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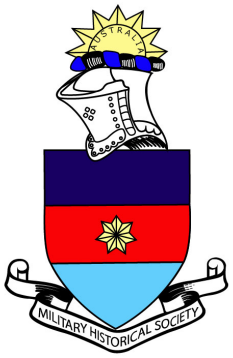

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CONTENTS

Contributions in the form of articles, notes, queries or letters are always welcome. Authors of major articles are invited to submit a brief biographical note, and, where possible, submit the text of the article on floppy disk as well as hard copy. The annual subscription to the society is $30.

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

SABRETACHE

The Military Historical Society of Australia

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

Organisation

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

Sabretache

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

Members' notices

Society members may place, at no cost, one notice of approximately 40 words in the "Members' notices" section of the Journal each financial year.

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

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Northern Vedettes

Captain Paul Rosenzweig

Vedette is an old term referring to a mounted sentinel placed in advance of a main position. It is derived from Spanish terms such as vela and veletta ("vigil"), themselves derived from the Italian vigilare ("to watch"). The term is particularly appropriate to a mobile unit operating in small, compact patrols based on a platoon or company post, designed to scout out to the front and flanks so that the post, and in turn the headquarters, do not become surprised by the enemy. It is a particularly effective technique for a force which is required to defend itself against a numerically superior aggressor, especially if this must be done across an enormous expanse of terrain.

Since its discovery, the continent of Australia has always been vulnerable to foreign incursions, and the early forts and garrisons along our seaboards are evidence of the seriousness with which we have considered the threat over the years. Makassan prahus from what is now South Sulawesi are among those vessels to have first crossed the Timor Sea to visit our shores. Wells and tamarind trees are today physical reminders of the many generations of Makassans who visited Australia, introducing to the Aboriginals the dugout canoe, pottery and iron smelting, and also leaving behind a strong heritage of language, many of the northern Australian dialects containing vocabulary borrowed from Makassan and recognisable to those speakers of Bahasa Indonesia.[1] Since the first official contact by Willem Jansz (Janszoon) in Duyfken in 1606, the north Australian coastline was visited regularly by Dutch mariners during the period 1623-1756, Arnhem Land gaining its name from the Arnhem in 1625, for example. When, through treaties made in 1824, the Dutch retained the right to maintain a presence in Java, the British thought it prudent to establish a defence presence in the north.

The Northern Territory was established in 1824 and was administered by New South Wales until 1863. Concerns for the Dutch, French and German colonialists saw three military garrisons established successively during the ninteenth century, demonstrations of British sovereignty in the region—Fort Dundas on Melville Island (1824-29), Fort Wellington at Raffles Bay (1827-29) and Victoria in Port Essington on Cobourg Peninsula (1838-49). On 17 February 1846, the Colony of North Australia, comprising all lands north of the 26°S latitude, was established by the British Government for settlement by released convicts.[2] Sir Charles Augustus FitzRoy[3] was appointed Governor of this Colony of North Australia on 21 February 1846[4] (whilst he was concurrently Governor-in-Chief of NSW). Beyond Victoria settlement however, North Australia was never physically established and, following a change in Government in Britain,

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1 Among the many: rrupiya (rupiah = money), dhambaku (tembakau = tobacco) and bandirra (bendera = flag).

2 Letters Patent dated 17 February 1846.

3 FitzRoy had earlier seen military service as an officer in the Horse Guards, notably at Waterloo in 1815, had been a member of the House of Commons for a brief period, and was Lieutenant-Governor of Prince Edward Island (1837-41) and then of the Leeward Islands (1841-45) before coming to New South Wales. Whilst FitzRoy can certainly be claimed as the Northern Territory's first Governor, in reality his brief period of rule extended only as far as the small number of Marines, some with wives and families, and their convicts at the relatively autonomous Victoria settlement. FitzRoy served as Governor-in-Chief of New South Wales from 1846 to 1851 and was subsequently the first "Governor-General of all of Her Majesty's Australian Possessions" from 1851 to 1855. He died in London on 16 February 1858. He was appointed a Knight of the Royal Guelphic Order (of Hanover) in 1837 and a Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath in the Civil Division (KCB) in 1854.

4 Letters Patent dated 21 February 1846

FitzRoy's Letters Patent were withdrawn in December of that year and the Colony was abandoned; that area north of the 26°S latitude reverted to the control of the Colony of New South Wales.[5] Victoria settlement was itself abandoned on 30 November 1849.

Control over the Northern Territory passed from New South Wales to the Colony of South Australia in 1863 and, under the direction of the Government of Premier Henry Ayers, Boyles Travers Finniss and James Thomas Manton, his Chief Surveyor and Second-in-Command, were responsible for founding a fledgling settlement at Escape Cliffs and Finniss became the first Government Resident of the Northern Territory.[6]

They arrived in Adam Bay and established the Escape Cliffs settlement on 20 June 1864, although after much quarrelling, breaches of discipline and complaints about the site, Finniss was recalled on 21 September 1865 to face a Royal Commission; the whole party was recalled on 6 November 1866 and Escape Cliffs was abandoned. The South Australian Surveyor-General George William Goyder was then despatched to the Northern Territory where he established his camp at the foot of Fort Hill, on the saddle between it and the mainland plateau—an anchor and commemorative plaque today records the site—and on the plateau to the north was laid out the township of Palmerston, today the Northern Territory's capital, the city of Darwin.

The *Northern Territory Acceptance Act 1910* authorised the transfer of control of the Northern Territory from South Australia to the Commonwealth, while the *Northern Territory (Administration) Act 1910* detailed the applicability of Commonwealth laws to the Territory, provided for the appointment by the Commonwealth of an Administrator, and provided for the making of ordinances. In the Northern Territory Government's first ordinance of 1911, the position of the Administrator was set out, charging him with administering the Government of the Northern Territory on behalf of the Federal Government.[7] On 25 March 1912, Dr John Anderson Gilruth DVSc FRSEd, a Doctor of Veterinary Science and Professor of Veterinary Pathology at the University of Melbourne, was appointed by the Federal Government as the first Administrator of the Northern Territory of the Commonwealth of Australia. After the Commonwealth took control of the Northern Territory, concerns for surveying the north saw RAN hydrographic vessels deployed to the Top End in the 1920s while, with a change in emphasis, Darwin lost its status as a naval base and instead became a fuel storage base with the first tanks being built in 1924-28. A Naval Officer-in-Charge was not appointed until 1934, while a Naval Reserve Depot was established in the same year and a Naval wireless station in 1937; boom defence netting and mines came later.

For the military forces, the Northern Territory did not gain independent administrative command until 1939, the 7th Military District being established on the recommendation of the Inspector-General of the Army Major-General Squires. Meanwhile, artillerymen and engineers had been sent to Darwin to build fortifications during the 1930s, a 6-inch gun battery and barracks being built but the garrison not numbering more than 84 by 1937. The prudence of a defence presence was seen by some but not fully implemented, with a Joint Services Committee and a Defence Committee considering the problem in 1937. The Darwin Mobile Force of artillery gunners was sent to Darwin in 1938, and this was followed by the CMF 27th Battalion and other units in the ensuing years following the declaration of war. The few RAAF aircraft in the north operated out of Darwin's civil aerodrome at Parap (the airstrip is today Ross Smith

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5 Letters Patent dated 28 December 1846.
6 Appointed on 3 March 1864; South Australian Parliamentary Paper No.36 of 1864.
7 Northern Territory Government Ordinance 1911, para 5.

Avenue) while, from mid-1940, No.13 Squadron flew from the still unfinished RAAF aerodrome.

The far northwest of Australia meanwhile, had first been visited by Portuguese and Dutch ships, but British interest in the Kimberley region dates from the arrival of William Dampier who anchored the Cygnet in King Sound in 1688. Over a century later, after the establishment of Swan Colony (later Perth), an overland exploration of the region by George Grey (1837-38) was followed by Alexander Forrest (1879) and, in 1880, the region was formally named after the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Earl of Kimberley. The East Kimberley was settled by pastoralists who brought their cattle from the eastern states while Western Australian pastoralists came north and occupied the West Kimberley—thus leading to two separate occupations and the region becoming known by the plural name "The Kimberleys", which persists today as a misnomer. The discovery of gold and iron ore led the region into the twentieth century, with the mining and pastoral industries being the largest source of employment up to World War 2.

The defence of northern Australia became an immediate problem during World War 2 when the Japanese entered the war and surprised all with the rapidity of their advances through South-East Asia. The determined efforts made in and around Darwin at this time are well documented elsewhere and will not be discussed in detail here.[8] In response to the perceived threat of invasion, a number of unique forces were raised for service in and to the north of Australia. Caught off-guard, these units were hurriedly raised to supplement our appalling lack of knowledge about our own country. The editor of the RSL journal *The Duckboard* recorded,

> There is a house in Domain Road, South Yarra, which was the planning and administrative centre for so many of these organisations and it contained many records. Roll after roll of large scale maps of remote areas never mentioned in official communiques. Boxes of ground and air photographs identified only by latitude and longitude, and filing cabinets filled with material about strange cryptics like AIB, ISTD, AGS, LRRO, Z-Special and NAOU.[9]

This was the headquarters of the Inter-Allied Services Department, an organisation responsible for supporting the Jaywick and Rimau raids, among other clandestine activities in the south Pacific. Within Australia itself, among a variety of units created, including Donald Thomson's Special Reconnaissance Unit, was raised a force of "coastwatchers", known as the 2nd/1st North Australia Observer Unit, AIF. As Australian and American Service personnel were being concentrated along the eastern seaboard, this force was to patrol the enormous "open front door", not to stop an enemy invasion but to give warning of his intentions. As vedettes for Northern Territory Force,[10] they patrolled from north-western Queensland to northern Western Australia on horseback—mounted, armed sentries patrolling away from the main NT Force outposts. Their daunting task was to watch for and warn of imminent invasion, and then to stay behind enemy lines and report on subsequent strengths, dispositions and deployments. On no account was NT Force to be caught unawares by the enemy. This required remarkable vigilance from a relatively small force scattered across an expansive, unexplored and largely uninhabited coastline. Their intensive patrolling schedule and the enormity of radio transmissions undoubtedly gave the impression of a much larger force, supplemented by the activities of NT Force and the various other units in the Northern Territory at the time.

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8 See particularly Abbott (1950), McCarthy (1959), Lockwood (1975), Hall (1980) and Powell (1988).
9 *The Duckboard*, 22(4): 21.
10 Known simply as "NT Force" and occasionally by some as "Norforce".

The anticipated invasion did not eventuate, and a surprising complacency infiltrated northern defence planning during the post-war decades. Little was heard of the NAOU during the post-war years as they had not actually "achieved" anything and had no tales of glory. Had northern Australia been overrun however, most of the men would have been killed and the survivors decorated for gallantry, their performances hailed as an Australian epic to rival Lone Pine, Tobruk, Kapyong or Long Tan. Even so, to say that the NAOU had not achieved anything is erroneous because its successes were immense in fields other than "behind-the-lines" operations. Its role in infrastructure gathering was notable, as also was its success as a coastwatch organisation. Anticipating a Japanese landing during the 1942/43 Wet Season, the NAOU established a Coastwatch Platoon Group and deployed a screen of stations east and west of Darwin to provide a 24-hour watch and give immediate warning to Headquarters NT Force of the approach of enemy forces. They were very much NT Force's front-line and, with the 2/8th Independent Company, were the "cutting edge" for the three brigade groups which lay in wait behind them. These coastwatch posts reported nearly every over-flying Japanese plane in all the raids during the period of their existence, an often overlooked achievement of some considerable significance.

The first published account of the NAOU did not appear until 1975[11] when, following withdrawals from Vietnam and the fall of Saigon, the defence of continental Australia was again becoming topical. A far more detailed account was published by the same author in 1979, and it was the adventurous nature of the NAOU revealed in this paper which prompted Richard and Helen Walker to compile their anecdotal history of the NAOU.[12] Their title is misleading however, because many units at that time were known colloquially as "Curtin's Cowboys", and some members of the NAOU are adamant that it is a title which "we were never known as till the book came out".[13] And because of the few published accounts, there are many myths and inaccuracies which need to be analysed and corrected—that the NAOU were "bushfire troops", that Stanner was only a "nominal commander" or figurehead, that the NAOU only operated from 1942 until 1943, that it patrolled all of northern Australia from 1942 to 1945, or conversely, that northern Australia was abandoned entirely and left unprotected for this same period.

Quite remarkably, it was not until 1981 that various positive steps toward the provision of another force of vedettes in northern Australia came to their culmination with the raising of the North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE). An integrated Army Reserve unit, NORFORCE is tasked with providing a widely-based strategic reconnaissance and surveillance capacity on the approaches to northern Australia, throughout the entire Northern Territory and that part of Western Australia north of the local Government boundary for the Kimberley region, an area long ago described as, "a vague and undefined territory to which attaches that glamour and romance that enfolds far distant lands".[14] This represents an area of 1.8 million square kilometres, or approximately one quarter of continental Australia. The coastline, including all of the offshore islands, measures some 4,200 kilometres in the Dry Season, swelling to 11,500 kilometres in the Wet Season due to inundation. The terrain varies widely from sandy beaches to red cliffs and dense swathes of impenetrable mangroves; from tropical rainforest to savannah grasslands to barren desert and gibber plains. Massive river systems run for kilometres from deep in the hinterland to the coast, including:

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11 Vane (1975).
12 Walker & Walker (1986).
13 Captain T V Carty (retd), pers comm, 17 December 1993.
14 Battye (1913) Volume 2, p.1012.

- The mighty Ord, Durack, Victoria, Fitzmaurice and Daly Rivers draining into Joseph Bonaparte Gulf in the west, as well as the Drysdale into the Timor Sea, and the Fitroy into King Sound and the Indian Ocean.
- Adelaide River, and the Alligator and Mary River systems running from the Arnhem Land floodplains to the Arafura Sea.
- The Rose, Roper, Limmen and McArthur Rivers running from the Territory into Limmen Bight.
- The Nicholson, Gregory, Leichhardt, Flinders and Norman Rivers draining from western Queensland into the lower Gulf of Carpentaria.

Northern Australia has particular demographic and social characteristics, including some of the most remote and sparsely settled regions, which clearly distinguish it from the rest of the nation. The Northern Territory has a population of some 170,000 people and the Kimberley some 23,600 people.[15] Other than occupying a dozen major population centres, ranging from Darwin (78,000) to Tennant Creek (3,100) in the Northern Territory, and six established towns (four local government areas) in the Kimberley, the remaining inhabitants are scattered among townships, settlements, outstations, town camps and pastoral properties. It is within this extensive Area of Operations that NORFORCE operates, in peacetime as in war, with the formal role of conducting reconnaissance and surveillance.

But "reconnaissance and surveillance of what?" may be asked. The necessity for such a presence can be appreciated when it is realised that this Area of Operations holds an abundance of natural resources, providing a solid basis for such industries as mining and agriculture which in turn, contribute substantially to the national economy. The area of Northern Australia north of the 26° S parallel contains just 5.4% of the national population but generates some 24% of Australia's exports. NORFORCE's Area of Operations contains the world's largest ore deposits of silver, lead and zinc, is responsible for over one third of the world's total diamond production, contains key defence establishments, and generates revenue in excess of $3,000 million per annum. Among the locations where facilities may be found for the extraction of natural resources are included:

Groote Eylandt:	The world's third largest producer of manganese.
Gove:	Alumina mining, and the third largest bauxite mine in Australia.
Alligator River basin:	Major uranium deposits, including one deposit at Jabiru containing 20% of the world's known low cost resource deposits.
McArthur River:	A world-class deposit with zinc, silver and lead ore all co-located.
Tennant Creek:	Significant gold and copper reserves.
Katherine:	Significant gold reserves.
Mereenie:	Over 6 million barrels of oil produced since 1984, as well as a significant supply of natural gas.

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[15] Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Northern Territory at a glance*, 1993; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue No.3203.5, 30 June 1992; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Catalogue No.3207.7, 30 June 1993.

Palm Valley:	Over 1 million cubic metres of natural gas is piped every day to all major population centres of the Northern Territory.
Fitzroy Crossing:	Major lead and zinc deposits.
Halls Creek:	Major lead, silver, copper, zinc and gold deposits.
Argyle:	Over one third of the world's highest grade diamonds are found west of Kununurra (50% of gem or near-gem quality, and 50% of high grade industrial quality).

