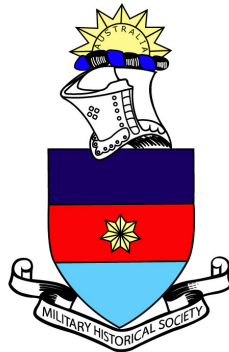


Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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★ ★ ★

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SABRETACHE

☐ This is my last issue as Editor of *Sabretache*. My two years have passed quickly with, I hope, evidence of a number of improvements in the Society's journal.

It's never an easy task for an editor of a journal to please all readers, particularly given the range of interests of this Society. However in my two years I think we've managed to feature a breadth of military history interests from a George Cross award to the 1990 Gallipoli Memorial Lecture in London.

I would like to thank all those contributors who supported *Sabretache* in my time. By your effort the Society has a fine publication. Keep it going.

☐ An Australian naval aviator has won what is believed to be the only British gallantry decoration awarded an airman in the Gulf war.

Lieutenant-Commander Peter Nelson, 33, met the Queen at Buckingham Palace on 5 November to be awarded the Air Force Cross.

He was on exchange duties with the Royal Navy's No. 845 Air Commando Squadron and becomes one of the very few in the RAN to have been awarded what

is essentially an Air Force decoration. At 3 am on 26 February, as the massive Desert Storm operation was raging, Commander Nelson and three crew members flew a Sea King helicopter deep into the desert at night to evacuate two injured men.

Commander Nelson said he was 'just called out to rescue two casualties who were fairly badly wounded'.

He found them, in sight of a tank battle.

'One of them was a British officer, obviously wounded in action', he said. 'The other, as it turned out, was an enemy POW, who was wounded as well — he'd been shot in the backside.'

'He wasn't very well, actually.'

☐ *On our release after those years of captivity under appalling conditions and our return to Australia and our families, our experiences were still vivid in our minds. We were still grieving over the loss of so many dear friends and colleagues and bitterly resentful of the waste of so many lives — young Australian women who possessed the skills and knowledge to contribute so much to the community and humanity.* An extract from the foreword to the book *Captives*, by Vivian Statham (nee Bullwinkel). Shrines and war memorials are testimony to the courage of those who had lost their lives in war, but the living testimony to that courage was seen in the faces of 10 women, ex-prisoners of war, who were in Canberra as part of the Australian War Memorial's 50th Anniversary celebrations on 11 November 1991.

The women, Australian nurses who had survived Sumatran prisoner-of-war camps, gathered at the Changi Chapel, Duntroon, as guests of honour at a moving ceremony commemorating their dead colleagues.

Among them was Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, 76, now Mrs Statham, of Perth, the lone survivor of a massacre of 21 Australian nurses on Banka Island, Indonesia, 1942.

☐ A new book, *The Military Significance of the Gulf War*, edited by Dr Andrew Ross, has been produced by the Australian Defence Studies Centre, University College, Australian Defence Force Academy

Although the full extent of the lessons of the Gulf War may take many years to distil, some preliminary observations of relevance to the defence of Australia are already possible. *The Military Significance of the Gulf War* pulls together some of these early conclusions from the navy, army and air force as well as other commentators.

In addition to chapters dealing with the particular service contributions and initial lessons from the war, there are chapters on the broader and unique problems of command and control of a multinational force in which some of the participants were NATO partners, some were members of the Warsaw Pact and others were non-aligned.

There are also chapters on the early lessons the Australian Defence Force might derive from the conflict and the implications of the conflict for Australian defence policy formulation. The book also includes a useful Order of Battle for the forces involved in the Gulf War.

Dr Ross said the book will attract those with an interest in the future of Australian defence — or the future of modern warfare. It can be purchased from the Academy bookshop or direct from the Australian Defence Studies Centre.

The AIF Project

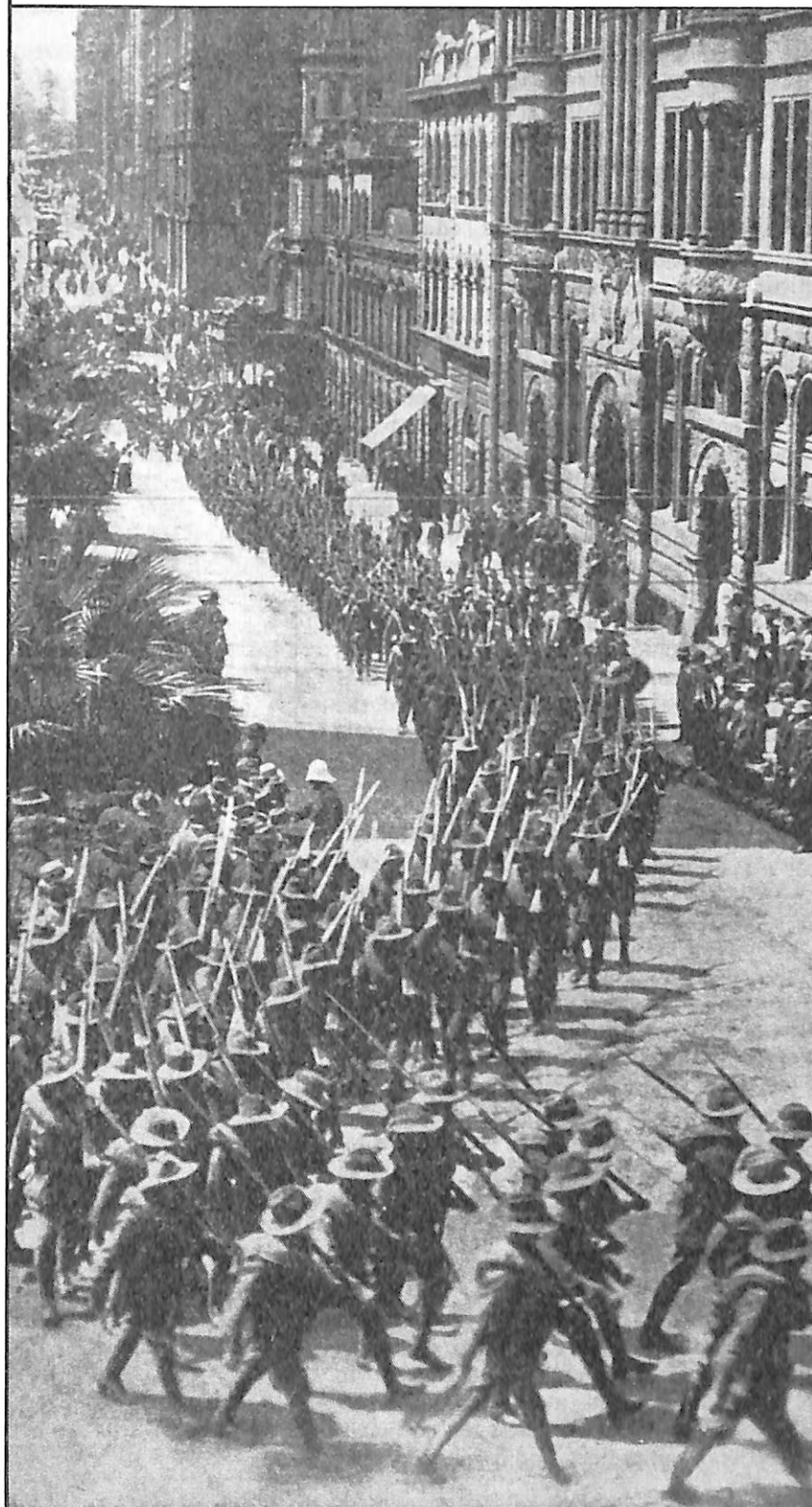
Jeffrey Grey

An externally-funded project based in the Department of History at the University College, Australian Defence Force Academy which aims at constructing a database of the service and personal details of all 331,000 Australians who served overseas in the First World War is entering its final year of construction.

Conceived by the late Associate Professor John Robertson and Professor Alan Gilbert (now Vice Chancellor of the University of Tasmania), and now run by Professor Peter Dennis, Dr Jeffrey Grey and Dr Robin Prior in the University College, the AIF Project will provide a historical resource of unique scope and richness. The Australian Army of the Great War was large enough to be interesting while being small enough to be manageable, and its size together with the fact that the records maintained by the Army were relatively complete and have survived largely intact has enabled the construction of a database which surveys rather than samples the lives and experiences of a significant slice of the adult white male population at the beginning of the century.

Drawing on the embarkation rolls, which recorded a soldier's particulars when he departed overseas, the roll of honour circulars, compiled by the Australian War Memorial in the inter-war years and detailing the background of Australia's 60,000 war dead, the honours and awards circulars, which listed the decorations earned by the members of the AIF, and other records concerned with the outcomes of war service and the postwar fates of individuals, the AIF database collates and makes accessible a wealth of information on its subject which, for the first time, will enable historians, demographers, sociologists, genealogists and others to extrapolate sensibly on a subject which, since C. E. W. Bean's time, has been characterised by generalisation and impressionistic assumption on the nature of the Australian war experience and the 'nature' of the soldiers of the AIF.

The database provides the following categories of information on individuals (although it should be said here that not every individual can be covered in all categories, for reasons which will be explained); on the military side: unit, service number, previous military service, shipping details, rank and progression where commissioned, decorations, transfers, fate on service or at the war's end; on the personal or 'social' side; religion, occupation on enlistment, place of birth if outside Australia, marital status, next of kin, next of kin's address and, in a good number of cases, school attended and place of origin if a migrant. In the 'outcomes' category, we will also be able to provide, ultimately, details of age at death and place of burial, irrespective of whether a serviceman died on active service or sixty years later. In the fullness of time we



Troops of the AIF march down Bridge Street, Sydney, to embark for abroad.

aim as well to cross-index individuals to collections of their papers held in public collections (principally, of course, the Australian War Memorial), and perhaps as well to the photographic collection of that institution.

There are some problems, naturally. We are working with data which was gathered by particular organisations for their own purposes. To take an example: schooling. The educational background of, say, officers versus other ranks is an issue first raised by Bean in the official history, and one pursued subsequently by the late Lloyd Robson amongst others. Unfortunately, the army was not in the least interested, at least formally, in where a man went to school, and so the embarkation rolls, the 'slice' of data on individuals at the point of leaving Australia, does not record this. When the War Memorial sent round its questionnaires to the families of those who had not returned, however, it wanted to compile as complete a picture as possible of those men, not least to meet the needs of the official historian. As a result, we have a fairly complete picture of the educational backgrounds of the 60,000 who were killed, but as yet almost nothing on a systematic basis on the rest. This gap may be made up over time through the co-operation of local history associations and individual schools (Hay High School, for example, is a war memorial school from the First World War, not the Second as is more usual, and preserves details of the men who went from the area). But it is indicative of the problems. The same stricture applies to that proportion of men who were born overseas, principally in Britain.

