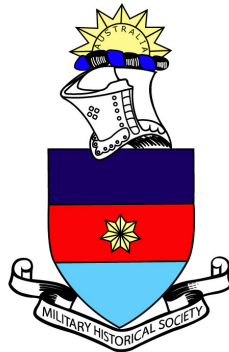


Military Historical Society of Australia
Sabretache



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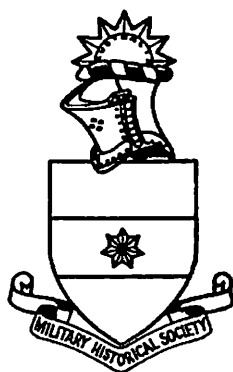
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Contributions in the form of articles, notes, queries or letters are always welcome. Authors of major articles are invited to submit a brief biographical note, and, where possible, submit the text of the article on floppy disk as well as hard copy. See the last page for further guidelines.

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The aims of the Society are the encouragement and pursuit of study and research in military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment and kindred matters; the promotion of public interest and knowledge in these subjects, and the preservation of historical military objects with particular reference to the armed forces of Australia. The annual subscription to the Society is \$30. A membership application is on the back page.

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Sabretache

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‘Our big world’: the social history of the Light Horse regiment, 1916-18 ¹

Peter Stanley²

Soldiers live—and die—as members of military units. Though accounts of particular infantry battalions or (more rarely) light horse regiments or artillery units have long formed a staple of military history, these units have been little studied as military and social entities, particularly in Australia. Despite several outstanding works, pre-eminently Bill Gammage’s *The broken years*, Australia has yet to develop a strong involvement in the ‘new military history’, ‘bringing to bear [as a recent advocate puts it] many of the methodologies and concerns of the social sciences and humanities, ... providing the context missing from the narrow operational focus of much of the “old” military history’.³ The ‘new military history’ pursues the integrated study of military experience in the broader context of society. Though not necessarily so new, its explicit formulation has been a feature of recent historiography, especially in North America. Much of the work undertaken in the field of Australian military history has in recent years can be characterised as social history, but relatively little has derived from the explicit perspective of social history, and very little has considered the nature of military institutions and the relationships between their members. Australian military historians have largely taken for granted the composition and character of military units, perhaps implicitly accepting a homogeneity not borne out by closer scrutiny, and overlooking a diversity known to contemporaries. A study of the relationships which follow the organisation and function of the Light Horse regiment during the Sinai-Palestine campaign enriches our understanding of the texture of that historical experience and of the Australian experience of war.

Reconstructing the workings of the Light Horse regiment as a social and military entity depends upon often intractable sources. It entails locating sparse and often tangential references in letters or diaries, often written by men either uninterested in sociological nuance or, rather, so familiar with the experience that they failed to record its assumptions and subtleties. These sources—like the Light Horse as a whole—have been neglected, and it seems timely and useful to point to their value as a coherent body of evidence. There is a school of thought of surprising currency which holds that little more can be learned from soldiers’ memoirs or from private papers, that we know enough of those who served in the Great War in outline and in detail. For the Light

¹ This article was researched and written during the brief tenure of the Sinai-Palestine Working Group at the Australian War Memorial from late 1994 to early 1995. The group (comprising historians, curators, education officers and conservators) convened under my direction to develop a refurbishment plan for the Memorial’s Sinai-Palestine Gallery, but was aborted in April 1995 due to changed priorities. The working group conducted extensive and even intensive research into the Australian Light Horse in the Sinai-Palestine campaign, and produced a number of research papers and articles, including this. I am grateful to fellow members of the working group for their assistance and criticism, including especially Dr Craig Wilcox of the Historical Research Section and one of the Memorial’s 1994 Research Fellows, Mr Alec Hill.

² Dr Peter Stanley is Senior Historian at the Australian War Memorial, where he has worked since 1980. He has published widely in Australian and British military history, including *The Remote Garrison, a history of the British Army in Australia* and *A Guide to the Australian War Memorial*. His last book was *Tarakan: an Australian Tragedy*, published by Allen & Unwin in 1997 and his next will be *White Mutiny: British Military Culture in India, 1825-75*, to be published by Christopher Hurst, London, in March 1998. He is presently leading the development of the Memorial’s permanent gallery on Australia and the Second World War.

³ John Whiteclay Chambers, ‘The new military history: myth and reality’, *The journal of military history*, Vol. 55, No. 3, July 1991, pp. 395-406. Put simply, the ‘new military history’ pursues the integrated study of military experience in the broader context of society.

Horse nothing could be more misleading, while for the AIF on the western front the deficiency is in relation to the social dynamics of the battalion equally grievous. Understanding the life of the 'bivvy' in the end depends upon exhaustive trawling of some contemporary sources, supplemented by official records and publications, memoirs and periodicals published during and after the war. Familiarity with the available private records renders generalisation suspect. Differences over time and between regiments and individual experiences militate against confident conclusions relating to the Light Horse throughout the war. Instead, it is possible to sense the variety of individual and communal experience, discerning at best patterns of variation on common themes.

Viewed from afar, the Light Horse regiments appear to be uniform, each an effective fighting unit in a cohesive force. Efficient and cohesive they may have been, but regiments were identical only in formal organisation. Formed from scratch, recruited in different states and lacking a well developed regimental tradition such as that enjoyed by the British army, each varied in composition and in character. Not all, for example, wore the emu plumes supposedly characteristic of the force: the 4th and 7th eschewed them altogether: the 6th retained its wallaby fur puggarees.⁴ They differed in character too. Corporal Bert Delpratt, a Queenslander who early in 1916 transferred from the 2nd to the 5th Light Horse, commented on the differences between the two. He found the 5th 'better in some way[s] & worse in others ... they don't seem to be quite so well trained but are better riders being mostly western men.' Later he decided that he preferred the 5th 'the cooking ... is better & the officers taking them all round'.⁵ Other perceived differences between regiments become apparent through private records. Corporal Selwyn Metcalfe, for example, recorded the 1st Light Horse's 'peculiar idea' that decorations were won by and for the regiment rather than its individual members, while Arthur Bateman reflected the view of the 5th Light Horse that men of the 12th had 'money to burn'.⁶

The regiment was the Light Horse's basic tactical and administrative unit, the cornerstone and often limit of its members' experience: Ion Idriess, author of the 'classic' Light Horse diary-cum-memoir, *The desert column*, referred to it as 'our big world'.⁷ Organised in a headquarters and three squadrons, each of four troops, a regiment at full strength comprised just under 550 men, just over half the size of an infantry battalion. Its strength in practice, however, was invariably much smaller. Weakened by casualties, men sick, on leave or detached on courses, it was further reduced by those performing specialist duties excluding fighting, such as signallers. In practice numbering about 400, the number of 'bayonets' able to take their place in the firing line was surprisingly small, and regiments often entered battle with fewer than 300 men. 'A' Squadron of the 12th Light Horse, the only one for which detailed returns exist, fluctuated between 104 and 170 men between mid and late 1916.⁸ The need to detach every fourth man as a 'horse holder' resulted in a squadron usually putting fewer than 90 men in the firing line. The regiment's basic organisation and composition changed little during the campaign, with the minor exception that in 1916 the regimental machine-gun sections were brigaded as a machine-gun squadrons.⁹

⁴ Peter Aitken, 'The slouch hat and emu plume', unpublished research paper, Australian War Memorial, 1994

⁵ L/Cpl B B Delpratt to his sister Nell White, Salahlia, 17 April & 13 May 1916, 3 DRL 3741

⁶ Cpl A S Metcalfe, 1st Light Horse to 'Harry', El Arish, 25 March 1917, 1 DRL 467; Arthur Bateman, 'White crosses dot the sand' [an (unsuccessful) entry in the Victorian RSS&AILA's 1934 Centenary Novel Competition], MSS 1332, p. 56

