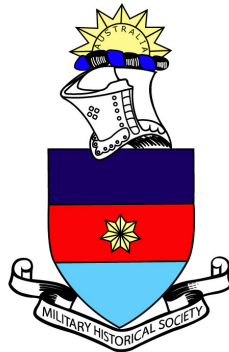


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# SABRETACHE

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

## September 2018

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.

### **Constitution and Rules**

The Constitution and Rules of the Society are printed in the January-March 1993 and April-June 1997 issues of *Sabretache* respectively. Section 12 of the Constitution was amended in the June 2010 issue of *Sabretache*.

### ***Sabretache***

The Federal Council is responsible for the publication of the Society Journal, *Sabretache*, which is mailed to each member of the Society quarterly.

### **Membership subscription**

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## ‘OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT WITH THE B.E.F.’: GAVIN LONG’S DISPATCHES FROM FRANCE AND BELGIUM, 1939-40

Garry Hills

*The town from which I am writing has been machine-gunned and bombed at intervals tonight and half-a-dozen buildings are blazing. There are intervals of silence then a rapid pounding of anti-aircraft guns and pom-poms, followed by the crashing of a line of bombs.*<sup>1</sup>

So wrote Gavin Merrick Long, Fairfax journalist and war correspondent, in the early hours of Tuesday, May 21, 1940. Along with other ‘non-effectives’ attached to the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.), Long had been ordered back to Boulogne, France three days earlier, joining thousands of Allied combatants, non-combatants and refugees retreating towards the Channel Coast in the face of the rapid German advance. His account continued:

*There are several reasons why it is difficult to write a lucid account of the present position. One is that nobody knows precisely how far their tanks and armoured cars have penetrated. Another is that it is inadvisable to give the Germans our estimate of their positions. Another is that, every half hour or so, a flight of German bombers arrives here. Our machine guns spray their tracer bullets skyward. Heavier guns thump and pom-poms send their shells racing along the track of searchlights. Then comes the thump of bombs and the rooms shake.*

The typically clear, vivid prose he pounded out on a portable typewriter while under fire that dawn was published the following day in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, by which time he and his colleagues – 30 English, American and Dominion correspondents and broadcasters – had joined a shipload of evacuees bound for London. Four days later, Operation Dynamo commenced.

At 9:30am on September 1, 1939, Gavin Long telephoned his wife, Jocelyn from his third-floor *Herald* office in Fleet Street, London to tell her the Germans had just invaded Poland. Londoners heard the news half an hour later on the wireless. Jocelyn wrote in her diary that her ‘heart suddenly began thumping as Gavin talked – a horrid feeling’.<sup>2</sup> The Longs, with their two young children, had been living in Beckenham, south-east London since January when he took up his posting in the *Herald* cable office.

On September 4, as his wife and children joined the evacuation, boarding a train for Cornwall, Long took to sleeping in a hotel closer to the London cable office to be on hand for the anticipated increase of activity. With the sudden establishment of censorship, the work of a journalist became more demanding. Things had to be written more carefully and took longer to get off. He applied for assignment as an official correspondent with the B.E.F., and on October 10, wearing khaki, with an armband of broad black and white stripes, the word PRESS across them, and with a portable typewriter in his kitbag, he shipped out from Southampton for France and Belgium. That same day, the *Sydney Morning Herald* announced Long’s assignment, noting that he had made a close study of defence and allied subjects, and, as the *Herald*’s Defence Correspondent in Australia, ‘had previously written articles which attracted widespread attention.’

<sup>1</sup> Here and throughout this article, G.M. Long, newspaper dispatches published by the *Sydney Morning Herald* and affiliates, variously between Sept. 1939 and May 1940 (<https://trove.nla.gov.au>, accessed Jan-Mar 2018). All of Long’s direct quotes from newspaper reports, correspondence and journal articles are italicised for clarity.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs M.J. Long, Private diaries and correspondence, held by author.



From Long's combat reporting, there is little evidence of his droll sense of humour and lively wit, but these traits are clearer in pieces he wrote in the days before shipping out for France. On September 13, for example, he wrote:

*Nothing may be printed except with the approval of a Propaganda Ministry which differs from Germany's only in its fantastic inefficiency. Anything from 50 to 200 journalists are there receiving communiqués that simply don't mean a thing and which, in any case, have been broadcast long before they are handed out there. At one stage, a foreign newspaperman ... waved his arms about and shouted 'Why don't they just install a radio!'*

## WAR CORRESPONDENT



**Mr. G. M. Long, "The Telegraph's" own war correspondent at the front in France.**

And:

*It's a grim kind of war. Our own planes have sunk at least one of our own submarines, our own guns have shot down at least two of our own planes, the Germans have mined at least one of their own torpedo boats with their own mines. The Dutch have mined one of their own minesweepers ... and three German freighters are ashore in the Baltic, presumably because they gave an excessively wide berth to their own minefields and forgot the other hazard. I've half a mind to call the whole thing off.*

*Left: Gavin Long in War Correspondent's uniform, London. (Brisbane Telegraph, Oct 30, 1939)*

Gavin Long had a keen sense of history, both global and personal, and often reported on this new conflict with reference to the Great War. To his mother in Australia he wrote:

*I have been reminded of 1917, when dad [Bishop George Long] arrived home with kitbags full of khaki. We seem to have a talent for turning up at wars in semi-military jobs. I am only a few years younger than he was in 1917 [he was 38 as he wrote this] ... and the men who will have to do the hardest work this time are the sons of the men who were also in their twenties last time.*

The importance of the Press in this new war quickly became evident. Commander of the B.E.F., Lord Gort, reported in dispatches that the Press had, from the first day, begun to play a far more significant role than had been appreciated prior to the outbreak of hostilities. He noted the presence of some 55 war correspondents under his purview, as well as representatives of principal newsreel companies. In addition, upwards of 60 visiting editors, correspondents and cinematographers had been permitted access to the Force.<sup>3</sup>

Gavin Long was the first war correspondent to receive a byline in the *Sydney Morning*

<sup>3</sup> J. Grehan & M. Mace, *The BEF in France 1939-1940: Manning the Front Through to the Dunkirk Evacuation*, Pen and Sword, Barnsley, 2014, p.40.

*Herald* (December 28, 1939),<sup>4</sup> and his dispatches from the frontlines were variously attributed in Australian newspapers to 'G.M. Long, Our Own Correspondent in France', 'Our Own Correspondent with the B.E.F.' or 'Our Special Correspondent'. The following sampling of Long's dispatches from France and Belgium between October 14, 1939 and January 10, 1940 provides a sketch of the so-called 'Phoney War', for a newsman, frustratingly bereft of dramatic stories to report. Long's reports were primarily for an Australian readership. He was always alert to the chance to interview any Australians he happened to encounter, and to comment on the role Dominion forces might eventually play in the conflict.

October 14, 1939<sup>5</sup>

[Noting the dangers of air attack:] *Unobtrusively moving chiefly by night, camouflaged so that by day long lines of stationary waggons [sic], guns, cars and fighting vehicles merge with the brown and green and autumn tints of a French October landscape, a British army of 160,000 men, with its vehicles has occupied a wide tract of France and is fortifying its line. [We passed through] ... towns whose names were made historic by the battles of the last war and past an occasional field of war graves whose ordered rows of headstones grimly recalled the battles fought on this soil by many who are serving again today with their sons fighting beside them.*

October 19

*Dominion pilots in some R.A.F. squadrons outnumber those from the United Kingdom, but there was only one Australian pilot in the squadron I visited today. He was from Perth, a former Guildford schoolboy. He has not yet made a flight over Germany.*

October 22

*... civilian life is going on more normally than in London or Paris. There are towns in Devon and Cornwall where hardly a chink of light can be seen at night, but in towns here in the British zone householders are less meticulous. Children in frontier villages are going to school as usual. Few buildings are sandbagged and only a small proportion of the populace has bothered to paste strips of brown paper across the windows .... This suggests that people whose villages were devastated in the last war have become fatalistic and calm compared with populations whose experience is less grim.*

October 25

Of the eight nurses Long spoke to in the British casualty clearing station not far from the line, three were Australian – two from Victoria, one from NSW:

*They were working in England when war broke out and enlisted immediately. In this war, unlike the last these sisters in casualty clearing stations will be equipped with steel helmets, in addition to gas masks. And they will be well within the danger zone. [Quoting one nurse:] 'The matron of this station saw four years' service in France in the last war, and is looking forward to perhaps a few more years on the same battlefields.'*

November 1

*Herr Hitler keeps us wondering. The days pass. Every day it becomes less likely that the German army will attempt a drive on the Western Front.*

Long ventured that there was no pressing need for Dominion troops on the western front, as troops were in good supply; however

<sup>4</sup> Gavin Souter, author of *Company of Herald*s (Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1981), acknowledged in a reply to correspondence from Long's son, Jeremy in 1981, that he had erroneously attributed the first *SMH* byline to G.E.W. Harriott (1942), and that, indeed Gavin Long was the first to receive one.

<sup>5</sup> The date of writing. Pieces were generally published on the following day.

*...the appearance of Dominion squadrons and wings would have a big practical value and also a big moral value. ... the sooner such squadrons appear the better.*

November 2

*... as an exercise the divisions in the forward positions ... are now working at night 'standing to' for an hour at dusk and also at dawn and sending out night patrols. I stood last night in the mud watching the dim shapes of a working party putting up barbed wire entanglements. Doubtless our voices were for a while raised louder than necessary. Then a pistol shot split the silence, and a Verey light, soaring in the black sky from 'No Man's Land' 400 yards away beyond the tank obstacles, flooded the paddock with light and fell sizzling five yards from the wiring party, who crouched motionless trying to look like a haystack.*

November 10

*There are practically no regular officers of the Dominion forces attached to the B.E.F. in France ... When war broke out there were enough Australian regular officers ... on attachment to British regiments to have made it possible for at least one Australian specialist officer to have partaken of the work of each army during the concentration in France. [But because practically every Dominion officer was recalled home at the outbreak of war] ... the price Australia has paid ... has been the loss of adequate, first-hand experience of the vast job now being done here. Never before has so large an army of mechanised and motorised troops been moved so far by sea and land. ... valuable experience can be shared with the Dominions only at second-hand unless Dominion officers are sent to France.*

November 21

*Standing in icy, drenching rain, I watched today a battery of British field guns being hurled into action against an imaginary enemy. Light rain and bad visibility will defeat any Blitzkrieg lightning war Germany may attempt in this area this winter. By next March, the English and French armies will have been enormously strengthened....and the Germans will face a combined army they could not hope to defeat.*

Few anticipated at the time that, by Spring 1940, the Germans would have identified the weakest section of the Allied defences and be well prepared to exploit them with devastating effect.

On November 25, Long returned to London on leave. On the 30<sup>th</sup> he flew back to Paris, dozed in a music hall throughout an afternoon and then travelled by train to his billet 'somewhere in France.' During this sojourn, it seems Gavin Long had reconsidered his post of the 21<sup>st</sup> about the futility of a successful German armoured push in the Spring. The following piece, written on the 30th was prescient.

November 30

*Tanks with the help of low-flying fighter and bomber planes certainly won the war in Poland. If the outcome of the war is decided on the western front it will be tanks that do it.*

*One can picture an unexpected attack, not by dozens, but by hundreds of tanks at a sector of the line where the tanks will outnumber the anti-tank guns. The attack will be supported by forces of fast light tanks which will rumble swiftly through the gap cut by the cruiser tanks and make havoc in the enemies back areas ...*

The Allied belief that the Ardennes forests were impenetrable by large armoured forces meant that, by the Spring of 1940, the line was poorly defended there by a thin screen of horsed cavalry and light tanks. Weak defences collapsed quickly when facing the vigorous, well-planned attacks spearheaded by armour supported by air and infantry forces. The

German plan, radically altered after the postponement of the attack originally ordered in January, centred around a main thrust – von Rundstedt's Army Group A, comprising 44 divisions, seven of them armoured – at Luxembourg and the Ardennes. A tactical element missing from Long's prediction was the targeted insertion of small forces of paratroopers, notably in Holland and Belgium to create mayhem, disrupt defences and quickly secure key strategic targets, such as bridges.



*Fig.2: 'War Correspondents Visit the Maginot Line', Dec. 1939.*

*Gavin Long on the right. From a French newspaper (unknown, cutting held by author).*

Through early December, Long reported on King George's tour of the British lines. On December 7, the King met with a

group of forty correspondents outside the chateau where Lord Gort had his headquarters. Long was there to shake the King's hand. Gavin Long's December dispatches begin to betray a growing frustration in the mind of a serious combat reporter as he endeavoured to compose daily reports from a vast theatre almost devoid of combat!

December 10

*... a large Alsatian dog is the only known casualty since the BEF and Germans have been ranged against each other. It was on patrol as part of 'the Red Indian warfare' being waged across wide, open fields*

December 13

*For five hours in drenching rain, I tracked from hill to wooded valley, through anti-tank ditches, from strong point to strong point, along the sector of the Maginot Line, which the British have taken over. Deep in dugouts, I found British soldiers singing and playing cards. It is a tough life for these young soldiers but they have taken to it manfully. They have been ingenious in making themselves comfortable by installing electric light, foraging straw for beds, and decorating overhead beams with mistletoe ...*

December 18

*Apart from anti-aircraft fire, the first British shot fired at the enemy was a rifle grenade. Immediately after the arrival of the British in the Maginot Line a jam tin hung on the barbed wire as an alarm signal jangled. Britain's first shot was fired towards the noise and ... disturbed the enemy marauder – possibly a feeding rabbit.*



December 26

*Not one shot was fired anywhere along the British section of the Maginot Line on Christmas Day. A British patrol on Christmas Eve crawled forward into No Man's Land and they could hear men in the nearest German outpost singing a German folksong.*

On that same day, December 26, Long was reduced by the lack of war news to report about reporting! He wrote an extensive piece about the apparatus of wartime news gathering in which he explained the dilemmas for good journalism under a censorious wartime regime. In it, he referred to a dictum from the War Office's *Regulations for Press Correspondents Accompanying a Force in the Field* which called for 'goodwill and commonsense' to be brought to bear by both the journalist and the censor in order to bridge the gap between the imperative for publicity by one and secrecy by the other. He reassured his readers that these virtues were indeed evident in his experience. He then illustrated the importance of this by noting that Dr Goebbels could not then claim that there was bad blood between Allied correspondents and censors, publishing stories that were nothing more than War Office propaganda.

December 27

After several days billeted with the British troops in their section of the Maginot Line, Long wrote a lengthy essay – about 1,500 words – describing how the fortified line was constructed and manned. One imagines it made for reassuring reading in Australia at the time. He optimistically concluded the essay: *France is guarded against the invader.*

January 1, 1940

*... so far it has been a war of strenuous inactivity ...*

Long opined that, in a war of nerves, rather than a war of muscle and steel, the special challenge for leadership was the maintenance of morale, spirit and discipline.

January 2

Still frustrated by the lack of actual news to report, Long's dispatch of the day was a long essay describing the British Army of 1940 – its organisation and equipment – compared with the army of 1918, and the implications for divisions in Australia being made ready for service.

Due to the lack of anything consequential to report, the *Herald* recalled Long on January 9 to return to snowy London to resume duties at the cable office, so he caught a train to the Channel coast, and embarked next morning for the crossing, complete with destroyer escort.

On January 21, Long was summoned to Australia House to be interviewed by Australian High Commissioner, Stanley Bruce who had received a cable from the Australian Government, inviting Long to apply for the role of Official Commonwealth War Correspondent. This, he was delighted to do, knowing that R.A.G. Henderson, General Manager at the *Herald*, had agreed to release him if he was appointed to the role and to take him back onto the staff once it was complete. Had Long been appointed to this role, it would have represented a logical and pleasing succession, as C.E.W. Bean, Official War Correspondent in the Great War, was Gavin Long's mentor and thought very highly of him. Indeed, Bean had recommended Long for the role, and, subsequently, successfully advocated that he be appointed General Editor of Australia's Official History of the War 1939-1945.

February 5

*The first phase of the campaign on this part of the front is over. That was the phase in which the British army moved up and occupied a thinly held and, at that time, inadequately fortified*

*line in Northern France, and turned that line into a very strong defensive position. ... units which have been digging and draining and wiring for more than three months are now living farther back and in more comfortable billets. The job they have done has been unspectacular, but of vital importance. It would be a pity if, because the B.E.F. has shed little blood, people were to forget that it has done a vitally important piece of work, and has done it very well, that it has been very uncomfortable, and will go on being very uncomfortable through the winter.*

Throughout January and February, Long and his wife waited in vain for news pertaining to the Official War Correspondent appointment, privately suspecting that Sir Keith Murdoch would put pressure on the government to have 'his man' appointed to the position, and on April 11, Kenneth Slessor was appointed. Gavin Long first became aware of this appointment when an acquaintance heard it publicly announced while listening to a news story on Australian radio. Long took this very hard news with his usual stoicism and generosity, commenting to his wife that Slessor was, in his opinion 'one of the four best journalists in Australia'. On the day of Slessor's appointment, Long received permission from the Admiralty, after multiple personal applications, to spend a day at sea on board a minesweeper, out of Harwich and report on the activities of the Royal Navy. He made several trips with convoys from Scotland over subsequent weeks.

At dawn on Friday, May 10, German forces invaded France, Luxembourg, Holland and Belgium. German armour advanced surprisingly quickly through the dense Ardennes forest to attack along that section of French territory not defended by the Maginot Line. On that day, as British, French and Belgian armies mobilised, moving up the line to defensive positions – forming a front along the Dyle River from Sedan in the south to Antwerp in the north – and as Winston Churchill formed a new government, Gavin Long hurriedly left London for Southampton and on to France. It was to be a brief, if frenetic tour, ending with evacuation from Boulogne on May 21. Long later described those days, with typical understatement, in a letter to his mother as 'fairly strenuous'.

Between 4:30am and 9pm on Saturday, May 11, Long travelled to Lille in northern France and joined correspondents there who had been at GHQ in Arras on the 10<sup>th</sup>. They had been awakened early that morning by bombs dropping on the aerodrome.

*From Lille for several days we were able to drive through Brussels to Louvain and Wavre ... the chief towns on the line which the B.E.F. took up here. A thin line of tired troops dug machine-gun positions, posted anti-tank guns and waited for the Germans, while Belgians straggled back.*

*It has been perfect weather since the war began which makes the bombed houses, the charred wrecks of planes and the constant stream of troops and lorries and tanks seem grimmer than ever.*

The Germans attacked with three Army Groups, comprising a total of 89 divisions, ten of them armoured, with massive air support and with 45 divisions in reserve.<sup>6</sup> On May 13, as von Rundstedt's tanks were pushing westward over the Meuse, surprising almost everyone with the devastating effectiveness of their advance, Gavin Long set out from Lille by car at 3pm in the company of another correspondent and a conducting officer on a long drive through Belgium. They reconnoitred and took notes throughout the night and got back about

<sup>6</sup> Maj L.F. Ellis, *The War in France and Flanders 1939-1940*, History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military, HMSO, London, 1954, p.13.