Our preliminary findings have thrown up some interesting problems and leads. There are over thirty categories of railway worker listed, and a goodly number of the one word job descriptions recorded by army clerks have no modern equivalent. Reconstructing a man's occupation from scanty details is a challenge on occasions. Perhaps as many as ten per cent of soldiers enlisted under aliases, mostly to evade age restrictions governing overseas service, but in a number of cases undoubtedly to avoid the allotment of two-fifths of a soldier's pay deducted by the army and sent to dependents. There was a significant trend before 1914 whereby men left their wives and families in one location while they moved in search of work. And we are beginning to detect a definite concentration of ex-soldiers' deaths in the early 1930s, at the height of the Depression; the sad fate met by prominent members of the AIF like Albert Jacka, Hugo Throssell and H. E. 'Pompey' Elliott is generally known, but these appear to mask a much wider pattern of relatively early deaths in the depths of economic depression and personal hardship.

The database is intended to be up and running on Anzac Day 1993, at which time it will be able to provide a service to academic and non-academic enquirers alike; a good example of the way in which an essentially academic project may find a wider application. It will be necessary to charge a modest but sufficient fee to cover the operating costs of the project, and it is hoped after

the first year or so to begin the expansion of the database to incorporate the military experience of the Second World War, and beyond. Within the constraints of the data collected, the database will have numerous applications in a number of academic disciplines, not least because the war fell between the Commonwealth censuses of 1911 and 1921, and thus allows some comparative work as well.

Cliometric work is more advanced in Europe and North America than is the case generally here. The AIF database, while blessed with a unique subject of study, good basic sources of data and some level of public funding through the Australian Research Council, does at least demonstrate one way in which 'new' technology and group research projects may be applied to areas of the humanities, to a common benefit. It suggests as well ways in which the artificial barriers sometimes erected between specialities within a discipline may be broken down.



In search of the military historian's craft

Barry Clissold

Like Sir Percival, that zealot of King Arthur, who centuries ago searched for the holy Grail, so too do I search. But mine is a different sort of Grail, no less important and certainly no less elusive. For me, and I venture to say a few others, I search for the historian's craft. I know, with some chagrin, that Bob O'Neill, Ken Inglis and others have already found it. Unfortunately the trouble with me is that although I think I know what it is I'm not entirely sure.

Some historians have told me that you need a 'fire in the belly' to write good history. Well I certainly have that but is it enough? Sadly I think not for a few years ago I laboured away hoping to discover whether Australia won the Battle of Amiens for the Allies in 1918, and along the way discover the historian's craft. Of the former I can say that Australia did indeed play a major role in the battle that led to the end of the Great War. My quest for the latter though is still incomplete but my experiences might be interesting to some of you intending to study and write military history.

Nearly two years ago when I became editor of *Sabretache* I wrote that the essential task of historians was not to collect dead facts but to confront live issues. Those issues were alive because they arose out of tensions that man faced in every generation. And the history of war is, as so many have pointed out, the history of humankind. Thus if there is to be one essential element in the writing of military history it is the recognition that men and women should be the basis of our attention. One cannot, and should not, analyse and write about, say military tactics, without an examination of the people involved. We need to view their backgrounds, their likes and dislikes, their attitudes towards their antagonists, and, of course, their strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, tanks, aircraft, weapons and naval vessels — to name a few — are virtually inconsequential without people to design them, manufacture them and crew them. And history of military decorations, dress, customs and traditions is incomplete, and certainly dull stuff, without recognition and analysis of all those involved — again the designers, the manufacturers and the bearers and wearers. People should be the embodiment of all you write. But what to write about and how?

Undoubtedly you all have interests or passions relating to military history and this should be your starting point. It is the fire in the belly that will sustain you through the long nights labouring on your manuscript. What you write about, of course, will be your choice but I suggest there are guidelines that you should consider — what has been written already? will your piece add to existing knowledge? will you criticise, confirm, comment or correct

something already written, and, importantly, who will be your audience?

The first difficulty is reaching this point. I suggest general reading is the essential step. Get a feel for your subject, refer to several sources, perhaps an official history and the works of several recognised scholars. Selected bibliographies held by major libraries are an important source in making the correct selections. Taking notes, making sure you record the sources, will help you narrow your intended subject. Unless you have been given a topic, and perhaps an argument to analyse, you must start formulating one of your own. You must come to grips in handling your evidence and its interpretation and in the end, be able to discard the irrelevancies. Structure is important at this stage irrespective of the length of your finished work.

Say for instance you chose to analyse some critical comments made about Australians, and their actions in the Great War. You would need to describe that criticism then state whether you intend to either challenge or confirm it, and offer your position. In your introduction, and throughout your analysis, you would probably want to note the works of other writers, who have written on the subject, and their views. This would need to be from both the Allied and German viewpoint.

The hard part is to identify the major components of your story. You must ask yourself will one argument stand without being supported by another. And, which argument fits where, and which can be omitted. You must never accept a single line of evidence without challenge or question. The construction of a paradigm could lead you in the right direction. Sometimes it helps to get a large sheet of paper and jot down on it all the major items as you discover them. Initially some of the information will appear of little relevance. It will look a mess but after a while, as the research continues, you will discover patterns emerging. Some will need to be discarded, some will need refining, but the end result will be the creation of your logical order in support of the argument which will run like a thread from the introduction to the conclusion.

So far the framework of your story will probably be based on general reading. The sequence that might be developing could look something like: an introduction, focussed on a criticism that the Australians did badly in the Battle of Amiens in August 1918 and your position that they didn't do badly; then an analysis of the accomplishments of the Australians to July 1918; followed by a review of the strategic situation on the Western Front and what the Germans were up to; an Australian action at Hamel early in July 1918 was important as it became the model for the Amiens offensive; then a close look at the front-line balance and the result of the Australians attacking Morlancourt late July; followed by analysing the first day of the Battle of Amiens, 8 August 1918; and, finally, a conclusion: what happened, the result and what you want to say.

There's a lot of gaps there so you must now broaden your search in gathering the material you need to begin writing. Those fortunate enough to live in Canberra will have the added bonus of access to the Research Centre at the Australian War Memorial, the library at the Australian Defence Force Academy and the Australian Archives. Catalogue searches for specific authors and titles need not be confined to Australian sources as access to data bases is possible through computer modems to other libraries and institutions overseas. Shelf browsing is also a useful technique in finding material sometimes missed in catalogue searches. Time spent in reviewing bibliographies is well spent.

It will be important that you review as much material from as many sources as you can. Locating foreign sources can be time-consuming and frustrating, and costly if translations are needed. Locating and interviewing survivors or witnesses will be interesting but also time consuming. Yours must be a balanced inquiry. Your sources will vary in quality and credibility. View official histories with caution as many are based on poor information. Many are written in accord with the dictates of superiors and thus not necessarily completely factual or true. Often they are compiled by junior officers, and using the jargon of the day whose intended meaning might be confusing to a reader today. And often histories are written in haste, in extremely hazardous circumstances, and when the recording of past, or even current, events has a low priority. Such circumstances normally result in the recording of events much later than when they occurred and often when the memory is not up to the task.

Watch for political sensitivities. Often these are responsible for the omission or sanitisation of vital information from official records. And while embargo's and censorship can be frustrating to the researcher they can often lead off into other lines of inquiry which questions the need for such security. The golden rule I suppose is to strive for balance, endeavouring to cast aside your prejudices and remain objective.

It will be essential to leave nothing to memory while researching. By all means take photocopies of references, and notes, but always record fully your sources: authors, titles, publishers, dates and page numbers. Often you do not return to your source — so carry a notebook, even to the bedside to record those princely arguments, dreamed in sleep and recalled in consciousness in the early hours.

After library sessions your notes should be transferred into working files — these should be roughly based on your chapters or the sequence of your piece. Establishing a card index is also useful. Such files and indexes can be created either manually or by computer. There are many excellent data-base programs on the market, including some inexpensive public domain software.

There will come a time when you must start to write. This will be the time to gather all the bits together and produce a coherent piece. Of course there is no right way but the task will be easier if

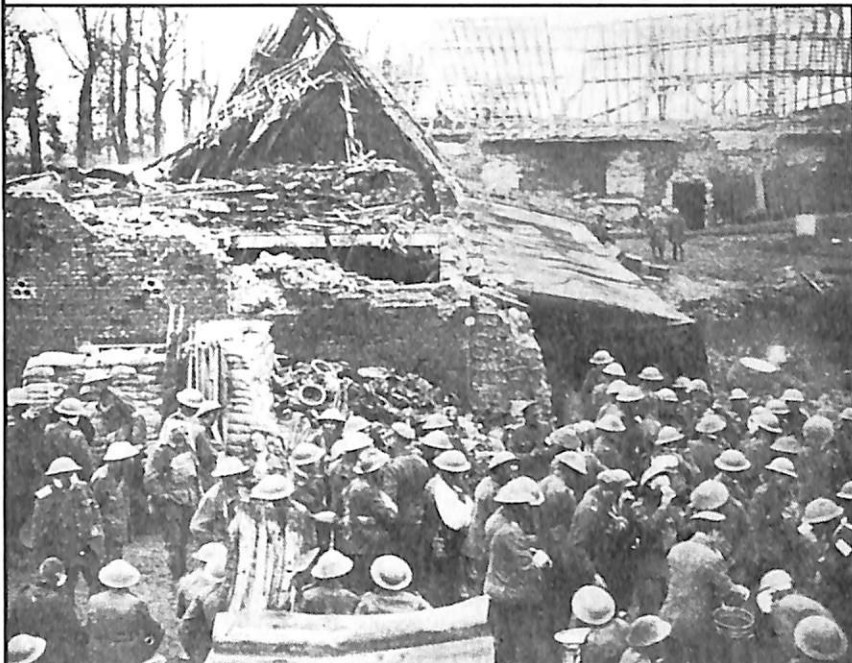


The frequent use of well-marked maps allows the reader to follow the narrative. Where appropriate photographs can be incorporated for extra emphasis.

you spend time first in drafting an outline, firstly of the whole, then each chapter or component. In this way you will discover the major flaws in your argument or any serious deficiency in your material. Remember that for every one view there is always a contrary one. You must provide the balance. Do not be satisfied with the views of one commander — search for others, especially those of antagonists. Similarly, in writing in other fields of military history, say of the development, and requirement, of the Australian Flying Corps, you might try to establish who of the Australian commanders opposed its formation, and were their reasons valid. Further, what of the views of their opponents who believed in the forming of the Corps and the importance to preserve it as a separate national force. In other directions, it would not be sufficient to merely recount, say the development and adoption of military uniforms in particular eras without some analysis of the reasons for changes in styles, proposals for alternatives, results of trials and advantages of one type over another. The list of course is endless but the principle remains — be objective and balanced in your inquiry and writing.

Some of us lack the historians vision, some lack the craft itself and most need a model upon which to develop. What better historians than Bean, Long or O'Neill, of Manning Clark, who said 'history was a drama', and Thomas Hardy who remarked that 'history was a rattling good yarn'. Build your history, and your characters, layer by layer, as a craftsman would build a brick wall. If you need a model to copy in this regard there is none better than Ken Inglis.