In addition, there are over 18 major gold mines throughout the Area of Operations, and major offshore facilities relating to deposits of natural gas and oil; the Northern Territory's oil production in 1992 was valued at over $500 million. The beef and buffalo export industry in the Territory earnt over $27 million in 1990-91, while livestock slaughtering earnt over $120 million in the same period. Other such ventures as the Ord River Dam and Irrigation Project continue to contribute significantly to the area's economic wealth. Such continuing development in the region has turned it from a remote outpost into Australia's northern gateway, not just the "front door" for arrivals but equally for an economic foray into Asia. This is particularly so in the Northern Territory since attaining Self Government on 1 July 1978 where, after 70 years of neglect, constitutional advance has been converted into economic advantage.[16]

In terms of infrastructure, the area contains facilities of both economic and defence value. Darwin, as the major city and port, relies on its lifeline—the Stuart Highway—for all road transport, a single bitumen road running north-south connecting it with Alice Springs. It also connects with Jabiru via the Arnhem Highway, Mount Isa and eastern Australia via the Barkly Highway, and with western Australia via the Victoria Highway. Other than the bulk loading and container facilities at Darwin port, other major ports are located along the length of the coastline, including Broome, Derby, Wyndham, Nhulunbuy and Groote Eylandt. Power is supplied by various stations, most notably the Channel Island Power Station which is of major economic importance, as also are the Alice Springs-Darwin gas pipeline, and the water pipelines from Darwin River Dam and Manton Dam.

Other than the airports and civil airstrips in Darwin and other major towns, strategically important airfields are also to be found at Angurugu (Groote Eylandt), Galiwinku (Elcho Island), Maningrida, Milingimbi and Ngukurr, Milikapiti (Melville Island) and Nguiu (Bathurst Island), and Lajamanu, Yuendumu and Wadeye in the Territory's hinterland. The major airfields are either Defence assets co-located with civilian facilities, or are frequently used by Service aircraft. Other major Australian Defence Force assets in the region include:

- Airhead and fighter bases—RAAF Bases Darwin, Tindal and Curtin.
- Darwin Naval Base.
- RAAF Radar Surveillance Unit (Jindalee Over-the-Horizon Radar).
- The Joint Defence Facility at Pine Gap.
- Communications facilities, including HMAS Coonawarra and sites at Humpty Doo and Shoal Bay.
- Larrakeyah and Robertson Barracks.

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[16] See *Key points on the Economic & Trade Position of the Northern Territory and its relationships with Asian countries*, Northern Territory Department of Industries and Development, Ministry of Asian Relations and Trade, Strategic Services Group, September 1993.

Any destruction of these regional assets, or even disruption of their normal production or role, could have a marked effect on the nation's economic infrastructure and defence capability. Given the very sparsely distributed population, and the widely distributed nature of these resources, it is not possible to sufficiently guard each one on a permanent basis, either physically on-site or on the approaches to it. Thus, infiltration with the aim of destroying or interfering with these assets could be readily achieved. Accordingly, infiltration must be guarded against by a force which can disperse itself widely to observe, not so much the facility itself, but the approaches which must be traversed to reach it, over which an insurgent party is at its most vulnerable. NORFORCE's success lies in its regionalism, in its co-operative effort with all defence and civilian agencies tasked with detecting incursions, and in its role of maintaining a forward reconnaissance and surveillance capability over some of the harshest terrain in Australia.

One of the earliest major deployments of NORFORCE, under the command of Lt Col John George, took place in June 1982. The regiment was tasked with observing the approaches to a number of "targets" throughout the Area of Operations, threatened by low-level reconnaissance and harassment raids from an enemy force which had covertly lodged itself somewhere on the north Australian coastline.[17] The "enemy" force was provided by a squadron of the Special Air Service Regiment from Swanbourne in Perth, commanded by Major Bill Forbes. For Forbes' 3rd SAS Squadron, Exercise BILTONG WATCHER was a major testing exercise, to definitively test an SAS squadron in long-range insertion techniques, reconnaissance and harassment operations against targets of strategic or economic value. Forbes, subsequently a Commanding Officer of NORFORCE, recalls the conduct of the exercise:

> The patrol deployments occurred from the SHQ base at Delissaville on the Cox Peninsula. A large number of insertion and extraction platforms were utilized from C130 [Hercules] and Caribou through Porter and Nomad aircraft to Fast Patrol Boat. Targets existed as far apart as Mount Isa, Gove, Alice Springs and Darwin. SAS patrols undertook a week of rehearsal training, acclimatization, briefings and Orders Groups at Delissaville and then deployed to the field for somewhere around 3 weeks duration. Few received re-supply drops, more often than not they carried their own additional supplies and hid them, or they had specific caches laid for them by other patrols who transited through their AO. The usual extraction platform was the opposite to the insertion one, that is go in by light aircraft to an airstrip lit by a Tactical Air Lighting System (TALS) usually laid by an "agent", and extract by Fast Patrol Boat. To say that missions were a challenge would be a major understatement, one particular patrol was not heard of for 19 days.[18]

During the approaches to one of the several designated targets, one of the SAS patrols was detected by the members of a NORFORCE Observation Post. In the resultant action, the majority of the patrol escaped and, through various well-rehearsed escape and evasion procedures, managed to return to Squadron Headquarters at Delissaville (now known as Belyuen)—a distance of over 1,000 kilometres! The remainder were captured and secured overnight. A media correspondent subsequently reported:

> George's Norforce, based in Darwin, appears already to be an outstanding success. Nobody's talking publicly but the citizen soldiery of Australia's most remote region are buzzing with excitement over a recent Norforce coup. On a recent exercise

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[17] A company from 3RAR was also involved in the exercise.
[18] Lieutenant Colonel W N N Forbes AM, pers comm, 16 September 1994.

> "somewhere in the Northern Territory" a Norforce patrol tracked down a squad from the super-secret Special Air Services Regiment exercising in the same area. The reservists rounded up the SAS unit at gunpoint and escorted them to the local jail for the night.[19]

In the various formal and informal debriefs which followed, the very creditable performance of the NORFORCE soldiers and hierarchy was openly acknowledged. Notably in the end-of-exercise function in the Long Tan Club at Larrakeyah Barracks, the SAS Squadron Commander and his men praised the performance of NORFORCE, plaques and stories of daring were exchanged, and the SAS patrolmen vowed to take a little more care when they next heard NORFORCE was in surveillance mode around a target.

Such is NORFORCE's task in war as it is now in peace, and as the regiment operates now so shall it operate when aggressors genuinely breach our northern shore, the vedettes becoming shadows behind enemy lines in their own country. In NORFORCE's fifth year, *The Vedette* was approved as the regimental Quick March, a quick and lively march with a good beat. It was first used in parades for the granting of the Freedom of Entry to the City of Katherine in June that year. It is an appropriate tune for Australia's modern vedettes, whose role it is to observe and report upon the enemy as did their predecessors during World War 2.

For security reasons, little can be disclosed of the operational nature of NORFORCE, and the analysis and study of these aspects is better left to professional strategists, just as the impact of successive Commanding Officers will be better analysed by professional military historians in years to come. This is a preliminary regimental history however, chronicling NORFORCE's heritage in the 2nd/lst North Australia Observer Unit, AIF and the early years in the development of one of the Australian Defence Force's most exciting units.

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19 Stakehouse (1982).

Early Colour Patch schemes of the 2nd AIF—Part 1

Paul Skrebels*

This is the first of two articles dealing with colour patches issued to the infantry battalions of the 2nd AIF during the early stages of the war. It uses as sources the primary material compiled in the Department of Defence's publication, the *Army Colour Patch Register 1915-1949*,[1] various unit histories, contemporary photographs, and examples of the colour patches themselves.

The documents from 1940 included in the Colour Patch Register reveal that a comprehensive scheme of colour patches, derived from that of the original AIF, was drawn up for the divisions being raised for the new AIF. Some of the battalion histories written after the war mention the patches received at this time, but their reactions to and explanations for this first issue vary, and in certain cases leave the reader with the sense that idiotic mistakes were made by the military authorities in mismatching units of the 2nd AIF with their "parent" units of the First World War. Thus in discussing the 2/24th Battalion's "traditional red-and-white diamond", the unit history says: "Somebody blundered when the 2/24th Battalion was formed, for initially we were issued with a purple-over-green diamond abomination", but that "the error was recognised and the correct patches issued."[2] The history of the 2/28th Battalion simply dismisses the first patch issue as "the false start at Northam [the battalion's first camp] when one colour patch had to be removed soon after it was affixed".[3] The history of the 2/19th Battalion even goes so far as to identify the patch first issued to the 2/19th with another battalion altogether, stating:

> On 1st September 1940 colour patches were issued, and considerable dissention and controversy ensued as we received the 34 Bn (1914-18) colours—purple over green in a grey oval shape. Whatever genius decided this apparently worked on the basis that, as our division [the 8th] was the third raised in this war, we would use the 3rd Div. patches of the first war.[4]

The "dissention and controversy" will be looked at later, but it is important to note that even though this description goes part of the way towards actually explaining the rationale behind the patch issued, the feeling among the members of the battalion was that initially "we had to wear the wrong colour patch."[5]

Other battalion histories, however, provide stronger clues that this early patch issue was an attempt to regularise unit identification in the new expeditionary force. Among the many tidbits supplied in the very fine unit history of the 2/13th Battalion is a contribution called *The History of the Colour Patches*. After a tantalisingly brief mention of what may have been the adoption

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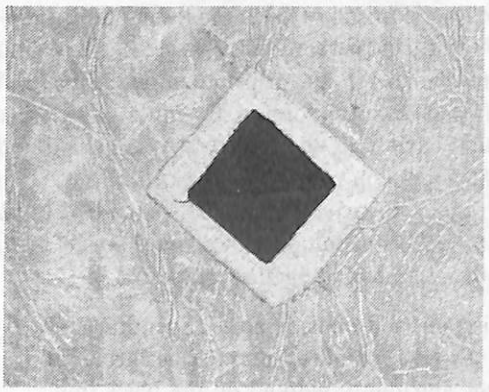
* Paul Skrebels is a member of the South Australian branch of the Society. He has been interested in military history since childhood, and has collected Australian, British and US militaria for about twenty years. He was awarded a PhD in English Literature in 1992, and currently lectures in Professional Writing and Communication at the University of South Australia. The author would like to thank Col D A Chinn (retd), compiler of the *Colour Patch Register*, for providing unlimited access to that work, and Mr Don Pedler for assisting with one of the sources.

1 *Army Colour Patch Register 1915-1949*, Department of Defence (Army Office), Canberra, 1993.
2 R P Serle (ed), *The Second Twenty Fourth*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1963, p.26.
3 Philip Masel, *The Second 28th*, 2/28th Battalion and 2/24th Anti-Tank Company Association, Perth, 1961, p.118.
4 *The Grim Glory: The History of the 2/19 Battalion AIF*, 2/19 Battalion Association, Sydney, 1975, p.22.
5 Ibid, p.23.

of unofficial patches within the battalion, there is a description of the first official patch which, as the 2/24th and 2/19th found, had nothing to do with the "two-blue oblong of the original 13th Battalion":

> The "colour" allotted to the 20th Brigade was red and therefore the battalions of the Brigade had to conform. The 2/13th, being the first battalion of the Brigade, found itself wearing a black-over-red colour patch, diamond shaped.[6]

This and further information regarding the patches worn by the 2/13th is a feature all too rare among unit histories, but accounts in the histories of two other battalions of 7th Division are also useful. The 2/14th Battalion's initial "black over blue diamond on a grey background" is explained as signifying "the first Battalion of the third Brigade of the second Division of the Second AIF",[7] while another battalion in the same brigade, the 2/16th, "being the second battalion of the brigade and the brigade being the second [sic] of the division, the original colours were a purple triangle over a blue triangle, thus forming a diamond on a grey background."[8]



The first official issue patch of the 2/13th Battalion, mid to late 1940: a black-over-red diamond on a grey background. This example appears never to have been worn, and the backing is of a coarse blanket material, as is frequently encountered in early war examples.

The First Scheme Described

It is clear, then, that the issuing of colour patches which had no relationship to those of a battalion's original AIF forbears—which had been maintained during the interwar years by militia battalions bearing the same numbers—was no blunder at all, but part of a considered plan to create a uniform scheme of unit recognition within the newly formed (and still forming) 2nd AIF. Unfortunately, it is impossible to pin down precisely when the scheme was prescribed, as "The original authority remains unlocated", but the conjecture is made in the *Colour Patch Register* that it was "issued in April (or early May) 1940".[9] From the various accounts in unit histories it would seem that the patches themselves became available from about the middle of the year. For example, the history of the 2/19th Battalion reproduces a photograph of the so-called "Griffith-Leeton-Yandra Contingent" of the battalion dated July 1940. These men

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6 Lt G H Fearnside (ed), *Bayonets Abroad*, [2/13th Battalion Association], Sydney, [1953], p.39. At this stage 20th Brigade formed part of 7th Division, hence the diamond-shaped patch. A description of the orders of battle of the divisions of the 2nd AIF is beyond the scope of the present article, but a detailed account of how these evolved and changed during the first years of the war may be found in Graham R McKenzie-Smith, "The Numerology of the Second AIF (Infantry) 1939 to 1945", *Sabretache*, Vol.XXX, No.2, April-June 1989, pp.3-11.

7 W B Russell, *The Second Fourteenth Battalion*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1948, p.13..

8 Malcolm Uren, *A Thousand Men at War*, Heinemann, London, 1959, p.21. At the time, 21st Brigade was the third brigade of 7th Division, following 19th and 20th Brigades; see McKenzie-Smith, op cit, p.6.

9 *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, p.16-1. The available information concerning this first scheme is assembled under the heading "Assumed Colour Patch Authority DCP-01: 6, 7 and 8 Divs", *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, section 16. This expedient is the result of "the relatively decentralised and limited promulgation methods of 1939-41" by which authorities were issued, and that sadly the authority in question was one of those "either destroyed by programmed culling of the files directly after World War II or lost during postwar reorganisation" (part 1, p.3-5 para.326, and p.3-4 para.321).

are already wearing the despised green-over-purple oval patch, indicating (if the date is correct) that it was available well before the official issue to the whole battalion on 1 September.[10]

Luckily, contemporary charts illustrating the scheme survive, and these are reproduced in the *Colour Patch Register*. They show, at least as far as the infantry was concerned, how closely this scheme adhered in form to that of the original AIF, with three notable qualifications:

- a grey background denoting the 2nd AIF, which seems to have come into use immediately after the outbreak of war, although again no order appears to have survived authorising the distinction;[11]
- a change from the old four-battalion brigade to the British style three-battalion brigade structure, so that the most junior battalion colour scheme of the old AIF—white over the brigade colour—was dropped;[12]
- a discontinuity in the sequence of battalion numbers in 7th and 8th Divisions as compared to the original 2nd and 3rd Divisions, AIF.[13]

This last feature of the 2nd AIF's structure was to have important consequences for the reception of the new scheme, leading ultimately to its rapid demise.

In table form, the scheme for the infantry of the three 2nd AIF divisions as they were to appear in the proposed organisation of early 1940 is as follows:

6th Division—rectangle

Bn colour (top)		black	purple	brown
Bde colour (bottom)				
green	16 Bde	2/1 Bn	2/2 Bn	2/3 Bn
red	17 Bde	2/5 Bn	2/6 Bn	2/7 Bn
sky blue	18 Bde	2/9 Bn	2/10 Bn	2/11 Bn

7th Division—diamond

Bn colour (top)		black	purple	brown
Bde colour (bottom)				
green	19 Bde	2/4 Bn	2/8 Bn	2/12 Bn
red	20 Bde	2/13 Bn	2/15 Bn	2/17 Bn
sky blue	21 Bde	2/14 Bn	2/16 Bn	2/27 Bn

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10 *The Grim Glory*, p.17

11 There are descriptions of the "2nd AIF Battleship Grey Backgrounds" in *Colour Patch Register*, part 1, p.4-3 para.419-421, and p.5-4, para.516b, but no specific date of introduction. The colour was described in official sources as both battleship grey and battle grey.

12 This was in contrast to the scheme adopted by 9th Division for its new "T" patches in December 1942, when white was used for the junior battalion of each brigade, and brown was dropped.