5am 'after having had half an hours' sleep in the car at the side of the road.' He immediately set to work, typing the stories which had to be ready for transmission by 7am. They were published in Australia the following morning and represent compelling, eyewitness reporting. Two lengthy sections are here excerpted. The first gives the reader a sense of the drama unfolding from the perspective of the civilian population. The second chronicles a lively interview with an Australian pilot who claimed that air combat was 'dashed good fun'.

May 13

*In a tour beginning early yesterday afternoon and ending after dawn to-day, I passed convoy after convoy travelling both night and day.*

*The efforts by fleets of German bombers to block the roads and destroy the bridges and viaducts by which this army is advancing have failed completely. The bombing has had little result, except for 'near misses,' which have blown Belgian houses to pieces, shattered acres of window glass, and killed some Belgian civilians.*

*Our fighters are still bringing down these Heinkel and Junkers bombers.*

*Towns lying in the zone where the coming battle is to be fought have been evacuated. I drove from end to end of one town and saw only a dozen civilians mostly officials. Houses were empty and the shops and offices closely shuttered. Few troops were visible for it is their job to remain unseen.*

*On the way to the forward lines I passed a stream of refugees from this and other towns.*

*On their way if they had not seen it before they passed evidence of what they were trying to escape – factories and flimsy brick houses shattered by bombs. Sometimes one such building had been neatly pulled like a tooth from a row of attached houses leaving its neighbour's walls intact.*

*Processions of cyclists pedalled beside the roads leading southward, each cyclist with a pathetic little bundle of clothing or food on the carrier, some with children on the handle bars.*

*I talked with a mother and father with a family of little girls who had left their home near the German frontier on Friday morning and had now nearly reached France. They had walked 40 kilometres and had been given lifts for the remainder of the distance. The poorest refugees generally carried only a bundle wrapped in a bed blanket. The richer fugitives streamed along in motor cars.*

*Shopkeepers' vans were crammed with boxes and bags of furniture and often had a mattress strapped over the cab roof.*

*I saw a group of priests and students cycling southward and a party of nuns sitting in the tray of an open lorry. Some refugees had cut saplings and tied them across the roofs of their cars in an attempt at camouflage. Here and there were Boy Scouts directing traffic through towns and along main roads.*

May 13

*The Germans today – the third day of their new stroke – moving with all the ingenuity they can command, are dropping parachutists, not only in Belgium, but far behind the Belgian frontier. The spearhead of the German attack is the armoured divisions and low-flying aircraft which aim at breaking a gap in the line through which the tanks and armoured cars can fan out.*

*... there is brilliant sunshine, in which the Belgian peasants spent today in their Sunday clothes sitting on chairs watching British and French aeroplanes or cheering English troops or watching German planes overhead ... most of the inhabitants went about their normal*



*holiday business.*

*During three almost sleepless nights and days, the British fighters including many Australians, have been fighting the swiftest and most intense air war history has ever seen, with seldom more than three or four hours' rest at a time. The result is that Heinkels and Junkers now dot the countryside here and in Northern France.*

*'A Junkers dive bomber only needs 30 rounds. We get them almost every time,' said a 22-year-old Australian pilot belonging to one of the hardest-fighting British squadrons in this area. He had come off duty for a bath and perhaps two hours' sleep. 'He hit the deck hard,' said the pilot who told me where his enemy had fallen. I saw the wreck a few hours later. To the squadron to which this young Adelaide pilot belongs – he is an old boy of Prince Alfred College – the first warning that the war had begun in earnest was that the early morning anti-aircraft fire on Friday was heavier and more persistent than usual. Suddenly a twin-engined plane appeared, flying low. The Junkers, as it was, roared over the aerodrome at a height of a few hundred feet. 'That was how it began .... Anti-aircraft guns brought this particular bomber down beyond the flying field, then bombers came in waves. They are the easiest things to shoot down,' he said, 'I've only got two so far. They can't get us very often, and we can get them almost always. It's dashed good fun provided you get a decent rest now and then.'*

The fighters of the RAF Air Component reinforced by two squadrons on the first day of the battle, flew without resting as did the three fighter squadrons of the Advanced Air Striking Force. They successfully protected airfields and resisted superior forces, though lost heavily – the ASF lost twenty aircraft and the Air Component 41 in the first six days, but brought down many German planes. Bombers of these two forces lost even more heavily. Guderian noted in his war diary on the 13<sup>th</sup> 'Enemy fighter activity is exceptionally vigorous ...'<sup>7</sup>

After the war, Long summarised the role played in the air by Australia in this phase of the conflict. The war was only three weeks old when Australia designated six squadrons from the RAAF (two bomb wings and a fighter wing) to comprise an Australian Air Expeditionary Force to assist Britain against the Germans in Europe. By October, these plans were changed to the establishment of the Empire Air Training scheme, a longer-term, less immediately tangible, but far more valuable strategy. The equivalent of sixteen fighter squadrons fought in France with the B.E.F., and 'most squadrons of the R.A.F. contained an Australian or two. In fact, 'in the last quarter of 1939 there were already about 450 Australians in the Royal Air Force, nearly all of them pilots ... consequently some Australians took part in practically all the main exploits of the R.A.F.'<sup>8</sup>

By May 14, the Meuse had been forced over a length of twenty kilometres and five hundred of von Rundstedt's tanks were pouring across into France. The Dutch surrendered, but the main strength of B.E.F. was yet to clash fully with the Germans.

May 15

*The Allied armies have not been hurried into their strange position, but they have deployed on a front which they decided to take a good many months ago .... Parachutists are still being dropped, as the methodical German mind is not yet convinced that this device has been effectively countered. Today a carload of 'officers' was detected and dealt with.*

<sup>7</sup> Ellis, p.54.

<sup>8</sup> G.M. Long, *The Six Years War: A Concise History of Australia in the 1939-45 War*, Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1973, p.19.

Early in the day on Thursday, May 16, the decision was made to withdraw the forward units of the B.E.F. to defensive positions along the Escaut river. As the withdrawal began that night, May 16/17, Long made what was to be his last visit to the line. He reported that evening that the line was *'still holding firm'*, yet each subsequent day was marked by continual retreat.

May 16

*All to-day the position held by the B.E.F. in front of Louvain and along the valley of the Dyle has been under heavy artillery and aerial bombardment. ... The battle for Brussels began in deadly earnest to-day. ... All the bridges here over the Dyle have been blown up and the English and German armies are facing each other at close quarters. It was in front of this line that the British light tanks and armoured cars were fending off the German advance in the last three days while Belgian troops steadily fell back. [Apart from a few hundred civilians] ... the city is deserted, its 50,000 people are among those who are still pouring south and west along the crowded roads to France.*

*I discovered on arriving at Lille at 9:00pm that Press headquarters ... except for two of us, and photographers, had already gone to Arras. We followed in a complete blackout, reaching Arras at 1:00 o'clock in the morning after a head-on crash in which the photographers' car hit a civilian car and three people were injured. It was a long business getting the injured to hospital.*

*A few hours after arriving at Arras, the Press corps was ordered to Amiens, we travelled on roads that were being mined and prepared to be blocked by carts against the German tanks that were 'at large over a wide area', with the aim of protecting retreat corridors for the B.E.F. if needed.*

*The Grand Hotel in Amiens was hit and ... it was impossible to avoid the conviction that, as in Poland, the German bombers circled over the larger cities in which important staffs were living, singling out the right hotels with the deliberateness of a dentist extracting a tooth.*

*Amiens was a distant place for which to write an intimate, colourful account of a battle. We were forced to rely for news on the B.B.C., which was almost as far from the battle as we and from the Paris papers, which were writing place names we were not allowed to mention.*

By early morning on the 17<sup>th</sup>, Lord Gort was faced with a 'grave situation'. German armour continued to advance, having crossed the Oise. The French reported ten enemy divisions engaged and 'the enemy break-through was now offering an imminent threat to rear G.H.Q. ... to communications ... and to base areas.'<sup>9</sup> Brigades were moved up to meet and delay multiple German advances in order to allow for the steady withdrawal of the main forces. By late in the day, orders were issued for all administrative troops, including correspondents to fall back immediately. Before dawn on Saturday, May 18, the members of the Press corps were roused and instructed to move immediately back to the Channel coast. Carrying only minimal hand luggage, Long travelled north via Abbeyville with his compatriots to Boulogne. This was a dangerous time for combatants and non-combatants alike. 'The enemy did not confine his attention to troops but attacked the long columns of refugees which continued to move westwards.'<sup>10</sup> Long continued to file copy from Boulogne, citing his location as 'a Channel Port.'

<sup>9</sup> Grehan & Mace, p.71.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.74.

By the next day, as part of the preparations for the defence of Arras, all troops not required for defence, including rear G.H.Q. were moved back in two echelons to Hazebrouck and Boulogne. With defence along the Escaut in jeopardy owing to very low water levels allowing advancing forces to cross, Gort estimated that five armoured divisions were about to break through to the coast and ordered plans be drawn up for the withdrawal of the B.E.F. at Dunkirk. He wrote, 'The picture now was no longer that of a line temporarily bent or broken, but of a besieged fortress.'<sup>11</sup>

*We hoped from [Boulogne] to get to the front and obtain accounts of the battle ... but ... we were informed that all Press cars had been taken over ... to evacuate G.H.Q. from Arras.*

*All telephone communications between Arras and Paris by this time were cut. For several days, the Press teleprinter at Arras was the only link to London. Before G.H.Q. left Arras, this teleprinter was smashed and the only way to communicate with London was by King's Messenger who crossed the channel daily by steamer.*

May 19

*[There have been fierce air attacks on] ... the German mechanised force ... thrusting down roads leading towards Amiens and Paris in an effort to drive a wedge between the main French army and the Anglo-French armies on its left. ... This mechanised force is far ahead of the German infantry. Its job, evidently is to push on as swiftly as it can, regardless of what is happening in its rear.*

By May 20, with German armour now clearly heading down the valley of the Somme and making for the channel ports, British anti-aircraft defences were provided for Boulogne, comprising eight anti-aircraft guns, eight machine guns and a searchlight battery. In addition, there were two French anti-aircraft guns, two anti-tank guns and two tanks, one of which was broken down and had to be used on the spot. Refugees continued to pour into the town. There were some troops – French and Belgian recruits and about 1,500 British Auxiliary Pioneer Corps all awaiting training, plus various smaller groups of French soldiers and men on leave or just out of hospital.

May 20

*Our seaport [has been] bombed nightly by planes, some of which flew at a height of a few hundred feet, disdaining the barrage of balloons and the spectacular anti-aircraft fire. Major Robert Machell, who had been in charge of advanced Press headquarters since May 11, was severely wounded.*

*... the British army has fallen back according to plan .... intact and unshaken, and if it is tired and short of sleep, it is no more so than the enemy. ... Amiens has been heavily bombed. ... Arras has been bombed and machine-gunned. The line of the German advance is marked at its outer limits by smoking towns and villages. ... Down the roads parallel to the French coast has poured and is pouring an immense mechanised evacuation. Tens of thousands of vehicles ... are on the move – trucks, tradesman's vans, private cars, furniture carriers and brewer's lorries are crowded with people, bedding and clothing.*

May 21

*At dawn, we were informed that we must board a transport and leave for England. Since we had no cars and there was no immediate prospect of the cars returning, it was not desirable for non-effectives to remain. Consequently we 30-odd English, American and Dominion correspondents, broadcasters and photographers clambered hastily on to a transport.*

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.80.

Communications across the Somme had finally been severed. By 3:30pm that day, a column of all arms was approaching Boulogne. Hospitals were now evacuated and bridges over the Canche demolished. A detachment of Royal Marines was sent to Boulogne to oversee the evacuation, which continued until the 24<sup>th</sup>.

May 22

*The news that all the B.E.F. correspondents had gone back to England at a time of the greatest interest was not published until today.*

On the morning of Wednesday, May 22, Long's wife Jocelyn, once more living in Beckenham, received a note from the *Herald* office in Fleet Street, explaining that her husband 'has just arrived in London, whither all B.E.F. correspondents have returned.' Until that moment, and since May 10, his precise whereabouts were necessarily unknown to her. She immediately caught a train and rushed to his office to find him at his desk, filing copy and speaking on the telephone. In a letter to her mother, she wrote, 'He was looking Dreadful – lank and grey and concave. I thought he might flop any minute.' She took him to a 'buttery' for some grilled chicken, the effects of which were immediate and he related that he had been a day or so ahead of the Germans for about a week 'with all that that means – little sleep, and that very broken; and not much food. After 3 days at Boulogne, they were given 20 minutes to get into a transport. He'd lost almost all his luggage – all he had left was his respirator and borrowed pyjamas.'<sup>12</sup>

A few days later, as the remnants of the B.E.F. were being brought across the channel, Long was despatched to Dover to report on the arrivals. Such was the chaos of the time, the journey from central London which normally took 40 minutes, took him five hours. In the wake of Dunkirk, as Australian troops began arriving in the UK in June for training, Long continued to report on the progress of the war. At some point during this time, he recorded an interview with an Australian officer, one 'Captain Smith'<sup>13</sup> who had been wounded in France in 1916 when a company commander with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF, and who, as a 53-year-old, was with the B.E.F., and received wounds again, this time at Dunkirk. 'Smith' observed:

In my opinion, the British as well as the French army was slack. It shared the French faith in the Maginot Line and it shared the French army's complacency. ... we sighed for some Australians or Canadians, for the offensive spirit typified by (Gen) Jimmy McCay ... the cool, clear brain of a Monash ... who would not have accepted the idea that the Germans were rolling right through us and there was no stopping them.

In November, with his wife and children back in Australia, Long was sent by the *Herald* to Egypt. He covered the campaigns of the 6<sup>th</sup> Division in Libya and Greece, returning to Australia in June 1941 to continue his articles and editorials as Defence Correspondent until February 16, 1943, when he was appointed General Editor of the Official History of Australia in the Second World War.

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<sup>12</sup> Mrs M.J. Long, Private diaries and correspondence, held by author.

<sup>13</sup> A pseudonym. This officer was reluctant to speak 'on the record', thus, unfortunately, verification of his identity is now virtually impossible. This officer's observations, running to six type-written pages, were apparently of significance to Long, so they are included here; not just for their historical interest, but because Long felt they were worth preserving. As far as this author can tell, this is the first time 'Smith's' comments have been published anywhere.



## RAILWAYS IN WORLD WAR ONE: THEIR PLACE IN THE AUSTRALASIAN MILITARY RAILWAYS JOURNEY – PART 2

Jeff Hopkins-Weise and Rob Shiels

*Continued from Part 1, published in the June 2018 issue of Sabretache (vol.59, no.2).*

### Railways on the Western Front

Let us now delve more specifically into the story of one small British Hunslet light rail locomotive, one of many which gave exhaustive service on the Western Front during World War One. This engine's story though does not end after the Armistice in November 1918, but in distant Queensland, where it took on even greater and lengthy post-war civilian service in the service of industry, before finally ending up as a prized collection object at The Workshops Rail Museum in North Ipswich.

In the decades before the outbreak of WW1, railways caused tension and concerns throughout Europe. Railways were viewed as a threat to one's interests and defence. The Germans saw the Russian railways expanding westward towards them – even though the gauge was different – as a threat, made even worse when they were funded by French loans. Even the British were intimidated by the announced Berlin-Baghdad railway, and feared a lessening of their influence in the East and a way of bypassing the Suez Canal.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to counter the squeezing effect of the French and Russians, and the realisation that they may very well have to fight on two fronts simultaneously, the Germans rapidly expanded their own railway networks. The Germans emphasised the ability to travel East-West and by 1914 had no less than 13 independent East-West railway lines that linked up to 15 railway bridges over the river Rhine. Such significance was placed on these strategic railway lines that only battleships had more money spent on them between 1870 and 1914. They were absolutely paramount to German military planning.<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, the French were also extending their own railways and by 1913 had built 16 railway crossings to the border, while the Germans had built 13 for a total of 29.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, in 1870 there were only 13 railway border crossings, and given that trade between the two great powers could not justify the creation of an additional 16 crossings over the next 43 years, this infrastructure can be viewed as a railway 'cold war'.<sup>4</sup> During these build-up years, French spies also reported other railway infrastructure in western Germany – sidings with no commercial use; the extension of platforms in areas where population was low and did not require large platforms; and depots and refuelling equipment in areas that made little sense for the movement of civilian and goods traffic.

The ambitious German Schlieffen Plan was reliant on railways to speed troops and supplies west via neutral Belgium to avoid the French fortress along their Eastern border, and to deliver a knockout punch to the French before wheeling around and rushing east to take on the Russian Empire. The initial movement of troops and supplies was extremely efficient thanks to meticulous pre-war timetable planning. In the first two weeks of the war, the

<sup>1</sup> J. Higgins, *Great War Railwaymen: Britain's Railway Company Workers at War 1914-1918*, (London: Uniform Press, 2014), p.27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.27.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.27.

<sup>4</sup> A Roden, *Trains to the Trenches: The Men, Locomotives and Tracks that Took the Armies to War, 1914-1918*, (London: Aurum Press, 2014), p.30.

Germans moved three million soldiers via 11,000 trains. Cologne was the busiest point on the German network in the early days of the war, with the Southern Bridge which was double-tracked carrying 60 troop trains daily, while the Northern Bridge which was four tracks carrying 2,150 troop trains between 2 and 18 August – about one every 10 minutes.<sup>5</sup> But no matter how organised the Germans were on their own soil, once they crossed the border the deficiency of their planning became evident. Critically, a huge miscalculation that the Belgians would simply surrender and allow easy passage into France became a massive hurdle to the plan.

The Belgians actively destroyed their own railway infrastructure to hamper the German advance, which managed to create huge bottlenecks of trains heading west towards the war zones. King Albert gave the orders to sabotage his nation's own railway even before the Germans arrived. He ordered bridges and tunnels blown up and rolling stock was removed from the east of Belgium and either destroyed or sent to France. Such was the destruction of the Belgian system that even after a month of German occupation the 26,000-man force that the Germans had repairing the network could only get one-sixth of the railway up and running.<sup>6</sup> Adding to the drama, the German forces advanced drastically beyond their railheads – sometimes up to 70-80 miles – hampering any ability to supply properly the men for strong attacks. German officers were also meddling in the timetabling and commandeered trains destined for other units.

