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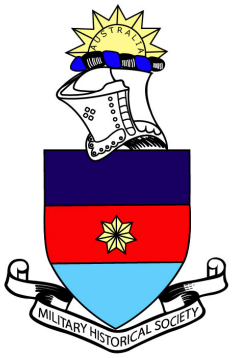

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Clarence Tasman Mummery MC

Beverley Bragge

Clarence Tasman Mummery, known as Tas, was born 4 November 1894 at Zeehan; the third of Isabelle McCreadie (nee Dods) and Christopher Stephen Mummery's four children. Tas was born during the six years his parents lived in Tasmania. When the family returned to the mainland they lived in Melbourne for a short time, then for some years his father managed the South Defiance Mine at Bullumwaal in Gippsland. Nothing is known of his school days although he probably started school at Bullumwaal.

Prior to 1914, the family moved to Wonthaggi, where Tas worked as a clerk at the state mine after leaving school. He also joined the 48th Infantry. War was declared on 4 August 1914 and recruiting for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) officially opened on 14 August. Nineteen year old Tas was one of the thousands of men who came forward to enlist during those first few days. Three days later, Colonel Bolton, Commanding Officer of the 8th Battalion reported to Victoria Barracks in St. Kilda Road only to be confronted by an amazing scene[1].

> I found a large number of men assembled in the Barrack square who had been enlisted and posted to the various battalions. General Bridges (the commander of the 1st Australian Division) and Colonel McCoy were present and the former officer addressed the nuclei of the Brigade and then handed over to their battalion commanders. I found in my command there were between 200-300 men; all had their few personal belongings in small suit cases, swag and even sugar bags and the look of a fine hardy looking crowd.[2]

The new recruits were formed into several company-sized groups, then the motley group of suit case-carrying civilians and uniformed men, commenced the 20 kilometre march to the new camp at Broadmeadows. From Victoria Barracks, the long columns of men crossed over Princes Bridge, left along Flinders Street and along Elizabeth Street, past Melbourne University and on to Broadmeadows. Once at Broadmeadows the men erected tents for themselves and for those that were still to be enlisted. Each man was issued with his blankets and sufficient straw to fill a palliasse. The 8th Battalion were located at the eastern end of the camp near the Broadmeadows Railway Station.

Tas, being one of the first to enlist had the number 59; signing the "*attestation* Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad" on 18 August and the "Oath to be taken by persons being enlisted" on 25 August at Broadmeadows. The date he took the oath, 25 August 1914, was his official date of enlistment. Tas passed his medical the same day and was described as; age – 19 years 10 months; height – 6 feet 2 inches; weight – 167 pounds; chest measurement 37 – 39 inches; complexion – dark; eyes – brown; hair – dk brown; religion – Presbyterian. Tas was assigned to 'H' company of the 8th Battalion as a private.[3]

Broadmeadows to Egypt

The majority of the battalion came from farming and country areas, so most could shoot and ride a horse. The 8th Battalion, having its origins in Ballarat, also had a large number of gold miners amongst its members. Over the next two months their training was intensive, Col Bolton noted:

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1 For the history of the 8th Battalion I have relied upon Ron Austin. *Cobbers in khaki: the history of the 8th Battalion 1914-1919*, Slouch Hat Publications, 1997 see http://www.slouch-hat.com.au/ Material from Cobbers in khaki is quoted with permission of Ron Austin.

2 ibid. p. 6

3 H Company in Australian battalions only existed until the AIF reached Egypt when the eight infantry company structure were reorganised into the four infanty company structure used by the British.

> it was an inspiring sight to see the whole camp crowded with recruit squads and their drill instructors going through the elementary training. Training was also necessarily hurried, (but the) rank and file displayed remarkable aptitude." Training was not without its problems, and how to impose discipline on the independent Australian soldier was to cause problems, Col Bolton wrote; "So much has been said and written about the lack of discipline in the Australian soldier...what NOT TO DO with a free born Australian whose discipline and obedience can only be secured by treating him as a man all the time, and having mutual consideration and respect throughout all ranks produces the very strongest and finest form of discipline under all conditions.

On the morning of 18 October, the battalion was awoken early, breakfasted, marched to the Broadmeadows Railway Station and by 9 am commenced boarding troopship A24 *SS Benalla* at Port Melbourne. Once loaded with its cargo of soldiers, the *Benalla* moved out to anchor in the Bay, waiting for the other ships to load; it was not until mid afternoon the following day the convoy set off on the six day journey to Albany, Western Australia, where they anchored in the Sound for several days, awaiting the arrival of other convey vessels. On the 29th the *Benalla* was allowed to proceed the three kilometres to the jetty at Albany and the men welcomed the opportunity to go ashore and stretch their legs by going on a route march. Led by the battalion band, they marched out into the countryside; when a halt was called they picked wildflowers and made garlands to hang around their necks. It must have been some sight to see as they marched back to the *Benalla.*

On 21 November, Tas has written to his parents describing the journey to them:

> When we left the heads you couldn't see any escort, but when we got to about Kangaroo Island, we could see we had the *Melbourne* with us. Nothing eventful happened on our trip to Albany. We arrived at Albany on 24th October and anchored in King George's sound. From then on it was quite exciting to see the transports arriving until the harbour was crowded with transports and warships. We had with us at Albany, the HMAS *Melbourne*, *Sydney*, French warships, Japanese and one warship from the China fleet *Minata*. It was just as well we had a shore escort as I will tell you later. Well on the 30th October we left Albany (Sunday morning) for Colombo. The *Oronto* was the first to move out, and we were next. It was a great sight to see them moving out in single line.[4]

During the next week, Tas celebrated his 20th birthday, and on board they ran a sweep for the Melbourne Cup, Tas continues in his letter;

> Well we are up to the 4th Nov, my 20th birthday, which was an unique one, inasmuch as it was celebrated on the high seas. I was thinking of home as I suppose you were also of me. The birthday cake was conspicuous by its absence, although that didn't matter...
>
> When the *Osterboy* passed us we asked her who won the Melbourne Cup, and she told us Kingsburgh. That was the first time we heard who won it. On board they had a sweep up, so they were anxious to know. On the 8th Nov, we had the bad luck to loose a fellow off the *Euripides*. I do not know what the cause of death was, but they buried him at sea. When a man dies they pull out of line, and bury them there. There have been 6 deaths so far, none on our ship yet. The health on board is good.

On 9 November there was great excitement, when HMAS *Sydney* took off in a westerly direction, Tas wrote:

> I was on the bridge and I noticed that all the boats were up very close together, much closer than they generally are, and I thought there was something up. When I went on I asked the Capt. the reason and he told me that they had sighted the *Emden*, near Kieling Island, and that the Sydney was going to attack her as soon as an opportunity occurred. We were all naturally excited. A peculiar incident occurred that same night. It was raining pretty hard and I had just got into bed after coming off, and a tremendous clap of thunder was heard, this waking the fellows and the first conclusion they jumped to

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4 The letters written by Tas quoted in the article are held at the Australian War Memorial, 2DRL548

> was that the *Emden* was bombarding us, and they all made a rush for their life belts, when they were enlightened. Well the next morning the fuss began, although we could not see anything, we were getting some information by wireless. I will give you the type written information we got – "Sydney started at 7 am. At 9.30 she had sighted the enemy, sailing at full speed she was able to get within her range in 20 minutes. At the time she signalled the chase, she was steering north. At 10.40 the Sydney was engaging the enemy briskly, and at 11.10 am, the latter beached herself to avoid sinking. Her fore mast and funnels were down but the flag was still flying. Sydney then went after *Emden's* colliu, (coal) caught her, took crew prisoner and sunk her. The casualties on the *Emden* were 100 men and 18 officers killed and wounded, and 2 seriously wounded on the Sydney and 13 others. It was a great bit of work on her part, and I suppose there was great excitement in Australia over it, and still since the Sydney being one of our escorts.

A few days later there was great merriment on board for the crossing of the Equator, Colonel Bolton agreed to a request by the men to perform the traditional ceremony of Crossing the Line, in hindsight he probably regretted that decision. The men, and Tas among them certainly enjoyed the hilarity of the occasion, which Tas tells his parents about:

> We were given a holiday on the 12th Nov, to celebrate the crossing of the line, but we didn't actually cross the line till 1 am 12th Nov. After dinner a tarpaulin was made into a tank, and filled with salt water. Then father Neptune arrived followed by his physician and you were taken up to him. The 10th had 1 lemonade bottle and went through the process of examining you and he would give you a patt, which was a haricot bean. Then you were passed on to the Barber, who plastered your face with some mixture of butter, soap and paint, and then he got his razor which was a sharpened piece of wood and scraped it off. Then you were thrown into this tank and ducked two or three times.

The soldiers had taken the traditional occasion of ducking those who had not crossed 'the line' before a little too far and included the officers as well. Colonel Bolter, who had taken the occasion to settle down in a deck chair and read a book was disturbed to see his officers being chased by the men; his order to the bugler to sound 'Attention' had little effect. When he found his officers sheltering, soaking wet in the hospital, he decided to go on deck to quell the activities and was not amused when a soldier grabbed him and called out "Let us duck the Colonel". He was rescued and promptly cut the ropes on the tarpaulin and dispersed the water. He later remarked, "This really was the only anxious moment I ever had concerning the discipline of the 8th Battalion."

The convoy was anchored at Colombo by 15 November, but the men did not go ashore, Tas said that they had a good look at the city through their telescopes. The troops had all assumed that they were going to England, but their final destination was not announced until 28 November, then there was great excitement on board when it was found to be Egypt. By 2 December the *Benalla* was slowly steaming up the Suez Canal, providing the troops with a constant display of village life. The convoy anchored in the Alexandria Harbour on 6 December, two days later the *Benalla* berthed and the 8th Battalion were immediately transferred to a special troop train and taken on the 160 kilometre journey across the Nile Delta to Cairo. It was pouring rain and 8 o'clock at night when the troops arrived in Cairo and were given a cup of cocoa and a cheese bun instead of an evening meal. They then started the 20 kilometre tram journey followed by a 3 kilometre march to Mena camp. The logistics of moving 4000 men on the local tram system was overwhelming. It was early morning before the 8th Battalion arrived at camp and when the sun rose, the tops of the three pyramids could be seen in the distance; it must have been a sight they never forgot.

Several months were spent at Mena camp while they continued their training, which included route marches in the sand. Over the weeks the emphasis in their training changed from drill to tactics. It was not all training, the troops did have some time off and were allowed to go into Cairo, when Tas wrote on 19 February to his family he described a visit to a mosque (misspelt as mosk), which he was obviously very impressed:

> We had our weekly holiday yesterday and we went into Cairo and visited some of the Mosks which are the places where the Mohammedans go to pray ... all the interior is covered with gorgeous carpets ...(there)... 6 large silver candle sticks about 6 feet high to describe them is impossible but it is beyond realization the same mosk you can see where Napoleon bombarded it but with his small guns couldn't do much harm as it is 330 feet high and very thick in the wall about 100 feet high there is a cannon ball still in it. ... We then made back to Cairo had tea and a look around and came home quite satisfied with our days outing which cost us 10 piastres equal to 2/- so we did well.

Also on the same day Tas has written to his brother Percy.

> Well we arrived at the Cairo Rly Stn at 3 o'clock ... we had to wait till 6 o'clock. The trip took us 5 hrs and we got to our destination quite tired and instead of tents we bivouacked.
>
> It was mighty cold I can tell you. The next morning A & B Coy were warned to hold themselves in readiness and were not allowed to leave the lines but then luck was out and they weren't wanted. Our turn was next and our luck was in and we were wanted in the trenches the next morning at the next stn ... The trenches we were in were on the other side of the canal, and quite close to the Canal. We could see the boats going past and they used to throw over stuff to us and we would swim in after them
>
> How are you getting on now. Do hope you are getting on well with fondest love from your loving brother. Tas
>
> I am in a new camp in charge of the Sigs. (signals) in that camp and it is 'D' Coy, 8th Bn AIF."

Percy never received this letter; he had died three weeks before on 19 January from tubercular peritonitis.

Tas was describing their first taste of action. When word had been received at the end of January, that the Turks were marching across the Sinai Desert with the aim of capturing the Suez Canal reinforcements were ordered to protect the Canal around Ismailia. The 8th and 7th Battalions were selected to go; the enemy was quickly repulsed, which unfortunately reinforced the commanders' view of the Turkish soldier as poor fighting value, a view that was to have dire consequences when the two armies next met at the Dardanelle's.

C & D Companies were sent to the canal where they took over some of the trenches previously occupied by Indian troops. While C Company crossed over the Canal on 7 February and took up positions in the trenches on the eastern bank, D Company (which Tas belonged to) was railed north to El Ferdan for a similar task. Both companies returned on Ismailia on 10 February.

Gallipoli

Tas was promoted lance corporal on 23 March and towards the end of March or early April, word went around the camp that they were soon to leave Mena and that there may be some fighting. It was 4 April before they left the camp, and on the 8th they boarded the 8,000-ton ship *Clan Macgillivray* at Alexandria for the three day journey to Lemnos Island. Because of heavy seas, it was the 17th before the men could go ashore. While they waited each man was issued with 200 rounds of ammunition and four days iron rations, consisting of bully beef, tea, sugar and biscuits. In anticipation of the forthcoming landing, some of the men spent their time filling the machine-gun belts with ammunition,

For 20 days the men were more or less confined to the ship, they had been practising clambering down into the ship's lifeboats and rowing to shore, where they leaped out and vigorously attacked an imaginary enemy. Although they still didn't know where they were going, their excitement mounted as they prepared for their initiation into battle. On the afternoon of 24 April, the invasion fleet set sail at 5.30 pm and anchored off Imbros Island that evening. During the day soldiers lined up at the grindstone to have their bayonets sharpened. During the night officers circulated around the decks checking equipment and the men had a hot meal of bully beef and

biscuits. Some men caught a few hours sleep, while others spent these hours writing letters home, fully conscious of the importance of the coming day.

At 3.30 am on 25 April, the 8th Battalion on board the *Clan Macgillivray,* were aroused and given a hot breakfast of bully beef stew, then half an hour later the order to 'fall in on deck' was given. Already they could hear shelling from accompanying battleships. The men were transferred to a British destroyer that came alongside. When it had steamed close to shore the troops climbed into barges. Soon after 7 am half of the 8th Battalion landed on the western edge of what is now known as Anzac Cove. They were joined by the remaining half of the battalion at 9 am and by 10 am the battalion had dug a series of trenches along Bolton's Ridge whose northern edge joined the plateau of Lone Pine.

Tas had been at Gallipoli less than a month when he was promoted on 19 May to corporal. It was not until mid July, some ten weeks after landing at Anzac Cove that the 8th Battalion had a break. Arrangements were made for the battalion to go to Imbros Island, some 25 kilometres due west of Anzac Cove. Apart from an hour a day on camp fatigues there was little else the men could do but swim and walk around the island, giving them a much needed rest.

To assist the men's letter writing home postcards were available, these had boxes the men could tick to indicate their situation. On 4 August Tas has written a brief letter;

> My Dear Mother
>
> As the mail closed tomorrow I thought I would drop you a short note instead of those cards they give us.
> There is a mail in I believe but so far haven't got it yet, but may get it this afternoon.
> We are still in the same place but expect to get a move on in a couple of days, so trust I will get through it alright, but if not you don't want to worry over it...
> News is very scarce but when this next attack comes off perhaps I'll have some then.
> Please remember me to all with fondest love from your loving son.
> Tas xxxxx
> Goodbye
>
> Please excuse brevity, but a little is better than nothing.

Tas sounds tired and from the fact that he has added the word 'Goodbye' at the end of his letter, realizes that his fate could well be the same as that of his many mates he has seen killed during the past three months. The attack that Tas has referred to was the second offensive in which the Australian were to play an important but supporting role[5]

> By 3rd August, large numbers of British troops had been landed at Anzac in readiness for the offensive. As the gullies above Anzac Cove filled with fresh troops each night, it became very obvious to the men of the 8th Battalion that a major attack was soon to occur. In preparation for the attack, the 8th Battalion extended its perimeter from Courtney's Post up to Brown's Dip. In order to find sufficient men to hold the 'thin red line' the battalion cooks were brought into the line as riflemen. On 6th August, all members of the 8th Battalion were issued with white calico patches which they sewed onto the back and arm of their tunics. This precaution was taken in case of a general advance, as it would assist those providing supporting fire to determine friend from foe.

