the Army in 1948. Reference material prior to this date does not show Leonard to be a double recipient. Two Patrick Leonards appeared in previous lists but the only common feature was that both awards were won in Nebraska. The culprit is almost certainly the 1948 Army Medal of Honor book which is replete with errors in names, units, places and dates. Once in print, these errors have been frequently repeated, particularly by the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee in its various editions of *Medal of Honor Recipients*. The double award to Patrick Leonard was never questioned until Ray Collins looked into the matter. Joseph Schott in *Above and Beyond* accepted Patrick Leonard as a double recipient and commented that the Medal of Honor was no guarantee of success since Patrick Leonard earned the first award as a sergeant and the second award as a corporal. Sadly, Dr Ray Tassin in his 1986 book, *Double Winners of the Medal of Honor* had not caught up with Ray Collins research which was originally published in 1984.

Ray Collins has exhaustively examined the records in the National Archives. He found that Sergeant Patrick Leonard, who was awarded the Medal of Honor with the 2nd US Cavalry in 1870 originally served in the US Navy from March to August 1965. On enlistment he was recorded as having hazel eyes, brown hair, was 5'8" high, aged 21 and occupation tobacconist. He enlisted in the 2nd Cavalry in 1867 and was discharged in 1872. His details on enlistment were grey eyes, brown hair, 5'9" height, aged 22 and occupation tobacconist. He served a third enlistment from 1876 to 1880. His details on enlistment were grey eyes, brown hair, 5'9" height, aged 29 and occupation tobacconist. Sergeant Patrick Leonard died at St Joseph's Hospital, Kansas City on 24 January 1899 at the age of 52 years old.

Corporal Patrick Leonard who was awarded the Medal of Honor with the 23rd Infantry in 1876, originally enlisted in the US Army in January 1865. On enlistment he was described as having brown eyes, brown hair, 5'9" high, age 37 and occupation porter. He was appointed to the 14th US Infantry which was subsequently redesignated the 23rd US Infantry. His 2nd enlistment was on 20 January 1868 at Camp Three Forks, Owyhee, Indian Territory. Enlistment details were brown eyes, brown hair, 5'9" height, age 40 and occupation soldier. He reenlisted for the 3rd time on 20 January 1871, at Camp Three Forks. He was described as having brown eyes, brown hair, 5'9" height, age 43. He was discharged on 20 January 1876, at Fort Hartsuff, Nebraska as a sergeant and reenlisted for the fourth and final time. He was shown as aged 48: eyes brown; hair brown; height 5'9". His final discharge was on 20 January 1881, at Cautonment, Indian territory as a sergeant.

1. The best source of informed and up to date information on the Medal of Honor for the last fifteen years has been *The Annals*, the quarterly journal of the Medal of Honor Historical Society edited by Ed Murphy. The journal is taking a break for 1992-93 and it is very much hoped that it will resume in 1993-1994.

2. Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. *Medal of Honor Recipients 1863-1978*, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1979

3. Secretary of War. *General Staff Corps and Medals of Honor*, Senate Document 58, 1st Session, 66th Congress, 2 July 1919

4. Pullen, John J. *A Shower of Stars: The Medal of Honor and the 27th Maine*, J B Lippincott Company, 1966

5. Staunton, Anthony. Mary Walker — Medal of Honor Winner, *Sabretache*, Vol 21 No 1, Jan-Mar 1980, pp.47-52

6. Staunton, Anthony. Victoria Cross Civilian Award, *The Annals*, Vol 12, No 2, Dec 1989, pp.33-34

7. Mathews John W. Deputy Assistant Secretary, DA Review Boards and Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance and Complaints Review, Memorandum for Commander US Army Reserve Personnel Center — Subject: Cody, William F (Deceased), 12 June 1989

8. Weekly Compilation of Presidential documents. Vol 27, No.17, Monday, 29 April 1991, pp 510-502

9. Tassin, Ray. *Double Winners of the Medal of Honor*, Daring Books, 1986

On 13 February 1908, Mary E Leonard filed a claim for a widow's pension. She identified her late husband as Patrick Leonard who served in the 23rd US Infantry. According to her statement he died in Leavenworth on 1 March 1905. A document from the City of Leavenworth identifies Patrick *Thomas* Leonard as having died on 1 March 1905. He was interred at Mount Calvary Cemetery, Leavenworth, Kansas. Also, in the National Archives is a letter from Patrick T. Leonard dated September 20, 1876, acknowledging receipt of his Medal of Honor.