Base your history on people — not just the generals and admirals but also on the soldiers, for it is only they that fight and occupy territory. Peter Stanley, in his address to Australia's Military History Symposium in 1988, summed it up nicely, 'there may have been ten thousand Military Medals awarded to the first AIF . . . there are ten thousand stories there'. Enlarge your facts and give them life. Use photographs to construct descriptions of people, places and weapons. Relics, like those in the Australian War Memorial, are invaluable in obtaining the sense and perspective of your subject. Bill Gammage, in *The Broken Years*, used the diaries and letters of soldiers to construct his history of a young nation at war. Build into your history a sense of time that the reader can follow, and use frequent short reminders of where you are at in the story. The sparing use of dialogue is another technique to breath life into an otherwise dull passage. The inclusion of an occasional vignette, a briefing say at General Haig's headquarters on the Western Front, or a dawn at a Casualty Clearing Station in Amiens or activity at the Field Kitchen in the reserve lines at Mericourt, is helpful in building your layers. Not forgetting one of the Military Medal actions that Stanley spoke of. Some might disagree but history is not unlike a novel.



Photographs provide another perspective to the historian in building his history. Here a scene at the casualty dressing station at Broodseinde graphically illustrates the primitive conditions, the intense activity and its closeness to the front.

Now having finished the first draft return to it with your red pen. Be ruthless — verbiage must go as well as redundant arguments and of course, irrelevancies. Slowly the final shape will emerge.



Darwin 1939-1942

The threat from the sea

Paul A. Rosenzweig

Even before Japan's bombers and fighters had violated the sanctity of northern Australia, her naval force had demonstrated Darwin's vulnerability to an attack from the sea. Shipping was attacked, and Allied aircraft were engaging carrier-based fighters almost continuously throughout January 1942. Some of the earliest Australian deaths at the hands of the Japanese were suffered during these aerial engagements. Flight-Lieutenant Sattler, for example, of 13 Squadron, RAAF was killed in action on 13 January. An airfield alongside the Stuart Highway just before Freds Pass Reserve was subsequently named in his honour, as was nearby Sattler Crescent.

Those early days were part of what is usually termed 'the phoney war', when soldiers, sailors and airmen were giving their lives but for the average person life went on as normal. *'In the period from when we arrived in Darwin (August 1939) until December 1941, it was almost like a peace-time posting except there were a lot more service personnel around. We were able to go on trips down country - weekends were off unless one was on duty and several of us owned pushbikes which we rode to any interesting spot around. Australian Rules Football was played, the ground was considered too hard for Rugby, and Saturday afternoon at the football was a big thing. The military also organised a mens hockey competition and civil as well as military teams took part. I played for what was known as the "Garrison".'*¹ But as the Japanese began to mobilise after their successes at Pearl Harbour and her aircraft began coming closer to our shores the threat of an invasion came to gather more credibility.

From this time of uncertainty sprang a genuine feeling that our continent was under threat, that all Forces rallied to our defence. The Allied airmen continued to fight gallantly in the air, while at sea submarines and shipping were taken on by the Royal Australian Navy. Ashore, the Army prepared to resist the invaders, constructing a number of defensive positions and manning gun emplacements along the coast. Their story is a vital piece of the history of the Top End, but it is often forgotten because it was mostly for nought, seen by some as perhaps an over-reaction. But had the invasion eventuated . . .

Submarines had for some time been reported to be active northwest of Darwin, and on 21 January 1942 submarine *I-124* became the first Japanese naval victim of the RAN. She had been engaged by three corvettes, principally HMAS *Deloraine* which exploded some 35 depth charges before the crew was rewarded with



Concrete defensive positions on the windswept cliffs of East Point overlooking the approaches to Port Darwin.

success. The Commander of the *Deloraine*, Lieutenant-Commander D. A. Menlove, RANR(S) received the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his praiseworthy leadership and skill during the action.²

The submarine still lies in some 50 metres of water sixty nautical miles west of Darwin, and this key battle was evidence, as if such was needed, that the cost of constructing an anti-submarine boom net was well justified. This net, one of the largest such booms in the world, was begun in 1940 and completed in 1943, spanning the five nautical miles from Dudley Point at East Point, across the harbour to West Point.

Nautical charts for Darwin bear testimony to this immense defence effort, with a large 'foul area' clearly marked – a zone some 2 km wide and nearly 6 km long. The chart cautions that vessels are not to anchor, trawl or sweep in this area owing to the remains of boom defence netting and cables fouling the bottom. The net was suspended from a number of large cylindrical bouys, a few of which now lie decaying on the rocks at Doctors Gully where they were abandoned after the net was dismantled in 1945. One has been preserved and today stands outside the tourist fish feeding facility, a relic of those days of uncertainty.

There were a number of naval vessels on duty on the net, operating the two gates which were used by Allied shipping to enter and leave the harbour.³ Of these, HMAS *Kangaroo*, *Kara Kara* on the western gate, and *Kookaburra* on the eastern gate, were machine-gunned by Japanese Zero fighters on 19 February, sustaining much damage and losing a total of three killed and two wounded. The other vessels distinguished themselves after the raid in the assistance they provided to stricken craft and wounded seamen.⁴

Submarines were not the only maritime threat envisaged in Darwin Harbour, and the boom netting possessed several mines for defence against surface vessels. The presence and proximity of the Japanese fleet offshore was well demonstrated shortly after the raids had begun. In early March, two transports and their two escorts were sunk by a small Japanese fleet in the Java Sea northwest of Darwin. HMAS *Yarra* was the last to go down on the morning of 4 March after a valiant struggle.

There were only 34 survivors of the sinking from a complement of 151 all ranks, although exposure and thirst soon took their toll. A mere thirteen ratings were all that remained of the *Yarra* five days later when they were spotted and rescued by a Dutch submarine. Leading Supply Assistant E. A. Latham⁵ was one of those survivors, and subsequently attained the rank of Chief Petty Officer in the Navy. He died in Darwin on 25 September 1982 at the age of 67 after a long struggle with cancer.

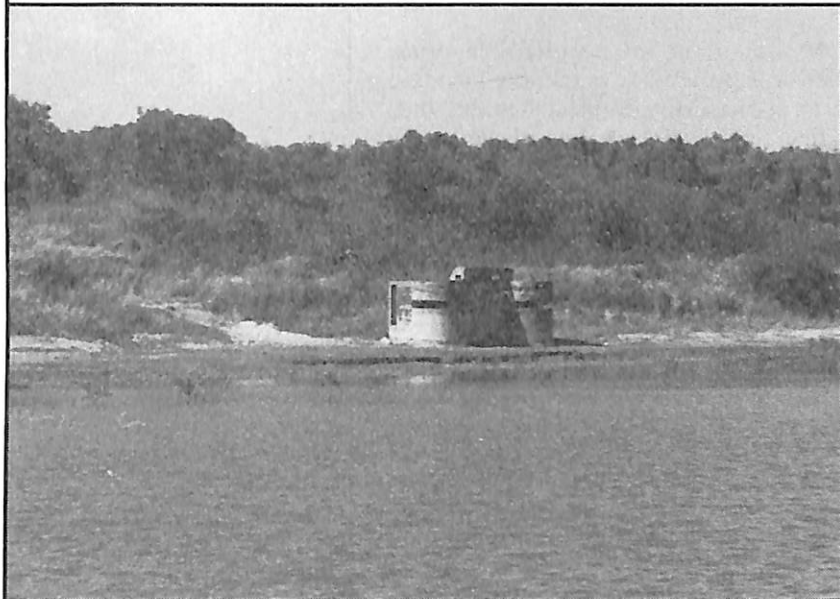
While the Navy was engaged offshore, the Army was readying itself to defend the coastline. The Darwin Mobile Force, in the early years, was busy training as a rapid deployment force which would quickly respond to reported landings or sightings in the Darwin area. Late in 1941 the 27th (South Australian Scottish) Battalion arrived in Darwin tasked with protective duties, occupying fixed defensive positions rather than being a mobile force.

The 27th Battalion has a long and proud history, its lineage being linked directly with the raising of the 2nd Battalion, Adelaide Rifles on 4 July 1877. This was in response to a public call to arms, ironically in the face of another invasion threat following the Russo-Turkish wars of 1875-1877. At this time a number of forts and garrisons were constructed around Australia to repel the Russian Naval forces then feared to be massing offshore.

A succession of name changes and redesignations led to the 27th Battalion of the First AIF which saw active service in WWI losing 1169 men and earning a total of 210 orders and decorations from Britain, Italy and France. In May 1940 the 2/27th Battalion, AIF was raised for war service in North Africa and later, the Pacific, continuing a proud tradition and earning 79 decorations for gallantry, with 206 men lost.⁶

While the 2/27th was fighting in the Middle East, their CMF colleagues in the 27th (SA Scottish) Battalion spent many days preparing for home duties. Called up for protective duties in South Australia at the outbreak of the war, the battalion, all volunteers, trained intensively until 9 December when, as a result of Japan entering the war, they were warned out for duty in Darwin.

When notice was given of their impending departure many were taken by surprise. A mere hour and a half local leave was given, enough to dash out and say their farewells to family and friends, but many remained in camp at Warradale. The sudden notice was interpreted by many as a panic move in light of the



Concrete pillbox on the beach near Lee Point, constructed for the defence of Darwin. It is composed of two gun bays and a central, slightly elevated observation bay with escape hatch.

rapidly deteriorating situation in the north – perhaps Darwin was already under threat?

The advance party of 289 personnel reached Darwin after a six day overland trek by rail to Alice Springs, by road transport to Larrimah, and then by rail again in cattle trucks of the 'Spirit of Protest'. The changing water, poor and inadequate rations, heat and dust saw many suffer from various stomach complaints during and after the journey. The main body soon joined them, giving them a strength of 34 officers and 1085 other ranks. They received their Commanding Officer Lieutenant-Colonel L. K. Farquhar, ED⁷ on Christmas eve.

They saw the passing of 1941 on the Winnellie rifle range becoming intimately familiar with their Lee-Enfield .303 rifles and Lewis machine-guns. Throughout January however, their training took a more serious turn as they prepared obstacles and defensive positions along the coast as part of the 23rd Brigade's tactical plan for the defence of Darwin. John Harman, today Secretary of the 27th SA Scottish Regiment (AIF) Ex-servicemen's Club, recalls those early days of uncertainty: *'Our units were dispersed in areas along the Darwin coastline which included East Point, Coconut Grove, Old Peanut Farm, Nightcliffe, Dripstone Caves, Casuarina Beach, Lee Point, Leanyer Swamps, Mickett Creek, and inland areas of McMillans, Rapid Creek and the RAAF drome in defence positions'*.

'Considerable lengths of barb-wire were erected along the beaches; machine-gun positions entrenched in caves and various positions along the coast. Lines of communications were strained for our unit during February, March, April and May, and because of the deteriorating supply position, diet became monotonous with rice figuring prominently in every meal.'

*'Often, and in one case for some 30 or more consecutive meals, unhusked rice was the sole meal.'*⁸ Little wonder that the men had little resistance to the effects of the many tropical diseases they were encountering for the first time, diseases which depleted the strength of the 27th from 1000 to only six hundred.