⁷ Ion Idriess, *The desert column*, Sydney, 1985, p. 62

⁸ AWM 9 [T12], Nominal roll, A Squadron, 12th Light Horse

⁹ 'War establishment of a Light Horse Regiment', AWM 25, 327/5, Part 8; *Tables showing composition and establishment of the 1st Australian Division*, Melbourne, 1914



Captain Anderson's 'Medical gunyah', probably in the Sinai in 1916. Caulwell Anderson is on the left, with a patient and, at right, one of Anderson's 'medical blokes'. The scene suggests one of the small groups which comprised the 'big world' of the Light Horse Regiment. (AWM P0859/23/22)

Few have attempted to explain how the Light Horse regiment functioned as either a military or a human organisation. Charles Bean, addressing the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1927, ventured some comments on the war and the 'Australian character'. In passing he identified 'a sort of trinity' of colonel, medical officer and chaplain which 'was the making of a good battalion'.¹⁰ Though reflecting Bean's familiarity with the infantry, his observation suggests that contemporaries—and arguably the most observant contemporary—realised that military units operated according to identifiable social dynamics.

Commanding officers naturally occupy a prominent place in contemporary letters and in memoirs, making more puzzling why their influence upon the effectiveness of the first AIF has not been systematically studied. Numerous diaries, letters and memoirs comment on colonels, and the question justifies separate treatment. It is clear that they exercised enormous influence on the character and effectiveness of their units; but also that their influence alone inadequately explains their units' lives and the differences between them.

The second member of Bean's trinity, the Regimental Medical Officer ('the MO') enjoyed an ambiguous standing, one which points to the complexity of relationships within what might appear to be regulated and disciplined military communities. A member of the Australian Army Medical Corps attached to the regiment, he played a critical part in maintaining the unit's morale and effectiveness. Cauldwell Anderson, who served with the 6th Light Horse, reflected on the

¹⁰ C E W Bean, 'Sidelights of the War on Australian Character', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. XIII, Part IV, 1927, p. 214

qualities required in an effective MO. As well as 'self respect, professional ability and knowledge of ... human nature', Anderson enjoined his successors to 'understand something of the inside working of [the] Regiment'. By becoming acquainted with the complexities of command, Anderson counselled, 'he will be able to choose the proper time to consult the CO ... or make demands'. The CO's co-operation was vital. He approved the MO's 'horses, batman, groom, drivers, sanitary Corporals, etc.', and 'if you don't consider him, he can repay you in the same coin with compound interest'.¹¹ Attached rather than part of the regiment, MOs were accorded half the space in the manual of *Orders and duties* than were the vet or the quartermaster.¹² Differences in the control of the regiment's sanitary squad may be significant: in some it resided with the MO, in others with the quartermaster, suggesting the relative power of the MO. Unlike his infantry counterparts, the Light Horse MO did not control a group of stretcher bearers. Though twelve men (one from each troop) were trained and equipped as stretcher bearers, they also carried arms and, not being AAMC, did not wear 'SB' or red cross brassards.¹³

The third member of the trinity, the padre, occupied an even more tenuous position, one not mentioned at all in the manual—a Presbyterian chaplain recalled being 'left to his own knowledge and sense of fitness'.¹⁴ Some evidently established by force of personality the regard of their units' members, irrespective of denomination. Others, however, felt themselves to be marginal. Nigel Backhouse, chaplain to the 7th Light Horse, felt the want of an orderly and pack horse and complained that the padre was not regarded as being 'in command of his department'.¹⁵ The chaplain's imperfect integration into the regiment could not have helped their acceptance among many troopers. One, Pelham Jackson of the 11th Light Horse, derided the padre's billet as 'the softest of all', resenting their two 'soldier servants' and judging their contribution as 'negligible'.¹⁶

Bean's trinity, however, merely hints at the dynamics of relationships within a regiment, which a discussion of the roles and relationships of its constituent parts reveals. Other members of the regiment's staff played critical roles in shaping the military and social experience of its members. Among the officers, the lieutenant appointed as adjutant, responsible for the regiment's administrative and disciplinary efficiency, had to tread warily. Enjoined 'not to interfere with the interior detail of Squadrons', he was nevertheless responsible for imposing the colonel's regime.¹⁷ The regiment's second-in-command, the senior major, occupied a more equivocal role. While obviously expected to act as the colonel's deputy in his absence, when the colonel was present the '2-I-C' was more vaguely required to 'assist and support' him in 'the maintenance of discipline and efficiency', a role which required close co-operation with the

¹¹ Lt Col Cauldwell Hamilton Anderson, 'Experiences of a RMO with the Australian Light Horse in the Sinai-Palestine campaign', AWM 1 DRL 32

¹² *Australian Light Horse orders and duties*, Moascar, 1917, p. 9. *Orders and duties*, compiled by Col J.M. Arnott of the Australia and New Zealand Training Centre at Moascar, near Ismailia on the Canal, sought to set general standards of 'interior economy' in place of the idiosyncrasies hitherto countenanced. Evidently based on a combination of Australian and British manuals, not all relevant to the Light Horse's needs on campaign, it reflects what a well conducted unit aspired to (perhaps the 9th Light Horse, which Arnott commanded in Sinai) rather than what all units achieved.

¹³ 'War establishment of a Light Horse Regiment', AWM 25, 327/5, Part 8

¹⁴ R C Racklyeft, 'Notes on chaplaincy work' (1 DRL 642), quoted in Michael McKernan, *Australian churches at war: attitudes and activities of the major churches 1914-1918*, Sydney & Canberra, 1980, p. 45

¹⁵ Chaplain B T Backhouse to J L Treloar, 18 January 1922, AWM 1 DRL 617

¹⁶ Tpr Pelham Jackson, 11th Light Horse, to Edward Steame, Lima, Peru, 29 December 1916, 1DRL/380

¹⁷ *Orders and duties*, p. 9

adjutant.¹⁸ Such uneasy partnerships must have depended more upon compromise and tact than upon clear 'standard operating procedure'.

Paramount among the warrant officers and staff sergeants was the adjutant's deputy, the regimental sergeant major. The RSM, setting 'an example of activity and soldier-like conduct', was expected to acquaint himself with 'every man's name, character, temper and abilities'.¹⁹ An RSM could support, counterbalance or undo a colonel's influence, though it is surprising how, in general a figure of myth and anecdote, individuals appear so seldom in surviving private records. Perhaps the Light Horse's RSMs were more concerned with efficiency than in perpetuating the mystique and demeanour of a regular army. The other warrant officers and NCOs assisting the regimental staff often appear to have exercised more power than their superiors, albeit informally. The quartermaster sergeant occupied 'the peculiar position of being able to cause a good deal of friction or otherwise' and the manual encouraged him to apply 'common sense' in fulfilling his responsibilities.²⁰ Actually detailing men to jobs and indenting and distributing stores, he appears to have exercised more influence than his superior, the quartermaster. The regimental Orderly Room Clerk, a sergeant, 'held down an awfully good job'.²¹ Working to the adjutant alone, he was not to be 'interfered with' by squadron officers and, while required to 'on no account ... disclose ... matters coming under his observation', was, like the signalling sergeant, privy to information both within and outside their big world, and therefore a useful contact.²²