Ray Collins concluded that 'Patrick Leonard' refers to two, not one, men. Patrick Leonard served in the US Navy in 1865 and in the 2nd US Cavalry from 1867 until 1972 and again from 1876 until 1880. He was never a member of the 23rd US Infantry. Patrick Thomas Leonard served continuously for sixteen years in the 23rd US Infantry from 1865 to 1881. He was never a member of the 2nd US Cavalry.[10]

Double recipient John Laverty

The Navy Medal of Honor Roll carries the names of Fireman John Lafferty, cited for heroism aboard the USS *Wyalusing* during the attempt to sink the rebel ram *Albermarle* on the Roanoke River, Virginia on 25 May 1864. and of First Class Fireman John Laverty cited for heroism aboard the USS *Alaska* at Callao Bay, Peru on 14 September 1881, when he hauled the fires from under the boiler following the rupture of the stop-valve chamber.

Ray Collins revealed that pension file information in the National Archives showed that Laverty (the correct spelling) first enlisted at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in December 1862 and served in the US Navy until 22 December 1896, when he was medically discharged. On 29 June 1895, in a general affidavit filed in connection with a pension application, he listed his enlistments and then made the following statement:

That he was presented with a Medal of Honor, which was awarded to him by the Secretary of the Navy in General Order No 45 dated 31 December 1864 for gallant and meritorious conduct whilst serving as a fireman on board of the USS *Wyalusing* in an attempt to destroy the rebel ram *Albermarle* 25 May 1864.

That he likewise was presented with a Medal of Honor whilst serving on board the USS *Alaska* for hauling the fires from under the boiler, the stop valve chamber being ruptured at Callao Bay, Peru 14 September 1891.

On 27 July 1899, while a resident of the US Naval Home in Philadelphia, Laverty applied for a pension. He was granted a pension of $17.50 per

month. Laverty died at the Naval Home on November 17, 1903. He was buried at the Home's plot at Mount Moriah Cemetery, Philadelphia. Ray Collins said that why first Medal of Honor is shown to John *Lafferty* is unknown. He suggested that perhaps in taking a dictated report of the recommendation a yeoman spelled the name phonetically. In the ship's log the name is spelled properly as *Laverty*.[11]

Thomas A Pope

In March 1981 there were 273 living Medal of Honor recipients including eight survivors from the First World War.[12] The last surviving soldier awarded the Medal of Honor in the First World War was in fact the first soldier to earn the Medal of Honor in that conflict. Corporal Thomas A Pope served with Company E, 131st Infantry and won the award on 4 July 1918 serving alongside Australian troops in the famous Australian-American victory at Hamel.

Pope rushed a German machine-gun nest, slashing at the crew with his bayonet. By the time his buddies joined him Pope had killed several of the crew and was holding the others at bay. His gallantry permitted the advance to continue into Hamel. He received his Medal of Honor from General Pershing on 22 April 1919. After discharge he worked with the Veterans Administration until he retired in the late 1950s. He and his wife then moved to California were he spent his final years. He took an active part in affairs of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society and was a vocal supporter of the war in Vietnam and the men who earned the Medal of Honor there. His health fell rapidly in his last years and he was forced to sell his house and move in with his son. Born on 15 December 1894, he died aged 94 years of age on 14 June 1989. He was buried was at Arlington National Cemetery.[13]

10. Collins, Ray. Double Recipient Identified As Two Men, *The Annals*. An editorial note by Ed Murphy sated that:

"Ray Collins should receive the highest commendation for his research. This startling revelation is the most significant piece of Medal of Honor research I have witnessed in 20 years of interest in the subject. Only Ray, with his persistence and devotion to accuracy, could have developed these facts. All of us are deeply grateful to him for his efforts."

11. Murphy, Edward F (researched by Collins, Ray) Eighth Navy Double Recipient Uncovered, *The Annals*

12. Murphy, Edward F. Medal of Honor Statistical Recap

13. For information on Medal of Honor awards during the Vietnam conflict see Staunton, Anthony. The United States Medal of Honor, *Sabretache*, Vol 29 No 3, Jul-Sep 1988, pp.23-29

Biennial Conference of the MHSA held at Buna Barracks, Victoria Street, Albury on Queens's Birthday Weekend, 6-8 June 1992

It appeared that all roads led to the Murray Valley region during the Queen's Birthday holiday weekend with every accommodation facility, particularly within driving distance of the twin cities of Albury/Wodonga, full to capacity. As a result, some especially keen Victorian Branch members were billeted in the nearby Scout Hall. Nevertheless, in spite of the many "No Vacancy" signs, a good number of Society members, and partners, were determined to participate in the ever popular Biennial Conference held, rather wisely, at the centrally situated Buna Barracks, just a few minutes walk from the Albury Post Office.

Representatives came from nearly every Society Branch, travelling from as far as Perth, Adelaide and Launceston, with, of course, the ACT, Geelong and Victorian Branches fielding goodly teams.

The conference was officially opened at 10am on Saturday, 6 June, by the Society's patron, Admiral Sir Anthony Synnot, KBE, AO, who, before declaring the function open, inspected a combined guard of honour drawn from Naval, Army and Air Force cadets. The offical guests included Col. J Campbell, Commander Albury-Wodonga Military Area, plus many other civic and military dignitaries. By the time that the late-comers had registered and managed to partake of morning tea, the Conference was in full swing.