13 See McKenzie-Smith, op cit, p.5, for an explanation of why and how the numbering of 2nd AIF battalions took place

8th Division—oval

Bn colour (top)		black	purple	brown
Bde colour (bottom)				
green	22 Bde	2/18 Bn	2/19 Bn	2/20 Bn
red	23 Bde	2/21 Bn	2/22 Bn	2/40 Bn
sky blue	24 Bde	2/25 Bn	2/28 Bn	2/43 Bn

Reactions to the Scheme

Circumstances dictated that neither the proposed organisation nor the adoption of the scheme of patches was ever fully realised. Part of the reason was that the brigades of 6th Division, organised under the old four-battalion structure, had already received their patches and between January and May had left for overseas. Again, no official documentation has survived authorising the issue of patches to 6th Division, but anecdotal and photographic evidence indicates that 16th and 17th Brigades received theirs in January, while 18th Brigade's arrived in February.[14] Thus although 19th Brigade, formed in June 1940 by "peeling off" the junior battalions of the 16th, 17th and 18th, was earmarked as the senior brigade of the new 7th Division, its battalions—the 2/4th, 2/8th and (initially) 2/12th—already had their own patches and were no longer in Australia to receive the planned green-based diamond patches prescribed by the scheme. And, as is evident from the 2/24th Battalion's history, the fact that green diamond patches were issued to another brigade altogether—the 26th, formed to take 19th Brigade's place in 7th Division in July 1940—would indicate that there was no serious attempt to make 19th Brigade abandon its former 6th Division patches anyway.[15] The issue of the 19th's proposed patches to the 26th is another indication of the breakdown of the scheme's uniformity, in that green-based patches (meant to signify a division's senior brigade) had been allocated to what was to be the junior brigade of 7th Division.

For reasons too complicated to be dealt with here, the proposed divisional structure of the 2nd AIF was considerably disrupted and rearranged from mid 1940 to early 1941,[16] but this in itself was not responsible for the breakdown of the colour patch scheme. More influential by far was the "considerable dissension and controversy", alluded to in the 2/19th's history, which the scheme generated. The 2/16th Battalion history sums up the feeling:

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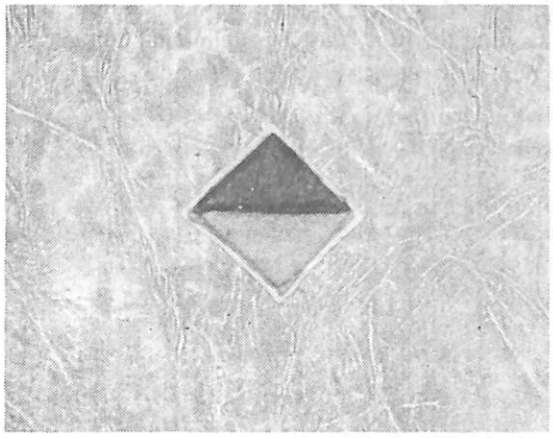
14 See, for example, W P Bolger and J G Littlewood, *The Fiery Phoenix: The Story of the 2/7 Australian Infantry Battalion 1939-1946*, 2/7 Bn Association, Parkdale, Victoria, no date, p.15, and A L GraemeEvans, *Of Storms and Rainbows: The Story of the Men of the 2/12th Battalion AIF*, vol.1: October 1939-March 1942, Southern Holdings, Hobart, 1989, p.21. I have been unable to find a precise reference to the introduction of 16th Brigade's patches, but photographs of the Brigade embarking for overseas in January 1940 show them wearing patches, while photographs of 6th Division's advance party leaving for the Middle East on 15 December 1939 show no patches being worn. See Norman Bartlett (ed), *Pictorial History of Australia at War 1939-1945*, vol.1, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1958, pp.45-46 and 34-39.

15 Neither unit history of 26th Brigade's two other battalions, the 2/23rd and 2/48th, mentions the issue of green-based diamond patches, and an enquiry made on behalf of the author to some members of the 2/48th Battalion Association revived no memories of a brown-over-green diamond patch. On the strength of the way patches had been issued on a brigade basis so far, one can assume that the 2/24th was not alone in receiving a green-based diamond, especially as the Brigade HQ patch of the 26th was a plain green diamond until the introduction of its "T" patch in December 1942.

16 See McKenzie-Smith, op cit, pp.7-10.

> The Returned Soldiers' League was never happy at the fact that although the units formed for World War 2 were intended to carry on the traditions of the parent units of World War 1, they were not allowed to wear the same colourpatch.[17]

In other words, why bother to number the new battalions as though they represented the second generation of the AIF and then deny them the insignia to go with the number?



The "purple-over-green abomination" issued to the 2/24th Battalion as part of the first scheme. Originally intended for the 2/8th Battalion, it would later have been issued to members of the 18th Battalion CMF who had volunteered for the 2nd AIF. The grey background has been trimmed on this example.

The discontent was manifested in current military circles as well, Brigadier Jack Stevens, OC 21st Brigade, being particularly quick off the mark. In a memo to 7th Division dated 28 May 1940 he bemoaned the "alteration to the traditional color [sic] patches of the 2/14 and 2/16 Bns.", noting that "Whilst it is desirable that a variety of color patches be avoided, there is no doubt regarding the affection held by former members of the first AIF for the original identification marks."[18] Stevens' omission of the third battalion in his brigade, the 2/27th, was no mere oversight, either. By an odd combination of circumstance and coincidence, the two South Australian battalions raised for 7th and 8th Divisions, the 2/27th and 2/43rd, found themselves as they had been placed in the first war, as the third battalions in the third brigades of their divisions. Thus the brown-over-blue diamond and brown-over-blue oval respectively with which they were issued were those worn by the original 27th and 43rd. No other battalions in 7th and 8th Divisions were as fortunate, and, not surprisingly, the unit histories of the 2/27th and 2/43rd make no comment on the mismatching problems associated with the first issue of patches. One wonders what sense they would have made of Stevens' suggestion, in the same memo, that battalions "affected" by the loss of continuity in the system should be allowed "to provide at their own expense miniature patches similar to those worn by the original Bn", to be worn "above the present official patch."[19]

Meanwhile, the controversy widened. In August the Adjutant-General, Major-General V P H Stantke, noted that, "Questions have been raised in Parliament and elsewhere regarding the wearing by AIF units of colour patches which are not the same as those worn by the original AIF units",[20] blaming the problem on the shift to the three-battalion brigade structure, and citing the example of the 2/4th, 2/8th and 2/12th Battalions which had been allotted "a colour patch differing in both colour and shape" from the first war designs. The validity of this

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17 Uren, op cit, p.21.

18 21 Aus Inf Bde 40/8/2, reproduced in *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, p.16D-1.

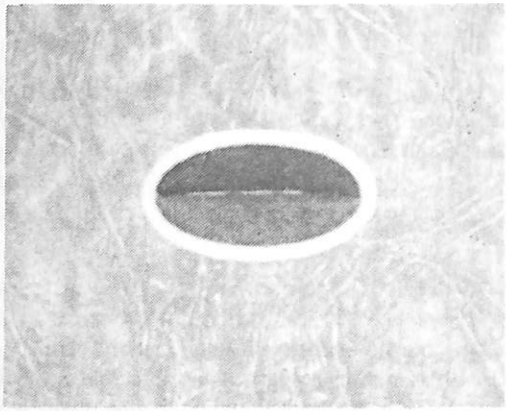
19 Ibid. Miniature patches positioned above full-size patches had been worn since 1921 to denote units of the AIF in which individuals of the militia had seen service, and the practice was introduced for similar purposes into the 2nd AIF in 1942; see Colour Patch Register, part 1, p.4-4 para.428-430. Stevens' idea was novel in that it would have meant the wearing of miniature patches on a unit rather than an individual basis

20 Department of the Army Minute AG 36/756/34, 19 August 1940, reproduced in *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, p.16E-1. The quotations from Maj Gen Stantke which follow are all from this paper.

assessment is undermined somewhat by the fact that the colour patch scheme almost certainly had no actual impact on units of 6th Division, which, as has already been shown, were already overseas and out of range of the scheme's influence. Nevertheless, Stantke's further observation that "this system has broken down owing to the reallotment of battalions within divisions" was valid and marked the beginning of the end of the scheme's viability as a system for accurate unit identification.[21] His overall attitude was refreshingly unbureaucratic in that he sided with "battalion sentiment and the point of view of returned soldiers and the public", adding, with a farsightedness atypical of this early, gloomy stage of the war, "that the regimental colours have the unit colour patch on them and that if the new unit patches are used difficulty may arise in this regard after the war."

This was not quite the trivial issue it may at first appear. Over four years later, in a letter advocating the streamlining of colour patches generally, General Blamey explained in concrete terms just what "the great desire for units of the second AIF to wear the same colour patch as those worn by the corresponding units of the first AIF" represented:

> It was pointed out [in Parliament] that many old AIF Associations had made gifts to the new units and in many cases had "adopted" the new unit, undertaking the obligation of looking after the interests of mothers and wives of members of the later generation of soldiers.[22]



The purple-over-green oval patch first issued to the 2/19th Battalion, which the unit history identifies with the 34th Battalion. Only 2nd AIF volunteers in the 34th could wear the grey background, however. Worn upright, this patch was also the insignia of the short-lived 62nd Battalion, the "Merauke Regiment".

Here the maintenance of the old colour patches went beyond mere "battalion sentiment" and became a symbol of the extended-family ethos of a *de facto* regimental system—and an adjunct to, if not a substitute for, official organs of welfare and assistance. Thus the history of the 2/4th Battalion describes how the unit's Comforts Fund was formed early in the war around a nucleus of the original 4th Battalion Welfare Committee, and "supplied items requested by the battalion's commanding officers for the troops' comfort and helped to keep them in touch with relatives at home".[23] The 2/4th history's definition of the tradition inherited by the 2nd AIF as "faith in the unit" and a determination not "to let our mates down" implies a concept of "the unit" as transcending history, and "mates" as all members of the unit at any stage in its history. The sense that "The 2/4th wasn't going into this venture alone", but were doing so with "a spirit of fellowship and goodwill among former members of the first AIF behind them",[24] was manifested in other battalions. For example, in the 2/5th Battalion, "A moving ceremony took place at an open day on March 17th [1940] when the 5th Battalion Association presented a unit

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21 To illustrate Stantke's point, compare the organisational chart of the 2nd AIF in McKenzie Smith, op cit, p.8—about the time when Stantke wrote his paper—with the table of organisation in the current article, above.

22 Letter by CinC AMF Gen Sir Thomas Blamey, 2 January 1945, reproduced in *Colour Patch Register*, part 1, pp.4C-1 to 4C-3; the quotation appears on p.4C-1.

23 The Unit History Editorial Committee (ed), *White over Green: The 2/4th Battalion*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1963, p.293..

24 Ibid, p.14

flag and the [5th Bn CMF] Victorian Scottish Regiment presented company flags."[25] The fact that all three units wore the black-over-red rectangle patch can only have reinforced the sense of tradition between them. Indeed, it is debatable whether such a ceremony involving insignia could have been held at all had the 2/5th been issued a different patch.

All this and more had obviously swayed Maj Gen Stantke's opinion. Whereas it had been hoped that the original scheme of "colours of the divisional shape ... allotted on a systematic basis" would promote "uniformity and simplicity", he now felt that it was "not ... essential that colour patches within a Division should be uniform", and "that present AIF units should be allotted the colour patch of the original AIF units according to their numerical designation." As an obvious concession to uniformity, he suggested that "the grey background be retained and that its shape correspond to to the division to which the particular unit is allotted."[26]

On 30 August a cipher message from Army Headquarters in Melbourne to Ausforce in Jerusalem reiterated the opinions expressed in Stantke's paper, and the reply from Ausforce a few days later concurred.[27] On 5 September the Master General of the Ordnance, Major General T R W Williams, took up Stantke's suggestions and proposed a scheme which, by December, had replaced its unloved predecessor.[28]

Examples of the Patches

The accounts published in unit histories and photographs of the period leave little doubt that this first official scheme was issued to all the brigades being formed in Australia during 1940. It is therefore fair to assume that examples of the patches should survive in reasonable numbers. The problem is that almost all of them are indistinguishable from patches subsequently used by militia battalions later in the war. General Routine Order A36 of 22 May 1942 stated that:

> Personnel accepted as reinforcements for the AIF, but who have not been allotted to an AIF unit or proceeded overseas, and who are transferred to CMF units, will wear the colour patch of their CMF unit with a battle-grey background of the same shape.[29]

Militia battalions which had 75 per cent or more of such members "could write AIF after their names",[30] although non-AIF members serving in these units were still not entitled to wear grey-backed patches.[31] Thus a good case might be mounted for claiming, for example, that a brown-over-red oval patch with a grey background is more likely a first-issue patch of the 2/40th Battalion than one from the 39th Battalion (whose patch it properly was), because the 39th—despite its fame on the Kokoda Track—was disbanded before achieving AIF status. Nevertheless, such an assertion would have to be balanced against the number of men serving in the 39th who bore the "X" before their enlistment number denoting membership of the 2nd AIF.

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25 S Trigellis-Smith, *All the King's Enemies: A History of the 2/5th Australian Infantry Battalion*, 2/5 Battalion Association, Ringwood East, Victoria, 1988, p.28.

26 Army Minute AG 36/756/34, *Colour Patch Register*, loc cit.

27 Both documents are reproduced in *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, pp.18G-1 and 18H-1.

28 Minute MGO 36/756/34, 5 September 1940, reproduced in *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, p.18I-1. This new scheme is the subject of the second article in this series.

29 *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, p.21-1.

30 David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives, Australia in the War of 1939-45*, Series 1 (Army), vol.VI, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, p.295, note 1

31 GRO A.491 of 23 October 1942, para.5, forbade the wearing of both "Australia" shoulder titles and grey-backed patches by any member "who has not himself enlisted in the AIF"; *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, p.21-10.

However, there is one patch which can with reasonable certainty be attributed to this first period without qualification. The black-over-red diamond patch issued to the 2/13th Battalion could not have been issued subsequently to AIF members of the 21st Battalion CMF (whose colours and shape these were), because at no stage during the Second World War did the latter enjoy a separate existence. As part of the program begun before the war to maintain CMF units at full strength, many battalions were linked by "one unit being disbanded and the other taking both numerical designations, the number of the disbanded unit being shown last."[32] Since 1 July 1929, the 21st had been linked to the 23rd Battalion as the 23rd/21st, and unlike a number of CMF battalions which enjoyed sudden autonomy with the outbreak of war in 1939, the 23rd/21st remained linked until disbandment in August 1943.[33] While it was decreed that in the disbanded battalions, "Personnel concerned may continue to wear the regimental badges and colour patches of the unit in which they were serving immediately prior to the linking of the unit",[34] in practice the discontinued unit's patches would have passed out of use as its members left and new recruits joined the combined battalion. It is therefore extremely unlikely that there would have been any need for the black-over-red diamond patch by this time, let alone one with a grey background.[35] There may be other cases where a particular patch could be said to belong more to the AIF first issue rather than the CMF, but that of the 2/13th would seem the strongest.

Conclusion

The colour patch scheme of mid 1940 was doomed even before it was issued. Designed for divisions with the new three-battalion brigades, it had missed the boat (literally) in the case of 6th Division, whose four-battalion brigades already had their patches and were heading off overseas. Any chances the scheme may have had for retention in 7th and 8th Divisions were scuppered by tradition, adherence to which had been either underestimated or overlooked by the scheme's proponents. The biggest misjudgement had been in taking a set of colours and shapes heavily laden with the deeds and memories of the original AIF and trying to endow them with a different significance for the 2nd AIF. Perhaps if the scheme had been made up of a new set of colour combinations (if not shapes as well) from those set up in 1915 it may have found acceptance. The patches adopted by 25th Brigade, formed as part of Austral Force in England in June-July 1940, reveal the possibilities of starting from scratch. With complete disregard for First World War precedents, the 25th adopted a red circle as its basic design, with the top halves in the standard battalion colours of black, purple and brown. And, apart from one battalion which was transferred to 9th Division, this design was maintained throughout the war.[36]

The 25th Brigade experience demonstrates that tradition can be created as well as inherited, as 9th Division also proved when it adopted its distinctive "T" patches in December 1942. The 9th had been formed entirely from brigades raised originally for 7th and 8th Divisions, and its new scheme was to some extent prompted by the resulting lack of uniformity in its patches. Ironically, the new scheme was based on the very divisional lines that informed the discredited 1940 scheme; and like that earlier effort, it completely overrode the old battalion connections with First World War colours and shapes. Yet no one seems to have been particularly upset by

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32 G R Vazenry, *Reorganization: Australian Military Forces*, unpublished bound typescript, 1966, p.48.