Like regiments, squadrons differed from each other, partly reflecting the importance of their squadron leaders: Bert Delpratt described the 5th Light Horse's C Squadron as 'the society Sqdn', because 'all the men in it were either Bank Clerks or Jackeroos', while another found the 1st Light Horse Brigade Signal Squadron 'as rough a lot as one would meet'.²³ Squadron leaders often exercised dynamic leadership in their sphere as their did colonels in the regiment, and often appear in diaries and letters. Being second in command of a squadron, like that of a regiment was, as Captain Henry Wetherell told his mother, 'a pretty easy job ... It is the Troop Leaders who do the work & run most risks'.²⁴

It is impossible in this article to consider in detail relations between officers and men, or the complex question of the Light Horse's 'discipline'. It is apparent that in 1914 each came from distinct backgrounds, with officers mainly landowners or professional men, often commissioned in the Citizen Forces, and their men largely drawn from rural callings. Heavy casualties on Gallipoli destroyed this distinction, and by mid-1917, most new Light Horse troop officers and subalterns had been promoted from the ranks, usually of their own regiment. For much of the Sinai-Palestine campaign, then, the Light Horse's officers commanded men whom they had known either on Gallipoli or as fellow troopers. Either case, combined with the disinclination to accept formal discipline among Australians in general and country-men in particular, impelled the Light Horse's disciplinary ethos towards informality.²⁵ At the same time, variations in the

¹⁸ *Orders and duties*, p. 8

¹⁹ *Orders and duties*, p. 16

²⁰ *Orders and duties*, p. 24

²¹ 'Taini' [M.E. Lyons], 'Relating to records', *Kia Ora-Cooee*, September 1918, p. 14, in David Kent, (ed.), *The Kia Ora-Cooee: the magazine for the Anzacs in the middle east, 1918*, [Sydney], 1981

²² *Orders and duties*, pp. 25-6

²³ Delpratt to his sister, Nell White, 13 August 1918, 3 DRL 3741; Diary of Driver E A E Brown, 1st Light Horse Brigade Signal Squadron, 27 May 1916, 2 DRL 1285, presumably because colonels understandably transferred undesirables from regimental signal sections to brigade signal troops when they were detached.

²⁴ Capt H Wetherell, 5th Light Horse, to his mother, 8 December 1917, 2 DRL 747

²⁵ It is not possible to consider disciplinary offences in the confines of this article, not least because the evidence is not accessible and because Ashley Ekins' doctoral thesis on the discipline of the AIF as a whole is forthcoming. In passing, however, the evidence of the 12th Light Horse's defaulters' records for the November 1916 - March 1919

regimes adopted by individual colonels renders generalisation suspect. Within regiments, the small size of troops and squadrons encouraged a direct and individual style of leadership. The average troop in action comprised perhaps twenty men; small enough to impel officers to lead by force of personality.

Mounted warfare depended upon the exercise of initiative and leadership, and training manuals and customary terminology emphasised its importance. Squadron, troop and section commanders are invariably described in official and private sources as 'leaders'. The Light Horse's manual, *Yeomanry and Mounted Rifle Training*, however, referred not only to regimental, squadron and troop leaders, but expected corporals, lance corporals or merely the most experienced member to act as section leader, and referred to pairs of men as 'half-sections', again expecting 'the senior present to take command of his own accord'.²⁶ Despite the appearance of formality inherent in military uniform and organisation, the Light Horse's ethos of leadership fostered a strong tradition of what might be regarded as informal and personal management. Regimental colonels have in the British tradition been accorded relatively wide latitude to command in a personal style, and in the Light Horse squadron and troop leaders appear to have been free, and even encouraged, to run their own show. *Orders and duties* urged squadron and troop officers to ensure that 'all ranks understand and know him as a "leader"'.²⁷ George Berrie, reflecting with the advantage of having served as trooper and officer, concluded that officers obtained compliance by 'a commonsense use of the blind eye and a judicious amount of kid', but remarked that 'if it *did* become necessary to hit, hit hard'.²⁸ In discussing the realities of command the manual *Orders and duties* departs from the formality expected of a War Office primer, perhaps an interpolation based on the compiler's observation of the Light Horse: 'to warn a man for duty is a very simple thing', it observes, 'but to see that man is actually in his place at the proper time, equipped, clothed, and fed, is', it points out using an appropriate metaphor, 'a horse of quite another colour'.²⁹

Much of the work of the squadron fell to the two troop sergeants, particularly the senior in each, who, in the Light Horse way were urged to 'maintain ... the independence' of the troop. NCOs acquired the knack of command 'by constant dealings with men'.³⁰ In reality, they ranged from the nameless but efficient figures beloved of contributors to the 'Anzacalities' column of the *Kia Ora-Cooee*, the Anzac forces' magazine, to the harassed 'Happy', recalled by Arthur Bateman of the 5th Light Horse. Bateman recalled 'Happy' as 'for ever in endless bother with his duty roster' which resembled 'a badly marked paka-pu [or lottery] ticket'.³¹ Promotion brought reward and responsibility, though in unequal measure. The first step seems to have been the hardest, in that much of the drudgery of supervision fell upon unpaid and probationary lance corporals. Reg Morley dismissed his promotion to squadron sergeant major as 'another bob a day and a jolly side less to do [sic]'.³² Further promotion depended not only upon efficiency—or, hinted at in some sources, the patronage of an officer—but upon seniority.³³

discloses that only 45 men were 'crimed', though ten individuals up to three times, most for being absent without leave. Accepting that offences, charges and punishments differed between units, the ledger does not support the Light Horse's larrikin image.

²⁶ *Yeomanry and mounted rifle training*, parts I and II, London, 1914, pp. 170-71

²⁷ *Orders and duties*, p. 41

²⁸ Berrie, *Morale*, p. 211: emphasis in original

²⁹ *Orders and duties*, p. 19

³⁰ *Orders and duties*, p. 63

³¹ Arthur Bateman, 'White crosses dot the sand'

³² SSM Reg Morley, 5th Light Horse, letter, 7 April 1917

³³ Though *Orders and duties* stipulated that 'seniority alone can never give a Non-Commissioned Officer right to promotion', it evidently remained a factor in selecting candidates for advancement. A field service pocket note

NCOs' difficulties often derived from their men's awareness of the limitations of military discipline. Nominally soldiers, Light Horseman maintained a nicely calculated sense of the impositions which military life could impose. Military and civilian reactions and ideas co-existed and competed. En route to Gallipoli, for example, a draft of the 6th Light Horse was recorded as having 'counted out' an officer—in Arabic—for having called its NCOs from sleep to order a parade for the next morning.³⁴ As a cross-section of the manhood of rural Australia, the Light Horse included men from every occupation and region. Its members must also have reacted to the exigencies of service in ways which reflect their occupational backgrounds, though scarcity of evidence precludes definitive analysis.



Australian Light Horse farriers shoeing horses at Maadi, in Egypt, 1915. For specialists like farriers, military service could closely resemble their civilian work. (AWM H02676)

About ten per cent of a regiment's strength comprised the 'permanent duty men' sustaining the fighting squadrons: the armourer, the farriers, signallers, saddlers, cooks (overseen with varying zeal by the quartermaster sergeant), the drivers working to the transport sergeant, grooms and batmen, the quartermaster sergeant and his fatigue party, the orderly room clerk and those detailed to assist him, the sanitary corporal and his fatigue men. Each squadron, too, included its quota of signallers, farriers, cooks and their 'offsiders', performing essential—and often coveted—jobs (a trooper recalled that he became a signaller because they seemed 'ever ready

book kept by Lieutenant G B Edwards of the 1st Light Horse in 1916, for example, contains a 'list of seniority of NCOs in B Sqdn': 1 DRL 258.