Saturday's events included papers delivered by Victorian Branch members John Price (The Columns in South Africa) and Neil Smith (Aspects of the Korean War), with WA Branch Secretary, Rhonda Grande, delivering a fine paper on nurses (Escape from Singapore).

Interspersed between talks was a regular Biennial Conference feature, the Federal Council meeting chaired by Society President, Brigadier Tan Roberts.

At the cessation of the day's activities, there was just enough time for the delegates to renew acquaintances over a glass (or two) in the Mess. Regrettably this "happy hour" was limited as many were heading in the direction of the elite Albury Club for a formal Conference Dinner. Those who were not attired for such an occasion headed towards the Services Club for a meal, or to their accommodation, to catch up on rest.

Breakfast next morning, in the Soldiers' Mess, was a happy affair, and to those who "had been there! done that!", reminiscent of previous military service. However, time, tide and Biennial Conferences wait for no one and we were soon listening to talks by ACT Branch members Col. John Hillier (Production of the Albury Map), Peter Sinfield (Australian Naval Aviation), and Federal Secretary, Anthony Staunton (Medal of Honor). To keep us awake and not "glued to our seats" the members of the 8/13 VMR regimental Association made sure that there were copious draughts of tea and coffee available, made even more palatable by huge piles of delicious doughnuts.

There was ample time to inspect the fine 8/13 Museum which has so much on show. Space had been alloacated for displays from Society members, two of whom received prizes for their efforts. The judges were hard pressed to decide which showcase deserved the awards.

After lunch, on Sunday, an army bus transported us to Latchford Barracks at Bonegilla, where we enjoyed looking over the RA Survey Corps brand new museum. Then for some of us, a nostalgic journey when we paid a visit to the RAAOC Museum at Bandiana, the location of the Society's 25th Anniversary Conference and Exhibition, back in 1982. Looking over the former venue it was incredible to realise that ten years had elapsed since taht memorable occasion.

Joining us on the Museum tour was MHSA foundation member, Barry Videon, accompanied by his wife Vida. They had been visiting the local RAAF display and were unaware that so many MHSA members were in town but, upon learning of the function, decided to pay us a visit. This brings one slight cloud over an otherwise excellent function, for it is possible that we may have had a larger attendance of members, especially those who are regular Conference attenders, had advance publicity and arrangements been forthcoming at both Branch and Federal level.

Sunday's functions ended with a low-key, yet enjoyable, "Smoke Night", which included trading tables, held in the Delegates' Mess. Sadly, many members had to leave for home early on Monday, but those who could stay until the end enjoyed two workshops chaired by Neil Smith (Researching Military records) and Geelong Branch member, Ian Barnes (Military Medals), which has become a regular feature at our get-togethers. Soon it was time for everyone to brave the bumper-to-bumper traffic leaving NE Victorian centres pondering upon how they had managed to pack so much into one weekend.

To everyone who worked to make the Conference a great success we thank you, especially the Commanding Officer and all ranks of 8/13 VMR for allowing us to use their facilities. Thanks also to those wonderful (Rhonda Grande put it far better in remarking, "they're gorgeous!") cadets of 37 RCU, who truly "walked the second mile" yet, at the same time, were so courteous and polite. Our heartfelt thanks must go to the members of the Albury/Wodonga Branch, especially Don Campbell, Tony Peck,

Some of the participants in the Conference

Christine Lyttleton and Bob Morrison and, in fact, everyone who worked so hard to make the event successful. they even miraculously organised for us to have good weather over the weekend.

The Conference now belongs to our memories along with those previous successful MHSA events. We're glad we went. — John Price

Awards of life membership and honorary membership

At the Conference dinner, life membership of the Military Historical Society of Australia was awarded to Peter Shaw of the Western Australian Branch and to Tony Harris of the South Australian Branch. Honorary membership of the Society was awarded to Colonel John Neale who, until recently was Honorary Colonel of the 8/13th VMR, curator of the 8/13 VMR museum and a great supporter of the Albury/Wodonga Branch of the Military Historical Society..

Peter Shaw

Peter Shaw has been a member of the Western Australian Branch for 20 years, was President for twelve years, serves on the Board of the Army Museum of Western Australia as the MHSA WA Branch representative and has done so for the past ten years. He is also the Military Historian for the Museum.

Tony Harris

Tony Harris was one of the foundation members of the South Australian Branch over 20 years ago. He has held the offices of President and Secretary to the Branch and has provided solid support for past and present committees. Tony's specialised knowledge on Australian Colonial equipment has led to being recognised as the consultative expert on such matters in South Australia for organisations such as the Mortlock Collection, the State Library and the Heritage Commission. Tony is active in promoting the Society and has placed the Society in high esteem.

Colonel John Neale at the Museum with a Vickers machine gun

Book Reviews

An Army for a Nation by John Mordike, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1992. pp.310, $34.95.