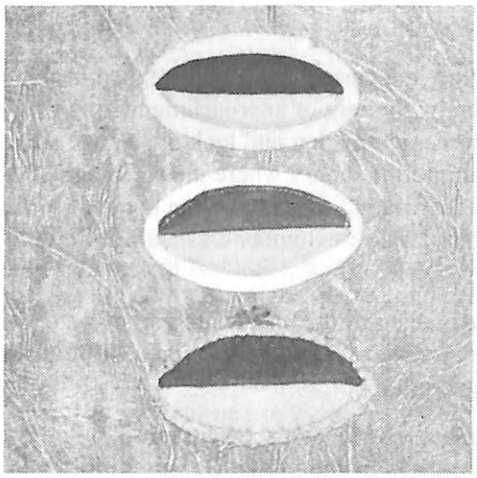
33 Alfred N Festberg, *The Lineage of the Australian Army*, Allora Publishing, Melbourne, 1972, p.82...

34 AAO 351 of 1930, quoted in Vazenry, op cit, p.109

35 The 21st Battalion CMF patch is thus quite correctly absent from the most accurate chart to date dealing with colour patches of the 2nd AIF, *Colour Patches of the Australian Military Forces—World War II*, Edgecombe Military Publications, Eildon, Victoria, 1988

36 See *Colour Patch Register*, part 3, pp.17-1 to 17-3 for a full explanation of the patches of 25th Brigade, including the fact that its battalions went through two false starts in numbering before becoming the 2/31st, 2/32nd and 2/33rd Battalions.

this change, as 9th Division had already established its place firmly in the Anzac tradition at Tobruk and El Alamein, and would carry on doing so in the Pacific, proudly wearing its new patches. One wonders how many veterans of the 9th today even remember what their pre-1942 patches were, let alone the fuss that was raised at their not being issued in the first place.



First scheme patches of the battalions of 24th Brigade, or those subsequently issued to 2nd AIF members of the 41st, 42nd and 43rd Battalions? There is no sure way to tell with these sky-blue based ovals, except that the bottom brown-over-blue example has a blanket material grey background, hinting at possible early war manufacture.

Beaufort Bomber A9 228 remembered

Douglas James Hunter[1]

The two ex-servicemen drew the curtain aside and stepped back a pace. A hush descended on those gathered. Suddenly, the roar of approaching motors was heard. Almost before the congregation could break their contemplation and look up, a huge silver aircraft swept low over the assembly and disappeared into the ranges where the wreckage of A9 228 lies. This was the climax to a memorial service, dedicating a plaque to the memory of four airmen who lost their lives on 4 June 1945 when their Beaufort Bomber crashed just north of Mount Tawonga in NE Victoria.

The memorial service and the placing of the plaque are part of a story tinged with mystery. The causes of the fatal flight, the extended search and the incident of the "tin box" have fascinated many who have learned of the crash.

The memorial service took place at Mongan's Bridge, 60 km south of Albury-Wodonga, on 17 November 1995. It was organised by the Mount Beauty Sub-Branch of the RSL as part of its "Australia Remembers" celebrations.

Two hundred attended, being from the local district, the Beaufort Bomber Association, RAAF Association and RSL. RAAF personnel from East Sale Base provided a catafalque party.

The service was led by Mr G Peers, President of Mount Beauty RSL, and addressed by Mr Rex Chamberlain JP, President, 35th District Board of the RSL; special guest Air Commodore (Rtd) Keith Parsons CBE, DSO, DFC, AFC; and RAAF guest speaker, Flight Lieutenant T M Golian. Canon Lewis Nyman led in prayers for the fallen and the dedication prayer.

The plaque, mounted on a temporary cenotaph, was unveiled by representatives of the Beaufort Bomber Association and the RAAF Association. Following the fly-past by the RAAF HS 748 from East Sale, wreaths were laid and the *Last Post* and *Reveille* were sounded. The service ended with the singing of the *National Anthem*.

After refreshments, the official party took the commemorative plaque to the actual crash site deep in the forest. Four-wheel drive vehicles supplied by the Australian Army at Bandiana transported the party as close as was possible. From there the party walked along a rugged gully to a large rock surrounded by wreckage. The plaque was attached in its permanent position and a final prayer said by Reverend Stewart Eiseman, of Beechworth, himself a former Beaufort pilot.

The four airmen whose names are on the plaque are:

Flying Officer D A Flavel
Flying Officer F A Wallis
Flying Officer R V Clayton
Flight Sergeant L J Sims

Their plane had been on a training flight from Mt Gambier in South Australia to East Sale, Victoria. A ground and air search, mounted the following day, and continuing for five days, was

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1 D J Hunter, 575 Poole Street, Albury, 2640.Ph. (060) 212835

unsuccessful. Local Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) members finally found the wreckage two months later.

The fatal flight

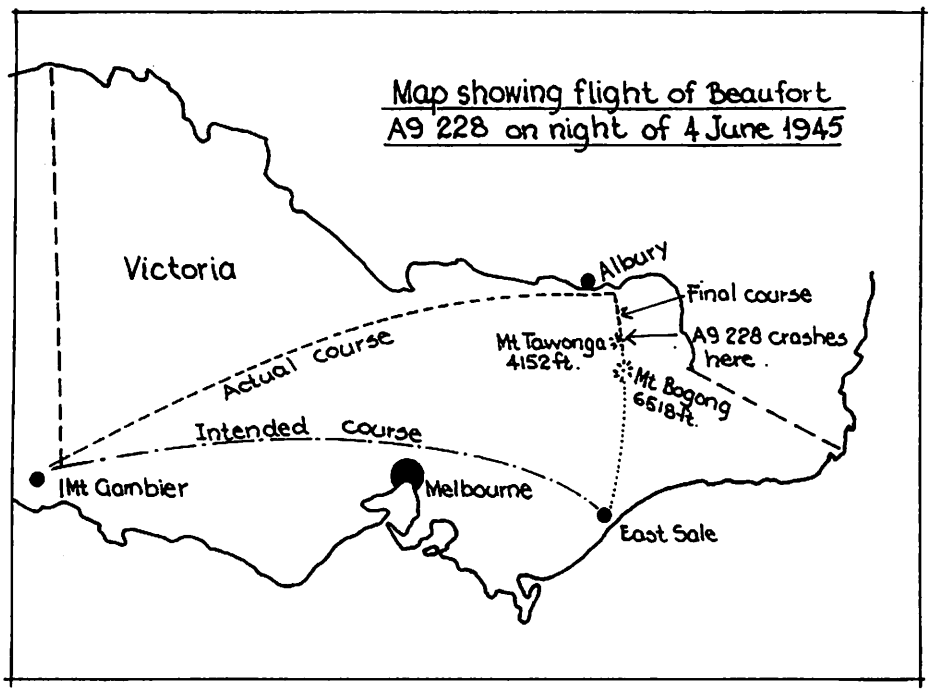
Beaufort A9 228 took off from Mount Gambier in South Australia at 5.30 pm on 4 June 1945. It was one of three aircraft from No.1 Operational Training Unit (1 OTU) based at East Sale Victoria, engaged in a night exercise practising astro-navigation. Their destination was the RAAF air-field at East Sale. The level of the crew's experience makes the events of 4 June hard to comprehend.

The crew were not young, newly trained airmen. The pilot, Flg Off Flavel, of Glenelg, South Australia, was a qualified instructor with almost 2,000 flying hours experience. The navigator, Flg Off Clayton, of Fremantle, Western Australia, had served in the RAAF since 1941 and had begun aircrew training in late 1943.

The two wireless operator/air gunners were Flg Off Wallis, of Fairfield, Victoria, and F/Sgt Sims, of El Arish, Queensland. Wallis had enlisted in the RAAF in 1941, and had served in Europe and the Middle East. He had returned to Australia in November 1944. Sims began his aircrew training in March 1943 and had been posted to 1 OTU in September 1944.

Shortly after take-off the three aircraft experienced a strong southerly cross wind which forced them north of the intended route. Two planes compensated for this cross wind, but seemingly the crew of A9 228 did not. Why remains a mystery. Was it human error, instrument error, or a combination of both?

After 90 minutes flying, the crew believed it was near its destination, East Sale. The lights of a town and a large body of water might well have confirmed that belief. Shortly after 7.00 p.m.,



the pilot reported his position as 28 miles from Sale.

The truth was very different. The lights the crew had taken to be those of Sale were those of the southern NSW town of Albury, and the body of water was Lake Hume. Beaufort A9 228 was many miles off course.

Seemingly confident of their location, the crew began a search for the air-field. Failing to locate the field after half an hour, the pilot contacted the radio direction finding station at East Sale. A heading was obtained, but ironically, from that moment the crew were doomed.

Their path led directly into the Victorian Alps. Only one thing could have saved them, to have climbed to an altitude above 7,000 feet to clear the peaks which lay in their way.

The crew, however, remained low and went on searching for the air-field. A Volunteer Air Observation Corps observer at Tallandoon reported seeing the plane flying low over a 1,500 ft ridge.

Other sightings were made by Eskdale residents: "... their attention was attracted by a plane apparently in difficulties flying low over the mountains."

"It seemed to be flying on only one engine", one resident said, and added, "the night was particularly cold and foggy and as the plane disappeared a flare was seen through the haze."[2]

Shortly after 8.15pm, A9 228 flew into the side of a 4,000 ft ridge, 3 km north of Mount Tawonga. The wreckage is strewn along a gully 1,000 feet below the crest.

The plane was torn apart by the force of the impact and the crew killed instantly. The fuselage burst into flame on impact, but the cold, foggy conditions quickly dampened the fire. All contact was lost with the plane and as time passed it was apparent that it was down. Where, and in what condition was unknown. A search was ordered, but the mountains would not give up their secret easily or quickly.

The search

The search for A9 228 was hampered initially by a lack of information. The RAAF base at East Sale had reports from the plane that it was near Sale. This they knew to be highly unlikely. The reported sighting by the observer at Tallandoon was probably the only piece of information available when the air search began early on 5 June. Consequently, the air search focussed in the general area of the Eskdale Spur, a rugged complex of ridges and deep gullies extending north for 60 km from Mt Bogong. The more southerly ridges were above 4,000 feet, and the whole area was heavily forested.

With little to go on, Beauforts from East Sale and Tiger Moths from Benalla scoured the vast area for the missing Beaufort. The weather was favourable. Scattered showers of the previous day had cleared leaving early frost and fog on the 5th. The fog cleared and was followed by a fine day, but there was no trace of the missing plane. Ground parties also were organised to conduct searches. In the process of mustering civilian volunteers useful information came to light.

Several Mitta Mitta and Kiewa Valley residents had noted unusual happenings on the night of the crash, but the relevance was not immediately apparent. Few farms had radios, fewer had telephones, so the passage of information was slow. Mr Gordon Seymour of Upper Gundowring

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2 *Border Morning Mail*, 8 August 1945, p.6.

had seen a bright glare in the sky at the time of the crash. Next day, he had seen an unusual number of aircraft in the area, but was unaware of any missing plane till the morning of 6 June when a local policeman called at his farm seeking help with a search party.

The search party from Gundowring combed the ridges and gullies of the Eskdale Spur where Mr Seymour had seen the glare. They continued for several days but without success. They met other parties from Eskdale who searched in vain the eastern side of the Eskdale Spur. The air search too had been fruitless, and low-level photography had provided no clues. After five days the RAAF scaled down the search, listing the plane as having crashed 17 miles south of Tallangatta.

Interest in the lost plane remained strong in the Mitta Mitta and Kiewa valleys. VDC volunteers from Eskdale led by Lieutenant Dick Hamilton, a local butter factory foreman, continued to search each weekend, but failed to find any trace of A9 228 or its crew.

On Thursday, 2 August, relatives of Flg Off Wallis, Messrs A and E Wallis, and Mr W Daniel, came to Eskdale to organise another ground search. They had been dissatisfied with the RAAF's response to their enquiries and urging, and believed a further effort was warranted. The three obtained willing assistance from Lt Hamilton and his VDC detachment. Detachment members included Cr E J Parkhill, Messrs Reg, Ian and Jim Larsen, George Jones, Leo Hewitt, Tom Larkin, Ted Polmear, Dave Swasbrick, and George and Reg La Fontaine. As these men were volunteers, with civilian jobs, the search was delayed till Saturday 4 August.

The searchers deployed into a line and swept an area of rough bush where a local farmer, Mr Paddy D'Arcy, said his cattle had acted strangely on the night of the crash. After only two and a half hours, the searcher on the extreme right of the line, Mr Leo Hewitt came upon debris. He said:

> "It was a shocking sight. The plane was in thousands of pieces. It had torn its way through huge trees, scattering branches over a wide area. One tree, snapped off at the trunk, must have been nearly three feet thick."[3]

Previous search parties had been in this same general area, and might have passed within a few hundred yards, but such was the density of the forest the wreckage had remained hidden.

A9 228 had been found 61 days after it had crashed. From the damage and scattering of the wreckage it was apparent that the plane had flown into the side of the mountain at considerable speed. A newspaper reporter visiting the site several days after the discovery, wrote:

> "Bits of the engines were embedded in the ground and huge chunks of metal from the wings were suspended from the branches of trees."[4]

The crew had perished instantly. One body, that of Flg Off Wallis, had been thrown clear, but the others had been burned in the fuselage fire. The bodies were so badly mutilated they could only be identified by personal belongings.

RAAF authorities were notified. The crash site was cordoned off for several days to allow the bodies of the crew and various items of equipment to be recovered and taken away. The story of Beaufort A9 228, however, was still far from finished.

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3 *Ibid.*
4 *Ibid.*

The Tin Box

When the removal of bodies and salvage work was complete, local residents were told that they were free to visit the site if they wished. Many did so because the crash and prolonged search had been of great interest.

Among the first to visit the crash site were Mr Gordon Seymour and his wife. They travelled on horseback from Upper Gundowring along the Dederang Track, then walked the last half-mile to the wreckage. They too were shocked by what they found. In her recollection of the incident, Mrs Seymour wrote:

> "there were human feet and hands lying around amongst the rubble where the main body of the plane was. Being the winter months the remains had not deteriorated".[5]

A few days later Mr Seymour returned to the crash with an ex-serviceman neighbour, Mr Rod Barton. They gathered the human remains and placed them in a metal box found in the wreckage. They buried the box and marked the location with a cross made from airframe struts. They had done what they believed to be a proper and decent thing.

Decades passed. The forest regenerated and gradually the forest litter began to cover the torn aluminium debris. Mr Seymour died in 1972. Several years later, Mrs Seymour received a telephone call from RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne asking to speak to her husband. When she explained he had passed away, the caller asked if she knew anything about the "tin box" buried at the site of the Beaufort crash.

Relatives of the dead airmen had heard the story of the tin box and had asked RAAF HQ if it was true. Mrs Seymour recounted what her husband had told her, and was able to tell what she had seen on her visit to the crash in 1945. She became concerned about the consequences of her information. She recollects saying:

> "I hoped any information I was giving him was not going to get anyone into trouble as what was done at the time was done with great respect for the families of the deceased and all concerned."[6]

Reassured that the RAAF wished only to know the truth, Mrs Seymour arranged for her son to guide RAAF officers to the crash site. Access was now easier. The bridle path had been upgraded to a four-wheel drive track.

The visit by RAAF officers took place as arranged. The cross made from struts was located and the metal box recovered. In it were bones consistent with Mrs Seymour's statement. The box and its contents were taken to Melbourne and the metal cross given to the Seymour family who still have it.

Another 20 years passed, but the spirit of the "tin box"—the wish to do the proper and decent thing—remained. As part of the "Australia Remembers" celebrations the commemorative plaque was dedicated and placed at the site of the crash where four young men lost their lives. To those who gathered on that occasion this surely was the final episode in the story of Beaufort A9 228 and its ill-fated flight on the night of 4 June, 1945.

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5 Mrs I J Seymour, *The Beaufort Bomber Crash between Gundowring and Eskdale*, unpublished manuscript, c.1995, p.6.

6 *Ibid.*, p.9.

Postscript

The dedication and placement of the commemorative plaque was not, unfortunately, the concluding episode. Less than 48 hours after the memorial service, vandals had levered the plaque from its mounting and removed it. Police are conducting inquiries in an effort to find those responsible. Fortunately, the plaque was found in bush nearby, but plans for the remounting have not been disclosed.