By the time of the Battle of Marne in early September 1914, the Germans were stretched to their limits. The rapid arrival of the British Expeditionary Force – thanks to excellent wartime railway timetabling (they had transferred 120,000 men in 620 trains to the ports for the crossing to France by the end of August) – surprised the Germans, who didn't expect to see the British so soon on the battlefields. The battle of Marne had a huge impact on the future of the war; the British and French had managed to push the German advance back, but the British were 40 miles ahead of their railhead and had to wait. The break allowed the Germans to dig in and the beginning of the trench warfare, iconic of the Western Front, had begun.<sup>7</sup>

German ambitions to conquer the French in less than 40 days before turning their attention to the mighty Russian Empire never came to be. And although the German plan failed virtually from the beginning, it was railways that helped create the situation on the Western Front. All sides were able to mobilise their troops thanks to meticulous pre-war planning and in the case of the British and French, the military were quickly able to control the private railway networks. It was the railway that moved the soldiers in such vast numbers to face off. And once the stalemate of trench warfare developed, it was once again railways that would feed the conflict for another four years. But it would be a smaller railway system that would help fuel this war – the narrow gauge or light railways.

### Development of Narrow Gauge (or Light) Railways for War

Narrow gauge railways were vital to both sides to supply the trenches; it can really be argued that without the narrow gauge railways to move the huge volumes of food, fodder, ammunition and men to the front, the opposing armies would not have been able to continue

<sup>5</sup> Major F. During, *Strategic Movement by Rail in 1914: Transportation Problem at the Outbreak of the War* <https://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?t=217491> (accessed October 2017)

<sup>6</sup> C. Wolmar, *Engines of War: How Wars Were Won and Lost on the Railways* (London: Atlantic Books, 2010), p.152.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p.155.

as long as they did. In 1920 the *Railway Gazette* published a special War Transportation edition which made clear in the immediate aftermath of the war the role that rail had played in the various theatres of war:

While the railway cannot claim the speed of the aeroplane, nor the mobility of the motor vehicle, it can definitely be affirmed that, for any prolonged transport function, the railway has proved to be the most satisfactory means, and this fact was abundantly established during the Great War ... Throughout the course of the Great War the railways – both at home and abroad – successfully met the heavy obligations imposed upon them. Both in trench warfare and in the wars of movement, they performed astonishing transport feats.<sup>8</sup>

Prior to the outbreak of WWI, Germany had already gained valuable operational experience with the use of light (or narrow gauge) railways in its colonial territories in south-west Africa. In preparation for the outbreak of the expected European war, Germany had therefore stockpiled vast quantities of 60cm narrow gauge railway track and light rail locomotives and rolling stock, as German military planners foresaw the value which this type of easily constructed and portable railway system would play in the logistics and troop movements for the coming war.

Such was the German vision of needing to move supplies from Standard Gauge railheads to the fronts on their *Feldbahns* (field railways) that narrow gauge equipment was placed strategically around the country in virtual full view. The American author Roy Norton stumbled across one of these real life train sets:

On February 14 of this year [1914] I was in Cologne, and blundered, where I had no business, into what I learned was a military-stores yard. Among other curious things were tiny locomotives loaded on flats which could be run off those cars by an ingenious contrivance of metals, or, as we call them in America, rails. Also there were other flats loaded with sections of tracks fastened on cup ties (sleepers that can be load on the surface of the earth) and sections of miniature bridges on other flats. I saw how it was possible to lay a line of temporary railway, including bridges, almost anywhere in an incredibly short space of time, if one had the men ... Before I could conclude my examination I discovered that I was on verboten [forbidden] ground; but the official who directed me out told me that what I had seen were construction outfits.<sup>9</sup>

The French were the pioneers of the light rail system, with French company Decauville designing a ready-made 60cm light railway products including track, locomotives and wagons, with the French military seeing its application as far back as the 1880s. The French eastern fortress network was serviced by this Decauville system, and there was some pre-fabricated track stockpiled prior to the outbreak of war in 1914. Their previous experience with the Decauville system, and the difficulties experienced in supplying their army during the first winter of the war, allowed the French to quickly see the advantage of extending their 60cm network in the rear areas behind their army, and at the same time ordered more locomotives from British and American workshops.<sup>10</sup> The French also had a metre-gauge railway system in regional areas that was utilised during the war.

Britain since the early 1900s though, had an official policy which favoured the use of motor vehicles over light railways. The British concept was to use motor vehicles as the linkage

<sup>8</sup> *The Railway Gazette and Railway News: Special War Transportation Number* (Cheshire, UK: The Moseley Railway Trust, 2013 facsimile reprint of original 21 September 1920 special issue), p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Roden, p.32.

<sup>10</sup> D. Bishop & W.J.K. Davies, *Railways and War before 1918*, (London: Blandford Press, 1972), pp.4-5.



between their standard gauge railheads and the forward areas. This decision would lead to serious failings in its logistical capacity on the Western Front by 1916 as the war front stagnated into hellish muddy and static trench warfare. Britain was forced to reconsider the operational role and efficiency of railways, but especially tactical light railways. Although the first British light rail operating companies were formed in 1916, it was not until 1917 that light rail expanded and helped transform the often extreme difficulties of movement and supply on the Western Front. Many light rail companies were formed during this period to assist the British war effort, including South African, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand units.

### British Narrow Gauge Locomotives

After realising that light railways were the way forward in 1916 after a report by Sir Eric Geddes, Deputy General Manager of the North Eastern Railway, the British War Office ordered 665 steam locomotives, 1803 petrol locomotives, and 12,960 wagons, all 60cm gauge.<sup>11</sup> Rolling stock was also necessary in the other theatres of war including standard gauge, metre gauge, 2ft 6in as well as 60cm gauge. In total 3655 locomotives and tractors, 81,076 wagons and 9124 miles of track were supplied to France, Italy, Mesopotamia, Salonica and Egypt.<sup>12</sup>

The Hunslet Locomotive Company of Leeds was engaged by the War Office to build a 60cm gauge tank locomotive with a maximum axle loading of four tons. Modifying the design of one of their existing locos, the 0-6-0T *Hans Sauer* which had been built for use in Rhodesia, Hunslet came up with the 4-6-0T 'War Office'.<sup>13</sup> The addition of a bogie reduced the axle load and by lengthening the new design, larger side tanks were able to be fitted and coal bunkers moved to the rear of a new larger cab.

The War Office type could haul 286 tons on flat track.<sup>14</sup> According to the War Office's specifications the Hunslets were to be painted: 'dead black' over all, with khaki used inside the cab and red oxide for inside the frames.<sup>15</sup> The War Office type also featured a bumper bar on both ends at a height of 2ft 3in (690mm) for both reducing dropping during derailment and working as a cowcatcher to push debris out of the way.<sup>16</sup> Two jacks were fitted with built-in jacking points to assist in re-railing.<sup>17</sup> Cleverly, water lifters were included so crews could take on water from shell holes and wherever else they could while on a run.<sup>18</sup> The War Office type also had a large sand box attached to the boiler which gave the crews a healthy supply of dry sand to assist with traction.<sup>19</sup> The locomotive in the collection of The Workshops Rail Museum was constructed by Hunslet as part of the War Office's second order of locomotives, and was given the job number of 1239 by Hunslet, and later given the running number 327 by the War Office.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cliff Thomas, 'Tracks to the Trenches', *The Railway Magazine*, (The Remembrance Issue: Railways at War, July 2014), p.30.

<sup>12</sup> *The Railway Gazette and Railway News: Special War Transportation Number*, p.14.

<sup>13</sup> W.J.K. Davies, *Light Railways of the First World War: A History of Tactical Rail Communications on the British Fronts, 1914-1918*, (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1967), p.145.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Hunslet Painting records, 1916, courtesy of Ian Hughes, Moseley Railway Trust.

<sup>16</sup> Davies, *Light Railways of the First World War*, p.145.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> L.G. Hughes, *Hunslet 1215: A War Veteran's Story*, (Usk, United Kingdom: The Oakwood Press, 2010), p.13.



Fig. 1: Hunslet No.309 transporting British troops, Elverdinghe, near Ypres, February 1917.  
(Imperial War Museum photo Q1700)

After winning the contract, it became clear that Hunslet Locomotive Company would be unable to build locomotives quickly enough for the War Office's needs. All the workshops in Britain were already undertaking vital work for the war effort and were unable to increase production any further. The Baldwin Locomotive Company in America was then given a contract to build a 60cm gauge tank engine 4-6-0T. While it took Hunslet a year to build 75 locomotives, Baldwin was able to produce 495 locomotives in seven months, without affecting their other production requirements.<sup>21</sup> Yet the Hunslets were very popular with the men who operated the light railways; they were nicely built, reliable and perhaps most importantly, relatively stable on poor track, especially compared to the wider Baldwins which had a reputation of toppling over very easily.<sup>22</sup> Another factor in the soldiers' preference for the Hunslet over other locomotives must have also been its fully enclosed cabin that at least provided a bit of cover from the elements.<sup>23</sup>

Work on the light railways would have been varied but demanding, as well as highly dangerous at times. By September 1917 the light railways were on average transporting nearly 211,000 tons of goods per week.<sup>24</sup> Split among different steam locomotives and the petrol-powered tractors, Hunslets would have been involved in hauling artillery shells, water, fodder, food as well as soldiers and anything else needing to be returned to rear areas, including casualties from the front lines. Writing in 1931 about the experiences of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> Light Railway Companies, Royal Engineers, T.R. Heritage wrote comparing the drivers of the steam locomotives and the petrol tractors: 'The locos Cooke, Hunslet and Baldwins did the lion's share of the haulage, but naturally being more or less in the back area, their drivers did not have the hair-raising thrills experienced by the tractor men'.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid; & Davies, *Light Railways of the First World War*, p.145.

<sup>22</sup> Hughes, *Hunslet 1215*, p.15.

<sup>23</sup> R.C. Link, *WDLR Album*, (Garndolbenmaen, Gwynedd Wales: RCL Publications, 2014), p.149.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p.74.

<sup>25</sup> T.R. Heritage, *The Light Track from Arras*, (East Harling, Norwich: Plateway Press, 1999), p.19.

We do know however, that the steam locomotives were also targeted by the enemy, and their crews also experienced dangers and hardships while operating. Arthur Stead, a member of the Light Railway Directorate in France, recalled in 1946 that his company:

*Operated about twenty miles of track ... We handled about 1000 tons of traffic with our steam and petrol locomotives every 24 hours, and looking back it seems miraculous how sometimes we managed to keep traffic moving with enemy shells falling all around, sometimes half-burying train crews in the debris. Many routes were under direct enemy observation and could be worked only at night.*<sup>26</sup>

The breakdown of rail-derived transport as you got closer to the front line was as follows:

Standard Gauge (or Broad Gauge) supply trains railhead and exchange with the 60cm Light Railway [steam] locomotives were anywhere from 12km to 5km from the front line; then to Forward Exchange yards where 60cm light railway internal-combustion locomotives or tractors took over which were about 3.5km from the front line; and then finally, push trolleys or ropeways of the trench railways carried the supplies for the final kilometre or so from the actual front line.<sup>27</sup>

This arrangement worked in reverse with regards to removal of the wounded. Men could be pushed out on hand-trolleys to meet up with the powered tractors and put into an open wagon (horse-drawn power was also utilised to remove the wounded).<sup>28</sup> From there the wounded could be treated at Dressing Stations and at Ambulance Control Points and if not fit for return to the front, were then delivered to a Casualty Clearing Station.<sup>29</sup> Casualty Clearing Stations were often located close to the rail network so that injured soldiers could travel via standard gauge ambulance trains to Base Hospitals in the distant rear areas and then if strong enough, travel by train to ports to be evacuated back to England via hospital ship.<sup>30</sup>

### The Workshops Rail Museum's Hunslet

Having survived the war, a miraculous feat in itself, locomotive 327, along with other War Office engines, was returned to Hunslet Locomotive Company in Leeds via the War Stores Disposal Board (WSDB) for overhaul and to be put on the open market for purchase.<sup>31</sup> The Workshops Rail Museum, having acquired an inspection report for engine 327 from late 1918, has been able to gain an understanding of its condition after finishing active service. Repair work began in 1919 and included:

- The boiler clothing had bulges due to incorrect lifting and had to be re-rolled to take out the bulges.
- The front buffer beam needed straightening and one derailment beam was missing.
- LH Cylinder needed replacement as well as a new LH front cylinder cover.
- The sidebars needed re-grinding and two oil syphons were missing.
- The motion work was generally in good condition but required re-fitting and new bushes to the radius link brackets. The LH eccentric rod was missing and was replaced by a spare rod returned from France.
- The boiler, firebox and tubes were in good condition.
- The gauge was slightly regauged from 60cm to 2ft gauge.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> K. Taylorson, *Narrow Gauge at War*, (East Harling, Norwich: Plateway Press, 2008), p.12.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, pp.78 & 84.

<sup>28</sup> J. Higgins, p.91.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Hughes, *Hunslet 1215*, p.19.

<sup>32</sup> Hunslet Locomotive Works, Order Number 39222 Report November 1918 (Hunslet Archive).

After repairs, 327, was returned to the War Department for sale. It was subsequently purchased by the Agent General for the Queensland Government in June 1920 and shipped to Queensland to work in the sugar industry at the North Eton Mill near Mackay, in Central Queensland.<sup>33</sup> It was one of 15 War Office Hunslets which were purchased and transported to Queensland, and was also part of the first batch that arrived in 1920, with more arriving in Queensland in 1924.<sup>34</sup>

In Queensland, engine 327 was given the number '4' by the North Eton Mill and was used to transport sugar cane to the mill for crushing. A number of modifications were undertaken by the mill during its working life there. The most notable modification was the extending of the smokebox and removing the rear spectacle plate. Undoubtedly the boiler was replaced (with Walkers Limited of Maryborough reconditioning the boiler at least once in 1945, and perhaps it was during this time that the opportunity to extend the smokebox was taken) and the side tanks.<sup>35</sup> When The Workshops Rail Museum acquired the locomotive in 2005 one of the side tanks was welded and the other riveted, but both were undoubtedly replaced by the Mill during its 44-odd years of Queensland sugar industry service.

It is fair to say that this Hunslet locomotive had a hard life at the mill; many modifications and repairs were done in-house with limited resources with the mentality of keeping it running year after year without much thought to its past war-time heritage. In 1964, number 4 was finally retired with more modern diesel locomotives taking over and it was installed at Langford Park in Eton near Mackay.<sup>36</sup> After suffering deterioration, number 4 was then moved to the Mackay Sugar Co-operative Association and placed in storage. The Mackay Sugar Co-operative then generously donated the locomotive to The Workshops Rail Museum in 2005 (see Fig.3, p.33).

After a few years sitting undercover at The Workshops Rail Museum, the Museum attempted to raise funds for a restoration project. After securing funding, the locomotive was then moved to the Erecting Shop at the Ipswich Railway Workshops, where restoration work commenced in June 2012. A lot of research at The Workshops Rail Museum went into this restoration project prior to its commencement. Museum staff and volunteers travelled down to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra to discuss with them their own Hunslet restoration project (1218/306). The Hunslet Archives in the United Kingdom were also contacted, and The Workshops Rail Museum was able to purchase a number of plan drawings to help with the fine details of the restoration work. This helped distinguish features and components on the engine to determine between its original design and those added later during its long post-war life in the Queensland sugar industry.

One of the more fascinating aspects of this restoration process has been the discovery of a number of parts which derive from other Hunslet locomotives on our 1239 (engine 327). Identifiable parts from other Hunslets include:

1240 – which came to Queensland in 1924, and ended up employed at the South Johnston Mill in Innisfail. This engine is now with the Australian Narrow Gauge Railway Museum Society at Woodford in Queensland.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.wdlr.org.uk/wdlr/> WDLR Hunslet 4-6-0T Database compiled by Ian Hughes (accessed July 2015).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Hughes, *Hunslet 1215*, p.52.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.



1219 – which also came to Queensland in 1924, and was sent to work at the Proserpine Sugar Mill.<sup>38</sup>

1334 – which was originally sent to the Buenos Aires and Great Southern Railway in South America between 1921-23.<sup>39</sup>

It will always be a mystery as to how these parts were acquired. Was it while serving on the Western Front during 1917-18, back at Hunslet in 1919, or were these components acquired later on? Parts from 1240 and 1219 may very well have been acquired after arrival in Australia with the mills swapping or selling parts amongst themselves. The part from 1334 is perhaps more of a mystery. From a later batch, 1334 never saw any war work, and perhaps parts from it were used to repair returning war service locomotives during 1919. Ultimately we will never know for sure, but it adds further intrigue to the story of engine 327.

Another interesting research endeavour has been the identification of the original wartime paint scheme. The description of dead black is quite straightforward: a matt sooty type of dull black; and the red oxide for the frames is also simple enough. However, the description of khaki for the cab is something that required further research. Today many people consider khaki to be an olive green colour. However, for the British of the early twentieth century, khaki was the colour that their armies adopted in India, where it was more like a light brown sandy colour. After corresponding with the Imperial War Museum in London, The Workshops Rail Museum managed to narrow it down to a colour range where we then had to go with what we thought was best (see Fig.4, p.33).

This restoration project has been a considerable labour of love for many of those involved, and 327 was completed and finally put on public display at The Workshops Rail Museum in early November 2017. The successful completion of this restoration project was due to the dedicated input by Queensland Rail and its heritage volunteers who worked away intensively on locomotive 327 for the last several years. Their efforts should be commended, and for which The Workshops Rail Museum, part of the Queensland Museum Network, is extremely grateful.

## Conclusion

Historians have calculated that if all the artillery shells that were fired during WW1 were fired back to back it would equate to a shell dropping every 40 seconds for four years straight. The only way that these shells were able to be delivered to zones of battle was primarily by rail. The light gauge steam engines and petrol locomotives proved that they were an incredibly efficient way to deliver the munitions that caused so much destruction to both the landscape and the men and women who served in or near the battlefields of the Western Front.