³⁴ Berrie, *Morale*, p. 81

with a reason for not doing a piquet').³⁵ Finally, regiments were often accompanied by local interpreters and Arab boys ('walids') acting as 'cooks' offsidars and batmen's batmen'.³⁶ These specialists were often enjoyed greater freedom than the men in the ranks. Insights into the lives of some specialists—the batmen, the farriers, the 'medical blokes'—suggest the complexity of the Light Horse regiment's organisation, and how a knowledge of the nuances of its society can enrich our understanding of the texture and rhythms of its life.

Two batmen attended each officer, one employed as a groom, but both also riding in his troop as combatants. Privileged by proximity to their superiors, they became a rich source of regimental gossip. George Berrie, newly commissioned in the 5th Light Horse, found that he 'seldom knew more than his own groom, and never half as much as a Headquarters batman'.³⁷ The contrast between the duties of a personal servant and the conventional image of the independent-minded Light Horseman suggests that batmen may have been found from the force's British-born (a lower percentage than among the infantry).³⁸ John Dalley's observation in his perceptive and witty reflection, 'The Australian as a batman'—that Australian batmen were 'probably the worst on earth'—encourages speculation, but absence of regimental nominal rolls confounds confident generalisation.³⁹

While the MO did not control either stretcher bearers or (in some regiments) the sanitary squad, the vet, attached from the Australian Army Veterinary Corps, was responsible for the regiment's farriers and smiths. The vet's department, caring for the regiment's 600 horses, occupied a particular hierarchy of skill. It comprised the regimental farrier quartermaster sergeant, the three squadron farrier sergeants and under them the corporal shoeing smiths and shoeing smiths in the troops, and the men detailed as hospital stablemen caring for sick or convalescent horses. Though professionally responsible to the vet, the farriers and smiths came under the command of their squadron leaders, and vets had to 'apply' to their officers before directing them to veterinary tasks. For some farriers, and other specialists such as cooks or clerks, soldiering could closely resemble the civilian callings they had left. The diary of Shoeing Smith Corporal William Henwood of the 12th Light Horse, often reads as if he were still smith to the Kameruka Estate: 'done a bit of shoeing', or 'started work again'.⁴⁰ Nor were farriers—or any specialist—simply ciphers in a military machine, but tradesmen expecting a certain consideration: Donald Black recalled having to persuade one to go to the trouble of shoeing his horse after it cast a shoe on the march.⁴¹ Military units, like any human organisation, rarely work by the book, and in major and minor matters orders and requests needed to be accompanied by persuasion and negotiation.

Several other ranks—known as 'the Medical Blokes'—assisted the MO: his orderly, the AAMC sergeant and a trooper detailed to assist, primarily with water supplies. Few coveted the water

³⁵ 'Aram', 'Solely about "Sigs", *Kia Ora-Cooee*, July 1918, p. 16, in David Kent, (ed.), *The Kia Ora-Cooee: the magazine for the Anzacs in the middle east, 1918*, [Sydney], 1981

³⁶ 'Camp Follower', 'The little bint of Wady Hencin', in H S Gullett, Charles Barker, (eds), *Australia in Palestine*, p. 118

³⁷ Berrie, *Morale*, p. 188

³⁸ No comprehensive survey of the composition of the Light Horse yet exists, but it seems likely that given their predominantly urban backgrounds, the proportion of British migrants would have been lower than the one fifth for the AIF as a whole.

³⁹ Lt John Dalley (Australian Field Artillery), 'The Australian as a batman', MSS 1338; AWM 9, Regimental nominal rolls, includes rolls for the 1st and 10th Light Horse for 1914-15, and the 13th, which as a part of the BEF maintained and preserved its unit records better. The roll of A Squadron of the 12th Light Horse, which includes detailed ledgers recording pay, promotion, defaulters and squadron orders, does not identify troopers who were also batmen.

⁴⁰ Diary of Shoeing Smith Corporal W J Henwood, PR 87/116

⁴¹ 'Donald Black' [John Lyons Gray], *Red dust: an Australian trooper in Palestine*, London, 1931, p. 42

duties, because in chlorinating the regiment's drinking water he could not win: 'if he over-chlorinates the whole Brigade will blaspheme him ... ; if he under-chlorinates Medical Officers will accuse him of encouraging epidemic'.⁴² The medical sergeant dealt with minor injuries and ailments at daily sick parades and often between times. Their medical duties over, they were largely free, leaving the RSM in 'a shade of doubt as to exactly how far the Medical Blokes come within his jurisdiction'.⁴³

The regiment's fighting strength lay in the four-man sections in the squadrons and troops. Sharing a bivouac or a post encouraged strong bonds between men riding as mates. Indeed, it would seem that one explanation for the Light Horse's mastery of the warfare in which they were engaged lies in the organisation of the sub-units in which they lived and fought. But we know very little about the internal life of these sections. In dismounted action, for example, one man held the horses of the other three, riding to the rear: how was this man selected? *Orders and duties* specified that 'Nos 3' held the horses, but in practice did men take turns; did the least experienced detailed to it; did men draw lots? Idriess described how his mate Morry implored the other men of their section to swap the job of horseholder when going into action after Romani.⁴⁴ Donald Gray referred to men drawing straws to decide shifts for guard duty.⁴⁵ Such initiative appears to have been common. Arthur Bateman recorded how in preparing for a raid in the Jordan Valley in 1918 his troop drew lots to decide who would perform the tasks of bombers or wire cutters, but men's letters or diaries largely remain silent on one of the great facts of Light Horse service.⁴⁶

Men could not have expected sections to remain unchanged for long. Though the Light Horse's battle casualties were relatively low, its losses from sickness entailed considerable fluidity in the regiments' composition. The field note book of Major James Clerke records that the 3rd Light Horse evacuated over 1800 men sick compared to 230 wounded during the campaign, nearly four times the regimental strength.⁴⁷ Steady losses rendered the four-man section less stable than it may appear in retrospect, with troop sergeants and leaders moving men between sections or breaking up some to ensure the operational efficiency of those remaining. The number of promotions apparent in the 12th Light Horse ledger (most seemingly following men evacuated sick) suggests considerable fluidity. Bert Delpratt found himself shifted to another troop and squadron because his former squadron was over strength in corporals: 'one had to go, we tossed & I lost', he explained.⁴⁸ This suggests that the strength of the Light Horse was not so much that it comprised small teams of long-standing duration, but small teams whose members were quickly able to form close, effective bonds while knowing that the group would be together temporarily.

At the heart of the question lies a massive gap in our understanding. Despite the hints in letters, the snatches of dialogue in memoirs, or the sketches in *Kia-Ora-Cooee*, we will never know what passed between man and man, not only in the stress of battle, but in the light of 'slushies' in bivvy tents and in interminable hours on the horse lines. While obliged to work with what we have—a lode of evidence rich enough—we should nevertheless recall the deficiencies in our knowledge.