Dr David Horner, the well-known Australian military historian, considered Mordike's book "a substantial historical work ... it is vital reading for those wishing to understand the development of Australia's foreign and defence policy as well as of the Australian army in this century". (Dustjacket)

And so it is. The central theme is that what went under the guise of planning for local defence of Australia as a self-governing dominion, was in fact directed towards the defence of the British Empire as a whole. Towards the end of the nineteenth century Britain had begun to smart under the budgetary burden of all aspects of her defence commitments, particulary of the need to maintain the two-power standard of the Royal Navy. Complementary with this was the requirement for the Army to ensure the military capability of upholding the balance of power on the European continent, particularly in the light of the power blocks that began to emerge after the unification of Germany and Italy. Also, the recruit material offering for military service proved to be largely unsatisfactory due to malnutrition and other causes related to the industrialisation of England.

The solution was seen in the raising of an Imperial Army, uniformly organised, trained and equipped, consisting of Empire contingents and commanded by the Imperial General Staff. This plan was pushed by the senior British service and political officers as well as by leading public figures. Particularly active in this respect were the senior officers sent to Australia to assist in the defence planning o fthe emerging nation, beginning with Edwards in the eighties and ending with Kitchener in 1910. Their endeavours were often assisted to a considerable degree by Australian politicians. Thus, Imperial military planning in Australia commenced in earnest in or about 1911 under the control of the Imperial "General Staff — Australian Section", culminating in the dispatch, in 1914, of fully equipped Australian Troops six weeks after Australia found itself involved in a European war. Thus the day Australians stormed the beaches at Gallipoli was not the day the country became a nation, but rather, it was the day Australia became irrevocably committed to the framework of Imperial defence.

Mordike points out that the planning recommended by the English senior officers was ideal from an Imperial point of view but quite inappropriate for the defence of the Australian continent which required a high degree of strategic mobility and the means of rapid concentration of the militia units. As it was, their wide dispersion, particularly that of the command function, made training at a brigade level virtually impossible.

Mordike challenges the view that British and Australian defenmce interests were identical and goes so far as to suggest that senior British military and political personalities "plotted" to draw Australia into the British military orbit. It would be hard to deny that the military experts sent out to Australia had British military needs foremost in their minds when recommending military measures to the government of Australia. On the other hand, Moredike might be criticised for going too far in impugning underhand methods and what amounts to almost treasonable motives. These officers were consultants in the modern meaning of the term and they based their recommendations on their own experience and personal view points. With one or two exceptions, Australia at that time had not been able to produce or accumulate any comprehensive and worthwhile strategic experience at the senior military level.

Mordike has produced a work which is also important from a political and constitutional point of view. He has given an insight into the defence consciousness of the political direction of the country during the decades prior to 1914.

The book is well illustrated and the text is painstakingly documented. — H J Zwillenberg

Hooves, Wheels & Tracks, David Holloway, published by the Regimental Trustees, PoWLH Regimental Museum, 16, George Street, Fitzroy. Vic 3065.

The subtitle is A history of the 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse Regiment (PoWLH) and its predecessors. The book is a history of the Light Horse In Victoria, mainly centred around the PoWLH.

The author, David Holloway is a former member of the 4th/19th, this gave him access to a large number of contacts and information sources. The book is the result of over 20 years of service and interest in the PoWLH, plus many years research in relation to the writing of the book.

The Australian Army is an evolutionary Army, changing to meet needs and re-organising. The PoWLH is a good example of how this has worked in practice. The Army began as Volunteer units established in the late 1850s and early 1860s following the proclamation of the colonial governments. Their responsibilities included home defence, where the emphasis was to provide it at minimun expense. These moves took place as the Britsh Army reorganised, following the Crimean War and the Indian Mutiny, Resulting in the garrisons in Australia being progressively withdrawn and the last Regiment left in 1870.

The Colonial Military Forces came into being and their regular soldiers were principally artillery and engineers. In the 1880s, as the population in the colonies grew, the volunteer soldiers were replaced by militia who were paid and the separate volunteer units were reorganised into linked militia formations. With moves towards Federation in the late 1880s, the commandants of the Colonial Military Forces meet at first biannually and then annually. Under their auspices, standardisation of armaments, uniforms and equipment took place and common military manuals issued. The benefits were realised in South Africa, when soldiers from several colonies formed into single units.

An Establishment Order for the Australian Army issued in 1903, provided for a mainly citizen force. While its main purpose was home defence, by 1908 a growing commitment for Imperial defence became an underlying feature. The PoWLH, one of the oldest units in Victoria, traces its foundation to 1863 has participated in all these developments, continuing in the Australian Army as a member of the Army Reserve. This is an underlying theme substantiated by details, set out in the book. The PoWLH is unique among units of the Australian Army. It is the only unit, which through its links with the Victoria Military Force, has had its members fight in every conflict involving Australian soldiers.