Lone Pine between 6 and 9 August was a major one in Australian military history, although the 8th were not directly involved they spent most of the time 'standing to' in support. On the 8 August, 300 shells landed on the firing line. Shell damaged trench parapets were being constantly rebuilt. Sleep over those nights was impossible because of the shell and rifle fire. The

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5 Austin op.cit. p.95.

casualties of the Lone Pine offensive were great, the battalion lost at least 50 men killed and another 100 wounded.

On 15 August 1915 Tas was wounded, receiving a bomb wound to the forehead; he was evacuated on the HS *Gascon* to Malta. This was his farewell to Gallipoli, for the next four months he was hospitalised in Malta. While he was convalescing in Malta, he wrote to his brother Willie (Bill):

> I suppose mother has told you I met with a slight injury, given to me by Mr. Turk, I was firing over the top of the trench at a big fat Turk, and just as I fired one of their fellows must have spotted me and he threw a bomb over at me, and it burst right under my rifle, blowing my bayonet to pieces, and I got the pieces in my head just above the right eye. It cut my right eyebrow right across, and of course bled a lot. Well I was in charge of the post I was on so had to get relieved and get down to the dressing stn and get it dressed. I slept there all night, and the next morning I was sent down to the boat, and from there I was put onto a hospital ship and we got filled up and left for Malta. The *Gascon* was the name of the hospital ship, and we were well looked after by the nurses.

He also told Willie that three days before he was wounded he had been promoted to Sergent.

When he was discharged 'fit for active service' on 2 December, he embarked on the HMT *Nile* for Egypt and spent the next month at Ghezireh at the Australian Overseas Base. It was not until 15 January 1916 that he has rejoined the battalion at Tel-el-Kebir. This was a time of major restructuring for the AIF, with the 8th Battalion being split down the middle with one remaining with the battalion and the other forming the 60th Battalion. Tas stayed with the 8th Battalion and on 20 February was commissioned Second Lieutenant.

The Western Front

At the end of March 1916, the battalion embarked on the HMT *Megantic* bound for Marseilles and the Western Front. Then there was a 65 hour train ride across France in carriages designed to carry horses, then an 12 kilometre march to billets between Steenwreck and Bailleul. There their training continued with the introduction of new tactics and weapons. Tas was chosen by Colonel Brand to lead the newly formed Scout Platoon, which had the role of undertaking special trench fighting tasks. At the end of April they were at Fleurbaix and had their first encounter with the enemy when the Germans shelled D Company billets. Fleurbaix was considered a quiet sector compared to some of the more volatile sectors on the Western Front.

Tas had ten days leave from late May to early June; then in July the Battalion was marched to Albert only to find that there were not enough billets for the 8th Battalion. After a hot lunch they were marched out to Brickfield where they bivouacked with the 7th Battalion. Even though it was summer the night was still very cold. The following day orders were received for the attack on Pozieres. During the day the officers visited the trenches the men would be occupying during the opening stages of the attack. Then under cover of darkness on 22 July, the battalion marched out to Sausage Valley and spent the rest of the night in old German trenches. Next day they were moved to trenches south west of the ruined village of Pozieres. D Company had the task of carrying up the water, ammunition and rations for the forward battalions.

Despite the lack of maps, information and confusing orders Pozieres was taken. Pozieres was the 8th Battalion baptism of fire on the Western Front where the artillery fire was much heavier and more sustained than Gallipoli. The battalion emerged from the fighting with experience and credit for their achievement. The price had been a high with 81 killed, 266 wounded and a further 23 missing, later presumed killed.

Tas was among several members who distinguished themselves during the first attack on Pozieres. On 12 August he was promoted lieutenant. The fighting continued, and on the night of

19 August, Tas, with Second Lieutenant Goodwin ventured into no man's land to look for wounded comrades. They found badly wounded Pte George Grove about seven meters from the enemy parapet. They took turns to piggyback him to the trenches. Both were awarded the Military Cross for their bravery.

Tas was recommended twice for the Military Cross during the Battle of Pozieres; on the 31 July 1916 for "conspicuous gallantry at Pozieres" and again on the 25 August, 1916 for "conspicuous gallantry in rescuing wounded at Pozieres". On 9 September the recommendations were combined and the Military Cross was promulgated in the *London Gazette* on 14 November 1916,. It was republished in the *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* on 19 April 1917. The published citation read:

> Lt. Clarence Tasman Mummery, Inf.
>
> For conspicuous gallantry during operations. He has set a fine example and displayed an utter contempt of danger. On one occasion, he assisted another officer to bring in wounded men from near the enemy's parapet under heavy fire.

The 8th Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Division's 19th Battalion on 21 August. The 2nd Division attacked towards the German stronghold at Mouquet Farm, north of Pozieres, where on 26 August, Tas' cousin Tom Mummery of the 24th Battalion was killed.

In September and October, 1st Anzac Corps saw service in the Ypres sector in Belgium before returning to the Somme where they spent the winter. The next twelve months was a continuous round of fighting on the Western Front; when the Battalion was not fighting, their training continued, interspersed with inter Battalion sports, football matches and the occasional concert, all to keep the men's morale up. As the weather deteriorated and the long months of winter set in, keeping men's morale up must have been difficult. The trenches became impassable with mud and snow and the disease 'trench foot' was a major concern. One of Tas' comrades Private Robert Harrowfield wrote:

> In the bitter 1916 winter, we saw many bodies well preserved by the snow ... In winter every man's feet took a lot of punishment despite our foot-wear and sox, but most of us escaped 'Trench feet' disease, thanks to whale oil which we frequently applied. A few neglectful ones were 'crimed' and lost pay. It was pitiful to see a real victim. Because of abnormal swelling, and bags took the place of boots. Toenails became discoloured. In advance stages, feet gave off a putrefying odour, and amputation was sometimes necessary.[6]

At the end of February 1917 Tas was hospitalised with the mumps. He must have had very mixed feelings about being hospitalised; being dry and comfortable while his mates were still living under very adverse conditions in the trenches. When he returned to duty on 16 March, 1917 the 8th Battalion was at Dernancourt.

For a short while in June the normal training was relaxed, there were inter-unit competitions and winter clothing was withdrawn. Mid June saw the resumption of normal training and their move to new billets at Bresle. The whole unit was required to attend a lecture by Archdeacon Ward and Lieutenant Colonel Butler on "The national, moral and physical aspects of VD". A problem that plagued the AIF during its stay in France.

Almost a year had passed since the terrible fighting at Pozieres and on 8 July, a party of 60 Pozieres veterans, led by Tas marched the 30 kilometres back to Pozieres for the unveiling of a memorial. With other 1st Division units, the 8th assembled along the Amiens-Albert road on 12 July to cheer King George V. They spent five days in the Bray Sur Somme training area and

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6 quoted in Austin op.cit p.137.

participated in a competition to find the best-trained platoon. The holiday atmosphere was short lived and by the end of July the battalion was camped at Hondeghem. The unit moved closer to Flanders on 8 August.

By early September all was in readiness for the resumption of the Third Battle of Ypres which had commenced on 31 July. The 1st Anzac Corps with the 1st and 2nd Australian Divisions was to attack through Polygon and Glencorse Woods. On 19 September the 8th Battalion assembled at Zillebeke; they had rested for almost two months and were eager to assume the fight against the Germans and gain some ground. Despite the rain the battle over the next hours was one of their most successful. Tas was among the several officers listed as having acted with great valour. Their success was not without cost, the battalion lost 59 men killed; their highest single day loss during the war.

On 23 September the battalion moved to Dickebusch (now Dikkebus). On the 27 September, Tas was recommended for a bar to the Military Cross for "great gallantry and devotion to duty during the attack and setting a splendid example throughout". The medal was promulgated in the *London Gazette* on 27 October 1917 and republished in the *Commonwealth Gazette*, 14 February 1918. The citation was published five months later on 18 March 1918 and read:

> Lt. Clarence Tasman Mummery, M.C., Inf.
>
> For conspicuous gallantly and devotion to duty as Adjutant of his battalion during an attack. He did excellent work in getting his battalion into the assembly position. Though wounded early in the attack, he refused to go back, but remained with the battalion, assisting and encouraging all ranks. He led a party against an enemy strong point and captured the garrison. He set a magnificent example throughout.

His wounds were not serious and he proceeded on leave until 10 October. When Tas rejoined the unit, they were at Renninghelst. On the 17th the battalion moved to Halifax Camp located near Dickebusch. Two days later the battalion was preparing to go back into the front line. Next day equipment was checked and parties were sent forward to reconnoitre the forward area. The Battalion War Diary records on 20 October 1917 that "Lieut. C.T. Mummery, MC killed while carrying out reconnaissance of forward area".[7] Percy Lay described Mummery as "about the finest officer in the AIF. His death caused quite a gloom over the whole battalion."[8]

Tas' Record of Service indicates that he was east of Ypres and west of the village of Zonnebeke when killed. He was buried where he fell, along with eight or nine others and their graves marked with wooden crosses. This ground was later lost to the Germans; when the war was over the search for graves began, but Tas' grave was never found. His name appears on the Menin Gate (panel 7) in Ypres, which lists the names of those who fell in Belgium and have no known grave.

Tas' name appears on the war memorial in Wonthaggi; on the Honour Roll at the Presbyterian Church in Epping, on his brother Percy's grave in the Melbourne General Cemetery, Presbyterian section M, plot 1219; and on the Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour (panel 53) in Canberra.

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7 AWM4 8th Battalion War Diary, 20 October 1917.

8 Austin op. cit. p.170. Captain Percy Lay was the most decorated member of the 8th Battalion. During his service on the Western Front he was awarded the Military Cross, the Distinguished Conduct Medal, the Military Medal and the French Croix de Guerre.

A PRISON OF OUR OWN
The AIF Detention Barracks 1917-1919

Graham Wilson[1]

On 1 November 1917, Captain Griffiths of the AIF arrived at HM Prison Lewes, in the town of Lewes, near Brighton on the Sussex coast, to take control of the prison. Having signed over the prison from HM Prison Service to the AIF, Captain Griffiths then formally raised the AIF Detention Barracks, an establishment that was to operate for almost the next two years.[2]

Background

Discipline was always a problem for the AIF. While I do not believe that the AIF was as ill-disciplined as myth and legend would have it, certainly the force did have a discipline problem.[3] The ill-discipline of the AIF arose from a combination of factors. Firstly, the fact that the force sprang up almost overnight, an "instant army" in fact, meant that not as much time as possible could be devoted to the inculcation of traditional standards of discipline. At least not at first. Certainly, once the AIF had settled into training in Egypt, strenuous efforts were made on the part of the Australian authorities to instil higher standards of discipline in the force. The second factor led on from the first, namely, a scarcity of experienced officers and, even more critical, NCO's with the experience necessary to instil discipline into the force. Thirdly, it is undeniable that a significant percentage of "bad characters" enlisted, for one reason or another, into the AIF in its early days. These characters, the "King's hard bargain," of course had a detrimental effect on the discipline of the AIF. And of course, what must never be forgotten is the relative lack of sophistication of a significant proportion of the AIF. Young (and even not so young) Australians, away from home for the first times in their lives, and exposed at a very early point to the "fleshpots" of the East, of course kicked over the traces.

The combination of all of the above factors led to a situation in Egypt in the earliest days of the AIF where discipline was less than satisfactory. Even Bean, who was always loath to record anything detrimental to the image of the AIF, could not avoid mentioning discipline problems. As he himself stated, by the end of 1914 "matters were coming to a point where discipline in the AIF must either be upheld or abandoned." He then goes on to record the "ultimate sanction" decided upon by Bridges, namely the ignominious return to Australia of men deemed unsuitable for service. To quote Bean, this remained "until after the Battle of Pozières, the most dreaded instrument of discipline among Australian soldiers."[4]

But, not every man committing a military offence could be sent back to Australia, either before or after Pozières. Discipline was tightened up considerably prior to the landings at Gallipoli and remained of lesser importance throughout the campaign on the Peninsular. Following the return of the troops to Egypt, however, and especially during the period of incredible expansion of the AIF

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1 This paper was presented to the 2004 MHSA Biennial Seminar at Albury.

2 AWM 224, MSS 573 Pt 1 & Pt 2 General History of the AIF Detention Barrack Lewes 1 November 1917 – 30 September 1919

3 But, then again, so did every other army in the Great War, in fact, every army since armies were formed. To take it further, there never has been, is not and never will be an army that has not had, currently has or will have in the future a "discipline problem." The AIF, however, has suffered over the years from some "bad press" in this area, both at home and overseas. The myth of the indiscipline of the AIF does not actually stand up to rigid examination.

4 Bean. Vol. I, pp. 128–129.

that followed Gallipoli, discipline again deteriorated and became a cause of concern for AIF authorities. It was at this time that the AIF was forced to establish a Punishment Compound at Abassia for the incarceration of soldiers sentenced to Field Punishment. One of the major transgressions for which soldiers could be sentenced was the contraction of venereal disease. It is therefore not surprising that the Punishment Compound was established in the grounds of the infectious diseases (i.e. VD) hospital at Abassia.

With the transfer of the bulk of the AIF to the UK, France and Belgium, discipline, and its enforcement, again became a priority. A major problem for the British authorities that is widely mentioned was the supposed fact that the Australians, not just the rank and file but also the commanders up to the highest level, were opposed to the British Army's Field Punishment system. Wahlert (with very little evidence) records that even Birdwood, every inch a British officer, believed that Field Punishments No. 1 and No. 2 were inappropriate for Australians.[5] But the fact is that Field Punishment was being awarded to members of the AIF from 1915. By early 1916 Field Punishment was widely used by both the AIF and the NZEF. To administer this lower level of punishment, the Anzac Field Punishment Compound was set up at Moascar in Egypt, while in Europe, the 1st Anzac Field Punishment Compound was set up in the vicinity of I ANZAC Corps HQ. This latter Compound moved with the Corps HQ, being set up in some substantial building, often a French jail, in the vicinity of the HQ.[6] The field punishment compounds were to operate until the end of the war.

But the field punishment compounds, as severe as they were, were only for relatively minor, "first time" offenders. For offenders sentenced for more serious offences, or for recidivists, the next step was incarceration in a detention barrack. Prior to November 1917, members of the AIF sentenced to periods of detention beyond 28 days (on the Continent), or beyond 14 days (in the UK), were transferred to a detention barrack. If the sentenced soldier was serving on the Continent, then he was returned to the UK, under escort, for incarceration. Apart from Aldershot and Colchester, which were purpose built British Army prisons, all of the establishments were civil prisons, taken over in part or in whole for the duration of the war.[7]

Towards an AIF Detention Barrack

The system put in place required that all soldiers sentenced to a period of detention in a detention barrack were delivered to the custody of the Assistant Provost Marshall (APM), Headquarters AIF Depots in the UK, located at Tidworth. Soldiers could be committed to detention either by findings of unit proceedings by the unit commanding officer (CO's award) or by the decision of a District Court Martial. As a general rule, only soldiers sentenced to periods of detention in excess of 14 days and up to 2 years were committed to the detention barracks.[8] Once the APM had taken custody of a prisoner or group of prisoners, he then contacted all of the Detention Barracks, either by telephone or by telegraph, and requested accommodation. Lack of sufficient accommodation more often than not meant that groups of prisoners had to be broken up and dispersed to several detention barracks. This was both costly in terms of manpower (for escorts) and rail fares, as well as a huge administrative inconvenience. In a letter to the HQ AIF Depots UK dated 31 January 1917, the APM (Lt Col J. Williams) notes that for the month of January, a total of 395 Australian soldiers were dispatched to detention barracks throughout the UK. Each man dispatched required an escort

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5 Wahlert, p.22.

6 Ibid., p.74.

7 AWM10, 4301/11/9 – letter from CO Anzac Provost Corps to HQ AIF Depots UK, 31 January 1917.

8 AWM 224, MSS 573 Pt 1 General History of the AIF Detention Barrack, Lewes, 1.11. 1917 to 30.9.1919, p.2.

of a minimum of one NCO and two private soldiers. Due to the distance of some of the detention barracks from Tidworth (the home of the APM), often the prisoner(s) and escort would arrive at the detention barrack too late to have the prisoner(s) handed over that day. In this case, the escort was required to make arrangements for the overnight custody of the prisoner(s) with the local civil police, plus of course accommodation for the escort itself.[9] An interesting table provided by the APM to HQ Anzac Depots UK at the end of January 1917 gives the actual cost, in rail fares, for the transfer of prisoners for the month. This table is shown below.

