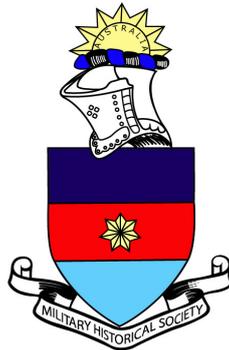


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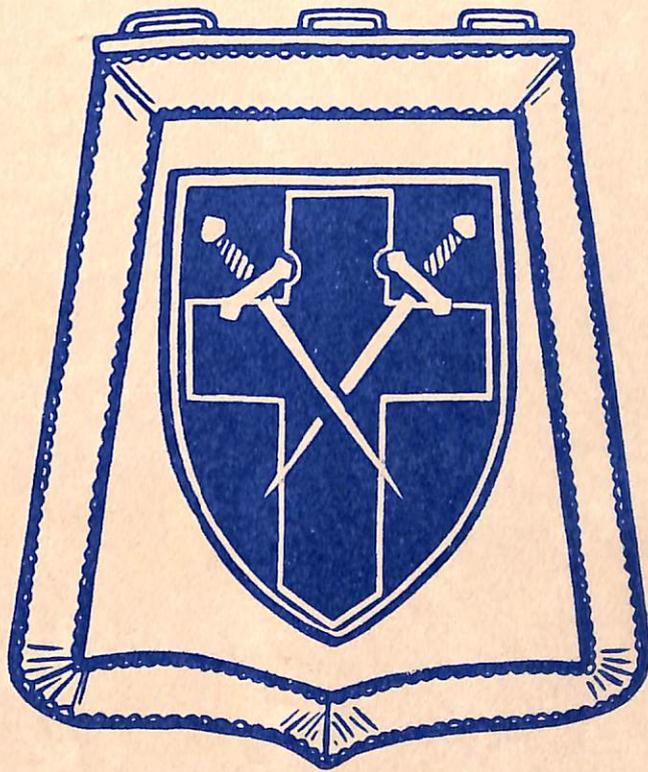
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Military Historical Society of Australia
PO Box 5030, Garran, ACT 2605.
email: webmaster@mhsa.org.au

SABRETACHE



THE JOURNAL OF
THE MILITARY RESEARCH AND COLLECTORS
SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

VOL. V

APRIL, 1963

No. 4



SABRETACHE
The Journal of the
MILITARY RESEARCH AND COLLECTORS SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA.

Vol. V.

April 1963

No. 4.

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.....

MONTHLY MEETINGS:

MELBOURNE: 2nd Saturday afternoon each month
SYDNEY: 4th " " " "

Please contact your local Secretary for time and place,
if you are in doubt. All members including interstate or
overseas, will be welcomed at meetings.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: 25/- Australian
3 dollars U.S.
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TITLES: Staff Corps (Aust) brass 2/6 each.

Mr L. Noble, "Marali", RAVENSWORTH, NSW.

.....
WANTED: Egypt Medal with bar "SUAKIN" 1885; China 1900; Queens and Kings South Africa Medals; or groups with any of the above in. MEDALS MUST BE NAMED TO AUSTRALIAN UNITS.

Exchange or pay cash for any of the above medals.

I have a very large range of medals for exchange, both in British and foreign (mainly German). German collection includes their high awards.

If you have any of the medals I require, send details of them and what you require. All letters answered.

242633 Capt. R. Clark, 11 Field Squadron, Kelvin Grove, Queensland, Australia.

.....
WANTED: Sleeve badges for ratings of Royal Naval Air Service 1914/18. Also Officers cap badge.
Metal shoulder title "RFC"
Metal shoulder title "AFC" (Australian Flying Corps).
Metal shoulder title "CFS" (Central Flying School).
pilot wings for A.F.C. and A.M.F. (WW1.)
RAAF sleeve badge four bladed propellor metal.
W.A.T.C. beret badges WW2.
Any badges of British Air Defence Cadet Corps.

B. J. Videon, 12 Noble Ave., PUNCHBOWL, N.S.W.

EARLY FORTIFICATION AND DEFENCE

The earliest attempt at fortification in Victoria dates back to the year 1826, when Governor Darling made an attempt to found a settlement in Western Port. Between the time of King and Darling, history tells us little about the northern coast line of Bass Strait. Its southern side was occupied since 1804, when a settlement was formed at Port Dalrymple, which in time has developed into the city of Launceston. From this place came whalers and sealers. Some of these people, in due course, found their way to Western Port and occupied French and Phillip Islands. When the H.M.S. "FLY" sailed in December 1826, with a company of the 3rd (The Buffs) Regiment, and a number of convicts under the command of Captain Wright, he was surprised to find that the place had been occupied. The first locality fixed on by his military force was on Phillip Island. A small fort was built and named Fort Dumaresque, but this position was soon vacated for one on the mainland, on the east side of the bay, a short distance from what is now known as the township of Corinella.

The first really serious attempt at fortification in Victoria took place in 1860, when the government of the colony applied to the British Government for the services of an officer of the Royal Engineers to superintend the erection of defences. Captain Peter Scratchley was selected for this important post. For three years and a half he was actively employed in devising a system of defence for Victoria, during which period he took a prominent part in the volunteer movement. During his service in the colony a Royal Commission was appointed to report upon the best means of defending Victoria. Scratchley submitted a report embodying a scheme in which special detail was given for a system of earth works around the shores of Hobson's Bay. These, it was considered at the time, were well devised for mutual support and held to be complete and effective. Earth batteries were erected, three on the Williamstown side of Hobson's Bay, termed the Right Battery and the Lighthouse Battery, armed with four and eight 68 pounder guns respectively. Also a third battery on the breakwater, armed with six 68 pounder guns. On the Melbourne side of the bay three sand batteries existed, namely Lagoon Battery, Central Battery and St. Kilda Battery, all armed with three 68 pounder guns. At the entrance of Port Phillip, an open battery on Shortland's Bluff (now Queenscliff) armed with three 68 pounder guns.