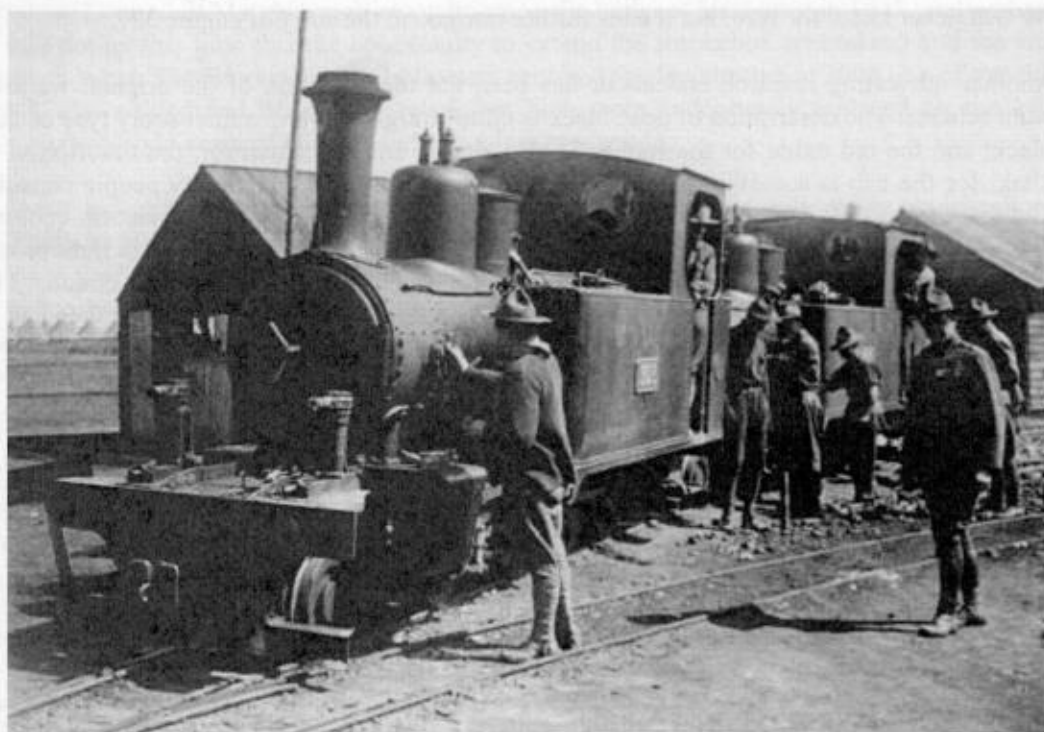
In later years, Hunslet locomotive 327 led a very different life, toiling year after year under the Queensland sunshine with most people totally unaware of its previous life as a vital cog in the Allied war machine. With the restoration and conservation work completed, Hunslet 327 has been proudly placed on display at The Workshops Rail Museum, where its full story will be told. Long after the commemorations of the centenary of the 'Great War' have passed, visitors will still be able learn about the light gauge locomotives that once criss-crossed the

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.wdlr.org.uk/wdlr/> WDLR Hunslet 4-6-0T Database.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. War-type locomotives were sent post-war to many parts of the world including the United Kingdom, Australia, the Middle East, Nepal, Argentina and Chile.

battlefields of Western Front and elsewhere during 1914-18. They will also be able to learn how locomotives like ours went on to have a second life in the Queensland sugar industry – arguably, a more noble and useful purpose to humanity than war.

The commemorations for the centenary of WW1 provided us with the opportunity to research Australia's involvement in the war from a railway perspective, a topic that is not widely known. The same opportunity also provided the chance to examine more closely Australia's 19<sup>th</sup> century military railway past. Just as we know that the use of railways for military use was well established before the start of WW1, we now know that Australia's exposure and understanding of the use and importance of railways for military purposes and in times of conflict has a history well before the outbreak of war in 1914.



*Fig.2: Hunslet No.303 with the US Army Corps of Engineers at the Light Railway Works at Boisieux-au-Mont, September 1917. (Imperial War Museum photo Q6075)*

Previous conflicts where railways often played a cameo role would pale in comparison to the pivotal role that would play in WW1. Railways were often the only means of reliable transport that could continually deliver the volume of soldiers, food, fodder and armaments to the battle zones. This necessity to effectively and efficiently fuel the new vast industrial-scale 'beast of war' led to the adoption of light railways, although the British stubbornly resisted using them for nearly two years before finally ordering large numbers of narrow gauge locomotives. Locomotives like Hunslet 327, having survived for one hundred years, are being given new life to help tell the remarkable story of how railways and the personnel who operated them had such a profound impact on the war at home and at the front.

*See colour section p.33 for Figures 3 and 4.*

## AN (AUSTRALIAN) HONOUR TO ASPIRE TO

Paul A. Rosenzweig<sup>1</sup>

In 2017, the Australian Air Cadets Alumni Network<sup>2</sup> established a writing competition as a means of gathering historical articles which might ultimately contribute to the Australian Air Force Cadets (AAFC) Centenary Project. The intention is to build upon the substantial 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary history which had been released in 2016.<sup>3</sup> In this inaugural 'Centenary Heritage Writing Competition', I was awarded First Prize in the staff category – announced on the RAAF Birthday, 31 March 2018.<sup>4</sup> My submission was titled, 'Through Struggle to a Star: a proposal for a rank star for AAFC Cadet Under Officers'.

The premise of my essay was the suggestion that the current rank insignia of a Cadet Under Officer (CUO) in the AAFC, a single wide bar, is visually similar to the rank insignia of a Flying Officer (AAFC), at least in the Disruptive Pattern Uniform version. More importantly, I proposed that the CUO rank insignia does not sufficiently represent the arduous pathway taken by cadets to achieve that rank, over several years concurrent with the pressures of adolescence, study and/or employment. I drew on the heritage of the RAAF in the Australian Flying Corps of World War 1 – noting that its members belonged to the army, with AFC officers wearing traditional military rank stars.

### Rank Stars

For a decade I wore the same rank stars as an Army Reserve Lieutenant and Captain, and at one stage also as a Lieutenant in the Army Cadet Corps. I still recall very clearly the day I first wore my Lieutenant's rank stars on my shoulders. The majority of young officers, and no doubt many collectors, would certainly know the correct orientation of these army rank stars, but perhaps not many know their derivation.

Officer ranks in British and Commonwealth armies have traditionally been denoted by combinations of three basic emblems: the Star, the Crown (of a pattern representing the reigning Sovereign) and the crossed Sword and Baton (for General officer ranks, or crossed Batons for a Field Marshal).<sup>5</sup> The star is significant as it is the first insignia worn by a newly commissioned officer. More importantly perhaps, it was designed to symbolise the highest accolade that might be achieved through military service: membership of an ancient order of chivalry.

The Australian rank star appears to be diamond-shaped, but it is actually derived from an eight-pointed figure in the form of a cluster of rays, with the cardinal points longer than the intermediate points. Superimposed at the centre are the emblems of an ancient British order created to honour military officers, the Most Honourable Order of the Bath in the Military Division. The rank star in effect is a stylised version in miniature of the breast stars of the Knight Grand Cross and Knight Commander of the Order.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Rosenzweig served for 20 years in the Army Reserve and then 12 years in the Australian Regular Army, retiring on medical grounds in 2011 with the rank of Major (Royal Australian Infantry Corps). He now volunteers as an officer in the Australian Air Force Cadets.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.aircadetsalumni.org.au/>

<sup>3</sup> Glozier, M. (2016) *75 Years Aloft: Australian Air Force Cadets (Royal Australian Air Force Air Training Corps) 1941-2016*. Australian Air Force Cadets.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Air Cadets Alumni Network, *Alumni Magazine* (August 2018) p.43.

<sup>5</sup> The star first appeared on uniforms after February 1810, and these first pattern stars were based upon the breast star of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, founded in 1348.



HOME WATERS – BUT NOT QUIET WATERS:  
THE AUSTRALIA STATION 1914-1919

Greg Swinden



Fig.1: Royal Australian Navy recruiting poster 1917 (State Library of Victoria)

## Introduction

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) knew the war was coming. On 29 July 1914, less than five weeks after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife had plunged the Balkans into turmoil, the Admiralty sent its official warning telegram to its foreign stations advising that war was imminent. The Australian Naval Board was advised the next day and on 31 July placed the RAN on a war footing.

By 2 August the fleet was at sea with ships moving to their war stations on the Australia Station<sup>1</sup> and across the country RAN Reservists were being mobilised for duty – particularly to man the Port War Signal Stations and Examination Service which would control the movement of all shipping into and out of Australian ports. At 12:00pm on 5 August 1914 Australia was at war.

In mid-1919 the war weary ships of the RAN straggled back into Australian ports after four long hard years of conflict. Some men were returning to a country they had last seen in 1914 after active service in places as far away as German East Africa, the Mediterranean, Southern Russia and the North Sea. They would often claim that the Australia Station was a backwater during the war - but in reality this was far from the truth.

## The Opening Shots 1914

On the first day of the war the RAN was involved in several 'actions' against Germany. The first was in Port Phillip Bay with the German freighter *Pfalz* attempting to leave harbour; she had sailed early on the 5<sup>th</sup> when war had not yet been declared. As *Pfalz* steamed down the bay she was shadowed by the examination service steamer *Alvina* which had on board a detachment of naval reservists under the command of Midshipman Stanley Veale, RANR. When information was received that war had been declared Veale hoisted a flag signal in *Alvina* which was answered by the naval signalmen at Fort Nepean – and at 12:45pm the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery gunners, at the fort, fired a six-inch shell across the bow of the German steamer and she heaved to. *Pfalz* was then boarded by the RAN reservists and taken back Melbourne. Whether the shot fired by the gunners at Fort Nepean was the first shot fired at the enemy, by the British Empire, is still open to debate.

The capture of German and Austrian merchant ships, when war broke out, had been planned for several years prior to August 1914 and vessels were seized in several Australian ports. A German steamer was captured in Tasmania that afternoon when a ten-man detachment of Naval Reservists, under the command of Sub-Lieutenant Russell Young, RANR travelled by road from Hobart to Port Huon (approximately 60 kilometres) and seized the German liner SS *Oberhausen* that was loading timber. The 45 German crewmen had no idea war had broken out and were somewhat amazed when the sailors, armed with .303 rifles, 'arrested them' late on the afternoon of the 5<sup>th</sup>. The German sailors became prisoners of war and were initially interned at Bruny Island Quarantine Station until moved to permanent internment camps in early 1915.

Altogether 25 German merchant ships (and a single Austrian vessel) were detained in port on

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<sup>1</sup> The 'Australia Station' was bounded by the Timor Sea and the Territory of Papua in the north, a line well west of New Caledonia and New Zealand on the eastern seaboard, Antarctica in the south and a line several hundred miles off Australia's west coast. The Royal Navy 'China Station' included the bulk of Southeast Asia, New Guinea, New Caledonia and New Zealand while the 'East Indies Station' included much of the Indian Ocean and the Netherlands East Indies.

the 5<sup>th</sup> or, due to lack of wireless telegraphy systems, captured soon after arriving in port with the last being the sailing vessel *Ernest* arriving in Sydney on 11 November; completely oblivious that a state of war existed. Two more steamers (*Neumunster* and *Thuringen*) were captured at sea, by the cruiser HMAS *Pioneer*, as they approached Fremantle, Western Australia in late August; again neither ship possessed wireless equipment. By the end of 1914 nearly 1500 German and Austro-Hungarian merchant seaman were held in temporary internment facilities across Australia. In 1915 they were moved to more permanent facilities with the ships officers being interned at Berrima, New South Wales (along with some sailors to acts as stewards and cooks) while the bulk of the ships' crews were sent to the large internment camp at Holsworthy on the outer fringes of Sydney.

The capture of German vessels in Australian waters assisted the greater war effort in many ways. Firstly these ships and their crews were no longer of use to Germany either as merchant ships or to be converted to armed auxiliary cruisers. Secondly the seized cargo became Australian Government property and most of the vessels were then used by Australia, especially as troopships.<sup>2</sup> Finally a number of copies of the German Mercantile Code Book (used to communicate with German warships) were seized from captured steamers along with a cipher key from the German steamer *Hobart* captured off Port Phillip Bay, Victoria. These code books and cipher were passed to Senior Naval Instructor Frederick Wheatley, at the RAN College, for translation and he also broke the German Navy code for communicating with their merchant ships. This information was quickly passed to the Admiralty and assisted greatly with tracking German vessels and breaking their codes throughout the war.

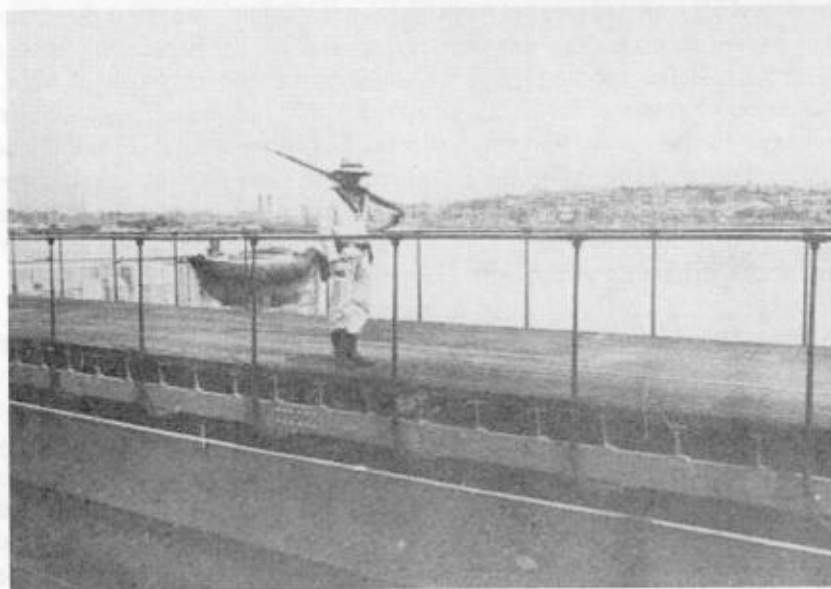


Fig.2: RAN Naval Guard at Cockatoo Island 1918 (Private Collection)

Another early naval activity was the conversion of Australian merchant ships to auxiliary cruisers, hospital ships and troopships. Cockatoo Island Dockyard and Garden Island Dockyard, in Sydney, took on the bulk of this work including conver-

sion of the vessels *Berrima* and *Grantala* into Australia's first auxiliary cruiser/troopship and hospital ship respectively. Throughout August-December 1914 dozens of merchant ships were quickly converted into troopships to carry the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) overseas and Cockatoo Island Dockyard remained exceptionally busy throughout the war building and maintaining warships, troopships and freighters.

<sup>2</sup> Several of the captured German merchant ships were also converted into Australian troopships with new names (for example *Pfalz* became the *Boorara*, *Hobart* the *Barambah* and *Oberhausen* the *Booral*).

The first major operation for the RAN was the capture of German New Guinea in September 1914. Australian warships operated in the Pacific supporting the capture of German Samoa and Nauru but the main action was at Rabaul, on 11 September, where the Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force of 500 naval personnel (mainly reservists) and 1000 soldiers landed from the troopship *Berrima*. After a brief period of fighting (with five naval personnel and an Australian Army Medical Corps doctor killed) the capital of German New Guinea was captured, the high-powered wireless station at Bitapaka seized and the entire territory surrendered to Australia on the 17<sup>th</sup>.<sup>3</sup> During this campaign the RAN lost its first vessel, the submarine *AE1* which sank during a diving incident, on 14 September, with the loss of her entire crew of 35. In another first during this campaign the hospital ship *Grantala* carried the RAN's first female personnel – seven nurses who had been specially recruited from the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney.

With the operations in German New Guinea successfully completed the main focus for the RAN was on escorting the AIF convoy to the Middle East during which HMAS *Sydney* sank the German light cruiser *Emden*. By the beginning of 1915 the RAN's major fleet units (HMA Ships *Australia*, *Encounter*, *Melbourne*, *Pioneer* and *Sydney* as well as the submarine *AE2*) were serving alongside the Royal Navy in the North Sea, Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean, off German East Africa and in the Mediterranean. Only the three Australian destroyers and other small vessels, mainly obsolete gunboats and torpedo boats of the former colonial navies, remained in Australian waters. The former German Government vessel *Komet*, which had been captured in New Guinea, was commissioned as HMAS *Una* and returned to New Guinea waters to support the Australian occupation force.

### 1915-1916

At the outbreak of war over 4,000 men of the RAN Brigade (formerly the RAN Reserve) were mobilised for service.<sup>4</sup> Some of these personnel served overseas in the RAN Bridging Train at Gallipoli (1915) and in the Sinai (1916-17), or as Naval Transport Officers, gun crews, wireless operators and signalmen in merchant ships. Plans to form an RAN Battalion, in 1915, to serve on the western front failed with the 300 volunteers being transferred to the AIF (mainly the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion). A proposed RAN Field Gun Battery to serve in France never moved beyond the concept stage, but a gun crew was sent to the remote Fanning Island (in the Pacific Ocean) to protect the wireless station against possible raider attack.

Within Australia, the RAN Brigade provided 2,500 men for service at the Port War Signal Stations, the Examination Service (which checked all ships once they had been permitted to enter harbour) and naval coastal lookout stations. Others conducted harbour patrols, guarding of dockyards, wharves, wireless stations and ships and the detention of captured enemy vessels. These men served in all major ports from Fremantle in the west to Sydney in the east and from Hobart in the south to Thursday Island and Darwin in the north.

In October 1915 the RAN Radio Service was also formed with RAN Brigade members maintaining all wireless communication, formerly controlled by the Post Master General's

<sup>3</sup> This was an essential task to reduce the ability of the warships of the German East Asian Squadron to communicate with other German ships and colonies.

<sup>4</sup> RAN Reserve training was part of the compulsory military training system in force in pre-war Australia but restricted for obvious reasons to the male population in the larger sea ports. RAN District and Sub-District Naval Officers were responsible for overseeing this task.



Department (PMG), into and out of Australia. Each main port had its own wireless station and RAN Radio Service personnel, many of them former PMG staff, operated these. RAN Radio Service staff also served in New Guinea alongside the Australian Tropical Force occupying the former German colony. Other RAN Brigade telegraphists augmented the crews of smaller RAN vessels such as HMA Ships *Countess of Hopetoun*, *Protector* and *Sleuth*. On 15 December 1915 *Countess of Hopetoun* was operating in Bass Strait undertaking wireless telegraphy trials when boiler failure caused the vessel to broach in heavy seas. RAN Reserve Signaller Percy Baker was washed overboard and drowned; he was one of several reservists who died during the war while serving within Australia.

HMAS *Protector*, which had served in the German New Guinea campaign in 1914, was by 1915 operating as a training vessel at Williamstown Naval Depot, Victoria providing new recruits with their first taste of life at sea – albeit mainly in Port Phillip Bay. Her ship's company was a mixture of regular and reserve personnel who had been mobilised for war service. In September 1915 *Protector* was dispatched to Western Australia with a dredger in tow for use on the construction of the Henderson naval base.

On arrival at Fremantle in October the naval authorities in the west requested *Protector's* services for the potential salvage of the wreck of the SMS *Emden*, aground at North Keeling (Cocos) Island. This was approved and she sailed north to Geraldton and from there to North Keeling Island where she arrived on 14 November. The commanding officer of *Protector*, Commander Patrick Weir, RANR, quickly realised that *Emden* was in no condition to be salvaged due to battle damage, and the effect of 12 months of pounding seas, that had broken the hull in several places. *Protector* departed North Keeling Island on 21 November and returned to Fremantle, via Geraldton, on 4 December 1915. She was soon back on the east coast as a training ship at Port Phillip Bay or undertaking patrol duties along the eastern seaboard from Sydney to Adelaide.

