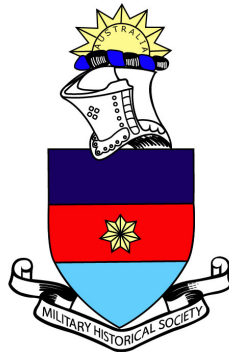


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*Sabretache*



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# **SABRETACHE**

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The Journal and Proceedings of  
**The Military Historical  
Society of Australia**

Vol XXXVI

April/June 1995

Number 2



**APRIL—JUNE 1995**  
**VOLUME XXXVI — NUMBER 2**

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**CONTENTS**

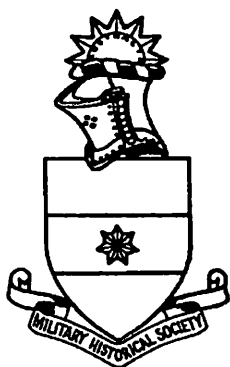
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3. Darwin 1942: a reassessment of the first raid casualties  
*Captain Paul Rosenzweig*
16. An Australian and the "Empire of the Sun"  
*Brad Manera*
22. The 13th Light Horse on the Western Front, 1917  
*Douglas Hunter*
41. Battle Honour for Maryang San
42. Charles Upham, VC and Bar  
*Anthony Staunton*
44. Living Victoria Cross recipients  
*Anthony Staunton*
45. Book Review
46. Correction
46. Letters
47. Notices

---

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  
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# SABRETACHE

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

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The Federal Council of Australia is located in Canberra. The Society has branches in Brisbane, Canberra, Albury-Wodonga, Melbourne, Geelong, Adelaide and Perth. Details of meetings are available from Branch Secretaries whose names appear below.

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### Members' notices

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## Darwin 1942: a reassessment of the first raid casualties

Captain Paul Rosenzweig

Thursday, 19 February 1942, is a day which should live in infamy for Australians, as much as 7 December 1941 does for Americans. The two raids on Darwin that morning constituted the first occasion on which the continent of Australia was genuinely threatened by an armed enemy and, during the course of 1942 and 1943, the Japanese ultimately accounted for some 700 casualties or more in nearly 100 raids; 64 of the raids on and around the town of Darwin. The events of that day, particularly the news blackouts, the cowardice, the looting, and the gallantry of the Militia and the waterside workers, have already been analysed in some detail<sup>1</sup>. Casualty figures, however, are not so well documented.

In the report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry concerning this first Japanese attack on Darwin, Mr Justice Lowe stated two figures which he believed to represent the number of known deaths at that time; these adding to a total of 243. While he undoubtedly reported to the best of his ability based upon the best available statistics, in hindsight it is now apparent that there were many deaths that were double-counted or miscounted, and many that were never counted at all, while there were also quite a number of people who subsequently died of wounds and whose deaths can legitimately be attributed to enemy action on that day. And additional to the myriad difficulties in producing an accurate death toll was the official directive to keep the figure as low as possible and thereby avoid a public panic, particularly "down south"<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, it is now a matter of legend that the earliest interstate reports claimed that only 15 lay dead in Darwin.

Although there were some attempts to list civilian casualties, a comprehensive roll of all people who were killed that day, or died afterwards of wounds, had never been compiled until a accurate analysis was published by the Historical Society of the Northern Territory<sup>3</sup>. This indicated that Justice Lowe's figure was, in fact, close to the truth but that its derivation was quite incorrect. This article is a condensed version of that paper, dealing particularly with the Armed Forces and Merchant Service casualties from these first raids on Australian soil.

### Stand To

On the morning of 19 February 1942, the Armed Services personnel in Darwin went about their usual "stand to" routine. One of the anti-aircraft gunners, Arthur Kennedy, recalled:

"Just before 10 am that day I was Sergeant in charge of the parade handing out work details for the day when we heard planes flying over rather high; no-one really took a lot of notice as we had been expecting a large number of American planes as reinforcements. The next thing, simultaneously the alarm sounded and we heard the

<sup>1</sup> Abbott, C L A (1950) *Australia's Frontier Province*. Angus & Robertson; Hall, T (1980) *Darwin 1942, Australia's Darkest Hour*. Methuen; Lockwood, D (1984) *Australia's Pearl Harbour*. New Edition. Rigby; Powell, A (1988) *The Shadow's Edge*. Melbourne University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Eddie Quong OAM, personal communication, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Rosenzweig, P A, Darwin (1994) 50 years on: a reassessment of the first raid casualties. *Journal of Northern Territory History*, 5: 1-19.

sound of explosions from the township. The guns were quickly manned and our gun site picked as targets planes attacking shipping in the harbour, the heavy bombers were out of range. Things were so confused and so many guns were firing it was difficult to tell whether one scored a hit or not. Several attempts were made to strafe our site but the firing of 'shrapnel' shells at these planes soon discouraged them."<sup>4</sup>

At Government House, Mrs Hilda Abbott, wife of the Administrator the Honourable Aubrey Abbott, later wrote:

"Then a new sound came out of Hell's fury. 'I think they've got a ship', the Administrator said ... We saw the American transport, Mauna Loa, settle and go down. We saw a tanker go, we saw a destroyer go, and we heard the other transport sink. We heard thud, and an uncanny roar—thud and roar—and guns and echoes. No one said a word."<sup>5</sup>

Sub-Lieutenant Zelman Cowen RANVR had been a duty officer at Naval Headquarters in Darwin on the night of 7-8 December 1941, and today still recalls the flurry of signals traffic that accompanied that raid on Pearl Harbour, and the feeling in Darwin when the advancing Japanese forces came within reach of Darwin.<sup>6</sup> As guest speaker on 19 February during the Northern Territory's War Service Commemoration Year 1992, the former Australian Governor-General recalled his impressions following the attack on Darwin:

"Those of us who were here on that day have our special memories. I remember early morning talk in Naval headquarters about unidentified aircraft; suddenly the warning sounded and we streamed out to the trenches ... I remember listening that night to the talk of more senior officers about the imminent prospect of attack, which was assumed as a certainty."<sup>7</sup>

## Casualties

The Japanese had flown onto a choice target: there were 47 ships in Darwin harbour, of which eight were sunk and a further 15 damaged, while in the follow-up raid soon after they specifically targeted the RAAF base. The Royal Commission of Inquiry into these first raids was conducted by the Honourable Mr Justice Charles John Lowe of the Supreme Court of Victoria,<sup>8</sup> of whom it has often been said that "no-one could be as wise as Charlie Lowe looked".<sup>9</sup> Justice Lowe prefaced his remarks with the following caveat: "It is impossible to speak with certainty of the number of people who lost their lives, but I am satisfied that the number is about 250, and I doubt whether any further investigation will result in ascertaining a more precise figure".<sup>10</sup> A total of 228 deaths was recorded for Darwin and the harbour, plus a further 15 killed near Bathurst Island, giving a reported total of 243—commonly and mostly

<sup>4</sup> Mr Arthur Kennedy, personal communication, 4 December 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs Hilda Abbott, Personal Diary, p 47.

<sup>6</sup> The Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowen AK GCMG GCVO QC DCL, personal communications, 15 June and 2 July 1993.

<sup>7</sup> The Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowen, address for the commemoration service at the Darwin Cenotaph, 19 February 1992.

<sup>8</sup> Lowe, Hon Mr Justice C J (1942) *Commission of Inquiry under the National Security (Inquiries) Regulations. In the matter of an inquiry concerning the circumstances connected with the attack made by enemy aircraft at Darwin on 19th February 1942. First Report (27 March 1942a) and Further and Final Report (9 April 1942b).*

<sup>9</sup> The Rt Hon Sir Zelman Cowen, personal communication, 15 June 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Lowe (1942a) p 9.

blindly quoted as the number of deaths, or worse, quoted as “243 deaths in Darwin”, in ignorance of Justice Lowe’s qualifying comments.

Witness to the raids from on board HMAS *Platypus* was Lieutenant Owen Griffiths RAN, who subsequently recorded that, “Bodies covered in oil, were seen floating in the harbour during the following week and informal burials took place at various parts of the harbour foreshores”.<sup>11</sup> One of the difficulties faced by the recovery teams was recorded during the Northern Territory’s Memorial Year by another witness to the events of that day, police constable Ron Brown: “The worst part of all the raids was trying to identify the mutilated bodies from the harbour. Some of them had been hideously fractured by the bomb blasts, quite beyond recognition ... we removed one body, with its head completely severed at the neck, both arms and legs were missing and bullet holes were sprayed across what remained of the torso”.<sup>12</sup> Further, Brown also chronicled the impossibility of basing the death toll on a physical body count, as commonly occurs with earthquakes and other natural disasters: “More bodies washed ashore on the other side of the harbour, amongst the roots of the mangroves, quite unrecoverable and eaten by crocodiles as they decomposed”.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, Justice Lowe continued in his Royal Commission report: “There was some suggestion in evidence of bodies still remaining in the mangrove swamps which border the harbour, which bodies it had not been possible to recover”.<sup>14</sup>

And there-in lies one of the major sources of error which affected the accuracy of the casualty roll. The casualty figures submitted were not based so much on a “body-count” as a tally of those reported missing. Many of the bodies buried in temporary graves on the beaches were marked by scraps of timber bearing inscriptions such as “Unknown male about 6’3” 14 stone white race, 23/2/42” or “An American Sailor”. One report made to Darwin’s Permanent Air Raid Precautions Officer, stated: “Stock Inspector Jones who is camping at the Quarantine Station informed Mr Harrison that many more bodies are apparently in the swamp but owing to the number of crocodiles now in the swamp it is considered recovery of the bodies will unnecessarily endanger human life”.<sup>15</sup>

Other sources of error were due to the fact that Lowe mistakenly only counted six RAAF personnel when there was actually a seventh body, unidentified for some time, and figures from the USS *William B Preston* were not provided because she departed Darwin after the raid. Further complicating the issue was a strongly Eurocentric attitude which gave little consideration or value to the lives of Chinese, Aborigines or itinerants. Thus, casualty lists provided for such ships as the *Neptuna* only listed “European” casualties by name, ignoring the many workers of Asian or Aboriginal descent. Confusing matters even more, a plaque in Darwin to honour the civilians killed on that day is significantly incomplete and inaccurate. In all published sources to date, the errors and omissions have been perpetuated by failing to list all casualties, thereby avoiding the necessity to justify the figure of 243.

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<sup>11</sup> Griffiths, O (undated) *Darwin drama*. Bloxham & Chambers, p 87.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, R & P Studdy-Clift (1992) *Darwin dilemmas*. Hesperian Press, p 103.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p 104.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p 104.

<sup>15</sup> Mr C T See-Kee, report dated 10 March 1942 (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).



### In town

Lowe quoted a total of 14 civilians killed in town, whereas there were in fact 18 deaths. Among them was Merchant Seaman Leslie John Perkins who, like so many others, was hastily buried at Kahlin Beach but was then exhumed in June and reburied at Berrimah. James Massin (sic) died of his wounds on board the Hospital Ship *Manunda* on the 21st, and was buried at sea; he is listed as Able Seaman J Masson, Australian Merchant Navy on the memorial to those with no known grave located in the grounds of the Adelaide River War Cemetery. Masson and Perkins could, in fact, constitute a further error as they may have been counted in one of the ship totals where names were never supplied (such as SS *Zealandia*, which suffered three deaths but had only one name recorded).

### On the wharf

Lowe quoted a figure of 39 civilians killed on the wharf. The basis of this figure was a Merchant Service Roll of casualties made available to Justice Lowe at the time of the Commission<sup>16</sup>, which listed the following deaths:

<i>British Motorist</i>	2
<i>Meigs</i>	1
<i>Port Mar</i>	1
<i>Florence D</i>	3
<i>Don Isidro</i>	11
<i>Zealandia</i>	1
Total	19

If these 19 are added to the 17 (Commonwealth Railways) and 3 (Burns Philp) civilians, Lowe's total of 39 is derived. An obvious discrepancy is that Lowe did not count two railway employees who died of their wounds on the *Manunda*, and neither did he count the other 11 Burns Philp employees on *Neptuna*, or indeed the merchant seamen aboard *Manunda*, *Mauna Loa* or the two others from *Zealandia*. And it may be a minor point, but it is spurious to call these civilians killed on the wharf when two of the vessels (*Florence D* and *Don Isidro*) were in actual fact well away from Darwin. Lowe's figure of 39 is misleading because all of those killed while physically on board a ship are listed separately with that ship's casualty roll—that is, they were double-counted by Lowe as, firstly, civilian losses on the wharf, and secondly, as shipping losses. Subsequent authors have perpetuated this misleading figure of 39 or made their own interpretation of it.<sup>17</sup>

### On ships sunk

An early telegram dated 2 March 1942 reported, "Mercantile Marine European casualties 11 all *Neptuna* stop".<sup>18</sup> The eleven men listed were all employees of Burns, Philp & Co and were apparently the only ones deemed to be worthy of mention—the 34 Chinese killed were not

<sup>16</sup> "Merchant Service Casualties resulting from enemy action at Darwin, 19th February, 1942", author unknown (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).

<sup>17</sup> Abbott (1950) p 84; Lockwood (1984) p 66.

<sup>18</sup> Telegram dated 2 March 1942 (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).

reported by name.<sup>19</sup> In establishing Bicentennial Park in Darwin, individual plaques were placed at the base of the trees circling the park to honour most, but unfortunately not all, of the bombing fatalities. Interestingly, each of the European crew members from the *Neptuna* (but not the Chinese) has two plaques, under separate trees, because they were double-listed: once as Burns Philp & Co employees, and again as crew of the *Neptuna*.

The SS *Zealandia* was reported by Lowe as having three deaths, even though the Merchant Service Roll listed it with just one—Fireman Davern who died from wounds on 19 March 1942. Davern's grave at Adelaide River War Cemetery is the only one there from the *Zealandia*. Price lists the *Zealandia* as being sunk with only two deaths,<sup>20</sup> apparently not counting Davern who died a month later. There were two deaths from the SS *British Motorist* and this is not in dispute, and neither are the five from SS *Mauna Loa* although the names are nowhere recorded. Both Captain Marshall Collins USN, the US Naval Liaison Officer, and the Merchant Service Roll listed just the one death from USAT *Meigs* (in hospital, of wounds), although Lowe mistakenly quoted two deaths.

By far the most significant loss of life occurred on the USS *Peary*: an estimate of 80 was supplied to Lowe but the "official" figure is now recorded as 91 deaths. The *Peary* was escort for a convoy carrying Australian and American soldiers to Timor, which had departed on 15 February but had been forced back by Japanese bombers and flying boats, arriving back in Darwin on the 18th. The *Peary* and *Houston* refuelled and set off into the Java Sea but were again forced, by a Japanese submarine, back into Darwin Harbour. As the strike force flew over Darwin, Lieutenant-Commander John Bermingham USN attempted to weigh anchor and head for the open sea. The *Peary* was hit where she was moored just south of the wharfs and, although the crew fought valiantly until the ship was rocked by a massive explosion, Lieutenant-Commander Bermingham went down with his ship. Witness to the *Peary*'s final moments, Sir Zelman Cowen recalled: "I have a vivid memory of the old 'star-crossed' American destroyer *Peary*, ablaze from stem to stern, going down with a gun still firing, and with appalling loss of life".<sup>21</sup> From a total of approximately 130 crew, the US Naval Liaison Officer Captain Marshall Collins USN reported an estimated 40 accounted for, four in hospital and ten on board the hospital ship *Manunda*;<sup>22</sup> he estimated 80 dead for the *Peary*, and this was the figure used by Justice Lowe in his Royal Commission. The following year, Collins reported to the Administrator of the Northern Territory: "The estimate for the USS PEARY is the best I could make at the time".<sup>23</sup>

Ironically, the *Peary* and some other ships sunk in Darwin Harbour that day were salvaged by a Japanese firm in 1959. A 4-inch gun was brought up at that time and installed at a popular tourist site at Doctors Gully. In 1989, on the low wall near the Darwin Cenotaph in Bicentennial Park, a plaque was installed by Dallas Widick USN and John Patterson USNR in honour of their ship-mates who lost their lives. On 8 November 1991, the 4-inch gun was removed from Doctors Gully by an Army crane and taken to the Darwin Naval Base for sandblasting and

<sup>19</sup> Typical of the Eurocentric attitude and apathy or ignorance displayed towards the Chinese crews, Man Loy was subsequently buried at Adelaide River War Cemetery, but a typed "M" was apparently mis-read as "IV", so his headstone today mistakenly marks the grave of "Ivan Loy".