The Battalion's Carrier Platoon was present in Darwin at this time, a fact which has often been overlooked by historians. They were responsible for ground defence at the RAAF 'drome from 5 February 1942 until mid-April when they began patrolling tasks at Lee Point, and on 28 April moved to the 49½-mile camp with the rest of the unit. Sergeant John Anstey commanded one of the carriers, with Doug Page his driver and Alan Hayes their Number 3. The other carriers in their section were commanded by Cyril Johnson⁹ and Danny O'Connell.¹⁰

The carriers had their 'action stations' at well-chosen points along the airstrips giving them excellent arcs of fire should they be needed. The men were quartered in prefabricated huts built on cement piers, and *'life would have been pleasant'*¹¹ recalls Sergeant Anstey, had it not been for the fall of Singapore and reports of attacks on convoys.

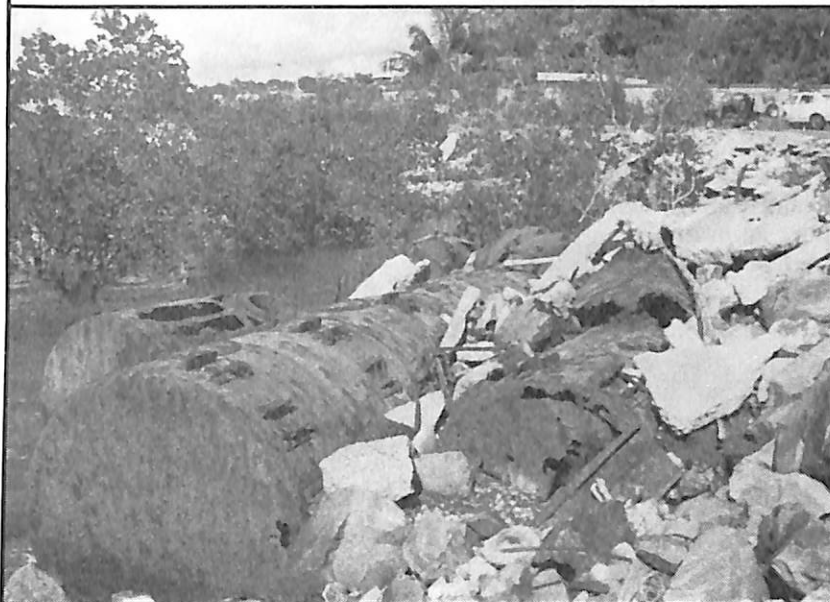
'The sunny morning of the 19th February was no different from the four previous mornings' recalled John Anstey, his carrier section having assumed responsibility for the aerodrome on 14 February. *'Late reveille breakfast about 0800 hours and then daily maintenance on guns and carriers. I was seated on top of the carrier in a vehicle park while the Vickers was being cleaned when I with the others heard the drone and then sighted about 50 planes flying in formation from the southeast. I remarked "there must be something on today" (thinking they were our planes) and then the siren sounded and we realised we were about to be attacked.'*

'Fortunately the gun had been assembled and it took only seconds to have it back in the carrier and we were on our way to our action station, which was the railway end of the main airstrip. Meanwhile the other two carriers raced off to their positions.'

'The planes we saw were on their way to bomb Darwin. Almost immediately dive bombers and fighters, seeming to appear from no-where began the task of destroying the RAAF Base. There seemed to be no opposition from the air as Zero pilots raced across the drome at such low altitudes that the enemy faces could be clearly seen.'

'The noise was deafening as the Zeros and dive bombers strafed and bombed the grounded planes, consisting of a Liberator and several Hudson bombers - setting them alight and exploding their bombs and ammunition, causing thick smoke to pour up and settle over the base.'

'Simultaneously, most of the buildings of the base were being dive-bombed and machine gunned and many were in flames. The Ackack guns kept up a steady fire in contributing their part to the din, but couldn't claim any success - they were not suited to fire at



The rusting remains of buoys which from 1940 to 1945 supported Darwin Harbour's boom defence net.

such low flying planes. The nearest action to us was the strafing of a grounded Hudson bomber about 40 yards away – it was completely demolished.'

*'Suddenly there was only the noise of fires and exploding ammunition, the Japs had done their job and were returning to their base. The raid lasted about 30 horrific minutes – the all clear sounded at 1040 hours.'*¹²

Shaking off the shock of the attack, the crews rallied together to assess the damage, but returned to their action stations to await an follow-up raid that might be coming, to finish off the job. The pipers of the 27th's Pipes and Drums meanwhile, had been at rehearsal at 10am and played through the raid because they did not hear the bombs exploding. The Pipe-Major Sergeant Dan McGregor is reputed to have retorted 'They won't hear us' when they were ordered to take cover in the trenches.

'About noon the siren again sounded' continues Sergeant Anstey, 'and we could see a formation of heavy bombers. We raced back to our station arriving just as the first bombs crashed down. Actually there were two formations of Betty bombers flying towards each other at different altitudes. They subjected the base to pattern bombing that was terrifying in its intensity.'

'Thick clouds of smoke, dust and flames shot into the air and it seemed every building would have to be razed to the ground. The noise of this second raid was even more deafening. Like a gigantic thunder clap the bombs all struck the drome within seconds, the ackack kept up a steady fire and from about 18,000 feet up came the roar of the heavy bombers.'

'We were straddled by several bombs, one landed about 40 yards away near the railway line and others on the edge of the

runway about 30 yards away. We were lucky the bomb pattern thinned out at the end of the run.'¹³

The carriers remained at their posts until 2 pm when they drove around to once again assess the damage. Everything had been destroyed, the hospital, hangars, and living quarters; and the few RAAF personnel that remained were busy quenching fires or salvaging personal belongings, all others having responded to the verbal order to withdraw south and then turn inland.

The carriers were moved into the scrub, their crew having packed their belongings so that they could live and sleep with their vehicles should they be called out. *'We had second thoughts about setting up camp off the main runway and remembered an empty shed nearer the drome area, not far from the burnt out hangars. By this time daylight was fading and in the poor light Doug Page drove our carrier into a bomb crater. Beds and gear were thrown off in all directions; an anti-climax after what we had been through perhaps. Amidst the laughter we felt we had cause to verbally doubt our driver's parentage. With the carrier bogged in red sand it took us some time to dig it out and reverse out of the hole. Eventually we decided on the shady trees site and set up our beds under the stars.'*¹⁴

The next day their Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Fred Piper, did the rounds of his carriers, and reportedly had some difficulty finding this particular section so well were they concealed. When he did finally track down his elusive section he was relieved to find they were still mobile, and expressed approval that they were living with their carriers. The men then had their first real meal since their war had begun – ham, tinned fruit salad and biscuits.

The troops took the opportunity over the next few days to vent some of their frustrations and engaged low-flying fighters with their Lewis guns. This merely stirred the Japanese pilots up and consequently the Battalion positions were subjected to several strafing runs and many vehicles were chased off the road by Zeros. They watched with interest the Japanese bombers being tracked by the searchlight detachments as night bombing commenced at the end of March, and they eagerly supported the P40 Kittyhawks as the aerial dogfights began on 4 April.

On 9 March the Battalion had come under command of the 3rd Brigade, AIF, and as the plans for the defence of Darwin had changed, Colonel Farquhar was ordered to move the 27th from the forward positions they had occupied since December to a new site adjacent to the 49½ mile post on the Stuart Highway south of Darwin. This occurred in April, and with the lines of communication being stretched so severely, it was not long before the men were suffering from a monotonous and inadequate diet, leading to illness, disease and a falling morale.

George Gormly was the 27th's Intelligence Officer for the first six months of 1942, and in this capacity witnessed the sinking of



Marker indicating the location of the 27th Battalion's camp at the 49½ mile on the Stuart Highway, occupied during 1942 and 1943.

ships in the harbour and the destruction of aircraft on the RAAF 'drome as he made his way around the area on his 3½ horsepower motorcycle. He recalls that the concrete pillboxes at various places along the coast were already there when the 27th arrived, having been built by private contractors. One of these still stands at the foot of the dunes near Lee Point, a silent sentinel on an otherwise deserted stretch of coastline.

*'They call Darwin and environs the "Top End" these days. When we were there they had rather uncomplimentary names!'*¹⁵ he recalls. While the 27th was at the 49½ mile he was posted to a rifle company and took them on active service in New Guinea. Today he is President of the 27th South Australian Scottish Regiment Association in Adelaide, and still whenever he sees the vapour trails of high-flying commercial aircraft his mind is cast back to the formations of Nipponese bombers over Darwin.

On 9 May Lieutenant-Colonel Alex Pope¹⁶ assumed command of the 27th Battalion, and well suited he was to the command. He was a veteran of the North African war where he had served as Second-in-Command of the 2/27th Battalion, AIF, and at the time of his promotion and posting he had been with the 2/27th at Caloundra in Queensland manning the infamous 'Brisbane Line' defences.

The strategies of jungle warfare were inculcated during exercises at Rum Jungle, Batchelor, Finnis River, Stapleton Station, Daly River and Bynoe Harbour. The men were given a respite from the heavy going of these exercises and brought back to Larrakeyah Barracks where they practiced amphibious landings from lighters and collapsible boats, as well as attacks on shore installations, in preparation for the beach assaults they would soon

Footnotes

¹ Arthur Kennedy, *Pers Comm.* 4 Dec 1986.

² DSO awarded to Lieutenant-Commander D. A. Menlove, RANR(S) 'for successful action against an enemy submarine'.

³ HMA Ships Kara Kara, Kookaburra, Kangaroo, Karangi, Kiara, Koala and Koombartoo.

be making in the Pacific. At about this time they gained AIF status, adding the letter 'X' to their regimental number.

After further jungle training in Queensland they went on to much anticipated active service overseas, on the Solomon Islands and at Bougainville. They lost 45 killed and 62 wounded,¹⁷ but accounted for some 242 enemy casualties. Three of their number were decorated¹⁸ including their Commanding Officer who was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, and a further 16 were Mentioned-in-Despatches.

In 1981 a party of veterans and their wives went on a tour for the 40th anniversary of Mobilisation in 1941, and in July visited the site of the 27th's 49½ mile camp of 1942-43.¹⁹ They left a crude plaque to commemorate their return visit – a piece of tin in the shape and colours of their unit colour patch. This was the common colour patch of the 27th Battalions of both the First and Second AIF and of the 27th (SA Scottish) which comprised a brown over light blue diamond. The colours gave the Battalion their nickname – 'The Chocolate and Blue Soldiers',²⁰ which was particularly used for the militiamen of WW2 who had played such a key role in preparing Darwin against invasion, who, like all militia soldiers of WW2, came to be known as 'Chocolate soldiers' or 'choco's'.

⁴ Able Seaman C. D. Scott of Koala, for example, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for courage in rescuing people from the burning ocean.

⁵ 21747 CPO(S) E. A. Latham, RAN, born Melbourne 16 Oct 1914. Buried in Darwin General Cemetery, Jingili.

⁶ Includes 174 killed, 4 missing presumed killed, 19 died of illness, 5 died of wounds and 4 accidentally killed.

⁷ Lt-Col L. K. Farquhar, ED, Commanding Officer 27th SA Scottish 24 Dec 1941 to 1 May 1942.