By 1916 very few RAN vessels were in home waters. The by now six destroyers (*Huon*, *Parramatta*, *Swan*, *Torrens*, *Warrego* and *Yarra*) were alternating between service in Australian waters and the China Station (Southeast Asia). The cruiser HMAS *Psyche* (formerly a Royal Navy warship) was commissioned in July 1915 and sent to Southeast Asia soon after – she did not return to Australian waters until late 1917. HMA Ships *Fantome* and *Una* operated as patrol vessels in New Guinea and Southeast Asian waters as well.

Older warships such as *Protector*, *Gayundah*, *Cerberus*, *Countess of Hopetoun*, *Childers* and *Franklin* undertook training duties, port defence, target towing for gunnery training and limited coastal patrol work. *Encounter* which spent most of 1915 in Southeast Asian or Pacific waters was by February 1916 back in Australian waters on convoy escort and patrol duties. Despite her age, 'The Old Bus', as she was fondly known, mounted eleven 6-inch guns and was the largest warship in Australian waters at the time. She also doubled as the RAN training ship giving many young seamen their first taste of real sea time.

Of note is that the British War Medal was awarded to all RAN and RAN Reserve personnel who had completed a minimum of 28 days of mobilised service; regardless of where that service was. This meant that service within Australia counted as mobilised service. The same was not the case for army personnel (either AIF or Australian Military Forces) who to qualify actually had to enter a theatre of war on duty or leave Australia and render service overseas. Those army personnel who served in the occupation force in New Guinea or embarked in a troopship that departed Australian waters, qualified for the British War Medal. Those who

served only in Australia unfortunately did not qualify regardless of what duties they carried out.<sup>5</sup> The Victory Medal was awarded only to those who had approved service at sea or entered a theatre of military operations – for navy personnel this included Southeast Asia and portions of the Pacific Ocean.

### Feeding the War Machine

Apart from the conversion of many merchant ships into troop or hospital ships the main dockyard in Australia, Cockatoo Island Dockyard in Sydney, constructed four warships that saw active service. These included the three destroyers *Huon*, *Swan* and *Torrens* as well as the light cruiser *Brisbane*. The light cruiser *Adelaide* was laid down in late 1917 but not completed until 1922.

Building work ashore also continued. Construction of the purpose-built RAN College, at Jervis Bay,<sup>6</sup> had commenced in early 1913 and by late 1914 sufficient progress had been made to transfer the college from its temporary site at Geelong in Victoria. Construction work at Jervis Bay continued on into 1915 and was not fully completed until early 1916. In Victoria the construction of Flinders Naval Depot (at Crib Point) commenced in 1912 and continued throughout the war. Over a thousand skilled tradesmen operated across both sites. At Cockburn Sound, in Western Australia, work had commenced on Henderson naval base in 1913. Work proceeded slowly throughout the war and despite extensive site preparation was discontinued in late 1921.

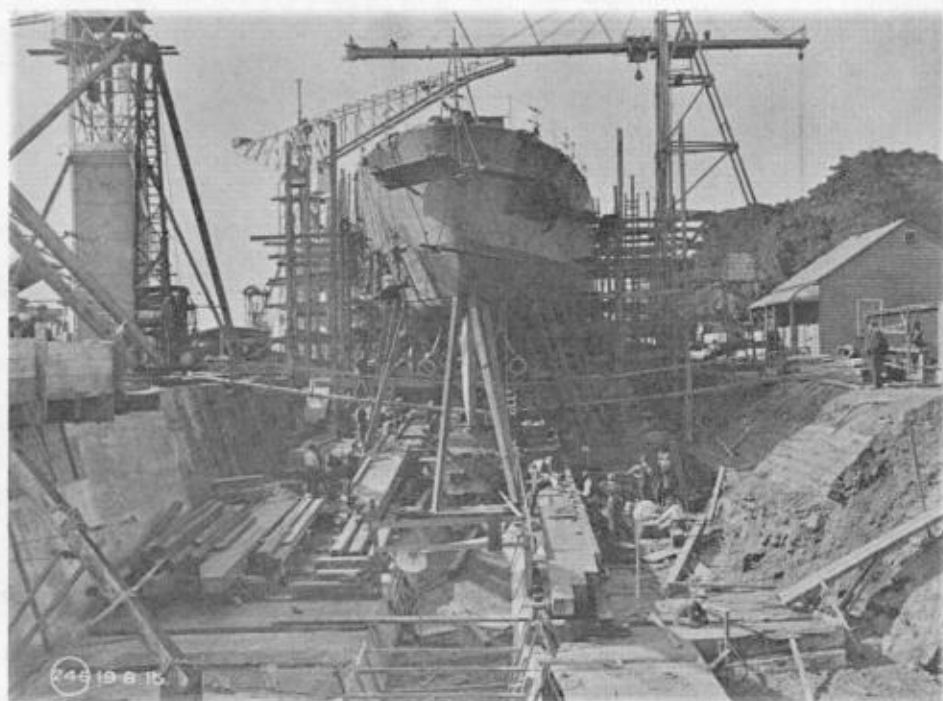


Fig.3: HMAS Brisbane under construction at Cockatoo Island Dockyard in 1915  
(Sea Power Centre – Australia)

<sup>5</sup> The inconsistency was corrected in World War 2 with the award of the War Medal 1939-45 to all service personnel who completed 28 days of service regardless of where that service was.

<sup>6</sup> Jervis Bay is part of New South Wales but the RAN College, and its immediate surrounds, is technically part of the Australian Capital Territory.

Training of personnel was conducted at three locations during the war. Cadet midshipman, destined to become the RAN's first locally trained officers, were educated at the previously mentioned RAN College and three classes graduated during the war years (1916, 1917 and 1918) but only the first two saw active service before the Armistice.<sup>7</sup> For the lower deck, boys, aged 14-16, were trained onboard HMAS *Tingira* moored at Rose Bay, Sydney, while adult recruits (and specialist officers) received their initial training at Williamstown Naval Depot in Victoria. At the outbreak of war the RAN had 3800 personnel and during the war another 3000 Australians were recruited to serve at sea. From the outbreak of war until late August 1918 (when the last wartime group of boys was sent to the fleet) a total of 776 *Tingira* boys successfully completed their training and went to sea.

Another 1500 men completed their training at Williamstown Depot and joined the fleet. Training failures, medical discharges and desertion reduced the numbers of RAN personnel and in several cases RAN personnel deserted in order to join the AIF, with at least 200 recorded cases. Balancing the books, a significant number of medically discharged AIF soldiers joined the RAN Reserve on their return to Australia and served ashore in various roles. Overall recruiting for the RAN was an issue with Royal Navy personnel required to fill gaps in those ships operating in the North Sea (HMA Ships *Australia*, *Melbourne* and *Sydney*) and the destroyers in the Mediterranean often going short-handed.

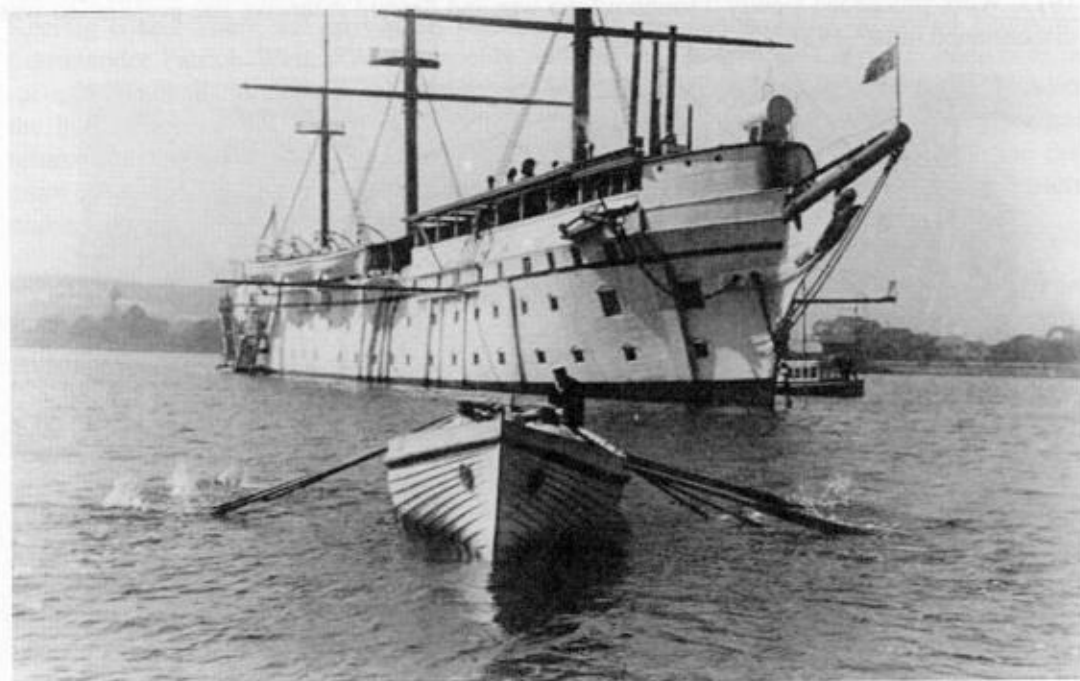


Fig.4: HMAS *Tingira*, Boys training ship of the RAN, 1916 (Sea Power Centre – Australia)

The bulk of boys and men joining the RAN were British or Australian born, with a smattering from New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and other British colonies. They were from the big coastal cities and the small inland country towns. Unlike the AIF, the Navy did not keep records of those who were of Aboriginal descent and generally discouraged the enlistment of indigenous personnel. It is possible that indigenous men did serve in the RAN and there are a

<sup>7</sup> Some members of the 1915 class served in Royal Navy ships in the Black Sea during the Russian Civil War and were subsequently awarded the British War Medal and Victory Medal.



number of service records stating that the sailor was from a country town and with a physical description indicting they had black hair, brown eyes and a dark complexion.

Despite the war life in Australia went on as normal for many civilian workers. In October 1915 the Sydney Coal Lumpers Union went on strike despite this causing significant delay in the supply of coal to warships and troopships in the port of Sydney. In early 1916, as part of the *War Precautions Act 1916*, the Naval Transport Coaling Battalion was formed to ensure the uninterrupted supply of coal to vessels deemed on essential war service; mainly troop transports.

The Naval Transport Coaling Battalion's junior officers consisted of colliery sales managers and supervisors, from the coal stevedoring firms, and were given honorary rank in the RAN Reserve. The coal lumpers were deemed to have enlisted for active service and issued with a black oval arm band with the words *RAN Coaling Corps* embroidered in the centre. During the coal strike of November 1916 the battalion effectively moved non-union mined coal to troops transports without delay. The Great Strike of August-November 1917 however, spelt the end of the Coaling Battalion as its union members refused to move non-union mined coal and the unit was disbanded. Non-union labour including farm labourers, unemployed city workers and university students were used to move coal and eventually broke the strike.

A separate Department of the Navy was created on 12 July 1915 with Jens Jensen as Minister. This was to prove a disaster as Jensen was both incompetent and corrupt, making several decisions on the purchase of vessels, facilities and equipment that benefited him and business associates. Joseph Cook became minister in February 1917 and while not corrupt he paid little attention to his portfolio. As the war progressed the management of the RAN was undertaken mainly by the Naval Board with little or no executive support.

This meant that the festering bitterness between Rear Admiral William Creswell (1<sup>st</sup> Naval Member) and Engineer Rear Admiral William Clarkson (3<sup>rd</sup> Naval Member) went unchecked. Creswell had commanded the Australian Navy (both Commonwealth Naval Forces and RAN) since 1904 and by war's end was 67 years old. He had been prepared to retire in 1914 but a suitable replacement could not be found as no RN officer was prepared to undertake the task – mainly due to poor pay rates and distance from the main theatres of war.

Creswell's health had been declining noticeably over the course of the war and the loss of two of his sons in action also affected his mental state.<sup>8</sup> Clarkson was seven years younger than Creswell and responsible for control of all naval depots (shore bases), naval dockyards (conducting the construction, repairs and maintenance of warships and troopships) and controller of shipping in Australian waters as well as director of transport vessels for overseas service. The two men clashed over numerous issues and at times were barely on speaking terms. This of course adversely affected the higher level decision making in the RAN, although this was negated in some respects by the bulk of the fleet serving overseas and under Admiralty control. Fortunately Creswell was well respected and the Secretary of the Naval Board, George Macandie, Finance Member Albert Martin and Captain Walter Thring (Director of War Plans) kept the RAN's administration on an even keel.

<sup>8</sup> His sons were Lieutenant Colin Fraser Creswell, RN killed in action when HM Submarine *E47* was sunk in the North Sea on 20 August 1917, and Captain Randolph William Creswell (Imperial Camel Corps) who was killed in action in Palestine on 6 November 1917.

Additionally a Royal Commission into Defence Administration commenced in February 1917 following on from the Howell-Price affair where Lieutenant David Howell-Price, a permanent army officer, defrauded the Government to the tune of £67,374 before he was caught. The Navy was not exempt from this investigation which also revealed some cases of poor administration and fraud but with Jensen the main culprit. In fact Paymaster Captain Alfred Treacy was appointed as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for his hard work in controlling the Navy's logistics during the war.

One area where financial matters were closely scrutinised was the RAN Families First Relief Fund (renamed the RAN Relief Fund in 1917). Founded in 1913, when two senior naval officers provided £10 to the chaplain of HMAS *Cerberus*, the fund existed to provide financial help to the families of RAN sailors. During the war substantial donations from sporting clubs and the sale of 'Jacks' Day' badges and *Emden* relics increased the fund significantly which allowed numerous gifts of money to be made to naval families who had fallen on hard times. Of note is the fund, now known as the RAN Relief Trust Fund, still exists to today. Additionally the collection of 'comforts' for distribution to sailors occurred in much the same way as those for soldiers and socks, balaclavas and Christmas Billys found their way to warships as well as the trenches.

### 1917 – The War Returns to Australia

In June 1917 the German auxiliary cruiser SMS *Wolf* arrived in New Zealand waters. She had sailed from the port of Kiel, Germany in November 1916 with orders to carry the war to the Indian and Pacific Oceans; thus disrupting Allied trade, slowing or stopping troop convoys and diverting Allied warships from the Mediterranean and North Atlantic. Her commanding officer, Karl Nerger, hoped to emulate the disruption caused by *Emden* in 1914 and in many ways he succeeded as the Allied attempts to find and destroy *Wolf* dragged on for many months and involved dozens of vessels in the fruitless search. For the RAN the actions of the *Wolf*, and later the *Seeadler*, were to have a substantial effect upon naval operations on the Australia Station.

*Wolf* entered the Indian Ocean in mid-January 1917 and laid minefields off the Cape of Good Hope, Bombay and Colombo and sank four vessels before sailing through the Great Southern Ocean and rounding the South Island of New Zealand. She laid minefields off Cape Farewell, near the western entrance to Cook Strait, and off the Three Kings group of Islands (near North Cape) as well as sinking four merchant ships between New Zealand and Fiji.

On 3 July she crossed the Tasman and laid a minefield, consisting of 30 mines, off Cape Howe (on the New South Wales/Victorian border) before heading towards Fiji. *Wolf's* minefield was discovered on 6 July when the steamer *Cumberland* struck a mine near Gabo Island, Victoria. The ship's master beached the vessel but she later sank during salvage operations. The Japanese cruiser, *Chikuma*, with Rear Admiral Yamaji embarked, was first on the scene and her divers advised that an internal explosion had sunk *Cumberland*. This misinformation resulted in several months of wasted effort as Australian authorities sought to prove the sabotage had been conducted by radical members of the Union of International Workers of the World. Eventually the Japanese report was proven incorrect and the RAN began mine-sweeping operations in October 1917 with several mines swept or destroyed.

On 6 August 1917 *Wolf* captured the merchant ship *Matunga* in New Guinea waters taking its crew and passengers as prisoners and later sinking the vessel. When the RAN was advised *Matunga* was overdue *Encounter* was dispatched to search for her. *Una* was also sent to

search for the missing vessel. Admiral Yamaji was requested to send the cruiser *Hirado* to assist but declined even though the ship was ready to sail. Yamaji remained unconvinced that a German raider was operating in the Pacific even with the loss of four vessels in New Zealand waters and the discovery of the burnt out hulks of three US schooners in the eastern Pacific; these had been sunk by the German raider *Seeadler* on 23 July 1917.

*Wolf's* next victim, on 26 September, was the Japanese vessel *Hitachi Maru*, sunk south west of Sumatra. The raider then headed home via the Atlantic. Despite the presence of several British, Australian and Japanese warships, *Wolf* escaped detection and returned to Germany in triumph on 24 February 1918. *Seeadler* was less of a threat – she had entered the Pacific in April 1917 and, having destroyed the three US vessels, was later wrecked on the isolated Mopelia Atoll on 2 August and her crew eventually taken prisoner.

The effect of *Wolf's* operations in Australia was profound for the RAN. The misinformation as to the real cause of the loss of the *Cumberland*, saw a frenzy of activity to protect shipping in port from sabotage. To assist the small Naval Dockyard Police service a force of naval and military guards were established in most ports to ensure that saboteurs, thought to be supporters of the anti-war International Workers of the World group, could not place bombs onboard merchant ships.<sup>9</sup> In a port such as Melbourne it meant on average eight vessels per day were under guard and at times this increased to in excess of 20. To provide a 24-hour guard in all major ports was a mammoth task which required the formation of the RAN Brigade Naval Guard Service. Eventually over 1400 men were recruited with many being returned AIF soldiers, including Sub-Lieutenant James Rogers VC (he had won his Victoria Cross in June 1901 during the South African War<sup>10</sup>).

The newly commissioned cruiser HMAS *Brisbane*, then serving in the Mediterranean, was sent to search the Indian Ocean in mid to late 1917. During 1918 she operated off the Australian east coast, and in the Pacific, conducting patrols in case more German raiders appeared in the area. The cruiser *Pysche*, only recently returned from two years of service in Southeast Asia and paid off, was hastily recommissioned on 20 November 1917 for 'temporary special service' with mainly RANB volunteers until March 1918. Along with other vessels such as HMAS *Sleuth* operating in North Queensland waters, and *Protector* in Bass Strait, they patrolled the east coast searching for the elusive raider – but by that time *Wolf* was already on her way home to Germany.<sup>11</sup>

On 17 July 1917, when it was suspected that a mine had actually caused the explosion the RAN Brigade Minesweeping Section was hastily formed with several vessels, mainly tugs and hopper barges, pressed into service and Brigade members mobilised as crews. While the training for the crews was undertaken, all shipping was reminded to remain outside the 100 fathom (600 feet) line as mines would be laid in 55-70 fathoms. This was an extant direction which the master of the *Cumberland* had ignored. Sweeping operations from Twofold Bay, New South Wales to well into Bass Strait commenced on 8 October 1917 using the

<sup>9</sup> The Naval Dockyard Police had been formed in 1913 to provide physical security at naval establishments in the Sydney area and during the war numbered only 50 men.