<sup>20</sup> Price, J E (1986) *The Merchant Navy Memorial*, Melbourne. *Sabretache*, Vol 27 No.4: pp 15-20; material provided by Captain L S Blease AM MBE, President of the Merchant Navy War Service League.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Captain M Collins USN, summary dated 9 March 1942 (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).

<sup>23</sup> Captain M Collins USN, letter to His Honour the Administrator dated 8 January 1943 (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).

restoration. After being refurbished, the gun was installed in Bicentennial Park overlooking the harbour, with a plaque at its base naming (and thereby confirming) the 91 who died, as a permanent and public memorial to the USS *Peary* DD226.

### On ships damaged

That the 2/1st Australian Hospital Ship *Manunda* lost a total of 12 is not disputed, but this figure must be considered carefully as it comprises nine crew-members and three Army personnel: one Nursing Corps Sister, one Medical Corps Captain (dentist) and one Corporal (orderly).

Three deaths on HMAS *Swan* have usually been reported, although both Lowe and Abbott referred to four.<sup>24</sup> The three men were physically aboard the *Swan* when she was damaged while the fourth, Norman Richard Moore, was on the wharf itself. Moore was actually listed on three different Naval casualty rolls—as a steward from HMAS *Swan* killed on the wharf, as a cook at the RAN shore establishment HMAS *Melville*, and as a cook for the boom vessel HMAS *Kangaroo*.<sup>25</sup> He also has two separate plaques under two different trees in Darwin's Bicentennial Park. This apparent discrepancy is not actually in dispute because, where the Royal Commissioner and Administrator both refer to four deaths for *Swan*, they list none for *Melville* or *Kangaroo*, while those authors who refer to three for *Swan* also list one for *Kangaroo*.

There were two deaths from HMAS *Kara Kara*, although for some reason Lowe cited five. And similarly, these two were also listed as belonging to HMAS *Melville* and accordingly, have been given two plaques in Bicentennial Park. Lowe recorded that HMAS *Gunbar* lost just one seaman, as also did SS *Port Mar*, which was verified by Captain Collins and the Merchant Service Roll.

Lowe did not quote a figure from USS *William B Preston* because he was not supplied with one by the US Navy. Reporting from Adelaide the following year, the US Naval Liaison Officer Captain Marshall Collins USN reported to the Administrator, "I was unable to determine the number of casualties that occurred in the USS WM B PRESTON as she departed harbour on that day" (19 February 1942).<sup>26</sup> Subsequent authors have consistently referred to four deaths, although again, the names were nowhere recorded.<sup>27</sup> It was not until 1993 that a firm number of ten deaths was obtained, from Commander Herbert Kriloff USN (retd), who returned to Darwin with Commander Guy Noble USN (retd) in October to install and unveil a plaque commemorating the wartime service of USS *William B Preston*.<sup>28</sup>

### The Armed Forces

Lowe quoted six RAAF personnel killed, including Wing Commander Archie Tindal. The Administrator however, had reported by telegram dated 4 March 1942 to the Department of the Interior, "Bodies washed ashore and unidentifiable and buried by police 60 stop RAAF killed 7 stop".<sup>29</sup> A RAAF minute written only a few days after the raids, upon which the Administrator's telegram was based, listed six casualties by name (the figure of six quoted by

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<sup>24</sup> Lowe (1942a) p 9; Abbott (1950) p 83.

<sup>25</sup> CRS F1 1942/364 AANT.

<sup>26</sup> Captain M Collins USN, letter to the Administrator dated 8 January 1943, *Op cit*.

<sup>27</sup> Hall (1980) p 39; Lockwood (1984) p 45; Powell (1988) p 81.

<sup>28</sup> *Northern Territory News*, 6 October 1993.

<sup>29</sup> His Honour the Administrator, telegram to Department of the Interior, dated 4 March 1942 (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).

Lowe) together with “one body found in bush which cannot be identified”.<sup>30</sup> This seventh body was subsequently identified as Leading Aircraftman Schultz. Lowe and others quote two Army deaths, although Vazenry (1984) quoted nine.<sup>31</sup> A document listing reburials in Berrimah War Cemetery<sup>32</sup> does list nine Army personnel exhumed and subsequently reburied in June and July 1942, and perhaps this was the source of Vazenry’s figure, but the dates of death of these nine range from 19 February to 31 May 1942! Further complicating the matter is the fact that this list only names two as having died on the 19th (Lowe’s two Army deaths): Corporal Roy Gardiner was certainly a militiaman from Victoria, with regimental number V15812, but the second name listed was S3534 Cook N R Moore, his regimental number suggesting at first glance that he was a militiaman from South Australia. Moore was in fact Navy, as mentioned above, and has the distinction therefore of having his name recorded on four separate casualty lists. Corporal Gardiner has a plaque beneath a tree in Bicentennial Park, but so too do two others from the AIF with 19 February 1942 recorded as the date of their death: Joseph Hall and Jack Dee. The best figure for AIF casualties is therefore three (as well as the three listed separately with the *Manunda*).

Captain Collins USN reported to the Administrator, “I am unable to furnish you the number of US Army personnel killed or wounded ashore”.<sup>33</sup> From various reports, three names have been gleaned, all belonging to the 148th Field Artillery Regiment. In addition, there were four deaths from the 33rd Pursuit Squadron of the US Army Air Force—Lieutenant Jack Peres of B Flight was the first member of the US Armed Forces to lose his life in the defence of Australian soil. This total of seven correlates with Lowe and subsequent authors.



USS *Peary*'s 4-inch gun in Bicentennial Park overlooking the harbour, salvaged from Darwin Harbour by the Japanese in 1959.

<sup>30</sup> RAAF minute dated 25 February 1942 (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).

<sup>31</sup> Vazenry, G (1984) Attacks on the Australian mainland—World War II. *Sabretache*, Vol 25 No.3: 21-29, p 24.

<sup>32</sup> “Reburials in Berrimah War Cemetery” (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT).

## Off Bathurst Island

Justice Lowe recorded 15 deaths in additional Japanese air attacks off Bathurst Island on 19 February, based on figures provided by the US Naval Liaison Officer: USS *Florence D* was sunk with 3 Filipinos killed, SS *Don Isidro* was beached (11 killed), and the Catalina flying boat PBY 2306 was downed (one killed). The Catalina was commanded by Lieutenant T H Moorer USN and had seven others aboard; after being downed, the crew were rescued without loss by the *Florence D*, but when the *Florence D* itself was attacked soon after, J C Schuler was killed. With regard to the *Don Isidro*, Captain Collins listed "Dead: 11" and then "US Army dead: 1",<sup>34</sup> while he later reported to the Administrator, "It will be noted that one US Army killed is listed from the SS DON ISIDRO".<sup>35</sup> It would appear that Lowe quoted the figure of 11, mistakenly believing that it included the sole Army casualty, where in fact there were 11 Filipinos and one unidentified soldier killed. In addition, a further two Filipino crewmen, among 73 survivors brought to Darwin by HMAS *Warrnambool*, later died of their wounds<sup>36</sup> and were not recorded in the Royal Commission tally.

## From the Manunda

Dead and wounded were ferried to the *Manunda* and, on the morning of 20 February, 19 dead bodies were taken ashore on a motor boat for burial. Another complicating factor in tallying the deaths from 19 February 1942 is that, coincidentally, a total of 19 men died of wounds while on board the *Manunda* and were buried at sea en route to Perth,<sup>37</sup> therefore having no known grave. Early in the trip the ship hove-to daily for burials but, as the journey progressed, the daily burials, supervised by Chaplain Hinsby, took place without slowing;<sup>38</sup> these men were not counted by Lowe.

## Commemoration

In an effort to honour the civilians killed during these first raids on Australian soil, the Darwin City Council erected a large plaque beside the doorway to the council offices but this too has suffered from many of the errors previously mentioned. Just 54 civilians are listed: some, but not all, from the merchant services are named, one man is listed twice, one name is listed but there is no mention of him in any of the official records, and there are listed the names of two men who were indeed killed during a Japanese bombing raid, but on 15 June 1942.<sup>39</sup>

The plaques installed beneath trees in Bicentennial Park also pose a number of difficulties. There are several who have two separate plaques, as mentioned above, while not every known casualty has one. Considerable numbers of the plaques appear to have been removed from the park; several mangled remains were found by the author at the base of their tree buried in grass cuttings, apparently the victims of a council lawnmower. And, intriguingly, in Bicentennial

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<sup>33</sup> Captain M Collins USN, letter to the Administrator dated 8 January 1943, *Op cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Captain M Collins USN, summary dated 9 March 1942, *Op cit.*

<sup>35</sup> Captain M Collins USN, letter to the Administrator dated 8 January 1943, *Op cit.*

<sup>36</sup> Lockwood (1984) p 63.

<sup>37</sup> Hall (1980) p 53 and Lockwood (1984) p 46.

<sup>38</sup> Griffiths (ND), p 72.

<sup>39</sup> Mr E R Harvey for Works Director, telegram to Director-General of Works, Department of the Interior, dated 16 June 1942. CRS F1 1942/364 AANT.

Park there are 20 plaques attributed to USS *Peary* but only seven of these names are listed on the plaque donated by *Peary* survivor Dallas Widick which lists the 91 known deaths.

A further memorial can be found in the Adelaide River War Cemetery—a monument honouring those who died in the north and have no known grave. Listed among the commandos and pilots who went missing on the islands north of Australia, there are also to be found the names of those Service and Merchant Navy casualties from the bombing of Darwin who could not be accorded a burial, among them the two from *British Motorist*, 12 from *Manunda*, and 10 from the *Neptuna*.

The Darwin Memorial Uniting Church in Smith Street, built on the site of the wartime US Army Headquarters which was destroyed by enemy bombing, was the venue for the 50th Anniversary commemoration service on Sunday, 16 February 1992. It bears a marble plaque honouring those who lost their lives in the Darwin region during World War 2. Of some additional significance, within the Church are bronze crosses at the ends of the pews and on the communion rail and pulpit which were cast from metal salvaged from ships in Darwin Harbour in 1959 and donated by the Japanese salvage firm, Fujita. In presenting the crosses, the Japanese Ambassador Mr Narita said, "These are a symbol of the fact that there will never again be war between Australia and Japan".<sup>40</sup>

## A Casualty Roll

When all of the various known errors and omissions are taken into account, an amended casualty roll is produced which totals 252 known deaths (Table 1), summarised as follows:

Armed Forces	130 (20 Aust, 110 US)
Merchant Services	50 (25 Aust, 23 US, 2 UK)
Civilians	72
Total known casualties	252

Armed Forces and Merchant Service casualties are listed by name in Table 2. The relative closeness of the figure of 252 to Justice Lowe's 243 is merely by coincidence rather than good calculation on his behalf. The various errors outlined above saw Lowe over-count a total of 25 deaths, and there were a total of 34 deaths which were not counted, either by accident or inaccuracy, or because the figures were not available at the time.<sup>41</sup> It should again be noted that this figure comprises 234 deaths in and around Darwin and 18 as a result of action off Bathurst Island, and that not all of these deaths actually occurred on 19 February, quite a few dying some days later from wounds incurred on that day. And lest anyone should doubt the difficulty of compiling a casualty roll for the 19th on that and subsequent days, two contemporary commentators should have the final say: Report on Merchant Service casualties (author unknown):

"NOTE: The [5] names prefixed + are reported to have been buried on the beach, but the other [14] bodies were not recovered."<sup>42</sup>

Report by Charles See-Kee:

"COOP or COOK—Apparently US Navy found off Quarantine Station on Sunday, 8th March. Name on card partly obliterated by sea water. Body in last stages of decomposition."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Darwin Memorial Uniting Church notes.

<sup>41</sup> See Rosenzweig (1994) for a full analysis.

<sup>42</sup> "Merchant Service Casualties...", *Op cit.*

### Table 1: Summary of all Deaths by Source

Listing the numbers of people who died on 19 February 1942, or who subsequently died of wounds incurred on that day, according to their origin and location at the time of death.

SOURCE	N <sup>o</sup> .	REMARKS
<b>KILLED IN TOWN</b>		
Government House	1	
Treasury Department	1	Killed at Post Office
Post Office	9	Including 1 DOW (Died of Wounds) on <i>Manunda</i>
Civilians	7	Including 2 Australian Merchant Service (1 DOW on <i>Manunda</i> )
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	
<b>KILLED ON THE WHARF</b>		
Commonwealth Railways	19	Including 2 DOW
Burns, Philp & Co	3	
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	
<b>KILLED ON SHIPS SUNK</b>		
MV <i>Neptuna</i>	45	11 Australian Merchant Service
SS <i>Zealandia</i>	3	Australian Merchant Service
USS <i>Peary</i>	91	US Navy
USAT <i>Meigs</i>	1	US Merchant Service; died in Hospital
SS <i>Mauna Loa</i>	5	US Merchant Service
SS <i>British Motorist</i>	2	UK Merchant Marine
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>	
<b>KILLED ON SHIPS DAMAGED</b>		
HMAS <i>Gunbar</i>	1	RAN
HMAS <i>Kangaroo</i>	1	RAN; cook, killed on the wharf
HMAS <i>Kara Kara</i>	2	RAN
HMAS <i>Swan</i>	3	RAN; excludes the cook on the wharf
2/1st AHS <i>Manunda</i>	12	3 Army/9 Australian Merchant Service
USS <i>William B Preston</i>	10	US Navy
SS <i>Port Mar</i>	1	US Merchant Service
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	
<b>THE ARMED SERVICES</b>		
Australian Army	3	Not including 3 on <i>Manunda</i>
RAAF	7	
US Army	3	Not including 1 from <i>Don Isidro</i>
US Army Air Force	4	
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	
<b>KILLED OFF BATHURST ISLAND</b>		
USS <i>Florence D</i>	3	US Merchant Service
SS <i>Don Isidro</i>	14	13 US Merchant Service, inc. 2 DOW/1 US Army
Catalina PBY 2306	1	US Navy
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>KNOWN CASUALTIES</b>

<sup>43</sup> Mr C T See-Kee, "Report by Mr E T Harrison", dated 10 March 1942 (CRS F1 1942/364 AANT); Probably refers to Archie Cook from USS *Peary*.

## Table 2: Casualty Roll, by Service

Listing by name the Service personnel who died on 19 February 1942, or who subsequently died of wounds incurred on that day, as a result of enemy action in or near Darwin.