From a report of the Fortifications Committee held in London in April 1867 (Victorian Parliamentary paper 77/1867) it is gathered that the line of defence to be taken up was between Williamstown and Point Ormond. This Committee, in considering Scratchley's recommendations, considered that two iron marine forts should be constructed in the water, one on the shoal at Point Gellibrand, about five hundred yards from the shore, to

mount nine or ten guns in casemates and two of the most powerful guns in the turret; the other, about two thousand yards from it, with casemates for twelve or fifteen guns, surrounded by two turrets. The committee also proposed that in shoal water, to the west of Point Ormond, should be placed obstructions and submarines, and a small work for about four 60 pounder guns be placed on Point Ormond, to prevent an enemy out of range of the other forts attempting to remove these obstacles. The Right Battery at Williamstown was to be remodelled and have six 60 pounder guns and the Lighthouse battery, four 9 inch and four 60 pounder guns. The Lagoon, Centre and St. Kilda batteries also to have heavier armament. As regards the entrance of Port Phillip it was proposed that a tower with one turret armed with two 23 ton guns should be placed on Point Nepean, and an enclosed battery, with shields, on Shortland's Bluff, armed with four 23 ton guns. Very little, however, was done in these days to secure proper defences.

In 1877, Sir William Jervois, in conjunction with Colonel Scratchley (then on his second mission), recommended that Port Phillip protected at the Heads would prove a most invulnerable harbour. He then proposed enclosed earth works at Point Nepean with 10 inch and 60 pounder guns, a battery and keep at Queens-cliff with 9 inch, 10 inch and 80 pounder guns. Also an enclosed work at Swan Island, a fort to be erected at South Channel, and torpedo defences in South and West channels, with contact mines. Batteries were also agreed to for Belfast, Warrnambool and Portlan

This system of defence was adopted, but, owing to the absence of necessary authority from the government during 1877-79, and the improvement in the manufacture and modes of mounting ordnance, which necessitated certain modifications to the original schemes, as well as insufficiency of amounts during the years 1879-82, much delay took place in carrying out the works.

In March 1882, so considerable a misconception appeared to exist on the subject of the land defence of Victoria that Scratchley thought it desirable to lay before the government a brief statement of the then state of affairs, together with recommendations as to the steps necessary to be taken in order to complete a modified scheme. Scratchley stated in his memorandum "although the scheme was approved at the time by the government, a portion only has been executed, and several of the most important recommendations have been entirely disregarded or ignored. In order that the portion executed may be given its full value, the remainder of the recommendations must be adopted. All I require is authority to proceed and funds to be provided."

The scheme originally recommended in 1877, although modified in armament, was adopted by the Victorian Parliament, who, in 1884, passed an Act especially appropriating £110,000 per annum for five years to defray the expenses connected with the defences, both naval and military.

In 1887, Major General Schaw, R.D., in reporting on the defences of Victoria said, "I would remark that the result of my inspection has impressed me with the good judgment in selecting sites and the skill in designing and carrying out the works which have been shown in the existing defences. The Victorian Government may well be proud of the forward state of the defences of the colony, and they may be very well satisfied with the excellent work done by their defence officers."

An inspection was made of the military forces in 1889 by Major General Bevan Edwards who also inspected the harbour defences, and he expressed himself highly pleased with the work that had been accomplished. From 1884 great progress was made in the defence measures of Victoria and strong fortifications were established at Forts Nepean, Eagle's Nest, Franklin, South Channel, Queenscliff, Crow's Nest and Swan Island. A battery also existed at Williamstown, called Fort Gallibrand.

Such were the lines on which the defences of Victoria were commenced and on which it has continued ever since. The main principles were the protection of Melbourne and Port Phillip Bay.

During Easter holidays the Garrison Artillery companies from Melbourne and Geelong attended at Queenscliff, where they encamped and took part in the naval and military manoeuvres carried out at the Heads. Forts were manned, search lights displayed, and target practice indulged in by the garrison. At the conclusion of the manning, the militia garrison companies fired their annual target practice, and entered into competition for gun laying, range taking, and other details incidental to the qualifications for garrison gunners. At Swan Island the activities were just as busy as they were at Queenscliff. The Militia submarine miners, in conjunction with the permanent engineers, carried out their annual course, the torpedo sections being engaged in minelaying, and the electric light section on instruction and working of the search light plant.

Peter Scratchley may be considered the "Father" of the Australian defences in general, not only as his advice of inestimable value, as when it was decided that the defence of the principle ports should be by permanent works and submarine mines, his very great knowledge of the subject enabled the governments to carry out the schemes with confidence. In fact, no greater authority on such matters could possibly have been consulted. The danger to which the colonies were exposed by not being prepared in any way to defend their own shores has, however, been fully recognised, and mainly to the efforts of this great engineer.

Large camps were established in the agricultural showgrounds and the Royal Park Reserve, to accommodate the troops from other States and Victorian country centres. This review may be regarded as the largest and most impressive ever held in Melbourne. Representatives of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines from the ships then in port, also New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland Naval Brigades, the representative troops from the other colonies (States), and the whole of the metropolitan and country troops of Victoria were in attendance. This was also the last review of the Victorian troops under State control. A contingent of the Fijian Native Constabulary, which happened to be in Melbourne, and the Victorian State School Cadet Corps also marched.

REGIMENTAL AIRS:

Martial music has always had its charm, and in this respect the old Victorian regiments were not lacking. In 1886 the 1st Battalion stepped to the tune of "ON YONDER ROCK RECLINING", the 2nd Battalion "BELPIEGOR", the 3rd Battalion "I AM NINETY-FIVE", and the 4th Battalion favoured "THE DASHING WHITE SERGEANT". In 1892 the 1st and 2nd Battalions changed their quickstep to "BLUE BONNETS OVER THE BORDER" and "LINCOLNSHIRE POACHER" respectively. The Garrison Artillery and the Engineers marched to the tune "SCOTTISH BEAUTIES", and "MONIE MONK" for the latter when on the trot. The regimental tune for the Victorian Rangers was "GARRY OWEN" and that for the Senior Cadets "BRITISH GRENADIERS". The Field Artillery chose "SCOTTISH BEAUTIES" when at the walk, and "MONIE MONK" for the trot. The Victorian Mounted Rifles selected the appropriate air "OLD BROWN PANTS". The tune for the gallop for all mounted corps was "BONNIE DUNDEE".