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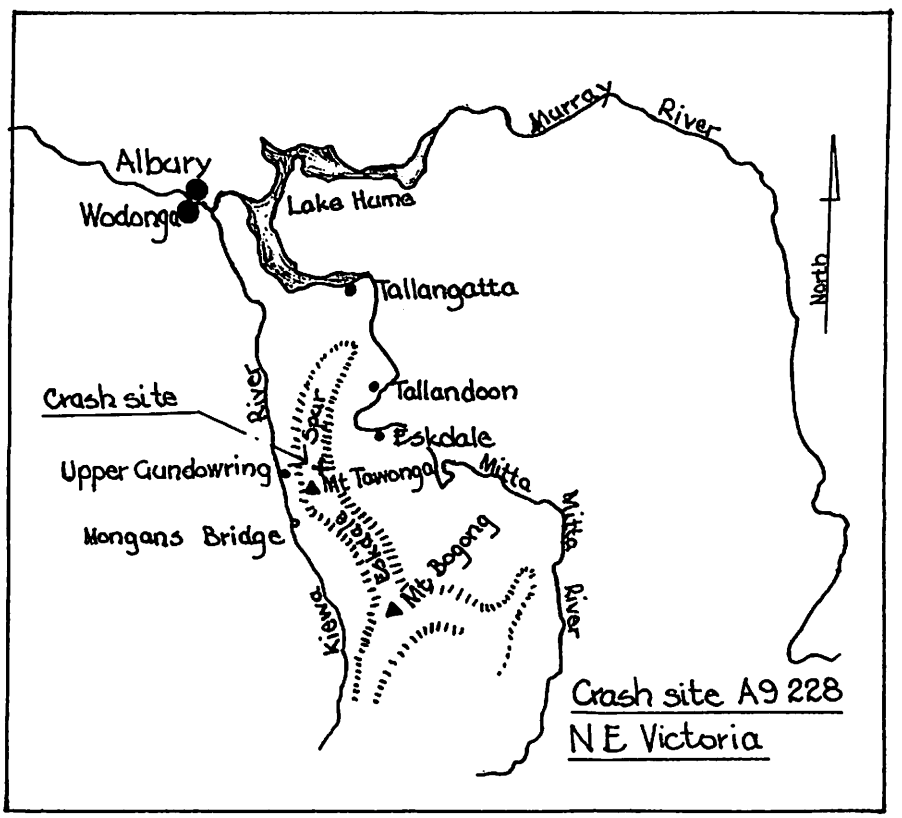

A truly remarkable man!

Master Sergeant David P Masko

Some men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat. That statement was used to remember Colonel Vernon P Ligon Jr.—a prisoner in three wars—at the recent Ninth Air Force Association convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The Association honored Ligon with its "Great Warrior" award in 1995. It was a posthumous award, for he died just a few months before his friends would meet to celebrate his long Air Force career.

But this was not the first honor for the legendary Air Force fighter pilot. Former U.S. Senator Jeremiah Denton's book about being a POW in Vietnam—*When Hell was in Session*—tells about Ligon's bad luck and great courage when both shared command of the "Hanoi Hilton" POW camp. Denton's book became famous for exposing the incredible cruelty suffered by American POWs during the Vietnam War.

Ligon, for example, was interned in the Hanoi Hilton for five years and four months where he suffered isolation, starvation and torture. Prior to that he was in a Korean POW camp, and fought for his life in Germany's notorious Dulagluft and Stalagluft III POW camps during World War 2.

"There was a contrast between the laughing, devil-may-care World War 2 squadron-mate pilot we knew and the normally quiet, but almost eerie Vern who attended our Ninth Air Force Association reunions in the 80s and 90s," said Chuck Mann, a former Army Air Force pilot who served with Ligon in the 362nd Fighter Group.

"We saw him most always with red-eyes and frayed nerves, never staying very long at any function. This was just some of the tragic proof of what the torture of Vietnam did, even to a strong man," Mann explained.

It was not uncommon for Allied pilots fighting Nazi Germany during World War 2 to have problems staying aloft ... the number of missions they flew, and the Luftwaffe's ground and air resistance, forced many Army Air Force pilots to the ground.

That dilemma resulted in the sharp rise in the number of American POWs near the end of World War 2.

After graduating from pilot training school at Luke Field, Arizona, in 1943, Ligon joined the 362nd Fighter Group forming at Westover Field, Massachusetts. The Group arrived in England in November 1943—the first P-47 group assigned to the Ninth Air Force.

According to Army Air Force records, Ligon was flying his 26th mission over Belgium—on April 22, 1944—when his Thunderbolt was so severely damaged by "flak" that he was forced to parachute into enemy-held territory.

Ligon said "heavy" interrogation followed for two months in Brussels, and at Dulagluft POW camp near Frankfurt, until the Germans decided they could not get useful information from him. He was then transferred to Stalagluft III POW camp.

In January 1945, Ligon said he and other prisoners were forced to walk in the cold and snow for about 100 miles (161 km) to Hammelburg where they were taken by train to Nuremburg prison for three months. During another forced march, he escaped only to be recaptured and taken to another camp near Munich.

Ligon was lucky. Records show that 50 prisoners who also got out were killed.

After a year in the German POW camps, Ligon was freed in April 1945 when General George Patton's Third Army broke through enemy lines.

"The other day I visited a German internment camp. I never dreamed that such cruelty, bestiality, and savagery could really exist in this world. It was horrible," explained General Dwight D Eisenhower to Mamie Eisenhower on April 15, 1945.

At a Pentagon press conference, on June 18, 1945, Eisenhower praised the courage of American POWs and Holocaust survivors, and blasted Germany. "When I found the first camp like that I think I never was so angry in my life. I think people ought to know about such things. It explains something of my attitude toward the German war criminal. I think the people at home ought to know what they are fighting for and the kind of person they are fighting."

War has always involved death, most obviously of military combatants, but in Ligon's case his first taste of war left him even more determined to fight the evil that men do.

Ligon's son, William, said being a POW should have made him quit after World War 2. But it didn't. William said his father was dedicated to the Air Force and wanted to continue flying.

From 1945 until 1967, Ligon served in a variety of Air Force assignments including range officer at Patrick Air Force Missile Range, Florida, and as a logistics officer in the Philippines. He also worked at the Air War College and in B-47 bomber training.

During this period of the Korean War, Ligon also was involved in flying missions. "We know details about his World War II experiences, and Vietnam, but not so much about Korea," explained Edward MacLean, a P-47 Army Air Force pilot who served with Ligon during World War 2.

Unlike his other internments, MacLean said Ligon only served for a short time in a North Korean POW camp. "He was gun-shy when it came to that ... being a POW so many times. What he suffered in Germany and at the Hanoi Hilton are the things we usually remember about him."

William Ligon also said Korea is something that he knows little about. "My father was very private about his military service to most individuals outside of his peers with the Air Force, and that behavior carried over into his family life."

"Most of the information I have to offer is bits and pieces, picked up from analogies he would use from time to time to compare the type of hardship he had to endure compared to the average person," William Ligon explained.

The son's indictment focuses, in part, on Ligon's involvement in three different wars, and the so-called work camps where prisoners were tortured or forced to participate in death marches.

"We will never know what was really going on inside," said Mann of his friend of 50 years.

After the Korean War and assignments taking him into the mid-1960s, Ligon was back in the cockpit, and again considered a top fighter pilot. But this time it would be his most formidable challenge—Vietnam.

In August 1967, Ligon—then a lieutenant colonel—volunteered to go to Vietnam where he was appointed squadron commander of the 11th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron, flying RF-4Cs. On 19 November 1967, his aircraft was struck by a SAM missile and he was forced to eject near Hanoi. He was soon captured and taken to the infamous Hoa Lo "Hanoi Hilton" POW camp where he endured four and a half years of solitary isolation—seeing no other prisoners.

Ligon said food was sparse and simple and he ate only "sewer greens"—an aquatic plant grown in the sewers.

"Interrogations were every two days, with constant lies about the war and activities back in the States," William Ligon said. The son also remembers Ligon telling him about other ups and downs of prison life, including being badgered, interrogated and often beaten. "He remembered the guard who inflicted the beatings as about six feet tall, and very stout for a Vietnamese. The severity of his beating seemed worse all the time as you got weaker."

When asked how he managed to survive, Ligon said "With no paper to write on, no books to read, no radio, no TV, you had to rely on your own memories, faith, grit and imagination. For me it resulted in recounting every day of my life from childhood ... backwards, forwards and over again and again. I became quite familiar with myself and my family and my friends."

Ligon's son said his father honed his memory skills so well that when he got out of the camp and moved to Florida, he designed for a house an addition that he had kept in his mind for over five years.

Ligon's third liberation from a POW camp occurred on March 14, 1973, when Air Force medivac planes took him and 524 other prisoners to freedom. After recovery, Ligon was promoted to colonel. He continued serving in the Air Force for a few more years, retiring at Patrick Air Force Base, Florida.

To Ligon, his Air Force career was a military success even though he had served almost seven years of it in POW camps. Still, the horror of war had taken a radical toll on him.

"I do know that he had a great amount of physical abuse inflicted upon him," William Ligon said. "He was placed in stocks in the center of the [Hanoi] compound for up to two days. Many of his vertebrae were damaged, along with his ankles, feet, wrists, and neck."

His son said all these injuries were severe enough to prevent him from what he loved—flying. "After returning from Vietnam, the restriction hurt him more than anything else. Flying was his life. I tried to get him to be checked out in small Cessna type aircraft—to sustain his lust for flying—but he said it would not be the same as flying any of the high performance aircraft he was privileged to fly in the Air Force," William Ligon said.

He was proud, real proud. He was also very active with the Ninth Air Force Association until he passed on, remembered his old friend, Chuck Mann.

Surprisingly, Ligon also kept his sense of humour. For instance, his son said his favorite television program after his retirement was *Hogan's Heroes*. "His 18 months of time in prison in World War 2 at the hands of the Germans left a deep impression on him also. Somehow the satire of this program allowed him to laugh out loud at this trying period in his life. He was a great man and cared a great deal about his country, and military branch he chose to serve," William Ligon said.

Museums Australia's National Conferences and views on museums future directions

Richard Murison[1]

In April this year a call was made for papers to be given at the third Museums Australia's National Conference, "Power and Empowerment", to be held at Sydney in November 1996. This conference will discuss politics, people and power. Also being addressed are issues now impacting on museums, including cultural diversity, race, gender and sexuality. This conference is expected to look at "how museums can empower their staff and audiences to have an input into future directions".

Subtle forces go to work when audiences, collections and museums proceedings meet. Dr Des Griffin, President Museums Australia National Council, suggested in Brisbane at the Second National Conference:[2]

> Communicating Cultures is what museums of all kinds are privileged to do ... Culture is not a given, it is mutable and shifting, and museums must reflect that.

Over four hundred delegates attended for four days in Brisbane, what was generally thought to be a lively event. It was efficiently organised and well conducted by Carillon, a Brisbane based conference management firm.

The second National Conference, "Communicating Cultures", was constructed around four plenary sessions, each relating to one of the four core themes, which are:

Plenary 1—Beyond nations: representing collections;

Plenary 2—New museology: (or as suggested by a delegate, better critical museum study);

Plenary 3—Museums, technologies and indigenous cultures; and

Plenary 4—Cultural tourism: mapping the place of museums.

These plenaries consisted of a keynote speaker, respondent, major speaker and two separate opportunities of discussion from the floor. Following each plenary, there were parallel sessions of either short papers or forum style discussions.

The half hour opening ceremony started with a very good performance by a didgeridoo player, a welcome by Aboriginal Elder, Dr Uncle Bob Anderson, and then the Minister's address, followed by Dr Griffin. Both took up the issue of communicating cultures through new systems and technologies. Dr Griffin expressed the sane view that the new technologies do not necessarily make us wiser; stressing that it is what museums do and how museums use them that is important. A fascinating performance to close the opening ceremony almost became a complete nonsense due to faulty technology. Bad luck, perhaps for the expert, introduced "to dynamically demonstrate technology in a thought provoking way"! Certainly, his "magic" was a novel ending to the opening ceremony.

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1 Federal Councillor Military Historical Society of Australia

2 Museums Australia 1995 National Conference handbook.

Later on in February, Dr Griffin wrote that "the papers were of a very high standard". Perhaps I could mention the sessions I enjoyed most, and the speakers who impressed me. A very effective chair at a plenary sessions was Margaret Coaldrake of Canberra. Dr Amareswa Galla, University of Canberra, was a keynote speaker, who spoke both about the possibilities of new communication systems and his concerns about the new technologies. He warned about the current democratic nature of the internet coming to an end with totalitarian control. He suggested that traditional museums could lose control to those creating virtual museums: also, the loss of jobs for educators (virtual teaching). He foresaw both challenges in the near future.

Dr Amar Galla is the secretary of the Asia Pacific Executive Board and Chair of the Cross Cultural Working Group of the International Council of Museums, Paris. In 1995 he worked as the international adviser to the Arts and Culture Taskforce of the Central Government in South Africa. Earlier on at the University of Canberra, he established the museum studies and cultural heritage management. He has a workspan now over thirty countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Europe and the South Pacific.

Jonathin Mane-Whecki was a major speaker, who conveyed in a lively way how Maori experience Maori, as well as non-Maori artefacts, in representing museum collections. He gave a forthright address on how museums in New Zealand were attempting to represent collections "against a shifting background of political, ideological and economic realignments". A senior lecturer at the University of Canterbury, he is an active writer and lecturer on Maori art and cultural life. He is also Vice-President of the New Zealand Academy of Humanities.

An extremely gifted speaker is Lori Richardson, who gave the major address for session 3. She is of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, has twelve years museum experience, is widely travelled, and is currently Acting Manager, Gallery of Aboriginal Australia, National Museum of Australia, Canberra. She succeeded in showing one way museums are using the new technologies; and, how such technologies are beneficial to a remote community of the Northern Territory. Lori introduced Peter Danaja, an Arnhem Land full blood aboriginal, to explain his use of the Internet in a remote area with Manigrida Arts and Culture. "Peter Danaja is really the only aboriginal person at the arts centre who uses the Internet for regular communications and who is computer literate".[3] I imagined during his confident address that not many of the 400 delegates would have been too familiar with it all. It was interesting to hear Peter's very forceful views on the Internet and copyright. I have the feeling to protect copyright, he would like to use the traditional way of spearing!

There was a good contribution in a parallel session from John Carter, Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, sharing his research about the demerits of tourism development and heritage/museums resources. A quite excellent presentation, accompanied by very good visual aids, in another parallel session was given by Liam Hanna, Assistant Director, Australian War Memorial. In a gifted way, he won over a largely unfriendly audience by giving them the opportunity to "touch" the spirit of the Anzacs. A very well done performance and presentation.

May I mention one of the six working groups, "History and Museums—futures for the past". Michael Evans spoke on twenty five years of presenting social history at Sovereign Hill, which really does seem to have been a success in every way at Ballarat. This Deputy Director was quite clear and confident about his museum's mission and future direction. Most of the other social historians gave the impression of losing their way over the state of social history in

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3 Danaja Peter and Carew Margaret, "Professional Development for Indigenous Museum Workers", *Museum National* May 1996.

museums. Many appear preoccupied with "deconstruction" as a concept, repudiating history and reinventing it for their museums. Would it not be more constructive to focus on communicating cultures better, and to a lesser extent on deconstruction? For instance, what about options for interpretation. We heard at this conference a novel way this is done at the American Museum of Indians. Each object on display has three caption texts, interpreted from the anthropologist, American and Indian viewpoints.

A very interesting approach to representing collections was outlined by Ian Galloway, a director at the Museum of Victoria. He talked about his experience with essayist approaches from which to develop research collection and exhibition planning and design. Topics for essays came from his museum's roles and core themes. Essays as well had a relationship to museum marketing, in respect to catalogues, books, CD-ROM, education programs and lecture series.

The international keynote speaker for plenary session four, Professor Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett of New York University, thought museums find themselves at a cross roads. "Will their future rest on fulfilling their historic mission by doing even better what they have always done. Or will they compete with the excitement tourism markets to attract visitors, no longer presumed to be interested in the quiet contemplation of objects"? The shifting focus from artefact to visitor is an issue causing concern; and, hence this desire to learn about new technologies.