From	To	No. of Prisoners	Individual Cost	Total Cost
Tidworth	Aldershot	5	6/2	£1/10/10
"	Chelmsford	66	1/10½	£39/3/9
"	Devizes	108	3/1	£16/13/0
"	Devonport	32	17/10½	£28/11/5
"	Gosport	7	5/8½	£1/19/11½
"	Parkhurst	73	10/6½	£62/9/6½
"	Pembroke Docks	8	11/6½	£4/12/4
"	Stafford	6	14/10½	£4/9/3
"	Wandsworth	90	8/6	£63/5/0
	Total	**395**	**Total**	**£222/15/1**

Table 1: Cost of transporting AIF prisoners to detention barracks, January 1917

Note that this cost is for the prisoners only. No capitation was figured for escorts. Pembroke Docks is an interesting entry. This was a naval prison, a fact that indicates the problem of accommodating military prisoners in the UK was so acute that army prisoners had to overflow occasionally into naval prisons.

Another problem noted by the AIF authorities was that of men sentenced to periods of detention who were also suffering from venereal disease. All AIF members suffering from VD were admitted to the 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital at Bulford. While most of the men at Bulford were not military criminals per se, a number of the inmates were in fact soldiers under sentence of detention. These men were sent to Bulford simply because there was not one British Army detention barracks with the facilities to treat VD. As a consequence, up until November 1917, at any given time a proportion of the inmates of 1ADH were soldiers under sentence. This was viewed as unsatisfactory by the AIF for a number of reasons. Firstly, the presence of detainees at the hospital required the permanent presence of a large guard of 1 officer and 78 other ranks. Secondly, since Bulford was a hospital, not a prison, many of the detainees took the opportunity to escape when their medical condition was cured or almost cured. Finally, because there were no proper facilities for discipline and retraining at Bulford, detainees under treatment there escaped most of the rigours of their punishment while at the hospital.[10]

By early 1917, the situation had deteriorated to the stage where the AIF authorities responsible for administering discipline at last reached the inescapable conclusion that the only solution was for the AIF to establish its own detention barrack. At the end of January, Lt Col Williams wrote to HQ AIF Depots UK outlining the problems listed above. He begged "respectfully to point out that if a Detention Barrack having accommodation of from 500 to 600 could be allotted to the A.I.F., it would be a great convenience and saving of expense."[11] This letter was forwarded from HQ AIF

9 AWM 10, 4301/11/9, CO Anzac Provost Corps letter, op. cit.

10 Ibid., CO Anzac Provost Corps letter dated 13 February 1917.

11 Ibid., CO Anzac Provost Corps letter dated 31 January 1917, op. cit.

Depots UK to AIF Administrative HQ in London with the strongest endorsement on 4 February 1917.[12]

On 13 June 1917, Williams followed up his original letter of 31 January with a second letter pointing out the problems entailed in committing detainees suffering from VD to 1 ADH at Bulford.[13] A further letter of 19 June reiterated the difficulties and expense of transferring prisoners from Tidworth to detention barracks throughout the UK. This letter also discussed, yet again, the problems entailed in committing detainees with VD to Bulford. It offered the opinion that the establishment of a dedicated AIF Detention Barrack to hold all detainees, including those suffering from VD, would release over 200 fit men, currently employed on guard and sentry duties in the UK, for service at the front.[14] Two days later, Major General McKay, Commander AIF Depots UK, wrote to GOC Southern Command summarizing Williams' letters and requesting allocation of facilities for the establishment of an AIF Detention Barrack.[15]

While all this exchange of letters had been going on, AIF Administrative HQ had not been idle. Some time in March 1917 (the source does not specify the exact date), Colonel Griffiths, CO AIF HQ London, had an interview with the Director of Personnel Services at the War Office.[16] The War Office had viewed the request favourably, but required that the AIF arrange for a formal request to come from the Australian Government. Accordingly, at the request of AIF Administrative HQ, the following telegram, dated 7 September 1917, was sent from Sir Ronald Craufurd Munro Ferguson, Governor General of the Commonwealth:

> Representations have been made that a separate detention barracks for the Australian Imperial Force only desirable. Government approves and will be glad if suitable place can be allotted to be staffed by Australian personnel. It is desired that sentence of imprisonment be served there in lieu of civil gaols.[17]

Unfortunately, while everyone seemed to think the establishment of an AIF Detention Barrack a good idea, finding a suitable location presented something of a problem. The AIF had originally requested Wandsworth Prison.[18] This request was rejected by the War Office, although no reason is given.[19] The matter then seemed to fall into abeyance until September. It is possible that the telegram from the Governor General provided fresh impetus. Whatever the case may be, on 19 September, the War Office wrote to the AIF offering Dorchester Prison and Cambridge Prison as the site for a Detention Barrack. This offer was rejected because the two prisons combined could not offer adequate accommodation. Dorchester offered space for 145 while Cambridge could accommodate 125. This total of 270 was well short of the AIF's stated monthly average of detainees (320).[20] Additionally, the AIF was not keen on the idea of spreading its detainees between two sites. The whole idea in the first place was to put all of the detainees into one location.

The War Office next offered Gloucester Prison with an offer of taking any overflow into Devizes.[21] The AIF rejected this offer also, even when the War Office amended the offer to Gloucester PLUS

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12 Ibid., GOC AIF Depots UK letter dated 4 February 1917.
13 Ibid., CO Anzac Provost Corps letter dated 13 June 1917.
14 Ibid., CO Anzac Provost Corps letter dated 19 June 1917.
15 Ibid., COMD AIF Depots UK letter dated 21 June 1917.
16 WO23/General Number/2756 (A.G.3.) of 25 August 1917.
17 AWM 10, 4301/11/9, op. cit.
18 ibid., AIF HQ letter A.4301/11/4 of 21 March 1917.
19 Ibid., WO23/General Number/3736 (A.G.3.) of 26 March 1917.
20 Ibid., AIF Administrative HQ Signal to HQ AIF Depots UK Ca 4301/11/9 TG/JS of 19 September 1917.
21 Ibid., WO23/General Number/2756 (A.G.3.) of 23 September 1917.

Devizes! Gloucester offered spaces for 210 detainees, while Devizes had a total capacity of 160, but was still operating as both a civil prison and a British Army Detention Barrack, so the full 160 spaces would not have been available. As AIF Administrative HQ argued in an un-referenced letter of 24 September: "GLOUCESTER is shown as holding 210 on this list: as our requirements are 350-400, our probable overflow would swamp DEVIZES (160)."[22] Instead of Gloucester and Devizes, the AIF now requested HM Prison Lewes as the site for the AIF Detention Barrack. The War Office accepted the AIF's counter offer with reservations, dependent on the agreement of the Prison Commissioners. With Lewes now the probable site of the AIF Detention Barrack, the staff process was put in train to gazette the prison as a detention barrack, authorize the prison establishment and appoint personnel to the establishment.

The proposed establishment was forwarded HQ AIF in the first week of October.[23] The establishment approved is shown at Table 2.

	Offrs	WO	Sgts	Cpls	L/Cpls	Ptes	Total	Remarks
Commandant	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Asst/Commandant	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Medical Officer	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	
Sergeant Major	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	WO Class 1
Q.M. Sergeant	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	
Staff Sergeants	-	-	4	-	-	-	4	
Sergeants	-	-	11	-	-	-	11	
Corporals	-	-	-	11(a)	-	-	11	(a) Includes 1 Cpl Cook
Lance Corporals	-	-	-	-	5	-	5	
Clerks	-	-	1(b)	-	1	2	4	(b) Sergeant Clerk
Batmen	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	
Total	**3**	**1**	17	**11**	**6**	**4**	**42**	

Table 2: Establishment of AIF Detention Barrack 4 October 1917

This establishment was 20% less than the authorized establishment for a similar British Army barrack. The establishment would be amended later with the addition of an Assistant Medical Officer. Later still, a Dental Unit (No. 13 Dental Unit), consisting of one officer and three other ranks would be added to the establishment.

HQ AIF Depots UK forwarded the names of two officers to fill the appointments of Commandant and Assistant Commandant. The nomination of Captain G.L. Phillips, late 2nd Battalion, was accepted without hesitation. Captain Phillips had enlisted in the 2nd Battalion in 1914 and had reached the rank of sergeant when the battalion went ashore at Gallipoli. As part of a unit reorganization, he was appointed Second Lieutenant in the field at Gallipoli on 8 June 1915.[24] He was promoted to Lieutenant in June 1916 and to Captain on 1 January 1917. Badly wounded in France, he was eventually permanently medically downgraded and posted to the Permanent Supernumerary List. At the time of his appointment as Commandant of the Detention Barrack, he was serving as Adjutant of No.1 Command Depot, Perham Downs. An officer of great experience, as well as maturity and sound common sense, Phillips would prove an ideal choice as Commandant.

Unfortunately, the same could not be said of the officer nominated as Assistant Commandant. Lieutenant H.W. Shaw was, like Phillips, on the Supernumerary List. Unlike Phillips, however,

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22 Ibid., unreferenced AIF Administrative HQ letter of 24 September 1917.

23 Ibid., C.R. A.I.F. 5001 (A) of 4 October 1917.

24 Belford, Captain Walter C., M.A., 1940 Legs Eleven. Being the Story of the 11th Battalion (A.I.F.) in the Great War of 1914-1919, Imperial Printing Company, Perth, p.56. Also various editions of AIF Staff and Regimental List.

Shaw does not seem to have been gainfully employed. On rejecting Shaw's nomination, the Deputy Adjutant General of the AIF, Colonel Dodds, noted that:

> Lieut. SHAW was court martialled in France in early 1916, and the sentence was forfeiture of seniority prior to 1.4.16. He was again court-martialled in June last, in England, on a charge of drunkenness and again the sentence was forfeiture of seniority. In view of these facts, it is considered undesirable that he be appointed to the staff of any such formation as the Detention Barracks.[25]

Apparently, Colonel Dodds was not prepared in this case to follow the old dictum of "set a thief to watch a thief!" In the end, Lieutenant Percy Paterson, 11th Battalion, was appointed to the position of Assistant Commandant. Paterson had been appointed Second Lieutenant in the 11th Battalion (16th Reinforcements) on 25 October 1915.[26] Promoted to Lieutenant on 21 November 1916, he was badly wounded leading a patrol of the battalion on 13 April 1917.[27] Placed on the Supernumerary List following convalescence, he was duly appointed Assistant Commandant of the Detention Barrack.

On 16 October 1917, the Prison Commission officially agreed to the handing over of HMP Lewes for use as the AIF Detention Barrack. The Prison Commissioners advised that all cells and buildings would be handed over, except for the "Debtors Wing" (24 cells), which would be retained for civil use. The Commissioners advised that the only items that would be removed from the prison would be clothing. All other equipment and bedding would be left in place.[28] On 26 October, Brigadier General C.H. Foot, DA&QMG AIF Depots UK, wrote to the War Office advising of AIF progress in taking over HMP Lewes. Foot advised that Captain Phillips would take over the prison as Commandant AIF Detention Barrack on 1 November, 1917. He advised that the accommodation at Lewes totalled 360 cells, less the Debtors Wing (24 cells), leaving 336. He stated that GOC AIF intended to set aside 60 cells for detainees suffering from VD and who were currently held at 1 ADH, Bulford, leaving 276 cells available for detainees. The letter advised that as at 26 October 1917, there were 332 AIF member undergoing detention in the UK.

Foot requested that the 57 AIF detainees held at Devizes remain there to complete their sentences, thus leaving 275 detainees for transfer to Lewes.[29] Interestingly, an unreferenced note to file appended to the AIF letter officially rejecting the offer of Gloucester Prison indicates that the AIF had wanted Lewes all along![30] While there is no explanation in the records as to why the AIF had not come straight out and asked for Lewes in the first place, the AIF's reasons for wanting Lewes are quite clearly stated. First of all it was a new prison – or at least, "new-ish." While Lewes had been built in 1853, Gloucester Prison, which the British authorities had offered to the AIF, had been built 1782 and most other major British prisons were of similar antiquity. The second reason Lewes was preferred was that it was big enough to hold the average number of AIF detainees while at the same time allowing 60 cells to be set aside specifically for detainees suffering from VD. Thirdly, the prison had excellent drains and sewers, a not totally minor consideration when deciding on a site for the concentrated treatment of men suffering from VD. Finally, the rail route from Tidworth/Salisbury Plain to Lewes ran through Portsmouth, rather than through London (as would

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25 DAG HQ AIF letter 25/116 of 14 October 1917.

26 Taylor, F.W. and Cusack C.A., 1942 Nulli Secundus A History of the Second Battalion A.I.F. 1914-1919, no publisher, p.351.

27 Ibid., p.429.

28 Prison Commission letter HQ 18878/22 M.X. of 16 October 1917.

29 CR. AIF. 26122(A) of 26 October 1917 letter from DA&QMG AIF Depots UK to War Office.

30 AIF Administrative HQ letter Ab: 4301/11/9 of 26 September 1916 - unreferenced note attached to letter on file.

have been the case for, say, Gloucester).[31] This last was a very real security consideration, as many men under escort from the APM to detention barracks attempted to escape custody. Lewes offered a distinct advantage in this way by bypassing London, because:

a. since the Tidworth to Lewes line was a direct line there was no need to change trains thus avoiding the major risk factor for prisoner escape;[32]
b. Portsmouth was a far smaller city than London and thus, even if a prisoner managed to escape custody during a station stop, he would have less chance of losing himself in the crowd; and
c. Portsmouth was a major military and naval town with a very strong military and naval police presence throughout the metropolitan area.

HM Prison Lewes

The prison selected as the site of the AIF Detention Barrack, HM Prison Lewes, is located in the town of Lewes, the county town of the County of Sussex, overlooking the sea in the south east of England. Lewes is a site of great antiquity, a major battle was fought on the site of the prison in 1264. The prison was first built in 1853 and throughout its history has served mainly as a "local prison." That is, it was a prison designed to served a local prison area and was generally for short term prisoners and remand prisoners.[33] The prison buildings are located on high ground in some small hills rising from the south coast of England, near Newhaven. The sea is visible from the main prison building and in 1917 the locale was described as healthy, with an equable climate.[34]

As noted previously, when the Prison Commissioners offered to hand over Lewes, they offered to leave all bedding, plant and equipment in place, taking only the uniforms. The AIF accepted this offer gladly. The Commissioners also offered to leave in place a number of the prison staff, the understanding being that any staff accepted would have their wages and allowances met by the AIF. The staff members who were offered for retention (and the projected cost to the AIF) are shown at the table below.

Name	Rank	Pay	War Bonus	Allowances
Hudson, Rev. H.H	Chaplain	£160 per annum	5/- per week	£52 per annum
Roff, C.A.	Steward	£240 per annum	Nil	£35.15.0 per annum
Cheetham, J.	Clerk & Schoolmaster	£2.8.0 per week	7/- per week	6/- per week
Giddens, F.W.	Engineer	£2.3.6 per week	7/- per week	6/- per week
Dine, R.	Principal Warder	£1.8.0 per week	7/- per week	6/- per week
Newman, A.W.L.	Warder	£1.12.0 per week	8/- per week	6/- per week
Jackson, H.	Warder Gatekeeper	£1.11.7 per week	8/- per week	Quarters
Tunnell, A.	Warder	£1.11.4 per week	7/9 per week	6/- per week
Webb, S.	Warder	£1.12.0 per week	8/- per week	6/- per week

Table 3: HMP Lewes Staff offered for retention October 1917[35]

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31 Ibid.

32 During the First World War, the UK was served by a number of private or semi-private rail companies, each of whom owned and jealously guarded "rights of way." Companies would not permit the rolling stock of other companies to travel on their lines and it was necessary, therefore, on long journeys to change trains when switching from one company owned line to that of another. The four major rail nexuses at the time were Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester and London with various rail networks terminating in these cities and requiring train changes when switching networks.

33 http:www.hmprisonservice.gov.uk/prisons/default.asp- "HM Prison Establishments, Lewes."