⁴² 'Concerning Medical Blokes', in H S Gullett, (eds), *Australia in Palestine*, Sydney, 1919, p. 103

⁴³ Ibid, p. 102

⁴⁴ Idriess, *The desert column*, p. 104;

⁴⁵ Black, *Red dust*, p. 22

⁴⁶ Bateman, 'White crosses dot the sand', p. 206

⁴⁷ Note book of Major J L Clerke, 3 DRL 4673 A

⁴⁸ Delpratt to Nell White, 17 March 1917

The significance of what can be recovered from the sources is, however, clear. The first AIF is painted traditionally as the epitome of a masculine world, one whose members disdain the petty details of military routine to concentrate on doing their jobs with a grim but nonchalant efficiency. The view permeates Bean's volumes of the official history, the apotheosis of which is surely the long description of the billet at Querrieu in the spring of 1918 in Volume VI. It accepts implicitly their disregard for rank or role, respecting only those who proved themselves in action. George Mitchell, author of the western front memoir, *Backs to the wall* and a self-appointed spokesman for the AIF, expressed the essence of the position in his *Soldier in battle*, an 'Australian Military Handbook' published to guide the second AIF. Mitchell claimed that 'in a fighting unit a man's relations with others are simplified by the almost complete absence of women', claiming that 'men, en masse ... are amicable and easy going, generally trusting and trustworthy'.⁴⁹

The Anzac legend has endured sustained investigation for several decades, but as an expression of male culture remains virtually unexplored from the perspective of what actually occurred in the military communities in which soldiers lived. In this the internal life of the Light Horse regiment connects with one of the engines of Australian popular experience—or at least the male portion of it—that of mateship. Members of a section were very likely 'mates', but friendships formed in section endured when men gained promotion or shifted to other troops or duties. Even Donald Gray, despite his urge to show the horror of war in his memoir, *Red dust*, described men living within sections in the classic mould: 'joined together by common cause living in toleration for each other; small coterie spring up, little groups form'.⁵⁰ And so it must have been, though contemporary sources also suggest that disharmony led to men being shifted, and to men seeking to live with others more congenial: items in *Kia Ora-Cooee*, for example, satirised the phenomenon of the 'lead swinger'.⁵¹ A snatch of dialogue from George Berrie's autobiographical novel, *Morale*, hints at the process. The Bushman—the narrator—recalls finding a mate 'Snow' (a character modelled on his great mate, Lance-Corporal F J Collins, killed at Suiveilah, near Amman, in March 1918) sitting despondently cursing his squadron sergeant major.

"Was that why you shifted to the Transport?"

"That was it ... The swine made it so hot for me that I put in for a driver's job. I wish to Gawd I'd stood it now."

"Couldn't you swap back again?"

"I've been trying that all week, but he's poisoned every troop leader against me."⁵²

'My word, men are a funny lot', reflected Corporal Reg Morley in describing an attempt to start a squadron canteen which foundered because the men 'haven't enough sense of fellowship'.⁵³ The traditional veneration of mateship and the close relations between men characteristic of (though not restricted to) Australian units should not obscure the tensions inseparable from close association in hardship, or the complexity of life among the men who made up these distinct military communities.

⁴⁹ G D Mitchell, *Soldier in battle*, Sydney, 1940, pp. 84-5, quoted in Robin Gerster, *Big-noting: the heroic theme in Australian war writing*, Melbourne, 1987, p. 135

⁵⁰ Gray, *Red dust*, p. 234

⁵¹ For men seeking changes, see the diary of Shoeing Smith Corporal Henwood, which describes how his fellow farriers paraded to the squadron leader to get a corporal shifted, successfully. For an instance of lead swinging, see the contribution by 'Den Ton' to the Anzcalities column of *Kia Ora-Cooee*, September 1918, p. 4.

⁵² Berrie, *Morale*, p. 32. For Berrie's eulogy on Collins, see his history of the 6th Light Horse, *Under furred hats* (6th ALH Regt.), Sydney, 1919, pp. 124-5.

The interaction of these elements is seen nowhere better than in the changes in the cooking arrangements of the 6th Light Horse. With food an understandable pre-occupation among soldiers, messing arrangements varied between regiments and depended upon the exigencies of the service. In general, men preferred section or troop messes (because they could choose, replace or abuse the cook) while medical officers and quartermasters preferred squadron or regimental messes, because they were cleaner and administratively easier. In the Jordan Valley in 1918, as George Berrie described it, 'some genius', weary of unpalatable rations, suggested a troop rather than a squadron mess. Begun by Berrie's troop, the squadron mess quickly became four troop messes, and the source of a brief struggle with the MO, who declared that 'four cookhouses in one line made proper sanitation doubtful if not impossible': the views of the quartermaster and the regimental and squadron quartermaster sergeants are unknown. The MO lost, not because his arguments were unsound, but because 'he had never been through the ranks, and ... every officer had'.⁵⁴ Curiously, though, the MO involved was Cauldwell Anderson, whose memoir on medical and sanitary administration includes a pointed note about the necessity of centralising cookhouses. Thus, the dynamics of the Light Horse regiment hinge upon the experience of its members rather than the rationality of their views.



A squadron cookhouse of the 4th Light Horse at Abbasan El Kebir, in the eastern Sinai, in 1917. Though Light Horsemen appear to have mostly messed in their four-men sections, cooking arrangements differed between regiments over time. (AWM J05998)

⁵³ Cpl Reg Morley, 5th Light Horse, Gallipoli, to an anonymous correspondent, 29 September 1915, 2 DRL 81

⁵⁴ Berrie, *Morale*, p. 209

A story, 'A Dead Sea stunt', submitted to the Anzac magazine *Kia Ora-Cooee* in 1918 (by Trooper M.E. Lyons, a New Zealand Mounted Rifleman) emphasises what subtle and complex little communities were the Light Horse regiments.⁵⁵ The piece opens with his section leader telling him that 'There's a stunt [an operation] on Thursday'. 'Abdul', one of the walids, also reports the rumour, so Lyons seeks out the adjutant's batman as 'the person most likely to know', who scorns the idea, though the colonel's batman confirms it. Seeing the 'quartermaster's offsider' hunting for grain sacks and the farrier quartermaster sergeant culling the 'crops' (which the vet returns) fuels his conjecture. Though his troop leader tells him that as the brigade is resting and that there is no work to be done (except road mending), the rumour proves to be correct. The rest of the piece describes the regiment's preparations for the stunt, which turns out to be a night move, a 'six mile' ride taking all day and finishing at the old campsite. In the course of telling the story, however, Lyons mentions no less than fifteen members of the regiment's hierarchy: When he loses his iron rations Lyons finds his troop sergeant 'coldly unsympathetic' and the quartermaster's offsider 'actively hostile'; attempts to procure information from three 'Lance Jacks' prove fruitless; the troop leader's batman—formerly an auctioneer and therefore 'a man of impeccable veracity'—provides advice of risible inaccuracy. He gives the impression that a regiment was less a well oiled military machine than a group of men fulfilling particular roles, rubbing along with each other in a setting which had ceased to be exotic but had become more a job of work.

Though a superbly effective military force, the Light Horse regiments were not made up of khaki-clad robots. Like any human group, they represented an amalgam of personal and communal loyalties and antipathies, enlivened by chaffing and gossip and strengthened by sharing hardship and danger. Each man occupied a particular rank and performed a particular job, which influenced his perceptions, his relationships with others and his contemporary or subsequent record. For the field of Australian military history generally, considering the nuance of military units as social and military entities may refine, if not revise, our appreciation of their experience. Scrutiny of the dynamics of ostensibly similar units—those within a brigade but recruited in different states, say—may reveal unsuspected differences which illuminate the general from the particular. That Militia battalions differed from AIF or regular units is universally acknowledged, but few have sought to explore how they vary in the setting of the relationships between their members. Such an approach may well prove a fruitful means by which the Australian experience of war can be better understood.

⁵⁵ 'Taini' [M E Lyons], 'A Dead Sea stunt', *Kia Ora-Cooee*, June 1918, p. 8, in Kent, (ed.), *The Kia Ora-Cooee*

Australian Light Horse at Villers-Bretonneux 24-25 April 1918

Douglas Hunter¹

Four horsemen rode through a shattered village in northern France. Spasmodic machine-gun and rifle fire sounded against the usual background of rumbling guns. Just north of the shell-damaged railway station the patrol encountered Australian infantry firing at German troops, some of whom were still in the village, while others were withdrawing towards a small forest to the south.

The troopers left the infantry and urged their horses along the railway embankment running east. Immediately they came under fire from a machine-gun post. The men dismounted and leaving one man as horse-holder, rushed the post and captured four prisoners. The patrol leader continued to advance alone. He came back with information and another prisoner. The patrol remounted and returned with their information and prisoners to their Headquarters.