What does one think about "this visitor business"? Success for museums is coming to be measured mainly in commercial terms by the number of visitors each year. Kenneth Hudson and James Bradburne agree experts are showing museums how to increase their figures by catering to children, as well as by increasing the museum's entertainment. Hudson thinks museums are suffering greatly by playing the numbers game. This European Museum of the Year Award director and distinguished international museum commentator says, museums should return to their academic roots and reduce their reliance on visitor numbers for success. In a radical paper,[4] Hudson says museums could become social centres, more places for seriously—interested users. Such museums users, who were not to be confused with "friends", could have a closer relationship with professionals and staff, benefiting from their knowledge and contributing to it. Such users would be a source of quality museum volunteers, increasingly needed in the "savings days ahead". James Bradburne, Canadian concepteur of the new Dutch national museum of science, suggested in an *AIM Bulletin* in February[5] that museums should follow Hudson's advice and turn to the notion of the museum user, not the museum visitor. Bradburne believes "museum users crave the occasion for engagement, absorption, learning, exploration with museum objects and exhibits, as distinct from entertainment" for visitors, drifting aimlessly about. Nevertheless, what about the funding bodies views; they could reduce or withdraw funding altogether if they see the museum is becoming exclusive as a social centre.[6] Obviously it is important not to believe all museums are alike. Museums as social places may be an option for some, but be unworkable for others. At the Brisbane conference Professor Kirshenblatt—Gimblett thought museums and tourism do need each other. It could well be important for each museum to examine whether or not it should focus on education and entertainment; and, so serve both the community at large and the tourist industry.

Bearing in mind the discussion at Museums Australia's conferences, let us remember over the next four years that the Australian War Memorial, as custodian of the Anzac tradition, is

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4 Hudson, Kenneth, "This Visitor Business", *AIM Bulletin* February 1996.
5 Bradburne, James, *AIM Bulletin* February 1996. v
6 *AIM Bulletin* April 1996.

planning major gallery refurbishment.[7] New work at the very time museum social historians seem to be struggling understandably with multi-culturism, feminism and political correct ideology. An input into essayist approaches would be one way that a community historian could contribute to undertakings on new interpretations for the past?[8] As described at the Brisbane conference, essay topics came from the museum roles and cores themes for work at the Museum of Victoria. So, one topic appropriate at the War Memorial is the theme:

> Here is their spirit,
> in the heart of the
> land they loved.
> and here we guard
> the record which they
> themselves made.[9]

Whether the 1995 conference successfully raised issues underpinning Australian museums today is a matter of opinion. The National conference did deal with indigenous issues, the topic of gender, the rise of new technologies and various topics concerning the Asia Pacific region. Speakers and delegates were present from Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea.

Turning in conclusion to the Third National Conference program at Sydney, the format and participation is to be the same as the Brisbane conference last year. Morning plenary sessions are to be followed by a range of parallel sessions and workshops organised around three central themes (further information from Conference Secretariat tel (02) 9949 4933). The Second National Conference really did give us new insights into museum practice, concerns and future directions. Hopefully, the Third National Conference successfully addresses how museums staff and their audiences can have an input into future directions.

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7 Stanley, Dr Peter, ACT Branch lecture, Military Historical Society of Australia 24 June 1996
8 Skipper, Len, AWM Register of Designers and Contractors, *The Australian* June 1996.
9 C E W Bean

Book reviews

Heather McCrae and others; *Soldier Surveyors, A History of 3 Australian Field Survey Company (AIF) 1940-1945*; Melbourne, 1996, Soft cover, A4, 154 pages. Available from R Smith, 108 Stewarts Lane, Sunbury, Victoria, 3429; $22 plus $3 p&p.

This is an appropriate time for this publication to appear, following on the article on the closely related New Guinea Survey Section in the last issue of *Sabretache* and, more particularly, with the disbandment of the Royal Australian Survey Corps and the absorption of the remnants of the Corps by RAE on 1 July 1996.

The history of the book is itself interesting. The 3 Coy Association raised funds to finance a thesis on the history of the unit to be undertaken by Heather McCrae for a degree of Master of Arts in Public History at Monash University. The thesis was then expanded by the personal reminiscences of the surviving members to produce this very readable account of one of the lesser known units of World War 2 and its accomplishments.

Mapping has been a little publicised aspect of military activity, one which meets a most fundamental military requirement for planning and the need to see "the other side of the hill". *Soldier Surveyors* outlines the deplorable mapping situation in Australia at the outbreak of World War 2 and the development of military survey units, mostly those in Victoria, to make good this alarming deficiency for the defence of Australia against the Japanese threat. The book gives an historically important description of the methods used in map-making at the time, before moving on to a day-to-day account of the activities of the unit and its members in Victoria, Queensland and New Guinea. The members of 3 Aust Fd Svy Coy won no gallantry awards but they went through the same physical hardships as combat troops; the unit was one of those Survey Corps units which set the standards for later RASvy soldier surveyors who, from 1946 to 1996, mapped across Australia, Papua-New Guinea, Indonesia and the Pacific, perhaps more comfortably, but with no less enthusiasm and dedication than the men of 3 Coy.

The book is amply illustrated with interesting and, at the time, possibly illegal photographs. It concludes with a nominal roll of those who served in 3 Coy which, unfortunately, gives ranks only for the officers and no regimental numbers for either officers or men. It is, nevertheless, a remarkable achievement to have recorded, fifty years after, the history of a unit in which only a little over 200 all ranks served. It is a story of dedication and hard work to provide the essential tool for the planners and the combat troops—topographic intelligence.—TCS

R H Montague, *Macquarie's Veterans*, R H & L I Montague, 169 New England Highway, Rutherford, NSW, 2320. A4 thermal booklet, 42 pages. Available from the author, $8.50 plus $1.50 p&p.

Society member, Ron Montague, is well known for his books and articles on early British Regiments in Australia, directed mainly towards family historians. This monograph, produced in co-operation with Mrs Janet Robinson, a well known member of the now defunct British Army in Australia Research Group, organised by the MHSA from 1987 to 1990, follows in the same mode.

It contains a brief history of the Veteran Company formed from the soldiers of the NSW Corps/102nd Regiment, too old or unfit for transfer to the 73rd Regiment and who did not wish to return to Britain when the 102nd was relieved by the 73rd in 1810. The history is supported by short articles on the four officers of the Company and by biographical notes on some 130 soldiers. This is the main value of the work which will be of interest mainly to family historians. There are differences in some entries to the service details given in *The Colonial Regiment* (ed P Statham 1992) which purports to contain the chronological record of every soldier who served in Australia to 1810. These records are based on the series of cards compiled by the late Brigadier Bunny Austin and which are held by the Australian War Memorial.

There are some minor errors. The General Pattern shako plate, illustrated on page 17, perhaps worn by the Veterans, was introduced with the Waterloo shako in March 1812 not 1816 as shown (see Kipling & King p.12). Also, the Commander of the Forces (p.41) was the Governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane, not Colonel James Erskine, Commander 48th Regiment.

This is a useful reference tool but it does point up, once more, the need for a detailed history of the NSW Corps, an outstanding need when the significance of the Corps in Australian history is considered. There have been several short articles published on aspects of the Corps' service and there is an unpublished thesis by Geoffrey L Laycock, great-great-great grandson of Quartermaster Thomas Laycock, but we still await the definitive work —TCS

Letters

Legends from the ledger

John Black's "Legends from the ledger" in the April-June edition of *Sabretache* provides an interesting miscellany of background information on paymasters and in particular those of the New South Wales Corps. However, he concludes with a statement which, without any previous mention or supporting evidence, alleges that the NSW Corps, presumably through its paymasters, "provided the Colony with a Treasury, Ministry of Supply and state education in the pre-Macquarie era of Australia", and goes on to repeat his earlier contention that the Corps' composition was normal to the time.

On the latter issue, while initial recruitment to the Corps may have been normal, few reinforcements arrived during the Napoleonic War period, and it had to continually reinforce itself with ex-convicts, given conditional release for joining the Corps: *Historical Records of Australia* is readily available in good libraries, including UK, and this gives a clear and basic reference to this augmentation.

On the first, the "Treasury" was provided by the Military Chest held by the Commissary, and it was the Commissariat which was the local "Ministry of Supply" if those two terms must be used as analogy. The Commissariat, an agency of the British Treasury, was effectively the Colony's imprest holder, bank and trading post: it held specie and drew bills on the British Treasury to procure more currency and purchase supplies in India, Cape Town and from visiting merchants; it bought and sold produce within the colony; and issued cash and supplies to the convict, civil and military establishment, and for a period to the settlers to counter the predatory commercial activities of the NSW Corps. A summary of these functions within all the Australian Colonies is contained in my book *Equal to the Task*, and further sources in the bibliography.

The NSW Corps paymasters received cash from the Commissariat and paid their soldiers and sundry expenses. Important as this may have been within the unit, there is no justification to pretend, for the sake of making a chosen subject seem more important, that they were more than this.

N R Lindsay
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Darwin, February 1942

I am addressing this to you for consideration and passing onto your Federal Council for their discussion and action. Recently received from friends in the States copies of pages from your Journal of April/June 1995 issue. Although not a member, I found their contents of interest, particularly as it appeared to be an attempt to clarify the situation in as far as the casualties in Darwin in February, 1942 were concerned. Having been there at the time, I am fully versed with the numerous distorted accounts that have been published by well meaning but in many case ill informed parties. Some accounts published in books written by well known and reputable authors shows they have based a great deal of their writings on information furnished by so called "Eye Witnesses", and of the latter there appears to be countless numbers. As a case in point would relate an incident which occurred whilst I was in Darwin in Feb '92. attending the 50th Commemorative Services.

I became interested when overhearing two ex Army Veterans being interviewed by an ABC TV Reporter. They were providing a vivid description of the first air raid and of the ships being attacked in the harbour. The attack on the ships, those sunk and sinking, of diving planes, bombing of various ships, men struggling in the water, the noise, smoke, utter chaos and confusion prevailing at the time. It was a most impressive performance on their part in front of the cameras. It led me to believe they must have been either on the harbour itself or in an excellent vantage spot, to allow them to make the observations they had. Later meeting with them and engaging in conversation, asked where they were at the time. "We were OK" they said, "We were way out in the bush in a camp"—so much for their eye witness accounts to the Reporter. Everywhere during the time I was there, eager media people were endeavouring to obtain as much material as possible for their respective networks, and there were many eager to oblige them. Listening to it all, one would be forgiven for thinking there was a great number of people lined up all along the foreshore to witness the death and destruction then taking place before them.

It was far from that and more correct to say any individual caught in the vicinity of the harbour on that morning would have made it his business to get as far away as possible. Even for those on the ships in the harbour, with the exception of those on duty, manning the guns on those who had them and so on, the remainder endeavoured to find the safest place possible to avoid the gunfire from the attacking planes. In the case of one ship, MV *Tulagi*, which apart from her crew had also over 200 members of the US 148th FAB onboard. With the exception of her Master, Deck Officers and Chinese crew members standing watch, the rest European and Chinese alike, made themselves as inconspicuous as possible. Of the Troops apart from several Officers and the eight men manning four machine guns located around her decks, the rest were herded down below in the 'tween decks, this to provide the least number of human targets to the searching enemy above.

Incidently this was also tbe situation when this ship came under attack from the enemy when at sea on the 16th—more on that later—so in all despite being in the midst of all the action, actually very few were in position to provide a complete minute by minute description of all that took place during that period of the raid itself. However imagination can play an important part at any time, so naturally when it is known one is known to have been in such a such place at any one time, then in the normal course of events, one is assumed to fully aware of all which had taken place—so one naturally obliges. It is a fact of life, a normal human trait.

On page 5 of your Journal is listed the ships and the casualties sustained on them. The *Tulagi* has been omitted. Actually she had two gunners killed and two wounded, one seriously. Below in the 'Tween Decks many of the Troops were wounded by bullets and flying pieces of shrapnel from near misses and piercing the ship's sides, also some members of her crew received similar injuries including the writer. Yet nothing has been recorded of this in any official or otherwise report. It makes one wonder just how many other matters of importance relating to this side of the raid have gone unreported, or if so, have been overlooked.

Another matter of importance, one which if the authorities had dealt with it properly at the time instead of ignoring all the warnings given, possibly the story of the raid on the 19th. would have been vastly different, with perhaps greatly reduced damage to the town and installations, not forgetting the huge loss of life, was the message given by the return of the "Timor Convoy". The "Timor Convoy" story is one which has been largely reduced to one of minor importance and significance as "A small convoy was attacked at sea while enroute to Timor with Troops and forced to return to Darwin". With some variations this is about all that has been said about it. Actually the truth is vastly different, one which deserves a place in our history books.

The complete story is too long to relate but in essence is as follows: It was the first time an Allied Convoy had been attacked in our waters by enemy aircraft in large numbers. It was the first time Australian and American Troops had been engaged in a combined operation against the enemy in WW2. It was the first and the heaviest attack by Japanese aircraft on shipping in what could be called Australian Territorial waters. It was also the first time Australian and American Naval Forces joined in combat so close to our shores. The 44 Japanese heavy bcmbers would have carried a full load of missiles of at least 10 per each plane. Therefore, the total number of bcmbs dropped on the ships and its Naval escort would possibly have exceeded 400. I doubt if as many had been actually dropped on the immediate town area of Darwin during the entire period of 1942/43.

That the convoy escaped with ccmparatively minor damage can be fully attributed to the efforts of the US Cruiser *Houston*. Her defence of the convoy was magnificent. The rest of the escort, US *Peary*, Australian Sloops *Swan* and *Warrego*, through their lack of suitable AA fire power against the highflying planes, kept the convoy in close formation thus preventing any from straying and becoming individual targets. Throughout, both Naval and Merchant ships displayed the highest in seamanship, which no doubt was responsible for the saving of hundreds of young Australian and American lives, not forgetting their own crews. To those responsible for this ill conceived and planned operation, they cannot draw any satisfaction from the outcome, just think themselves lucky they do not have the blood of hundreds on their hands. It is quite possible if one were to dig deep enough, this is the prime reason why a full account of this incident has failed to reach the public. And just another reason why the whole affair of the Darwin episode has been named as "Australia's Day of Shame", which without a doubt it was.

If those in authority had given the messages as received from the convoy on its return their full attention and acted accordingly, that an air attack on Darwin was imminent, possibly within hours, thus giving them at least 13 hours prior warning, then the town and the shipping, as well

as the various defence areas would has been better prepared. As for the *Tulagi*, her Master Capt. James Thomson, took every precaution for the safety of his command and all those aboard. Her anchor was on short haul to allow quick recovery, her Officers prepared for any emergency, the fact the *Tulagi* managed to get underway, steam through sunk and sinking ships to the safety of the far side of the harbour, there was beached to allow the almost 300 men aboard swim to safety without any further loss of lives, speaks volumes.

In the past I have made attempts to bring to the notice of those interested in the recording the history of the events which took place back in 1942 without avail. Prior to the Services held in Darwin in 1992, a request was issued seeking information which could be included in certain publications being considered for issuing at the time of the scheduled events. I responded in time stating much of what have related here, these went to the Official Historian responsible for assembling this information. I am still waiting for a reply. My information certainly was not used. From inquiries made when in Darwin, I could only draw the conclusion from the answers received, "It was not considered to be in the best interests of the public to bring such matters to their attention", or ones similar. I was under the impression this was the purpose of the whole exercise—to remember! Maybe I was wrong, for one reply ended with, "After all it all took place 50 years ago!"

In view of this perhaps I am wasting my time in sending this letter to you. I hope I am wrong. Perhaps at this point in time I should provide a few personal details regarding myself. I served in the Merchant Service for the better part of 10 years in the capacity of Purser, at times fulfilling the duties of Chief Steward as well. My service covered the entire period of WW2. Seeing service on Australian, English, Singapore, Hong Kong and American ships of those countries' registers. The last 18 months was in the service of the US Armed Forces, spent mostly on a troopship. I saw service in all areas of the Pacific, Central and North Atlantic, the latter aboard tankers. As far as the Darwin area was concerned spent the time from December 1939 through to November 1942, running there regularly.

My departure from the *Tulagi* was to allow me to fully recuperate from the effects resulting from the February 1942 episode. Only for this, I may have been still with her in March, 1944, when in the early hours of the 18th, while enroute from Australia to India, she was torpedoed by a German U Boat U532. She went down in minutes. Of her crew of 54 only 15 escaped her sinking, and of those, only 7 survived drifting on open rafts across some 2570 kms. of the Indian Ocean. Without a doubt this can be place foremost in all the sea sagas which eventuated from WW2. So ended the short life of a gallant ship, launched Hong Kong July 1939, sunk 18th. March, 1944. I also lost a number of good and close shipmates. When this happened I was facing U Boats in the North Atlantic, and did not hear of the *Tulagi's* end until some time later.