<sup>10</sup> James Rogers (1872-1961) was awarded the Victoria Cross for valour while serving, in the South African Constabulary, in the Orange Free State on 15 June 1901. During World War 1 he served as a Lieutenant in the AIF and was wounded at Gallipoli and repatriated to Australia in mid-1916. His appointment in the AIF was terminated on 31 December 1916 and he undertook a variety of home service in the Army and Navy in 1918-1919.

<sup>11</sup> Aerial patrols of the south-eastern Australian coast were also conducted by Australian Flying Corps aircraft and military forces also patrolled the coastline searching for signs of the raider.

minesweepers *Gunundaal* and *Koraaga*; they swept their first mine the next day.

Sweeping operations continued until February 1918 using *Brolga*, *Cecil Rhodes*, *Gunundaal* and *Koraaga* with a total of 13 mines swept. The minesweepers were then handed back to their owners but sightings of mines, near Gabo Island, continued throughout 1918 and three more were positively located and destroyed (one was washed up at Falmouth in Tasmania in late February, another destroyed near Sydney in April and a third towed into Twofold Bay, New South Wales and destroyed there in mid-May). Sweeping operations commenced again on 30 September using *Gunundaal* and the tug *Champion* but no mines were swept. The minefield was by now beginning to break up due to weather and another mine was sighted off Moruya, New South Wales on 7 November 1918. The steamer *Coogee* and tug *James Paterson* swept the area off Cape Everard, Victoria (now Point Hicks) during 1-26 January 1919 without success.

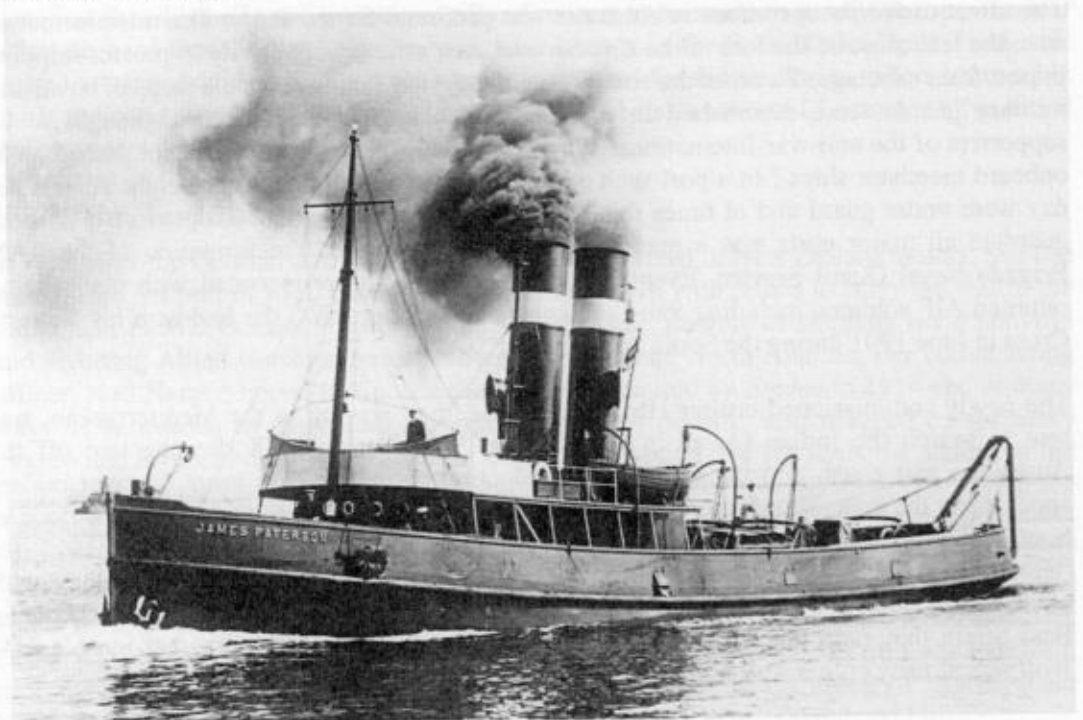


Fig.5: Minesweeper James Paterson returning to port 1918 (State Library of Victoria)

On 23 February 1919 a floating mine was sighted near Cape Everard by the steamer *Aeon* and destroyed by rifle fire. This prompted yet another round of minesweeping; this time by *Protector* during 10 March-4 April 1919 but no mines were located. In June, however, another mine was sighted near Cape Everard and soon after was washed up onto nearby Clinton Rocks and exploded. The final round of sweeping took place during 8-20 September 1919 when three Royal Navy minesweepers, HM Ships *Geranium*, *Mallow* and *Marguerite*, which had recently cleared the German minefields in New Zealand waters, swept off Cape Everard again. This time one mine was located and destroyed.

Despite the mammoth effort in minesweeping the *Wolf's* mines continued to 'pop up'. One was found off Cape Everard in October 1919, another off Dove Island (thousands of miles north in the Torres Strait, Queensland) in December 1919, a third on a beach near Camden Haven (near Port Macquarie, New South Wales) in February 1920 and the last at Noosa



Heads, Queensland in February 1921. In all 23 of the estimated 30 mines laid by *Wolf* were located (and this includes the one 'swept' by *Cumberland*). An interesting aside is that among the various honours awarded to RAN personnel for 'home service' there were three to men involved on minesweeping duties.<sup>12</sup>

In September 1920, however, two sailing vessels disappeared in Bass Strait and there was concern that both had struck mines. The first lost was the 400-ton schooner *Amelia J*, with a crew of 11. She departed Newcastle, bound for Hobart, and was last seen near Jervis Bay on 5 September and despite an extensive search no sign of the vessel was found. The second vessel was the 257-ton schooner *Southern Cross* with a crew of ten, which sailed from Melbourne on 12 September also bound for Hobart with a cargo of benzene. A large amount of burned wreckage from this vessel was later found on the north-east coast of Tasmania and offshore islands indicating the cargo had ignited. No survivors or bodies from either vessel were found and there remains speculation that both had struck mines.

In comparison to *Wolf*'s activities in Australian waters the German raider SMS *Seeadler* was a minor annoyance. *Seeadler*, a three-masted sailing vessel under the command of Felix von Luckner, departed Germany in December 1916 and preyed upon Allied shipping in the Atlantic, before rounding Cape Horn and entering the Pacific. After running aground on Mopelia Atoll (in the Society Island Group) her crew attempted to escape but were captured over the following weeks. *Encounter* was dispatched to Mopelia to inspect the vessel and on arrival, in early November 1917, found the German vessel substantially destroyed and only one of her 10.5 cm guns was salvaged.

### The Imperial Japanese Navy in Australian Waters

Japan had declared war on Germany on 23 August 1914 and was active in seizing German colonies north of the Equator. From December 1914-January 1915 the cruisers *Chikuma* and *Yahagi* operated off the north coast of Queensland while *Nisshin* visited Rabaul and Madang in April 1915. During May-July 1915 the training squadron cruisers *Aso* and *Soya*, visited ports from Rabaul southwards through to Fremantle. With the majority of RAN ships operating overseas the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) undertook the bulk of coastal patrols and convoy escort work. From May-December 1917 the cruisers *Chikuma*, *Hirado* and *Yahagi* were based in Sydney and conducted coastal patrols and convoy escort work in Australian and New Zealand waters. The Japanese warships were docked occasionally at Cockatoo Island Dockyard for maintenance and hull cleaning. Despite occasional sporting activities between Japanese and Australian personnel, particularly the cadet midshipmen at the RAN College, there was little social interaction between the two navies.

Following the issues caused by the sinking of *Cumberland*, when misinformation caused wasted effort in searching for non-existent saboteurs, the normally cool, but respectful, Australian-Japanese naval relationship started showing signs of strain. Admiral Yamaji's refusal to send *Hirado* to sea to search for *Matunga* only added to this strain. Equally Admiral Yamaji was concerned that Japanese naval activities, in Australian waters, were not reported in the Australian press and that the RAN was keeping information from him; particularly the discovery of the wrecked *Seeadler*.

On 20 November 1917 the situation became worse. That morning the cruiser *Yahagi* was entering Fremantle Harbour, with a harbour pilot embarked, when the ship failed to hoist the

<sup>12</sup> This does not include Royal Humane Society medals awarded for lifesaving in Australian waters.

special code signal of the day. As a result the Fremantle port gun battery fired a warning shot across her bows. Suddenly the good working relationship between the IJN and the RAN dissolved and a great deal of correspondence between the two navies took place. Eventually the Australian Governor General, Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, made a personal apology to Admiral Yamaji regarding the incident.

Japanese warships were withdrawn from Australian waters in January 1918, however, *Yahagi* conducted a port visit to Fremantle in March and then during May-October 1918 she patrolled off the north eastern coast of Australia and the island groups further north. *Nisshin* also conducted a brief patrol off Fremantle in October 1918. Both ships were then withdrawn from Australian waters and the planned replacement of *Yahagi*, with the cruiser *Chitose*, never eventuated once the Armistice came into effect.

### The War Ends

The end of the war was greeted with much relief in Australia. Of the estimated 450,000 Australians who wore a uniform during the war only approximately 25,000 were in the Navy (both permanent and reserve force) and of the 62,000 war deaths less than 300 naval men lost their lives. Although demobilisation of the AIF began almost immediately following the Armistice, the Navy's work continued after the war. Recruiting and training continued in order to replace those pre-war men, who had their term of enlistment extended due to the war, and were expected to leave the service when they returned to Australia.

Although the war had been won the peace could be equally dangerous. Returning troops brought with them Pneumonic Influenza and in Sydney HMAS *Sleuth* was employed as a patrol vessel, off the North Head Quarantine Station, to prevent returning soldiers escaping by small boat from the station. In December 1918 the cruiser *Encounter* was sent at short notice to Samoa and Fiji to provide urgent medical assistance when outbreaks of the virus devastated the islands' native population. Hundreds of thousands of Australians were infected and at least 12,000 people died, but the death toll could have been higher if the quarantine system across the nation had not been as robust.

By mid-1919 the last of the RAN's ships had returned to Australian waters and a new phase of activity began. Older ships were retired and replaced by the new. The Royal Navy gifted a force of new destroyers and submarines and the RAN assumed surveying duties for the continent in 1920. RAN Reservists continued to be trained although compulsory training ceased in 1929 with the arrival of the Great Depression. The new training depot HMAS *Cerberus* (Flinders Naval Depot) was commissioned in 1921 and continues to operate to this day.

The RAN had gone to war in 1914 only a few short years after its formation. Its service overseas had seen short intense periods of action interspersed with long periods of mundane work on patrol searching for the enemy. At home the Navy had quietly got on with the job of recruiting, training, building ships and facilities and the constant grind of patrol work in coastal waters. Most importantly, both at home and overseas, the RAN had kept the sea lines of communication (the sea lanes) open for commerce and the movement of men and materiel to the front lines, which ultimately led to Allied victory in 1918. For many in navy blue the home waters had been anything but quiet.

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## ERNIE COREY: AUSTRALIA'S FORGOTTEN HERO

### Noel Tregoning

In September 1918, Australia's 55<sup>th</sup> Battalion fought its final two battles of the Great War, firstly at Peronne on 1 and 2 September and at Bullecourt on 30 September. While costly in terms of casualties, the outcome of these battles meant that it would be only a matter of time before Germany would finally capitulate, which it did less than two months later. Ernest Albert Corey, the blacksmith's striker from Nimmitabel who had joined the 55<sup>th</sup> Bn in February 1917, was awarded his second and third bars to his Military Medal during these battles, whose 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries are commemorated this September. Earlier, when his brigade suffered heavy losses while in action near Queant on 15 May 1917, Ernie volunteered to be a stretcher-bearer. That day, he was awarded the Military Medal for working seventeen hours non-stop, carrying the wounded back to the dressing station some two kilometres in the rear. On 26 September 1917 during the battle of Polygon Wood, Ernie frequently ventured out into no-man's land under heavy artillery and machine gun fire to bring the wounded to safety, and was awarded his first bar for his heroism that day.

Then in September 1918, Ernie was decorated twice for his actions at Peronne and Bullecourt. Besides being the only soldier to have been awarded the Military Medal four times, he could well be also the only one who was awarded that medal twice in a calendar month. The citation for Ernie Corey's second bar at Peronne reads:

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during operations at Peronne on 1st and 2nd September 1918. This man who is a stretcher bearer, dressed and carried wounded of several units throughout the whole of the operation. Although the enemy artillery and machine gun fire was exceptionally heavy, this did not deter this man from carrying on. He worked continuously and ardently and was the means of saving the lives of many of the wounded. He was most unselfish throughout and cheerful at all times and under all circumstances. His careful handling of the wounded and his knowledge of first aid helped greatly to relieve their sufferings. Throughout the operations he set a fine example of courage, coolness, determination and devotion to duty, under heavy fire. (The London Gazette (Supplement), 11 March 1919, p.3411)*

Three weeks later, Ernie was promoted corporal and put in charge of the regimental stretcher-bearers. At Bullecourt, where he added an unprecedented third bar to his MM, he was wounded for the only time during the previous eighteen months. His citation reads:

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty as NCO in charge of Battalion stretcher bearers during an attack on the Hindenburg line north of Bellicourt on 30th September 1918. Although enemy*



machine gun and shell fire were intense, this gallant NCO directed the operations of the Battalion stretcher bearers with the utmost skill and bravery. Regardless of personal danger, he, on numerous occasions although the enemy were firing on him and other bearer parties, attended to men and carried them from the most exposed positions. His efforts were untiring and he set a splendid example to all ranks until he was severely wounded. It was mainly due to his magnificent work that the wounded were safely removed from the danger zone. (*The London Gazette* (Supplement), 13 June 1919, p.7641)

It was a phenomenal performance that deserves to be recognised when we commemorate the two battles. A memorial in honour of Ernie can be found in Centennial Park, Cooma, and Corey Place, Charnwood, a suburb of Canberra was named after him. Ernie died in August 1972 and was buried with full military honours in Woden Cemetery, where the faded lettering on his headstone was recently renewed. His medals are now on display at the Australian War Memorial.

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## REVIEWS

**James Hurst, *The Landing in the Dawn: Dissecting a Legend – The Landing at Anzac, Gallipoli, 25 April 1915*, Helion, Solihull, 2018. ISBN 9781911512462. Hardcover, 264 pages, photos, maps and tables. RRP \$59.95 AUD.**



Given the place in the Australian psyche occupied by the Gallipoli campaign, it's little wonder that it has received so much attention from historians and writers, from the publication of *The Anzac Book* and volumes 1 and 2 of the *Official History* of the First World War by Charles Bean to the present day. The marking of the centenary of the campaign saw a corresponding rise in the number of such works, some purporting to tell the 'true' story, while others tend to recycle the various myths and versions of events that have accrued around the landings on Anzac Cove. So is there room for yet another account and, indeed, is there anything still left to tell? The approach taken by James Hurst in *The Landing in the Dawn* makes it very clear that there is, in fact, a great deal which needs further investigation and clarification regarding what happened on 25 April 1915, and why.

Readers may be familiar with James Hurst's *Game to the Last* (originally published 2005), a history of the formation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF and its service during the Gallipoli campaign. In *The Landing in the Dawn* his focus remains principally on the activities of the 11<sup>th</sup> Bn, but this time narrowed down to that single first day of the landings. His method involves taking the considerable array of first-hand accounts – diary entries, letters home, published and unpublished memoirs, and so on – and attempting to arrive at a plausible reconstruction of what actually occurred. Generally, the usual attitude of historians to personal sources is to marginalise them, either making them fit the Procrustean bed of officially sanctioned versions such as those of Bean or Aspinall-Oglander, the British WW1 historian, or using them as supportive material for official texts. Hurst, on the other hand, places these personal accounts at the centre of his history, not for the purposes of undermining or subverting the official versions, but to provide a parallel text by which to arrive at a deeper and more complete understanding of events and their causes.

Hurst uses the term 'prosopography' to describe his method, which involves finding the common characteristics of a well-defined body of individuals and creating a kind of 'collective biography' of them. If he presents his 11<sup>th</sup> Bn protagonists as 'game' in their deeds on Gallipoli, so Hurst demonstrates considerable courage himself in employing such a historical method, if only because of the range and quality of the material he has to deal with. And gamely, he confronts the issues up-front by presenting the reader with the memoir of W.W. Goodlet, an 11<sup>th</sup> Bn veteran who committed to writing his version of the landing some 20 years after the event. It's a wild and woolly narrative which 'if followed, in full, chronologically and compared to the ground and the *Official History*, makes very little sense' (p.20). Very skilfully and perceptively, however, Hurst makes a case for the value of Goodlet's story, and so sets the scene for the way he is able to weave together what might at first seem a very disparate set of resources into a cohesive account of the day of the Landing.

The result on the page is an almost endless series of opened and closed quotation marks as Hurst ties together relevant passages from his sources in order to build his story. To his credit, though, the marks do not impede the narrative at all, as piece by piece he offers alternative explanations, fills in gaps in the accepted versions, and raises questions about our understanding of what happened on the day. In particular, he addresses a few main issues, notably the early arrival and part played by Lt Col Mehmet Şefik's 27<sup>th</sup> Turkish Regiment in thwarting the advance of 3<sup>rd</sup> Bde; the 'disintegration of resolve by Allied commanders' to 'take and hold key objectives at Z Beach'; and 'the level of fragmentation of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion', which further research might almost certainly hold true for other units on the day (all quotes p.236). Hurst's sources reveal how uncertain the Australians were about the geography of the area, and especially how few troops (and those from an ad hoc mix of units) actually took part in actions conventionally described by historians as involving whole companies and even battalions. Ultimately, concludes Hurst, 'The Australians had all the disadvantages of inexperience and of being thrown ashore as though shipwrecked on unfamiliar ground without their field artillery, and the Turks enjoyed the corresponding advantages' (p.236).

*The Landing in the Dawn* is an unquestionably significant contribution to our understanding of the often confusing and contentious sequence of events and decisions of 25 April 1915. While most of the stories of that day have gone to the grave with those who took part in it, James Hurst is to be thoroughly commended for his efforts in giving voice and substance to the ones that have survived the ravages of time. One wonders how many other historians would be game enough to try the same.

Paul Skrebels

**Brigadier Nicholas Jans (Ret'd), OAM, *Leadership Secrets of the Australian Army*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2018. ISBN 9781760631802, softcover, 208 pages. RRP \$29.99 AUD.**

When talking to the press Australian commanders are encouraged to say, 'Australian forces are well trained, well equipped and well led.' Indeed, the Australian Army is well led and this book explains how and why. Brigadier Nicholas Jans has made leadership a lifetime study and is no stranger to how it is practiced in the Army. He served, as an artillery officer, in Vietnam and has stayed close to the Army since then as an Army leader himself and a close observer and teacher of leadership.