The Victorian Mounted Rifles, composite and later Commonwealth units in South Africa, the 4th Light Horse in World War One at Gallipoli, France and Palestine, World War Two in units of the 6th, 7th and 9th Divisions in the Middle East and later the South West Pacific, some of its members were also in the 8th Division in Malaya. Several officers served in Korea and so may have the other ranks but they are not identified. Members also served in Borneo. A Squadron PoWLH was the first Australian armoured unit to be sent to Vietnam in 1966. These periods are extensively covered in the book. Each member who was

killed, wounded, died of wounds or illness on active service is recorded whenever it has been possible to identify them from official records.

The Book opens with a brief summary of the Light Horse in the Colony of Victoria. The first unit being the Kyneton Mounted Corps formed in 1863. It was later followed by the Prince of Wales Hussars, which were incorporated into what is referred to at times as the Victorian Cavalry. The dress of the Victorian Cavalry was blue with light blue facings. These were the colour patch of the 4th Light Horse AIF and is of the PoWLH. A major review of the Victorian Military Force followed the passing of the Defence and Discipline Act in 1890, the combined light horse units became the Victorian Mounted Rifles.

Detachments of the Victorian Mounted Rifles went to South Africa in 1900. When David Holloway commenced the task of writing the 4th/19ths history, there were no longer any survivors of the Boer War. He was restricted to the official war records, primary source articles and books written during that war or immediately afterwards. The secondary sources written long afterwards and those written records by the combatants themselves, whenever and wherever they could be found. All these are recorded in the end notes and the bibliography.

The initial chapters, therefore, have a clinical impact when you read them, with very little of the human characteristics of the members appearing. David Holloway writes in a brief, compact and concentrated way, so that after reading a chapter at the most, usually a few pages, sometimes paragraphs, the reader has to put the book down as one can no longer effectively absorb the writing. Yet, when one rereads those pages new information comes to light. This is one of the great merits of the book.

There is a change when writing of World War One because the author was able to draw from a vast reservoir of information from members who served at Gallipoli, in France, the Sinai and Palestine. Many of these men died during the preparation of the book and their deaths are acknowledged. The author by the use of both the oral and the written word was able to gather a wealth of information from sources that cannot now be further extended.

Because of this personal contact, the more human side of soldiering now appears in the book. The chapters start to contain extracts from the former members whose ability to recall events so long after they occurred was of considerable value. The author, through this large growing research and reference base, was able to verify and evaluate much of what he heard and read. This is of inestimable value when reading the chapter on Beersheba in which the 4th Australian Light Horse (ALH) fought.

The service in South Africa, and, more particularly, in World War One, with respect to the 4th ALH created a bond that was retained and nurtured after discharge. It was this bond that helped the author. The pride in being a member of the PoWLH is still strong.

In 1919, the CMF was re-organised with the regiments being renumbered to equate with the ALH Regiments of the AIF. The difficulties experienced by the 4th and 19th Light Horse Regts between 1920 and the outbreak of World War Two are well covered. The 4th LH was called to full time service on the declaration of World War Two. At that time it was still mounted and played a role in the making of the film *40,000 Horsemen.* A large number of officers and men enlisted in the 2nd AIF and this placed stress on the Regiment. In 1942, the CMF was incorporated into the Australian Army and the 4th LH became armoured. As an armoured unit its title was changed a number of times. It moved to Queensland prior to the Squadrons being sent to New Guinea and Bougainville. In World War One, after Gallipoli, the 4th ALH

divided into two. In 1944, the Squadrons were sent separately to the South West Pacific. The Regiment was disbanded in January 1946, as were most units that fought in World War Two.

The re-establishment of the CMF was announced late in 1947 and, in 1948, two Light Horse units were formed in Victoria to replace those that existed in 1939. They were the 4th/19th Prince of Wales Light Horse and the 8th/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles. The PoWLH was to be an armoured unit and was equipped with obsolete Grant tanks. Following the introduction of National Service in 1952, the conscripts had to complete their two years service as part time soldiers with the CMF this put further strain on the PoWLH. The Grants were replaced by Centurions.

In 1964, the Army re-organised into Pentropic Divisions and one Squadron was to be a regular Squadron based at Puckapanyal. Before the squadron could be fully integrated within the Regiment, it was sent Vietnam equipped with Armoured Personnel Carriers. Towards the end of its tour, it was renamed the 3rd Cavalry Regiment. Other officers served in Vietnam as members of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV). The experience of one is contained within one of the Appendices.

The role of the PoWLH changed when the Centurions were replaced — the PoWLH reverting, in large part, to a role it possessed when it was a mounted unit, i.e., that of reconnaissance and fluid movement.

The book is well illustrated, each photograph is captioned and, in most instances, the photographs are placed adjacent to the text to which they refer. There is a bibliography and an index. The value of the book lies in its reference value.