To be continued in next edition.
("NAVAL FORCES").

BADGE FOR GARRISON MILITARY POLICE.

M. O. 328/1919.



A badge has been approved for wear by members of the Garrison Military Police in Australia, and arrangements are being made for supplies to be forwarded to Senior Ordnance Officers. The badge, which consists of a white metal scroll "GMP" surmounted by a crown in gilding metal, will be worn on both sides of the collar of the jacket. Four badges per member will be issued.

NEW BADGE FOR R.A.A.F. MEDICAL BRANCH.

A new badge is to be provided for the Medical Branch of the R.A.A.F.

It replaces the present collar badge worn by R.A.A.F. Medical Officers and members of the R.A.A.F. Nursing Service, and will be issued shortly.

One of the two serpents on the old badge has been eliminated, thus replacing the inappropriate staff (or Caduceus) of Mercury with the more fitting rod of Aesculapius, the Greek god of medicine.

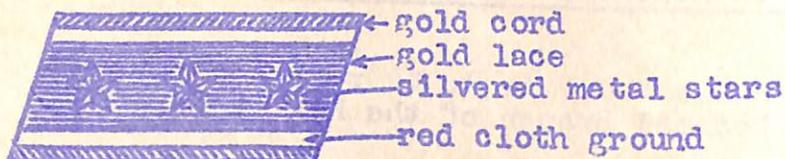
The old collar badge was copied from that of the R.A.F., who adopted it in 1920, after discontinuing the use of an earlier pattern featuring the "crux ansata", an ancient Greek Symbol of life. While the R.A.F. had a mess dress version of the collar badge, with silver wings, the R.A.A.F. did not wear the Medical Branch collar badge in mess dress, clinging rather to the naval method of showing Medical Branch by the use of red cloth between the gold rank rings on the shoulder boards of the mess dress jacket. This is not the present practice.

Present dress regulations of the R.A.A.F. prescribe that the badge "Medical, gilt" will be worn by Medical Officers and R.A.A.F. Nursing Service in "all orders of dress. On jackets the bottom of the badge to be 1 inch above the ear end of the collar step opening, the staff of the badge to be parallel with the inside (rolled) edge, and midway between such edge and the outside edge of the collar. On R.A.A.F. Nursing Service capes the staff of the badge to be placed diagonally on the front corners of the cape midway between points of facing on the cape."

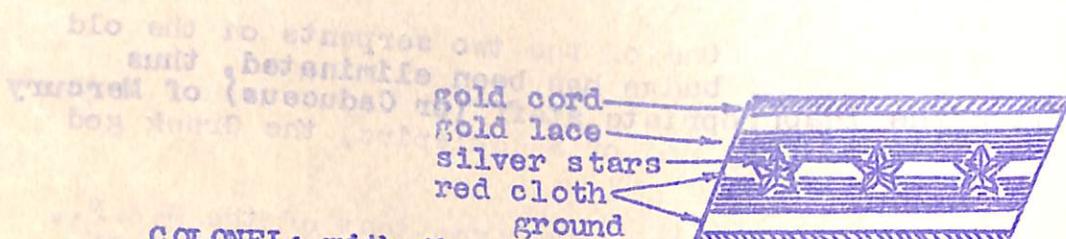
It is interesting to note that the rod of Aesculapius is used in the Medical Corps badges of the British Commonwealth armies, and in numerous others, including the German forces since before the war of 1914/18. The Germans used the winged caduceus of Mercury to denote Administration Branches.

The United States forces to at least the end of the 2nd World War employed the winged caduceus as the badge of their Medical branches. The present insignia for medical personnel of the U.S. Air Force include, however, the rod of Aesculapius.

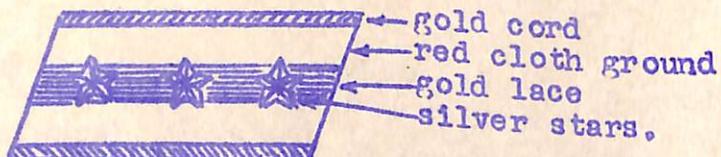
B.J. Videon.



GENERAL: with three stars
LT. GENERAL: with two stars
MAJ. GENERAL: with one star.



COLONEL: with three stars
LT. COLONEL: with two stars
MAJOR: with one star.



CAPTAIN: with three stars
1st LIEUTENANT: with two stars
2nd. LIEUTENANT: with one star
WARRANT OFFICER: with no stars.

Collar patch introduced in October 1943, with strip of colour beneath to show arm or service.
(here, GENERAL rank).



RANK AND ARM OF SERVICE BADGES OF THE JAPANESE ARMY IN
THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

Prior to October 1943, the Japanese Army displayed rank on the collars of uniforms, and a zig-zag coloured stripe was worn on the breast to denote the arm or service to which the wearer belonged.

The rank system was in the officer grades similar to those of the Western armies, but in the lower ranks differed in that there were four grades of privates.

Japanese Army Instruction No.81 of October 1943 abolished the wearing of the zig-zag coloured stripe, and authorised a new type collar badge showing the rank (more or less as previously shown) with the addition of a small colour strip beneath to show arm or service. The main difference in the method of showing ranks was that, whereas stars were previously balanced about a centre line, in the later pattern they were positioned near the front edge of the patch when in position on the collar. Reference to the sketches will show this difference.

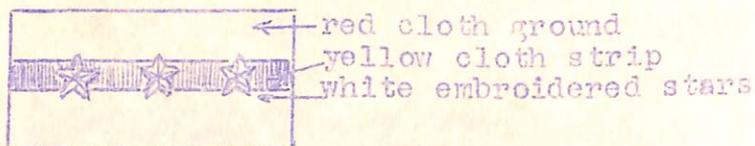
In addition, this Army Instruction introduced new style rank badges for wear on sleeves of Summer and Winter Dress uniforms. These comprised gold stripes, similar to those commonly worn by naval officers, beneath which appeared varying numbers of stars, according to rank.

