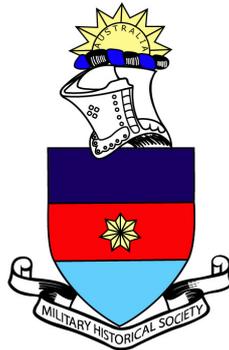


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200707858

## THE INTERCOLONIAL RIFLE COMPETITION NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA 1862 - 1867

Dr J K Haken

Organised shooting has always been associated with the military forces, particularly in colonial times, when competitive shooting matches between different companies were a regular occurrence.

From early Colonial days the establishment of volunteer 1 and later permanent military forces 2 were accepted as a necessity. These however were widely and continually viewed as a drain on a limited public purse and were subjected from inception to many budgetary constraints and reductions by successive Colonial Governments. Federation did not alter this situation, the formative plans of the first General Officer of the Commonwealth Forces, Sir Edward Hutton being frustrated, by the allocated Government finances.<sup>3</sup> Such financial restraints with the exception of times of conflict have persisted to the present day.

Volunteer or partially paid personnel have always accounted for the vast majority of our military forces and it is unlikely that either financial gain or patriotic endeavour was responsible for the continuity, limited as it was of the forces that have been achieved.

A camaraderie existed between a core of members, such that while formal parades were limited, rifle shooting competitions in the form of annual competitions or more often in the form of picnics between regimental companies were frequently a weekly occurrence with the results being generously reported in the popular press.

A huge number, many hundreds, of small trophies were awarded by volunteer companies for rifle matches, but relatively few major competitions were held. Members of the South Australian Rifle Association were the first to suggest an Intercolonial competition, but their suggestion that the first match be held in South Australia was not acceptable to the other colonies. Subsequently in August 1862 the Victorian Rifle Association communicated with the other colony associations about the possibility of holding an Intercolonial meeting. New South Wales was the only colony to respond and a match was arranged. The rules were formulated by Mr J. Grafton Ross and Colonel Ward, then Master of the Victorian Mint. The Associations of both colonies contributed 50 pounds annually towards the provision of a suitable trophy, to become the property of the colony whose team won the match in three consecutive years. The competition became known as the Intercolonial Rifle Competition or the Intercolonial Challenge and the trophy as the Challenge Shield<sup>4</sup> or the Bronze Challenge Shield.<sup>5</sup>

Each team consisted of ten marksman, and each had ten shots at seven distances i.e. 200 yards, 300 yards, 500 yards, 600 yards, 700 yards, 800 yards and 900 yards. Any rifle was acceptable providing the pull of the trigger was not less than three pounds. All distances used the Hythe position in 1862 and 1863, but in further matches, the Hythe position was specified for 200 and 300 yards, and any position allowed for the other distances. A small bore rifle was described as

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1 New South Wales Government Gazette, No. 100, p. 1762, 15.8.1854.

2 Victoria 34 No 19 (1871).

3 Annual Reports of General Officer Commanding Commonwealth Military Forces 1903 and 1904.

4 Sydney Mail, 975-6, 30.9.1871.

5 Marksman 37 No 1, 1 February 1985.

one with a bore less than 0.577 calibre, although both teams used a variety of muskets of 0.451 calibre.

The first, third and fifth matches were held at the Sandridge Butts in Melbourne, the second, fourth and sixth matches were held at the Paddington Rifle Range in Sydney. The first match nearly ended in disaster, as the steamer on which the NSW team was returning to Sydney ran aground near Cape Green.<sup>6</sup> The dates on which the various matches were held are shown below.

First Match. Shot in Victoria on 3-5 November 1862. Won by New South Wales.

Second Match. Shot in New South Wales on 15-17 October 1863. Won by New South Wales.

Third Match. Shot in Victoria on 14-16 November 1864. Won by Victoria.

Fourth Match. Shot in New South Wales on 14-16 December 1865. Won by New South Wales.

Fifth Match. Shot in Victoria on 6-8 December 1866. Won by New South Wales.

Sixth Match. Shot in New South Wales on 26-28 December 1867. Won by New South Wales.

The names of the New South Wales competitors and their scores are shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

	1862	1863	1864	1865	1866	1867	Number of Competitions
Corp J.S.Lynch	182		202	232a	223	248	5
Priv G. Sharp	177	196	199	221	208		5
Priv W.Rayner	168	214	189	224	229	254	6
Sgt J. Webb	152						1
Priv C.Wyndham	150	179					2
Lieut M.M.Campbell	144	190					2
Sgt W.H.Strong	140	160	186	216b	180		5
Sgt/Maj. W.Hellyer	134						
Priv R.Brownlow		191	168	234	223	231	
Priv C.Roberts		163					1
Priv C.L..Phillips		159					1
Ens G.Phillips				212			1
Tr L.Hordern		122			211		2
Priv J.M. Smith			201	204			2
Priv J.J. Slade			199		243	246	3
Lieut T.Richards			180				1
Priv J. West			173				1
Mr A.Wickam				216	232		2
Mr W.H.Glennie				199			1
Mr J.R.Linsley					234	245	2
Mr J.Bushelle						249	1
Mr J.A.Compton						248	1
Mr D.Gee						247	1
Mr J.M.G.Smith						241	1
Priv J.Beaumont						233	1

a Promoted Sergeant

b Promoted Colour/Sergeant

<sup>6</sup> J E Corcoran. *The Target Rifle in Australia 1860-1900*, Dolphin Press, 1975.



Figure 1 Gold Medal presented to Private James Beaumont

After the competition was won and the proposed trophy became the property of the New South Wales Association, a committee was formed to purchase a suitable shield. The committee was inactive and did not meet. The honorary secretary of the New South Wales Rifle Association, Mr F C Brewer, formerly a lieutenant in No 6 company Sydney Battalion Volunteer Rifles (1861-1867) and secretary of the Volunteers Club, assumed control. He asked Colonel Ward, then in London, to arrange for the purchase of a suitable trophy, to cost no more than 340 pounds, the extent of the accumulated funds. A design was provided by Garrand and Sons of Haymarket, London in June 1870. The design was approved, with minor modification, and the trophy was delivered mid 1871, and displayed by Flavelle and Roberts in the window of their George Street store.

Round the outer rim of the shield, on its convex side, is a wide border, formed of the leaves of the laurel, or rather the bay tree-this "honour-giving wreath" being subdivided by narrow bands twining round it. These bands providing a suitable space for the names of the competitors. Inside of this border, and extending for approximately one-third of the diameter of the shield, is a broad annular space and in this space are four separate compartments, representing, in low relief, the amicable contests of the marksmen of Australia and their British ancestry. In the first compartment the ancient Britons (half-clad like the aborigines of this country) appear throwing their spears at a mark; numbers being seated on the greensward, evidently awaiting their turn. In the second a mark; numbers being seated on the greensward, evidently awaiting their turn. In the second compartment, a large body of the archers of the middle ages are seen similarly engaged, and groupings of these figures being yet more spirited and pleasing than that of the first compartment. In the third compartment we have a "Wapen-shaw" or shooting match of the 17th century, to which or rifle contests in these days are, perhaps, most assimilated. In the fourth compartment is a group of modern riflemen, whom we may well suppose to be those who have won the shield for the colony. The compartments are divided from each other by the trunks of trees and Australian birds. In the centre is the "boss" surrounded by an ornament or rim, of a sort of a dragon-tooth pattern. In the narrower circular space around the boss, is the following

inscription:- This Intercolonial Challenge Shield was contested for annually by the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria for six years, from 1862 to 1867, with Small Bore Rifles. Conditions: to be won three times consecutively. The number of competitors: ten men from each colony. Ranges 200, 300, 500, 600, 700, 800 and 900 yards: ten shots at each respective range. WON BY NEW SOUTH WALES, represented in the various matches by the riflemen whose names, and number of contests involved, appear on the laurel border. Within this rim, on the boss of the shield, is a very beautiful picture of Fame, represented as a semi-nude winged female, holding in her upraised left hand a wreath of laurel, the long symbolical trumpet being carried in her right. Below this exquisitely graceful figure, a wreath appears, as it had dropped from her hand upon Australia, represented by the outline of a mountainous country, beyond the horizon of which is seen the rising sun. The shield was made of the best bronze and described as 33(7) or 36(5) inches in diameter.