Hooves, Wheels and Tracks was written and printed without sponsorship. This factor, plus the limited production run, means that it does appear to be expensive at $80. It deterred the reviewer from purchasing it. The reviewed copy was obtained from the ACT Public Library Service, Canberra, and was loaned nine times prior to this review being written. No public library in Australia should be without it, especially since 31 October has been designated Beersheba Day.

There is an omission in the book — no mention of the Ballan Clause. The PoWLH is the only unit in the Australian Army that can claim to a special provision in an Act of Parliament. It goes back to 1863, the Kyneton Mounted Corps and the construction of the railway line between Bacchus Marsh and Ballarat. During the construction of the Pentland Bank near Ballan, the Irish labourers went on strike, the local authorities sought the assistance of the Kyneton Mounted Corps, who restored order probably in a manner which the 4th Light Horse repeated at Beersheba. However, political reprecussions followed. The next year, 1864, the Volunteer Force Act was introduced to administer and control the Volunteer units in Victoria. Section 15 provided for the calling out of Volunteers in an emergency or a general alarm, restricted to an external threat to Victoria. This Act remained in force until 1903, when it was superseded by the *Defence Act 1903* (Cth) where the proviso to section 51, which refers to the Defence Forces being called out by the Governor-General or a State Governor, states that the Citizen Forces (now the Australian Army Reserve) shall not be used in connection with an industrial dispute. — Stan Pyne

The Glass Cannon and *The Devil's Garden*, by Peter Pinney, University of Queensland Press

The Glass Cannon and *The Devil's Garden* are the second and third books of Peter Pinney's trilogy based on his experiences in the 8th Independent Squadron in Bougainville in 1944-45. The first book , *The*

Barbarians was published in 1988, *The Glass Cannon* in 1990 and *The Devil's Garden* in 1992. The books reviewed are paperbacks.

Peter Pinney enlisted in the 2nd AIF in 1941 and served in an artillery regiment in the Middle East, prior to service in the South West Pacific. Initially in Papua-New Guinea and then joined the 8th Independent Squadron for service in Bougainville, he kept a dairy which is one of the main reference sources he uses. Extensive use is also made of the Squadron's War Diary. The books are not a war history in the conventional sense, neither are they fiction, but like Tom Hungerford's books, do lividly recall the 8th's Independent Squadron's involvement in Bougainville, at the section and platoon level. within a fictional and autobiographical framework.

From the global perspective of World War Two and with respect to the Pacific Campaign, in 1944 and 1945. By that time, Bougainville, which had been prominent in 1942 and 1943, had become a backwater. It was so regarded by General Macarthur, to the Australians in Bougainville in 1944 and 45, the task of containing and eliminating the Japanese threat on the island given them by General Blamey was far from the balmy one expects in a backwater. Jungle warfare, involving ambushes, skirmishes rather than the battle involving larger numbers were the order of the day.

The books, described the physical conditions which the soldiers endured. The difficulty of cross country movement in harsh terrain, that was jungle covered is well portrayed and includes the adverse impact that it had when the wounded had to be evacuated. The early medical treatment of wounds could not take place and the time lapse before it was possible and the consequences thereof are well written. This includes the anguish felt when one loses one's comrades in attempting to cross a strong river current in jungle terrain. The loss of jungle cover as a result of military activity is also well told. Not only the fear of mental and physical exposure, but also the personal pain from dried thorns which festered the body when they entered the feet or the prone figure.

The characters in the book include some of the actual members of the unit and others are composite, that is they portray identifiable characteristics wrapped with others so an individual is not adversely identified. The books do reveal the difficulties under which Australian troops lived and fought in Bougainville. In recent years there has been a stronger identification of the Aboriginal and part Aboriginal membership of the 2nd AIF and Pinney includes such a soldier in the unit. However, this may be a conventional inclusion by Pinney. If there was such a member is it necessary to outline the individual frailties so strongly and in what could be said in a disdainful way? The books also have another 1990s characteristic, the language, soldiers do use is at times crude and obscene, in the oral context it passes often unnoticed with minimal impact unless it becomes excessive in use. However, in print it is more stark and striking with the result that it can distract the reader and the amount on occasions results in it being overdone. The book would have been better with less of it.

The books provide a good insight into the difficulties of the campaign in which Australian troops participated. — Stan Pyne

Ed: Sadly, Peter Pinney died in October 1992.

Erratum: In the previous edition of *Sabretache*, in the review of Roger Freeman's *Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred*, the price was incorrectly stated as $100. Dr Freeman advises that it can be obtained from him at $69.50 plus $6 postage and packaging. (Ed: $100 is the price at the Australian War Memorial bookshop!)