Leading Privates holding acting NCO rank wore a sleeve badge of a red chevron with a narrower yellow edge beneath. A Superior Private wore in addition to his collar badge a red chevron, whilst an Acting Superior Private wore a yellow chevron edged in red in the same way. These badges were worn on the right arm above the elbow.

A peculiar system was devised for displaying the "vital statistics" of soldiers wearing shirt-sleeve order. This employed a piece of cloth of khaki colour, bearing the following devices:-

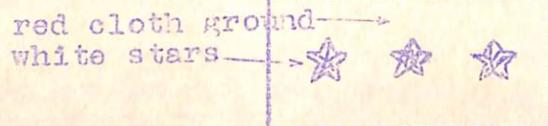
- Colour zig-zag stripe of arm or service;
- rank badge;
- regimental emblem;
- name and regimental number of soldier.

The whole device was secured to the shirt with a safety-pin, of common household pattern.



SERGEANT MAJOR: with three stars
SERGEANT: with two stars
CORPORAL: with one star

LEADING PRIVATE: with no stars.



SUPERIOR PRIVATE: with three stars
1st CLASS PRIVATE: with two stars
2nd CLASS PRIVATE: with one star



Positioning of one star on badge for
2nd CLASS PRIVATE in the post-October
1943 patch.

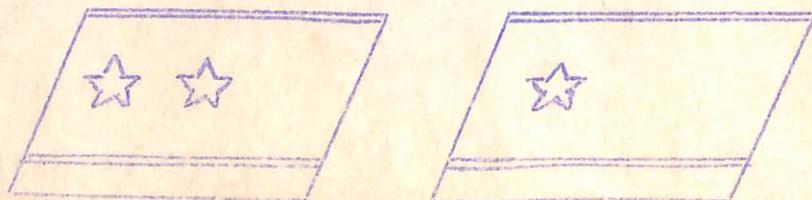
← colour strip denoting arm or service.

The following diagrams show the difference in
positioning of the stars where two or one
are used....

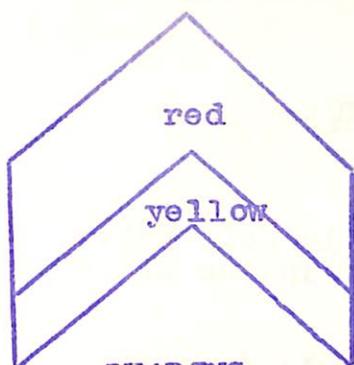
ORIGINAL GROUPING



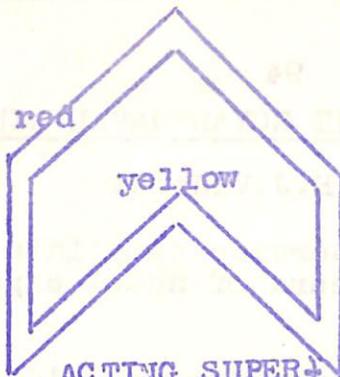
POST-OCTOBER 1943 GROUPING.



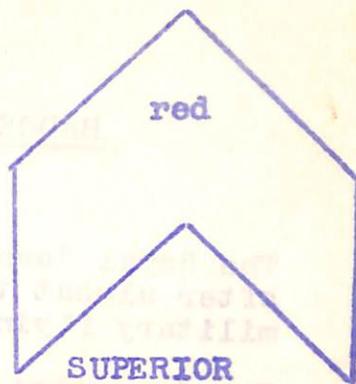
ADDITIONAL BADGES FOR WEAR ON RIGHT ARM.



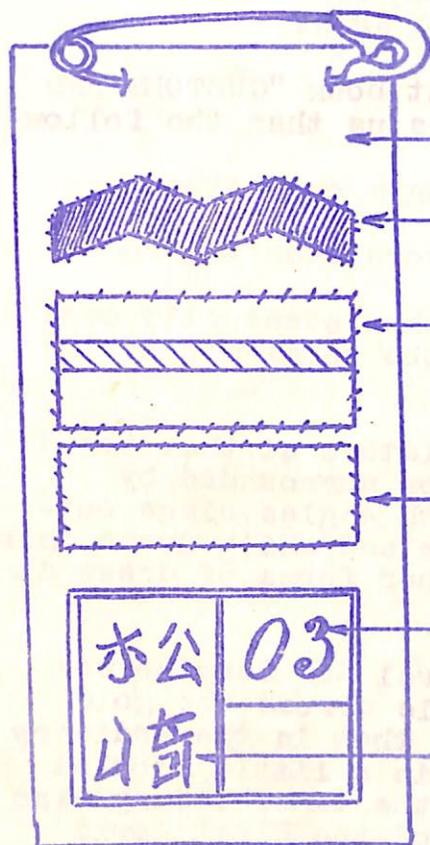
LEADING PRIVATE WITH ACTING NCO RANK.



ACTING SUPERIOR PRIVATE



SUPERIOR PRIVATE



khaki cloth patch.

colour zig-zag stripe for arm or service.

rank badge--here for LEADING PTE.

regimental emblem white patch for 102nd Infantry Rgt.

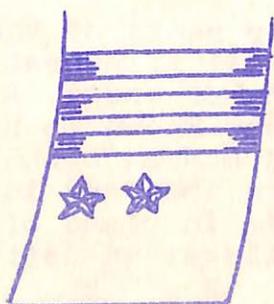
last two figures of code number of regt. 2803 = 102 Regt(51st Div.)

soldiers name.

COLOURS OF ARMS OR SERVICES.

- MILITARY POLICE: black
- ARTILLERY: yellow
- GREEN
- MEDICAL: green
- DAR
- VETERINARY: dark purple
- AIR CORPS: light blue.
- TRANSPORT: dark blue.
- INTENDANCE: greyish
- JUDICIAL: white
- ENGINEERS: mauve
- INFANTRY & TANKS: red

NEW SLEEVE RANK BADGES FOR OFFICERS.