34 General History of the AIF Detention Barrack, Lewes, 1.11. 1917 to 30.9.1919, p.1.

35 AIF Administrative HQ letter Ab: 4301/11/9, op. cit., Schedule A.

Ultimately, the AIF only retained Roff (Steward), Giddens (Engineer), Newman (Warder Cook and Baker), Jackson (Warder Gatekeeper) and Tunnell (Instructor). Roff was retained as he was the stores officer or "QM" of the prison and was familiar with the stores layout and capacity. Giddens was familiar with all aspects of engineering maintenance in the prison. Newman was thoroughly familiar with the ovens at the prison, which were said to be of a peculiar type. Jackson was retained to provide a 24 hour "gate presence." Finally, Tunnell was retained to provide instruction to military detainees in the manufacture of mail and coal bags.[36]

Prior to the AIF taking over HMP Lewes, the prison was being used to hold Sinn Fein prisoners and these prisoners apparently left the prison in a very dirty and unhygienic condition when they were transferred. The AIF therefore arranged for the entire prison to be thoroughly cleaned prior to its occupation.[37]

The AIF Detention Barrack

The agreed date for the AIF to take over HMP Lewes and establish the AIF Detention Barrack was 1 November 1917. Prior to that date, a fair amount of work still had to be done. On 18 October, the War Office set the arrangement firmly in place with a letter to AIF Administrative HQ confirming that HM Prison Lewes was to be taken over by the AIF on 1 November 1917. The letter went on to direct the AIF to issue instructions that "all Australian soldiers sentenced to detention after that date to be committed thereto." Members of the AIF who were currently under detention and whose sentences expired after 1 December 1917 were to be transferred to Lewes as soon as possible. Although it is not stated in the letter, presumably, AIF prisoners currently undergoing detention in British Army Detention Barracks, and whose sentences expired before 1 December 1917, were to remain in place to complete their sentences. The letter also stated that industrial work for men under sentence would be supplied by the Prison Commissioners. [38] Appended to the letter was list of requirements for the prison to comply with in order to abide by British Army regulations dealing with detention barracks.

On 19 October, Captain Phillips and six enlisted personnel proceeded to Aldershot for a one week course of instruction at the Military Prison. At Aldershot, Phillips and his staff were instructed by members of the Military Prison Staff Corps in the administration and management of a military detention barrack. Incidentally, all of the enlisted personnel posted to the AIF Detention Barrack, with the exception of the small administrative, quartermaster and catering element, were members of the Anzac Provost Corps.[39] Meanwhile, on 24 October 1917, HMP Lewes was declared by the Secretary of State for War as a Military Detention Barrack.[40]

The AIF Detention Barrack was officially established on 1 November 1917, when Captain Phillips, Lieutenant Paterson and 13 enlisted personnel arrived to take over HMP Lewes. The authority for the establishment of the detention barrack was the declaration by the Secretary of State for War of 24 October 1917 and AIF Order 995 of 30 October 1917. [41] The first week of November was taken up with completing the cleaning of the prison, receiving staff, integrating the civilian prison staff taken on strength and finalizing arrangements for the reception of prisoners. On 1 November, the

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36 HQ AIF Depots UK DAIF/A/1173 of 24 January 1918 – letter relating to War Bonuses.

37 General History, op. cit., p.2.

38 WO Letter 23/General Number/2756 (A.G.3.) of 18 October 1917.

39 HQ AIF Ab: 4301/11/9 of 17 October 1917.

40 WO 23/General Number/2756 (A.G.3.) of 24 October 1917.

41 General History, op. cit., p.1. See also AWM 224 MSS 575, AIF Detention Barrack Lewes, Commandant's Journal.

day the AIF Detention Barrack was established, the Senior Supply Officer HQ AIF arrived to make arrangements with the British Army for the Detention Barrack to draw supplies from OC Supply Depot, Brighton. The next day the DA&QMG HQ AIF Depots UK arrived to officially take over stores and supplies from the UK Home Office. On that day 11 additional staff also arrived. Fourteen more staff members marched in on 3 and 4 November, bringing the establishment almost to full strength. On 5 November 7 Australian Army Medical Corps personnel marched in from 1 ADH, Bulford, along with the Senior Medical Officer, Captain Frank Macky, AAMC. Also arriving on that day was Staff Sergeant Baes, ASC, who was detached from No. 1 Command Depot to assist in setting up the Orderly Room. [42] The SMO, Macky, had been appointed Captain (AAMC) on 27 September 1915 and had spent all of his military service in the UK. His first posting had been to 1 Australian General Hospital, to which he was appointed at the beginning of January 1916. In June 1917, he was transferred from 1 AGH to 1 ADH, Bulford and was still serving with 1 ADH when he was appointed SMO AIF Detention Barrack.[43] The fact that Macky had been serving at Bulford when appointed to Lewes, and was therefore experienced in the treatment of VD cases, indicates the seriousness with which the AIF took the problem of VD.

Finally, on 8 November 1917, the first prisoners marched in to the AIF Detention Barrack. These were 17 AIF detainees transferred from the Woking Detention Barrack. The numbers of detainees held in the barrack would steadily increase throughout November and December until, by the end of December, the AIF Detention Barrack held 246 prisoners (plus 3 held in "safe custody"). [44]

With the first admissions, the regime of punishment and training began. As with the British Army, periods in detention barracks were viewed by the AIF as an opportunity to turn a bad soldier into a good soldier. Only soldiers sentenced to periods ranging from 14 days to two years were admitted to the AIF Detention Barrack. Members of the AIF sentenced to periods longer than two years, sentenced to detention "in hard labour" or sentenced for purely civil offences were committed to civil prisons. The "not less than 14 days" rule was not rigidly adhered to as the records indicate that five soldiers sentenced to less than 14 days were committed to the AIF Detention Barracks.[45] Although the records give no details, it is likely that these soldiers were serving locally, perhaps even on the staff of the barrack, and were thus incarcerated at Lewes as a matter of convenience. The total list of sentences of soldiers, drawn from the general history, is shown in Table 4.

From 8 November 1917 until 30 September 1919, the average monthly admission rate for the AIF Detention Barrack was 159. The highest number admitted in one month was 271, in November 1917. This latter number makes sense when it is recognised that November 1917 was the month when the AIF was transferring most of its soldiers under detention from British Army detention barracks to the AIF Detention Barrack.

The regime at Lewes was, like the British Army's establishments, designed to rehabilitate soldiers under detention, rather than simply punish them. While the regime of Lewes and like establishments of the time can be viewed from our contemporary perspective as harsh, British (and Australian) military penal practice of the time was well ahead of general civilian thinking. Even as late as the First World War, detention in a civilian prison was largely viewed simply as punishment. Men (and women) were incarcerated in a civil prison, subjected to savage, even brutal discipline, employed on menial, almost demeaning industrial tasks, and given little or no incentive or chance to

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42 Commandant's Journal, op. cit.

43 General History, op. cit., p.1. See also Commandant's Journal and AIF Staff and Regimental List of Officers (various editions 1916 and 1917).

44 General History, op. cit., p.1. See also Commandant's Journal.

45 General History, op. cit., p.2.

rehabilitate themselves. Military prisoners, however, especially in the latter years of the Great War, when the manpower situation for the BEF and AIF was becoming critical, were viewed as a valuable resource, to be rehabilitated and retrained to the point where they were once again useful soldiers. Thus, the routine at Lewes was one of hard military training, under strict discipline, rather than the mindless brutalities of the previous century (such as hours of "shot drill") designed to break a soldier, rather than make him. Various specific aspects of the regime and routine at Lewes are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Commanding Officer's Awards	**1917**	**1918**	**1919 (to 30 Sep)**	**Total**
7 days and under	Nil	1	4	5
14 days & over 7 days	1	9	19	29
21 days & over 14 days	11	65	46	122
28 days & over 21 days	21	147	160	328
TOTALS	**33**	**222**	**229**	**484**
District Courts Martial Awards				
14 days & over 7 days	Nil	Nil	1	1
28 days & over 14 days	13	58	10	81
42 days & over 28 days	38	189	58	285
84 days & over 42 days	82	383	109	574
168 days & over 84 days	138	396	181	715
365 days & over 168 days	126	338	228	692
18 months & over 365 days	18	54	34	106
2 years & over 18 months	12	42	53	107
TOTALS	**427**	**1460**	**674**	**2561**
GRAND TOTALS	**460**	**1682**	**903**	**3045**

Table 4: Sentences of Soldiers Committed to AIF Detention Barrack, Lewes

Admission. Soldiers sentenced to a period of detention, either by their CO or by a DCM, were handed into the custody of the APM who arranged transport, under escort, to Lewes. Detainees were received from Monday to Saturday and were required to arrive between 0800 and 1400, no admissions being accepted after the latter time.[46] The reason for this was that the admission routine was reasonably lengthy, entailing copious paperwork followed by a bath and delousing (if necessary), withdrawal of clothing and personal items, a detailed medical examination, issue of prison denims, induction briefing and allocation to cell. This routine and time stricture appears to have been common to all of the detention barracks in the UK. Escorts arriving after 1400 were required to make arrangements to lodge their prisoners overnight in the civilian police lock up in town (and, of course, make what arrangements they could for their own accommodation).

Training. All "A" Class detainees, i.e. all detainees of the highest physical classification, spent the majority of their time at Lewes undergoing refresher training designed to bring them to a standard where they could be despatched as reinforcements to the Front immediately on completion of their sentences. If a man was classified as "C" Class on admission, for instance if he was suffering from VD, he was not put into the training program, being required only to undertake (with medical clearance) light drill and PT, graduating to "A" Class training on completion of medical treatment. Detainees were trained in gas, Lewis Gun, musketry and bombing, as well as PT, bayonet fighting and drill.[47] As early as the 27th of November 1917, less than a month after the Detention Barrack had been established, the Eastern Command Gas Officer had visited the barrack to discuss

46 General History, op. cit., p.2.

47 Ibid, p.7.

arrangements for gas training. Lewes indented through HQ AIF Depots UK for gas masks and a NCO from the barrack was despatched to the Eastern Command Gas School to attend a two day gas instructor's course. Arrangements were made for a gas officer to visit the barrack to administer gas tests as required.[48] In addition to the standard training, detainees of specialist branches – signals, engineer, artillery, machine gun, etc. – were put through refresher courses specific to their own branch of the service. To facilitate this aspect of training, selected NCO's of the barrack staff were detached to British and AIF schools to receive the cross training necessary. Up to the time of the Armistice, detainees at Lewes successfully completed the following courses of instruction:

Gas Course (Eastern Command Gas Certificate)	856
Lewis Gun Course	86
Musketry Course	800
Bombing Course	800

The total number of men classed as fully trained and drafted overseas for service prior to the Armistice was 1105. To this figure must be added those fully trained soldiers (figures unknown unfortunately) who were serving short sentences and who were transferred to Unit Training Depots or Training Battalions on expiration of their sentences.[49]

Discipline. While the records are somewhat unrevealing and, of course, reflect the "party line", it would appear that discipline at Lewes was strict without being harsh or brutal, and was very effective.[50] The Commandant noted that "few breaches of the rules have been committed which were not dealt with at Orderly Room." While this indicates that at least a few offences were committed by detainees that required court martial action, it also shows that most infractions of barrack discipline were of a level minor enough to be dealt with "in house." As with current military corrective practice, discipline at Lewes revolved around the conduct of the individual detainee and was based on a points system. Prisoners were awarded or deducted points based on their conduct and behaviour. Increased points resulted in increased privileges, e.g. more visits to the library, additional tobacco, etc. Conversely, breaches of discipline resulted in loss of points and thus loss of privileges. Conduct points also counted towards remission. Every soldier sentenced to detention for a period of 28 days or more was entitled to a maximum remission of one sixth of his sentence, calculated from the date of the award. Since remission was based on both good conduct and application to training, this was a great incentive to discipline.[51]

The only major incident recorded anywhere is the attempted suicide of No. 7356 Private B. Lindsay on 23 March 1919. Private Lindsay attempted suicide with a razor, presumably of the straight variety, but was unsuccessful. He was removed to No. 2 Eastern General Hospital and no other details are available.[52]

Unfortunately, as noted above, all detail on discipline at Lewes is based on official records. It has not proved possible to date to locate any record left by a detainee. Such a record, while possibly biased, would be invaluable in providing a balanced view. It is almost inconceivable that there would have been no incidents of brutality or violence towards prisoners at Lewes during the almost two years of its operations. On the other hand, the absence of any record of official complaint or enquiry, especially from Australia, indicates that in the main the conduct of the AIF Detention Barrack was on the whole correct and above blame.

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48 Commandant's Journal, op. cit.

49 General History, op. cit., p.7.

50 Ibid. See also Commandant's Journal.

51 General History, op. cit., p.7.

52 Commandant's Journal, op. cit., entry for 23 March 1919.

Interestingly, while following much the same logic as I have, Glenn Wahlert, in his work on the Australian military police and their relationship with the Australian soldier *(The Other Enemy?)*, reaches a different conclusion. At the end of his chapter on the Anzac Provost Corps as jailers he notes:

> The Anzac Provost Corps commanded and manned the AIF detention and field punishment barracks throughout the war. As such they were not only responsible for the detection and prevention of military offences but were also the soldiers' jailers. It is unlikely, considering the harsh attitude of the authorities to the purpose of field punishment and detention, that compassionate military police were chosen to staff these compounds. More likely the barracks staff attracted some of the more invidious members of the provost corps, men who had little affinity with the soldiers' lot and often had never served at the front.[53]

Wahlert's conclusions are not referenced to any source and ignore totally the extreme care taken in choosing the Commandant and Assistant Commandant for the AIF Detention Barrack. Without any factual record to go on, I believe I am just as correct in saying that it is likely that as much care was taken in choosing the enlisted members of the barrack staff as was taken in choosing the officers!

Medical. In the general history of Lewes, it is stated that the "general health of the Institution has been good." The medical staff of one medical officer and seven AAMC other ranks, later supplemented by an assistant medical officer, was more than sufficient to serve the needs of the Detention Barrack. Although the original establishment of the Detention Barrack allowed for one medical officer, the high number of VD patients detained, with the concomitant need for the SMO to concentrate his efforts in that area, saw the requirement for an Assistant MO. As a consequence, the establishment was amended at the end of November 1917 to permit the attachment of a second MO.[54] William Leonard Millett was appointed Captain, AAMC (AIF) on 30 March 1917 and the AIF list for April of that year shows him attached to 11th Field Ambulance.[55] Transferred to 3rd Australian General Hospital in October 1917, he was posted to HQ AIF Depots UK in November and detached to the AIF Detention Barrack in November.[56] Between them, the two MO's and the enlisted AAMC staff handled all of the medical work for Lewes. Ordinary medical cases up to minor surgery were handled in the Infirmary at the Detention Barrack. More serious cases were transferred to the 2nd Eastern General Hospital at Brighton and then returned to detention when convalescent.[57]

The only major medical problem encountered at Lewes appears to have been a severe outbreak of influenza in June 1918. The SMO was at a loss to explain the cause of this outbreak. The first case dealt with was that of a soldier who had been in detention for over six months and had been occupying a single cell the entire time. During the period of the epidemic, over 40% of the staff were affected, as opposed to 9% of the detainees. One detainee developed pneumonia on the second day of his sickness and died later in the 2nd Eastern General Hospital.[58] Unfortunately, to date it has not proved possible to identify this soldier.

Apart from this one outbreak, however, the general health situation at Lewes was good. Daily sick parades were held every day from Monday to Saturday, with a medical orderly on duty in the Infirmary on Sundays and one of the MO's on call out of hours.[59] The SMO recorded that the

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53 Wahlert, op. cit., p.78.