David St Alban Dexter, 1917-1992

David Dexter was born in England on a cold 8 January 1917 at a time when Australian infantry were expecting relief after a depressing 1916-17 winter on the Somme. Charles Bean had earlier said of these Australians that with their lives they had purchased a tradition beyond all human power to appraise. Years later Dexter himself would recall these words as he drafted *The New Guinea Offensives*, which would record the operations of the Australian Army in New Guinea from April 1943 until mid-1944. Like Bean, Dexter had a vision, an uncompromising vision to tell the story of the front-line. For Dexter, it was to record a story of individuals, and small sub-units on patrol, in ambush, in attack or defence. He argued that the war in New Guinea was not a war of massed battalions but of the forward scout, the section, the platoon and the company. Inspired by Bean and guided by his *guru* Gavin Long, Dexter left an account of war along gloomy jungle tracks and rain-drenched razor-backs that yielded a magnum opus.

He was born in Saint Albans the son of an Australian clergyman, who, at the time of his birth, was serving in the AIF in France. His earliest memories were of a swampy soldier settler block at Kilsyth in Victoria that his father took up when he left the ministry. When his father returned to the ministry as Vicar of Lara and Little River he, like his brothers, attended Geelong Grammar where his father was an occasional teacher. It was an ambivalent experience as he received an excellent education, which stressed the social responsibility of privilege and which his parents could not otherwise have afforded, but he was a poor boy amongst great affluence. From this stemmed his distrust of any distinction based upon class or material possessions, and his commitment to work for the betterment of society.

In 1940 he graduated from Melbourne University with honours in history, one of his great passions. During his university years he was also a teacher at Grimwade House. But the outbreak of war the year before had doomed a promising teaching career. In 1940 Dexter enlisted in the infantry in the A.I.F. but soon transferred to the Independent Companies then being formed. After training at the guerilla warfare school on Wilson's Promontory he was commissioned in the 2/2nd Independent Company (later 2/2nd Commando Squadron) with which he served in 1942 on Timor for 10 months of guerilla fighting, and in the Ramu Valley operations of 1943-44. He was second-in-command of the 2/2nd Commando Squadron on New Britain in 1945 and later commanded the 2/4th Commando Squadron on Tarakan, with the rank of major. He was severely wounded in action and mentioned in dispatches.

Dexter's experiences with 2/2 Commando Squadron in Timor remained with him the most. There he, with just 300 others, and the help of the Timorese people, held out against 30,000 Japanese troops for over ten months during 1942. He survived, and the following year a still young 26 year old captain continued the war in New Guinea. In September he led a fighting patrol of 2/2 Commando against a strong Japanese position at Kesawai. His children speak about this as a "classic" ambush and it was one obviously spoken about by Dexter himself years after the war.

Ordered to "take advantage of all favourable chances to harass [the enemy]", Dexter crossed the Ramu River in darkness on 28 September 1943 with a heavily armed 24 man patrol and advanced through kunai and swamp to within two miles of known Japanese positions. Dexter was intent on setting an ambush but despaired in not knowing the precise location of the Japanese or their movements. In a rather novel solution he despatched a three-man patrol toward the enemy in the hope that the patrol would attract some interest. It did and the patrol withdrew hastily toward Dexter's position now organised in ambush. The Japanese followed in force and in the subsequent successful Australian ambush Dexter was wounded but not before the Japanese suffered heavy casualties. Then, whatever the Japanese expected Dexter to do, he did the

opposite. Boldly, and in broad daylight, Dexter withdrew his small force back across the Ramu River while his enemy scoured the foothills of the Finisterres. Dexter was to recall and record these events many years later in his military history, *The New Guinea Offensives.*

His membership of the "green-clad fighting machine" as he aptly described it, came to an end with the defeat of the Japanese in 1945. The following year he joined Australia's foreign service and from 1947 attended the United Nations General Assembly. Back in Canberra he worked on the development of the Colombo Plan. He also served in both Colombo and New Delhi. In 1960 he became Secretary of the Australian Universities Commission, and in 1967 Registrar at the Australian National University.

His passion for history, and his experiences during the war, were to result in him being asked to write one of the official war histories. The volume he would write would relate how the Australian Army, supported by Allied naval and air forces, and with the help of some American regiments, drove the Japanese out of most of the mainland of Australian New Guinea in 1943 and early 1944. It would also describe the concurrent operations of the American Army and amphibious forces in the Pacific.

Commenced sometime in 1948, his military history is a tour de force. Like Bean's towering masterpiece of 1914-1918 Dexter's history is similarly enriched with the exploits of individuals and small units. While Bean records the deeds of his ghosts of tomorrow, the fettlers, drovers, miners and butter-makers turned soldier, Dexter tells the story of his soldiers, the engine drivers, surveyors, bricklayers and insurance clerks as they fought, not on the flattened plains of Pozieres but in the confines of wet and foetid jungle. He had himself tramped and fought over much of the country he described, and borne on stretcher, wounded.