<b>ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY</b>	<b>Total: 7</b>
<b>HMAS <i>Gunbar</i> (1)</b>	
SHEPHERD, H J	Seaman
<b>HMAS <i>Kangaroo</i> (1)</b>	
MOORE, Norman Richard	S3534, Cook
<b>HMAS <i>Kara Kara</i> (2)</b>	
EMMS, F B	Leading Cook (posthumous MID)
MOORE, Frank	Petty Officer
<b>HMAS <i>Swan</i> (3)</b>	
BREEN, Alwyn John	PM2243, Signalman
PURDON, Albert Samuel	H1171, Able Seaman, RANR
SAULT, John	17910, Leading Seaman
<b>AUSTRALIAN ARMY</b>	<b>Total: 6</b>
DEE, Jack	AIF
GARDINER, Roy Stewart	V15812, Corporal, CMF
HALL, Joseph George	AIF
<b>Aboard 2/1st Australian Hospital Ship</b>	
<b><i>Manunda</i> (3 / total of 12)</b>	
BEVIR, Robert J	NX65289, Corporal, AAMC, NKG
DE MAESTRE, Marguerite A	NX70211, Sister, AANS, NKG
HOCKING, Boynes Hedley	VX68883, Captain, AAMC, NKG
<b>ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE</b>	<b>Total: 7</b>
BARTON, Leonard Arthur	18368, Leading Aircraftman
LATHAM, Philip Stonham	32932, Leading Aircraftman
NEAYLON, Francis	20361, AC1
SCHULTZ, Albert Victor Leske	28222, Leading Aircraftman
SIMMONS, Robert Frederick	26040, Corporal
SMITH, Stanley George	45738, AC1
TINDAL, Archibald Robert	76, Wing Commander
<b>AUSTRALIAN MERCHANT SERVICE</b>	<b>Total: 25</b>
<b>In town</b>	
PERKINS, Leslie John	Merchant seaman, NKG (No Known Grave)
MASSIN (MASSON), James	Able Seaman (?), NKG (DOW on <i>Manunda</i> 21 February)
<b>2/1st Australian Hospital Ship <i>Manunda</i></b>	
<b>(9 / total of 12)</b>	
CONNELL, Arthur Alexander	Cook, NKG
HOLMES, John Arthur	Steward, NKG
HUMPHRIES, Harold Edmond	Steward, NKG
KANE, Victor (Michael George Patrick)	Steward, NKG
McKAY, William	Greaser, NKG
SMITH, L Allan Scott	3rd Officer (DOW 21 February), NKG
SMITH, Richard Thomas	Cook, NKG
SPINNEY, William	Steward, NKG
THOM, Robert Alan	Assistant Purser, NKG



**MV Neptuna** (11 / total of 45)

CROSS, C G	7th Engineer Officer, NKG
DAVIDSON, Robert George	Radio Officer, NKG
FORMAN, John Murray	2nd Officer, NKG
FOWLER, Thomas	6th Engineer Officer, NKG
GILLIES, J	Chief Officer/1st Mate, NKG
MICHIE, William	Master, NKG
POLLARD, Eric Henry	Radio Officer, NKG
ROSEN, Jacob Lewis	Chief Steward, NKG
STOBO, Robert Henry	Deck Cadet
VEALL, R P	Radio Officer, NKG
WILSON, Noel Charles	8th Engineer Officer, NKG
<b>SS Zealandia</b> (3)	
DAVERN, Keith	Fireman (DOW 19 March)
<i>...and 2 names not recorded</i>	

**US NAVY****Total: 102****USS Peary** (91)

ANDREWS, John B	HALL, Alonzo D	PIERCY, Ralph D
ARMSTRONG, Robert B	HANSON, Wendel H	POLAND, Eugene R
BAKER, Delmer E	HARRIS, Franklin R	POLHEMUS, Willis F
BANCROFT, William E	HOLERSTOTT, Charles C	QUIGGEN, Jack
BARBEE, Murren A	HOOKS, William M	RADINSKI, George S
BARNETT, George E	HOWELL, Robert Lee	RADINSKI, Victor F
BAUER, Lee Anthony	HUNTER, Robert T	REESE, Alexander
BERMINGHAM, Lieutenant- Commander John M	JOYCE, Philip M	RICH, Benjamin B
BOUDREAUX, Charles C	KALISZ, Edwin J	RODGERS, Curtis
BUCKLEY, Claude L	KAPPS, Joseph M	ROSSITER, Paul J
CARTER, Cyrus D	KENNAUGH, Gilbert T	ROTH, Louis
CHAPMAN, Robert F	KJOLHEDE, Gerhardt M	RUDE, Milton Darwin
COOK, Archie R	KOIVISTO, Lieutenant Martin M	SCHULER, Max N
CROSS, John W	KRIENER, Bob B	SCHULER, Norman F
DAVIS, Arthur William	LABRIE, William Charles	SENYOHL, Eugene R
DAY, Shirley O	LEE, Richard J	SHOFNER, Walter
DEATRICH, Ray L	MATHER, John R	SHOOK, Willis C
DENMARK, Willie R	MATTHEWS, Forest C	SMITH, William L
FAIR, James H	MATLER, William G	SPATA, John J
FRAYER, Chester H	McCORD, Willis E	SWEENEY, Paul R
FRISBIE, Harold A	McFARLAND, William	TAPIA, Joseph
GEORGE, C S	McGINNIS, Jackson D	TEW, Douglas H
GLOVER, Frank A	MILLER, Whitman S	TINSLEY, John
GOLDMAN, Herman E	MINNECI, Charles F	UMPLEBY, Eugene E
GRAY, Augustus Henderson	O'DONNELL, Jack T	VERNON, Walter
GRIFFIN, Ralph	O'TYSON, Donald C	WAITE, Everett F
GRONAU, Harold G	PALMERO, James W	WEISS, James T
GUNN, Ralph E	PARKER, Arthur R	WHITE, Robert D
GUSTAFSON, Lieutenant Arthur G	PATCH, Clifton F	WILSON, John Louis
GUSTI, Robert L	PEARSON, Raymond B	ZIZAK, Frank E
	PETERSON, Lester N	

**USS William B Preston (10)***Names not recorded***Catalina PBY 2306 (1)**

SCHULER, J C

**US ARMY****Total: 4****148th Field Artillery Regiment (3)**

MEAD, W

39006236, Private

SKELTON, Basil J

39602567, Private, C Battery

WOFORD, J M

20947009, Sergeant

**SS Don Isidro (1 / total of 14)**

One unidentified soldier

**US ARMY AIR FORCE****Total: 4****33rd Pursuit Squadron (4)**

HUGHES, Charles W

Lieutenant, A Flight

PELL, Floyd J

Major, A Flight

PERES, Jack R

Lieutenant, B Flight

PERRY, Elton S

Lieutenant, B Flight

**US MERCHANT SERVICE****Total: 23****USS Florence D (3)**

BELTRAN, Francisco

Sailor (Filipino)

BRIONES, Librado

Carpenter (Filipino)

REYES, Mariano

Messboy (Filipino)

**USAT Meigs (1)**

CLEBORNE, John H

3rd Officer (DOW in hospital)

**SS Don Isidro (13, all Filipino / total of 14)**

CORDOBA, Antonio

Oiler

DELGADO, Raul

Machinist

JAMENEA, Albert

Oiler

JAROBILLA, Malchor

3rd Engineer

JAYNE, Lorato

2nd Engineer

LONGO, Amado

Waiter

MANGA, Maximo

Chief Engineer

MASANKAY, Acapito

Pantryman

MONTRALEGRA, Frederico

Chief Electrician

REYNES, Antonia

Extra Engineer

SABANDO, Quirino

Oiler

*...and another two (unnamed) who later died**of wounds in Darwin***SS Mauna Loa (5)***5 names not recorded***SS Port Mar (1)**

TYRELL, Tom

Rank/rating unknown

**UK MERCHANT MARINE****Total: 2****SS British Motorist (2)**

BATES, Gilbert Chase

Master, NKG

WEBSTER, J H

Wireless Operator, NKG

## An Australian and the “Empire of the Sun”<sup>1</sup>

Brad Manera<sup>2</sup>

**T**hose that were alive at the time will never forget how they received the news that the Second World War had ended. For Rose Sarah Rasey, an Australian nurse and missionary in China, the allied victory meant the end to years of imprisonment at the hands of Japanese military authorities.

The Japanese Government signed the instrument of surrender on 2 September 1945. Rose Rasey was a prisoner in the camp at Lunghwa near Shanghai at that time. On the day of the surrender she wrote to her friend, and former fellow missionary, Marjorie, recounting how the inmates responded to the momentous news of that day:

“The ‘Peace’ came so suddenly that we could not realise it at first ... rumours were thick of bombings over Japan, and of fighting still going on. Wednesday 15th we were told, ‘The War is over’, definitely, and our Camp representative was allowed to go to the city, in a car, unescorted, we knew it was *true*!! Cheers and rejoicing! That evening we had an open air Thanksgiving service, and Flag raising ceremony. ... With hearts overflowing in praise of God, & tears of joy in our eyes we sang “O God our help in ages past”—a united service, many Jews were present, led by Mr W Rowlands, LMS, of Hopei, representing the Nonconformists, and the Dean of Shanghai Cathedral.

“That night the young folk had a concert and dance on the roof of one building”.<sup>3</sup>

But peace did not bring immediate relief and it would be more than three and a half months before Rose was reunited with her family in Brisbane.

Rose Sarah Rasey (1896-1992) was a nurse and for 15 of her 96 years she was a missionary in China. She survived war, illness and imprisonment. The letters Rose Rasey wrote to her family from China<sup>4</sup> and the armband and identity tag she wore as a prisoner of the Imperial Japanese Army have recently become part of the National Museum of Australia’s collection.<sup>5</sup> They allow us a glimpse of her remarkable life.

Rose was born on 10 June 1896, in Brisbane, second youngest of a family of five girls and two boys. Upon leaving school she initially trained as a milliner then changed to a career in nursing. Rose Rasey studied in Brisbane for three years to qualify as a nurse and, after graduating, worked in hospitals in Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart and across the Tasman in New Zealand. Rose’s family were Christians but, to use her own words, “toward the end of my teens I

<sup>1</sup> This is a play on the title of a semi-autobiographical novel, *Empire of the Sun* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1984) by J G Ballard, about British civilians living in Shanghai interned by the Japanese. Now a popular feature film.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Australian Society and History National Museum of Australia

<sup>3</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “Darling Marjorie” from the “Civil Assembly Centre, Lunghwa”, 2 September 1945.

<sup>4</sup> In this article I have not altered the English place names that were in use by non Chinese English speakers before the Pinyin Romanisation, as this is the nomenclature that Rose Rasey was familiar with during her time in China.

<sup>5</sup> Rose Rasey’s armband, identity tag and letters have been donated to the National Museum of Australia by her great nephew R G Bain QC.

wandered away from God".<sup>6</sup> While working in hospitals in the early 1920s Rose met other nurses who were devout Christians. Contact with these people strengthened Rose Rasey's own Christian faith. In 1929 Rose would remember and write of her reintroduction to religion, "Within a few days I had a definite knowledge and assurance of being a child of God through the witness of His Holy Spirit. My whole outlook on life took on a different aspect from that of former days. I wanted to serve God, because I already had eternal life, not because I hoped to gain eternal life through service to him."<sup>7</sup> This conviction attracted Rose to a missionary calling and would sustain her through the privations she could not have imagined she would face in China in the 1930s and 40s.

In the mid 1920s Rose Rasey did obstetrics training at Melbourne Women's Hospital, and was an active member of the Australian Nurses' Christian Movement. After her training she was asked to go to Queensland as the Organising Secretary of the Movement. Nursing in Queensland for two years drew her to missionary work. She wrote, "gradually the Lord began to burden my heart with the great need of those in foreign lands who had never heard the Gospel. At first I thought it was Egypt, but later on China ... was the place of His appointment for this life of mine."<sup>8</sup>

Rose Sarah Rasey joined the China Inland Mission on 16 July 1929. On Armistice Day of that year the China-bound SS *Tanda* steamed out of Moreton Bay with Miss R S Rasey listed among the passengers.<sup>9</sup> She was entering the social and political chaos that was China between the world wars—a China that would be her home for the more than a decade and a half.

After the Great War (1914-1918) fighting among bandits, war-lords, regionally based political cliques, rioting students as well as rivalry between the Canton based Nationalist Government and the Communists, competed with flood, earthquake and drought induced famine and disease to create a whirlpool of violence and confusion. In the 1930s, China's domestic nightmare was exacerbated by the external pressures of border clashes with the Soviet Union and invasion by Japan. This followed the first campaigns of a civil war between the Nationalists and the Communists that included their now legendary Long March of 1934 to 1935. Then came World War Two.<sup>10</sup>

When Rose Rasey arrived in China in 1929, the China Inland Mission had 1,162 active workers, of which 129 were Australians or New Zealanders.<sup>11</sup> They were scattered across China from Yunan to the Manchurian boarder. Since the mid 1860s, missionaries of the China Inland Mission had been learning the language, adopting local dress (when appropriate) and working

<sup>6</sup> Autobiographical notes by "Miss R S Rasey" in *China's Millions* (China Inland Mission, Sydney) November 1, 1929 page 165

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

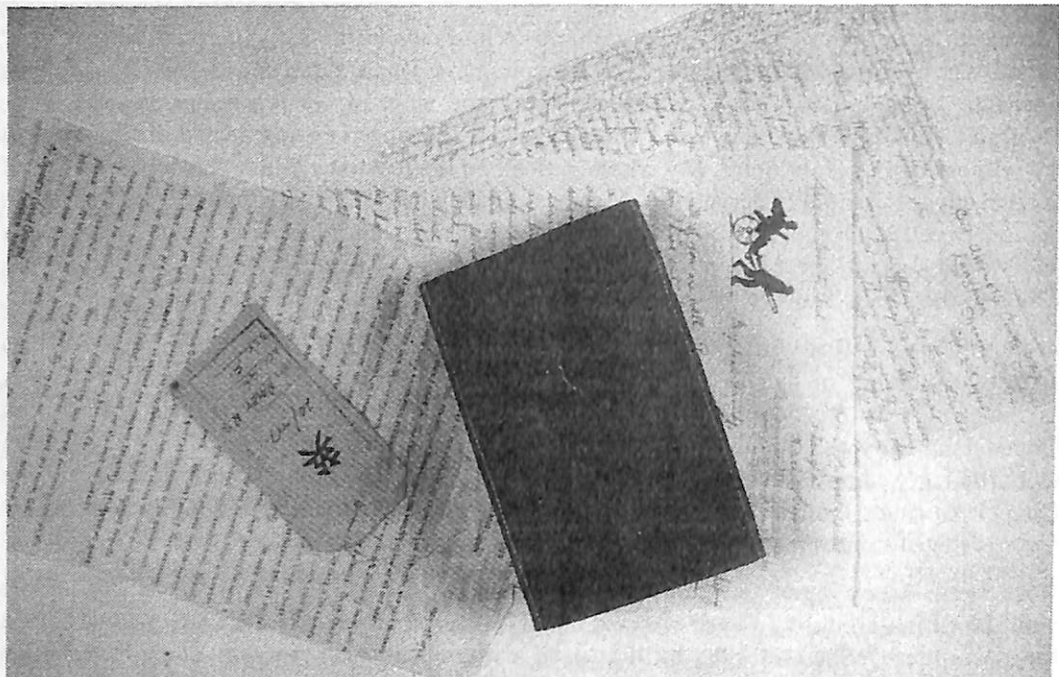
<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> *China's Millions* (China Inland Mission, Sydney) November 1, 1929 page 163

<sup>10</sup> For an outline of conflict in China from 1919 to 1945 and its impact on missionary activity see:

- Loane MA DD, M L *The Story of the China Inland Mission in Australia and New Zealand 1890-1964* (Halstead Press, Sydney, 1965)
- Keegan, J (Ed), *The Times Atlas of the Second World War* (Times Books Ltd, 1989) chapters 3 & 4
- Fitzgerald, C P, *The Birth of Communist China* (Penguin, Middlesex, 1964), *East Asia's Millions* (Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Epping.) Vol 98 No 2 April/June 1990

<sup>11</sup> Loane MA DD, M L, *The Story of the China Inland Mission in Australia and New Zealand 1890-1964* (Halstead Press, Sydney, 1965) page 66



to spread Christianity in China. They suffered illness, physical privations, attacks from—and occasionally death at the hands of—bandits or ill disciplined soldiers and other innumerable hardships in their chosen task, but they persevered.<sup>12</sup> Rose Rasey's training as a nurse equipped her to dispense aid to the body as well as the soul as she worked in troubled provincial north China.

On Christmas Day 1934, Rose returned to Australia accompanying a sick fellow missionary. She took a furlough and studied child welfare during 1935, returning to China on 9 February 1936. For most of the next two years Rose travelled the provinces of Honan, Hopeh and Shensi explaining the Gospel to Chinese peasants, particularly the wives and daughters of farmers and miners.<sup>13</sup> Her letters home describe with sympathy and detail village life in China under the ever present threat of natural disaster, "Reds" and "lawless men".<sup>14</sup>

The Imperial Japanese Army invaded China proper in 1937. The atrocities it committed as part of its reign of terror in the countryside as well as in cities like Nanking have been well documented. The resulting bloodshed meant that trained nurses like Rose Rasey were in great demand but, tragically, short supply. From the life of a travelling missionary she became a nurse, and later matron, of a series of hospitals dangerously close to the face of battle.

Rose Rasey nursed in a number of hospitals in war torn China. She spent much of 1938 serving at the American Baptist Mission Hospital at Chengchow in Honan.<sup>15</sup> A year later she was helping manage the China Inland Mission Hospital at Hwailu in Hopeh.<sup>16</sup> In a letter home Rose

<sup>12</sup> *East Asia's Millions* (Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Epping.) Vol 98 No 2 April/June 1990

<sup>13</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to "My dear Family" from the China Inland Mission, Tsingsing, Hopeh. 18 November 1936.

<sup>14</sup> Letter from R S Rasey entitled "General News". January 1937

<sup>15</sup> Letters from R S Rasey to "My Dear Family" from the American Baptist Mission Hospital, Chengchow, Honan, dated 3 June 1938 and 17 June 1938.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to "My dear Friends" from the China Inland Mission, Hwailu, Hopeh. 14 March 1939

describes the conditions in the nearby military hospital in which she and two other missionaries, a doctor and a nurses' aid, were trying to help out and care for over 1,000 wounded soldiers. She wrote:

"Proper equipment in the form of steam sterilizers are lacking but instruments are boiled, or soaked in antiseptic solution, & the Drs go ahead & do whatever is possible. Legs, arms, hands, are amputated, bullets extracted from legs & arms, but those with deep chest or abdominal conditions have to wait till more equipment is procured. ...