54 General History, op. cit., p.2.

55 Ibid. See also AIF Staff and Regimental List of Officers, April 1917, p.129.

56 General History, op. cit., p.2.

57 Ibid., p.3.

58 Ibid., pp.3-4.

59 Ibid., p.6.

average number of men attending daily sick parade was 15. Percentage wise, the figure for daily sick parades was 4% of the total soldiers under sentence and 0.8% of staff.[60]

Venereal Disease. The Female Wing ("F" Wing) of HMP Lewes, the smaller of the two wings, was taken over for use as a VD hospital, with a capacity of 60 patients, each in a separate cell. In addition to the cells in F Wing, the wing held sufficient rooms to provide for an Infirmary, Operating Room, "606" Department and an Irrigation Room capable of accommodating 9 patients at a time.[61] Both the Commandant and the SMO reported enthusiastically on the advantages of treating VD infected soldiers under sentence at the AIF Detention Barrack, rather than at 1 ADH, Bulford as had previously been the case. The SMO was enthusiastic about the ease of treatment and almost total elimination of the risk of cross or self re-infection afforded by the individual isolation of prisoners. For his part, the Commandant appreciated the ease of control and minimal staff required to exercise such control, as well as the chance to gainfully employ men under treatment, which had not been the case at Bulford.[62]

From November 1917 until the end September 1919, 552 soldiers were treated Lewes for gonorrhoea, 246 for syphilis and 360 for scabies.[63] Statistically, the SMO reported that:

a. the average daily number of soldiers in detention was 260;
b. the average daily number of patients suffering from VD in detention was 28.7;
c. the average daily percentage of prisoners suffering from VD was 11.04%; and
d. the percentage of admissions to detention suffering from VD was 21.84%.[64]

The discrepancy between c. and d. above was explained by the fact that a large number of men committed to detention suffering from VD were certified cured prior to the completion of their sentences. It seems, therefore, that there was a rather high percentage incidence of VD amongst men committed to detention.

The Commandant noted in his journal regular visits by ADMS HQ AIF Depots UK during which inspections were carried out of the Detention Barrack and VD Hospital, always with favourable results.[65]

It is worth mentioning here, in a slightly wider context, that over the years there has been a great deal of misunderstanding and even misrepresentation on the subject of VD in the AIF, and the attitude of the authorities to those men who contracted the disease. It is certainly true that in the early days of the war men suffering from VD were treated as outright criminals and, at first, sent home in disgrace. By 1916, however, while contraction of VD remained a chargeable offence, the disease itself had been largely "decriminalised" in the AIF. For example, originally, any member of the AIF who contracted VD had his pay stopped until such time as he was certified cured. If

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60 Ibid., p.4 and p.6.

61 Ibid., p.4. "606" Department. The first truly effective treatment for VD, especially syphilis, was discovered by the German, Paul Ehrlich, in 1910. Ehrlich had been experimenting on syphilitic rats, using various compounds of arsenic, since 1908. As the 606th compound he tried was the one that worked (or seemed to work!), he called it Compound 606 or Number 606 and the course of treatment prescribed (twice daily intramuscular or intravenous injections) was called the "606 Treatment." Although he later called his compound "Salvarsan" ("I save") the name "Compound 606" stuck, as did the terms "606 Treatment" and "606 Department." Ehrlich, incidentally, is the person credited with inventing the term "silver bullet" in describing his discovery.

62 Ibid., pp.4-5.

63 Ibid., p.4.

64 Ibid., p.5.

65 Commandant's Journal, various dates.

discharged from the AIF as medically unfit while still classed as suffering from VD, deferred pay would only be calculated up to the day of diagnosis of VD. Similarly, all allotments to spouses and next of kin ceased. By 1916, however, this rule had been amended to the point where a soldier committed to a dermatological hospital was entitled to payment of 1/- per day plus full deferred pay and all allotments continued.[66] Certainly the regime at 1st Australian Dermatological Hospital, Bulford, was far stricter, even severe, than at other AIF medical establishments, but there were very good reasons for this as far as the AIF was concerned. The first was that they felt that it was for the men's own good, i.e. the authorities were determined to effect a cure of infected men, whether they wanted it or not (it is unlikely that there were many who did not). Secondly, diagnosis of VD meant a soldier was automatically categorized to "C" Class standard and was unemployable. The AIF authorities were determined to get these men cured and back into the line as soon as possible. There is a belief, however, that all men who contracted VD during the war were actually imprisoned. Glenn Wahlert, for example, makes it quite clear he believes that all men who contracted VD were committed to the AIF Detention Barrack Wahlert then goes on to assert that prisoners suffering from VD "trained and worked alongside the other prisoners for the duration of their sentence."[67] This totally ignores the sophisticated treatment regime in place at Lewes, outlined above. What is most inexcusable in Wahlert's statements is that he drew on some of the same primary sources as I have drawn on and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he has deliberately misrepresented the facts for reasons of his own.

Dental. The first visit by a dental officer to the AIF Detention Barrack was on 28 November 1917, when ADMS (D) HQ AIF Depots UK visited to assess the needs of the barrack. Arrangements were made at that time for regular visits by a dental officer and assistants to carry out dental treatment.[68] Weekly visits were made, generally on a Wednesday, up until April 1918.[69] This effort, while appreciated, was not, however, totally satisfactory. The problem was twofold. Firstly, the dental health of the AIF was always a problem and many men were rendered unfit by dental problems. This problem was just as marked at the AIF Detention Barrack as anywhere else in the AIF. Secondly, various elements of the VD treatment at the Detention Barrack created oral or dental problems that needed to be attended to both immediately and constantly. As a result of this, the decision was made to attach a Dental Unit permanently to the Detention Barrack. Accordingly, on 14 April 1918 No. 13 Dental Unit was sent to Lewes.[70] No. 13 DU was commanded by Captain Henry Creswell Doidge Taunton, AAMC (Dental Reserve). Taunton had been appointed Lieutenant, AAMC Reserve on 10 December 1915. Appointed Honorary Lieutenant AAMC (AIF) on 17 April 1916, he was posted to command No. 46 DU (11th Field Ambulance). Promoted to Captain on 17 April 1917 he remained in command of No. 46 DU until the end of the year, at which time he was transferred to command of No. 13 DU, then at No. 1 Command Depot, Tidworth.[71]

At Lewes, Taunton and his small unit were kept very busy. From the time of the attachment of No. 13 DU to the Detention Barrack, all prisoners admitted to the barrack were rendered dentally fit during the course of their sentences.[72] One of the main problems encountered by the unit was the

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66 Mullett, op. cit., pp.372-373.

67 Wahlert, op. cit., p.76.

68 Ibid., entry for 28 November 1917.

69 Ibid., various.

70 General History, op. cit., p.6. See also War Diary of ADS AIF Depots UK, "Report for the Month of May 1918 on Dental Services."

71 AIF Staff and Regimental List of Officers, January 1916, May 1917, June 1917, January 1918.

72 General History, op. cit., p.6. Also War Diary of ADS AIF Depots UK, Appendix 3 to "Six Monthly Report of the Operations of the Various Dental Units Attached to AIF Depots in UK – June 1918."

treatment of men suffering from VD. While scaling, extractions and treatment for gingivitis could be carried out immediately on admission, mechanical work and fillings had to wait until the prisoner had finished his "606 Course." Men undergoing treatment for VD were also examined regularly for signs of mercurial stomatitis, a virulent, destructive and potentially fatal affliction, brought on by acute allergy to mercury (bear in mind that dilute mercury nitrate in ointment form was still used to treat VD lesions). On detection of the condition, the man was treated at once and apparently no severe cases were reported. One of the medical scourges of the war was Vincent's Disease, an acute or recurrent form of gingivitis which, if untreated, can lead to gum destruction. One of the main causes of the spread of Vincent's Disease (also known as Trench Mouth) was the sharing of eating and drinking utensils. The fact that each man at Lewes occupied his own cell and used only his own eating and drinking utensils resulted in very few cases of the disease being presented. By the time of the Armistice, 1,048 men held under sentence at Lewes had been rendered dentally fit. This represented the equivalent of one complete, full strength infantry battalion returned to the line.[73]

Messing. Diets according to the medical classification of the soldiers concerned were issued in accordance with the ration scales approved for the AIF. The daily ration scale for an "A" Class soldier is listed in Table 5.

Commodity	Amount	Scale of Issue	Remarks
Bread	1¼ lb (579 gm)	Per man per day	Or biscuit 1 lb (450 gm)
Fresh meat	1½ lb (680 gm)	"	Or preserved meat, salt meat or salt fish 1 lb
Coffee	¾ oz (21 gm)	"	
Pepper	1/32 oz (0.89 gm)	"	
Mixed vegetables (fresh)	8 oz (275 gm)	"	Or dried vegetables 2 oz (57 gm)
Cheese	3 oz (85.05 gm)	"	
Potatoes	1 lb (450 gm)	"	
Sugar	3 oz (85.05 gm)	"	
Salt	½ oz (15 gm)	"	
Tea	¼ oz (7 gm)	"	
Jam	¼ lb (113 gm)	"	
Flour	½ lb (275 gm)	Per man per week	In lieu of fat, bones etc, now sold
Rice	½ lb (275 gm)	"	
Curry	1 oz (30 gm)	"	

Table 5: AIF Standard Ration Scale (Source – Mullett)

Ration scales for "B" and "C" Class men were based on this table but were provided on a reduced scale, "C" Class men receiving slightly less than three quarters of the standard ration.[74] Soldiers suffering from VD were automatically graded "C" Class and rationed accordingly. The SMO at Lewes noted that the chance to move to a higher ration scale was a big incentive for men undergoing VD treatment to complete their course of treatment at Lewes.[75]

Between 1 November 1917 and 30 September 1919, a total of 545,240 were prepared and issued. Although all meals were prepared centrally in a single cook house, the records indicate that prisoners were fed individually in their cells. Food preparation was under the direction of a

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73 Ibid., p.5.

74 Mullett, Albert J. (by authority of), 1918 (?) Report Upon the Department of Defence From the First of July 1914, Until the Thirtieth of June 1917, pp.276-278.

75 General History, op. cit., p.6.

Corporal Cook as well as Warder A.W.L. Newman, who had been specifically retained at the prison due to his knowledge of the stoves and baking ovens. Newman also served as the master baker and supervised the baking of the Detention Barracks' bread, all of which was prepared on site. Phillips recorded that more than 95% of men committed to sentences of detention at Lewes showed a marked increase in weight at the end of their sentences.[76]

One rather poignant entry in the *Commandant's Journal*, two entries in fact, relate to Christmas Day. The Commandant notes that on Christmas Day 1917 and 1918, each detainee was issued half a Christmas pudding![77] The entries indicate that such largesse on the part of the authorities was out of the ordinary.

Industrial. The main intent of the AIF Detention Barrack was to turn bad soldiers into good ones and release fully trained soldiers at the end of their sentence, ready to go straight to the front. For this reason, the bulk of the activity undertaken by detainees was military training. Nevertheless, for various reasons there were a number of men, "C" Class or otherwise medically unfit, who were unable to undertake full military training but still needed to be gainfully employed. To this end, the industrial facilities of Lewes Prison were put to full use.

The prison workshop, set up to manufacture mail bags and coal bags, was put to full use, under the direction of Warder Instructor Tunnell, another of the Prison Service men retained by the AIF. Under Tunnell's direction, between 8 November 1917 and 30 September 1919, AIF prisoners at Lewes produced 50,470 mail bags, with a value of £4,788/3/1d and 1,022 coal bags to a value of £50/0/9d. Manufactured and sold against contracts arranged with the Home Office through the War Office, the sums quoted were calculated as being the amounts the Home Office received from other government departments for the selling of the finished article, minus any capitation for labour.

The prison also included a small boot repair shop and all boot repairs needed at the barrack, either by detainees or staff, were carried out in the boot shop on site. A total of 1,641 pairs of boots were repaired in the barrack boot shop.

As befitted such an institution, HMP Lewes had a large laundry. A number of "C" Class or otherwise medically unfit detainees were provided gainful employment by this establishment. The prison laundry was responsible for washing and drying all articles of personal clothing, blankets, sheets, hospital "blues" etc. The laundry was able to provide every man with a complete change of clean clothing weekly and a change of blankets and sheets "at frequent intervals" (with no indication in the record of just how often "frequent intervals" meant). The Detention Barrack also carried out its own program of fumigation, utilising prisoners to actually perform the tasks. Men who were recategorised from "C" Class to "A" or "B" Class were taken off industrial work and put into the standard training program.[78]

Mail, Parcels, Censorship. In the beginning, all incoming mail, parcels, newspapers and books were withheld, although outgoing mail was permitted, subject to strict censorship. Later the rules were relaxed to allow prisoners to receive mail, again subject to censorship, and books, which were passed to the library and then signed out to the prisoner. This relaxation was a departure from the British Army's practice but Phillips defended it on the grounds that it made for a marked improvement in morale. But, while letters and books were allowed in, newspapers were totally banned and parcels were not permitted into the prison. Instead, a prisoner who received a parcel was permitted to nominate a member of the AIF to receive and hold the parcel on his behalf,

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76 General History, op. cit., pp. 3-7.

77 Commandant's Journal, op. cit., entries for 25 December 1917 and 25 December 1918.

78 General History, op. cit., p.3.

pending completion of sentence.[79] The books, incidentally, had to be returned by the prisoner to the library after a set period to then be available for other prisoners to read.

Religion. A small section entitled "Denominational" is included in the general history. It reveals an interesting anomaly in the AIF's statistics. Official records indicate that 162,774 members of the Church of England served overseas with the AIF, and 63,705 Catholics.[80] These represented roughly 50% and 20% of the AIF respectively. The general history of the AIF Detention Barrack, however, gives the following denominational break down for the establishment:

Church of England	1,875
Roman Catholic	1,244
Other Protestant Denominations	535
TOTAL	3,652

Note that the Church of England members, who represented 50% of the AIF, also represented about 50% of the prisoners in Lewes. But Catholics, who represented approximately 20% of the AIF, represented almost 35% of the prisoners at Lewes! What does this mean? Were Catholics discriminated against by the Army authorities and thus more likely to end up in detention? Were Catholics worse soldiers than Anglicans? Were Catholics more likely to commit a serious offence? Who knows? I think I'll leave the answers to those questions to the sociologists to work out!

As for religious services, very early on, arrangements were made both with the Senior Chaplains of the various denominations at AIF HQ and with local clergy for services to be held at the barrack.[81] The first service was held on Sunday 25 November 1917, celebrated by the Senior Chaplain (C of E) AIF Administrative HQ, and services were held every Sunday after that, as well as on special religious days.[82]

From Armistice to Closure

Although the shooting part of the war ended on 11 November 1918, the work of the AIF Detention Barrack went on. Even as the AIF commenced the immense task of repatriation back to Australia, men remained under detention or continued to offend and be committed to detention. The AIF was determined, however, that as far as possible no man of the force would be left behind. Under an arrangement made with the British authorities, the AIF undertook to repatriate to Australia all men under detention, except those serving civil prison sentences for murder, manslaughter or rape. Thus, even as the AIF contracted, Lewes remained busy, preparing men for repatriation. Bedsides the soldiers committed to detention at Lewes, the barrack served as a reception and transhipment unit for men transferred from military detention on the Continent or civil incarceration in the UK. Prisoners from the UK and the Continent were concentrated at Lewes and then sent as drafts under armed escort for repatriation. All but a few of these men received immediate full remission of sentence on the day of embarkation for Australia. Those very few men whose sentences were not remitted were transferred to Australian prisons on arrival to serve out their sentences. NOT

Gradually, as the AIF contracted and the drafts regularly departed, the work of the AIF Detention Barrack wound down. Finally, on 19 October 1919, the AIF Detention Barrack Lewes closed its doors and the unit was disbanded.

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79 General History, op. cit., p.3.

80 Australian Imperial Force Statistics of Casualties, etc., Compiled to 30th June, 1919., p.20.

81 General History, op. cit., p.8.

82 Commandant's Journal, op. cit., entry for 25 November 1917 and various.

Conclusion

It has possibly comes as something of a surprise to some readers that the AIF had a prison of its own during the First World War. Was such an establishment necessary? I believe so. Discipline is ever a fragile thing. Australia had committed itself to a global war and to maintain a viable force in the field, it needed a disciplined army. The nature of armies, which, after all, are made up of human beings, is that men will offend against both civil and military law. Given that fact, it is essential that a system is in place to both punish offenders and to rehabilitate these offenders as soldiers.

In the early days in Europe, Australia relied on the British system to manage the punishment and rehabilitation of its military offenders. When this proved unsatisfactory, Australia set about establishing its own prison and refused to take "no" for an answer until the prison was in fact established. The records indicate that the AIF Detention Barrack was almost a model of its type. Although discipline was strict, it does not appear to have been unduly harsh. In fact, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, discipline seems to have of the "firm but fair" variety. Certainly, written records indicate that the AIF took an inordinate amount of care in selecting the staff for the barrack. The fact that well of one thousand men were returned to the front line as useful soldiers testifies to the success of the unit and establishment.

While some people might decry the establishment of a prison by the AIF, I personally applaud it as a classic example of the AIF "looking after its own".