RANK.	STRIPES.	STARS.
GENERAL	3	3
LT. GENERAL	3	2
MAJ. GENERAL	3	1
COLONEL	2	3
LT. COLONEL	2	2
MAJOR	2	1
CAPTAIN	1	3
LIEUTENANT	1	2
2nd. LIEUTENANT	1	1

BADGES OF THE ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE.

by B.J.Videon.

The Royal Naval Air Service came into being in July 1914, after almost three years of naval experiment in the art of military flying.

The formation of the new service did not result in the introduction of a separate uniform, and naval airmen continued to wear their normal blue naval type dress, with, however, some minor variations to distinguish them from their shorebased or seagoing brothers in arms.

Squadron Leader Hering, in his excellent book "CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF THE ROYAL NAVAL AIR SERVICE" tells us that the following were the variations:

replacement of the anchor with an eagle on buttons, cap badges, epaulettes and swordbelts; addition of an eagle on each cuff, worn over the rank braids.

It is this eagle (or albatross) badge that eventually came into well-known use in the R.A.F. and the remainder of the air forces of the British Commonwealth.

Hering also tells us that the naval aviators at that time wore a flying badge comprising an anchor surrounded by laurels, and surmounted by a crown, with eagles wings outspread. In full dress, ball dress, mess and white dress this was a gilt brooch 2" long, while in other forms of dress it was in worsted 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " long.

The officers cap badge of the Royal Naval Air Service was a splendid affair, with the silver eagle across the gold wreath of rather "leafier" design than that in the ordinary naval badge. This is illustrated well in a little booklet named "RANK AT A GLANCE", produced at the time. It may also be seen in numerous news articles etc of the First World War. The above booklet mentions that 'Naval Officers who are also Air Service Officers wear the naval anchor badge'.

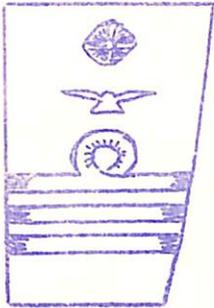
It is not clear to this writer whether other ranks of the R.N.A.S. had an eagle in their badge also. All illustrations of ratings in peaked caps show the usual anchor badge. Also, a bronze metal badge featuring the anchor was known to have been worn by R.M.A.S. in khaki uniform (see M.H.S. "BULLETIN" Vol.X, No.37, p.10). As a similar shaped badge appeared in the R.A.F. and W.R.A.F. about 1920 with an eagle in place of the anchor, it is assumed that the R.M.A.S. ratings and petty officers did not wear the eagle badge.



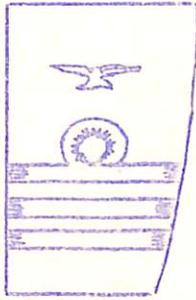
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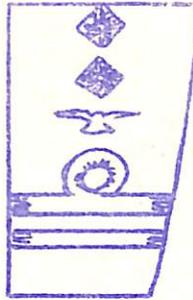
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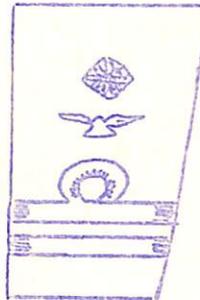
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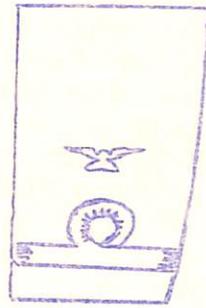
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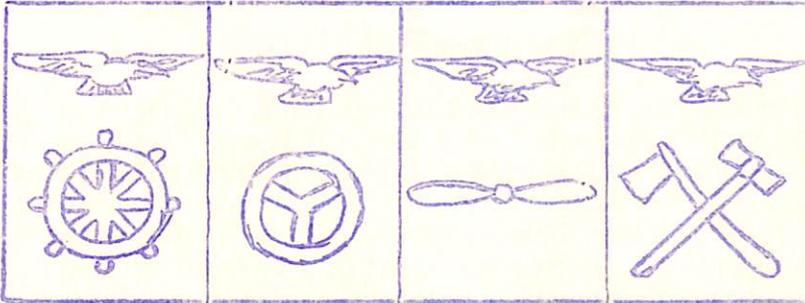
5.



6.



7.



8.

9.

10.

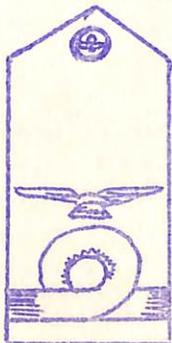
11.



12.

13.

14.



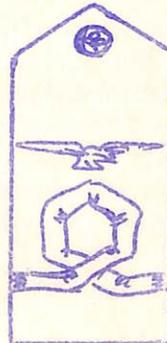
15.



16.



17.

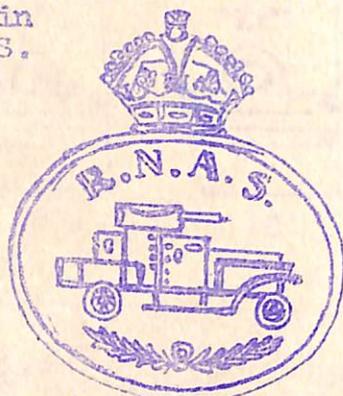


18.

Introduction of new trades and skills was also responsible for the appearance of new arm badges for ratings. A number of these are illustrated on the following page. They are taken from "RANK AT A GLANCE" and a companion volume "BADGES AND THEIR MEANING", as are the other illustration on that page. In the latter volume, the use of the term "albatross" is used to describe the bird appearing in the R.N.A.S. insignia

A somewhat unusual type of naval badge is that of the R.N.A.S. Armoured Car Section. This unit is understood to have been formed for the protection of the R.N.A.S. base at Dunkirk, but as armoured cars were in use for a variety of purposes in the R.N.A.S. this may not be the badge was in use.