"The men lie on straw mats on the floor with a ru-tsi under them, covered with a wadded quilt. Coats etc rolled up serve as a pillow. There are about 30 men in the 'ward' we work in, they lie against the wall ... Small boys are employed to fetch boiled water for drinking, & bowls of food. Alas! Opium is brought to them, too, but who can blame them, altogether, when they are in so much pain!! ... We go out every morning at 10 am. when materials for dressings are given out. Gauze, cotton wool, bandages, with small bottles of Iodine, Mercurochrome, Carbolic Solution, etc. The dressings are not sterilized, but they are clean, so we go ahead. Vaseline & another ointment serve very well as protective agencies against the invasion of flies!! The wounds are truly dreadful, some men have been ten days wounded before we get them; they had some first-aid nearer the fighting line, but many are in a sorrowful condition when they come here."<sup>17</sup>

As the war raged all around Rose Rasey she did not consider running before the Japanese invader. In a letter to her family in June 1938 from the American Baptist Mission Hospital, Chengchow, she notes next to her contact details, "Write to this address, if we are 'taken' mail will come via Shanghai—if not we may still be in touch [through] Hankow."<sup>18</sup> Rose was eventually "taken" while working at a hospital in Shunteh, Hopeh province. At her hospital in Shunteh, through 1940 and 1941, Rose Rasey rarely had less than 70 patients, mostly civilians, victims of diseases caused by drought and famine. She was particularly touched by:

"the number of small children in hospital for treatment of a disease prevalent in North China called Kala-Azar.

"The spleen is enlarged and the patients' condition is debilitated by fever, loss of appetite, and complaints such as hard lumps that form in the mouth or cheek, these gradually develop into a hole, unless treatment can be given early enough to check the disease. Their plight appears pitiful indeed."<sup>19</sup>

Even when the Japanese occupied Hopeh Rose Rasey continued to work in her hospital. It was not until the declaration of war between the British Empire and Imperial Japan on 8 December 1941, that Rose was interned as an "enemy alien". She was incarcerated in a converted mission compound in Shunteh for the next eight months. Then in August 1942 she and 113 other British, Dutch and US nationals were transferred to Shanghai.<sup>20</sup>

In Shanghai, Rose and her fellow internees were made to wear red armbands to identify themselves as enemy aliens. She mentions in a letter to her family in March 1943, "sometime

<sup>17</sup> Letter from R S Rasey, 25 October (front page missing).

<sup>18</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to "My Dear Family" from the American Baptist Mission Hospital, Chengchow, Honan, 17 June 1938

<sup>19</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to "My Dear Friend" from Shunteh, Hopeh, 15 June 1940.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to "My Dear Family" from the Civil Assembly Centre, Lunghwa, 26 August 1945

before this year, red arm-bands were issued to us, who were not neutrals. These we, wear on our left arm, displaying our number and nationality.”<sup>21</sup> Rose’s red armband was printed with a large “B” (to indicate she was a British subject) over a smaller number “3598” in black ink. The armbands were issued by a body called the British Residents Association of China on behalf of the Japanese authorities.<sup>22</sup> On Sunday, 28 March 1943, Rose Rasey was given a weeks warning that she would be moved to Lunghwa Civil Assembly Centre, a prison camp about 10 kilometres out of Shanghai. This was to be Rose’s home for the next two and a half years. The night before she was transported to Lunghwa she wrote to her parents:

“To-morrow I am to leave here at noon with one other from here. About 500 are to go into the Centre to-morrow from all over the city. It seems strange to leave our home here, but we feel sure that God has some special reason in permitting these circumstances, & when we all get home to Heaven, in His time, we shall see the eternal result. There is no bitterness or resentment in our hearts. Of course I expect to be kept busy in my usual work, for we expect to have sick people among the eighteen hundred to go into the Centre. There will be about seven hundred children. The Americans will be in another place, about 4 miles from the city, so some of our people are there also. Write through the Red Cross. The branch in the city will have my number & location. With much love to you, each one—Rose.”<sup>23</sup>

The next day, 5 April 1943, Rose was issued with a cardboard identity tag then loaded onto a truck with the other internees being sent to Lunghwa. The tag listed her number “20/417”, name, age and sex.<sup>24</sup> As she had expected she was assigned work in the camp’s hospital.

Internees at Lunghwa do not appear to have suffered the brutal treatment that was meted out in many Japanese prison camps within the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, but the Lunghwa Civil Assembly Centre’s poor food, overcrowding and inadequate sanitation took its toll. Rose Rasey’s letters from captivity are cheerful and avoid detailed descriptions of living conditions within the camp.<sup>25</sup> The letters may have been deliberately positive so that they could get past the Japanese censor and assuage the fears for her safety held by her family back in Brisbane. It was not until 2 September 1945, in a letter to Marjorie on the day of the Japanese surrender she mentions that, “From Sept, ’44 to March of this year I was off duty with the same complaint [general debility]. Blood pressure now only 84/58, instead of being around 125, but I have more strength and energy now. We did night duty one week in two months—but I have not done it since my illness. Weight was 142 lbs when I came to Camp, now 126, & it suits me. Most of the folk here have lost weight. The food was, of course, not good. With over 1 700 to cook for it had to be stew, stew, stew—the meat & vegetables could be made to go round when lost in water).”<sup>26</sup> At Lunghwa, by mid August 1945, rumours of impending Japanese defeat

<sup>21</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “My Dear Family” from the China Inland Mission, Shanghai on hand-drawn “man in rickshaw” letterhead, 28 March 1943.

<sup>22</sup> The armband has a black ink stamp inside that reads “BRA” in large block capitals within a circle, around the rim of the circle is the text “BRITISH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION OF CHINA\*” in small block capitals.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “My Dear Family” from the China Inland Mission, Shanghai on hand-drawn “man in rickshaw” letterhead, 28 March 1943. There are two handwritten copies of this Letter in the collection. RSR may have posted them to Australia using different routes in the event that one did not get through.

<sup>24</sup> The cardboard Identity Tag bears the printed Chinese character for “British” above the handwritten number 20/417. 20/417 also appears on her letters dated 18 May 1943 and 2 September 1945. She had written under the number 20/417 on the letter dated 2 September 1945, “my Red Cross number for letters”.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “My Dear Elsie [Hutchinson]” from the Civil Assembly Centre, Lunghwa, 18 May 1943.

<sup>26</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “Darling Marjorie” from the Civil Assembly Centre, Lunghwa, 2 September 1945.

were rife. When Japan finally surrendered on 2 September the inmates of the camp were relieved and grateful but very aware that they were surrounded by vanquished but still armed Japanese military units. When the Japanese withdrew the camp was left to its own resources. People, who just days earlier had been prisoners themselves, were suddenly faced with managing the camp and feeding their fellow former prisoners. When the gates of the camp opened many simply walked out to seek news of family and friends or eager to find out see for themselves if the war had left them a home or possessions. Most non-Chinese sought repatriation. Rose stayed on at Lunghwa to help the sick while other inmates were getting repatriated. The camp received its supplies by air at that time. Rose wrote:

“USA Army rations, dropped by parachute, which are also very good indeed. The big Flying Fortresses cannot land, airfields are not large enough. They come over from Okinawa & other places with ‘War Prisoners Supplies’ painted on the wings, our people mark out ‘P.W.’ on a field to indicate where the supplies are to be dropped. Some break loose from the chute & come hurtling to the earth in a terrifying manner, & the contents are bashed to pieces, but they are few, most land quite well & are pretty to watch coming down on red, blue & green chutes.”<sup>27</sup>

Although on the sick list Rasey’s own return to Australia was delayed until late October. On Saturday October 22 Rose Sarah Rasey left China for the last time, she was a patient on the British hospital ship *Empire Clyde*.<sup>28</sup> After staging for more than a month in No. 2 PW Reception Camp, Hong Kong, Rose was met by friends in Perth Western Australia, who demanded she take immediate bed rest. In mid December 1945, she wrote to her cousin in New South Wales, “For the last week I have been kept in bed resting ... the friends here noticed that things were a strain, though I did not feel tired; & they asked me to be good & rest, so I did.”<sup>29</sup>

Rose Rasey was reunited with her family in Brisbane over Christmas and New Year 1945/46, nine years and eleven months after her return to China. It took some time for Rose to regain her health after the War. In 1949 China fell to the Communists and Rose Sarah Rasey resigned from the China Inland Mission.<sup>30</sup> In her mid 50s Rose returned to nursing as a tutor sister at Royal Brisbane Hospital. She moved to Tasmania, seeking a cooler climate for her health and became a matron at Royal Hobart Hospital, later matron-in-charge of the Royal Nursing Federation Hospital. In her 68th year she returned to Brisbane and took up the post of Nursing Sister at Saint Margaret’s Anglican Girl’s School. She finally retired in 1981.<sup>31</sup>

On Thursday afternoon, 30 July 1992, Rose Sarah Rasey died.<sup>32</sup> In this 50th anniversary year as we remember our fellow Australians who lived through World War Two, Rose Rasey’s letters from China and the armband and identity tag she wore as a prisoner of the Japanese that are now part of the collection of the National Museum of Australia record the extraordinary experiences of an ordinary Australian who was there.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “My Dear Family” from the Civil Assembly Centre, Lunghwa, 15 September 1945.

<sup>28</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “My Dear Family” from the No 2 PoW Reception Camp, 144 Argyle St, Kowloon, Hong Kong, 1945.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from R S Rasey to “My Dearest Dorothy [cousin of RSR]” from Perth, Western Australia on Red Cross letterhead, 17 December 1945.

<sup>30</sup> This and other dates were supplied or confirmed by Christine at the Overseas Missionary Fellowship Headquarters on telephone (02) 868 4777 Postal address: Overseas Missionary Fellowship, PO Box 849 Epping, NSW 2121.

<sup>31</sup> “In Memory of Rose Sarah Rasey” in *East Asia’s Millions* (Overseas Missionary Fellowship, Epping.) July/September 1992 Supplement.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



## The 13th Light Horse on the Western Front, 1917

Douglas Hunter

The 13th Light Horse Regiment (AIF) was the only complete Australian Light Horse Regiment to serve on the Western Front during World War I. Its role was that of the Corps Cavalry Regiment of I ANZAC Corps and later the 1st Australian Corps.

A second mounted regiment made up of contingents from 4th LH Regiment and New Zealand Mounted Rifles also served in France and Flanders. The 4th LH experience is recorded in chapters 13 to 16 of David Holloway's, *Hooves, Wheels and Tracks*.<sup>1</sup>

The doings of the 13th LH, however, have received little attention. This situation is somewhat surprising given the strength of the 13th LH post-war Regimental Association, which was active from 1927 to 1980. With the Association's closure, much of the 13th LH records and memorabilia was passed to the 8th/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles and is housed in its Regimental Collection, Buna Barracks, Albury. Work is in progress to write a history of the 13th LH Regiment, especially its experience on the Western Front from 1916 to 1919.

There are occasional references to the 13th LH in the Official History, and two very brief summaries of the unit's history have been written.<sup>2</sup> None of this, however, seems adequate if one considers the service of the 13th LH Regiment implicit in the battle honours on the Regiment's Guidon: Pozieres, Bapaume 1917, Arras 1917, Ypres 1917, Amiens 1918, and Albert 1918.<sup>3</sup>

Of their efforts at Amiens and Albert in 1918, Lieutenant-General Monash wrote:

"I found an opportunity of employing my Corps Cavalry (13th Australian Light Horse) ... These troops more than justified their employment by bold, forward reconnaissance, and energetic pressure upon the enemy rearguards."<sup>4</sup>

That a 13th LH Regiment existed in 1918 for Monash to use is, in itself, remarkable. Following service on Gallipoli, the 13th LH was disbanded in Egypt in early 1916. Individual squadrons were sent to France as divisional cavalry for the 2nd, 4th and 5th Australian Divisions. The squadrons were brought together again in July 1916 and the 13th Light Horse Regiment was reformed as part of the 1st ANZAC Mounted Troops. That the Regiment performed for Monash as well as it did is testimony to its diligence in learning the exacting trade of corps cavalry on the Western Front. This period of apprenticeship and on-the-job training occupied 1917, and it is this period which this article addresses.

Soon after its arrival in France, the Australian light horse took instruction from British cavalry units who by then had the benefit of the experience of many months of fighting. During this period the British had gained, often at bitter cost, an appreciation of the effects of the new

<sup>1</sup> David Holloway, *Hooves, Wheels and Tracks*. Published by 4/19 PWLH, Melbourne, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> V C Walker, "Short War History of the 13th Australian Light Horse Regiment AIF" in 13th Light Horse Regiment Association Annual Report, 1965. And, C Wilson, *Unofficial History of the 13th LH Regt and 13th Armd Regt*, unpublished, c.1987.

<sup>3</sup> The Guidon of the 13th LH Regt carries five additional Battle Honours, including France and Flanders 1916-1918, and Somme 1916-1918. The Guidon is housed at Buna Barracks, Albury.

<sup>4</sup> Lt Gen Sir John Monash, *Australian Victories in France in 1918*, rev. ed., Lothian, Melbourne, 1923. p.217.

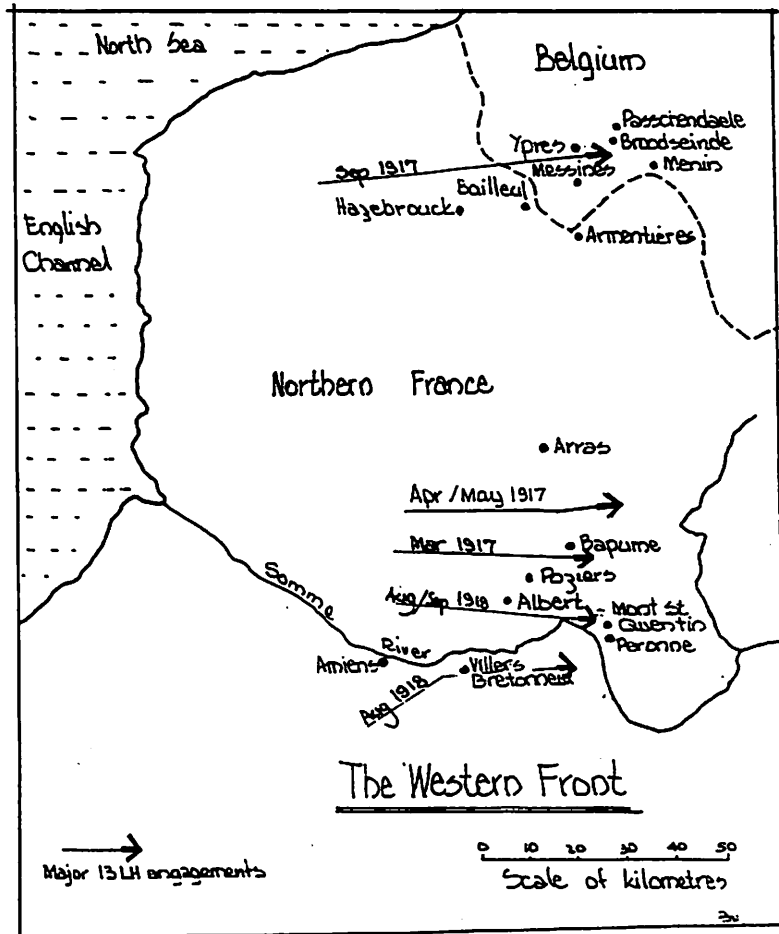
weapons such as machine-guns, and defensive techniques such as trenches and barbed wire, which had changed the nature of European war on horseback.

The tasks of corps cavalry were considered to be scouting, reconnaissance and the seizing and holding of strong tactical points. The purpose of scouting and reconnaissance was two-fold: to obtain information about the enemy, and to give early warning to friendly forces. In an attack, the corps cavalry was to follow up an infantry assault, to pass through the gap made in the enemy defences and

to seize a strong-point some 1 to 4 miles (1½ to 6 kilometres) to the enemy's rear. This they would hold until the cavalry divisions had passed through. In an advance, the corps cavalry was to form the vanguard and move up to 5 miles (8 kilometres) ahead of the main body of the infantry. A squadron frontage was not to exceed 2 miles (3 kilometres).<sup>5</sup>

The prescribed tasks probably sounded quite attractive to the light horse, but the fact was that for the latter half of 1916, the 13th LH found itself engaged in what might be described as ancillary tasks, serving as dispatch riders, signallers, orderlies at Corps HQ, escorts to POWs, traffic control and labour parties.