⁸ J. L. D. Harman, Pers Comm. 28 Jan 1988.

⁹ Alby Barnes (Driver), Gordon Ditter (No. 3).

¹⁰ Kieth (Skeeter) Hall (Driver), No. 3 not known.

¹¹ Sgt J. Anstey, *My Longest Day. In the News Bulletin of the 27th SASR Ex-servicemen's Association.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ George Gormly, Pers Comm. 14 Oct 1987.

¹⁶ Lt-Col A. Pope, DSO, ED, Commanding Officer 27th SA Scottish 1 May 1942 to 10 Oct 1945 (but commanded 23 Brigade from 9 Dec 1944 as a Colonel).

¹⁷ 3/16 killed, 10 died, 16 accidentally killed; 1/16 wounded.

¹⁸ Lt-Col Pope (DSO), Lt L. C. Mills (MC) and Cpl A. F. Hunt (MM).

¹⁹ Mrs Iris Aldridge, Pers Comm. 28 Oct 197 (wife of Pte H. T., Aldridge of B Company, 27th SA Scottish).

²⁰ Also used for the title of the battalion history, published by the SA Scottish Regiment Ex-servicemen's Club.



THE MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Biennial Conference

<i>Venue</i>	8/13th Victoria Mounted Rifles Victoria Street, Albury 2640
<i>When</i>	12th, 13th and 14th June 1992
<i>Programme</i>	Tentative at this stage but the subject of much discussion!
<i>Papers</i>	We require speakers! We require collectors! We require "Workshop" organisers
<i>Museum's</i>	We have commenced negotiations with Military Museums in the area for an Open Weekend to coincide with the Conference
<i>We require</i>	<i>YOUR PARTICIPATION!</i>

THE ALBURY-WODONGA BRANCH OF THE MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Secretary:

Christine Lyttleton, 1/283 Weidner Cres., Albury. Ph: W. 060 21 6030 H. 060 55 7777

President:

Don Campbell, 1/10 Chifley St, Federation Park, Wodonga 3690. Ph: H. 060 21 5811 H.
060 59 2961

The Northern Territory's War Service Memorial Year

In 1992, the Northern Territory will commemorate Australia's war at home. This was Australia's frontline-scene of the only sustained conflict on Australian soil.

It is a unique and fitting commemoration for the Northern Territory because no other part of Australia has the depth of wartime heritage that the Territory possesses.

Special services and commemorative events are planned around key wartime dates and will involve the participation of those who served here and their families. Already many in the returned services community, including unit associations, have made firm plans to walk once again the battleground of their youth and to renew old friendships at the places they were forged.

The Battle of Australia Commemoration begins in December 1991 and will finish in 11 November 1992. It will involve all major Territory centres from Alice Springs to Darwin.

The Memorial Year will commence with the release of memorabilia including specially commissioned books and the Battle of Australia 50th Anniversary Medallion.

The first major commemorative activity of the 1992 War Service Memorial Year will be the special observances to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin. Memorial services and commemorative events at the Cenotaph, the Port of Darwin and the Darwin RAAF Base will be held. The Hotel Darwin will be the focus of a number of activities, and Australia Post will issue special commemorative stamps and a Darwin first-day cover.

A number of special events, including an Evacuee Reunion, an evening of authentic 1940s entertainment and demonstrations by vintage World War II aircraft, has been planned as part of the anniversary activities. Special memorial observances will also take place on ANZAC Day in April and Remembrance Day in November.

Regular events on the Territory calendar, such as the Australia Day celebrations and displays at the Territory's show circuit, will adopt the military heritage theme for their 1992 activities.

A variety of special events will be held throughout the year, reflecting the Territory's unique military heritage. Military bands, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra and the Darwin Brass Band will feature programs of military music. A unique collection of World War II paintings and photographic exhibitions will be staged throughout the Territory and a series of commemorative history lectures will be delivered throughout the year. A Battle of Australia Commemorative Air Safari and a military-theme motor rally have been organised.

The three services are an important part of the Territory community. Goodwill visits by naval vessels, military drill units and air force flying teams will contribute to the year's activities. The K92 military exercise across the Top End along with the annual Pitch Black air force exercise and Navy Week celebrations will provide additional opportunities for armed forces involvement in the 1992 commemoration.

The Northern Territory's unique World War II heritage will be on show during 1992. Apart from museum displays and pictorial exhibitions in major centres, some of the more than 1000 known World War II sites have been selected for public presentation. The Northern Territory Government is providing access and interpretative signage.

Visitors in 1992 will be able to obtain brochures and maps for each WW II historic sites trail or visit the site with tour operators. The sites include military camps, munitions depots, airfield and gun emplacements. Some sites will be utilised as venues for special events arranged as part of the commemorative activities.

Territory tour operators have set up special arrangements with the defence forces to conduct scheduled tours of present-day bases. December is the launch month for the 1992 Commemorative Year. Memorabilia associated with the 1992 Commemoration will be released during this month including specially-commissioned books and the Battle of Australia 50th Anniversary Medallion.

December 1991 — Official Launch, *Australia's Frontline: The Northern Territory's War* — Darwin. This commemorative book, authored by Frank Alcorta, focuses on the Territory's war years.

December 1991 — Official Launch, *Darwin's Air War* — Darwin. An informative publication produced by the Royal Aviation Historical Society.

December 1991 — Official Launch, Battle of Australia 50th Anniversary Medallion. Produced by the Royal Australian Mint to mark the Territory's War Service Memorial Year.

A number of other books will be published in advance of the commemorative year. *Blood Stained Wattle* by Queenslander Maria Gardner is a novel based on the small wartime diary kept by her father during the bombing of Darwin in 1942 and Darwin writer Tom Lewis has written a children's novel *Fire from the Sky*.

Other memorabilia will include a special 50th Anniversary Plaque and commemorative port and wines.

Activities in January will place the year in its historical context and provide an educative focus.

Sunday 26 January — Australia Day Official Ceremonies — All Territory centres. February is the key commemorative month. It marks the 50th Anniversary of the first bombings of Darwin — the first attack on Australian soil. The month will be marked by special services, commemorative events and reunions. The focal

FEBRUARY						
S		2	9	16	23	
M		3	10	17	24	
T		4	11	18	25	
W		5	12	19	26	
T		6	13	20	27	
F		7	14	21	28	
S	1	8	15	22	29	

event will be the Commemoration Service at the cenotaph on 19 February.

Saturday 15 February — Darwin Evacuees Reunion Lunch — Darwin. This is a Reunion Lunch for those associated with the compulsory evacuation of Darwin in 1941 and 1942.

Sunday 16 February — Battle of Australia, 50th Anniversary Memorial Service — Darwin Memorial Uniting Church. The Darwin Memorial Uniting Church was constructed between 1958 and 1960 as a memorial to all who died in World War II defending Northern Australia. Crosses attached to the end of each pew and to the communion rail are made from metal salvaged from ships sunk in the harbour by the Japanese.

The service will commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.

Monday 17 February — Official Opening World War II Display, Museum of Arts and Sciences — Darwin. A major gallery of military history will be officially opened as part of the Territory's 1992 commemoration.

Tuesday 18 February — Official Reception Northern Territory Government and RSL — Darwin. The Northern Territory Government and RSL will host a reception to mark the year-long memorial to those who served in the Northern Territory during World War II.

Friday 21 February — Frontline Variety Concert, Darwin Performing Arts Centre — Darwin. A variety concert involving Territory entertainers and entertainment.

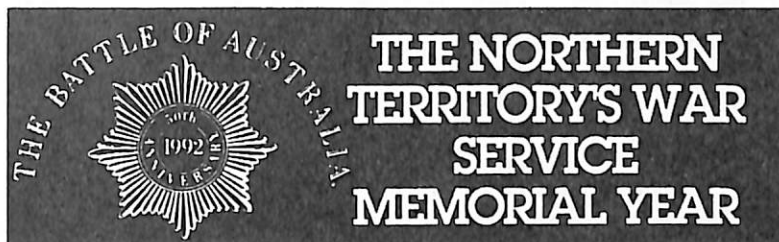
Saturday 22 February — Back to the 40s Dinner, Dance and 40s Entertainment — Marrara Stadium. A night of 40s atmosphere and entertainment in authentic style organised by the Darwin City Brass Band.

Sunday 23 February — Government House Open Day — Darwin. Government House, an important part of Darwin's history, suffered bomb attack and loss of life on 19 February 1942. In conjunction with the National Trust, it is hoped to have the building opened to the public.

Sunday 23 February — Aviation on Show, Aviation Museum — Darwin. The Aviation Museum on the Stuart Highway will include vintage aircraft on display as part of the 1992 commemoration. A B25 Mitchell bomber and replica Spitfire will feature along with existing displays of a B52, Sabre and other aircraft.

The Museum's Open Day will feature a range of activities to highlight the major role of air operations played in the Territory theatre of war. Entertainment will feature the RAAF Command band.

Further information on the Northern Territory's 1992 War Service Memorial Year, particularly after February, may be obtained from Northern Territory Tourist Bureau offices in each State or by writing to: Front Line, GPO Box 3146, Darwin, NT 0801.



Presented to Shepparton

Peter Ford

They came wrapped in brown paper, and evidently had passed through the mail like this at some stage. Through the kind offices of one of our members, and the generosity of a branch of the family, I was now, as President of the Shepparton Historical Society, about to accept as a donation to our Museum the service decorations and medals of the late Colonel Robert Geoffrey Cronk.

Geoff Cronk was born at Wangaratta on the 10th March 1918, but his family moved to Shepparton soon after, and he resided here until 1939, having been educated at Shepparton Primary, and High, Schools.

Perhaps under the influence of his elder brother Alex,¹ Geoff joined the Shepparton militia in March 1936, at the age of eighteen. The unit was 'B' Company of the 58th Battalion, The Essendon Rifles, I believe Alex at the time holding the rank of Major.

In 1937 the Shepparton militia became part of the newly-raised 59th Battalion, The Hume Regiment,² and from conversations with former members Geoff was studying for his commission, although his employment as a clerk may have taken him outside the area.

With the declaration of war in 1939, interviews and recruitment commenced amongst the militia to assist in forming the Second Australian Imperial Force.

Geoff Cronk is listed as having been commissioned as a Lieutenant in the 14th Infantry Battalion (The Prahan Regiment) on 21st May 1940, his appointment being to 'D' Company. Perhaps it should be made clear that there was no relationship between this and the 14th Training Battalion that passed through Shepparton about this time.