The key message of his book is that leadership, as practiced in the Australian Army, can and should be applied across the broader Australian community. The achievements of the Army, on global combat operations, over the last nearly two decades, strongly affirms our style of decision making, team building and leadership and tells us that we have got something good going here. As a successful consultant to many organisations Jans is also well versed on how leadership works in the civil community. He presents case studies of Army leaders who took the leadership skills they learned in the Army and applied them in their new careers to become successful business leaders. They made a real difference and a positive contribution to the success of their businesses.

All they did was do things we take for granted and are taught and practiced at all levels of the Australian Army.

If you are in the Army you can read this book and be proud. If you work in industry, commerce, education and the professional services you should read this book and decide how you are going to apply these 'secrets' to your life and workplace. At a time when we are deluged with theories of leadership and management from universities and airport bookshops, it is refreshing to find a practical and common-sense guide on how to make decisions, be a genuine and authentic leader and position your organisation for success. The methods are not complicated or difficult to apply. They make sense and are well explained in this easily digestible and astute book. It is enormously practical and explains how and when the Australian Army's unique style of leadership came about and why it has been so successful. It talks of values and character, of how to build a team and be agile and flexible. It will cause you to think about who you are as a leader and what your responsibilities to your team are. It will teach you that leadership is not about you but about the people you lead. The book explains how Army leaders are anything but authoritarian. They have a sense of purpose and an ethos that emphasises duty and responsibility to the team and its objectives. Their focus is on the team and as Jans explains, the best leaders do this by representing the best of leadership and relating to and running the team.

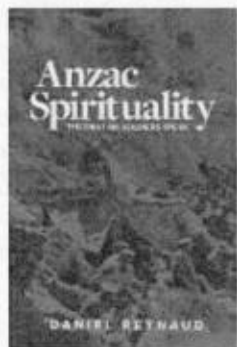
Everyone in the Army is a leader with every rank required to accept responsibilities and make decisions. This means that everyone is a team player and has learnt how to make a positive contribution to the common goal. A message for business is that if you are looking for someone to employ and want someone to make a positive contribution to your business, you would do well to consider someone leaving the Army. They joined the Army with a sense of purpose and a desire to accept a challenge, just the sort of person you want working for you. If more people understood the nature of service and what a veteran can offer, everyone would benefit. Veterans' post service career prospects would be improved, the stress of military service and career transition would be alleviated, and the civil community would benefit from great people doing great things.

The success of the Australian Army, over more than a Century, is built on a legacy of leaders, leadership and professional development. What is revealed in this book should not be secrets but should be widely exposed to individuals, companies and corporations across Australia. Australia would be a better place if these 'secrets' were followed and applied more broadly.

*Disclosure: The author Nicholas Jans will donate all proceeds from this book to the charity Soldier On. As Chairman of Soldier On I thank him for his generosity.*

**Lieutenant General Peter Leahy (Ret'd), AC**

**Daniel Reynaud, *Anzac Spirituality: The First AIF Soldiers Speak*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2018. ISBN 9781925588750, softcover, viii + 370 pages incl. photos. RRP \$44.00 AUD.**



Since the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, religious belief has played a major part in the wars fought by European peoples. It has been either a dominant imperative for making war, part of a mix of factors leading to war or a mask for nationalism, imperial advancement or regime change. The religious or spiritual beliefs and practices of those who fight wars should therefore be of interest to the military historian.

Daniel Reynaud has written a book based on his research into the spirituality of members of the 'First' AIF. Spiritual and religious ideas are personal and to some extent idiosyncratic, so the best way to study them in a given population would be to conduct extensive interviews.

That being no longer possible with veterans of the AIF, Reynaud has searched diaries and correspondence of over 1,000 of these soldiers (and some nurses) as well as interrogating other sources such as lists of personal effects (of those dying on service), gravestone inscriptions and reports in Australian local newspapers. Reynaud uses as a null hypothesis, the assertion of Bill Gammage that 'the average Australian soldier was not religious'.

Reynaud cautions the reader regarding some of the pitfalls in analysing soldiers' letters home, especially when it comes to sensitive issues such as religious belief and personal morality. What a soldier writes to his mother might have a very different complexion to what he says in correspondence to a brother. Also letters from the front had to go through censorship, so any comments about the war effort would have to be avoided. The keeping of diaries, even though forbidden by the army brass, fortunately seems to have been very prevalent and provides a source, it is contended, that might reveal much closer the writer's real feelings and personal views.

This book presents the data grouped according to the various ways and contexts in which spirituality may be expressed. Church parades on Sundays were compulsory and disliked by many, firstly for being compulsory but also for poor standards of presentation, i.e. unpopular hymns, unskilled or boring preachers and the inability of most attendees (many thousands at a time) to even hear what was being said from the pulpit. For all this the soldiers would have to stand around in all weathers for many hours. However, the majority of writings surveyed had positive things to say about church parades.

Voluntary religious activities, both group and individual, and personal devotions are presented as being a more realistic measure of spiritual life amongst the AIF. Bible study, discussion groups, public and private prayer and attending visiting evangelists' meetings or going to a local church are discussed. One touring evangelist attracted up to 25% of a transit camp in France to his meeting. This is a better attendance than the 10% of present day declared Christians in Australia who attend church on Sundays. Australianism never fails to come through even in such a serious discussion, as with the fellow who reported looking forward to the Orthodox Easter because he would be allowed to kiss every pretty girl he saw as long as he proclaimed 'Christ is risen'!

The study also examines living up to moral expectations in a war situation, attitudes to chaplains, denominationalism and the use of religion to justify the war and to foster greater



devotion to attaining victory. Non-Christian religions and non-religious spirituality are also considered although, perhaps naturally, given the era, to no great extent.

This book is not exactly a 'page turner', due probably to the staid nature of its subject matter; but Reynaud has a clear, logical and straightforward writing style suitable for reporting on such a large survey of written primary sources. The work that Reynaud has done in collecting and analysing the data is indeed impressive. In this book he has laid it out with congruent and insightful conclusions, together with a useful bibliography and an adequate if not extensive index. It provides a baseline collection of data for anyone interested in further research into the subject of religious belief and warfare. *Anzac Spirituality* should also appeal to those who wish to obtain a greater understanding of the inner life, fears, feelings and personal motivations of members of the original AIF.

Colin Maynard

**Pat Beale, *Legends of War: The AIF in France 1918*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, North Melbourne, 2017. ISBN 9781925588644. Softcover, 161 pages. RRP \$34.99 AUD.**



The commemorations of the Great War are coming to an end. The final year is the subject of many articles and events, which portray the strategies and battles which led finally to the Armistice in November 1918. In *Legends of War*, Pat Beale brings his scholarship and insight as a former soldier to bear on that final year. He opens with the following: 'There are essentially two ways of considering Australia's involvement in the First World War. One the widely held view of personal sacrifice and futile heroism; of our "great-hearted" men martyred to a worthless cause, suffering savage losses in a pointless struggle ... The other view is of how an initially amateur force, ill-disciplined and badly trained, evolved over four years into a highly skilled, well led, and victorious army'.

It is with these two perspectives, one negative and one positive, that he explores what he describes as 'legends' (non-verifiable stories which distort or exaggerate historical events), which he suggests have taken hold on popular understanding of the Great War. Beale 'casts a soldier's eye over the legends' as he explores 'where the military reality, so important to the Digger has been disregarded or distorted in the years since'. In particular, he focuses on the battles in 1918 in which the AIF fought under the command of General Sir John Monash, when the bitterly acquired experience of the previous years was garnered such that the AIF as a single Australian Corps displayed its full capability alongside its Allies.

Beale chooses six 'legends' or shibboleths to explicate within the context of the 1918 battles. Were the soldiers sheep led to the slaughter, engaged in a pointless struggle? Were they lions led by donkeys; brave men with incompetent leaders? Were the Aussies born soldiers without need of training? Were they larrikins and merely 'fighters' and not soldiers with approved army discipline and battle skills? Was the war won because the German army command had been 'stabbed in the back' by politicians, rather than won by the tactical skill of the BEF?

Carefully dissecting the progress through to the final victorious assaults, which led to the German surrender, Beale sets the scene for the achievements by the Allied forces and particularly of the Australian troops and their leaders. He is intent on restoring recognition for

this achievement, which he asserts, is denied by the popular acceptance of the glibly expressed 'legends'. Instead he maintains: 'From late march to early October, they displayed the military qualities of sound leadership and training, high morale and audacity, skill in battle craft and tactics, and mature discipline'.

It was at a heavy cost, but victory was achieved. It is public 'memory' or 'imagining' that focuses on the cost rather than on what and how the victory was won. Thus, while the memorials and commemorations reflect on loss, 'the horror, the pain and suffering', Beale, the soldier and researcher, asks that the men who believed in what they were doing, who sacrificed their lives and felt pride in what they achieved should also be honoured for their 'collective triumph' – not to glorify war, but to acknowledge what they did and why they felt proud of what they had done. He concludes, that 'The eager mob of 1914 grew into a highly skilled army ... an army of great unity, confidence and skill', which had achieved much despite terrible casualties.

Readers might find Beale's views a challenge to their perceptions. They might also be moved by the underlying personal sense of a writer who with thoughtfulness and clarity has brought to bear his own comprehensive research as well as his knowledge and experience a soldier in order to offer a revised view of the Digger soldier and his leaders in 1918, and what this might mean for commemoration today.

Claire Woods

**Stephen Dando-Collins, *Heroes of Hamel*, Penguin Random House Australia, 1918. ISBN 9780143787600. Softcover, 323 pages, photos and maps. RRP \$34.99 AUD.**



As an amateur historian I have a special interest in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, a South Australian and Western Australian unit in the AIF. This unit, along with other battalions, was in the front wave on the assault on Hamel. Hamel is considered a turning point in the war in that from then on, a template had been set which the following battles in 1918 adopted. I was looking forward to this book by Stephen Dando-Collins on the battle, and I find he has produced a very readable book. It is a praiseworthy addition to popular Australian military history without too much technical jargon.

The previous years 1914 and up to 1918 had produced enormous casualties for little ground gained. Lieut Gen Sir John Monash saw that there had to be a better way to engage the enemy without losing men on a grand scale. Given the five Australian divisions, he and his staff put together a detailed plan to take the village of Hamel with minimal casualties. The AIF battalions had suffered heavy casualties numbers over the past years of combat and the reinforcement system was unable to cope with the losses. Monash was given to opportunity to use American troops to bolster the numbers in his battalions. This was the first time American soldiers had fought in a major battle and with the now experienced Australians, this was to prove a winning combination.

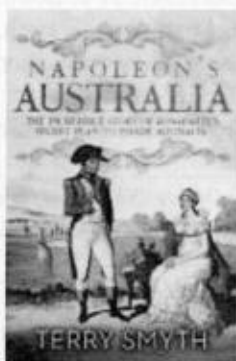
This book relates the build-up and planning and additional training undertaken prior to the assault on Hamel on 4 July. The author explains clearly the plan, how it was implemented and the lengths Monash went to put it into practice. General Pershing the American commander was not happy that his troops were being used and ordered that they be withdrawn. With a little sleight of hand, several companies of Americans did fight with the

Australians. The author gives the reader an excellent insight into the mind of Monash and also the experiences of some of the individual soldiers who fought in the battle, both American and Australian.

As you read through the book you can almost feel the tension building up before the assault. When zero hour arrived I saw in my mind's eye the troops moving forward supported by tanks, artillery and the aircraft of the RAF. This was an all arms battle, carefully constructed with the result that approximately 1,400 casualties were incurred. Dando-Collins style is a pleasure to read without getting into the technical explanations of how the military operates. It is a detailed yet concise book, allowing the reader to understand what a textbook battle plan could achieve. I have read several recently published books on the Battle of Hamel, but this one is by far the best description of that battle. I do have one slight criticism: Corporal Frank Shaw, who was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for his courage in the battle, was definitely a member of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Bn not the 42<sup>nd</sup>, as described in chapter 11. I can live with that slight error and it shouldn't dissuade anyone from buying the book. I would highly recommend *Heroes of Hamel* to anyone interested in the Australians in that now famous battle.

Mike English

**Terry Smyth, *Napoleon's Australia: The Incredible Story of Bonaparte's Secret Plan to Invade Australia*, Ebury Australia, 2018. ISBN 9780143787280. Softcover, 320 pages (including notes, bibliography and index). RRP \$34.99 AUD.**



*Napoleon's Australia* is clearly aimed at the general market and is an example of popular history. It is mostly written in the present tense and is certainly easy to read. In fact, at times it reads like a novel. For example, on page 31 the author writes of Rose (Josephine) and Napoleon in prose that would seem to have been better suited to a historical novel than a work of nonfiction. A sizable chunk of this book is a retelling of the well-known voyage of exploration of Nicholas Baudin with his two ships *La Geographe* and *Le Naturaliste*, including the meeting with Matthew Flinders in Encounter Bay in my home state of South Australia. In this account the author introduces the villain of the piece, Francois Peron. Peron was the officially appointed anthropologist of the expedition. However, the author does not think

much of his qualifications for this position. Peron wrote a report on the defences (or rather the lack of them as he saw it) at Sydney and how relatively defenceless the new Colony was.

Francois Peron comes across as a nasty character. He seems to have been deceitful, boastful and prone to exaggeration. His report on the defences of Sydney was to the Governor of the French possession of Isle de France (Mauritius), General Charles Decaen, and is presented as the basis for a suggested French invasion of the Colony of New South Wales. No doubt there was a strategic element to Baudin's scientific exploration of the coastline of southern Australia as the author, quoting Peron's report, says was true of British exploration. However, I think it is fair to ask how feasible was such an operation and, given Peron's lack of reliability, how much weight could be given to his report. The author offers a speculative chapter on a French invasion of New South Wales later on in his book. I found this to be a bit too fanciful for me; it reads more like a chapter in an alternative history novel.



A major issue I have with this book is its tendency to go off on tangents. For example, at times it reads like a potted biography of Napoleon and Josephine. In a book that is about a proposed invasion of Australia, it is strange to read briefly about Ludwig van Beethoven. Elsewhere it examines in quite a bit of depth the rebellious nature of Irish convicts in early New South Wales. True, these people could well have been useful allies in a supposed invasion by the French, but the pages given to the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland could have been summarised in a footnote. So could have been the speculative writing on how Matthew Flinders may have influenced by a strange, unsavoury Frenchman in coming up with the name 'Australia'. Yet having said this, some of these tangents are very interesting. For example, it is hard not to be amused by the account given of the behaviour of domesticated rabbits released for the hunting pleasure of Napoleon.

A strength of the book is its description of Josephine's estate at Malmaison and its zoological and botanical exhibits. The Baudin expedition brought many plants and animals to France, with kangaroos, black swans, an emu and a lyrebird coming to live at Malmaison. Sadly, the dwarf emu, now extinct, also lived at Malmaison and was an unloved addition to the menagerie. Apparently Josephine was not impressed that these unpredictable birds would eat any black swan cygnets wandering near them, and so were moved on to a museum. Also, some 200 plus Australian plants were cultivated at Malmaison. Here we have wandered a long way from any secret plans to invade Australia, but these passages about Malmaison are a fascinating part of the book. The photographs are wonderful too.

The book's tendency to wander all over the place at times can be frustrating if you want to read specifically about a plan for possible French invasion of early Colonial New South Wales. However, if you are looking for general book about aspects of Australian, French, British, Irish and world history in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century that is an engaging, easy read, then you may enjoy *Napoleon's Australia*.

David Vivian

**Marianne van Velzen, *Missing in Action: Australia's World War I Grave Services, an astonishing story of misconduct, fraud and hoaxing*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2018. ISBN 9781760632809. Softcover, 267 pages, photos and map. RRP \$29.99 AUD.**



At the Armistice of the Great War, Australia had over 45,000 dead on the battlefields of the Western Front. The British Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) had the responsibility for the exhumations and concentrations into formal cemeteries. The Australian Graves Services (AGS) was established to identify the recovered AIF, produce grave markers and photograph graves. The National Archives of Australia (NAA) holds a large file containing two inquiries held in 1920 investigating accusations of the unit's irregular activities. Having previously perused the file, I found that many of the accusations stem from petty squabbles over authority within the unit. It was therefore with great anticipation that I awaited journalist Marianne van Velzen's book

to see how she handled the more serious allegations in the inquiries.

The book devotes chapters to the background for the accused of misconduct, Capt Allen Charles Waters Kingston DCM, MSM, late 48<sup>th</sup> Bn, and Lt William Lee, formerly of 4 Div Signals Coy. Further chapters relate to key witnesses, including Hon Maj Alfred Allen (previously the assistant director of the Red Cross in the Netherlands), officers of the court



and the proceedings of inquiries. After the first inquiry, Allen was accused of hoaxing. The author relies on correspondence and transcripts of the proceedings held in the NAA file to reconstruct events.

In October 1919, the previous Australian Graves Detachment established by the AIF was reorganised as the Australian Graves Services. This military organisation now came under administration of the Australian High Commissioner, Andrew Fisher, in London at Australia House. The Grave Services operated in three districts, directly reporting to Capt Quentin Spedding in London: Amiens under Lt Lee, Villers-Bretonneux under Capt Kingston and Poperinghe with Allen. Spedding refused to acknowledge Allen's position, and Kingston and Lee objected to serving under someone with no war service. Australia House failed to rectify this clash of authority early on, which spiralled out of control.

After a series of complaints were received at AIF Headquarters, it was decided to hold a classified court of inquiry. In Villers-Bretonneux administration was deemed to be lax, discipline poor, the photographers unproductive and the transport section misappropriating army property. Lee expected to present his accusations against Allen and Kingston, but instead found himself under suspicion. Men under both commands had been caught running *estaminets*. The court found 16 men were to be discharged, but not prosecuted. To avoid publicity, Kingston and Lee were not court-martialled. Allen survived and was left in control of the AGS in northern France.

Allen proceeded to gain a reputation as a body diviner through achieving an abnormally high success rate of locating graves and identification. Lt Robert David Burns of the 14<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Coy was advised by the German Red Cross in 1916 to have died at Fromelles. Under persistence from his family to locate the grave, Allen reacted. The Germans had been explicit, advising of five mass graves near Pheasant Wood. Attending the vicinity, Allen located a cross and stated he had discovered the grave. When the family requested a representative to attend the exhumation, Allen changed his story. Repeated refusals of permission by Maj George Phillips in London led to suspicions of a cover-up. The opening of the grave revealed an officer and four other ranks – all British. Senator Pearce, the Minister for Defence, receiving a complaint over the handling of the case, demanded a second inquiry over the allegations of hoaxing. Allen's and Phillips' accounts to the court contradicted events. The key witness was not called, and the source of accusations were treated as hearsay and therefore inadmissible. Conveniently, the court found no action to be taken over the accused pair.