1917, however, promised something new and on three significant occasions the 13th LH Regiment operated in a way more in keeping with its role as corps cavalry. The first occasion was at Bapaume in March 1917, the second was in the prelude to Bullecourt in April 1917, and the third was near Ypres in September 1917. The tactical situation and the weather differed on each occasion, as did the results. The tasks undertaken also differed from those envisaged in the doctrine of early 1917. Nevertheless the lighthorsemen performed with skill, discipline and courage. The experience of this tough year, 1917, prepared them well for their part in the Australian victories of the following year.



<sup>5</sup> Holloway, op cit., p.235.

## Bapaume 1917

In February 1917, Allied plans for a spring offensive north of the Somme River were disrupted by German withdrawals. The I ANZAC Corps was ordered to advance on an axis Bapaume-Cambrai and re-establish contact along the new German defensive line. The advance began in heavy fog on the morning of 24 February. The entire Corps was jubilant about the warmer weather and the prospect of movement. C E W Bean records:

“The depression of the long winter’s struggle began to vanish like mists breaking beneath the sun. But the excitement was nowhere so great as in the billets of the 13th Light Horse Regiment, when shortly before midnight, it was ordered to prepare to carry out for the first time its proper function—‘special patrol duty’ ahead of the corps.”<sup>6</sup>

Among those excitedly preparing horses and kit for the advance were Sergeant Robert Tuff “B” Squadron, Lance-Corporal Geoff Gilbert “A” Squadron and Trooper (later Lieutenant) Vern Walker “B” Squadron.

The plan was for the light horse to patrol ahead of the infantry, to discover gaps between the German rearguard positions, then to move through the gaps and force the defenders to withdraw. The barbed wire and trenches, and the effectiveness of the machine gun and rifle fire covering gaps, quickly nullified the plan. Walker’s diary tells of the disappointment of the first two days:

“24/2/17 One Squadron of Regiment ordered to the front line as enemy believed to be retreating. Whole Regiment ordered to be ready to move forward. Some Germans had retreated to their trench fortresses.

“25/2/17 Regiment moves out from forward position, as impossible to reconnoitre with mounted patrols, ‘B’ Squadron stands by to cover retreat.”<sup>7</sup>

The infantry of the 2nd and 5th Divisions took up the advance and steadily drove back the German rearguard until, in mid-March, more open country was reached near Bapaume. Information received by Army HQ suggested that the enemy was about to withdraw beyond the town, so light horse patrols were ordered to follow up and maintain contact.<sup>8</sup> Walker’s diary tells the story from 14 to 16 March:

“14/3/17 Regiment under orders again to advance through German rearguard in case of further evacuation near BAPAUME.

“16/3/17 ‘B’ & ‘C’ Squadron move forward to patrol enemy lines. Owing to mud it is impossible to use infantry. ‘B’ & ‘C’ Squadrons re-connoitre where enemy is falling back and BAPAUME falls into our hands.”<sup>9</sup>

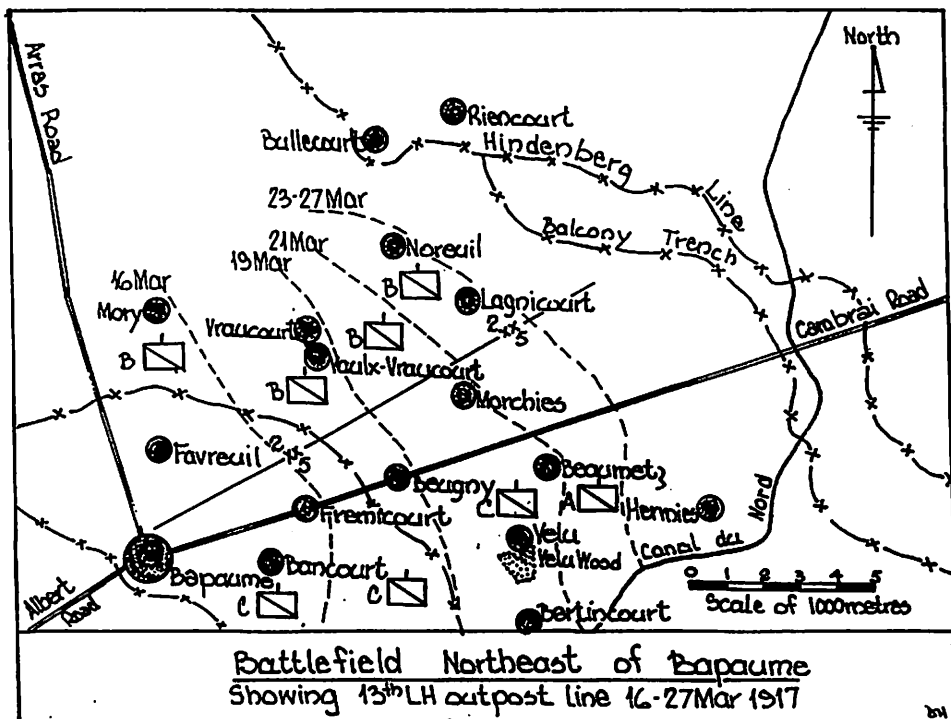
Lance-Corporal Geoff Gilbert recalled the simple, but hazardous advance procedure:

<sup>6</sup> C E W Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Vol.IV, 10th ed, Sydney, 1940, p.70.

<sup>7</sup> Diary entry of Lt V C Walker dated 24 and 25/2/1917. A transcribed copy of the diary for 1916 and 1917 forms part of an *Unofficial History of the 13LH Regt and 13th Armd Regt*, compiled by Claude H Wilson, unpublished, c.1987, and held by 8/13 VMR Regt Collection. (Other references to Walker’s diary will cite, “Walker”, and date of entry.)

<sup>8</sup> Official History, Vol IV. p.122.

<sup>9</sup> Walker, 14 and 16 March 17.



“out in front, in the advance to Bapaume and beyond towards Cambrai, riding over at the walk, to draw enemy fire—rotten shots the Fritz must have been for any of us to survive.”<sup>10</sup>

Following the capture of Bapaume on 17 March, an advance guard comprising 6th Infantry Brigade on the left and 15th Infantry Brigade on the right continued the advance towards the main German defence line. Each brigade had a squadron of light horse to do its scouting. Walker again takes up the story:

“16/3/17 Mounted patrols move out beyond BAPAUME, pushing enemy beyond FREMICOURT. ‘B’ Squadron occupy MORY, at 6.00pm, not much opposition. ‘C’ Squadron advance to THILLOY, a few casualties.

“19/3/17 All Squadrons return and bivouac at BAPAUME, but advance later to VALIET and VRACOURT, a few more casualties.

“20/3/17 Wet and windy conditions hampers operations. English Cavalry evacuated. Light Horse establish outpost near BERTINCOURT, BEAUMES. 13th take over and surround BERTINCOURT thus allowing Australian Infantry to occupy BERTINCOURT.

<sup>10</sup> Recollections written by Geoff Gilbert, c.1976, and printed in the Annual Report, 1976, p.12.



Group of 13th Light Horse in France, 1917

"21/3/17 Advance more difficult and slower[.] 13th Light Horse establish another outpost near BAMEZ, enabling Australian Infantry to occupy that village on "21/3/1917. Prince Leopold of Prussia, shot down and captured by 13th Light Horse, due to Sgt Bob Fyffe, of the 13th Light Horse, who wounded him as he was trying to reach the enemy lines[.] 'A' Squadron move to BAMEZ to relieve 'C' Squadron. More casualties suffered by the 13th Light Horse, and Regimental aid post established in area.

"24/3/17 Advance move at standstill as enemy now offering very stiff resistance. Our Infantry take over[.] as not much use for Light Horse now, so Regiment escort a few German Prisoners to MEAULTE.

"26/3/17 Part of Regiment now billeted in BAPAUME Town Hall, recently captured[.] A] German time bomb explodes, causing a number of casualties to occupants, various assorted Australian Troops. A few of the 13th lost in explosion.<sup>11</sup>

"28/3/17 Regiment now move back to safer area and make camp at BECORDEL to rest horses and men. Germans bring on some big guns and force Regiment and Infantry etc, to move further back, out of their range, still muddy.

"31/3/17 Everything quietens down, but our bugler taken prisoner by the Germans."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Official History, Vol IV, pp.205n, 206n, refers to 7 members of 13th LH Regiment rescued from the cellar of the Town Hall. Gilbert mentions Phil Taylor as killed in the explosion. Geoff Gilbert, letter from France, c.1978 and published in Annual Report of that year, p.11.

<sup>12</sup> Walker, 16 to 31 March 17. It is unclear whether the loss of the bugler was the reason things quietened down! How the bugler was captured is something of a mystery because indications are that the Regiment was out of the line on 31 March. It was, however, back in the line on 1 April.

Walker's record of the capture of Prince Leopold is at variance with other accounts of the incident. The Official History records that Prince Frederick Charles of Prussia, a pilot, was forced down between the lines on 20 March, and wounded and captured by "2 NCOs from 26 Bn and several lighthorsemen".<sup>13</sup> But, in an interview published in 1965, Sgt Robert Tuff of 13th LH Regiment claimed it was he who wounded and captured the prince.<sup>14</sup> Walker's diary seems to support Tuff's claim even though he credits the capture to the wrong sergeant, Bob Fyffe instead of Bob Tuff, and names the German prince Leopold instead of Frederick Charles. Walker's record, even with its inaccuracies, is an example of how exciting incidents were spread by word of mouth, (and sometimes distorted) throughout the battle zone. Bean appears to have heard two stories of the wounding and capture of the prince. One was that it was the work of infantrymen of the 26th Battalion, and the other that it was the work of lighthorsemen. Possibly unable to resolve the differing accounts, Bean combined them.

As the advance neared the new German defense line, resistance stiffened and the light horse cooperated increasingly with infantry and cyclists. Geoff Gilbert gives the following graphic description of a typical action south of Bertincourt on 20 or 21 March:

"... later in the same day ... we were to ride over the rise where we would be in full view of the enemy, between Bertincourt and Vulu (sic) Wood, and draw fire, as the infantry were going to advance their line on our left. ... we rode over at the walk and right away succeeded in drawing fire in plenty, showing that there were many of the enemy thereon. On the retire signal, which we understood loud and clear, we galloped back over the rise and handed the horses over to the No. threes, who smartly galloped away to cover with the led horses. Surprisingly we had very light casualties in both men and horses.

"We then ran in dismounted, and assumed the super prone position. Fritz made it pretty warm for us as we must have been good targets, and we gave them all we had with machine guns and rifle fire, and the cyclists from the mill were doing an excellent job. The chap next to me got a bullet through his water bottle, but I think their range was too low as a great number of bullets, etc, were hitting into the ground just below us. Casualties were still light."<sup>15</sup>

During the advance, the Australians sometimes encountered German cavalry.<sup>16</sup> One encounter was reported in sensational fashion by a London newspaper under the headline:

**LIGHT HORSE ENGAGE UHLANS HAND-TO-HAND.**

**Victorians Use Bayonets Against Lances and Sabres.**

The article, credited to "United Service Special Service" reads:

"Wounded Anzacs from Bapaume who arrived in London confirmed the report that Australian losses were trifling and were mostly due to sniping and to isolated parties advancing too far. The Australian field guns, they say, have moved smartly through

<sup>13</sup> Official History, Vol IV, pp. 189n,190n.

<sup>14</sup> *Australasian Post*, 11 Feb, 1965, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Geoff Gilbert, in a letter from France, c. 1978, and published in the Annual Report, 1978, p.12.

<sup>16</sup> Official History, Vol IV, p.152, records on incident on 17 March near the village of Bancourt where 15th Brigade encountered cavalry of the 6th Cuirassier Regiment, and p.164 records contact with cavalry on 19 March near Beugny. Walker does not mention the incident, nor does the War Diary. Entries in the War Diary for March 1917 after 8am, 19 March 17 are missing.

Bapaume, and the 13th Light Horse (Victorian) are working magnificently in scouting. The horses and men are very fit and the latter are delighted when they encounter the German cavalry. One advance troop engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand fight with a stronger party of Uhlans, both sides suffering. The Australians were armed with rifles and bayonets and the Uhlans with lances and sabres. At first they cut up the Australians but the fight finished with honours even.”<sup>17</sup>

The 13th LH Regiment was withdrawn from the line on 28 March thus ending for them the Battle of Bapaume and their first experience of “special patrol duty” on the Western Front. For fourteen days, two squadrons of the Regiment had engaged in vigorous patrolling, driving back the German rearguard. Operating on a 12,000 metre frontage they advanced about 10,000 metres in the 14 days. By Western Front standards this was a significant advance, but surely fell far short of what mounted troops might have expected (and what was achieved in Palestine, thus demonstrating the vast differences in battlefield conditions). Given the risky methods of advancing to draw fire, casualties in men and horses appear not to have been heavy.

The Regiment’s period of rest after 14 days action was brief. Withdrawn on 28 March, the Regiment was again in the line on 1 April, this time conducting reconnaissance in preparation for the 4th Division’s attack on Bullecourt.<sup>18</sup>

### **ARRAS 1917, (Bullecourt)**

Following their successful advance on the Somme during March, the Allies planned an attack on the main German defences along the Hindenburg Line. The Battle of Arras, better known to the Australians as Bullecourt, occurred in two separate battles, 1st Bullecourt on 11 April, and second Bullecourt from 3 to 18 May 1917.

The situation at Bapaume in March was very different to that which confronted the ANZAC Corps at Bullecourt. Instead of a fighting withdrawal, the enemy now occupied strong fixed defences. In order to plan its attack the ANZAC Corps needed detailed information about those defences. This became the main task of the corps cavalry, the 13th LH Regiment. In order to disguise the location of the planned attack, reconnaissance activity was necessary all along the Corps front.

On 1 April, “A” and “C” Squadrons were attached to the two Australian divisions holding the ANZAC Corps front east of Bapaume. “A” Squadron was attached to 1st Division holding the southern portion of the front, and “C” Squadron to 4th Division holding the northern portion. The Regiment had been quartered in huts at Fricourt near Albert when the squadrons were ordered forward. The weather was cold and snow was falling.<sup>19</sup>

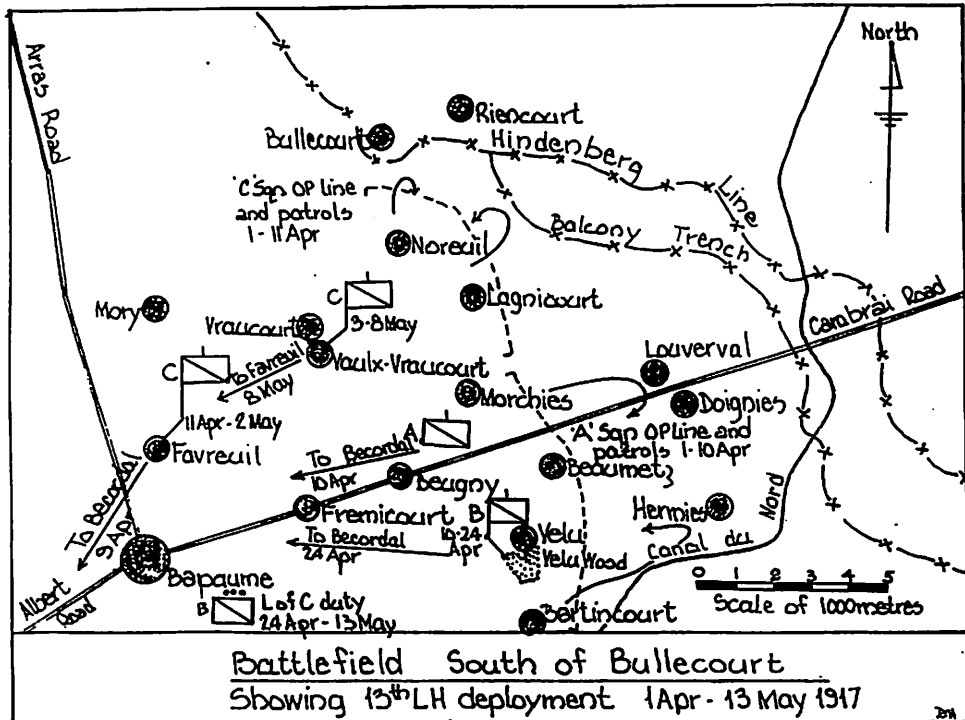
Immediately upon their arrival in the line, both squadrons pushed patrols forward. An “A” Squadron patrol from Morchies, astride the Cambrai road encountered the enemy on the outskirts of the villages of Doignies and Louverval and were driven back by heavy fire. Similarly, a “C” Squadron patrol from mid-way between Noreuil and Lagnicourt encountered heavy fire as it approached the Balcony Trench system.