The shield was presented to the riflemen in 1872 by the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, at a ceremony held in the Exhibition Building in Sydney. Following the ceremony, the shield was carried in a procession to the Public Library where it was housed. The shield latter hung in the corridor of the Sydney Town Hall before relocation to the Dehn Auditorium, Jamieson House, Anzac Rifle Range, the headquarters of the New South Wales Rifle Association, where it remains today.

The participating riflemen received a small gold medal (2.4 cm. diameter), a miniature of the shield. Both sides of one of the medals is shown in Figure 1.



Figure 2 shows the obverse side of the medal with the ribbon bar engraved with the year in which the rifleman participated. It is not known where these medals were manufactured as the specimen shown is in a presentation box, seemingly original, with the name R. Lamb, 23 Hunter Street, Sydney. Watchmaker, Jeweller, and Optician. Established 1838 attached. The medal was worn on the left breast with a pale green ribbon.

A book entitled *Shooting Awards and Prize Medals to Australian Military Forces 1860-2000* details the Intercolonial Challenge Shield and shows plates of several hundred badges and medals but does not include this medal.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> J M O'Connor. *Shooting awards and prize medals to the Australian Military Forces 1860-2000* Kingsgrove, 2000.



200707859

## TROPHY GUNS AT ALBURY

Doug Hunter

The city of Albury in New South Wales is well known for its fine World War 1 War Memorial located high on a hill at the end of the city's main street. Next to nothing is known about the trophy guns allotted to the town in 1921. And for good reason, they have been buried for seventy years. By sheer luck, the remains of two artillery pieces were dug up during excavations at the former Albury Drill Hall site in Victoria Street on 24 November 2005. The relics are in poor condition consistent with having been buried for many years. The guns were identified as a 77 mm German field gun and a 105 mm German howitzer. This exactly matched with the two guns given to the town of Albury as war trophies following World War 1. The site developer, Davis Sanders Homes, kindly allowed the guns to be removed from the site by staff from the 8/13th VMR Museum and Army Museum Bandiana. The guns were taken to Bandiana while further research was done and a conservation plan worked out.<sup>1</sup>



Relic of 77 mm field gun excavated from old Albury Drill Hall grounds, Nov 2005.

### How Albury got the guns

At the end of World War 1, hundreds of guns captured by Australian troops were brought back to Australia and offered to towns across the nation as symbols of their men's exploits. The municipality of Albury made a bold bid for "4 big guns suitable for mounting on the base of the proposed Soldiers' Memorial," and strengthened its bid by including Lavington even though the village was located in Hume Shire.<sup>2</sup> Albury was eventually granted one field gun, one howitzer, two light machine guns and one light trench mortar. The municipal council entered into an agreement accepting the trophy and agreeing to conditions for display, maintenance, formal takeover and sundry expenses. A copy of the agreement has been obtained from the Australian War Memorial. It was signed by the Mayor, the Town Clerk and two aldermen, one being J A Brian ex 7137, 13th Battery AIF.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> War trophies from the First World War 1914-1918, Major R S Billett

<sup>2</sup> AWM 194 N15

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The field gun and the howitzer were displayed in Dean Square, a park fronting Albury's main street. A photograph c.1925 shows them in a fenced enclosure facing the street. It is not known what was done with the lighter weapons. Council did purchase two sets of mounting brackets for the machine guns for 16/- so it seems there was a plan to display them. Nothing more is known of the artillery pieces until 1937 when the local newspaper, the *Border Morning Mail* of 22 April carried this item:

#### Guns Buried and Will Not Be Reclaimed

The municipal council after enquiring into a report that German guns, captured by Australian soldiers and presented to Albury as war souvenirs, were buried under tons of mullock in the Drill Hall paddock, has decided not to press for their reclamation. After considering a report from the works committee, open council agreed last evening that because these trophies had fallen into a state of disrepair action to restore them was considered inadvisable.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 23 April carried a similar article, and followed it up on 26 April with this item:

#### GERMAN GUNS BURIED IN DRILL HALL GROUNDS RETURNED SOLDIERS PROTEST

Albury Sunday

The decision of Albury Council not to recover two captured German guns, which after being placed in the custody of the council were buried without any defined authority in a mass of debris in the drill-hall grounds, was commented on yesterday by Mr A A Rogers, President of the Albury Returned Soldiers' League.

"I am disappointed," he said, "that souvenirs brought from the battlefields to remind the generations to come of the glorious struggle by the Australian soldiers should have been treated in such a way." It is understood a military official ordered the burial of the guns because they were a danger to children who played in the drill-hall grounds.

How might this have come about? Guns of this vintage had wooden wheels. The spokes rotted when the wheel stood in damp ground for a long period causing the wheel to collapse leaving the gun unstable. It is feasible that this happened to the guns in Dean Square and they were removed to the Drill Hall paddock pending repairs. This probably happened when the Depression was at its deepest and the Council had pressing demands on scarce resources. When times improved, however, the guns had been forgotten and nothing was done to restore them in accordance with the agreement. Finally, a 'military official,' arranged for the guns to be buried in the old creek bed that ran behind the Drill Hall because they posed a risk to neighbourhood children. There the guns remained until November 2005.

The trophies allotted to Albury (including the village of Lavington) were

77 mm gun	No. 12556 - Captured 18 September 1918 by the 3rd Battalion
105 mm howitzer	No. 1086 - Captured by Australian Light Horse
Light machine guns	Nos. 9971 and 2530
Light trench mortar	No. 23538

#### Lavington's bid

Although it had been included in Albury's bid and subsequent allotment of trophies, the Parents & Citizens Association of the village of Lavington, lying just north of the town, made a separate application for a trophy. Specifically they asked for something captured by either the 1st or 2nd Division artillery, or the 18th Battalion. The letter was signed by the Association trustees: Fred J Danes ex 356 1st Field Artillery Brigade, E A Polkinghorne late 18th Battalion, and Thomas Percival Pearsall ex 7229 13th Battery, 5th Field Artillery Brigade.



Relic of 105 mm howitzer excavated from old Albury Drill Hall grounds, November 2005.

The application was denied on the basis that Lavington was included with Albury. However, the Hume Shire Council intervened, pointing out that a machine gun had been allocated to the village of Bowna, but because this village was to be inundated by the waters of the Hume Dam, the trophy might be better placed elsewhere. The Bowna allotment was cancelled and machine gun No 4670a, captured by the 18th Battalion, was allocated to Lavington. It was displayed on the wall of the School of Arts, but its whereabouts today are unknown.

### **Controversy at Albury Public School**

The Albury Public School received a machine gun from the NSW Education Department pool. It was received with due ceremony on 11 December 1922. In June 1928, a subsequent headmaster of the school wrote to the Department seeking guidance. In the process of clearing out a storeroom, he had found a box containing a machine gun. What should he do with it?

The Department advised it should either be displayed, or returned to the Australian War Memorial. The headmaster decided to display the trophy, but was met with strong resistance from his staff who cited the policy of the Teachers' Federation of NSW opposing the display of guns at schools because it was "not in the best interests of child development." The meeting between the headmaster and the staff was reported in the *Sydney Sun* of 21 June 1928 under the heading "Heated Controversy". The last folio on the file is a receipt from the AWM for a machine gun in box.

So Albury's trophies disappeared, much as they have done in many towns and villages across the nation. Until last year, that is, when an excavator preparing a residential estate unearthed two old artillery pieces. What should be done with them now? Restoration is probably out of the question, but can something be salvaged of the message these trophies were intended to convey, of brave and terrible exploits, of society's values in a bygone age? The decision rests with Albury City Council.