The badge here shown metal. The writer One is cast, with at the back for while the other two more common for use with split



is also of bronzed has two varieties. two shapened prongs fixing to uniforms, is pressed, with the shanks at the back pins.

The following badges are illustrated on the following page:

1. Officers cap badge R.N.A.S.
2. Officers button. This was the original button also of the R.A.F., but was soon replaced by the more common "smooth" type.
3. Sleeve rank of a Wing Captain.
4. Wing Commander.
5. Squadron Commander. Squadron Commanders of 8 years seniority had a half stripe with half stripe for 8 years seniority.
6. Flight Commander. Also Lieutenant.
7. Flight Sub-

A Flight Lieutenant wore the two rings and albatross with no star above.

RATING BADGES: 8. Airship pilot. 9. Aeroplane and waterplane pilot. 10. Engineer. At the Royal Tournament in 1953, a man wearing the blue uniform of the R.N.A.S. -- jacket, breeches, puttees and peaked cap, with collar and tie -- wore this badge on the right sleeve. 11. Artisan. 12. Chief Armourer. 13. Telegraphist. 14. Physical Training Instructor. Badges for ratings and petty officers were worn in either red or gold on blue.

OFFICERS SHOULDER BOARDS:

These generally were the same as for the other branches of the Navy. At that time, colour stripes were used for the distinction of most branches. The albatross was employed for the R.N.A.S., and it was worn above the top rank ring. The illustrations show the rank of Flight Sub Lieutenant in 15. R.N.A.S., 16. B.N.R., 17. R.N.V.R., and 18. Earlier type device for R.N.V.R. attached to the R.N.A.S.

"RANK AT A GLANCE" tells us that R.N.R. and R.N.V.R. officers attached to the R.N.A.S. wore a gilt "A" with wings on their shoulder straps and sleeves; and that Observers wore the same badges as Pilots, but with the body of the eagle represented by an "O".

From the above therefore, it seems that the badge of a pilot was the eagle (albatross), whereas earlier the pilot badge was stated to be the winged anchor and crown badge. In the absence of samples, this writer would appreciate any information that will serve to clarify this point. In this connection, it should be remembered that the badge of the later Fleet Air Arm pilot was in fact the winged anchor and crown, and that this was not necessarily carried on from the R.N.A.S., although, having regard to naval conservativeness, it probably was so.

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THE SILVER WAR BADGE.

Submitted by Robert Gray.

M.O. 279/1917. H.M. The King has approved the issue of a silver badge to officers who have retired or relinquished their commissions, or, in the case of men, have been discharged on account of age, wounds or sickness, such as would render them unfit for further military service.

A silver badge of the Imperial Cypher, pierced within a circle, the circle bears the words "FOR KING AND EMPIRE-SERVICES RENDERED", each badge will carry a serial number. Badge to be worn only with plain clothes, on the right breast, or on the right lapel of the jacket. It is to be made perfectly clear that this is for those members of the A.I.F. or Naval Expeditionary Forces who may have left the service as a result of wounds or sickness arising from military service, and who are now unfit for active service.

Permanently

If subsequently such officers or soldiers are found fit for active service, or are employed on home duty, the badge is to be handed back, and the endorsement on the discharge certificate cancelled.

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NEW BADGE FOR AIR DESPATCHERS R.A.A.S.C.

A Skill at Arms badge has been approved for Air Despatchers in the Royal Australian Army Service Corps.

It is similar to the badges worn by the Royal Army Service Corps and those in other British Commonwealth countries, the difference being in the corps initial letters.

It will be worn on the left upper arm, in silver and gold embroidery on blue, for mess dress, blue uniform, ceremonial whites, and on the walking out tropical uniform. In khaki winter service dress and battledress, the badge will be in worsted embroidery, blue and gold on khaki.



Those who may wear the badge are those qualified as Despatchers, who have completed 20 operational or 40 training sorties (or a combination of the two), and who requalify in the trade test every 18 months.

Approval for this badge was granted in May 1963.

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DESPATCHES:From Mr Robert Gray.

1. Were the following postwar badges issued with kings crown for Australian army units:-

Royal Australian Artillery Chaplains (Christian)
 Royal Australian Engineers GvIR Dental Corps
 Royal Aust. Army Service Corps GvIR Ordnance Corps
 1st Armoured Regiment.

2. Were regimental buttons issued to the following units in the postwar period:-

3rd Battalion 12th Battalion 13th Battalion
 58/32nd Battalion 7/21 Australian Horse

3. What was the wording of the latest cloth shoulder title of the Educational Corps.

4. Further to your last edition, page 64, the following was a shoulder title worn by the Victorian Railways Volunteer Regiment:

the word "RAILWAYS" in white metal, curved and unpierced.

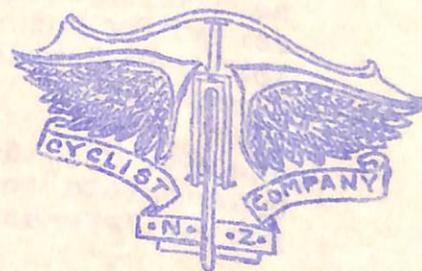
NEW ZEALAND CYCLIST CORPS.

By Robert Gray.

A unit was raised in the first instance on the 5th April 1916, with the title 1st Cyclist Company, and it was raised from members of the N.Z. Mounted Rifles Reinforcements (8 officers and 196 other ranks) who were in camp at Featherston.

The badge worn by the company was made in New Zealand and sold to the troops. With it they wore the metal shoulder title "N.Z.M.R."

On July 22nd 1916, when they were in France, the title was altered to the N.Z. Cyclist Corps, and new badges and shoulder titles were issued in August 1917.



A JAPANESE CUIRASS FROM THE SOUDAN.

By C. Halls.

(Reprinted from KUSH, Vol X. pp 337-340, 1962)

The Battle of Omdurman has been written about, talked and argued over, but generally from the viewpoint of the British staff officers, and although the equipment, numbers and disposition of the Anglo-Egyptian armies have been extremely well documented by such able writers as Sir Winston Churchill, comparatively little research has been carried out by Western scholars on the arms, equipment and organisation of the Dervish forces.