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<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately the newspaper is not named, but the item is reprinted in the Annual Report, 1964, p.12.

<sup>18</sup> 1st ANZAC Mounted Troops War Diary, Vol 10, April 1917, Sheet 1, on microfilm at the Australian War Memorial.

<sup>19</sup> Walker, 2 April 17.



On 2 April, "A" Squadron established a line of observation posts forward of Bertincourt, Beaumetz and Morchies. It also set up liaison patrols between 1st Division and the divisions on its flanks.<sup>20</sup>

On 3 April, a patrol advanced from Bertincourt towards Hermies. This patrol encountered the enemy on the outskirts of the village and was driven back. "A" Squadron maintained its observation and patrol program until 10 April when it was relieved by "B" Squadron. "A" Squadron returned to camp at Becordal just south of Albert.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, "C" Squadron established an observation line east of Lagnicourt and held up against the German defences north and north-east of Noreuil. Six-man reconnaissance patrols worked constantly to gather information about strong enemy positions along the railway embankment north of Noreuil<sup>22</sup> (and south of Bullecourt, although the significance of the task was probably not apparent to the patrols). Frequently the patrols drew heavy fire.

On 8 April, the Squadron received orders to be prepared to move as advance guard for 4th Infantry Brigade. This brigade was to be the right assault brigade for 4th Division's attack on Bullecourt scheduled for dawn on 9 April.

Owing to the non-arrival of supporting tanks the divisional attack was postponed. "C" Squadron moved back to a camp at Favreuil, a distance of some 10 kilometres. The Squadron was ordered forward again on 10 April in preparation for the attack now timed for dawn the next day. Throughout this period heavy snow continued to fall.

<sup>20</sup> War Diary, Sheets 1 & 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., Sheet 1



With dawn only hours away, "C" Squadron's orders for advance guard duty were cancelled and the Squadron returned to Faveuil.<sup>23</sup> The cancelled orders undoubtedly saved "C" Squadron severe casualties because the attack went disastrously wrong. The tanks and infantry lost contact with each other soon after the attack began. By late morning the attack had ground to a halt well short of its objectives and with heavy casualties.

The Germans followed up their successful defence of Bullecourt by counter attacking further south on 15 April. Four German divisions advanced against the ANZAC Corps front. 1st Division succeeded in holding the attack in the south, but desperate fighting occurred near Noreuil where German infantry broke through to the gun lines of the Australian artillery. Gunners rolled their guns out of the gun-pits and fired at point blank range at the attacking infantry, while Australian infantry battalions in reserve were hurried forward to halt the German advance.



Early in the day, "C" Squadron was ordered to report to 7th Infantry Brigade which was waiting in reserve north-east of Vaulx. As the crisis eased two troops were ordered to Noreuil to escort prisoners, and the remainder of the Squadron was ordered back to Faveuil.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the day the ANZAC front had been restored.

"B" Squadron which had been in the line continuously during the Bapaume battle, had remained at Becordal when the other two squadrons moved into the line on 1 April. Walker records activity at Becordal:

"2/4/17 German planes attack at night, but no damage done. Still snowing. Australian artillery start heavy bombardment. Front now quiet except for Aerial activity.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Sheet 2

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Sheet 3

“8/4/17 A batch of new horses arrive to replace those lost in action.

“9/4/1917 Very successful advance on our left by British forces towards ARRAS & LENS. 10,000 prisoners taken. Snow very heavy.”<sup>25</sup>

On 10 April, “B” Squadron relieved “A” Squadron at Velu Wood and established a bivouac area there. Beginning on 12 April patrols led by officers, moved forward along 1st Division’s front mainly for the purpose of familiarisation. The Squadron seems not to have been unduly perturbed by the German counter-attack on 15 April. Walker comments in a diary entry for 16 April, “... our front normal.”<sup>26</sup>

Two unusual incidents occurred on 20 and 21 April. First, “spies” were reported in Velu Wood, so a search party of an officer and 50 men scoured the wood on foot but found no one. The next day, the Squadron was placed on gas alert expecting to be shelled, but fortunately for the men and especially the horses, the expected attack did not take place.<sup>27</sup> Walker does not mention either event.

On 24 April, “B” Squadron returned to camp at Becordal leaving one troop to provide guides and traffic control in the Corps line-of-communications zone near Villiers au Flos.<sup>28</sup> This troop finally rejoined the Regiment at Becordal on 13 May.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to his meagre description of activity while in the line, Walker tells more about activities in camp at Becordal:

“25/4/17 ANZAC DAY REMEMBRANCE. Troops out of the line, given half day holiday, after inspection by GENERAL BIRDWOOD.

“29/4/17 GENERAL BIRDWOOD presents Military Medals to some members of the 13th Light Horse.

“30/4/17 Voting of Regiment, for Federal Election.

“2/5/17 Regiment and horses resting. Football match between headquarters and ‘A’ Squadron.

“5/5/17 5th Australian Division hold sports day. A big attendance of resting troops, along with an assortment of curious French peasants.

“9/5/17 ‘C’ Squadron returns from patrol.”<sup>30</sup>

Between 11 April, when its advance guard orders were cancelled, and 9 May when it returned to Becordal, “C” Squadron had been in the northern part of ANZAC Corps front which was now held by 2nd Division. The Squadron had operated from a camp at Faveuil and had spent much time assisting the Division in its preparations for another attack on Bullecourt.

During the last week of April the Squadron performed the unusual task of marking the position of the artillery barrage while infantry of the 5th and 6th Brigades practiced the forthcoming

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<sup>25</sup> Walker, 2, 8 and 9 April 1917

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> War Diary, Sheet 3

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., Sheets 3 & 4.

<sup>29</sup> War Diary, May 1917, Vol 11, Sheet 2. Also Walker, 13 May 1917.

<sup>30</sup> Walker, 25, 29, 30 April 1917 and 2, 5 and 9 May 1917.

attacks. In order to be in position by the time the practice began, the Squadron paraded at 2.30am and moved to the practice area in darkness.<sup>31</sup>

In the early hours of 3 May, "C" Squadron was ordered forward from Faveuil to take over reserve trenches near Vaulx, relieving 4th Battalion. They occupied these trenches for three days coinciding with 2nd Division's attack on Bullecourt. When the Squadron was relieved by another Infantry battalion it remained in a bivouac near Vaulx until 8 May, then returned to Faveuil.

The next day the Squadron was ordered back to Becordal.<sup>32</sup> It had been in the forward area just under six weeks, in the outpost line, in bivouacs, in reserve trenches, and in a camp at Faveuil. Snow had fallen during much of this time.

The second battle of Bullecourt, the 2nd Division's attack, began on 3 May. Part of the town was captured on 7 May. The 5th Division then moved up to take over the attack from 2nd Division. It was during this relief that "C" Squadron withdrew from the forward area. When the attack resumed on 12 May, though the War Diary makes no mention of any deployment, Walker records: "5th Australian Division capture BULLECOURT, many prisoners taken, escorted by a troop of 13th Light Horsemen." Whether this was the troop left behind by "B" Squadron for traffic control and guide duty, is not clear. Certainly that troop returned to Becordal the next day.

With the complete Regiment assembled at Becordal, the involvement of the 13th LH in the Battle of Arras concluded. For six weeks the Regiment had carried out its role as corps cavalry in a manner appropriate to Western Front conditions. It had conducted reconnaissance, observation post duty, flank liaison, patrolling, escorts, traffic control, guide duty and general assistance to the infantry.

Back at its base at Becordal, the Regiment immediately commenced a busy program of training, or so the War Diary says. Walker tells a slightly different story of football, and more football. The Regiment played inter-squadron matches and inter-unit matches. Their opponents were the 24th Battalion, the 29th Battalion and the Light Railway Company. Walker described one match as: "... a game of football in the mud, very amusing."<sup>33</sup> Unknown to Walker and his mates, they were soon to experience the mud of Flanders, an experience they would not describe as wholly amusing.

### **Third Ypres, 1917**

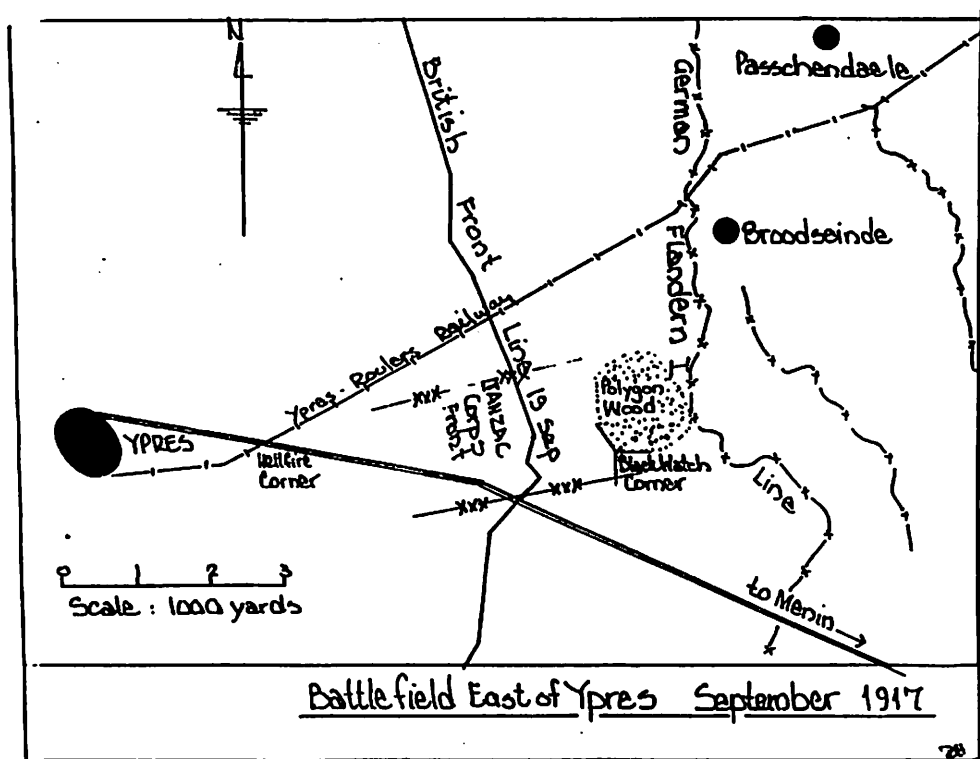
The third battle of Ypres extended over the period July to November, 1917. The attack along a 15 mile front involving some 17 British and French divisions and aimed to relieve pressure on the French armies to the south by enlarging the Ypres salient and driving the Germans beyond Passchendaele. The attack began on 31 July following a two week artillery bombardment. The attack continued for a month until German resistance and heavy rain finally brought it to a standstill. Gains had been slight. The artillery of the I ANZAC Corps supported the attack, often from very exposed positions, but the Australian infantry was not involved.

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<sup>31</sup> War Diary, April 1917, Vol 10, Sheet 3.

<sup>32</sup> War Diary, May 1917, Vol 11, Sheet 1.

<sup>33</sup> Walker, 14 May 1917.



The 13th LH Regiment had moved from the Somme to Flanders in July 1917 as part of the general relocation of the I ANZAC Corps. The Regiment left Becordal on 8 July and arrived at its new billets at Morbecque on 15 July. The move had been accomplished by route march in mid-summer and under constant threat of air attack.

Immediately upon its arrival at Morbecque, the Regiment was ordered to supply two detachments of Hotchkiss gunners for anti-aircraft defence of supply dumps: 4 guns at Borre, and 6 guns at Baillieu. These tasks continued for the next six months with only occasional relief. The remainder of the Regiment settled down to a rigorous training program which emphasised route reconnaissance. A steady stream of officers and other ranks were sent to Corps schools: Anti-gas; Scouting, sniping and observation; Small arms; Cooking; Bombing; Anti-aircraft defence; Signals; Farriers, and Veterinary. Every effort was being made to improve the skill and efficiency of the Regiment.

German aircraft were a constant danger. Walker records a raid soon after the Regiment arrived at Morbecque:

"16/7/17 Air attack by Germans at night[. All ordered to horse lines to try to pacify horses and prevent them from stampeding."<sup>34</sup>

On 1 September, the War Diary entry recorded a regimental strength of 29 officers, 543 other ranks, and 484 horses. Of these 7 officers and 102 other ranks were detached, 1 officer and 50 other ranks on leave and 10 other ranks in field ambulance.<sup>35</sup> The Regiment moved closer to the front and detachments were warned to prepare for action.

<sup>34</sup> Walker, 16 July 1917.

<sup>35</sup> War Diary, September 1917, Sheet 1.

The I ANZAC Corps entered the front line on 31 August in preparation for a resumption of the battle. The renewed effort was to involve three separate attacks along the front, each with a limited objective, the first beginning on 20 September. I ANZAC Corps comprising 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Divisions was located due east of Ypres with British divisions on either flank.

On 13 September, two detachments, each probably of half-squadron strength were placed under command the 1st and 2nd Divisions. These divisions were to make the first attack. If the procedures developed at Bullecourt were employed, then it is likely that in the week prior to the attack the lighthorsemen were engaged in reconnaissance and observation post duties in order to fill in details of the enemy defences. The remainder of the Regiment was also busy as Walker records:

“9/9/17 60 men supplied to help make up losses by Australian Infantry.

“10/9/17 Heavy bombardment, continues for 2 days.

“13/9/17 Another terrific bombardment commences.

“14/9/17 Detachment from Regiment ordered to front line, also Machine Gunners and Patrols supplied.

“18/9/17 Terrific bombardment, more detachments went out to support Infantry.

“19/9/17 Another lot from Regiment move in on horses to escort German prisoners out.”<sup>36</sup>

On the early morning of 20 September, 1st and 2nd Divisions advanced in muddy conditions to capture a low ridge line running through the eastern edge of Polygon Wood. The attack succeeded and the ridge was in Australian hands by midday. Detachments and patrols of the 13th LH were allotted varying tasks during the attack.

Regimental Hotchkiss machine-gunners followed the advancing infantry to provide defence against German aircraft. Several guns arrived late because their crews became lost during the move.<sup>37</sup> When the situation in an area on the 1st Division front, known as “Black Watch Corner”, was not clear, a light horse patrol was dispatched to report on the situation. The use of the mounted patrol was described in the Official History as “under an arrangement initiated by corps headquarters as an experiment”.<sup>38</sup> It is not clear what Bean meant by this phrase. The light horse detachments were under divisional command so it is unlikely Corps HQ would interfere in the dispatch of a short patrol. It seems more likely the decision to use a mounted patrol was an attempt to test a policy being developed for the use of corps cavalry.

The patrol advanced at 9.20am, succeeded in gaining accurate information, but was not able to relay it to Divisional HQ till 1.30pm. By this time the situation had been clarified. Other light horse patrols ordered that day also demonstrated the difficulty of mounted patrolling on the Flanders battlefield where mud, wire, trenches and accurate fire made any movement slow and hazardous.<sup>39</sup> Walker recorded events as they were relayed to those men of the Regiment not directly under command of the attacking divisions:

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<sup>36</sup> Walker, 9, 10, 13, 14, 18 and 19 September 1917.

<sup>37</sup> Official History, Vol IV, p.774n.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.779.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

“20/9/17 Another counter attack by Australian Infantry at 4.50am, and all objectives gained, a few casualties in Regiment, prisoners escorted back to prison camp.

“21/9/17 Aussies still advancing. Heavy bombardment precedes German counter attack, with no success. A few more casualties in Regiment.”<sup>40</sup>

On 22 September, the two detachments under command of 1st and 2nd Divisions were transferred to 4th and 5th Divisions. The fresh divisions now prepared for the second attack. The attack took place on 26 September and resulted in the capture of the ridge linking Polygon Wood and the German Flanders I trench. The preparations for the attack were hampered by German artillery bombardments, and a German attack on the left flank of the I ANZAC front. Walker's diary reflects the toughness of the fighting, the stress perhaps showing in his dating of events:

“23/9/17 Another Australian attack with good results. Highland Regiment moves in to assist.