A suggestion that has been put to Council is that the relics be placed in Noreuil Park, Albury. This park, located on the bank of the Murray River, is one of the most popular recreation areas in the city. The name of the park derives from an action near the village of Noreuil on 15 April 1917 when a German attack broke through infantry positions and reached the Australian gun lines. The 13th Battery, known as the 'Albury Battery' because of the large number of local men

serving with it, was surrounded, but continued to fight. They ran their guns out of the pits and engaged the enemy over open sights. The German attack faltered, and was driven back by counter-attacking infantry. 2007 is the 90th anniversary of the battle at Noreuil, so placing the trophy guns at the park alongside the plaque commemorating the Albury Battery might be a good way of observing the anniversary. After 70 years buried they might be allowed to do their work of "remind[ing] future generations of the glorious struggle of the Australian soldiers."

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## **FAST-TRACK APPLICATION PROCESS FOR AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE MEDAL**

### **Media Release from the Minister assisting the Minister for Defence**

On 3 April 2007, the Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence Bruce Billson has urged those eligible for the Australian Defence Medal (ADM) to apply to enable their service to our country to be further recognised. Since its introduction last year, the ADM has been awarded to more than 133 000 current and former serving members of the Australian Defence Force, including national servicemen. "I am pleased that a large number of eligible people have received their medals in the short time since the ADM was introduced and have had the honour of presenting many. Records show that more than one million people are entitled to apply and to those who are yet to do so, I would encourage them to come forward," Mr Billson said.

The Department of Defence has set up a fast-track application process. Applications are submitted in the form of a specially designed statutory declaration, with basic information relating to applicant's service. "The Department of Defence Directorate of Honours and Awards is dispatching an average of 2 700 Australian Defence Medals per week in response to the continuing flow of applications," Mr Billson said. Current and former Defence Force members who have served since 3 September 1945 for a period of four years or an initial enlistment period, whichever is the lesser, can apply for the medal as recognition of their service to our nation.

Eligibility for the medal is dependent upon individuals having completed their four years or initial enlistment period. The Australian Defence Medal regulations also provide for issue of the medal to those who were discharged due to Defence workplace policy at the time of their discharge (such as a requirement to discharge due to marriage) or were discharged medically unfit with a compensatable injury at the time of their discharge. Mr Billson said that the ADM recognises the fact that Defence Force members make a contribution to the national interest whether on actual operations or in Australia in support roles. "Many tasks undertaken by soldiers, sailors and airmen including preparation and planning, intelligence and other classified activities cannot be recognised by operational service medals but deserve recognition all the same and the ADM achieves this aim," he said. "I encourage all former Defence Force members when applying for their medal to take advantage of having their local Federal Member of Parliament host a presentation ceremony. The Government is committed to the proper recognition of the hard work performed by our Defence Force.

"Presentation ceremonies for the Australian Defence Medal provide an appropriate level of dignified formality to that recognition," Mr Billson said. Application forms are available through the electorate offices of all Senators and Federal Members of Parliament, and branches of ex-Service organisations including state branches of the Returned and Services League of Australia. The form can be downloaded from the internet at [www.defence.gov.au/medals/](http://www.defence.gov.au/medals/)



200707860

## PRISONERS OF JOHNNY TURK

Barry Clissold

Captivity is rather a hard thing to get used to.

Lieutenant F Hancock, 1st Light Horse, in a letter to his father, 15 March 1918.

As an ally of Germany, in World War 1, the Ottoman Empire fought Australians in two major campaigns, Gallipoli and Palestine. During these campaigns, 217 Australians were taken prisoner, the first on 25 April 1915 at Gallipoli and the last on 29 September 1918 at Damascus. This is the story of a few of these men, their experiences of capture and treatment while in captivity.

Australia's first casualties occurred on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. Near Pope's Hill in the confusion surrounding the landing, Captain R McDonald, 16th Battalion, mistaking a Turk for an Indian soldier "was seized by men who rose out of surrounding brushwood undergrowth and hurried forward with a fixed bayonet in the small of the back".<sup>1</sup> Bugler F Ashton, 11th Battalion, similarly confused, and lost, near Pope's Hill was initially fortunate that the Turks mistook "my colour patches for officer insignia and treated me with some deference".<sup>2</sup> This attitude, however, did not continue. Lieutenant W Elston, 16th Battalion, and Private R Lushington, also from 16th Battalion, were to join McDonald and Ashton as prisoners that first day.

Early losses were not confined to the Gallipoli peninsula. In an engagement with a Turkish gunboat, the *Sultan Hissar*, the Australian submarine *AE2* was sunk at Kara Burnu in the Sea of Marmora on 30 April 1915. All 32 crew, including their captain, Lieutenant Commander Stoker, were rescued by the Turks although some had to swim to the gunboat, the rescue dinghy being too small. One of the submarine's stokers, C Suckling, was to state "I don't think, if we had known what was ahead of us, that any one of us would have left the boat."<sup>3</sup>

During major offensive on Hill 971, Private J Thomas was captured on 8 August 1915. Sergeant W Bailey, 15th Battalion, was taken prisoner the same day. Thomas was to remember mistaking his Turkish captors for Australian reinforcements. Although severely wounded Bailey was to cite "a body of Turks chasing across the ridge bayoneting and shooting any wounded".<sup>4</sup>

In Mesopotamia and Palestine, the Australian Flying Corps and units of the Australian Light Horse were also taking losses. In Mesopotamia, on 13 November 1915, Captain T White<sup>5</sup> and his observer Captain F Yeats-Brown, Indian Army, were captured. White recalled "by Arab utter savages in different stages of nudity and variously armed" then by Turkish soldiers "uniformed and well equipped, a smart detachment of gendarmerie".<sup>6</sup> The pair had taken off in their aircraft from Aziziyeh, some 60 miles south of Baghdad. They had planned to land close to Baghdad and by placing explosive charges to telegraph poles destroy the city's communication system. Unfortunately their aircraft was damaged on landing and they were unable to take off. Their problem was compounded due to the selection of a landing site being near an Arab camp.

Meanwhile preparations were being made by British forces to attack Turkish defences at Ctesiphon on 21 November 1915. In a series of counterattacks by the Turks on 23/24 November the British fell back to Lajj and finally to Kut el Amara on 2 December 1915. Then began a siege

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1 AWM 30 B1.22

2 AWM 30 B1.1

3 3 DRL.6226

4 AWM 30 B1.36

5 Captain T White, *Guests of the Unspeakable*

6 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

by the Turks on British forces who finally surrendered on 29 April 1916. The garrison had consisted of 3,000 British and 10,000 Indian troops. Before the surrender the Australian Half-Flight, Australian Flying Corps, which had been part of the garrison, was ordered to leave by air. Some however remained including nine Australian mechanics who would begin a more than 1100 kilometre march to Afion kara Hissar in which only two would survive into captivity. Flight Sergeant J Sloss remarked "it would have been possible to have fought our way out but for the weakness of the garrison". He added "the day we surrendered our rations were finished". On the 1100 kilometre march Sloss tied his wrists to a cart to prevent him falling and being left behind, "to drop out was to die".<sup>7</sup>

The experiences of some Australians in Palestine differed little to those experienced by Australians at Gallipoli and Mesopotamia. Trooper P Duffy, 2nd Light Horse, was captured after an advance against intense Turkish machine and rifle fire. He explained "with no reinforcements or ammunition available the situation became desperate. Until we saw our officer had surrendered and another white flag was flying ... we had no alternative but to be taken prisoner".<sup>8</sup>

Turkey's military infrastructure was not sufficiently developed to cope with handling large numbers of prisoners of war. Throughout Turkey the military used gaols, hospitals, farms, hotels, construction sites, army barracks, camps, private houses and even monasteries for use as prisons.