All accounts of the battle mention the distinctive swords, spears and daggers wielded by the Dervish host as they attacked the British lines. But little attention has been paid to the protective clothing, chain mail and armour worn by the Emirs, and it is with one hitherto unremarked metal cuirass that this paper is specifically concerned.

Within a month after the Battle, a number of trophies taken from the field were exhibited and photographed in Cairo; these trophies included the standard of the Khalifa and a peculiar metal cuirass. When the photograph was published in "THE NAVY AND ARMY ILLUSTRATED", the editor of that journal had this to say concerning the cuirass:..... Especially interesting is the armour worn by the Emirs... an iron breastplate which is somewhat similar to, but certainly has never been burnished like, those which can be seen any day encasing the mounted sentries outside the Horse Guards.'

The editor did not realise that what he termed "an iron breastplate" of implied Soudanese workmanship, was in fact a Japanese cuirass!

With Japanese armour, the breast and back plates were generally hinged or laced together at the sides, while corresponding to the "tassets" or thigh protectors of European armour, the Japanese used a number of folding aprons, called "kusadzuri". These aprons hung down both in front and to the rear of the cuirass or do and can be distinctly seen in the published photograph mentioned.

To give some estimate of the age of such armour is difficult, because the Japanese Armourers frequently copied suits of other and earlier periods. But in view of the fact that it was made of iron plates set in horizontal rows, it probably dates from the Edo period (1600-1867) of Japanese history.

Regarding the way in which such a piece could have reached the Soudan, a number of possibilities are worthy of mention.

1. Through the Moslem merchants of Indonesia. It was a well known fact that Arab merchants from Sumatra travelled widely in the seas of South-east Asia, visiting Siam and Cambodia, and that in both these countries there were large numbers of Japanese. In Siam, especially, there was an important settlement, composed mainly of retired samurai (knights) who had fled from their native land after the civil war which resulted in the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1601. Such a piece of armour could well have been procured by some Arab merchant trading with these Japanese settlements, and later the armour could have been traded into Africa via Arabia, or through the Moslem emporia on the coast of East Africa. Also, the importance of the "Hadj" in Moslem trade relations should be borne in mind, as a possible medium through which such a valuable object could have reached Africa, after its owner had sold it in Mecca, to help to defray the costs of his return journey.

Another possible way in which the cuirass could have been obtained by an Arab merchant is through the Japanese mercenaries who were employed with the Dutch forces in the subjection of the East Indian Archipelago.

2. Through the medium of Portuguese traders, The Portuguese had established themselves in the 16th century on the coast of East Africa, in the East Indian Islands, and by the 17th century, were trading with Japan. Thus such a suit of armour could have reached East Africa by a more direct sea route, and subsequently been traded northwards into the Soudan, for it is known that the Soudan had commercial relations with Mogadisco and Zanzibar during the 17th century.

3. Through the "Fertile Crescent". This theory presupposes an almost exclusively overland route from either Siam or Cambodia across the Indian sub-continent and eventually, through the Levant, into Arabia or Africa. Such a theory has much that can be said in its favour, but there are two factors which would mitigate against it.

(a) In the course of such a long overland journey the armour would pass through innumerable middlemen, and it does not seem possible that such a valuable object would have survived the acquisitiveness of the intervening peoples.

(b) If the cuirass had reached Africa by the overland trade route, surely it would not have arrived in the comparatively good condition that it appears in the photograph. The silk lacings attaching the tassets or kusadzuri would in all probability have suffered from the dampness of the tropical climate in those lands of South-east Asia through which it would have passed.

The above theories are attempts to show that trade relations in the 17th century between Africa and South-east Asia could account for the occurrence of a genuine Japanese cuirass of that date in the Soudan.

An alternative theory is that the armour could have been taken to the Soudan in the period 1868-82 by some European who had previously visited Japan or South-east Asia, and there obtained it as a souvenir. According to this theory the cuirass could then have formed part of the loot of the Mahdi's forces in the period 1882-5. But exhaustive research has revealed no European residents living in the area of the opposing armies in the above-mentioned period who had travelled in any of the countries where such a suit of armour could have been obtained. Certainly General Gordon had served in the Far East during the 1850's, but it is known that he had very few personal effects with him in the Soudan, and certainly had no cuirass such as the one illustrated. Another factor mitigating against this theory is that though Japanese armour is comparatively light, it is awkward to transport, and thus it seems improbable that any traveller would include such a piece among his souvenirs. Also the fact that no one identified the suit as being of non-Soudanese workmanship at the time when the photograph was taken shows that those present among the soldiery could not have had any knowledge of Japan. Suits of armour from that country were sometimes assumed to be Chinese, but no such assumption was made in this case. Therefore the fact that this cuirass was accepted as being of Soudanese workmanship, and that the photograph accompanying this paper (unfortunately not able to be reproduced in SABRETTACHE) was taken within two months of the battle of Omdurman, by a photographer on the spot, and the context in which the cuirass appears, all point to the following conclusion.

A Japanese cuirass was in the possession of one of the Khalifa's Emirs, who wore it in action in the battle of Omdurman in 1898, and this cuirass had been traded into the Soudan at some time

between the 17th and late 19th centuries.

NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATION. Reproduced through the courtesy of George Newnes Publishers, the photograph was taken by the photographic firm of G. Lekegian and Company, and was subsequently published in "THE NAVY AND ARMY ILLUSTRATED" VII(1898), p.165. This photograph, hitherto unremarked by students of Islamic military history, is not to be confused with the photograph taken in 1910 by W. Griggs and Son, which appears in the publication "ORIENTAL ARMOUR AT SANDRINGHAM HOUSE".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. The author wishes to acknowledge the help in the preparation of this paper of Dr. A. J. Arkell of the Dept of Egyptology, University College, London; Mr Bretnor of the Japanese sword Society of the United States, Captain Bryce-Morris of the United Services Institution of Western Australia, Mr H. R. Robinson of the Armouries, H. M. Tower of London, and Major General H. A. Saleh, Director of the Military Museum, Cairo.