“25/9/17 Another heavy German bombardment. One of the 13th Officers and several men wounded. One of our Lieutenants killed and another wounded along with a few other ranks.

“30/9/17 Major McIntire, Commanding ‘C’ Squadron killed, along with a junior Officer. Several men and a number of horses wounded.

“1/10/17 Germans drop more bombs and a few more horses wounded.”<sup>41</sup>

As they had done during the first attack, light horse machine gunners were again deployed in an anti-aircraft role. On this occasion they were successful in shooting down 3 enemy aircraft.<sup>42</sup> Casualties suffered by 13th LH during the first two attacks were 3 officers and 22 other ranks.<sup>43</sup> One of the officers killed was Major H McIntire who had led “C” Squadron with distinction at Bapaume. The unhappy task of arranging for graves to be properly marked fell to Lieutenant L A Deegan. On 27 October, he wrote to the Officer Commanding “A” Squadron:

“I beg to report that crosses of oiled oak with the necessary lettering inscribed have been erected over the graves of Major H McIntire & Lieut S Lade at the following places, viz:—

“Major H McIntire—Cemetery South of 1st Anzac Dressing Station. Map reference (Sheet 28) H.27. C Central. NW of DICKEBUSCH. Killed 30th Sept. buried 1/10/17.

“Lieut S Lade—Cemetery adjoining 2nd C.C.S situated at L.23 C.2.7 (Sheet 27). No.1 Area REMI. Killed 26th Sept.”<sup>44</sup>

On 9 December, Deegan wrote to the Graves Registration Unit asking for a photograph of Lieutenant Lade's grave because, he explained:

<sup>40</sup> Walker, 20 and 21 September 1917.

<sup>41</sup> Walker, 23, 25 and 30 September 1917 and 1 October 1917.

<sup>42</sup> Walker, 26 September 1917.

<sup>43</sup> Official History. Vol IV, p.789n.

<sup>44</sup> Lieut L A Deegan, Field Notebook. Two Field Notebooks belonging to Lieut Deegan covering the period 20 July 1917 to 31 March 1918, are held at the 8/13 VMR Regimental Collection, Buna Barracks, Albury.

"I am acquainted with [his] relatives in Australia, & know that the receipt of [this] photograph would be greatly appreciated."<sup>45</sup>

The third attack, the capture of Broodseinde Ridge, took place on 4 October. The I and II ANZAC Corps attacked side by side and all objectives were captured before midday. On 7 October the 13th LH Regiment moved back out of the line to billets at Oudezeele, there to rest and refit.<sup>46</sup> The War Diary is vague, but Walker suggests strongly that machine-gunners and all, or part of "A" Squadron remained in the line till the withdrawal of I ANZAC Corps. He recorded casualties among the machine-gunners and the return of "A" Squadron to Oudezeele on 16 November.<sup>47</sup>

Immediately following the Regiment's disengagement from the Ypres fighting, 36 men were transferred to the Australian Artillery and the manning level of the Regiment reduced accordingly. Walker records the ensuing shortage of men to handle horses.<sup>48</sup> The preservation of two Field Notebooks kept by Lieutenant L A Deegan and covering the period 20 July 1917 to 30 March 1918 provide a description of 13th LH activities which would otherwise have gone unrecorded. They are especially interesting because for much of the time Lieutenant Deegan commanded the Hotchkiss Machine Gun detachment at Bailleul.

Bailleul was a town some 20 kilometres south-west of Ypres, and astride the railway linking Armentieres and Hazebrouck. Because of its proximity to the front line, and the rail connection, it was a suitable site for an ammunition dump. This dump was an attractive target for German aircraft, so anti-aircraft measures were taken to defend it. Lieutenant Deegan's detachment had a strength of 50 and was equipped with 5, or possibly 6 Hotchkiss machine-guns mounted for anti-aircraft use.<sup>49</sup> The Hotchkiss Automatic Rifle was of French manufacture and intended for infantry use. The British adopted the weapon, converted it to .303 calibre and issued it to cavalry units. It was fed by a 30 round metal strip, or tray magazine and had a rate of fire of 500rpm. A metal clip on the butt enabled the gun to rest on the firer's shoulder freeing both hands to clear stoppages.

The dump at Bailleul was raided on many occasions including the night of 22 July. Lieutenant Deegan's Fire Report describing the events of that night gives an interesting insight into both the employment of 13th LH and World War I air defence. Deegan's report is as follows:

"FROM OC BAILLEUL M.G's  
TO OC T BATTERY A.A.  
FIRE REPORT 23/7/17.

"At 10.20 pm on evening of 22nd inst. searchlight beams were observed due EAST of our position. The observer on duty heard approximately three aeroplanes moving without showing lights or blowing Claxton Horns.<sup>50</sup> Gun Teams took post and as AA

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Walker, 6 and 16 November 1917. The War Diary also records 14 other ranks wounded during November 1917.

<sup>48</sup> War Diary, November 1917, Sheet 1, and Walker, 18 and 19/11/1917.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., Deegan writes of 5 MGs. The War Diary record of the original task called for 6 MGs. The normal crewing for Hotchkiss guns in support of mounted troops was 4 men, 2 being horse-holders, so Deegan's 50 men to 5 or 6 MGs in a static role seems unusual.

<sup>50</sup> Lights and claxton horns were the methods used at night by allied aircraft to indicate that they were friendly. Deegan records these aircraft recognition details in his Notebook.

Gun Sections commenced firing, I opened traversing barrage over Ammunition Dump with 5 (five guns). The hostile planes continued to travel in Westerly direction & appeared to keep slightly north of Amm. Dump. As they reached vicinity of my position I opened a Northerly Vertical Barrage with all guns at 30° elevation over Station Dump. The planes appeared to shear off in direction of HAZEBRO[UCK] & returned about 11 pm, passing to the NORTH of BAILLEUL in an Easterly direction. They were fired on by A.A. Guns but not by the MG's of this section.

“At 11.25 approximately two hostile planes advanced from same direction as planes reported at 10.20. Searchlight beams brought one hostile plane into view slightly to N.E. of AMM. DUMP at an approximate height of 6,000 feet. A barrage was immediately opened on Northern end of Dump & at same time two bombs dropped near Map Ref. Sheet 28 S.W.—S. 20 D.9.8. Also one bomb dropped on Rlwy Line destroying two ways at S. 26.B.8.8. Planes then proceeded over BAILLEUL in Westerly direction towards HAZEBROUCK. As the planes left vicinity of AMM Dump I put on the STATION DUMP BARRAGE with 5 guns & and noticed that the planes appeared to bear further over the town away from the Dump. This second raid returned at MIDNIGHT & followed the same course taken by the 1st raiding party on their return. I did not open fire as they were too far away from Dumps. The Searchlight that picked up the aeroplane in second raid was a powerful light situated about two kilometres due South of this position.

“One of the aeroplanes returning in second raid veered over towards AMM. DUMP, but appeared to alter course to due [W is crossed out in pencil and E inserted] of Dump when I opened up a Northerly Vertical Barrage with 5 guns at 30° Elev[ation].

“At 3.45 am this morning (23rd inst), approximately two hostile planes were heard hovering in a direction due EAST of this Section. They appeared to be coming directly for AMM DUMP & a short lateral BARRAGE was opened 30° Elev. over the Dump. The planes then appeared to move away in a S.E. direction A.A fire was observed due E of AMM Dump but no searchlights.

“One N.C.O & one trooper were slightly wounded on the face by falling shrapnel splinters.

“2430 rounds were used by the 5 guns in the three raids.

“I beg to report one gun out of action & needs attention of an Armourer before I can use it again.

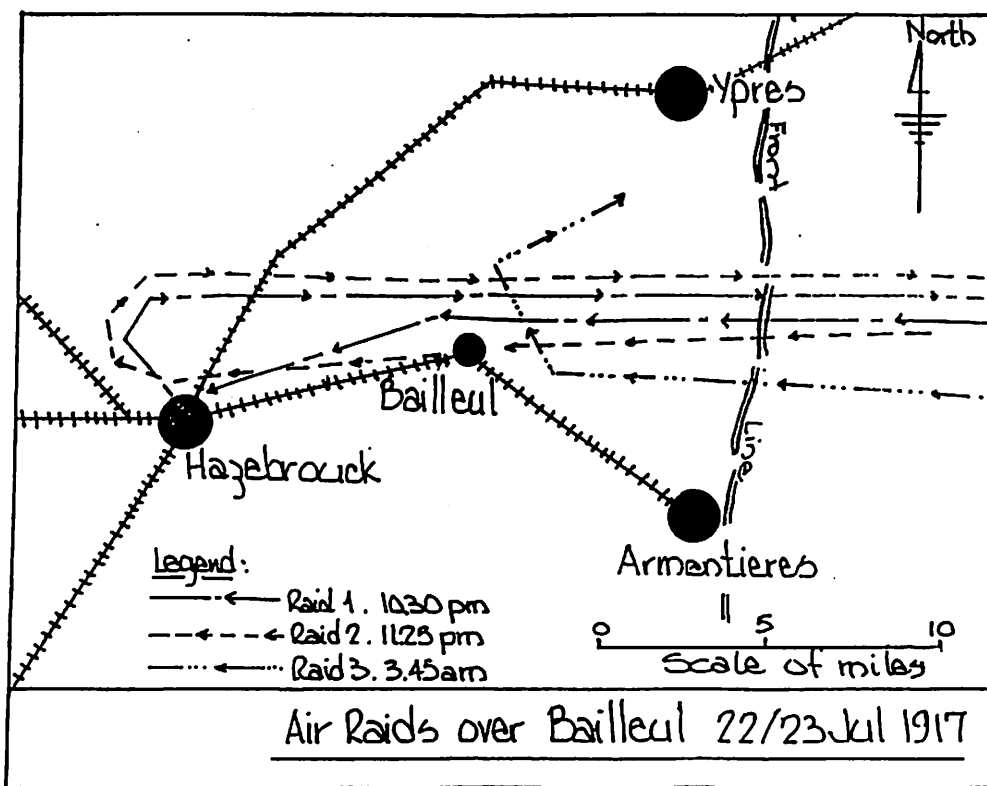
“L.A. Deegan Lieut  
OC. BAILLEUL M G's  
23/7/17.”<sup>51</sup>

Through the Notebooks it is possible to gain an understanding of the activities of a junior 13th LH officer during the second half of 1917. It was perhaps typical. From July to late August, Deegan commanded the MG Section at Bailleul. In late August he appears to have returned to duty with “A” Squadron. In late November he was back at Bailleul, but by late December was again with “A” Squadron. Reports of two road reconnaissance tasks which he conducted near Messines late in 1917 are included in the Notebooks. This extract shows the meticulous nature of Deegan's reporting:

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<sup>51</sup> Deegan in Field Notebook.





"REPORT OF 'A' SQUADRON ROAD LD2  
RECONNAISSANCE 22/12/17.

"PERSONEL[sic]:— 1 Officer — 4 N.C.O.'s.

"OBJECT:— (A) To report on M.G. positions from Hill 75 at N.30.c.5.8.  
(B) To report on roads & tracks leading to line WYTSCHAETE - MESSINES.

"REPORT:— Left camp 9.20, & proceeded via tracks over MONT KIMMEL; by 2nd Class road through LINDENHOER to Hill 75 N.30.c.5.8; this road is in good condition.

"The summit of Hill 75 is marked by a huge mine crater. The lip of this crater provides a good position for MG to control cross roads at N.36.b.4.9. Range about 750 [yards]

"There are several patches of dead ground between the crater & the cross roads, but this dead ground can be controlled by M.G.'s from lip of another crater at about N.36.b.4.3. There is a good sweep of fire for M.G.'s from both these craters EAST towards MIDDLE FARM at O.32.a.9.4. and SOUTH EAST towards MESSINES.

"ROADS:— The road from Hill 75. S.E to KRUISSTRAAT [unclear] will carry transport, but no further, as the road is impassable about 10[yards] from the KRUISSTRAAT junction. The road running S.W from WYTSCHAETE through KRUISSTRAAT Junction is a corduroy road of hewn timber in good condition.

"The second class road from KRUISSTRAAT Junction to MESSINES is merely a track in parts—marked with Shell Holes.

“The road from WYTSCHAETE to MESSINES is being used by transport, but was to-day damaged by shellfire.

“The country between Hill 75 & line WYTSCHAETE - MESSINES is not suitable for cavalry operations owing to Craters, shell holes, wire & bad state of all tracks shown on maps.

“I had to leave horses behind Hill 75 as EAST from there is under direct observation from enemy lines & shell fire was experienced.

“Field artillery are established at O.31.a.6.0.

“L A Deegan

Lieut

O.C. A Sqdn Reco[unclear] Patrol

22/12/17”

Deegan makes no direct reference to the weather, but other sources mention the snow and freezing conditions. The War Diary notes, “roads becoming impassable to horses without frost cogs due to frost and snow.”<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion

Thus 1917 came to a close for the 13th Light Horse Regiment. During the year it had fought in three momentous battles on two sectors of the front, the Somme and Flanders. The situation and intentions of the enemy had differed on each occasion as had the climatic conditions. In each of the battles it is possible to discern a developing policy for the employment of the corps cavalry. Bapaume began with a false start in February, then a much more successful advance against the enemy rear guards. At Bullecourt probing patrols were immediately thrown forward to establish the broad extent of enemy defences, then sustained reconnaissance and observation posts gathered detailed information of those dispositions. Finally the attacking infantry was supported in its preparation in every appropriate way.

At Ypres, the Regiment experienced the corps cavalry role at its toughest. Enemy dispositions, difficult ground and climatic conditions reduced the effectiveness of mounted patrolling in the front line. The subsidiary roles of anti-aircraft defence and route reconnaissance behind the line assumed greater importance. It is also possible to discern a changed attitude in the soldiers. The apparent exuberance of New Year 1917 when Walker wrote, “31/12/16 Rank and File see the old year out and create a great disturbance”, had given way to the more sober attitude of seasoned campaigners:

“31/12/17 Still freezing and snow thick, a quiet New Years Eve. Germans visit at night, and drop a few bombs, but no damage to men and horses.”<sup>53</sup>

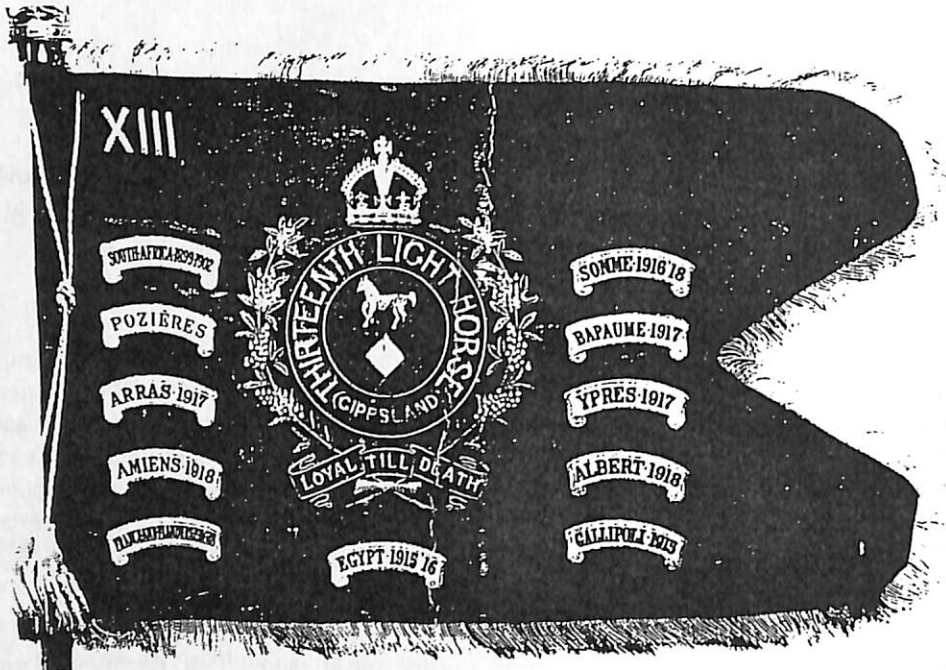
Perhaps the final word on the resolve and efficiency of the 13th LH was written at Villers Bretonneaux in April 1918 when the Chestnut Troop of the Royal Horse Artillery recorded in its War Diary:

<sup>52</sup> War Diary, December 1917, Sheet 2. Walker also refers to heavy snow and freezing conditions.

<sup>53</sup> Walker, 31 December 1916 and 31 December 1917.