Retrospectively, it could be argued that Allen neglected his duty in his failure to detect the Fromelles mass graves. They were at last located in 2009, with Burns among them. Velzen offers a feeble excuse in defence of Allen that the recovery attempts of large burial pits 'would have meant a great deal of gruesome work'! Over 100 years later it is left to volunteer civilian researchers to investigate the whereabouts of the missing. To date, some 10,000 remain lost.

Velzen is to be thanked for condensing the original file of 790 pages into a more readable format. However, it is regrettable that the author's insufficient grasp of the military means the book fails to make a greater impact. Kingston is wrongly referred to as serving in 45<sup>th</sup> Bn. At one point his DCM was referred to as a 'Distinguished Medal'. There is no mention of his MSM. Implying that Kingston was unfit for active duty due to officers in this condition being placed in the Graves Detachment during the war is ludicrous (he had been on strength of 48<sup>th</sup>

Bn until March 1919). The 14<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun [Coy], a unit which was not established until 1916, is said to have 'fought a costly and unsuccessful campaign against the Turks at Gallipoli'.

There is more confusion on awards, as Velzen raises the 'matter concerning the protracted dispute about [Lt Col Percy Muir] McFarlane receiving a medal for services during the war', and 'although he had been granted the Victory Medal in the end, it had not come about without a scuffle'. The fact is, he was recommended in 1917 by Birdwood for a MiD for services at Gallipoli, but not approved – and was entitled to the Victory medal due to his service there. In relation to rank, Velzen persists with the view that captains should accord lieutenants greater respect when the latter are more senior in age. She also takes two sources of information, one from Burns' Red Cross Inquiry and another from the D.16 statement in his dossier, to incorrectly conclude that 'Kershaw' is the CO of 5<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun [Bn], when in fact the reference is to a Sgt James William Kershaw. Furthermore, the classic journalist gaffe of claiming that 5000 were 'killed' at Fromelles is made. Hazebrouck is spelt inconsistently. Allen & Unwin certainly need to hire a military editor if they wish to continue publishing in this genre.

Artistic licence is used to portray the thoughts of people, for example, in Velzen's citing the last vision of Lt Burns before dying. This gives the book the feel of a novel and, combined with grievances and deceit in testimonies, puts the reader in a quandary of trying to distinguish fact from fiction. In the chapters on biographies, the writer strays by adding detailed depth on superficial characters – Frank Hurley for instance – to pad out the pages. There is repetition between chapters. Anyone anticipating an account of how burial units functioned during and after the war will be disappointed.

The motive of the author in writing this book is unclear. Is it to tarnish the reputation of the AIF? Or does she want us to reflect upon the idea that our nationhood was built upon 'sacrifice', for which the underlying commemoration charter of the authorities is self-serving? Without Velzen developing an argument to support or criticise the cases the result appears merely tabloid. On a final note, Capt Charles Mills OBE, late 31<sup>st</sup> Bn, receives no recognition in the book. Mills was wounded and captured at Fromelles. Appointed the PW Red Cross representative for Switzerland in March 1918, he was instrumental in accounting for the 'Missing in Action'.

**Brenton Brooks**

**Clive Morton, *The Evo Owen Story*, Mulgrave Shire Historical Society, Gordonvale. ISBN 0975171534. 126pages, photos. \$30 posted. Available from the Mulgrave Shire Historical Society, PO Box 566, Gordonvale, Qld 4865.**

Prolific author Clive Morton travelled across Australia and New Guinea and became a confidant of the Owen family in his quest to bring to light the story behind the production of the Owen Gun. The Owen submachine-gun served the Australian armed forces from its debut on the Kokoda Track in 1942, in New Guinea, Bougainville and Borneo, then again during the Korean War, and was used to effect during the Battle of Long Tan in South Vietnam in 1966. Remembered with affection by the Diggers who carried it, the Owen had a lot going for it – lightweight and compact for jungle use, accurate from shoulder or hip, bursts or single shot, and as near as damn to stoppage free.

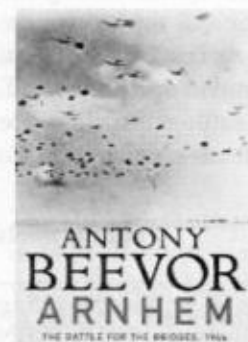


Evelyn Owen was a young Australian with a penchant for inventing; his prime invention was the Owen Gun. *The Evo Owen Story* is a boots-and-all tale of Owen's long struggle to have his gun recognized, and in 1942, brought into the armoury of the Australian army. He was opposed, for various reasons, by high-ranking officers and politicians, and author Clive Morton lays bare the machinations and skullduggery behind that opposition. Morton uses his pen as a rapier to pierce the pomposity of Owen's opponents both high and low.

The story is interspersed with a running history of war and peace, the progress of World War 2, character studies and vignettes – all in Morton's knockabout style of fearless journalism. Numerous black and white photos of early model Owen Guns add interest to the written word. *The Evo Owen Story* was self-published in 1960. The Mulgrave Shire Historical Society has arranged a re-publication with Clive's widow, Mrs Desma Morton, as a tribute to Evelyn Owen and to our long-term member and supporter, Clive Morton.

Donald Lawie

**Antony Beevor, *Arnhem: The Battle for the Bridges, 1944*, Viking Penguin, Random House UK, 2018. ISBN 9780241326769. Softcover, 457 + xxi pages, photos and maps. RRP \$35.00 AUD.**



Prolific British military historian Antony Beevor has produced yet another World War 2 study, this time of Operation Market Garden, the combined Allied airborne and armoured offensive to take the bridges over the Maas, Waal and Neder Rijn Rivers up to Arnhem in the Netherlands in September 1944. However, whereas his predecessor Cornelius Ryan maintained – supposedly in the words of General 'Boy' Browning – that the operation might have succeeded, but was 'a bridge too far', Beevor's premise is that it was doomed to failure from the outset. Indeed, as if to underline his point, he casts doubt on whether Browning actually uttered the infamous phrase at all. It is such attention to historical detail that marks out Beevor's

work as an important addition to scholarship on Market Garden, drawing as it does on a wide range of sources – German, Dutch and Polish as well as British and American – to create his narrative of the bravery, desperation and ultimate futility and tragedy arising out the battle.

What strikes the reader from the outset is the almost slapdash way the plan was thrown together by the various staffs involved, as though in an attempt to find employment for the recently-formed First Allied Airborne Army, languishing in the UK, rather than trying to arrive at the most effective strategy for invading the Reich and winning the war. Field Marshal Montgomery – newly (and very irregularly) promoted by Churchill as a sop to the British commander's ego – was prepared to accept any initiative that supported his desire for a left-flank approach into Germany rather than a US-dominated right-flank thrust into the Saar, and so Market Garden was given the go-ahead.

The problem, maintains Beevor, is that the operation 'defied military logic because it made no allowance for anything to go wrong, nor for the enemy's likely reactions' (p.365). It was as though, despite the lessons of the German landings on Crete and those of the Allies on

Sicily and Normandy, the planners were still clinging to Modernist sci-fi fantasies of airborne warfare as depicted in the 1936 film *Things to Come*. In this version of H.G. Wells' book, impossibly large aircraft disgorge hundreds of paratroopers safely onto the dropzone, who then carry out their mission at will. But while Wells' 'Wings over the World' forces have a 'gas of peace' with which to subdue the opposition, Browning and his lightly-armed troops had to contend with the very prompt and fierce German reaction to the airdrops, as did Horrocks' XXX Corps as it attempted to drive its armoured vehicles along a single narrow highway towards Arnhem.

The results are predictable, but Beevor nonetheless weaves a fascinating and insightful account of the whole effort, and from both sides' points of view. For even though the nineteen days of battle led to the effective destruction of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, and considerable losses to their armoured forces, the US 82<sup>nd</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Divisions and the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Parachute Brigade, the Germans also suffered heavy casualties. As Beevor ably demonstrates, the German response involved sending in not only the rump of a couple of SS panzer divisions, but many ad hoc units made up of support personnel as well as Luftwaffe ground forces and even Kriegsmarine units. The lack of infantry training in such organisations led inevitably to uneven contests with the elite Allied airborne troops, but ultimately the Germans got the job done, and the offensive was halted.

Caught up in the maelstrom were Dutch civilians, and Beevor offers a very sympathetic treatment of their plight. In fact, their sufferings didn't end with the conclusion of the operation; the book closes with a summary of what the Dutch had to endure during the 'Hunger Winter' of 1944-45, when the Netherlands became a strategic cul de sac for the Allies, and a spiteful Nazi regime enforced starvation conditions on the nation. This is a powerful story which adds much to our awareness both of the Market Garden operation itself, and of the brutality of modern warfare, particularly as waged in urban settings. At the same time, *Arnhem* raises many uncomfortable questions about the conduct of what we like to think of as the 'just war'.

Paul Skrebels

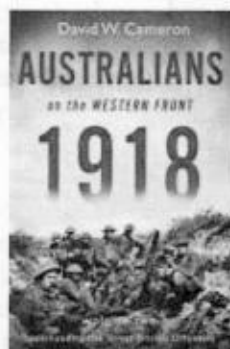
**David W. Cameron, *Australians on the Western Front 1918 Volume Two: Spearheading the Great British Offensive*, Penguin Random House Australia, Melbourne, 2018. ISBN 9780670078288. Softcover, 541 pages, photos and maps. RRP \$34.99 AUD.**

In the second volume on *Australians on the Western Front 1918*, David Cameron divides the coverage into five parts: the Battles of Hamel and Amiens, 'Keeping the Pressure On', Mont St Quentin and Péronne, and the Hindenburg Line.

On 4 July 1918 Lt Gen Monash launched his attack on Hamel. The depleted Australian brigades which were committed to the attack were supported by companies of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division, American Expeditionary Force. At Hamel, Monash successfully combined planning and co-ordination of arms – artillery, tanks, aircraft and logistics in support of the infantry. While the battle lasted only 93 minutes, Cameron soon gets bogged down in detail. Rather than lead us through the battle, the author smothers the reader with excerpts from battalion war diaries, unit histories and published memoirs, delivering an eclectic mix of ramblings. Hamel is attributed as the blueprint to the later, larger scale Battle of Amiens. Nevertheless, Cameron overlooks the fact that the Germans only regarded Hamel as a local, limited-



objective action. The Germans sought solutions in tactics, but battered units (often at 40% strength) suffering from hunger and disease were unable to maintain defence in depth.



On 8 August 1918 the Australian and Canadian Corps spearheaded the Allies' major offensive east of Amiens. The Germans offered little resistance, with nearly half their casualties of 27,000 being prisoners. Ludendorff in his memoirs declared August 8<sup>th</sup> 'the Black Day of the German Army', yet Cameron fails to deliver a summary of Allied gains to demonstrate how successful the victory was. Alternatively, it could be argued the earlier Second Battle of the Marne in the French sector was more decisive in sealing Germany's fate.

In the days following the Battle of Amiens, the offensive pressure was kept on the Germans in the belief they were close to collapse due to the high number of prisoners being taken. Haig instructed all his Corps commanders to make assaults along the front to break it. At the end of August, Monash pressed this 'aggressive policy' against Mont St Quentin and Péronne. After the victories of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions, assisted by the 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Germans withdrew to the Hindenburg Line. On 18 September the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions successfully attacked the Outpost Line. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions, reinforced with two fresh American divisions, were then tasked with breaking the Hindenburg Line by taking the St Quentin Canal in the tunnel beneath Bellicourt.

The relentless pressure of advance left the AIF infantry battalions exhausted and under strength. This was exacerbated by Prime Minister Hughes introducing ANZAC furlough for the 'Originals'. The disbandment of units to conform to the Imperial reorganisation of three battalions in a brigade caused widespread resentment among the troops. Cameron does not examine why Monash did not consider employing the underutilised, full strength pioneer battalions in their combat role to reinforce the infantry?

The author has attempted to produce the definitive Digger narrative of 'chivalrous' victories in 1918. Unfortunately, the result is an unwieldy mosaic of battalion historical accounts laden with a feats of individual participants, at the expense of genuine analysis. Cameron struggles to harness the significance of events. The book would have benefited from the publisher imposing a sensible page limit to eliminate repetition.

**Brenton Brooks**

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## THE 'JAPANESE LANDING' AT DONGARA – 24-28 OCTOBER 1942

**Graham McKenzie-Smith**

In the face of Japanese air raids on Wyndham, Derby, Broome, Port Hedland, Onslow and Exmouth, the Army's defences in Western Australia increased over 1942 to include two divisions which were deployed on the sandplain between Perth and Geraldton. While fighting in New Guinea continued along the Kokoda Trail and the battle for Egypt was reaching its peak at El Alamein, General Gordon Bennett decided to test his defences. EXERCISE ROBBER ran for four days from 24 October, and with over 20,000 troops involved it was to be the largest anti-invasion exercise conducted by the Army in World War Two.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Division was responsible for the defence of the northern sector with 2<sup>nd</sup> Brigade having three battalions north and south of Geraldton and 6<sup>th</sup> Brigade three battalions between Irwin and Mingenew, while the Western Australian 13<sup>th</sup> Brigade had three battalions at Dandaragan and towards Jurien Bay. The division's HQ was at Moora and supply depots were at various towns including Mullewa. There was no Brand Highway or Indian Ocean Drive so the road through Moora was the road to Geraldton that was closest to the coast. The road from Moora to Dandaragan and tracks to Jurien Bay and Wedge Island were the only access tracks to the coast between Yanchep and Dongara.

For the exercise the enemy was designated as 5<sup>th</sup> Japanese Division and the three battalions of 8<sup>th</sup> Bde were organised as a Japanese regiment to be known as 'X' Force. On 23 October 1942 'X' Force moved to Dongara where they 'landed' the next morning at dawn ready to attack towards Mingenew. 44<sup>th</sup> Battalion (now 'W' Force) was to move to the Jurien Bay area from where they also 'landed' to attack the brigade at Dandaragan. 19<sup>th</sup> Garrison Bn was defending the Geraldton town area and port, but they 'switched sides' to become 'Y' Force which captured the town and prepared to fight off the counterattack by battalions of 2<sup>nd</sup> Bde. Also 'switching sides' was 25<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment at Northampton ('Z' Force), which was to send one squadron to take the supply depot at Mullewa, another to attack Mingenew from the north and a third to harass the brigade trying to retake Geraldton. As the final piece of the plan a 'commando' group was 'parachuted' into Watheroo to harass communications and maybe capture the divisional HQ at Moora.

Preparations were elaborate, with live ammunition withdrawn from the troops but carried in unit transport, just in case the real Japanese tried to spoil the exercise. The attackers were to wear their slouch hats and mark their vehicles with white iron crosses, while the defenders wore helmets or caps and marked their vehicles with red circles. The umpires had white armbands and had engineers attached who would place explosives to simulate artillery fire and bombs. General Bennett had fought the Japanese in Malaya and experienced the Japanese tactics which had been practiced by the 'enemy' forces earlier that month. Bren gun carriers were used to simulate light tanks.

The 'landing' at Dongara went well with 30<sup>th</sup> Bn securing the 'beachhead' and advancing towards Irwin. They were held up along the Mingenew Road by 14/32<sup>nd</sup> Bn, so 4<sup>th</sup> Bn took over with some initial success and 35<sup>th</sup> Bn tried a wide sweeping move aiming to re-join the road at Strawberry Siding. However, each ran into strong resistance from 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Bn and 38<sup>th</sup> Bn and the attackers were forced back towards Irwin. Meanwhile 30<sup>th</sup> Bn advanced north towards Geraldton before being turned back at Greenough by 6<sup>th</sup> Bn, so they returned to Dongara to assist. The only success for 'X' Force was a 'commando company' from 35<sup>th</sup> Bn which detoured to the south, surprising HQ 6<sup>th</sup> Bde at Strawberry and forcing them to withdraw.

After seeing off the 30<sup>th</sup> Bn advance at Greenough, 6<sup>th</sup> Bn suddenly found that 'Y' Force had 'landed' to capture Geraldton, so they turned north. Along with 5<sup>th</sup> Bn attacking from Moonyoonooka and two companies of 2/11<sup>th</sup> Bn from the north, they engaged in house to house fighting to clear the enemy from Geraldton and recapture the port. 13<sup>th</sup> Bde at Dandaragan was expecting 'W' Force to land at Jurien Bay and had their battalions covering the track from there, as well as the one from Wedge Island. However, 44<sup>th</sup> Bn had previously been patrolling this area and chose a different route. 'W' Force 'landed' at Lancelin and advanced across country past Reagan's Ford, bypassing Dandaragan and approaching Moora from the southwest. They were only discovered when the main party was close to Moora

airfield, so 16<sup>th</sup> Bn and 28<sup>th</sup> Bn were rushed back to defend the town. The exercise was ended before the result of this defence was clarified.



Fig.1: 'Geraldton, Australia. 1942-10. "Capture" of Geraldton, during field exercises of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Australian Divisions, by "enemy" forces. An "Allied" prisoner in "Enemy" hands. (AWM photo 028701, original caption)

In the meantime the 'commando' group had 'parachuted' into Watheroo where they were captured, but a motorised 'commando' group from 'W' Force had already reached Moora where they shot up HQ 4<sup>th</sup> Division and proceeded to 'blow up'

bridges, telephone lines and stores dumps around the district. 25<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regt at Northampton had been guarding the northern flank of the Geraldton defences, so when they changed sides on 25 October to become 'Z' Force there was no one to stop them. The three squadrons headed in different directions. 'Z2' drove straight to Mullewa and captured the main supply depot before preparing to join 'X' Force at Mingenew, which did not happen as they had been held up at Irwin. 'Z1' moved south towards Geraldton but were held back from joining 'Y' Force before they were driven out of town. 'Z3' travelled overland to attack Mingenew from the rear but did not come into action.

Exercise Robber was called off at 1630 on 28 October and the units returned to their previous camps. Although light forces had broken through to the rear areas to cause significant 'damage' and 'W' Force had almost reached Moora before detection, 4<sup>th</sup> Aust Division had held the major part of General Morimoto's 5<sup>th</sup> Japanese Division and learnt some valuable lessons about handling Japanese tactics. The photographer John Faithfull was on hand to record the action and the Australian War Memorial has a series of 38 photos from the exercise (see Fig.1). In 2006 the letters section of the NSW RSL newsletter *Reveille* carried correspondence from veterans who claim to have fought off a real Japanese invasion at that time and it took several issues before the controversy died down. As you drive through Moora, Mingenew, Dongara or Geraldton today spare a thought for those who 'fought' to defend the area back in 1942.

## References

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