Following his capture and interrogation in Constantinople, Captain McDonald was moved to Afion kara Hissar camp and placed in a "good house" on the outskirts of town until March 1916. He was moved to "very bad housing the" following year as a consequence of a failed escape attempt by the captain of the AE2, Lieutenant Commander Stoker.<sup>9</sup>

Bugler Ashton worked a six-day week under German supervision making bunds, carting stones and making roads. He was transferred to Turkish camps at Karqhali and San Stefano, a seaport on the Sea of Marmora. There he unloaded and loaded railway trucks and barges. Private Thomas was taken to Stainbone prison in Constantinople before being transferred, firstly to a monastery at Aujora where he received "fair treatment", then to Belemedik in January 1916 to work in the tunnels which the Germans were cutting through the Taurus Mountains, as part of a rail link to connect Berlin, Constantinople and Baghdad.<sup>10</sup> The German operators of the project usually preferred Allied POW's to indigenous workers.

The crew of the AE2, after spending some time in Constantinople and Angora were moved to Belemedik to also work in the tunnels. There prisoners record that pay received from the Germans enabled the local purchase of food such as bread, beans, potatoes, eggs and a fiery drink, Rakky. Work conditions were harsh as the prisoners loaded stone into trucks after it had been blasted from the tunnel walls. Stoker Suckling was eventually made responsible for looking after the project's air compressors "an easy job paying two shillings a day".<sup>11</sup> During this period two of the crew attempted an escape but failed. Suckling himself, with two others, also attempted to escape but failed after four days on the run "when they ran out of food and could not clear the surrounding mountains from the camp".<sup>12</sup>

Sloss also attempted to escape from the northern camp at Afion kara Hissar. From there he attempted two escapes both failing; the second by building a portable boat in which he and a

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7 AWM 43 (802)

8 AWM 30 B2 2A

9 AWM 30 B1 22

10 AWM 30 B1 33

11 3 DRL 6226 419/101/14

12 Ibid.

party of British sailors attempted to reach the coast and then sail 60 miles to Cyprus. They failed when captured by gendarmes “who mistook them for deserters from the Turkish Army”.<sup>13</sup> Indeed stuff that legends are made from.

Medical arrangements, for prisoners and even for the Turks themselves, were often described as disgraceful and in many cases primitive. Malaria, diarrhoea and dysentery were the main causes of death of prisoners. Other causes included septicaemia, enteritis, typhus, bronchitis, pneumonia, Spanish influenza, chronic nephritis and meningitis. Amongst Australian prisoners there was a higher incidence of death at Angora than in other Turkish camps. On 17 February 1917 Sergeant G Drysdale and Trooper A Day, both 2nd Light Horse, died there from tubercular bronchitis and Private D Creedon, 9th Battalion, died 5 months later of enteritis. Privates G Mathers and A Nelson, both 15th Battalion, having survived capture at Gallipoli, also died at Angora. Trooper P Scoope was one of a number from 9th Light Horse who died of dysentery. Sergeant W Bailey, 15th Battalion, also imprisoned at Angora was to write “it was custom when a man was very ill and dying slowly to inject caffeine and kill him off very quickly”.<sup>14</sup> Trooper E Hobson, 2 Light Horse, wrote that if a man was incapable of helping himself he invariably died, as the Turkish orderlies would never help him.

At Belemedik three crew members of the AE2, Petty Officer S Gilbert, Able Seaman A Knaggs and Chief Stoker C Varcoe died; two from typhus and Varcoe from meningitis. Stoker M Williams died from malaria at neighbouring Bozanti. Private L New, 15th Battalion, died from complications after being crushed by a falling rock at Belemedik while working on the Baghdad-Constantinople railway. It was acknowledged that Belemedik was an overcrowded camp riddled with malaria and meningitis.

Winter in Turkish prisons brought hardships for Australians, and life for many was maintained by slender margins. Despite the cold and poor living conditions prisoners were required to work long hours. Small allowances were paid by the Turks for work. Many prisoners worked from daylight to dark at Afion kara Hissar or when transferred to Angora Trooper G Handsley, 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse, captured at Romani, worked on the railway receiving no pay and fed on a ration of bread and boiled rice. He remembers being badly treated and food very scarce. When released on 11 November 1918 Duffy told authorities that many held captive at Adana worked on railway construction for about 13 hours a day and received payment. Such payments could be used to supplement Turkish-provided food and clothing. Many officers sought funds, by using personal cheques, to survive. McDonald had his Army pay and field allowances credited to a Turkish bank in Constantinople. During the war the American Embassy in Constantinople regularly assisted prisoners in camps. Bailey recalled “conditions were almost impossible to live without parcels and money”.<sup>15</sup>

Without the support of outside organizations supplying parcels of food, clothing, money and medicines, many prisoners would not have survived.

Air Mechanic K Hudson recalled conditions at Bagtehe Camp as the very worst. He said “*of the men who went there very few ever got back alive*. The work, railway construction on difficult ground was hard.” In one week he remembered 133 deaths, “the dead never were put more than a foot away from the surface and not every man got a coffin”. Often a blanket sufficed which was withdrawn after the burial.<sup>16</sup> Treatment, in some camps, of officers was better. At Afion kara Hissar, McDonald was admitted to hospital for typhus and was well treated although he was

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<sup>13</sup> White, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>14</sup> AWM 30 B1 36

<sup>15</sup> 1 DRL Box 9/4

<sup>16</sup> 3 DRL 3325

required to buy all medicines and food. Writing from there he observed the health of the camp is excellent as far as the officers are concerned. Of course we do not see any of our men but I believe they are well. By comparison, at Nisibin, overcrowding, filthy conditions, the sharing of bedding, lice-infested hospital clothing and the re-using of bandages compounded problems and increased the death rate. Such conditions were exacerbated by malnutrition and poor sanitary facilities.

For many the dull routine of prison life was relieved by "once a week lectures where we learned from the men who had done things; how coconuts are grown in the Malay States, of archaeology in Ceylon and Turkey, of elephant hunting and Arctic exploration".<sup>17</sup> Some prisoners studied the Russian language, initially from Russian prisoners, then from books sent by the Australian Red Cross. White, particularly, studied Russian with the thought of escaping there. With a false Russian passport he did escape, near war's end, to Odessa on 6 October 1918 aboard an Ukrainian steamer. At Afion kara Hissar McDonald became the camp's dressmaker, doing untold mending.

Despite the hardships, horror and often ill-treatment by the Turks, McDonald, Ashton, Elston, Lushington, Thomas, Bailey, Suckling, White, Sloss, Handsley, Duffy, Hobson, Stoker, and Hudson survived the war and returned to Australia. Sixty two other Australians did not return.

For their conduct in the face of great hardship and service during captivity Sloss and Hudson were awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. White, knighted in 1952, was Australian High Commissioner to Great Britain from 1951 to 1956. Earlier he had been Minister for Air and Civil Aviation. He died in 1957, aged 69. Suckling, aged 92, was the last of the AE2 to die; his latter years were blind caused by the beatings to his head when a prisoner of the Turks. Stoker was recalled to duty again in 1939 as Chief of Staff to Admiral King. In 1944 he was appointed, at 59, to the staff of the Navy command force for the invasion of Europe. He died in 1966.

#### Statements and manuscripts at the Australian War Memorial

AWM 16 4376/50/4	1 DRL 223
AWM 18 9982/1/2	1 DRL 428 Box 143/1
AWM 30 B1 13, 16, 20, 30, 81, B2 2B,2D, 14, 14D, B3 1, 1C	2 DRL 530
AWM 36 Bundle (49)(Box 11)	3 DRL 419/101/14 PR 85/96 419/108/27

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<sup>17</sup> White, op. cit., p. 164.



## EMPTY GRAVE

### The story of Ordnance Artificer Gordon Robertson

Greg Swinden

In the quiet Presbyterian Section of Gore Hill Cemetery (Sydney), only 50 metres or so from the busy Pacific Highway upon which the people of the city travel to and from their daily business stands a headstone commemorating an ordinary Australian sailor. Yet this is no ordinary grave; for it is an empty grave. This memorial commemorates Ordnance Artificer IV Class Gordon Jack Robertson of HMAS *Canberra* who was killed on 9 August 1942 when the cruiser was sunk at the Battle of Savo Island. His wife and parents commissioned the memorial as Gordon Robertson, like most war time RAN casualties, has no known grave.