That his history was ever published is a tribute to his tenacity and skill, and, importantly, the encouragement of his wife Freda and his devoted children. For it took more than a decade to put together. He commenced writing in Canberra but this was interrupted by a diplomatic posting to Ceylon in 1952. Undeterred, the writing continued in Colombo and on a tea estate in the high country; the finishing touches were put to it during his next posting to India. There in New Delhi and at Himalayan hill stations his Private Smiths and Corporal Halls relived their wartime dangers with their patrols cut off, without support, fighting last ditch battles against a tenacious foe, one which Dexter himself respected as a fighter. Finally, in 1959, the task was complete. The volume was published in 1961 to sit alongside the other six volumes in Series 1 (Army).

It is as a military historian, and his immense contribution to Australian history, that we will wish to remember David. As a member of the Military Historical Society of Australia we will miss him greatly.
— Barry Clissold

Letters

Egypt (1882-9) medals

Although I have been a keen collector of Egypt (1882-9) medals for many years, I have only recently acquired a copy of your Society's book, *But Little Glory*, with its list of names of the NSW Contingent. As I have five Egypt medals of these men, I wonder if you would be interested in the following details to add to your files? These men are:

Lt R H Owen, NSW Infantry (are his WWI medals known to exist?)
254 Sergt Rose, NSW Infantry (your list gives rank as "Pe", but both medal and medal roll say "Sergt")
503 Pte A C Olley, NSW Infantry, together with his Mayor of Sydney's Medal. the medal roll, the medal, and the Mayor's Medal all say "Olley" and not as spelt on your list
48 Pte W Knott, NSW Infantry, together with his Mayor of Sydney's Medal
28 Pte W Smart, NSW Amb Corps, together with his Khedive's Star, the latter finely engraved on the five points of the reverse — "28 Pte / W Smart / NSW / Amb / Corps".

About 15 -20 years ago, to get Pte Olley's Sydney Medal from a dealer, I had to give him, in exchange, the Sydney Medal of Lt Airey, which is presumably still in someone's collection. Although the dealer obviously had the better of teh bargain, in commercial terms, I was delighted to reunite Olley's two medals.

I hope that these notes may be of some use to your archives.

J V Webb
22 Highbury Terrace
London, N5 1 UP
Phone 071 226 8962

25th Battalion History

The 25th Battalion served in Gallipoli, France and Belgium from 1915 until its disbandment in1918. It had the unfortunate distinction of having more casualties (killed and wounded — some 3,600 men) than anyother AIF unit. It was the first battalion to arrive in France, and one of the first to enter the front line. Its last battle was Beaurevoir, on 3 October 1918 — one of the last battles the [1st] AIF fought. It was then one of the battalions disbanded in the rationalisation of the AIF (it was also one of the battalions that "mutinied" when ordered to disband the first time).

And yet, its history has never been written. I am attempting to rectify that, and to that end I would appreciate it if any of the Society members that may have access to any letter, disries or photographs relating to the 25th Battalion, 1915-18, would let me know. I will be quite happy to pay any costs involved in copying.

Bob Doneley
194 West Street
Toowoomba Qld 4350

Lost medal group sought by family of deceased recipient.

39-45 Star, Africa Star with 8th Army clasp, Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, Australia Service Medal to QX18396, A E Copeland.

Please send reply to PO Box 25, Ferny Hills Queensland, 4055

"They Proved to All the Earth"

To those members who owbn a copy of this valuable source book which lists those 262 Victorians who died on service during the 2nd Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902, you may be interested to learn that, after some ten years, I have finally compiled an Addenda and Corrigenda that includes several new names and locations of memorials.

Should any mamber wish to avail themselves of this useful addition to the work, would they please send me stamps to the value of $2.00 plus a stamped addressed business sized envelope to:

Joihn Price
Villa 7, 16 Barrett Street
Cheltenham, Victoria 3192.

There are still a few copies of the book left which will include the amendments.

The Whitley Boys
4 Group operations 1939-1940

by Larry Donnelly, DFM, RAF (Retd.)

Includes details of 4 Group's operations from Sept. 1939 to Sept. 1940, daily summarires of operations, tables of aircraft and crew losses, 16 pages of photographs.

Hyland's Bookshop, Flinders Way Arcade,
238 Flinders Lane, Melbourne
ph. (03) 654 6883

"We are here, too"

compiled and edited by Margaret Young

Collection of letters and diary entries of Sister Olive Haynes, AANS, serving during the First World War.

$35.00 plus $5.00 p&p
Australian Down Syndrome Assoc.
91 Hutt Street, Adelaide, SA 5000
ph (08) 232 0688, fax (08) 223 7368

Application for Membership

I/*We.....of.....
(Name/Rank, etc.) (Address)

.....

hereby apply for membership of the MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA and wish to be admitted as a *Corresponding Member/*Subscriber to *Sabretache*/*Branch Member of the

.....Branch

* strike out non-applicable alternative

My main interests are.....

I/*We enclose my/*our remittance of A$26.00 being annual subscription, due 1 July each year.

Send to: The Federal Secretary, PO Box 30, Garran, ACT 2605, Australia