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Air Marshal Gration accepts another term as Society Patron

Air Marshal Gration AO AFC enlisted in the RAAF in 1953 and graduated with distinction from RAAF College Point Cook in 1956 as a pilot officer General Duties Branch. Between 1957 and 1970 he served in a variety of flying and staff appointments, including a tour as flying instructor.

In June 1970, as a squadron leader, he was awarded the Air Force Cross for his services to No 34 Squadron as training officer and VIP captain. Air Marshal Gration became an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1988. He also holds the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Service in the Air in recognition of his role in flying training and air transport.

Other appointments held by Air Marshal Gration include Officer Commanding RAAF Base Fairbairn, ACT; Director of Operations - Air Force; Officer Commanding RAAF Base Richmond, NSW; and Director General Joint Operations and Plans, Australian Defence Force Headquarters, Canberra. Air Marshal Gration was posted as Head, Australian Defence Staff and Defence Attache at the Australian Embassy in Washington, He was appointed Air Commander Australia in February 1990 and became Chief of the Air Staff in October 1992.

During his appointment as CAS he guided the RAAF though a period of significant structural change, surmounting the challenges of structural reviews to make the RAAF a more effective and capable force as it moved into a new era of regional defence cooperation. He retired from the RAAF in 1994 after 41 years service.

In March 1996, Air Marshal Gration graciously accepted the invitation by the Society to become its Patron for an initial term of three years. Federal Council is pleased that Air Marshal Gration has continued as the Society's Patron and is pleased to announce that, yet again, he has agreed to accept another three year term as Patron of the Military Historical Society of Australia.

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Some logistical challenges for the Japanese in the New Guinea campaign, 1942–1945

Keith Richmond

Logistics played a key role in the defeat of the Japanese forces in New Guinea during the Second World War. In the awful conditions of that battlefield, a lack of supply led to a fighting force that was wracked with disease, close to starvation and continually short of war matériels. Some have suggested that this outcome was but part of a wider failure to come to terms with modern warfare. Taafe sums up the view of many:

> Indeed, for all its initial military successes, Japan was in almost all respects incapable of waging a protracted conflict against an industrial giant like the United States, a fact that many Japanese military leaders recognised from the outset ... By attacking the Western powers in December 1941, the Japanese committed themselves to a multi-front war that stretched their resources to, and quickly beyond, the breaking point.[1]

It is clear that despite any logistical shortcomings, the Japanese were a most formidable foe. As fighting men they were outstanding, often fanatical, always tenacious. They were equally at home in defensive as well as offensive operations – the dissimilar nature of engagements including the Kokoda campaign, Buna, Gona and Sanananda, Shaggy Ridge and the Driniumor demonstrates this. Battered remnants of the infantry maintained pressure on a far better supplied Australian force until the end.

From a logistical perspective, their efforts could be most impressive, witness the creation of the Buna/Gona fortifications. Their supply lines, however, were never able to withstand the impact of Allied attacks, and they were unable to integrate their logistical demands with the requirements of fighting a better supplied force.

Yet the outstanding efforts they made deserve to be better understood. This paper seeks to outline the steps that the Japanese made in some disparate but essential areas of logistics, construction works, sea transport, troops resorting to agriculture for survival, to demonstrate that the Japanese expended every effort to remain viable and effective.

The first area of activity we turn to is that of construction. While roads have been selected, it should be remembered that the Japanese were also active in building a succession of aerodromes as well as creating fortifications, ports and facilities.

Road Construction

As the Japanese 18th Army fell westward along the northern coast of New Guinea following their defeats around Buna and Gona, their Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) delivered a succession of orders declaring that a new defensive line had been chosen. On 4 January 1943 the IGHQ declared that "operational bases such as Lae, Salamaua, Madang and Wewak will be strengthened at once"[2] while an Army-Navy Central Agreement of 25 March 1943 supported an intensified construction program, including airfields and roads. The 18th Army was to undertake the strengthening of bases while the 6th Air Division was to protect supply lines and conduct

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1 Stephen Taafe, *MacArthur's Jungle War: The 1944 New Guinea Campaign*, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1998, page 50

2 Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years, US Army in World War II*, US Army, Washington DC, www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USA/USA-P/-Strategy/index.html, page 366

reconnaissance.[3] While sea routes would have been far easier to operate, the threat of Allied air attacks meant that there had to be an alternative if large quantities of troops and provisions were to be able to move to the west.

Three measures were taken quickly. First, supplies and some men were moved from Rabaul in New Britain to Lae by submarine. Secondly, troops were taken by Navy transports to Finschhafen, although this expedient lasted only a short time before Allied air attacks made this route too vulnerable. Thirdly, in addition to opening a sea route between Madang and Lae, a unit was sent overland from Madang to Lae to assess the possibilities of making a road between the two centres.[4] Of the many road construction projects undertaken, it is the fortunes of the latter road that will be followed as it is the best known.

The road from Madang to Lae was undertaken in two sections: Madang through the Finisterre Range, and Lae to Kaipit. Additionally, a third section, from Lae up the coast to Finschhafen, was to be upgraded. In effect, the completed road program would resemble three sides of a partially collapsed box – from Madang south to Dumpu as the left hand side, Dumpu and the Finisterres to Lae represented the bottom, while Lae to Finschhafen was the right hand side of the box.

We look first at the Madang to Finisterre Range section. While the reconnaissance report of 3rd Battalion of 21st Infantry on the building of this road indicated great difficulties in such a project, the official response was that, despite any problems, "ultimately the road would prove of great value"; the 20th Division was assigned to the project.[5] (The distance using the designated route was about 300 km. The road was to move from south of Madang at Bogadjim, to the Ramu River and east into the formidable Finisterre Ranges.)

As the Japanese historian and former serving officer in the campaign, Tanaka Kengoro, said: "For the purpose of this road construction, the headquarters of the 4th Engineer Command, two independent engineer regiments and three field road construction units were assigned to the 20th Division. However, the tools and equipment actually used by these units consisted of cross-hoes and shovels only."[6]

Estimated to take 400,000 man days of labour to complete, progress eventually reached 800 metres a day. According to a native report, in addition to the Japanese there were 4000 coolies constructing the road, 1000 coolies transporting supplies, and 60 trucks.[7] Begun in February 1943, by 10 September the road was a twenty-foot-wide, "all-weather" road 86 kilometres long, with an additional pack-horse trail on a more southerly inland route from Mabligo to Dumpu:

> The construction of this road was both difficult and dangerous. It was a winding trail up the mountainside with about 70 places where the gradient of the slopes was one in ten and the radius of the curves was less than ten metres ... in sections of the road that ran around the cliff face the rise was 800 or 900 metres though the distance travelled was only about 20 km. The road was about 1000 metres above sea level and numerous ravines, cliffs and dense jungles that were pitch dark during the

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3 ibid, page 412

4 Tanaka Kengoro, *Operations of the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces in the Papua New Guinea theater during World War II*, Japanese Papua New Guinea Goodwill Society, Tokyo, 1980, pages 51-52. Also see AWM 55 1/4 Spot Report 150

5 US Army, Japanese Monograph No 37, 18th Army Operations Volume 1, in Donald Detwiler and Charles Burdick (eds), War in Asia and the Pacific, Volume 7, The Southern Area, Garland Publishing, London, 1980, pages 159-163

6 Tanaka, Operations, op cit, page 53. There is a good photograph of one section of the Bogadjim to Yuala road, that is, some of the early sections completed, in David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1961, facing page 749.

7 Dexter, ibid, page 244

> day made road construction extremely difficult and hazardous. In addition with the cutting down of the trees the earth crumbled and there were numerous landslides ...[8]

There were the normal difficulties of supply and a lack of barges between Wewak to Madang, so that rations were reduced to one-third. Workers experienced exhaustion, malnutrition, malaria, and a dissatisfaction that came from being front line soldiers wasted on the project. Salt was in short supply so that the soldiers took "long, tiring trips to the seashore to obtain salt water which they evaporated". Maps and equipment were lacking, there was frustration with a change in the course of the road, and a continuing problem in having Tokyo understand and appreciate the need for greater allocations of resources in order to finish the task: "It took at least two months to receive even part of the requisitioned supplies after the Inspector General of Line of Communications in Tokyo issued the supply orders as supplies from Japan had to be transferred to other ships at Palau ... convoy transportation movements to New Guinea were limited to one or two a month ..." There was a lack of expertise so that repairs could not be made adequately to the equipment or to the road itself, and a lack of fuel for the few mechanical pieces of equipment and the 60 or so trucks they scrounged. Also, bridges were likely to be blown up by the Allies and workers attacked by planes.[9] As Miller said, "The road-building projects were next to impossible for the Japanese to accomplish."[10]

Much to the relief of the 20th Division one imagines, General Adachi suspended construction of the Madang-Lae road when the Australian 9th Division landed east of Lae on 5 September, allowing the 20th Division to resume combat duty.[11]

The second section of the Madang-Lae road was the road running west from Lae through Nadzab to Kaipit, a relatively short distance from the supposed finish of the road in the Finisterres. As one Japanese history of the war expressed it:

> The road from Lae to Kaipit requires daily 60,000 men [man hours?] in its construction and 60,000 men along with 50 automobiles for collection and transportation of materials. On the road were 13 bridges, the total length of which was 1400 metres. Since there were no materials available in that sector for constructing bridges, it was necessary to obtain them from the eastern side of the Makabu by vehicles.[12]

In mid-September 1943 when the Australians were at Lae, General Vasey's chief engineer estimated that it would take "a mechanical equipment company, two field companies and 500 natives seven weeks to prepare the Markham Valley Road between Lae and Nadzab [part of the Lae to Kaipit section] for use by an estimated 50 three-ton lorries per day as incidental traffic".[13] So for all the work the Japanese may have done on the roads, they were recognised as inadequate for Allied use.

The final section of this construction program was the coastal road from Finschhafen to Lae. It was a vital link with the sea transportation from New Britain. While the track had been "scantily maintained by the field road construction unit and the 8th Landing Barge Regiment ... troops of

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8 Japanese Monograph No 37 in Detwiler and Burdick, op cit, page 171
9 ibid, pages 171-175; Hattori Takushiro, Complete History of the Greater East Asia War, Masu Shobu, 1953, Vol 3, pages 13-14. There were 20 barges allocated to the needs of the road between Madang and Amile, for example: Japanese Monograph No 37 in Detwiler and Burdick, op cit, page 166
10 John Miller, *Cartwheel: The Reduction of Rabaul, US Army in World War II*, US Army, Washington DC, 1959, page 42
11 ibid, page 213
12 US Army, Japanese Monograph No 38, 18th Army Operations, Volume 2, page 149
13 Dexter, op cit, page 402

the 51st Division were sent to Lae through this route from the middle of May",[14] so the construction efforts on this link were well justified.

Overall, however, the results were unsatisfactory and the dream of an all-weather road running some 300 km from Madang to Lae was only realised in part, and even completed sections were prone to closure with the advent of rain, landslides or enemy action. There was also the sad waste of infantry troops used as labourers. As Miller has said, the task was next to impossible, and the immense drain on scarce resources clearly unsustainable.

The Japanese lacked the equipment, the manpower, as well as time to succeed. Moreover, while they were undertaking such programs they were neither building fortifications designed for the final defence, nor attacking the Allies in vulnerable positions. Without adequate mechanical support and a guaranteed supply line, it was largely wasted effort.

Sea Transport

With a lack of a manufacturing base and limited cultivation of crops such as rice, virtually all food for troops on the island had to be imported. Because the Japanese failed to develop their aerial transport to any extent, sea transport was the only option.

The New Guinea coastline was a difficult place to operate. Ports were designed for unloading luggers but little more. The weather was often inclement with poor visibility, and waters were generally shallow thus limiting the type of ship that could be used. Nonetheless the Japanese for a considerable period subsisted on the provisions brought to the shores by an assembly of craft.[15]

These craft included sea trucks carrying 100-300 tons; freighters of different types and capacities; luggers that carried about 60-90 tons; pontoons; fishing boats; and a variety of barges. Barges were the mainstay of operations, ranging from the large 50 foot (16 metre) version carrying 30 cubic metres to the smaller version carrying 8 cubic metres.

As the larger craft proved easier targets, a request was made to obtain very small boats. From June 1943 a total of some 600 fishing boats of about 50-60 tons and their crew were commandeered and ordered to move from Ujina in Japan to begin transportation duties at ports including Hollandia, Wewak and Rabaul.[16] Owing to their success in the rear areas they advanced to Madang and then to bases at Sio, Karkar and Long Islands.[17]

There was an immense logistical challenge involved in transportation of supplies from Japan and its occupied territories. [18] One of the main ports for disembarkation was Ujina, headquarters of the Military Transport Bureau. From there to Truk (1840 miles) took 11 days at 8 knots, from Truk to Rabaul (847 miles) took 5 days, from Truk to Palau (1069 miles) took 6 days, and Palau to Rabaul (1290 miles) took almost 8 days. Shipping was clearly highly vulnerable as enemy naval and air forces had the capacity to interdict.[19] Ammunition went on a variety of routes from

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14 Tanaka, Operations, op cit, page 52

15 From the time of the Meiji restoration, the Army was responsible for transporting the troops by sea to the invasion area and for subsequent provisioning.

16 AWM 55 12/41 pages 3, 4

17 Japanese Monograph No 37 in Detwiler and Burdick, op cit, page 195

18 In addition, there was the spectacle of the shipping belonging to the forces taking supplies to the islands and civilian shipping leaving Japan in ballast and taking on a load when they reached ports in the Dutch East Indies or other occupied ports, that is, the prospect "that empty ships might frequently pass each other going in opposite directions" – see John Ellis, One Day in a Very Long War: Wednesday 25 October 1944, Pimlico, London, 1990, page 413

19 AWM 55 5/32, EP # 361, pages 25 and 26

Japan, although most included the ports of Palau and Rabaul.[20] (Rabaul was relatively well set up for stevedoring operations, as there were established wharves used pre-war by British Petroleum and WR Carpenters, as well as the Customs wharf and one known as Oil and Coal which was used for bulk supplies as well as ammunition.[21] Further work was undertaken including adding new piers and cranes.)

Parillo claims that with over half a million Japanese troops in the South West Pacific Area (SWPA), two million tons of merchant shipping was required for provisioning.[22] It is difficult to determine the number of vessels available at any time in New Guinea waters. According to Allied estimates, as at August 1943 there were 1030 ships in the SWPA while a supplement in November 1943 added a further 53 ships. Some were listed as sunk, or out of commission.[23] Attrition was enormous from PT boats and aerial attack especially. By March 1944 there were "about 50 landing barges and 30 fishing and powered sailing vessels" in the Wewak area[24] and by the time of the Driniumor operations in May 1944 Drea has suggested there were 27 landing barges.[25] In late 1944 the total number available was estimated at approximately 30 barges and smaller craft including fishing boats and canoes, in addition to native craft.

A variety of modes of shipping was employed to get the supplies to New Guinea:

- The voyage from Japan, or the Philippines or Formosa to Palau or Rabaul was made by large transport ships, probably with a heavy naval escort.
- Palau or Rabaul then acted as staging points from where the smaller boats came to secure provisions.
- Sea trucks were the most used vessels, moving from Rabaul to Lae, and Palau to Wewak, Hansa and Hollandia although larger transports were sometimes used.
- A combination of sea truck and barge then took goods from Rabaul to Cape Gloucester to Bushing to Finschhafen and Lae, and barges and sea trucks made the voyage from Wewak to Hansa, and Hansa to Madang.
- Fishing vessels took provisions from Hansa to Karkar Island to Long Island and then to Sio, and as at June 1943 fishing boats assisted on the Madang-Hansa route.
- Provisions to smaller sites along the coast or along rivers were taken by the smaller vessels - the fishing boats, luggers or powered sampans.[26]

As the war progressed, the position changed little: some ships sailed directly from Rabaul or Palau to Hollandia or Wewak, submarines took over the Rabaul-Sio-Finschhafen leg, and barges

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20 AWM 55 12/54 pages 19-24

21 AWM 55 12/13 page 11

22 Mark Parillo, *The Japanese Merchant Marine in World War II*, Airlife Publishing, Shrewsbury, 1993, page 37. Also, John Coates, *Bravery Above Blunder: The Ninth Australian Division at Finschhafen, Sattelberg and Sio*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1999, page 301, says that to maintain 10,000 men for a month required 350 barge loads per month, with 150 of these for food.