“Rapidity with which attack orders were got out on 24th inst., made possible by use of well trained cavalry (Australian Light Horse), who quickly located extent of enemy gains.”<sup>54</sup>

The year 1917 demanded much of the 13th LH Regiment. The conditions on the Western Front had to be confronted and countered and the role of corps cavalry learned, tested and mastered. That they did this so well, and here I hasten to include the 4th LH and the NZMR who also served in France and Flanders, deserves recognition generally and especially in the body of literature devoted to the Australian Light Horse in the Great War 1914-1918.



Guidon of the 13th Light Horse Regiment

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in Official History, Vol V, pp.550, 551n.

## Battle Honour for Maryang San

**T**roops from the Holsworthy-based 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, paraded in Canberra on 27 February 1995 to receive a newly-awarded battle honour from the Korean Conflict. The battle honour "Maryang San" will join others from the Korea and Vietnam on the Regimental Colours of The Royal Australian Regiment.

The battle had not been recognised at the end of the Korean Conflict, but recent research and publication of the details prompted consideration as a battle honour. It was approved last year. The new honour will be emblazoned on the Colours by the commanding officer of the battalion at the time of the 1951 battle, General Sir Francis Hasset, who went on to become Chief of the Defence Force Staff in 1976.

The ceremony was attended by many ex members of the Battalion, including some who took part in the battle.

The battle of Maryang San took place north of the Imjin River between 2 and 8 October. It has been described as a post-World War 2 classic in which an outnumbered battalion removed the enemy from a series of strong mountain-top positions. Official War Historian, Robert O Neill, in his history of the Korean Conflict, wrote "In this action, 3RAR had won one of the most impressive victories achieved by any Australian battalion ... [this was] probably the greatest single feat of the Australian Army during the Korean War."

Twenty Australians were killed and 89 wounded. In one night, the enemy lost more than 120 in human-wave attacks. The Australians used more than four times the amount of ammunition the Battalion carried on such an operation.

A total of 39 decorations were awarded to officers, non-commissioned officers and soldiers who took part in the battle. Two officers were invested into the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), one made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE), one received a bar to his Military Cross (MC), and eight awarded the MC. Two NCOs were awarded Distinguished Conduct Medals (DCM), one of which was a Bar to the DCM won at the earlier battle of Kapyong; 10 received Military Medals (MM) and 11 officers, NCOs and soldiers were Mentioned in Despatches (MID). In addition, one officer was awarded the MC and three officers received MIDs for their efforts during the Battalion's tour of duty, including the Battle of Maryang San.

## Charles Upham, VC and Bar

Anthony Staunton

**C**harles Upham VC and Bar, one of only three double VC holders in the history of the decoration, died on 22 November 1994 at the age of 86. He was born in Christchurch, New Zealand, on 21 September 1908.

Arthur Martin-Leake (VC 1902, Bar 1914) and Noel Godfrey Chavasse (VC 1916, Bar posthumously 1917), were both medical officers who won the decoration for the rescue wounded men under fire. Upham, an infantry officer, won his first VC in Crete in 1941 and his second in North Africa in 1942.

After studying for a diploma at Canterbury Agricultural College, Upham mustered sheep in the high country of Canterbury province. He immediately enlisted in the New Zealand Expeditionary Force (NZEF) when war was declared and was posted as a private to the 20th Infantry Battalion. Upham rejected an offer to join an Officer training course in New Zealand in order to go overseas with the first draft of the NZEF but, after arriving in the Middle East, attended an Officer Cadet Training Unit. He did not impress his instructors and passed out of his course in last place. It was not the practice for newly commissioned officers to return to their own units but the Commanding Officer of the 20th Battalion, Colonel H Kippenberger, who did not share the instructors opinion, succeeded in retaining Upham for the 20th.

The New Zealand Division moved to Greece but withdrawn to Crete after the Germans invaded in April 1941. On 20 May, the Germans invaded Crete. During the next ten days Upham performed a series of remarkable exploits, showing outstanding leadership as a platoon commander, tactical skill and utter indifference to danger for which he won his first Victoria Cross. The citation for the award is particularly long and specifically mentions actions at Maleme on 22 May, Galatos on 25 May and Sphakia on 30 May. During the whole of the operation he suffered from dysentery and was able to eat very little, in addition to being wounded and bruised.

At the end of May, the order was given to evacuate Crete, and Upham returned to the Egypt, then went to Palestine and, later, Syria. His VC and that a second 20th NZ Battalion soldier, Sergeant Alfred Cline Hulme were gazetted on 14 October 1941. Upham was embarrassed about his award and until ordered would not wear the ribbon on his tunic.

Rommel's advance in June 1942 threatened Egypt and the New Zealand Division was sent to reinforce the Eighth Army. Upham, by then a captain, took part in the break-out at Minqar Qaim, where the New Zealanders had been positioned to block Rommel's path as the Afrika Korps drove forwards to Alexandria. Completely surrounded by the Germans, the New Zealanders broke out at bayonet point, an action on which Upham and his platoon made a notable mark. Upham himself, unseen in the darkness of night, ran from one German vehicle to the next, hurling in grenades to clear a path to let the New Zealanders through.

In the small hours of July 15 on the Ruweisat Ridge Upham's company was breasting a rise when it came under heavy fire. Perceiving that this came from a strong German concentration of tanks, guns and other armoured vehicles in a fold of ground below, Upham led his company down to the attack. Although shot through the elbow he personally destroyed a tank, four machine-guns and a number of trucks, capturing the German position and some valuable

tactical maps. Observers of his performance have since described him as being possessed of an almost divinely inspired rage against the enemy as he strode forward destroying everything in his path. But in the process he had additionally been wounded in the leg and after the fighting had died down was taken back to the regimental first aid post.

He refused to stay there after his wounds had been dressed and returned to his company just as it was coming under a heavy German counter-attack. Overwhelmed by superior strength, Upham's company fought until it was down to a handful of men. Severely wounded again, Upham was unable to fall back and was captured.

Upham was transported to Italy where he lay, gravely ill, for some months while he recovered from his wounds. He was subsequently transferred to Germany where he set himself to be as much of a nuisance to his captors as he could for the rest of the war. After numerous attempts to escape he was transferred to Castle Colditz where he was eventually liberated by advancing American troops in April 1945.

After his release, he was reunited with his fiancée, Miss Eileen McTamney, a New Zealand nurse who had been serving with the Red Cross in northwest Europe. They were married in Britain in June 1945. It was not until September 1945 that the VC which acknowledged his bravery in 1942 was gazetted. He was sitting having his portrait painted in an artist's studio in Wellington, New Zealand, when the telegram announcing the award was handed to him. He put it in his pocket without even telling the artist.

Meanwhile he had bought the farm he had always longed for. In doing so he rejected a gift of £10,000 raised for the purpose by the citizens of his native Christchurch, and allowed it to be used to fund a scholarship to help the children of servicemen to get to university. From then on he lived quietly, in the sheep country near Parnassus in New Zealand's South Island, shunning the limelight and the embarrassment of public recognition. He made a number of trips to Britain to attend the reunions of the VC and GC Association and attended a number of Anzac Day functions in Australia. He leaves his widow, Eileen, and three daughters.

## Living Victoria Cross Recipients

### Anthony Staunton

		date of birth	age
<b>1939-1945 War</b>			
Agansing Rai	Indian Army 1944 Burma	1920	75.4
Ali Haidar	Indian Army 1945 Italy	21 Aug 1913	81.8
Annand, Richard Wallace	British Army 1940 France	5 Nov 1914	80.6
Bhanbhagta Gurung	Indian Army 1945 Burma	1921	74.4
Bhandari Ram	Indian Army 1944 Burma	24 Jul 1919	75.9
Chapman, Edward Thomas	British Army 1945 Germany	13 Jan 1920	75.4
Cruickshank, John Alexander	Royal Air Force 1944 North Atlantic	20 May 1920	75.0
Cutler, Sir Roden	Australian Army 1941 Syria	24 May 1916	79.0
Fraser, Ian Edward	Royal Navy 1945 Singapore	18 Dec 1920	74.5
Gaje Ghale	Indian Army 1943 Burma,	Jul 1922	72.9
Ganju Lama	Indian Army 1944 Burma	7 Jul 1922	72.9
Gardner, Philip John	British Army 1941 Libya	25 Dec 1914	80.4
Gian Singh	Indian Army 1945 Burma	5 Oct 1920	74.7
Gould, Thomas William	Royal Navy 1942 Mediterranean	28 Dec 1914	80.4
Hinton, John Daniel	New Zealand 1941 Greece	17 Sep 1909	85.7
Jamieson, David Auldgo	British Army 1944 France	1 Oct 1920	74.7
Kenna, Edward	Australian Army 1945 New Guinea	6 Jul 1919	75.9
Kenneally, John Patrick	British Army 1943 Tunisia	15 Mar 1921	74.2
Lachhiman Gurung	Indian Army 1945 Burma	30 Dec 1917	77.4
Learoyd, Roderick Alastair Brook	Royal Air Force 1940 Germany	5 Feb 1913	82.3
Merritt, Charles Cecil Ingersoll	Canadian Army 1942 France	10 Nov 1908	86.6
Norton, Gerard Ross	South Africa 1944 Italy	7 Sep 1915	79.7
Porteous, Patrick Anthony	British Army 1942 France	1 Jan 1918	77.4
Reid, William	Royal Air Force 1943 Germany	21 Dec 1921	73.5
Smith, Ernest Alvia	Canadian Army 1944 Holland	3 May 1914	81.1
Smythe, Quentin George Murray	South Africa 1942 Egypt	6 Aug 1916	78.8
Tulbahadur Pun	Indian Army 1944 Burma	23 Mar 1923	72.2
Umrao Singh	Indian Army 1944 Burma	11 Jul 1920	74.9
Watkins, Sir Tasker	British Army 1944 France	18 Nov 1918	76.5
Wilson, Eric Charles Twelves	British Army 1940 Somaliland	2 Oct 1912	82.7
<b>Korean War</b>			
Speakman, William	British Army 1951 Korea	21 Sep 1927	67.7
<b>Confrontation</b>			
Rambahadur Limbu	British Army 1965 Sarawak	Aug 1939	55.8
<b>Vietnam War</b>			
Payne, Keith	Australian Army 1969 Vietnam	30 Aug 1933	61.8

There were 33 living Victoria Cross recipients as at 1 June 1995—average age 76.1 years

## Book Review

*Victoria's Guns: A Field Guide*, Major Bill Billett, Scienceworks, Museum of Victoria, 1994, soft cover, 98 pages, 46 photographs and 1 diagram, index, 3 appendices showing lists of the guns by town, nature of gun, and maker. Available for \$19.95, at Australian War Memorial, the Museum of Victoria and certain bookshops.

The reader does not have to be an artilleryman or a Victorian to enjoy this excellent field guide. However, if the reader is a gunner he will be pleased to learn that Major General John Whitelaw has written the foreword. This gives an indication of the status of the book. A Victorian reader will recognise that the towns where the gun can be found are some of the most attractive in Victoria, with civic pride very much in evidence.

The author, Major Billett, is the curator of Arms and Armour at the Museum of Victoria. He gives, at the outset, a little of his military background and the reason why he produced this listing of pre-Federation guns. The guns were from ships, fixed coastal defences, mobile field forces of the Colony, and some were even the booty of war. The guns are part of our history. They are now sited in parks and gardens in such diverse places as the coastal town of Queenscliff and the inland town of Tarnagulla<sup>1</sup>. To answer the question, why are they where they are, you will need to read the book.

The guide contains a short and general description of guns. This background information not only adds to the interest but it will provide a basis for examining guns in other States. The main joy of this study is the simple presentation of facts along with snippets of information. For example, at Daylesford, there is a gun which, "is readily accessible for children's play ... that once defended Melbourne"; and did you know that a magnet will not stick to brass?

This is the sort of book to browse through when the spirits are low or to be kept in the car glove box together with a road map of Victoria. Furthermore, it would make an ideal present for an inquisitive adult or child. It is to be hoped that Major Billett will do a follow-up study of post-Federation guns.—J J Shelton

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<sup>1</sup> 25 kilometres west of Bendigo.



## Correction

The article "Postscript to Mutiny, James Steele at Deniliquin, 1902", which appeared in the January-March 1995 edition of *Sabretache* was written by Les Hetherington. Apologies to Les for his name being left off the article.

## Letters

### Conway's Corner

Dear Editor,

I am writing to thank you for the excellent presentation of my article on Conway's Corner, that appeared in the latest edition of *Sabretache*.

However, I was disappointed that three sentences relevant to Lieutenant Hensman, were deleted from the footnotes. I understand that perhaps this was done in order to keep the footnotes to a minimum or to conserve space. Could I therefore, request that the relevant sentences be included along with a brief explanation, in the next issue of *Sabretache*, I make this request as I have had several people approach me to ask, What happened to the rest of the article, as it doesn't make sense as it is?

To be read from the end of: "During the fighting at ..."

Footnote West Australia Hill, Hensman was to have his right thigh shattered and would also suffer another five wounds. These were to be three further bullets in the right leg, his temple was grazed by a fourth and a fifth was to tear a broad, ugly strip across his stomach. When the patrol was withdrawn on Major Moor's command, he had to be left behind. Later that evening a rescue party guided by Private Krygger returned to the hill and found him still alive. He had been found by the Boers when they had gone over the positions held by the West Australians. Apart from being gently and humanely stripped of his accoutrements by a Sergeant of the Johannesburg Police, who also "commandeered" his watch, he had not been harmed further.

Footnote 3—should be Private Alexander Krygger.

John R Sweetman  
Altone Road  
Lockridge WA, 6054

### 102nd Regiment

A most informative article on the 102nd Regiment on its return to England appears in the March 1995 edition of *Descent*, The Journal of the Society of Australian Genealogists. "The 102nd Regiment at Horsham, Sussex" by Mrs Janet Robinson relates how the regiment was sent to Sussex on their return to England from Sydney in 1810. The Burial Register of Horsham Church records a terrible toll of the soldiers' children. Mrs Robinson lists 26 children identified as almost certainly belonging to the 102nd Regiment as well as 22 possibilities. Fourteen men from the 102nd Regiment were buried between 17 December 1810 and 3 July 1811.

## **The Military Historical Society of Australia**

**South Australian Branch**

**South Australian Branch will be host the  
Military Historical Society of Australia's  
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Queen's Birthday weekend  
8-10 June 1996**

Please return expressions of interest forms asap. Further information from

**A F Harris  
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PO Box 550  
MITCHAM SA 5062**

## **The Military Historical Society of Australia**

**Federal Council**

### **Notice of 1995 Annual General Meeting**

**Monday 28 August 1994**

**RSL Club Civic**

**7.30 pm**

In accordance with section 5(a) of the MHSA Constitution (1993), half the members of Federal Council retire at each AGM. Tan Roberts, Clem Sargent and Anthony Staunton were elected for two years at the 1994 AGM. The other three positions on Federal Council will be declared vacant at this AGM. Nominations will be received by the Federal Secretary up to and at the AGM for three Councillors to serve for two years from August 1995.

### Notes from the Editor on contributions to *Sabretache*

While the following are merely guidelines, it certainly helps the Editor in preparing copy for publication if these guidelines are followed. Nevertheless, potential contributors should not be deterred by them if, for example, you do not have access to computers or typewriters. Handwritten articles are always welcome, although, if publication deadlines are tight, they might not be published until the next issue.

Typewritten submissions are preferred. Material should be double spaced with a margin. If your article is prepared on a computer please send a copy on either a 3.5" or 5.25" disk (together with a paper copy).

Please write dates in the form 11 June 1993, without punctuation. Ranks, initials and decorations should be without full-stops, eg, Capt B J R Brown MC MM.

Please feel free to use footnotes, which should be grouped at the end of the article (however, when published in *Sabretache* they will appear at the foot of the relevant page). As well as references cited, footnotes should be used for asides that are not central to the article.

Photos to illustrate the article are welcomed and encouraged. However, if you can, forward copies of photos rather than originals.

Articles, preferably, should be in the range of 2,000-2,500 words (approx 4 typeset pages) or 5,000-7,000 words (approx 10 typeset pages) for major feature articles.

Articles should be submitted in accordance with the time limits indicated on page 2. Recently, lateness in receiving articles has meant that the Journal has been delayed in publication. Nevertheless, where an article is of particular importance, but is received late, the Editor will endeavour to publish the article if possible and space permitting.

Elizabeth Topperwien  
Editor



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### Application for Membership

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