.....
Clem Sargent

"IN THE SIGHTS".



As the President of the newly-formed A. C. T. Branch of the Society, it is probably an opportune time for me to bob up "in the sights", and to introduce my interests to those members whom I have not met.

The Directory, with its usual brevity, states "collects books, models, arms etc, pertaining to the Peninsular War". It will shortly be amended to add "the Peninsular Veteran in Australia.

The question always put to me is--"why the Peninsular War; isn't there something easier?" My only answer is, how can anyone who has read Sir Arthur Bryant's books on the period not be interested in it? Perhaps, too, as a serving soldier, I live a little too closely to current military matters to enjoy a deep interest in the later years.

Basically, my interest is reading, and I read, and endeavour to collect, anything written on, not only the War itself, but also concerning the times generally. I have formed a small library of representative books, some antiquarian, some modern, and am filling several binders with extracts and articles from many current military publications.

In addition, I have a small collection of prints, some contemporary and some recent, a handful of self-painted models of the period---a few Stadden, Gammage, and Imaill (and wish that I had the time to paint more), and a Military General Service Medal 1793-1814, with bars for Vimiera, Carunna, Salamanca, Pyrenees and Toulouse.

A logical followup to the War, I feel, is to look into the activities of the Peninsular Veteran in Australia, in a rich period of our own history. Consequently, I have recently commenced compiling notes on this aspect, but as yet have not really scratched the surface.

I have resisted very strongly any tendencies to follow other interests or eras, even Waterloo, as I feel that there is quite sufficient between the years 1808-14 to keep me busy.

I do have a word of warning for any other members who may become interested in this era. Make sure that your wife does not! My wife has developed quite an interest in Regency furniture and pottery, and I shudder to think of the result with two collectors in the house!

FOOTNOTE.

Clem is typically modest in referring to his small collection of model soldiers. These are really excellent samples of painting, and are beautifully displayed in a glass fronted frame or cabinet, lined with gathered white silk. The whole effect is most impressive, and is a challenge to those of us who have not yet achieved this standard of display.

FOOTNOTE 2.

Members are shy about being "IN THE SIGHTS". Who will be the next one to write about his interest? This is a good chance to introduce yourself to other members, and the above "blurb" is an excellent model for your guidance.

BOOK REVIEW.

105.

"AUSTRALIAN MILITARY BIBLIOGRAPHY"
compiled by C.E.Dornbusch.

(Hope Farm Press, Cornwallville, New York, U.S.A.)

This bibliography, of which a preliminary notice was included in SABRETACHE V,3, has now been printed, and should be available in Australia shortly. It is Number 6 in a series of military books published by Mr Dornbusch.

Listed are some 550 items, and in addition, another 31 main titles in a separate group of Commonwealth official publications. The main headings in the Table of Contents are:

Australian Colonies; Australia (general, etc); Australia in World War I; Australia in World War II; Occupation of Japan and the Korean Conflict; Addenda; Index; Regimental Index; Official Publications;

It is perhaps a pity, from the point of view of those who are interested in the history of military aviation, that there is scant mention of the Australian Flying Corps, which was an integral part of the Australian Army during World War I. This may, however, be an intentional omission, for the purpose of reservation for a later work dealing with the air forces?

Mr Dornbusch, a fellow-member of our Society, notwithstanding the distance from Australia at which he lives, has done a very creditable job here, and students of the Australian Army will be grateful to him.

A point of interest is that he has chosen as his frontispiece a sketch of one of the oldest buildings at Parramatta, N.S.W., LINDEN HOUSE? which, if sufficient funds can be raised, is to be removed and re-erected by the Royal New South Wales Lancers as a War Memorial Museum.

The book will be obtainable at 42/- (post 1/2) from F.V. Cheshire Pty Ltd., at 338 Little Collins St., MELBOURNE, and at Garema Place, CANBERRA; and from Messrs Berkelouw, 114 King St., SYDNEY.

Four hundred copies have been printed.

FIREARMS LEGISLATION PROPOSED.

Following recent disturbing reports, it was deemed desirable for the N.S.W. Branch to send the following letter to the various interested persons who might be able to influence official opinions:

144 Chetwood Rd.,
GUILDFORD, N.S.W.
30/11/62.

Dear Sir,

This Branch is concerned at recent reports that moves are afoot to provide for the compulsory registration of antique firearms. Concern is based on the following:-

- (a) Damage to antiques, resulting in reduction or loss of value;
- (b) Futility of registration of such "weapons";
- (c) Suspicion of motives underlying the proposals;
- and (d) Infringement of the rights of the individual, with no consequent benefit to the community.

It is understood that the definition of an antique firearm is accepted as "a weapon which is muzzle-loading, or firing a cartridge which is other than rim- or centre-cap primed, or pin-fire."

On behalf of my members, I register a strong protest at any possible action so retrograde as the compulsory registration of such collectors' items.

1. DAMAGE:

Registration would require the recording of serial numbers. Most antique firearms are not serially numbered, and it would follow that serial numbers would require to be added for the purpose of registration. Such vandalism would ruin the originality of the weapon, and would seriously reduce its value, both in the financial and the historical sense. One certain result would be that collectors throughout the world would be able to say of such defaced weapons "This weapon was defaced by a New South Wales Government in the year 19...".

2. FUTILITY:

Registration would serve little practical purpose. It would not provide control. The daily incidence of deaths, maiming and damage caused by registered motor vehicles in New South Wales is well known. Antique firearms are no longer practical as weapons. This is the reason for the evolution of more modern types. They are no more lethal than the bow and arrow, the knife, the axe, or a blunt instrument ably wielded. They are not more lethal than the bow and arrow, the knife, the axe, or a blunt instrument ably wielded. Even in the hands of an expert, the actions of loading, priming and cocking are time-consuming, and mitigate against the use of