This latter unit evolved into the 2/14th Bn, Second AIF, having originally recruited about the Caulfield area, then establishing at Puckapunyal. It next moved to country camps including Shepparton Showgrounds.³

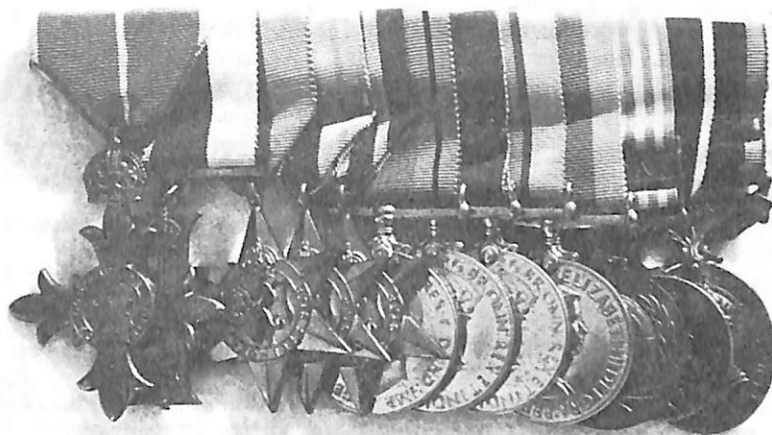
While at Shepparton the AIF unit was under the instructional command of a local, Lt-Col E. P. Hill⁴ of Lemnos,⁵ who, in turn, drew heavily upon the officers of the 59th Bn for support. Indeed, many of the 59th's officers were to join the 2/14th, and journey overseas, leaving Australia in November 1940.

One who did, Captain Bill Arthur, ED, does not remember Geoff Cronk being with the unit, as they next met at Dimra Camp, in Palestine.⁶

Geoff may have been at the Showground camp at some stage, however, as his name appears in a soldiers signature book also donated to our Museum by the family. This book was in a local cafe at the time, and, interestingly, includes four men of the 14th



Geoff Cronk in 1947 while on service in Japan.



Militia Battalion — distinguished by a 'VE' prefix to their serial number — amongst the 'VX' serials of those in camp.

In February 1941 Geoff joined re-inforcements to the 2/32nd Bn, AIF, and embarking for the Middle East he joined his battalion in July, they being part of the famous 'Rats of Tobruk'.

The activities of the battalion can be followed in the Official Histories (indeed, Geoff himself gets a mention, too). Suffice that Geoff was wounded three times on active service: firstly August 1941, then July and September of 1942 at Tobruk and El Alamein.

Six days before embarking for Australia in January 1943, Geoff was promoted to Captain, and by August his unit was engaged in the New Guinea campaign, remaining in this theatre until March 1944.

June 1945 brought involvement in the landings at Morotai in Borneo, followed by a transferring to the newly-formed 66th Infantry Battalion in October.

The 66th, of course, formed part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces, Japan, and from March 1946 Geoff served there, becoming a Temporary Major during 1947.

November 1948 saw Geoff return to Australia, but still as a soldier, for he had enlisted in the Interim Army, and became Captain, Temporary Major, in 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, upon his arrival.

In his prior units Geoff has held the posting of Adjutant, but a Corps posting was to follow, along with attendance at the Australian Staff College (1950-51) which saw his majority confirmed in 1952.

Service as a Brigade Major, HQ 13th Infantry Brigade, was followed by an appointment as Major, Administrations, to the Commander in Chief, British Commonwealth Forces Korea (Australian Component) on 27 June 1953, Geoff now being a member of the Australian Staff Corps.

Decorations and Medals

There are twelve in all comprising:

- (i) **MEMBER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE (MILITARY DIVISION):** Awarded in the Queen's Birthday Honours List, but the insignia bearing the Royal Cypher 'G.R.I.'
- (ii) **MILITARY CROSS:** the subject of some speculation. Before leaving for New Guinea, Geoff had told his family he was going on dangerous duty, that they wouldn't be able to contact him, and should he be killed, the family would never know what had happened to him. This caused a belief, even today, that Geoff was involved in secret affairs. I too felt this, as a copy of the citation read simply 'Gallant and distinguished service in action'. However, I now believe the award was made for gallantry when his battalion was pinned for five days in shallow slit trenches at Parva, November 1943, during the Finschafen campaign. The decoration was recommended in 1946, promulgated in 1947, and presented by registered post in January 1948 when the recipient was at Morshead Barracks, BCOF, Japan.
- (iii) **1939-45 STAR**
- (iv) **THE AFRICA STAR (Bar 8th Army)**
- (v) **THE PACIFIC STAR**
- (vi) **THE DEFENCE MEDAL**
- (vii) **THE 1939-45 MEDAL** (with Oakleaf for Mention in Despatches, 'for exceptional services in the field in New Guinea')
- (viii) **THE AUSTRALIAN SERVICE MEDAL**
- (ix) **THE QUEENS KOREA MEDAL**
- (x) **THE UN KOREA MEDAL**
- (xi) **QUEEN ELIZABETH'S CORONATION MEDAL**
- (xii) **KING GEORGE VI EFFICIENCY DECORATION**

With his return to Australia, Geoff became a Staff Officer, attached to HQ Southern Command. His later posting was as Administrative Officer, Officer Cadet School, from January 1958, in which capacity perhaps, some readers may have met him.

Retiring in 1969 with the rank of Colonel, Robert Geoffery Cronk, MBE, MC, psc, psa, died in 1974, and is buried at Shepparton.

Acknowledgements

I could not have written this article without the kind assistance of fellow MHS member George Ward in researching both Geoff Cronk, and John Beckham.

Sources include a microfiche of the First Australian Imperial Force Nominal Roll, plus Australian Army Officer Lists of various years.

The Australian War Memorial was able to provide photocopies of their Governor-General's Office honours and

awards index for Geoff's MC and MID.

An un-named or dated press cutting — believed from the Shepparton News — that was included with the photo of Colonel Cronk gave important details of his career.

And Mr Bill Arthur, former CSM of 59th Battalion Shepparton and late Captain, 2/14th Bn, Second AIF, has given freely of his valuable time.

Footnotes

¹ *Later Lt-Col W. A. Cronk.*

² *This Regiment, and its insignia, has been covered by the author in another article.*

³ *Following use by a number of military units, the Show-grounds were taken over by the Royal Australian Air Force, and was home to No. 1 Recruit Depot for the remainder of the war.*

⁴ *Enlisting as a private in the 14th Bn, AIF, in the First War Hill won the Military Medal in France, later being commissioned in the field. Staying in the militia post war, he became Commanding Officer of the new 59th Bn in 1938. Service as an Area Officer in the Second War was followed by his becoming the Honorary Colonel of the 59th upon its re-raising from December 1952.*

⁵ *While still a Major, Lt-Col Hill had suggested, at a meeting of regional soldier settlers in the early 1920s, the name 'Lemnos' for an area about five miles east of Shepparton. This was in remembrance of the island used as a base during the Gallipoli campaign.*

⁶ *Bill actually joined the 2/14th at Puckapunyal after his interview; prior to returning to Shepparton with his new unit he well recalls the confusion he had upon finding the 2/14th flying a flag comprising a blue over black diamond — the colours of the 2/25th Bn. This deviant practice ceased once the 14th Bn AIF Association learnt of it.*

1/15 Royal New South Wales Lancers Band, Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia

S. H. Pyne

The Royal New South Wales Lancers are the oldest Cavalry Regiment in New South Wales. Being established as part to the NSW Cavalry Reserves on 3 January 1885 with Troops forming in towns throughout the Colony. On joining the Corps one had to purchase their uniform, and provide one's horse, the equipment issued was sabres, rifles, bridles and saddle cloths.

The Troops were usually identified by a locality name, one of these at West Maitland, on the Hunter River, was known as the Maitland or the Hunter River Troop. In 1888 an unofficial Band was formed and operated with that Troop. The following year, the Reserves were reorganised and the NSW Cavalry Regiment, was formed later allocated a Band. The Brass Band associated with the Hunter River Troop, became the NSW Cavalry Band, Mr F. Fitness being the initial Bandmaster.

The Band became mounted and were mounted on greys, purchased by the officers and used for training purposes when not required for band use. It was unusual in those days for horses to be maintained by a regiment. The Band establishment was initially 21 including one kettle drummer. Recruitment of 24 was permitted to provide for casualties. An initial clothing allowance of £2 per Bandsman was paid when the uniforms were issued on 4 June 1891. The instruments from Potter & Co. London cost £297.5.3. The GOC NSW Military Forces authorised a payment of £100 from the No. 2 Band Fund, part of the balance being provided by members of the Regiment and donations. A consequence of this financial shortfall the Band began fund raising ventures to ensure its survival.

The NSW Colonial Government in 1891 authorised an annual Band Subsidy of £50; this was later increased to £250. In 1903, when the Regiment passed to Commonwealth control it was reduced to £150. It was further reduced to £75 in 1914. The Australian financial year commences on 1 July with the Budget being introduced in mid August. World War I had started and Australia had declared war before the 1914-15 Budget was introduced.

The Band wore the same uniform as the Regiment, NSW Brown, with the tunic being fitted with a red Plastron, on their breeches a white stripe, whereas the Regiment wore a red stripe. The Regiment wore cock's plumes on their slouch hat, which had a

puggaree of red with two white folds. A white pouch belt with silver mounted black pouch was worn over the shoulder, plus a red and yellow girdle. Collar badges were also worn.

In 1903 on becoming the 1st Australian Light Horse Regiment (New South Wales Lancers) the uniform was changed to that authorised for the Australian Light Horse, although the Band was permitted to wear the NSW uniform plus the white stripe on the breeches. Nickel shoulder titles (1 ALH NSW Lancers) were also worn.

Bandsmen's pay was subject to an annual appropriation which was set in 1894, the pay was full day 1/24th, half day 1/48th and evening band practice 1/96th, subject to the Efficiency rate of the annual rate being met. The Efficiency standard was gazetted the next year, being 2 of every 3 full days, 9 of 12 half days and 6 of 8 practices.

In 1894, the Regiment was renamed the New South Wales Lancers and the following marches were authorised, Walk – The Dragoon Guardsman, Trot – The Cavalier, Gallop – Bonnie Dundee.

The Dragoon Guardsman and The Cavalier were always played when the NSWL passed a saluting base and all three marches were played at Inspections, Tattoos and when the NSWL gave a mounted display, where there was sufficient space for the horses to gallop.

On 25 August 1895, the Peace & War Establishments were reviewed and the Band in the P.E. was 1 Band Sergeant and 18 Bandsmen. In the W.E. the bandsmen were to be stretcher bearers allocated four per Squadron.

1897 was an eventual year. It was decided that the Band would transfer to Parramatta, where the RHQ was to be located.

The Barracks, designed by Lt John Watts, 46th South Devonshire Regiment in 1818 under instructions of Governor Lachlan Macquarie and completed in 1820. The Barracks were renamed the Lancer Barracks and are listed in the National Historical Buildings Register. The RNSWL is still located there.

Before the Band moved, Regimental officers helped the bandsmen who were prepared to transfer in finding employment in the Parramatta district, plus the design and construction of their homes. On moving to Parramatta a new Bandmaster Mr W. Watters was appointed. New bandsmen were recruited from the 3rd Infantry Regiment, and the Parramatta Town Band.

Plans were in hand for the NSWL to send a Detachment together with NSW Mounted Rifles and the Royal Australian Artillery to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, in the United Kingdom. A Promenade Concert was held at the Sydney Town Hall to raise funds for the expenses. The Colonial Governor attended the Concert. The Band came from West Maitland 157 km from Sydney, the Australian Artillery – NSW Regiment Band,



*New South Wales Lancers
Band, 1926.*

now the 2nd Military District Band, Australian Regular Army, the NSW Naval Brigade Band, now the Royal Australian Navy Support Command Band, HMAS *Penguin*, and NSW Police Band combined for several items. This was the introduction of the NSWL Band to events in NSW, and the continuing relationship between the NSWL and the other bands.