The empty grave (or memorial) is common-place in Australia and became so during World War 1 when thousands of Australian soldiers were listed as Missing – Believed Killed in Action at Gallipoli, the Middle East and on the Western Front. Families often erected special headstones to their missing loved ones or added their names to family memorials often stating where their son or husband had fallen.

During World War 2 this form of commemoration again became popular but this time all three services were acknowledged. Thousands of Australian airmen were killed in operations over Europe and the bodies of many were never recovered. During the South East Asian and Pacific campaigns, particularly in 1941-42, hundreds of Australian soldiers were listed as missing in action and later many died as POW's without a known grave.

For the Navy the heavy fighting in the Mediterranean, in the defence of Australia and the Pacific Campaign produced hundreds of casualties and most with no known grave. These losses

included the sinking or damage of HMA Ships *Goorangi* (19 missing), *Sydney* (645 missing), *Parramatta* (130 missing), *Perth* (356 missing), *Yarra* (138 missing), *Vampire* (8 missing), *Canberra* (84 missing), *Matafele* (24 missing), *Australia* (17 missing), and *Nizam* (10 missing). Other ships lost men to enemy action, accidents or the vagaries of the sea and weather and as a result their bodies were either lost overboard or buried at sea.

The sinking of troopships (with *Anking*, *Ceramic*, *Khedive Ismail*, *Tulagi* and *Nellore* being the most catastrophic) added yet another 57 to the list of the missing. Thus of the approximately 2000 RAN personnel listed as fatal casualties during the war well over 1500 have no known grave and their names are recorded on the Plymouth Naval Memorial to the missing.

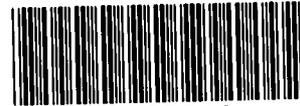
For their families the creation of an individual memorial to them in Australia allowed a place to grieve and offer commemoration. For the Robertson family the memorial held special significance as the remains of Gordon's infant sister Phyllis, who died in September 1918, are buried nearby. But what of Gordon Robertson? He was born on 28 July 1919, the second of three children born to Arthur and Barbara Robertson of North Sydney, and joined the RAN on 6 July 1939 as an Ordnance Artificer V Class (Official Number 23389). He enlisted for a period of 12 years (having been a fitter and turner in civilian life) and was described on entry as 5 foot 6 inches tall with fair hair, hazel eyes and a fresh complexion and a scar on his right cheek.

Gordon Robertson's initial service was 'under training' at HMAS *Cerberus* and after being rated as an Ordnance Artificer IV Class he joined *Canberra* on 11 June 1940. Three days before joining *Canberra* he married 20 year old Edna Joan Gerrard at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne (it is not known if they had any children, but following Gordon's death she remarried and became Mrs Edna Joan Carter).

During 1940 and 1941 *Canberra* operated on the Australian Station and Indian Ocean escorting convoys and searching for German raiders. In late 1941 and early 1942 she carried out convoy escort duties to New Guinea and Java before becoming part of Task Force 44 which was to become involved in the operations to recapture the Solomon Islands. Ordnance Artificer IV Class Gordon Jack Robertson was still serving in *Canberra* on the fateful night of 8/9 August 1942 when off Savo Island in the Solomon Islands Group the ship was badly damaged by enemy action and later sunk. He was subsequently listed as "presumed killed" and "discharged dead" on 9 August 1942.

Lest We Forget.

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## AUSTRALIAN VICTORIA CROSS PRESENTATIONS

Anthony Staunton<sup>1</sup>

Tuesday, 26 June 2007 is the 150th anniversary of the first presentation of the Victoria Cross. The medals were personally presented by Queen Victoria in a parade at Hyde Park. On parade were a large body of troops; life guards, dragoons, hussars, engineers, artillery and line regiments together with a detachment of Royal Navy bluejackets.<sup>2</sup> Just before ten o'clock in the morning, following a royal salute from the artillery, Her Majesty, the Prince Consort, the Crown Prince of Prussia and the Prince of Wales rode into the park and took their places near the dais. The 62 recipients came forward one at a time, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in order of rank and the Army recipients in order of regimental precedence. The first Army recipient to be presented with his medal was Sergeant John Grieve of the 2nd Dragoons who was cited for gallantry during the Charge of the Heavy Brigade. The Victoria Cross presented to Sergeant Grieve has been held for nearly 100 years by the Art Gallery of South Australia. A military review followed the presentation.

The Queen personally presented 185 of the 471 Victoria Crosses gazetted during her reign. After the 62 awards presented at Hyde Park, the Queen in five further investitures personally presented a further 76 crosses between November 1857 and November 1860. Following the death of Albert, the Prince Consort in 1861 the Queen made no further presentations until 1874 although during the period from 1861 to 1872 a further 57 Victoria Crosses were gazetted.

### After the death of the Prince Consort

On 30 March 1874, The Queen reviewed the troops of the recently returned Gold Coast Expedition at Windsor Great Park. The parade was under the command Major General Sir Garnet Wolseley, who commanded the expedition which is nowadays known as the Ashanti War 1873-1874. On parade were the Royal Artillery, the Black Watch, the Rifle Brigade, the Army Service Corps and the Army Hospital Corps. Two days earlier two members of the expedition had been gazetted with the Victoria Cross but only Lieutenant Lord Gifford received his cross from the Queen on parade. The second recipient Sergeant Samuel McGaw of the Black Watch received his cross three weeks later at Osborne House.

Two further awards were made to members of the Gold Coast Expedition and both received their crosses from the Queen at Windsor Castle on 26 November 1874. The first presentation was to Major Reginald Sartorius whose younger brother would be awarded the Victoria Cross for Afghanistan in 1879. Both brothers were born in Portugal and both retired as Major Generals of the British Army. The second presentation on 26 November 1874 was to Lieutenant Mark Sever Bell of the Royal Engineers who was born in Sydney on 15 May 1843 but who left New South Wales as an infant and never returned. He did not consider himself an Australian.

Between 1874 and 1900 the Queen presented 47 crosses at 30 investitures. Twenty two were single Victoria Cross investitures and of the eight multiple investitures the largest was five crosses on 15 December 1900 her last investiture before her death in January 1901. The first recipient was Lieutenant Sir John Milbanke who would be killed in action at Sulva Bay in

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- <sup>1</sup> This paper was originally presented to the ACT Branch of the Military Historical Society of Australia at its February 2007 meeting.
  - <sup>2</sup> The parade commander was Sir Colin Campbell who as an ensign was in Sir John Moore's advance to Salamanca and the retreat to Corunna and as a lieutenant was at Vittoria. In the Crimean War he led the 93rd at Balaclava in an action immortalised as the 'Thin Red Line' and commanded the Highland Brigade. Shortly after the parade he was to leave for India to take up the position of Commander in Chief India where he would be responsible for containing the Indian Mutiny.

August 1915. The fifth recipient was Private Charles Ward who in some rare footage shown on TV several years ago is seen with a shy grin posing proudly with his Victoria Cross for the camera. He was the last man presented with his Victoria Cross by Queen Victoria but the Queen then conferred Distinguished Service Order awards. The first was to a Royal Marine Light Infantry captain and the next was to Lieutenant Commander William Jarvis Colquhoun of the Victorian Navy, the first Australian naval officer awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

#### **Edward VII**

Edward VII succeeded his mother Queen Victoria and as King he personally presented 26 Victoria Crosses, ten which had been gazetted during the reign of Queen Victoria and 16 of the 51 awards gazetted during his reign. One of the ten awards gazetted during the reign of Queen Victoria presented by Edward VII was the award to Lieutenant Guy Wylly of the Tasmania Imperial Bushmen at St James' Palace on 25 July 1901. Lieutenant Wylly was the first Australian soldier to be actually presented with his award and was the only Australian to receive his award from Edward VII.

#### **Duke of York and Cornwall**

In 1901 and 1902 the future King George V would present 17 Victoria Crosses. Prior to the death of Queen Victoria it had been arranged that the Duke of York would tour Australia, South Africa and Canada. Following the death of Queen Victoria it was decided that the tour would proceed. As a result of the accession of Edward VII to the throne the Duke of York also became the Duke of Cornwall, As Duke of York and Cornwall he opened the first Australian Parliament in Melbourne in May 1901.