The day was Anzac Day 1918; the village was Villers-Bretonneux in the Somme Valley; the Australian infantry were from the 57th Battalion which had just participated in a dashing counter-attack to recapture the village; and the mounted patrol was drawn from the 13th Australian Light Horse Regiment. The patrol leader was Lance-Corporal F E Lanagan who was awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal for his actions that day.²



The exploits of the Australian Light Horse on the Western Front are not well known. This is regrettable because they constitute a distinguished chapter in the history of the Light Horse. Though comprising less than two regiments,³ their contribution to the success of Australian operations was out of all proportion to their numbers, as this study of the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux on 25 April 1918 shows.

Villers-Bretonneux and the plateau on which it stood was a vital objective in the German offensive of March 1918. Australian forces had been instrumental in preventing its capture in early April. On 5 April, von Hindenburg wrote:

Our advance became slower and slower. The hopes and wishes which had soared beyond Amiens had to be recalled. Facts must be treated as facts. ... We ought to have shouted in the ear of every single man: 'Press on to Amiens. Put in your last ounce. Perhaps Amiens means decisive victory. Capture Villers Bretonneux whatever happens, so that from its heights we can command Amiens with masses of our heavy artillery!' It was in vain; our strength was exhausted.⁴

¹ Lt Col D J Hunter (ret'd) served with the 8th/13th Victorian Mounted Rifles. He is a volunteer assisting with the VMR Regimental Collection, and is writing a history of the 13th Australian Light Horse regiment (AIF).

² Based on information contained in LCpl Lanagan's citation held in file AWM28 at Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

³ In addition to 13th ALH, one or two squadrons of 4th ALH served with II ANZAC Corps Mtd Troops (later XXII Corps Mtd Tps).

⁴ Field-Marshal von Hindenburg writing on 5 April 1918. Quoted in John Terraine, *To Win a War*, Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1978, p. 65.

Von Hindenburg rested his forces, then on 24 April launched them in a final effort to capture the vital high ground. The German assault, led by tanks, fell upon the British 8th Division. The 8th Div was driven out of Villers-Bretonneux and formed a defensive line about 2 kilometres to the west. The Australian 5th Div, occupying the line from north of Villers-Bretonneux to the Somme River, held its positions.

A counter-attack to recapture the village was imperative and none realised this more than Brigadier General H E (Pompey) Elliott, commanding the 15th Australian Infantry Brigade. Elliott's brigade was the 5th Div reserve and occupied positions north-west of Villers-Bretonneux. Elliott prepared to launch an immediate counter-attack even though the village lay outside his divisional boundary. H-hour was set at 10.00 am. A troop of light horse was ordered forward to support 15th Bde in its attack. Lt L V Reid was the troop leader. At the conclusion of the operation, he wrote a report which was included in the War Diary of the Australian Corps Mounted Troops. Reid began:

I moved out of camp at about 9 a.m. on 24th and reported to Lt Conlan 59th Btn, made arrangements to protect his flank in a counter attack.⁵

Brigadier Elliott's counter-attack was cancelled only minutes before H-hour on orders from III Corps which advised that 8th Div was well able to restore the situation without help. Elliott did not believe this for a moment. The 8th Div had been severely mauled during the previous weeks and had been hastily reinforced with young recruits. While 15th Bde settled down to await developments, Elliott stepped up his battle-field intelligence gathering.

Reid was released from his flank protection task and placed at the disposal of Lieutenant Colonel H T C Layh, 57th Bn, for reconnaissance duties:

I was then attached to Lt Col Layh at about 10.40 am. Sent out two patrols, one to 56th Btn and one to Bois le Abbe, to gain information reference the enemy and our own dispositions.⁶

The situation on the right flank of the 5th Div, held by 56th Bn, was stable and Reid's patrol returned quickly, but on the 8th Div front the situation was confused:

The right patrol however had a much more difficult task as troops appeared generally to know very little which was absolutely [certain].⁷ An extra patrol being sent out, however gained reliable information from the right.⁸

Reid's troop, less seven men, was released by Layh and came under command of Lt Col C V Watson. Watson was a spare battalion commander on 15th Bde HQ. Elliott made him "special intelligence officer" responsible for the Report Centre at Advanced Bde HQ.⁹ Reid placed his patrol in a base five kilometres northwest of Villers-Bretonneux and taking six men joined Watson at Advanced Bde HQ closer to the town. From the Report Centre, Reid dispatched patrols 'to keep in touch with our own infantry and that of the 8th Division on the right and report any changes of our own front line.'¹⁰

⁵ Lt L V Reid, Report of Troop Operations, attached as an Appendix to the Australian Corps Mounted Troops War Diary for April 1918, p. 1. Page one of the four page report is missing from the War Diary held on microfilm at the AWM Canberra. I am indebted to Mr Cameron Simpson who provided me with a transcript of page one which he had copied from documents held at the Public Records Office in London.

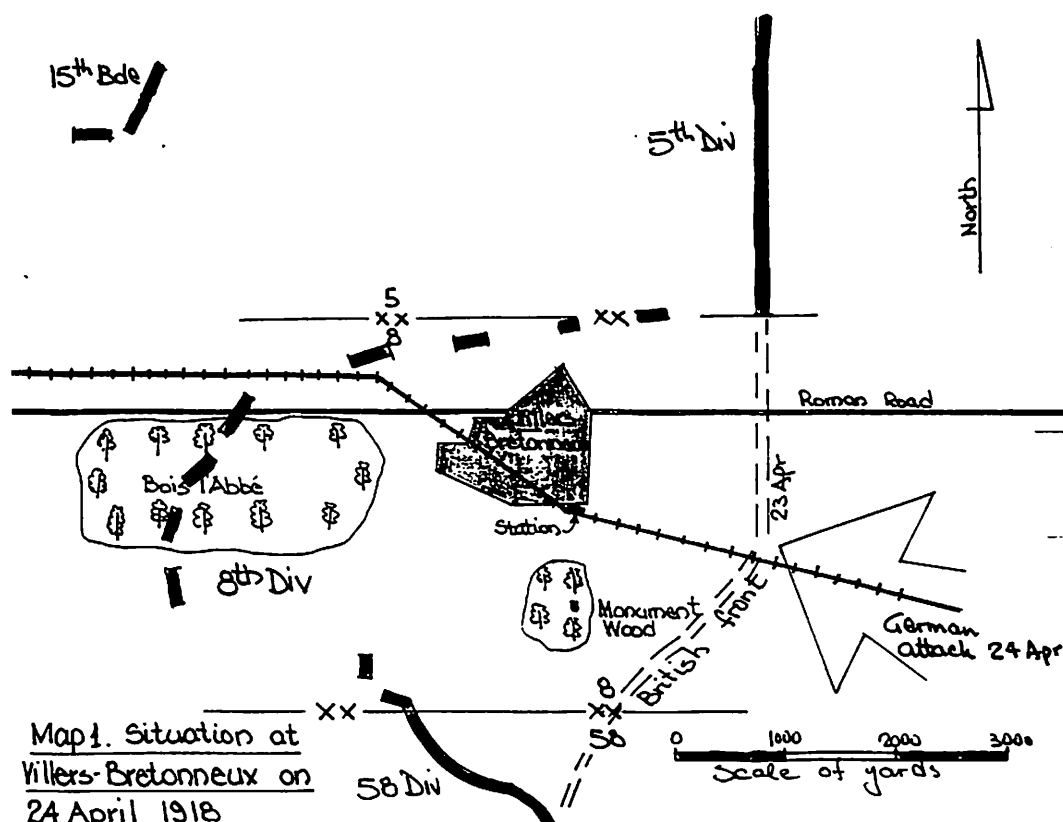
⁶ Reid, p. 1.