The next day the Band led a parade through Sydney of the NSW Contingent to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations to their embarkation. The NSWL Troop paid their own fares.

Early in 1898, the Band moved to Parramatta and some new instruments were purchased. These included two tympani for use on the drumhorse. The Band was increased to 25 and this was confirmed in the revised P.E. of 6 July 1990, which also provided for two trumpeters per squadron.

The Band was heavily involved in the Commonwealth of Australia inauguration ceremonies in 1901. It led a Section of the Parade through Sydney, culminating at Centennial Park, where the inauguration ceremony took place.

The following evening, the NSWL Band with 21 other Bands including 7 British, one Canadian, one Indian and one New Zealand participated in the Commonwealth inauguration Tattoo. Late in the evening paraffin lamps were used to illuminate the march cards. The attendance was 30,000 the largest at any gathering in Australia until that date.

A squadron of the NSWL went to England for training in 1899, and the Band lead the squadron through Sydney before its departure. On their return journey most of the Squadron disembarked in Capetown to serve in the South African War 1899-1902. Many officers and men were to serve in South Africa, either

in the NSWL or other Colonial units, which were formed, or subsequently in the Commonwealth Units formed after Federation on 1 January 1901.

Several trumpeters went to South Africa. The Band did not although individual members may have.

In 1900, a half-squadron was formed at Newcastle, 83 kms from Sydney. Mr E. W. Tryell, Wallsend, NSW wrote the NSW Lancers March, which was dedicated to the initial officers of the Newcastle Half-Squadron. This march and the NSW Lancers Waltz by Mrs C. Dalton, were played at each regimental ball. There was also an annual ball at each of the four Squadrons, located in the greater Sydney area every year until 1914. Copies of these two pieces of music are on display at the Regimental Museum, Linden House, Lancer Barracks, Parramatta.

After the Great War, sub-unit balls were resumed and held on an irregular basis until 1937 when they were held annually until 1939. The Band played at the Balls held at Parramatta.

On 16 May 1906, the Band combined with the 3rd ALH Band to play at the Dedication of the South African War Memorial Tablet at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney. The Bands subsequently lead a Veterans' Parade through Sydney.

In the Band for the first time was Frederick James (Jim) Heapy (1881-1945). Jim had previously served in South Africa as a Trumpeter. he was a member of the Band for 32 years after playing several instruments, playing the 1st trombone, 2nd trombone, bass trombone, finishing on eb tuba. He retired as Band Sergeant, the only NCO in the Band apart from Bandmaster A. E. Taylor.

He started a family tradition. He persuaded his brother William (Bill) to join, his son Ernest Neil (Dadda) Heapy (1909-1979), his nephew Edward (Eddie) Bill's son followed. Dadda joined as a learner in 1926 and played without pay until he enlisted in 1934. His instruments were tenor and brass trombone. The Band was the first Army Reserve Band to attend the then Army School of Music, Balcombe, Victoria, where the Director of Music stated that E. N. Heapy was 'one of the finest bass trombone players he had heard'. Major V. Newman was not the only Bandmaster to compliment Dadda on his playing.

The Band returned to the Army School of Music in 1961, 63, 65, 68, 74, 76 and 1982. Subsequently, the Army School of Music was transferred and integrated as the Australian Defence Force School of Music, Simpson Barracks, Watsonia, Victoria.

Jim's grandson Neil Frederick (Heap) Heapy (1935-) joined the Band in 1953 after National Service, when W.O. O'Donnell was Bandmaster. Like his grandfather and father, Heapy also played the trombone, until 1968, when he joined as a regular musician the Australian Army Band Corps, where he served in the Royal Australian Engineers Band and Eastern Command Band, now the 2nd Military District Band.



*Royal New South Wales
Lancers Band, July 1991.*

Jim, Dadda and Heap were all awarded the Efficiency Medal.

The United States Navy sent a fleet on a world circumnavigation voyage in 1908. The fleet arrived in Sydney, at the conclusion of the annual Light Horse training exercises, which were extended by one day so that the ALH could form part of the Review Parade in which the American sailors also took part.

On 12 March 1913, the Canberra Commencement Ceremony, took place. [Canberra is the Capital of Australia.] The 3rd Australian Light Horse Brigade who had been holding their annual camp in the Canberra area were present and the ceremony concluded with a marchpast of the Brigade, the salute being taken by the Governor-General Lord Denman. The Brigade comprised, the 7th ALH (New South Wales Lancers), 9th ALH (NSW Mounted Rifles) and 11th ALH (Australian Horse) Regiments, in Review Order at the Walk. The Regiments were renumbered in 1912. The Brigade was lead by the NSWL Band.

The Australian part time forces were recruited for Home Defence, and on the outbreak of WWI, large numbers of the NSWL joined the Australian Light Horse Regiments of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). The 1st Australian Light Horse Regiment was raised in NSW, included the NSWL and the AH Bandsmen in its dismounted Band of 19, the Band Sergeant being J. H. Calthorpe of the AH. The instruments were purchased with donations by the regimental members, country supporters and a ladies group in Sydney. The ladies group also contributed funds to purchase instruments for two infantry battalion bands.

The War was to have an impact upon the Band and it became dismounted in 1915. The Band contributed to recruiting and other war effort campaigns in Parramatta and Sydney.

In 1918, and 1921, there was a further renumbering of the ALH Regiments, which were linked to the ALH Regiments of the Great War, in 1921, the NSWL Band, became the 4th Cavalry Brigade Band, although it remained at Lancer Barracks and was administered by the 1st Light Horse (LH) and continued to be known as the Lancers Band.

In 1921, the NSWL Band commenced its annual participation in the Anzac Day march through Sydney on 25 April to remember the Gallipoli campaign of 1915.

Field Marshal Lord Allenby, visited Australia in 1926 and arrived in Sydney on 20 January. He was met at the Sydney Central Railway Station by a Guard of Honour formed by the NSWL which included Officers and men who had served with or under the F.M. in South Africa and Palestine. The Band was also present. The next day at Parramatta, a tablet was dedicated at St John's Parramatta, to members of the ALH who fell in the Great War. The Band led the NSWL to the church and played at the service.

Guidons were consecrated at the 4th Cavalry Brigade Camp on 2 April 1928. The Band and the 1st LH (NSWL), 6th LH (NSW Mounted Rifles), 7th LH (Australian Horse), and 21st LH (Illawarra) were present. At the conclusion of the Parade, the Regiments passed in review, at the Walk, the Trot and the Gallop, with the Band providing the music.

The Band entered the Palings Shield in 1929. Palings were a music house in Sydney. The Shield was for competition by Brass Bands, the Band won the competition. It entered the competition again in 1932, 1935 and 1936 gaining a prize on every occasion.

The Sydney Harbour Bridge was opened in 1932, the NSWL provided the Governor's escort and the Band were present, they received little mention. One Captain De Groot, a member of a semi political organisation, The New Guard, planned to cut the Ribbon and deny the Premier, Mr Lang, the opportunity of doing it by the Police. The incident was witnessed by the NSWL escort and the Band.

The NSWL and the Band were pleased to discover and duly emphasised that De Groot was not using an army saddle. This served to dispel the allegation that De Groot was a member of the LH contingent at the Ceremony.

1935 was an important year on 5 March, the Band led the NSWL through Parramatta for the 50th Anniversary Church Parade. It later took part in the Royal Review held to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of H.M. King George V. The King granted the title of Royal New South Wales Lancers.

The Band was also involved with the Tattoo held as part of the Jubilee Celebrations.

Late in the year Lt A. E. Taylor, Bandmaster, retired after 44 years service in the Band and was the last original member having joined in 1891 to leave the Band. He continued as an Honorary

Instructor, until shortly before his death in 1941. The Band at this time wore the current Australian Army uniform plus the accoutrements referred to earlier.

The next year, the Band was invited to Canberra to play for the opening of Parliament following the accession of H.M. King George VI. After the formal opening, photographs of the Band were taken on the steps of Parliament House, including one with the Prime Minister, Rt Hon Joseph Lyons. Mr Lyons invited the Band to play in Kings Hall, inside Parliament House. Capt A. E. Taylor, Senior Officer present declined on the basis that as the Band was both non-political and non-secretarian, he could not permit the Band to enter Parliament House.

However, it can claim to be the first Band that played at the New Parliament House, opened by H.M. Queen Elizabeth in 1988 for the Band played on its site in 1913 on Canberra Commencement Day.

A Sequi-Centenary Review was held in Centennial Park, on 26 January 1938 in which the RSWL and Band participated. A Tattoo was held at Cumberland Oval, Parramatta on 27 October, the Band was accompanied by the Kings School Cadet Corps Band and the Australian Broadcasting Commission Military Band, 7000 attended the Tattoo.

The Band remained in New South Wales as the 4 Cavalry Brigade Band until 1942. The RNSWL was disbanded in January 1946.

In 1948, the RNSWL and its Band, were reestablished, when the CMF was reconstituted. The establishment for the Band was 28 and former members of the Band rejoined, W.O. Dale being appointed Bandmaster. The Band wore the standard Army uniform with a Black Beret. The Black Beret replaced the Slouch Hat in 1944, when the RNSWL became an armoured unit.

On 12 June 1951, the RNSWL contingent and the Band returned to Canberra to participate in the Services Marchpast, with the Salute being taken by the Governor-General the Rt Hon W. J. McKell, following the opening of Parliament, which took place on the 50th anniversary of the first Federal Parliament in Melbourne. The next time in *The Canberra Times*, which reported these events mentioned that as the Parade formed up in the Assembly area there was a heavy downpour. It also mentioned that a Canberra resident present at the 1913 Marchpast complained that there was only one Band in the parade and no horses. There were lots of horses in 1913. The complainant seemed unaware that the Armoured vehicles in the parade and the Band belonged to one of the Regiments on parade in 1913. There was Heapy in the Band on each occasion and probably another Father and son amongst the other members of the Lancers on parade.

Shortly after the Band began to suffer from declining numbers as the pre-war members retired, but it was resuscitated by recruitment from an Army Reserve Infantry Band.

On 24 November 1957, Guidons were presented at Cumberland Oval, Winter Uniforms were the Order of the Day. The temperature at 11am when the Rehearsal took place was 100° F. When the Presentation took place in the afternoon it was 106° F. In an attempt to keep the instruments cool, cold water was poured into them and drained out through the water key. That did not prevent the slides sticking on the trombones and the valves in some of the other instruments sticking.

On 18 October, 1959, the Band led the RNSWL to receive the Freedom of Entry to the City of Parramatta and still leads the RNSWL when the Right of Entry is exercised.

In December 1968, the Band commenced a Beat the Retreat Ceremony at Parramatta, which continued until 1972.