In South Africa in August the Duke of York and Cornwall presented ten Victoria Crosses including the only Victoria Cross earned by the Indian Army in the South African War. This award was to Lieutenant Frank Aylmer Maxwell who was one of five officers and men awarded the Victoria Cross for saving the guns of Q Battery, Royal Horse Artillery at Korn Spruit on 31 March 1900. In 1906, Maxwell married Charlotte Alice Hamilton, the third daughter of the late Pat Hill Osborne of Currandooley New South Wales. The property of Currandooley is situated about six kilometres from Bungendore. In 1910 Major Maxwell served with the Australian Military Forces. Brigadier General Maxwell, commanding the 27th Brigade of the British 9th (Scottish) Division was killed by a sniper on 21 September 1917 during the Battle of Menin Road. His widow edited and published his letters and diaries after the war. On the title page the name of Charlotte Maxwell did not appear as the compiler but in its place was simply "his wife".

After South Africa the Duke of York and Cornwall presented three Victoria Crosses in September and October at separate ceremonies in Ottawa, Quebec and Toronto to Canadian soldiers for gallantry in South Africa. The celebrations were somewhat muted out of respect for the death of United States President William McKinley. The Duke of York and Cornwall arrived in Canada just as word was being received that the President had died eight days after being shot by an assassin. Shortly after arriving back in England he was named Prince of Wales.

As Prince of Wales, he presented four further Victoria Crosses on 1 July 1902 at Horse Guards Parade. The awards were to be presented by Edward VII during the period following the coronation which was scheduled for 26 June 1902 but two days earlier his doctors recommended he be operated on and the coronation was deferred until 9 August. One of the four recipients was Lieutenant Frederick William Bell of the 5th Western Australian contingent.

#### **George V**

Of the 639 Victoria Cross awards for World War 1 and the interwar period 559 or 87% were personally presented by King George V. Including the 17 awards he presented during his father's

reign he personally presented 576 crosses. Half of the 96 Australians awarded the Victoria Cross were presented by George V, 43 at Buckingham Palace, two at Windsor, two at Sandringham, and one in Hyde Park to Harry Murray. The first four were presented to three Lone Pine recipients and to Hugh Thossell, the only Light Horse recipient, at Buckingham Palace on 4 December 1915. Albert Jacka received his cross at Windsor Castle on 29 September 1916. The last Australian to personally receive the Victoria Cross from George V was Lawrence Dominic McCarthy of the 16th Battalion, at Buckingham Palace on 12 July 1919.

### **Posthumous awards**

Prior to World War 1 only 12 posthumous Victoria Crosses had been approved. Edward VII approved six for the South African War in 1902 but the policy against posthumous awards was not overturned until six awards gazetted between 1858 and 1897 were confirmed in 1907 and crosses issued to their next of kin. All twelve awards were sent to the next of kin by registered post and were not personally presented to the next of kin. Twenty other recipients before 1907 did not live to have their crosses personally presented to them. A number died before the awards were gazetted and the others died after the awards were gazetted but in neither case were the medals personally presented to the next of kin. It was not until World War 1 that next of kin were personally presented with the Victoria Cross.

Many references state that the next of kin of Captain A F G Kilby of the 2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for the Battle of Loos on 25 September 1915 received the Victoria Cross from the King at Buckingham Palace on 11 July 1916. Lieutenant Colonel Bertram Best Dunkley died of wounds on 5 August 1917 and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross on 6 September 1917. Again many references state that some weeks later, King George V, pinned the Victoria Cross on the shawl of his new born son. In these and some other cases I am unable to confirm that the presentation took place. However, the Court Circular confirms that George V presented 141 Victoria Crosses to next of kin.

The first presentation to the next of kin confirmed by the Court Circular was to the widow of Captain John Leslie Green, RAMC at Buckingham Palace on 7 October 1916. This was followed on 1 November 1916 by the presentation to the widow of Major William La Touche Congreve whose father was awarded the Victoria Cross in South Africa and was in 1916 a Corps Commander in France. Two further presentations took place on 16 and 29 November in which 31 posthumous awards were presented. Three of the awards were gazetted in 1914, 18 in 1915 and the remainder were 1916 awards including the award to Sergeant Claude Castleton 5th Australian Machine Gun Company of the 2nd Australian Division presented to his mother.

### **Edward VIII**

There were no Victoria Crosses gazetted during the reign of Edward VIII but shortly before the death of George V the last Victoria Cross before World War 2 was gazetted posthumously to Captain Godfrey Meynall of the Corps of Guides, 12th Frontier Force Regiment, Indian Army for gallantry on 29 September 1935 on the North West Frontier. On 14 July 1936, the widow of Captain Meynall received his Victoria Cross from the King at Buckingham Palace. This was the fourth Victoria Cross presented by Edward VIII, having previously presented three awards as Prince of Wales in the early 1920s.

### **George VI**

During the reign of King George VI, 184 Victoria Crosses, 182 for World War 2 and two for Korea were gazetted. George VI personally presented 125 of the awards but only three to Australians. The three Australians were Hughie Edwards, an Australian serving in the Royal Air Force and Privates Richard Kelliher and Reginald Roy Rattey awarded Victoria Crosses for New

Guinea in 1943 and Bougainville in 1945 respectively. Both were part of the 1946 Victory Contingent to London and received the crosses at Buckingham Palace on 9 July 1946.

On 22 June 1943 investiture was scheduled to present medals to aircrew from the successful air raid against the Ruhr dams the previous month. However George VI was ill on the day and delegated the duty to his wife Queen Elizabeth who presented the medals including the Victoria Cross to Wing Commander Guy Gibson. This is the only occasion when a Victoria Cross was presented by the consort to the monarch.

#### **Queen Elizabeth II**

The first Victoria Cross presentation by Queen Elizabeth II was to Private Bill Speakman whose award was gazetted during the reign of George VI. On Wednesday, 7 March 2007, Lorena Budd, the widow of Corporal Bryan Budd of the Parachute Regiment, attended an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace where she received from the Queen the Victoria Cross awarded posthumously to her husband. Eleven Victoria Crosses have been gazetted in the reign of Elizabeth II and nine, all five living recipients and four of the six posthumous awards have been presented by the Queen.

#### **VC Presentations in Australia**

Australia has witnessed forty Victoria Cross presentations between 1858 and 1969. Presentations have been made in all states and also in Canberra. Over half of the awards have been made by the Governor General and a quarter by State Governors. The first four presentations between 1858 and 1864 were to the British Army, the Indian Army and the Royal Navy.

In 1857, the 77th Regiment (which with the 57th Regiment in 1881 became the Middlesex Regiment) arrived in Sydney. The 77th were veterans of the Crimean War and the names of two of the regiment, Sergeant John Park and Private Alexander Wright, had appeared in first gazette published 150 years ago in February 1857. Being at sea they were unable to attend the first presentation at Hyde Park in June 1857. It was not until 9 November 1857 that the two crosses were dispatched to the General Officer Commanding New South Wales. Unfortunately, about the time the crosses arrived in Sydney, orders had been received for the regiment to prepare to move to India where reinforcement was needed because of the Indian Mutiny. This is the likely reason no public presentation was made to Park and Wright. However, medals were definitely received in Australia before the Regiment left for India and were presented to the men. After the 77th reached India, many men including the Commanding Officer and Private Wright died from cholera. Sergeant Park survived but he did not survive India dying there in 1863. Regrettably, there are no known photographs for either recipient.

The honour of the first public presentation of a Victoria Cross in Australia goes to Private Frederick Whirlpool then serving with the Hawthorn and East Kew Rifles, Victorian Land Forces, and formerly of the 3rd Bombay European Regiment. His award was for gallantry at Jhansi during the Indian Mutiny on two occasions in April and May 1858. The presentation took place in Melbourne on 21 October 1859 and the Victoria Cross was pinned on his tunic by Lady Barkley, the wife of the Governor of Victoria.