⁷ The word is unclear, but this seems to be the context.

⁸ Reid, p. 1.

⁹ C E W Bean, *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Vol.V, 10th ed, Sydney, 1940, pp.550,551. The slight rise which Adv Bde HQ occupied is now the site of the Australian War Memorial in France.

¹⁰ Reid, p. 1.



Throughout the afternoon of 24 April, horsemen combed and probed the battlefield for information. The 8th Div front continued to be difficult:

Patrols operating on the right had to make a personal inspection of the ground held, to get reliable information.

No casualties occurred during the 24th, one patrol however having a lucky escape in C28d [where the railway crosses the Roman road] after being covered by machine gun fire at close range managed to make good their escape and returned with reliable information at 10 pm.¹¹

Captain A D Ellis, in his book, *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division*, wrote, that following the cancellation of the counter-attack:

... General Elliott was forced to chafe in comparative idleness ... His Report Centre, however, was doing good work, and largely through its activities reliable information of the position came regularly to hand.¹²

Darkness halted mounted patrolling, but not before the chaos and uncertainty of the morning had been largely set in order, and sound intelligence provided a basis for bold action. The clarity of

¹¹ Ibid, p. 2. This patrol was probably led by Sgt A Hollis.

¹² Captain A D Ellis, *The Story of the Fifth Australian Division*, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, London, c.1919, p.293.

the situation owed much to the mobility and audacity of the light horse. The Chestnut Troop of the Royal Horse Artillery, who supported 15th Bde in the counter-attack, noted in its War Diary:

Rapidity with which attack orders were got out on 24th inst., made possible by use of well trained cavalry (Aust Light Horse), who quickly located extent of enemy gains.¹³



On 25 April, the morning mist cleared to reveal a dramatically altered situation at Villers-Bretonneux. During the hours of darkness two Australian brigades had carried out a spirited counter attack. In a pincer movement, the village had been enveloped and the position of the German defenders made untenable. But the attackers had failed to complete their ambitious aim of encirclement. A gap of uncertain size still remained south-east of the village providing a withdrawal route for the defenders. Reid was called upon to locate the flanks of the gap and the position of British units which had advanced after daylight:

At about 9.30 a.m. on the 25th two patrols were dispatched, one to find the exact position of 57th Btn's right flank and unit on their right.¹⁴

One of the patrols was that led by LCpl Lanagan, already described. Lanagan returned from that particularly aggressive patrol having found what he believed to be the right flank of the 57th Bn. There was a problem, however.

During its attack the 57th Bn had entered Villers-Bretonneux from the north, cleared the north-east quarter of the village and emerged from its eastern edge to join up with the 59th and 60th Bns in occupying a line extending south from the Roman Road. One platoon on the extreme right had encountered enemy withdrawing south of the railway station. The company commander ordered that platoon, under Lt Falconer, to remain in position and continue harassing the enemy. Almost certainly it was this platoon which Lanagan located.

Was the position held by Falconer's platoon the right flank of the 57th Bn? Lanagan thought it was, and probably Lt Falconer, also. As Lanagan's patrol withdrew through Villers-Bretonneux, it noted infantry of the 22nd Bn, Durham Light Infantry digging-in in the station yard. This could only confirm Lanagan's belief that Falconer was the 57th's flank.¹⁵

In contrast to Lanagan's aggressive patrol, the second patrol, with the task of locating units on the right of 15th Bde, had a less eventful time. The patrol started from the 8th Div HQ and moved through the forested area, Bois l'Abbe. While still west of the village the patrol came upon the remnant of a British battalion, 2nd Middlesex, digging-in, but out of touch with flanking units.

The patrol skirted the village to a point south of the railway station where it was driven back by machine-gun fire from further east. The patrol had passed through the gap between the DLI at the railway station and the other Australian brigade involved in the counter-attack, the 13th Bde, without making contact with either.

This lack of contact clearly showed that a wide gap existed between the Australian brigades, and that the 8th Div was unlikely to be able to fill it. However, the patrol was able to withdraw through Villers-Bretonneux, as did Lanagan's patrol, thus demonstrating that organised enemy resistance there had ceased.

¹³ Bean, Vol V, pp. 550, 551n.

¹⁴ Reid, p. 2.

¹⁵ Reid gives what appears to be an incorrect map reference for the DLI position: O34d where O35d seems more likely.

As the day wore on, the question of the 57th Bn's right flank continued to puzzle Bde HQ. Reid ordered out another patrol led by LCpl P G Blomley. This time the route was laid down making it clear that the patrol was seeking the southern end of the line extending from the Roman road. The ground over which the patrol attempted to advance was flat, and under German observation and fire. A company of the 57th Bn had attempted to cross from north of the Roman road earlier in the morning and found it impossible owing to machine-gun fire.¹⁶ Nevertheless the mounted patrol advanced and immediately was fired upon:

... one man & 1 horse killed, one man & 1 horse wounded and a 3rd man slightly shell shock. Brought these 3 men back & with 3 fresh men pushed on through O29b & d to O30c to O36a, where patrol came upon the 57th Bn just on the outskirts of VILLERS-BRETONNEUX, the Bn had to retire as some of our own shells were falling short. Patrol secured exact position and returned.¹⁷

The revised route was through the town then east. The battalion was encountered rather sooner than expected, having been forced back by allied shell-fire.

With the location of the flanks established, Reid's troop carried out other tasks. Escorts took batches of prisoners to 5th Div HQ located about 10 kilometres north-west of Villers-Bretonneux.¹⁸ Then, in a night operation, guides were provided to bring infantry forward to close the gap between 13th and 15th Bdes:

A patrol went out at 10.30 pm to guide troops from O27d 4.5 to line running from O36b 5.1 to railway line at O36c. 8.3.¹⁹

This patrol, led by Sgt R L Malseed, met two reinforced companies of the 49th Bn on the Roman road 1000 yards west of Villers-Bretonneux and guided them through the town to a line extending south from the 57th Bn right flank. There, the infantry were directed to defensive positions by Lt Hale, 50th Bn, and Lt Noad, 57th Bn, who had reconnoitred the position earlier. The Official History records the work of Hale and Noad, but makes no mention of the 13th ALH.

Sgt Malseed's citation described the execution of this task as requiring him to move from one flank of the gap to the other, "in pitch darkness and over very rough ground, all the time exposed to very heavy fire". His coolness and skill demonstrated the outstanding level of discipline and training which this superb light horse regiment had attained.

Reid's troop reverted to Divisional control early on the morning of 26 April. The efforts of this small body of troops, one officer and 28 men, did not go unnoticed by 15th Bde. Lt Reid was awarded the Military Cross, LCpl Lanagan, the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and Military Medals were awarded to Sgts Hollis and Malseed and LCpl Blomley.