As part of the 200th anniversary celebrations of the Discovery of Australia by Captain James Cook, H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia, officially declared open the restored Government House at Parramatta. The music for that occasion was provided by the RNSWL Band.

In December, 1971, the Band returned to Government House, the Band under W.O.II T. F. G. Nichols, 28 strong restoring the practice of giving concerts in the garden. The last Band to play 121 years before, had been the 58th regiment (Rutlands) now the Anglican Regiment in 1985, prior to returning to England.

The band played at the opening of the R.S.L. Club, Castle Hill, near Parramatta by the State Governor of 28 September 1974.

The Band also took part in the H.M. Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee Parade through Sydney, on 3 December 1977. It also performed the Beat the Retreat ceremony in the forecourt of the Sydney Opera House, in 1980.

The centenary year of the Regiment in 1985, meant the Band had a busy year, at which a Clydesdale, complete with the tympani as a Drumhorse, paraded with the Band. The tympani long held in the regimental Museum, were reskinned and their sound was heard once more. Unfortunately the original drum bannerettes had perished.


The Band also led the Regiment to Sydney Town Hall, where the Royal New South Wales Lancers were given the Freedom of Entry to the City of Sydney. It had led the Regiment in the Exercise of that Right. Several times since then it has led the regiment when it has exercised that Right.

The following year there was a disaster for the band. A fire in the Bandroom resulted in the complete loss of its instruments and Library. From this adversity, the Band drew strength and reorganised, obtaining new instruments, it became a military band and continued its support to the RNSWL and the local community. It was this spirit which enabled the Band to participate fully in the Australian Bi-Centennial celebrations in 1988.

In 1991, the Band celebrates one hundred years of military music. It has been reorganised many times, undergone several changes of name. The RNSWL Band was one of the first mounted Bands in Australia. When it became dismounted in 1915 it was the last military mounted Band of the Home Defence Force. There were several mounted Bands in the ALH component of the Australian Imperial Force.

The RNSWL Band is celebrating its 100th Birthday by playing at a Regimental Ball on 11 July and a Concert at Lancer Barracks, on 13 October 1991.

The Band, underwent several changes of name, was disbanded and reformed and then underwent a major fire. Despite these misfortunes, it follows Australian Army practices and has female musicians. They number three who play the tenor saxophone, 2nd trombone and side drum respectively. The Band stands at Attention, with instruments at the Ready. The Bandmaster's order **BAND AHEAD WALK MARCH** is now only heard when the Band plays for the Memorial Horse Troop. On the command, **BY THE CENTRE, QUICK MARCH**, the band steps off smartly with a distinct identifying sound into its second century.



Sources

Lt Col P. V. Vernon, History of the Royal New South Wales Lancers, 1885-1985, Historical Records, NSW Bands Assn, Canberra Times, Parramatta Argus, Sydney Morning Herald, past and present Bandmasters and Musicians.

Obituary

Reginald John Salmon, 1944-1991

Reg Salmon was born 5 December 1944 at Wavel Heights, Brisbane, the son of James and Veronica. Reg joined the RAN, however after six months was discharged medically unfit.

During the period 1966-67 Reg moved to Sydney where he became a store attendant at Hoffnungs Glassware before moving to Scotts Pies. A workmate at Scotts was doing maintenance on a vehicle when it moved and crushed him. Reg was quickly on the spot and was able to move the two ton vehicle thus saving the mans life! The effort caused Reg to have a massive heart attack approximately half an hour later.

Whilst in Sydney he joined the Historical Society of the Navy, Police and the Army. He became a committee member of the Snapper Island Institute and judging by his interest in the Albury Wodonga Branch he would have been an enthusiastic member of these Societies.

On 26 August 1978 Reg married Elizabeth. The marriage was not to last. He joined the MHSA in Queensland and continued with his military historical interests until his death. Prior to Reg coming to Wodonga he went through two further heart attacks. He was in intensive care for five days and was given up for dead. His enormous love of life pulled him through.

Over the past few years his health was up and down. The last six months he was depressed, but never down enough to miss his commitments. He was wrapped in things military and devoted his days and nights to the study of the Zulu Wars, the Battle of the River Plate and to studying and reading the works of Banjo Paterson.

His excitement and pleasure at being elected to committee positions was some compensation to his family who stuck by him during his illness. His passing was sudden! He attended a committee meeting at the home of the Branch Secretary, Christine Lyttleton, and left for home about 10.45 pm. The next morning he complained of being ill and was taken to the Wodonga Hosital where at 3.30 pm he passed away.

The funeral was conducted by the Rev R. M. Hudfield of the Wodonga Lutheran Parish at the Albury Crematorium. Pastor Bob concluded his obituary of Reg's life saying 'He was admired for his inner strength, loved by his family and had a heart as big as himself. May God rest his soul.

DON CAMPBELL
President, Albury-Wodonga

Society Notes

Major General R. L. Hughes
225 Beasley Street
Mawson ACT 2607
30 October 91

The Editor,
Sabretache

Dear Sir,

I have read with interest the article on the Darwin Mobile Force by Paul Rosenzweig in the April/June 1991 edition of *Sabretache*. I must however disagree with the statement in the third paragraph that the Darwin Mobile Force was formed in response to a report by Lieutenant General E. K. Squires who was Inspector General to the Australian Military Forces in 1938. I suspect that Paul Rosenzweig's authority for his statement is an article in the *Australian Army Journal* No. 275, April 1972, which states that the Darwin Mobile Force was raised as a result of Lieutenant General Squire's report. The facts are that the Squires Report is dated 16 December 1938 and the Darwin Mobile Force began assembling at Holsworthy on 1 November 1938. The General refers to the existence of the Darwin Mobile Force in paragraph 18 of his report when he says:

'It is noteworthy that, for this reason, the Mobile Force which is to be part of the Darwin Garrison, though essentially an infantry unit in character and function, has to be formed, officially, as a unit of the Royal Australian Artillery.'

The origin of the Darwin Mobile Force stems from an inspection of the Port of Darwin Defences and a Reconnaissance of the Surrounding Country carried out by the Chief of the General Staff, Major General John Laverack, in September 1936. At that time the Imperial Defence Conference,

which was held regularly in London to consider all major aspects of imperial defence, had agreed that in the event of war Darwin might be subjected to attack by naval and air forces, but considered a landing to be unlikely. The Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the Imperial Conference considered Darwin of considerable importance as an operational base at which there was already established a strategic reserve of fuel oil (for the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy). It was anticipated that a force of cruisers, armed merchant cruisers and fleet auxiliaries would be established there. In time of war Darwin would be a Naval Control Base, a contraband base and a refugee port. They also considered it would be an important civil air centre and would most likely increase in value as a Service aerodrome in time of war.

During his inspection of Darwin in September 1936 Major General Laverack discovered that within 60 to 70 miles of Darwin there were 80 to 90 Japanese pearling luggers, each with a crew of 10 to 12 sailors. There were in effect more effective male Japanese in the vicinity of Darwin than there were European males. The CGS concluded that if the Japanese wished to destroy the Naval Oil Tanks and the Navy's reserve of fuel, a surprise raid by armed members of the pearling fleet would be the most efficient and effective method. The pearling fleet could land its raiding party without warning in the vicinity of Darwin. A diversionary attack by aircraft and naval craft would keep the Darwin Garrison fully occupied while the Japanese raiding party could take out the Oil Tanks and any other facilities they wished to attack.

The War Plans of the day envisaged that the mobile defence of the area would be provided by the 31st Battalion from Townsville. It was estimated that by using all passenger aircraft in Australia and New Guinea and the rail link to Mount Isa, it would take 14 days to move the untrained battalion to its operational area.

When Major General Laverack returned to Melbourne he reported his views to the Defence Committee and recommended that a Permanent Force battalion of 500 men be raised and located in Darwin. A Joint-Service Sub-Committee was appointed to review the whole problem of the defence of Darwin. Their report which covered all three Services recommended, inter alia, an infantry force of 450 men. This report was submitted to the Imperial Defence Conference in London and was considered by that body in June 1937. The Conference agreed that:

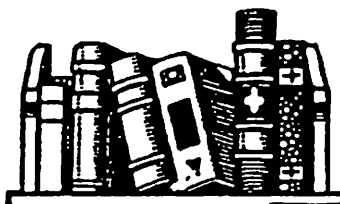
'Without detailed knowledge of the local topography and conditions, it is impossible to make precise recommendations as to the composition of the infantry garrison. Nevertheless it is suggested that a Force of some 200 should be adequate to repel any raid (including 1000 men from Japanese luggers). Arrangements should be made for militia reinforcements.'

Other decisions were made concerning the emplacement of 9.2 inch coast guns, anti-aircraft guns and lighters.

Not much was done in Melbourne to carry out the recommendations of the Imperial Defence Conference until the international situation deteriorated and Neville Chamberlain had signed the Munich Agreement on 29 September 1938. On 6 October 1938 a minute was received by the Military Board conveying a direction from the Minister for Defence to raise at once a force to be established in Darwin. On 21 October 1938 instructions were issued by the Secretary to the Military Board for the raising of the force we know as the Darwin Mobile Force.

Yours faithfully
R. L. HUGHES
ex DInf

Book Reviews



Joan Beaumont, *Gull Force*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, \$16.95.

Gull Force by Joan Beaumont is a well written treatise about the formation, overseas posting, defeat, captivity and survival of the 2/21st Bn, that made up Gull Force in World War II, and an effort to try to establish why its survival rate of members was so low in comparison with other Australian units in similar circumstances.

Her prime theme deals with the unit's members survival and their leadership during captivity whilst at the hands of the Japanese. She identifies the inexcusable prolonged neglect, inhumane treatment and unnecessary suffering the Japanese inflicted upon the members of Gull Force. She establishes quite clearly that a large proportion of the problems the unit experienced during its captivity were brought about by an apparent failure of unit leadership and planning stemming from the bitterness which resulted from the circumstances surrounding the untimely change of unit command just a few days prior to the Japanese attack, and the apparent abandonment of the unit in Ambon, by the Australian High Command.

She displays a fairly high standard of objectivity and impartiality when concerning herself with recognisable facts and evidence in her endeavours to understand and identify those circumstances which contributed to the life and death struggle for survival that was experienced by unit members.

Unfortunately, she appears to have little comprehension of the military bonding, comradeship, unit *esprit-de-corps* and military pride in tradition, aspects so essential and characteristic of military units whether in times of peace or war. That intangible phenomenon that is the essence of a unit's morale. In her treatment of this aspect she presents a lack of sensitivity and understanding so characteristic of an academic writer. Her treatment of this subject commences at the beginning of her book, and has the capacity to wrangle service personnel, and create frustration and anger in them so as to cause them not to perhaps read the book.

If one can set aside her treatment of this aspect, and concentrate purely on the book's purpose, then it is a book well worth reading. It is well set out and her use of documentary evidence and interviews with survivors is well handled. The book contains many illustrations, maps and appendices that all help the reader to deal with the presented topic.

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

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

Jan.-March edition mailed last week of March
Apr.-Jun. edition mailed last week of June

July-Sept. edition mailed last week of September
Oct.-Dec. edition mailed last week of December

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1 April for April-June edition

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