The first public presentation in Sydney took place on 24 September 1864 to Captain of the Foretop Samuel Mitchell of the Royal Navy for gallantry the previous April in New Zealand. This is the only presentation of a Victoria Cross with a blue ribbon in Australia. The Victoria Cross was presented by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir John Young.

### **The Boer War**

Six Australians were awarded the Victoria Cross during the South African War 1899-1902. Three were presented overseas including the awards in London to Wylly by Edward VII and to Bell by the Prince of Wales. The third overseas presentation was to Lieutenant Leslie Maygar of the 5th Victorian Mounted Rifles by Lord Kitchener Commander in Chief South Africa at Pretoria on 8 June 1902. The three awards presented in Australia were to Captain Neville Howse by the Governor of New South Wales on 8 August 1902, to Private John Bisdee by the Governor of Tasmania three days later and to Sergeant James Rogers, who went to South Africa with the 1st Victoria Mounted Rifles, who was awarded the Victoria Cross while serving with the South African Constabulary and who in 1915 would be wounded on Gallipoli with the Australian Imperial Force. His cross was presented by Lord Tennyson, Governor General of Australia on 18 September 1902.

### **World War 1**

Forty eight of the 66 awards to Australians in World War 1 were presented by George V in the UK between 1915 and 1919. The only other Australian World War 1 Victoria Cross presented overseas was by the Governor General of New Zealand in 1917 to next of kin of New Zealand born Private Thomas Cooke of the 8th Australian Infantry Battalion. Twelve awards were presented in Australia including seven by the Governor General Sir R Munro Ferguson, two by the Prince of Wales during a visit to Australia in 1920, and one each by the Governor of Tasmania, Sir Harry Chauvel and by Lord Birdwood during a visit to Australia. There were no formal presentations to the next of kin of five Australian recipients.

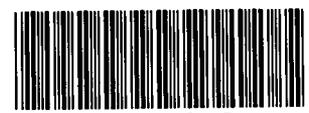
Seven of the 12 presentations in Australia were to next of kin, the first being to the widow of Melbourne born Wilbur Taylor who had served with the 5th Victoria Mounted Rifles in South Africa and who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross with the 25th Battalion Royal Fusiliers in East Africa in 1915. The presentation was made at Government House Melbourne by the Governor General on 7 October 1916. This is the same day as the first confirmed presentation to next of kin by George V and since Australia is ten hours in front of GMT it would seem that the first confirmed presentation of a Victoria Cross to next of kin occurred in Australia.

### **World War 2 and Vietnam**

Twenty one of the 24 Victoria Cross awards to Australia in World War 2 and Vietnam were presented in Australia with three being presented by George VI at Buckingham Palace. Fourteen of the awards were presented by the Governor General and five by State Governors. In World War 2, Lord Gowrie and the Duke of Gloucester each presented six crosses as Governor General. Three Victoria Crosses were presented by the Lieutenant Governor of Western Australia, and one each by the Governors of Queensland and South Australia. The first two awards for Vietnam which were both posthumous awards were presented the Governor General, Lord Casey. The remaining two awards for Vietnam were presented in separate ceremonies in Sydney and Brisbane to Warrant Officers Ray Simpson and Keith Payne by Queen Elizabeth II during her 1970 tour of Australia.

### **Conclusion**

A comparison of Victoria Cross presentations in Australia and Canada show both similarities and differences. Prior to World War 1 both countries had seven presentations to living recipients; four to personnel of British or Indian forces and three to their own forces for the South African War. For the world wars there were 18 and 16 posthumous presentations in Australia and Canada respectively. However while Australia presented 11 world war living recipients with the Victoria Cross no living Canadian from either world war was presented with his award in Canada.



## THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY DURING THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION

Alexandra McCubbin<sup>1</sup>

Outline the position of the PLA in Chinese society in the 1950s. Then examine in detail the social, political or military roles of the PLA in the Cultural Revolution, especially between 1966-68? What impact did the Cultural Revolution have on the authority and workings of the PLA in Chinese politics and society from that time into the mid-1970s?

At the time of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) on 1 October 1949, the military was one of the most important institutions in Chinese society. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is highly politicized and was always viewed as the defender of the Party as well as the defender of the nation. The launch of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 presented a major challenge to the PLA, which soon became embroiled in the conflict. During this period the army performed a number of social, political and military roles, despite constraints placed on its action by the central leadership. Ultimately the PLA intervened to restore order in China, although the impact of the Cultural Revolution continued well into the 1970s.

Civil-military relations in the PRC developed during the war of national liberation, when the Communist party's Red Army fought for the creation of a unified China. The army's guerrilla strategy forced it to develop strong ties with the local people, a relationship as close as that "between lips and teeth"<sup>2</sup>. Following victory, the army continued to have a strong presence in the life of Chinese civilians. Renamed the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1949, the army was far from a professional, apolitical tool of government, instead becoming involved in economic, social and political activities. The Communist forces had spent years fighting both the Japanese military and the Nationalist troops, lending it a great degree of authority.

In the early years of Communist rule, the army was closely involved in 'political work'. Soldiers were involved in the economic reconstruction of China, supervising land redistribution and implementing collectivization. As well as supporting the development of the national economy, the PLA was required to maintain maximum self-sufficiency, thus placing as little strain as possible on the civilian population.<sup>3</sup> In terms of social hierarchy, the soldier greatly increased his prestige, having formerly held a status below that of scholars, peasants and merchants.<sup>4</sup> The military also functioned as political educator to the civilian population. This involved the promulgation of the Communist Party ideology, as well as the establishment of local political structures. In regional areas it was quite common for military commanders to hold political positions, in both the Party and state apparatuses.

In the mid-1950s the PLA retreated somewhat from its social role as several military leaders began to press for increasing professionalism within the Chinese army. A modern country needed a modern military, and the PLA's experience in the Korean War emphasized its need to review its doctrine of People's War. The principle that one was 'better red than expert' had previously been dominant among many PLA leaders, but now military training was valued alongside

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- 1 Officer Cadet Alexandra McCubbin RAAF was the 2006 recipient of the MHS Military History prize awarded at ADFA. It was personally presented to her at the ADFA Prizes and Awards Ceremony in December by Federal President of the MHS Major Robert Morrison. Alexandra is now a Flying Officer and is enjoying her first posting to 87 Squadron at RAAF Base Edinburgh in South Australia.
  - 2 Lieberthal, Kenneth, *Governing China: From Revolution through Reform* (New York, 2004), p. 46
  - 3 Dreyer, June, *China's Political System* (New York, 2004), chapter 9, 'The role of the military', p.197
  - 4 *Ibid.*, p. 199

political education. This progress was stalled in the later part of the decade. During the Great Leap Forward (1958-60), Chinese society was compelled to abandon everyday work and focus on the national effort of industrialization. The PLA was no exception, becoming a staunch supporter of and participant in the campaign. In 1956 uncompensated work by each soldier amounted to an average of less than 2 days a year, while in 1958 this figure had risen to 25.6 days.<sup>5</sup> In the end, the mass campaign was a complete failure and the PLA emerged with depleted ranks and poor morale.

The Cultural Revolution, officially launched in 1966, was prefaced by a period of renewed revolutionary zeal. Radical Maoist groups began attacking bourgeois capitalists and intellectuals, and the PLA was not immune from this phenomenon. In May 1965 the rank system was abolished, and commanders who emphasized military expertise came under attack. Chairman Mao's call in 1966 for China's youth to 'storm the centre' brought about the formation of a number of radical groups, who came to be known as Red Guards. These groups began to take action around the country, denouncing and attacking sources of authority with increasing violence. It is generally acknowledged that military commanders were reluctant to be drawn into the dispute, and initially attempted to retain a level of neutrality. In January 1967 a number of senior PLA officials were purged, and in general the military complied with instructions to stand aside as uprisings occurred.