23 AWM 55 12/41, page 3 and attachments; and AWM 55 12/45 at supplements 3, 4 and 5. An early estimate, 4 March 1942, suggested there were 2500 barges – AWM 54 962/3/1, page 1. Also, AWM 54 505/4/10 at page 1 offers an estimate of the total number of Japanese oil transports still afloat as at 27 November 1943 saying that it "...comprises 118 vessels of all transport categories".

24 Japanese Demobilisation Bureau Records, Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, Volume II, Part 1, Reports of General MacArthur, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, 1966, page 264

25 Edward Drea, *Defending the Driniumor: Covering Force Operations in New Guinea*, Combat Studies, Fort Leavenworth, 1984, www.cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/csi/Drea/Drea.asp, page 19. An undated chart from 4 Sea Transport Battalion listed 118 sea trucks, fishing boats and powered sailboats: see AWM 55 12/41, page 3. It is very difficult to estimate ship numbers that were sunk, permanently out of commission, awaiting spare parts, etc at any time. There are frequent references to barges breaking down.

26 AWM 55 12/60 page 12; Japanese Monograph No 38, op cit, 119; US Army, Japanese Monograph No 44, History of the 8th Area Army, page 30; Japanese Monograph No 37 in Detwiler and Burdick, op cit, page 193

and fishing boats became the predominant form of transport.[27] By the closing stages of the war there was interior transportation and distribution using fishing boats and canoes, but little other activity by transport craft.

As an example of the sporadic activity, in early September 1944 army transports took supplies from Rabaul to Sowom, But and Boiken, and returned with hospital patients.[28] Also, one barge went with supplies to Sowom from Wewak on 16-18 December 1944 and two barges went from Wewak to But on 22-24 December.[29] There is evidence of submarines bringing some supplies as late as January 1945.[30] These contributions were important, but insufficient to support an army: Parillo says that a division needed 50 large barges to survive.[31]

When submarines were used they tended to operate like peacetime ferries, as they were not under great pressure from Allied craft. Seven submarines were used in August 1943 to transport goods to Lae with the most active, I-33 and I-176, making four trips each. While the various reports offer conflicting information, it is said that during May 1943 some 400 tons of supplies were brought in using the submarine transports.[32] According to Stevens, 3500 tons of supplies were brought to New Guinea ports between September 1942 and December 1943 using submarines[33] while Boyd and Yashida have said that Lae was sent 1400 tons of supplies and 1000 men between mid-March and mid-June 1943.[34]

To take provisions from the storehouses, usually Rabaul, Truk[35] and the Palaus, to bases such as Madang, took many days and required deception as well as luck. Yet the Japanese had some positives on their side. They could depend on the vagaries of the New Guinea weather including rain squalls and sea fogs to confuse aerial attack, and boats travelled at night. They were also established in a number of major ports, so they could launch their operations from different places if necessary. On the negative side, vessels were small, they travelled very slowly, they were not heavily armed, they could not always depend on air and naval support, and the standard of maintenance of the ships was often second rate. Hence there was a constant challenge to get the supplies to where they were required.

There is no doubt that enormous quantities of goods were transported even under the watchful eyes of the coastwatchers, PT boats and Allied aircraft. One Japanese report makes the surprising statement that up until the end of 1942 the idea was to simply disregard losses and just keep going.[36] But the extent of shipping losses grew too high for this cavalier attitude to last and in reaction, shipping was cancelled for a period. A series of innovative approaches to provisioning, including a version of the Tokyo Express as used at Guadalcanal, submersible cargo carriers, and the use of submarines for transport, was then employed.

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27 Japanese Monograph No 38, op cit, page 143.
28 US Army, Japanese Monograph No 40, 18th Army Operations Volume 4, page 107
29 ibid, page 82
30 ibid at page 215 states that "transportation by submarine became hopeless on 26 January [1945]" so this implies submarines were used until early that year; also see page 216.
31 Parillo, op cit, page 37
32 AWM 54 505/4/10 page 3
33 David Stevens, *The Naval Campaigns of New Guinea*, http://www.awm.gov.au/journal/j34/stevens.htm ,page 8
34 Carl Boyd and Akihiko Yoshida, *The Japanese Submarine Force and World War II*, Airlife, London, 1995, page 116
35 Truk is not normally associated with being a supply dump for New Guinea operations, but on 27 May 1944 the submarine RO-115 brought a load of ammunition and weapons from "the accumulated depots at Truk Islands" to Wewak – US Army, Japanese Monograph No 39, 18th Army Operations, Volume 3, page 60
36 Japanese Monograph No 38, op cit, page 135

The challenge for the Army was not only to secure the boats and the cargoes but to decide on the most appropriate routes. In the early days when Japan enjoyed both air and sea dominance, this presented no problem but from the end of 1942 onward and especially after the Battle of the Bismarck Sea in March 1943, this position changed and it became difficult to transport matériels.

Detailed timetables were devised for transportation of goods along a selection of routes, such as for the southeast and southwest routes from Rabaul along the coast of New Britain. Some examples of the routes:

- Ships from Rabaul to Lae along the southeast route took 16 days as well as a preparation time of four days. The 530 mile trip required approximately 6-10 hours of sailing per day;[37]
- from Alexishafen to Finschhafen was a six day affair, using the ports of Alexishafen, Minduri, Hungaeya, Fangger, Gali, Orai and Sio;
- a barge convoy from Wewak to Alexishafen took five days, as follows: Wewak to Sepik mouth 4 hours 40 minutes, Sepik mouth to Hansa 4 hours 40 minutes, Hansa to Wigan 5 hours 25 minutes, Ulingan to Alexishafen 9 hours;
- Wewak to Madang took 4 days with stops at Sepik River, Hansa Bay, Eifel Friedrich Harbour or vicinity and then Alexishafen or Madang. Total travel time was about 30 hours;
- Alexishafen to Sio had stops at Mindiri, Saidor or vicinity, Fale, and Kiari, with a running time of 25 hours;
- and a trip down the coast of New Britain took 11 days from Rabaul to Tuvalu, with stops at Minamizaki (48 km), Put Put (100 km), Mokicron (80 km), Tokain (80 km), Obbechay (24 km), Abul (103 km), Gasmata (84 km), Mowe (73 km), Pulul River (85 km), Hive River (135 km), and finally to Tuluvu.

This extract from a log made of a trip from Rabaul provides an insight into the difficulties faced:

10 February	completed camouflage. Same day 2200 arrived Put Put ...
11 February	0500 landed in jungle. Added to camouflage.
Same day	1700 left ... .and began to advance gradually.
12 February	0130 arrived Marumba, Wide Bay ... renewed camouflage ...

As to concealment, barges usually only travelled during the hours of night and rested up during the day. They selected areas where they could tie up with sufficient overhanging branches so the barge could escape detection from the air. Minor bases were established every 70 miles or so with caches of food and equipment stored there, with less elaborate hiding places constructed between those bases.[38]

For all the effort the Japanese expended on sea transport operations, from commandeering ships to research into convoy operations, moon phases, tides, water depths and camouflage, the overall system devised was inadequate, Allied air and sea strikes made sure of that. From the time of the Bismarck Sea battle and the slow turning of the fortunes of war to the Allies, sea transportation became too vulnerable and provisions for the fighting troops could not be guaranteed.

Survival by Depending on Agriculture

As the Japanese retreated to the west, their supply lines fractured. They lost goods and equipment, and they had few vehicles to transport matériel over largely unmade roads. According to Martin van Creveld, in the Franco-Prussian War and specifically the siege campaign of 1870-1871, troops were forced to suspend fighting for two months when they reached Paris so as to search for food. He goes on to say that this "employment of an army as a

37 AWM 55 12/6 SR 111, page 1
38 Parillo, op cit, page 181 and Japanese Monograph No 37 in Detwiler and Burdick, op cit, pp. 60- 61

food-producing machine is, to my knowledge, unique in the annals of war after 1789" and "the last occasion when a large force belonging to an advanced State was so utilised".[39]

Japanese forces effectively suspended much military activity over many months (mid-1944 to August 1945) while they lived off the land. This may represent one of the best modern examples of an army at least partially abandoning war in order to survive. According to Kane, when the Japanese retreated they adopted what he refers to as an "ambush approach".[40] This meant that the troops were allocated large tracts of land, began self-sufficiency operations on them in order to regain strength, and then used the territory as a home base from which to engage the enemy when necessary.

The retreating soldiers were never entirely free to recuperate. They were attacked by Allied planes, as were dumps and barges bringing provisions. A report on a raid: "At the beginning of July [1944] the total amount of provisions at Wewak was 960 tons but due to enemy bombardment 200 tons were destroyed".[41] Additionally, any likely food sources such as palm trees were targeted. It is worthy of note that from 1943 there was a systematic attempt at making the army self-sufficient, and plans were in place to farm fish, cattle, vegetables and rice, as well as producing bean paste, salt, clothing and lumber, but the results were disappointing. From the end of July 1944 the supply of rice and wheat to the Army from outside sources had effectively ended, making self-sufficiency an imperative.[42] This meant that the troops had to live on the stored provisions and from food they could obtain locally.

The Japanese Army was faced with a very real problem - it lacked the supplies to be able to provide a strong and capable fighting force. Yet there were some reserves of provisions; it was able to harness the natives; it had some experience in self-supporting programs; and the attacks from the Allies at that stage were not so great as to deny the Japanese significant territory. Stronger troops were transferred in ("it was necessary to acquire a good number of strong men who could endure a long period of hardships") and weaker troops transferred to other units where food was either more plentiful or they were less of a burden to what were ostensibly front line forces.[43]

The Army's aims were simple – to produce food and get the troops strong so they could not only counter the Allied attacks but stage a decisive battle; to accumulate provisions for the future; and to transport supplies to other areas where the troops had even less. These aims were integrated, as "The Army taking over the Boiken District is going to organise the counter-offensive positions there and also establish a self-subsistence set-up".[44]

In food production, the Army established its own farms (such as the Nanko/Feomao Gardens at Sarmi, and "a 49 acre farm will be established in the area north of the Hawain River")[45]; troops also took over existing farm areas and used them as sources of bulk food. The Army also allocated areas of territory to the different units for farming operations. Indeed, one gains the impression that the Army had become a real estate business: "the division assigned a sago-gathering sector to each unit as a step to make up the deficit in the fixed amount and to save on

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39 Martin van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, page 108
40 Kane Yoshiharu, Southern Cross, http://awm.gov.au, Chapter XX, pages 1 and 2 especially
41 Japanese Monograph No 39, op cit, page 90
42 ibid, page 165
43 ibid, page 29
44 ibid, page 149
45 ibid, page 57

the feed on hand".[46] Or, "the unit will be allowed to retain about ten acres of the native farming ground ... In return for this the village of Hain including the sago palm trees ... will be added to the operational areas of the unit.."[47]

Resources were stretched and men tried to eke out an existence on productive areas. Thus in the Maprik area which was already supporting troops, it was said "it was not only impossible to accommodate more than 5000 men in this area but it was difficult to provide provisions."[48] This meant that the Army widened the areas available to the troops for patrolling as well as food producing operations.

The soldiers made use of resources available. In the Boiken area, for example, the Army was looking to grow sweet potatoes and pulse grains for 3000 men with the assistance of native labour, as well as vegetables, fruit, coconut oil, peanuts and chickens. They took the native's sago palms for the production of sacsac. In the coastal areas they decided to plant potatoes, using natives "by promoting goodwill and, if possible, as beasts of burden". Potatoes were sent to the But and Dagur areas, the plants being sourced from the natives and from Army plantations.[49] In the area north of the Maprik and in the area north of the mountain range where the Miyake unit was settled, potatoes were the main staple.[50]

In early 1944 a report was made on the future prospects of self-sufficiency in some centres in Dutch New Guinea. It showed some areas almost self-supporting (Manokwari and Sarumi); at Babo rations were low and fish from Seroe on Japen Island were required as a supplement; at Sorong the staple food came from stored provisions, although coconut oil was plentiful; while at Waigeo, "only copra and salt are adequate".[51] Clearly some areas were more able to support troops than others.[52] The prime focus for troops from July 1944 at least until the end of that year, was the preparation of sacsac (supplemented where possible with other foods). In effect, troops had dual roles: military and the collection of sacsac. This applied both to the 18th Army in the Aitape/Wewak area and the 35th and 36th Divisions in the Manokwari/Sarmi areas of Dutch New Guinea.

Sacsac was a carbohydrate gathered from sago palms growing in many areas of the island. Palms were selected and cut down, and after a laborious washing and screening process, a sticky, brownish starch residue resulted.[53] Feldt said "it is gelatinous and tasteless and, to those not inured to it by years of consumption, unsatisfying, leaving the belly distended but with the feeling of hunger unappeased".[54] White also said of native sago-gatherers that "The physique of the men in particular, was poor. The cause was probably nutritional, since they lived almost entirely on sago".[55] Even the natives added some garnishing to make the stuff palatable, such as fish or dragonflies, and when the Japanese tried it they required some form of seasoning too.

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46 US Army, Japanese Monograph No 136, North of Australia Operations Record, Supplement, page 41
47 Japanese Monograph No 40, op cit, page 149
48 ibid, page 49
49 ibid, page 43
50 ibid, pp 203, 240. Prior to the war, German missionaries had imported a large range of vegetables, including high quality seed English potatoes to the Wain country near Nadzab, and distributed them widely to the natives see Peter Ryan, Fear Drive My Feet, Duffy and Snellgrove, Sydney, 2002, p. 60
51 US Army, Japanese Monograph No 13, North of Australia Operations Record, 1943-1945, page 104
52 ibid, pages 88, 89
53 Osmar White, *Green Armour: The Story of Fighting Men in New Guinea*, Wren Publishing, Melbourne, 1972, page 120
54 Eric Feldt, *The Coast Watchers*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1991, page 229
55 White, op cit, page 120

The men spent the bulk of their time searching for sago palm trees in the areas allocated to their units, and then preparing the material for food. As an example, the Aotsu Detachment had depleted its area of sago palms and then turned to the area occupied by part of the 20th Division on the banks of the Sonam River. The Detachment had 500 men providing sacsac to the front line troops.[56] In addition to the collection, preparation, cooking and then distribution of sacsac to the troops, if necessary the entire tree could be taken away: "...the 20th Division Commander sent 50 sago palm trees to the Aotsu Branch unit in addition to the trees which were being cut by the unit ..."[57]

Hattori said that the yield from one high yielding sago palm was about 23 gallons of sacsac,[58] although clearly, not every tree was as productive. According to Kane, the yield from one tree could feed 300 men, although such rations probably accounted for mortality rates in some units in late 1944 reaching 10-30%.[59] The Army hierarchy spent a great deal of time focussing on the harvesting of sacsac. "The Army made extensive searches for the sago palm tree" and also "organised various branches to make scientific and advanced research" to improve self-sufficiency.[60]

Despite the very real efforts at sacsac production there were still significant levels of reserve provisions available, and these were doled out sparingly as needed. The difficulty for Intendance (supply) officers, however, was to determine how long the supply drought would last: whether the supply links with Rabaul or Palau might be reinstated; the time before the next major offensive; and how troops could live in the period until any crops planted came to harvest (usually three months or more).

There was a problem for the troops in determining whether they should search for sago, depend on the goodwill of natives, or become agriculturalists. In the Sarmi area in mid to late 1944, there was a lack of conviction from the 36th Division:

> despite the emphasis laid on self-sufficiency, there were no units that set to work steadily, because they were not only sceptical over the possibility of realising it, but also they relied on the stored provisions ... But at the end of 1944, [rations] dropped so low that under the fixed rationing system of 300 g per man per day, it would be sufficient for only three months. The division, faced with such a vital problem, finally made up its mind to farm and carry out its self-sufficiency plan.[61]

This Division then converted its position into farmlands. By adopting the "agriculture first principle" it "discarded its nomadic consumer life in searching for sago" and each man thereafter tended land of about 0.096 acres in size.[62]

In addition to the normal problems in collecting sacsac when a war was being fought, other difficulties intervened. The troops engaged in sago collecting were - certainly in the initial stages - inefficient and often obtained little sacsac from a day's labour, they were physically weak, there was a continuing chance of wood pulp being included in the finished product thereby causing stomach problems,[63] and the units looking for suitable palms tended to wander about, undermining the efficiency of the troops.[64] Also, if the troops roamed the swamps looking for the sago palms they were more likely to come into contact with disease-bearing pests or insects.