I trust you find the foregoing of interest, and would appreciate your acknowledgement and comments in due course, in the meantime, wishing your Society every success.

R B (Bill) Hughes
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PS: If it is of any consolation Australia was not isolated in establishing correct numbers of casualties as the result of enemy air attacks, as the following article from the Melbourne *Age* of Wednesday, 6 March, indicates:

> History is being rewritten at the Pearl Harbour Memorial in Honolulu, with good reason—it's full of mistakes. Thirty of the panels that list deaths in the 7 December,

1941 Japanese attack contains misspelled names, wrong ranks and incorrect duty stations. One man, Private First Class George Baker, was listed as killed in action. He actually survived the attack. "I'm pretty sure I'm alive" the 74 year old veteran told the The Honolulu Advertiser, "Yep. Still here."

So maybe some excuses can be made for the errors and mistakes made after the Darwin debacle.

—RBH

Response to letter re Darwin, February 1942

The comments in paragraphs 1 to 4 regarding problems with oral history and recollections are very valid. Simply because a person was present at the time and has survived until today does not necessarily make that person a 'witness' to the events. Similarly, many small or isolated incidents have grown in stature and significance through telling and retelling at reunions, or have flourished (possibly unwittingly) after the death of other more credible witnesses who might otherwise have refuted such tales.

Mr Hughes is concerned that the casualties on the MV *Tulagi* have been overlooked. I must make it clear that casualties were attributed to a particular vessel because those persons were listed as belonging to the crew of that ship and were reported as such. The civilian crew of the Burns Philp Motor Vessel *Tulagi* suffered no deaths as a result of the raid. The two gunners Mr Hughes refers to were most probably members of the US Army 148th Field Artillery Regiment which had been taken aboard the *Tulagi* and *Port Mar* (see Lockwood, 1966, *Australia's Pearl Harbour*, p.47). These are possibly two of the deaths listed in my article under the heading of "US Army".

For interest, MV *Tulagi* is listed with other ships which were in Darwin Harbour on the morning of 19 February 1942 on a plaque located in Survivors' Lookout on the Esplanade overlooking the harbour.

Paul A Rosenzweig
Darwin, NT

Timor Convoy, February 1942

Concerning the "Timor Convoy", if any part is considered to be worthy of inclusion in your journal, then I have no objections whatsoever. Anything which can be done to bring this matter to the public generally am in full agreement with. In order to provide a full rundown on the pertinent dates involved please note the following:

14 Feb 1942	Convoy raised anchor and proceeded to depart from Darwin early hours of 15th.
15 Feb 1942	Under observation from Japanese Flyingboat.
16 Feb 1942	Under heavy attack from 44 Japanese Bombers.
17/18 Feb 1942	Heading back to Darwin on a SW course towards Broome in order to confuse enemy should they attempt a further attack. Arrived Darwin late afternoon 18th.
19 Feb 1942	Main air attack on Darwin.

The attack on Darwin Harbour saw three ships of the convoy, *Meigs* and *Mauna Loa* sunk, *Portmar* badly damaged and beached to prevent sinking. MV *Tulagi* received damage to its superstructure and hull from near misses and gunfire from attacking planes. It was beached over near West Arm off a small mud Island to allow crew and troops of near 400 to swim ashore. Two machine gunners of the 148th were killed and two wounded, one seriously, during the attack. Also a number of casualties were incurred amongst the troops, with several crew members suffering minor injuries.

However, the attack at sea is the main point of contention, for little or nothing has ever been written about this ill conceived, planned and executed operation. As stated in my letter of 6 March, it was far more than just a "Small convoy being attacked at sea while on its way to Timor"—far from it. Had the Japanese achieved its purpose of destroying the convoy and its escort as well, then apart from the near 2,000 members of the crews and the troops on the four Merchant Ships, a possible further 1,000 personnel on the four Naval Ships would have also been at risk—making a total of around 3,000 men. Little imagination is required to realise the potential death and casualty toll would have been as great if not greater than that of Pearl Harbour. This certainly would have made it a most horrific catastrophe to have taken place during the war in the Pacific near our shores. Those responsible for this near disaster can take no comfort from the fact the convoy escaped with only minor damage. To support this line of thinking one had only to be in Darwin at the time to see at first hand the shortcomings and inexperience of many of those charged with the task of protecting our most vital Northern Frontier.

To be fair, blame for this cannot be placed entirely on the heads of those of the various Departments of Defence in Darwin itself, but more on the Government of the day which proved to be completely inadequate in its overall control of the situation. Its subsequent handling of the news—heavily censored—that was allowed to be presented to the general public after that first raid, is just one area where it failed completely. Should the convoy have fallen a victim to the Japanese attack, one hesitates to imagine just how the Government would have conveyed the tragic news to the rest of Australia. There is one thing for certain, the story of the "Timor Convoy" should be told, and furthermore, it deserves a prominent place in the history of events surrounding those which took place during February, 1942, in and off our shores.

I wrote the following article about a little known or publicised incident which occurred in the Territorial waters of New Guinea during the early days of World War 2 on a small island named Emirau (often called "Stormy" or "Squally" Island), located some 40 nautical miles NW of Kavieng, a town on the Northern end of New Ireland. Although consisting of several unrelated events, which had occurred over a period of several months, when all combined together they provided one of the most interesting stories to be associated with the war in the Pacific.

In all of these incidents the *Tulagi* was involved in one way or another, just a few more isolated moments in her short life before meeting with a tragic end in the Indian Ocean in March 1944, when torpedoed by a German U Boat.

R.B. (Bill) Hughes

Emiraw Island Affair

It all began in October, 1940 when the Burns Philp vessel, MV *Tulagi*, under the command of Captain "Tommy" Thomson, was southbound in the Barrier Reef, approximately a day's run from Sandy Cape, the southernmost entrance to the reef, when she came across a large vessel which appeared to be stationary and flying the International Signal "Not in distress, but inability to manoeuvre". She was about a mile off our Port Bow, portside on to us. Captain Thomson ordered a signal to be sent per Aldis lamp inquiring if the ship required any assistance. Although the signal was repeated several times, but all were ignored.

Water disturbance at her stern indicated her engines were turning over slowly, and as we came abeam it was noticed she was keeping her portside towards us the whole time. By this time Captain Thomson was becoming a little cautious and ordered a slight alteration of course to Starboard. As we passed and left her slightly astern of us, it was noticed that the signal she had been flying had been taken down and she was heading north at speed. Although the incident caused some discussion and comment among the Officers and passengers, no great significance was placed upon it, for during wartime it was not unusual for ships to ignore each other when at sea, unless known to each other, or when each had friends on the other. So the incident passed from our minds.

Upon our arrival in Brisbane two days later when berthed at Brett's Wharf, Hamilton, we were boarded by Customs, as this was our first Australian port of call since leaving Rabaul. Accompanying them were several RAAF Officers. After being cleared by Customs the RAAF Officers inquired of us had we seen any signs of one of their Hudson reconnaisance planes that had gone missing while on patrol in Reef waters, and were now two days overdue. As we had not sighted the plane nor any trace of it we were unable to assist them. We did, however, give details of the strange ship we had encountered and its unusual behavior at the time. However, they did not appear to place any great importance on this information and soon took their leave. We, in turn, soon forgot the whole business, being more interested in completing discharging and getting away for our home port, Sydney.

At this time the *Tulagi* was running a regular schedule from Sydney to Port Moresby and Darwin with general and military cargo. From Darwin she proceeded to Rabaul, New Britain. From there and a number of places around the north coast of New Britain she loaded a cargo of logs for Brisbane and Sydney. Sometimes her schedule was varied to gather a cargo of logs from Bougainville and New Ireland. Another port of call was Wide Bay on the south coast of New Britain. At this time, the *Tulagi* was the only ship engaged in taking logs from the New Britain area, so her services were very much in demand.

On the following voyage, after calls at Darwin and Port Moresby, she was once again back in New Guinea waters. After clearing Customs in Rabaul and receiving our loading instructions, we proceeded out of harbour and down the St George Channel to a small place called Put Put, where it had been arranged we would load a small consignment of logs. Arriving in the early morning, this was soon accomplished and with the next place of call Mandres, located on the other side of the Gazelle Peninsula, only a few hours steaming away, it was decided we would remain at Put Put until the early hours of the following morning before proceeding.

It being a Sunday, the prospects of spending a few hours in leisure appealed to both the Ship's Officers and passengers. Captain Thomson, an "Old New Guinea Hand"had once owned a Copra Plantation close by to Put Put, so decided he would pay a visit to the present owners, old friends of his. With the ship snug at anchor, the midday meal over, all settled down to a pleasant

afternoon, reclining in deck chairs in the sun with Chinese Stewards on hand to keep up a supply of cool drinks, it seemed an ideal way to fill the day.

Where we were anchored was typical of the coastline in these parts. As far as the eye could see, coconut palms lined the shoreline, while here and there natives in canoes could be seen fishing in the calm waters of the reef. Across the Channel, the coastline of New Ireland could be seen. In all, it was a very peaceful scene that met the eye. Although we did not know it at the time, in the not too far distant future all this would change. Put Put and another small village a short distance away, Tul would become the setting for one of the most horrible incidents and atrocities to take place after the Japanese had invaded and captured Rabaul in January 1942.

For it was at Put Put and Tul that a number of Australian troops, having escaped from the Japanese in Rabaul, once again found themselves captives of the invading enemy. It had been their intention to make for the south coast of New Britain and hopefully make their escape by boat or other means to the New Guinea mainland and freedom. Instead of taking their captives back to Rabaul to join the rest of the Australian prisoners, the Japanese simply took them into the jungle one by one and executed them. Fortunately, one or two of the Australians though badly wounded, feigned death. When the enemy had departed and with the aid of friendly natives, they managed to make their escape. Eventually, they were able to make it to safety. They were able to tell of the manner in which the Japanese had acted. Only for this, nothing would have been known of what was to become known as "The massacre of Tul Plantation"— one of the most heinous crimes perpetrated by the Japanese during the time they had occupied New Britain.

All this was in the future, now we were enjoying a very pleasant Sunday afternoon, when from high above came the drone of a plane's engine. Soon we could see it shining silver against the blue of the sky. It appeared to be a small float plane, and circled high above us. Obtaining a pair of binoculars from the bridge, this was soon verified, However, it did not appear to have any markings of identification as required under aviation regulations. As we had all spent a number of years in the Territory and were familar with most, if not all, planes flying there, this one had us puzzled. For one thing, we were not aware of any planes fitted with floats for a start. This alone caused considerable comment amongst us. After spending sometime circling high above us it headed away to the north and was soon gone from sight, and from our conversation.

A week later with all cargo loaded and cleared by Rabaul Customs we were well on our way south again. Before departing we were able to celebrate Christmas Day, though having to spend the entire day in loading operations, it wasn't as pleasant as we would have liked it to be. After crossing the Coral sea several days later, we eventually entered the Great Barrier Reef and proceeded in the run down to Brisbane. This precaution was necessary to avoid any chance meeting with an enemy raider, for a number were known to be operating in the Pacific, with many ships being attacked and sunk. During the run through the Reef we sighted one of our Naval Cruisers heading north at full speed, it was just on dusk and she was soon lost to sight in the gloom. Arriving in the Brisbane River without further incident, we tied up at Brett's Wharf, Hamilton, and after being cleared by Customs, prepared to begin discharging.

Upon our arrival we had been surprised to find the *Montoro*, another Company ship, already there. As we had known she was several days ahead of us and by that time should have been well and truly in Sydney, her presence caused considerable comment. As soon as I was able to go ashore, I went to pay my respects to my opposite number on the *Montoro*, Eric Turner. I found him busily engaged in checking the loading of fresh stores and cabin linen, with little time for idle chatter. Eventually, I learned that upon her arrival in Brisbane, orders were received for all Sydney bound passengers to be disembarked with arrangements made for them

to continue their journey by rail. After obtaining fresh stores and being bunkered, the *Montoro* was to proceed immediately for Rabaul. In fact all this had just about been completed and she was expected to be ready for departure within the hour. A short time after my visit, the *Montoro* slipped her moorings and was soon heading down river on her journey.

Naturally, the unexpected change to the *Montoro's* itinerary caused considerable comment amongst us. Even our Captain had been unable to obtain any information concerning the sudden change. At first we thought it might have been because Matupi, the volcano, had erupted again. Although the absence of any news in regards to this over the radio, made this seem remote. The last time Matupi had erupted (1937) had caused a great deal of devastation in the town of Rabaul as well as accounting for the deaths of more than 600 natives. Although we had noticed a certain amount of activity with the volcano during our recent visit, she was not to make her presence felt again until 1941.

Arriving in Sydney and with the business of discharging and reloading cargo for North we had little time to think about the *Montoro*. In fact from the odd inquiries made, it appeared our Head Office knew very little either, or if they did, were not saying anything. So by the time we had loaded and departed on our way north to Port Moresby and Darwin, the matter of the *Montoro* was soon forgotten. After completing this part of our voyage we found ourselves once again in Rabaul. This time however the whole town was abuzz with excitement. On all sides we were regailed with stories of German Raiders, of hundreds of prisoners being dumped on a small island, of them being rescued and brought to Rabaul by all manner of means, then being evacuated by steamers south. As our time in Rabaul was limited to being cleared by Customs, then with loading instructions delivered from our office, we were on our way to our loading destinations, we left with an unclear picture of what really had taken place. However, I was able to learn the reason as to why I had received a request while in Darwin to keep one stateroom empty for two passengers, who were to join us in Rabaul fo the journey to Brisbane.

A week later and all loading completed we arrived back in Rabaul and prepared to leave the Territory. We also took aboard the two passengers I had been advised would be joining us there. They were Mr & Mrs Bill Cook. Bill was the Manager of the Copra Plantation on Emirau Island, also known as "Storm" Island, but by most as "Squally" Island. Located some 40 odd miles to the Northwest of Kavieng, the main town on the northern end of New Ireland, it was well off the normal track for large vessels. All copra from the island was transported to Kavieng by schooners, which also kept the inhabitants supplied with all their needs.

The *Tulagi* with only accommodation for twelve passengers, although with very comfortable Staterooms did not have a Saloon or bar facilities as is normally found on ship carrying passengers. However the absence of these amenities did not prevent either the passenaers or the Officers off duty from enjoying their leisure moments. The Purser's quarters located on the Poop Deck Aft, with its own small private deck, made an admirable substitute, particularly as it was located over the coolrooms where the drinks were stored and adjacent to the Chinese Stewards quarters. So, in time, this area of the ship became the accepted place to gather prior to lunch or dinner for those predinner drinks—so necessary and which added to the enjoyment of the meal. So it was in these surroundings, and with the Cooks as my guests, I was to hear at first hand the story of what had taken place on Squally Island during the week prior to Christmas, 1940. I was also to learn the reason for their being on the *Tulagi* and heading for Brisbane. It seems that the Australian Government, in appreciation of what they had done during this time, had invited them to Brisbane, there to be treated as official guests and given the Keys of the City, at a reception in their honour.

The following is the story told me by the Cooks of their experiences during the time their island home was taken over by the German Reich during the week prior to Christmas in December, 1940. It all began on the Sunday morning prior to the 25th. As was their usual custom, they were taking things easy and enjoying a morning cup of tea on their verandah, when one of their "boys" came running along the track from the direction of their main copra shed and wharf area. These were located about a half a mile away on the shores of a small sheltered bay, and hidden from view from the house by a small hill.

The "boy" was yelling and waving his arms as he approached. It wasn't until he got closer that Bill Cook could make out what it was he was yelling. "Masta, Masta, u e cum quik tim, plenti ship im e stop alon soda wata, plenti man im e stop alon bech." By the time he had reached the house he was exhausted and it was sometime before the Cooks could get any sense out of him. However, sensing that something out of the ordinary had or was happening, Bill climbed into his truck instructing the boy to climb up into the back, then he headed for the wharf area. As he approached the hill and the turn in the track he came face to face with a party of armed soldiers with an Officer in the lead. With his arm raised, the Officer instructed him to stop. It did not take Bill long to realise he was facing a group of Germans.

I remember asking Bill just what his thoughts were at that moment. He replied, "I can't remember exactly how I felt. My first thoughts were, I was dreaming it all, it all seemed so unreal. However the German uniforms and the Swastika emblems soon made me realise it was for real." Then the Officer, in perfect English, introduced him self and instructed Bill to continue onto the wharf area, that he would accompany him, while the troops with him would continue along to his house. In reply to Bill's query that his wife was there on her own, the Officer replied, "She will not be harmed" and said that their orders were only to destroy the radio.