As violence became more widespread and the Red Guards started to fragment, many military commanders began to have reservations about the revolution. The Red Guards splintered into a number of factions, each claiming to be the true representatives of Maoism. Those with more radical views become progressively more destructive, attacking local institutions and power structures. At this stage army leaders were becoming increasingly confused about the role the PLA was expected to perform, and sought clarification from the central leadership. A directive was released on 23 January 1967, entitled "Concerning the Resolute Support of the PLA for the Revolutionary Masses of the Left". According to these orders, the PLA could no longer remain aloof from the Cultural Revolution: "The so-called 'noninvolvement' is false".<sup>6</sup> The document directed PLA forces to intervene on behalf of the revolutionary left.

The directive failed, however, to adequately define which groups comprised this 'revolutionary left'. Many military commanders found it difficult to distinguish the 'genuine' proletarian revolutionaries from so-called rightists or 'capitalist-roaders'.<sup>7</sup> Some of these military leaders were even ousted as they were considered to have "committed errors in supporting the left".<sup>8</sup> Regional commanders tended to support factions with a more conservative inclination, often protecting groups who were being pursued by the Maoists. Although the central government explicitly prohibited the sheltering of these conservatives, the practice continued throughout the Cultural Revolution. In many cases regional military leaders had close personal or professional ties to local officials, and they sought to uphold rather than overthrow the local establishment.

The most publicized example of such conflicting loyalties was the Wuhan incident of July 1967. Chen Caidao, commander of the Wuhan military region, ordered his followers to detain radical officials visiting the region. The central government sent in its own paratroopers to suppress

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5 Adelman, Jonathan, *The revolutionary armies* (Westport 1980), p. 168

6 Jencks, Harlan, 'China's civil-military relations 1949-1980' in Morris Janowitz, ed., *Civil-Military Relations: Regional Perspectives* (Beverly Hills, 1981), p.132

7 Scobell, Andrew, *China's use of military force: beyond the great wall and the long march* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 98

8 Chang, Parri, 'Changing Patterns of military roles in Chinese politics', in William Whitson, ed., *The military and political power in China in the 1970s*, (New York 1972), p.56

Chen's forces and capture the commander. It appears that the incident served as a pretext for the central government to attack regional PLA elements. To avoid this, some local PLA commanders set up mass organizations which promoted a more conservative Maoist line. Such organizations could serve as proxies to fight the radical Red Guard units, while PLA members themselves maintained deniability.

In the early stages of the Cultural Revolution, the PLA was rarely targeted directly in the violence. Although several military leaders had been purged, the army initially retained its reputation as a vanguard of revolutionary spirit. Soldiers would attempt to mediate between rival Red Guard factions, although the use of force was not yet mandated in order to suppress such clashes. PLA troops demonstrated an extraordinary level of restraint, made all the more difficult by the contradictory orders they often received from above. As the Cultural Revolution gained momentum, the PLA itself came under attack in many areas. Rebel Maoists raided army headquarters, seized army weapons and disciplined army leaders. This trend only intensified when a newspaper editorial called on rebels to seek out rightists and "pull out a small handful in the Army."<sup>9</sup>

Army officials participated in the political process at the highest levels, taking part in policy discussions and expressing the unease of many PLA members. In February 1967 senior military officers engaged in a series of meetings with radical Party leaders to debate the future direction of the Cultural Revolution. During these meetings, termed the 'February adverse current', army leaders objected to the increasing disorder and its impact on the PLA itself. The frustration of the PLA leaders was expressed by Marshal Ye Jianying, vice chair of the Central Military Commission, who told one radical leader "You have made a mess of the Party, government and industry. But even that doesn't satisfy you, so now you want to wreck the army."<sup>10</sup> Ultimately Mao sided with the radicals, and the anarchy continued.

By mid-1967 China had degenerated into chaos, with the collapse of civil institutions and the abandonment of production. Increasing numbers of the senior Party cadre began to recognize that the excesses of the revolution must be curbed. Mao himself appeared to come to this conclusion after an unpublicized tour of several regions. He expressed his personal disappointment in the actions of the Red Guards, who had been unable to unite under the revolutionary banner. In September of 1967 the army finally received the official command to restore order. Over the course of the Revolution, Red Guard groups had seized power from party and government officials, eroding basic organizational structures. The PLA assumed responsibility for administration at the local and provincial levels, coming to dominate the Revolutionary Committees which governed each region. Despite the PLA's heavy political involvement, Andrew Scobell of the U.S. Army War College maintains that "in no way can this intervention be considered a military coup d'état".<sup>11</sup> The army only took on a governing role due to the breakdown of civilian authority.

In addition to its political role, the PLA was vital in restoring a sense of order to Chinese society. Military representatives were placed in important institutions like hospitals, factories and offices.<sup>12</sup> PLA soldiers occupied university campuses, quelling student unrest and preventing further uprisings. Millions of Red Guards were resettled in China's rural areas – in particular the harsh interior of the country – and others were forced to undertake reeducation programs. According to an editorial published on Army Day in 1968, the "basic tasks" of the PLA were "to

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9 Scobell, op. cit., p. 106

10 Marshal Nie Rongzhen, 'Inside the Red Star', p.741 in Scobell, op. cit., p.101

11 Scobell, op. cit., p. 94

12 Lieberthal, op. cit., p. 116

do propaganda among the masses, organize them, arm them and help them to establish revolutionary political power".<sup>13</sup> In the words of one historian, "The PLA's societal role had reached its zenith".<sup>14</sup>

As stability returned in China, the Cultural Revolution continued to shape the role of the PLA in Chinese politics and society. The PLA emerged from the Cultural Revolution as the sole stabilizing force in the country. Although some military conflict continued after its intervention, the PLA was successful in preventing a resurgence of the radical Maoists. The dominance of the military in political affairs was confirmed following the Ninth Party Congress in 1969, where 44% of the newly elected Central Committee were PLA members.<sup>15</sup>

There were, however, attempts to curb the power of the military and its senior leaders. From 1971 to early 1975, no Chief of the General Staff was appointed.<sup>16</sup> Mao ordered the rotation of most regional commanders, preventing them from establishing a personal support base. Historian June Dreyer argues that Mao's "first target was the PLA figure to have most profited by the Cultural Revolution, Lin Biao".<sup>17</sup> Certainly Lin had gained power and influence during the rebellion, and was formally named as Mao's successor in 1969. Evidently Lin was perceived as being too powerful, as he died in a mysterious plane crash in 1971. Accused of plotting a coup against Mao, in the aftermath of Lin's death many of his faction members were purged. This brought about an increase in the influence of moderates within the army elite.

At the same time, China was beginning to focus on external threats such as that posed by the Soviet Union. <sup>18</sup> Thus greater priority was accorded to developing the strength and capabilities of the military. This policy necessitated the rehabilitation of a number of experienced PLA leaders who had been purged in the course of the Cultural Revolution. While their expertise contributed to the increasing professionalism of the military, their return also deepened factionalism within the PLA. The reinstated leaders often clashed with newer commanders who had risen to power during the Cultural Revolution. Perhaps the most significant act was the rehabilitation of Deng Xiaoping from 1973, who was to become the leader of the military and ultimately the paramount leader of the People's Republic of China.

The Chinese army has traditionally played an important domestic role, retaining close ties with the population as part of its doctrine of People's War. Throughout the 1950's the army was extensively involved in various social and political activities. The PLA's greatest involvement, and perhaps its greatest test, came during the Cultural Revolution. As the only stabilizing force in Chinese society, the PLA was vital to restoring order and preventing civil war. This episode destroyed much of the prestige and command structure of the military, but also demonstrated its authority and legitimacy. In the ensuing years the army exercised widespread political control, but the PLA had learned its lessons and soon initiated a program of professionalization.

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<sup>13</sup> Adelman, Jonathan, *The Revolutionary Armies* (Westport 1980), p.171

<sup>14</sup> Dreyer, op. cit., p.204

<sup>15</sup> Dreyer, June, 'Lessons learned from the Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen Massacre' in Laurie Burkitt et al., eds., *Lessons of History: The Chinese People's Liberation Army at 75*, (2003), p.410

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p.413

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.411

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.413