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56 Kane, op cit, Chapter 20, page 3
57 Japanese Monograph No 40, op cit, page 200
58 Ibid, page 90
59 Kane, op cit, Chapter 13 page 4 and Japanese Monograph No 39, op cit, pages 166 and 167
60 ibid, page 77
61 Japanese Monograph No 136, op cit, pages 44, 45
62 ibid
63 Japanese Monograph No 39, op cit, pages 166,167; Japanese Monograph No 40, op cit, page 88
64 ibid, page 66

In the midst of all this difficulty, the Japanese soldier was forced to be innovative. One order in the Boiken area sought a sacsac milling machine:

> With the possible future of the use of manpower in mind, labour will be conserved and a milling machine hastily improvised from engines, meters and other parts of automobiles and tricycle wrecks. All possible aid will be given to sacsac gathering.[65]

A later report listed the number of requests on the same topic, becoming more sophisticated as time passed.

- The Army greatly urged the units to develop machinery for collecting sacsac.
- The Army ordered the 51st Division and the ... Shipbuilding Sub-depot at Mushi Island to develop a sacsac refining machine
- on 30 September the Shipbuilding Depot was ordered to build three automatic engine operated sago refining machines
- on 5 October the Commander of the 39th Independent Motor Battalion at Wewak was ordered to send one sago starch refining machine and three expert instructors to the 20th Division
- on 9 October the Motor Commander was ordered to manufacture three sago crushers (utilising small engines)
- on 14 October the 51st Division Commander was ordered to manufacture ten sago crushers. The Shipbuilding Depot was ordered to manufacture five sago crushers operated by foot pedals and two sago crushers run by small engines by the end of October
- the superintendent of the mill at Barun ... was ordered to form two groups of instructors to instruct the various units in the operation of the sago machines
- the 39th Independent Motor Battalion was ordered to send one refining machine (engine operated) to the freight depot to refine barley.[66]

While there were many tons of reserved provisions distributed in the period from mid-1944, these were never sufficient to sustain the forces at the standard required; there was no guarantee of regularity of supply; and select foods or provisions such as medicines were rarely available. The Army equally realised that the focus on sacsac was not sustainable, not only because the number of trees was in short supply and that the trees only grew in particular locations, but because of difficulties with inept harvesting and Allied strafing. Also, the starchy food did little more than sustain life. Yet for much of the period from mid-1944 until the end of the year and well into 1945, sacsac remained the staple for many. As an example of a fighting force resorting to self-sufficiency in order to survive, it is hard to equal. It is doubtful whether many other armies could have survived for such a period with so few resources.[67]

Conclusions

The three logistical issues discussed – construction of a major road, sea transport, and the use of agricultural practices – reflect the very real effort the Japanese forces made to survive. If we add that to their courageous fighting and an apparent neglect of their own comforts in order to achieve their ends, they made a highly respected force.

Indeed, it is not unreasonable to suggest that whatever the Japanese tried, they succeeded better than other armies might have done with similar levels of resources.

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65 ibid, page 57
66 ibid, pages 99,100
67 An agreement was reached at the end of 1944 with some of the head chiefs requiring the natives to provide the troops with far higher levels of food and support. While this did not end the difficulties faced by troops it considerably lessened the dependency on the sacsac operation, although harvesting of the sago palm continued: see Hattori, op cit, Vol IV, pages 453 and 454 and US Army, Japanese Monograph No 41, 18th Army Operations Volume 5, page 98

Yet, as seen in this paper, three major examples of activity did not achieve the intended aims. The Japanese lacked the wherewithal to convert the prospects of a capable supply system into a proficient operation, and their legendary fighting skills could not overcome the shortcomings. Their efforts, while possibly unparalleled, were never enough.

The view of Taafe quoted at the beginning of the paper holds that the Japanese were unable to compete with a larger industrial power and with this it is difficult to disagree. From the time when the Allied war machine, and particularly American industry, was able to gear up for war, the result of the challenge against the Japanese (in New Guinea or elsewhere) was rarely in doubt.

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Members Notices

Information wanted

Do you have a great-grandfather who fought at Gallipoli in World War One? A military historian is writing a book about the campaign, and is seeking copies of diaries, letters, and personal photographs of men that served at the Dardanelles. For more information please contact: Bud Feuer, P.O. Box 1145, Roanoke, VA 24006, USA e-mail: budfeuer@worldnet.att.net

For sale

A Queen Victoria 1900 Christmas tin for Empire troops in South Africa. Condition appropriate for age. Also, a NSW Military Forces button and a pass to the wharf for the departure of the Second NSW Contingent on 17 January 1900. $100 ono.

Neville Foldi 9 Parnell Place FADDEN ACT 2904 (02) 6291 7177

For purchase

Wishing to purchase, cash or trade, the following First World War medals:

- 40th Battalion AIF
- 42nd Battalion AIF

Roy Manual, 14 Rothbury St Maryland NSW 2287 (02) 4951 4724

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VICTORIA CROSS FOR GALLANTRY IN IRAQ: British soldier decorated

Anthony Staunton

On 18 March 2005, Private Johnston Gideon Beharry, C Company, 1st Battalion, the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment, the driver of a Warrior fighting vehicle, who in six weeks faced two deadly ambushes in southern Iraq, was awarded the first Victoria Cross in 22 years. Beharry drove, dragged and choked his way through intense enemy fire to save the crews of his own and following vehicles.

Beharry was the driver of a platoon commander's 30-tonne Warrior armoured fighting vehicle when a convoy of six Warriors was attacked and his vehicle was engulfed by explosions. The commander and most of its occupants were concussed or wounded, and the radio was rendered useless. Beharry, sitting at the controls unable to communicate with either his own senior officer or the other Warriors, and not knowing whether his commander and gunner were dead or alive, took the initiative; he closed the hatch and drove forward, only to suffer another intense rocket attack which set his vehicle on fire and filled it with intense and noxious smoke. Forced to open the hatch again, he drove through further intense fire, believing that the only way to save the lives of his comrades was to drive through the ambush. Further attacks destroyed his periscope, and he had to drive 1.4 kilometres under enemy fire with his head exposed out the hatch. Still under fire, he stopped and in three separate missions at great danger to himself he rescued the platoon commander, the wounded gunner and the remainder of the soldiers in the vehicle, leading them all to a place of safety. He eventually collapsed from physical and mental exhaustion and was himself evacuated, but not before he had been hit by a 7.62 mm bullet which penetrated his helmet and remained lodged on its inner surface, millimetres from his brain.

Returning to duty after medical treatment, Beharry once again found himself driving his Warrior through the streets of al-Amarah on the night of 11 June when his vehicle was ambushed from the rooftops. He sustained a serious head injury when a rocket-propelled grenade scored a direct hit on the vehicle's armour 12 millimetres from his head. Several others of his crew were injured. With blood from his injury obscuring his vision, Beharry managed to retain control and reversed the Warrior out of the ambush to a comparatively safe area, enabling nearby crews to rescue his wounded crew, including himself. Only then did Beharry finally lose consciousness. As a result of his head injury he lapsed into a coma, from which he subsequently recovered.

Beharry, 25, who was born in Grenada in the West Indies and whose parents still live there joined the British Army less than four years ago. He deployed to Iraq in April 2004 having previously served six months in Kosovo and three months in Northern Ireland. After treatment at the Shaibah Field Hospital south-west of Basrah, he was evacuated to the Royal College of Defence Medicine (RCDM) in Selly Oak, Birmingham. At the RCDM he underwent neurosurgical reconstructive survey. He has been undergoing rehabilitation at the Defence Medical Services Rehabilitation Centre at Headly Court in Surrey. "Maybe I was brave," he said. "I don't know. I think anyone else could do the same thing. If I had to go back to Iraq, I would and if I found myself in the same position I would do it all over again." Beharry said that because of the injury to his head, he could not remember anything of the second incident, adding: "I joined the Army because I wanted a change of life [he had previously worked in the construction industry]. It was a good decision and I've never regretted it. He said that when he came under fire, what he feared most was "losing a track" on his Warrior, because that would have prevented him from driving through the ambush to safety. Asked if he would be Britain's first black general, he quickly replied: "No." Standing before the cameras, with the scar from his

operations visible, he said it was his wish to stay in the Army, despite constant pain in his head, shoulder and back.

Tour of Duty

Beharry was one of 29 members of the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment decorated for their 2004 tour of duty in Iraq. The Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Maer was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, two sergeants were awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross and seven members of the regiment were awarded the Military Cross. During their tour the regiment faced constant assaults from the first day of the deployment, including 237 shootings, 51 rockets, 185 RPGs and 360 explosive devices. Colonel Maer said "The total was 850 attacks, or six a day every day for five months, except that one day we had 109 attacks," He said 40 of his soldiers were wounded and three were killed.

First Victoria Cross since the Falklands

The award to Beharry was the first Victoria Cross since the Falklands in 1982 when Colonel "H" Jones and Sergeant Ian McKay of the Parachute Regiment were posthumously honoured. The previous living recipient was Warrant Officer Keith Payne of the Australian Army Training Team decorated for gallantry in Vietnam in 1969. The Beharry award was the twelfth Victoria Cross since the Second World War and he was the sixth to survive to receive his award.

Victoria Cross Presentation

On Wednesday, 27 April 2005, Beharry received his medal from the Queen at an investiture at Buckingham Palace. This was the ninth VC presented by the present Queen, the sixth to a living recipient. Three of the four awards for the Korean War including one posthumous award were presented by the Queen. In 1966 the Queen invested Rambahadur Limbu for bravery in Borneo and during her tour of Australia in 1970 invested Warrant Officers Ray Simpson and Keith Payne of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam. In 1982 the Queen presented the Victoria Cross to the widows of Colonel "H" Jones and Sergeant Ian McKay of the Parachute Regiment.

Victoria Cross citation

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
Whitehall, London SW1
18th March 2005

The Queen has been graciously pleased to approve award of the Victoria Cross to the under-mentioned:

25136865 Private Johnson Gideon Beharry, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment

Private Beharry carried out two individual acts of great heroism by which he saved the lives of his comrades. Both were in direct face of the enemy, under intense fire, at great personal risk to himself (one leading to him sustaining very serious injuries). His valour is worthy of the highest recognition.

In the early hours of the 1st May 2004 Beharry's company was ordered to replenish an isolated Coalition Force outpost located in the centre of the troubled city of Al Amarah. He was the driver of a platoon commander's Warrior armoured fighting vehicle. His platoon was the company's reserve force and was placed on immediate notice to move. As the main elements of his company were moving into the city to carry out the replenishment, they were re-tasked to fight through a series of enemy ambushes in order to extract a foot patrol that had become pinned down under sustained small arms and heavy machine gun fire and improvised explosive device and rocket-propelled grenade attack.

Private Beharry VC at the media conference that announced his award

Beharry's platoon was tasked over the radio to come to the assistance of the remainder of the company, who were attempting to extract the isolated foot patrol. As his platoon passed a roundabout, en route to the pinned-down patrol, they became aware that the road to the front was empty of all civilians and traffic - an indicator of a potential ambush ahead. The platoon commander ordered the vehicle to halt, so that he could assess the situation. The vehicle was then immediately hit by multiple rocket-propelled grenades. Eyewitnesses report that the vehicle was engulfed in a number of violent explosions, which physically rocked the 30-tonne Warrior.

As a result of this ferocious initial volley of fire, both the platoon commander and the vehicle's gunner were incapacitated by concussion and other wounds, and a number of the soldiers in the rear of the vehicle were also wounded. Due to damage sustained in the blast to the vehicle's radio systems, Beharry had no means of communication with either his turret crew or any of the other Warrior vehicles deployed around him. He did not know if his commander or crewmen were still alive, or how serious their injuries may be. In this confusing and dangerous situation, on his own initiative, he closed his driver's hatch and moved forward through the ambush position to try to establish some form of communications, halting just short of a barricade placed across the road.

The vehicle was hit again by sustained rocket-propelled grenade attack from insurgent fighters in the alleyways and on rooftops around his vehicle. Further damage to the Warrior from these explosions caused it to catch fire and fill rapidly with thick, noxious smoke. Beharry opened up his armoured hatch cover to clear his view and orientate himself to the situation. He still had no radio communications and was now acting on his own initiative, as the lead vehicle of a six Warrior convoy in an enemy-controlled area of the city at night. He assessed that his best course of action to save the lives of his crew was to push through, out of ambush. He drove his Warrior directly through the barricade, not knowing if there were mines or improvised explosive devices placed there to destroy his vehicle. By doing this he was able to lead the remaining five Warriors behind him towards safety.

As the smoke in his driver's tunnel cleared, he was just able to make out the shape of another rocket-propelled grenade in flight heading directly towards him. He pulled the heavy armoured hatch down with one hand, whilst still controlling his vehicle with the other. However, the overpressure from the explosion of the rocket wrenched the hatch out of his grip, and the flames and force of the blast passed directly over him, down the driver's tunnel, further wounding the semi-conscious gunner in the turret. The impact of this rocket destroyed Beharry's armoured periscope, so he was forced to drive the vehicle through the remainder of the ambushed route, some 1500 metres long with his hatch opened up and his head exposed to enemy fire, all the time with no communications with any other vehicle. During this long surge through the ambushes the vehicle was again struck by rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire. While his head remained out of the hatch, to enable him to see the route ahead, he was directly exposed to much

of this fire, and was himself hit by a 7.62 mm bullet, which penetrated his helmet and remained lodged on its inner surface.

Despite this harrowing weight of incoming fire Beharry continued to push through the extended ambush, still leading his platoon until he broke clear. He then visually identified another Warrior from his company and followed it through the streets of Al Amarah to the outside of the Cimic House outpost, which was receiving small arms fire from the surrounding area. Once he had brought his vehicle to a halt outside, without thought for his own personal safety, he climbed onto the turret of the still-burning vehicle and, seemingly oblivious to the incoming enemy small arms fire, manhandled his wounded platoon commander out of the turret, off the vehicle and to the safety of a nearby Warrior. He then returned once again to his vehicle and again mounted the exposed turret to lift out the vehicle's gunner and move him to a position of safety. Exposing himself yet again to enemy fire he returned to the rear of the burning vehicle to lead the disorientated and shocked dismounts and casualties to safety. Remounting his burning vehicle for a third time, he drove it through a complex chicane and into the security of the defended perimeter of the outpost, thus denying it to the enemy. Only at this stage did Beharry pull the fire extinguisher handles, immobilising the engine of the vehicle, dismounted and then moved himself into the relative safety of the back of another Warrior. Once inside Beharry collapsed from the sheer physical and mental exhaustion of his efforts and was subsequently himself evacuated.

Having returned to duty following medical treatment, on the 11th June 2004 Beharry's Warrior was part of a quick reaction force tasked to attempt to cut off a mortar team that had attacked a Coalition Force based in Al Amarah. As the lead vehicle of the platoon he was moving rapidly through the dark city streets towards the suspected firing point, when his vehicle was ambushed by the enemy from a series of rooftop positions. During this initial heavy weight of enemy fire, a rocket-propelled grenade detonated on the vehicle's frontal armour, just six inches from Beharry's head, resulting in a serious head injury. Other rockets struck the turret and sides of the vehicle, incapacitating his commander and injuring several of the crew.

With the blood from his head injury obscuring his vision, Beharry managed to continue to control his vehicle, and forcefully reversed the Warrior out of the ambush area. The vehicle continued to move until it struck the wall of a nearby building and came to rest. Beharry then lost consciousness as a result of his wounds. By moving the vehicle out of the enemy's well chosen killing area he enabled other Warrior crews to be able to extract his crew from his vehicle, with greatly reduced risk from incoming fire. Despite receiving a serious head injury, which later saw him being listed as very seriously injured and in a coma for some time, his level-headed actions in the face of heavy and accurate enemy fire at short range again almost certainly saved the lives of his crew and provided the conditions for their safe evacuation to medical treatment.

Beharry displayed repeated extreme gallantry and unquestioned valour, despite intense direct attacks, personal injury and damage to his vehicle in the face of relentless enemy action.

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Military Historical Society of Australia

Federal Council

Annual General Meeting

7:30 pm, Monday 22 August 2005

RSL Club (Gallipoli Room, 2nd Floor) – 13 Moore Street Canberra ACT