Arriving at the wharf area, he was amazed to find several hundred German troops exercising on the beach, while boats were busy transporting people ashore where they joined others who appeared to be under the guard of armed troops. At anchor in the Bay, were three large ships. Before he could take in everything he was ushered into the copra shed and into his own office. Seated at his battered desk was another Officer who appeared to be in command. After introducing himself, Bill was invited to take a seat. He then proceeded to inform Bill of the reasons for them being there.

What was to follow is far too lengthy to relate in detail here, but in essense is as follows. The Officer informed Bill he regretted the circumstances surrounding their meeting, but provided that he did as he was requested, no harm would come to either him or his wife. There were several reasons for their presence on Emirau. It was off the normal track and not far from Kavieng, and was believed to be perfect for their requirements. The main reason was to disembark a large number of prisoners, crews and passengers off ships they had captured and sunk. Over a period of time the prisoners had attained such numbers, that they had become an embarrassment. There was insufficient food or medical supplies, so the decision had been made to land them at some suitable spot, which in this case was Emirau.

As some of the prisoners had suffered wounds or injuries of some kind at the time they were captured, and with the lack of sufficient medical amenities to care for them, the situation had become extremely urgent. It was the intention after all the prisoners had been landed that they would stay for several days in order to allow the troops and the crews onboard the ships ashore to obtain some exercise. While the discussion was going on Bill could hear and see a small float plane being readied for takeoff. Soon it was in the air and gone from sight. It did not return until

several hours had passed. (With the time and the dates coinciding, I believe this was the plane we sighted when at anchor at Put Put in the St Georges Channel.)

From this discussion it was apparent the German Officer was well aquainted with everything pertaining to the island—the number of Europeans, including the missionaries, what cattle there was (these were later rounded up, killed and taken aboard the ship as was a quantity of food from their storerooms). Bill was to learn that, after smashing his radio, others owned by the other Europeans were also put out of action, as were all small craft they found. To do this, vital parts of engines or sails were taken.

Before being allowed to return to his home, Bill was allowed to visit the area where the prisoners were being held. Some appeared to be in a bad way, while others were in good health. Lack of clothing seemed to be one of their main problems. For instance, one woman had only a nightgown to cover herself. As she was similar in build to Mrs Cook this problem was soon overcome.

Good to their word, the Germans departed after staying for three days. Although the ships had been anchored some distance from the shore, Bill could make out the names of at least two of them, both ending in "Maru", so from that it had been assumed they had been masquerading as being Japanese. With their departure came the problem of feeding and taking care of the hundreds of people who had been landed. With insufficient food for such a number the canned food and rice as normally the fare of the native labour was brought into use.

At a meeting, it was decided the engineers among those landed would make an assessment of the damaged craft and, if possible, make at least one seaworthy enough to attempt the journey to Kavieng, the nearest town to the Island. Eventually, after cannibalising parts from various engines, one was put into running order. This was installed into the least damaged boat, which with necessary repairs was made sufficiently seaworthy to make the voyage across to Kavieng. With this done, a further meeting was held to select a crew to make the journey. Among those selected were two RAAF Officers (?) who had been among the prisoners. It being reasoned that having members of the Armed Services in the party, would add some weight to the story they would have to tell once they arrived at their destination. For even at that stage it was realised to try and convince whomever it was they would eventually meet that their story was true, may require some kind of verification. As it turned out when they eventually reached Kavieng, it took some time before any credence was given to their story and rescue measures put into operation.

Eventually, the boat and its occupants made the crossing, arriving off the entrance to the reef near Kavieng in the dark. After negotiating the passage through the reef, they made it to the jetty, where the boat was tied up. What followed is difficult to imagine. From memory I believe it was New Year's Eve on which they had arrived.

From the direction of the town of Kavieng sounds of revelry could be heard indicating parties were in progress. Knocking on the first door they came to, they endeavoured to explain the reason for their presence. Apparently the occupants were under the impression some kind of prank was being played, and after telling them to try it on someone else, shut the door on them. From what Bill Cook told me, unbelievably this occurred not once but several times before those approached after taking a good look at their ragged appearance suggested they go to the home of the District Officer and tell their story.

Arriving at the DO's home, they again told their story. At first he appeared to be skeptical but the presence of the RAAF Officers soon had him convinced that what they were telling him was true. Even then trouble was experienced in convincing the Authorities in Rabaul that the radio

message sent by the DO was true and not some practical joke. It was to take an exchange of several radio messages before those in Rabaul were assured that the news sent was indeed fact and not fiction. At the time, there were a couple of RAAF Sunderland Flying Boats based in Rabaul. Arrangements were then made for one of them to fly up to Kavieng with a group of Civilian and Military personnel aboard and meet the group from Squally Island and discuss the matter in full.

Soon after their arrival, they were convinced of the truth of the matter, and with the party of survivors aboard the Sunderland took off and headed for the island. As the plane arrived over the island and saw the hundreds of people gathered around the copra sheds, this was sufficient for those from Rabaul to realise they had a major problem on their hands. Radio messages were sent from the plane back to Rabaul which alerted everyone of the situation. The plane then returned to Rabaul where it and the other Sunderland were immediately loaded with food, clothing and medical supplies, which were flown back to the island, returning with a full load of those in urgent need of medical treatment.

Over the next couple of days, every means of transport was brought into operation to bring all the survivors back to Rabaul. For this, schooners were hurriedly brought into operation, with them being assisted by the RAAF planes. With in excess of 600 people having to be transported this was a major exercise, not only in transporting them back to Rabaul, but accommodating them in suitable accommodation upon their arrival, as many were in urgent need of medical attention of one kind or another.

Meanwhile, the Australian authorities had been made aware of the situation, with arrangements made to divert shipping to Rabaul to bring everybody back south. Once the situation of removing the survivors from the island was under control, one of the Sunderlands was dispatched in an attempt to locate the enemy vessels. Eventually, the three ships were located heading in a direction that would take them to the Japanese controlled Caroline Islands. Although they came under fire from the ships, the crew of the Sunderland endeavoured to get into a position that would enable them to make a bombing run. However, each time they attempted to do this, they found a number of people had been brought up on deck, which the pilots soon realised were the prisoners the Germans had kept onboard, no doubt to be used in a situation in which they now found themselves. This ruse effectively prevented them being attacked by the Sunderlands.

Although the enemy ships were kept under watch for several days, eventually they came beyond the range of the Flying Boats, which reluctantly had to give up. By this time they were also beyond the range of the Australian Naval Cruiser which had been sent in an attempt to intercept them. (This Cruiser was no doubt the one we saw heading north as we on the *Tulagi* was heading south.) So, from the Cooks we learned of one of the most intriguing stories to come from the war in the Pacific. Upon our arrival, the Cooks were met by representatives of the Government and the City of Brisbane. After disembarking they were whisked away in a limousine with a police escort. I was never to meet with them again.

On subsequent trips to Rabaul we were to learn more about the "Squally Island Affair", but having heard it at first hand we began to lose interest. Then in December of that year, we had many other things to occupy our thoughts and minds. Perhaps I should mention that as far as I can ascertain there was absolutely no mention of this affair to the public in general, either over the radio or by the media. It was as though it had never happened.

A number of years after the war I read in a magazine an account of a RAAF Hudson reconnaisance plane that had gone missing whilst on patrol duties in the Great Barrier Reef.

This had taken place in 1940. As I read on, I realised the similarity in the story to the circumstances surrounding the *Tulagi's* meeting with the strange vessel in the Reef in October, 1940. The following is a summary of the article as contained in the magazine.

A Hudson Bomber while patrolling in the Barrier Reef had come across a large vessel as it was flying no recognition signal or carried any markings of identity of any kind. The pilot decided to take a closer look at it, at the same time had a message flashed by lamp asking the vessel's name and destination. The signal went unanswered, as did a second message. The pilot then made a further sweep over the ship, once again repeating his signal, this met with the same lack of response. By now, a large number of the crew could be seen lining the ship's rails and waving to the plane. The pilot then made a further sweep towards the ship, this time much lower. As he flew alongside, almost at deck level, the walls of a deck structure suddenly collapsed revealing a gun which immediately opened fire on the plane. Unable to avoid this sudden attack, the plane was struck by several shells causing severe damage and the pilot to lose control of his aircraft, causing it to crash into the sea.

The impact caused the plane practically to disintegrate as it hit. Although the crew suffering injuries of one kind or another, they managed to get clear of the wreckage before it sank and were soon picked up by a boat from the ship and taken aboard. By this time, several other boats had been lowered and were busy collecting or sinking any remains of the plane still floating. Within a shortime no trace of the Hudson remained and, with all boats raised, the ship resumed her course. The RAAF crew soon realised they were on a German Armed Raider. Taken below deck they joined a large number of prisoners that had been taken from ships sunk by the Raider. They were to remain down below decks for a couple of months, during which time from the sounds above and the gunfire, other allied ships were being attacked. This was soon confirmed when more prisoners came down to join them.

Eventually, the ship's engines stopped and the noise of the anchor being lowered could be heard. Then under armed guards, all were ordered up on deck from where they could see the ship was anchored off the shores of an island. There were also two other ships at anchor close by. They were then informed they were to be landed on this island where they would be told of the arrangements that had been made for them. The story then went on to relate the series of events which eventually led to their rescue, being taken to Rabaul and eventually back to Australia. It also mentioned the voyage made by the small boat to Kavieng, which had included in the party two members of the plane shot down in the Reef.

Reading all this seemed to make everything fit into place. There was no doubt I now had the answer to the strange action of the ship we had sighted in the Reef. The Tulagi could only have been a few miles to the north when this drama had been played out, though we had not heard any sounds of gunfire at the time. I now believe the reason why the ship kept her portside towards us the whole time, was that her crew were busily engaged in removing all traces of the plane they had shot down. Once this had been completed, they had made a hurried departure. Although the *Tulagi* must have appeared an easy target and easily disposed of and sunk, the possibility of us getting away a radio message that we were being attacked, caused them to hold their hand, for if her presence had been revealed to the outside world no doubt she herself could have come under attack from our own forces.

One possible reason for us not hearing any gunfire, apart from us being some distance away, was the high level of noise that came from the *Tulagi's* main engines and auxiliary generating power system. She could be heard from miles away. This, together with other factors, may have been responsible for us not hearing anything. As an indication of this, when in Vancouver on her maiden voyage, the Harbour authorities received a number of complaints from residents on

nearby shores as to the noise coming from the *Tulagi*. She was then forced to go to an isolated anchorage. Another bad habit was the tendency to emit large quantities of sparks from her funnel when her engines were firing at full speed. This occurred despite having spark arresters installed. These two annoying traits were of particular concern when running in waters where lurking enemy ships could be operating. When in convoy we were always seen to arouse the ire of the Convoy Commander when we put on our "Fourth of July" act. Other ships in the convoy didn't appreciate our behaviour either. Despite all efforts of the engineers, there seemed nothing could be done to eradicate this problem.. I can recall one evening when it appeared we were on fire. One of the Deck Officers said, "This will be the death of us one of these days!" I have often wondered over the years, whether these two factors were in any way responsible for the *Tulagi* being torpedoed in the Indian Ocean in the early hours of the 28 March 1944, with the loss of 47 crew members from a total of 54.

Over the years, I have come across several small references to the events which had occurred and were associated with what had taken place on Squally Island, with each one enabling me to piece more of the puzzle together. I was to learn the German ships involved were the *Komet* and the *Orion*, both responsible for destroying a large number of Allied shipping in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The third, a supply ship, was the *Kulmerland*. I had often wondered about Bill Cook's reference to the possibility of the ships being Japanese on account of the names he saw painted on their sterns, particularly as it was some time before the Japanese had entered the war against us. Recently in a book, *The Red Duster*, by John Slader, I read where it had been the practice of the German Raiders to approach their intended victims posing as ships of a neutral nation, and when close enough run up their true colours and open fire on them.

The book also contained information regarding the three ships involved in the "Squally Island Affair". After eluding the planes and the naval ships sent after them, they eventually arrived at the Island of Lemotrek in the Carolines. There the remaining prisoners were transferred to the Raider *Ermland* and in her taken back to Bordeaux, France, and from there to POW camps in Germany, where they were to remain for the duration of the war in Europe. This has since been corroborated by one ex MN member who, after having his ship sunk at Nauru, was one of those landed on Squally Island and eventually shipped to Germany in the Ermland. He now lives in retirement in Melbourne.

When all the facts of this story are considered, I believe the series of events that took place as a whole, can with some justification be called one of the most intriguing and interesting tales to have come from the war in the Pacific.

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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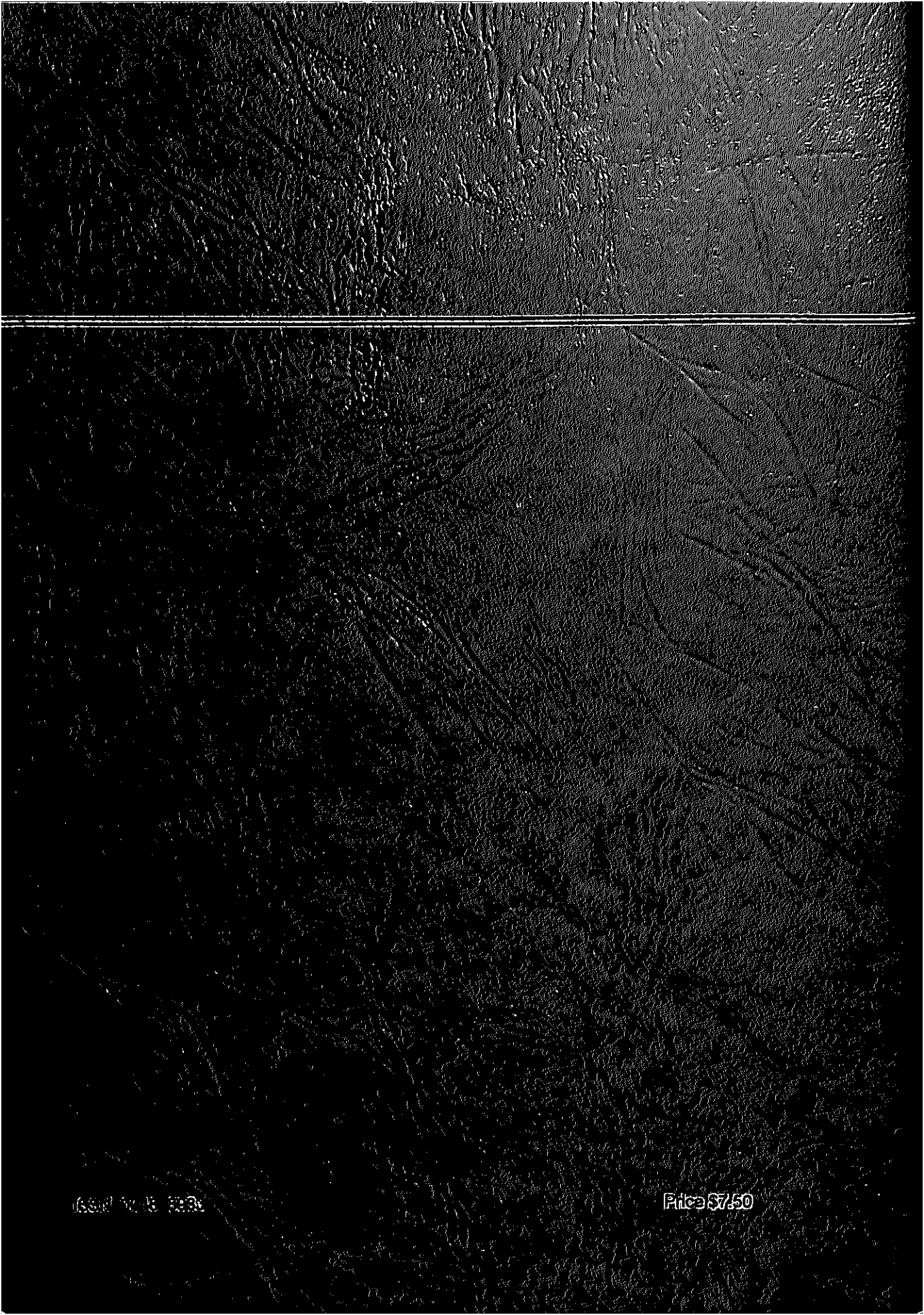
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