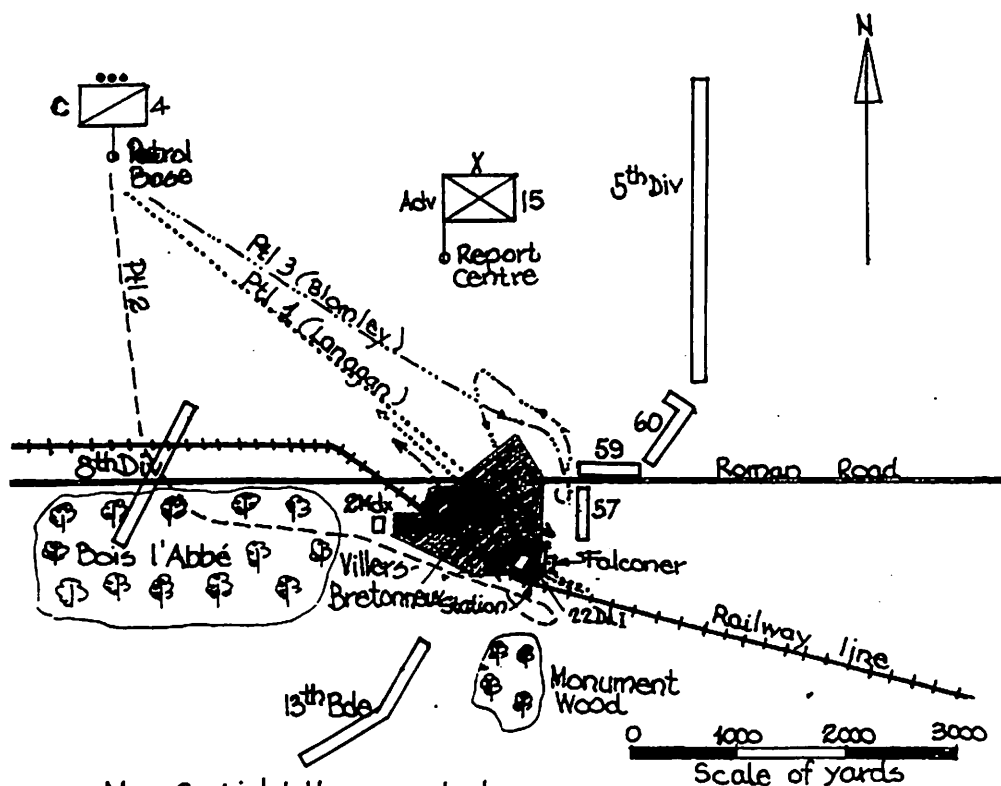
The recapture of Villers-Bretonneux on 25 April 1918 was considered by some to be among the finest exploits of the AIF. Without doubt, the success of the counter-attack owed something, perhaps a great deal, to the comprehensive intelligence gathered by the small bands of horsemen who crossed and re-crossed the inhospitable and uncertain battlefield.

¹⁶ Bean, Vol V, p. 621.

¹⁷ Reid, p. 4. Almost certainly the man killed was 1233, Tpr Henry Forbes. He is buried in Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery.

¹⁸ Bean, Vol V, p. 541n, says General Hobbs 5 Div HQ was in a chateau "3 ½ miles west of Corbie".

¹⁹ Reid, p. 4.



²⁰ Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

An Australian 'officer-type'? — a demographic study of the composition of officers in the 1st Battalion, First AIF

Dale James Blair

Following the 1st Australian Infantry (New South Wales) Brigade's introduction to the Somme offensive at Pozieres in 1916, it was noted in a Brigade report: '40 new officers have been promoted from the ranks to fill the vacancies caused by casualties. The standard has been steadily lowered and though the new men are very good men few are of what used to be known as the officers type'.¹ This statement suggests that an officer type existed. What was it that constituted an officer-type? Moreover, did an Australian officer-type exist? Within the mythologies of Australia's Great War soldiers a particular—and much ridiculed—British officer-type has been promoted to act as a foil to the egalitarianism that has been presumed to have defined the friendly mutuality of Australian officer/man relations. The stereotypical British officer, as depicted through the Anzac legend, was a public-schooled, class-conscious, textbook authoritarian incapable of understanding the character and requirements of the front-line soldier. Australian officers, on the other hand, are depicted as being more informal, generally having risen from the ranks, and more attuned to the wants and needs of their men. Discussion of the merits of such comparison and comparative behaviours, however, do not belong in this paper which is more concerned with 'type'. The 1st Brigade report suggests that a distinct Australian officer-type existed, at least up until its erosion at Pozieres. The question this paper sets is whether such a 'type' existed and, if so, how different was it from the other ranks (and stereotypical British officer). The question will be addressed through examination of the 1st Brigade's premier battalion—the Sydney-raised, 1st Battalion.

A comment made after Pozieres by a 1st Battalion company commander, Captain Phillip Howell-Price, seemingly confirms the official view that a diminution in standard (and type) had occurred in the 1st Brigade's officers cadre:

My other two officers are two Sgts. promoted, Steel and McIntyre. They are not brilliant and not up to the standard of my previous officers. Their responsibility does not seem to impress their childish minds, nor do they show any special knowledge of any sort whatever.²

Howell-Price's statement also reveals a marked degree of paternalism, a quality apparent in the writings of a number of other 1st Battalion officers.

Australia's Great War historiography offers two distinct views about the selection of officers in the AIF. The first, and most favoured in writings about the AIF, is that of C E W Bean, Australia's official historian. Bean asserted that the selection of Australian officers stood in marked contrast to the British preferment to social position and education and wrote: 'Anyone watching an Australian battalion on parade felt that in this year's corporals he saw the next year's sergeants and the following year's subalterns'.³ A second view, and one that this article

¹ AWM 26, Box 53/22, 1st Australian Infantry Brigade report dated 6 August 1916.

² Letter dated 27 August 1916 in AWM/2DRL 29.

³ C E W Bean, *Anzac to Amiens: A shorter history of the Australian fighting services in the First World War*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1946, p. 537.

will argue was a more truthful depiction, was a declaration by General John Monash in relation to the officers of his Third Division: 'The officers (the great majority of whom I have promoted from the ranks) represent the cream of our professional and educated classes, young engineers, architects, medicals, accountants, pastoralists, public-school boys, and so on.'⁴

A comparison between the occupations of the 1st Battalion's commissioned officers and other ranks supports Monash's observation. A bias in selection is clearly evident in the occupational background of the Battalion's original officers [see table one]. Seventeen (53.12 per cent) of the officers were drawn from professional or clerical occupations, a figure completely out of proportion to the overall representation of the Battalion in which those two categories combined accounted for only 16.27 per cent of all occupations. The three most labour-intensive categories of 'tradesmen', 'labourers' and 'industrial/manufacturing' accounted for over half (52.23 per cent) of occupations in the Battalion. These figures are reinforced by a comparison of the Battalion's sergeants and, at the next level of command, lieutenants [see table two]. Over fifty per cent (57.14) of lieutenants came from professional and clerical occupations while 48.32 per cent of sergeants came from labour intensive occupations.

Table one: Comparison of the occupations of 1st Battalion officers against occupations of the original 1st Battalion.⁵

| | Original Battalion (including officers) | Officers of the Original Battalion | Officers of the 1st-26th Reinforcements |
|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Professional | 5.39 | 21.87 | 25.86 |
| Clerical | 10.38 | 31.25 | 29.31 |
| Tradesman | 17.00 | 12.5 | 12.06 |
| Labourer | 22.40 | 0 | 0 |
| Industrial & manufacturing | 12.83 | 3.12 | 1.72 |
| Transport | 8.75 | 0 | 3.44 |
| Commercial | 5.60 | 9.37 | 12.06 |
| Rural | 7.73 | 0 | 5.17 |
| Seafaring | 3.66 | 0 | 1.72 |
| Mining | 2.64 | 0 | 0 |
| Domestic | 2.54 | 0 | 0 |
| Other/Unstated | 1.00 | 21.87 | |
| Total | 99.92 | 99.98 | 99.95 |

⁴ F M Cutlack (ed), *War Letters of General Monash*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1934, p. 233.

⁵ Figures for the original battalion are based on examination of 982 of the 1030 men listed on the 1st Battalion embarkation roll. Records for thirty-two of the Battalion's original officers were extracted from the embarkation roll. Fifty-eight reinforcement officers were identified from the embarkation rolls. However, as the reinforcement embarkation rolls are incomplete this figure represents the majority, not all, of the commissioned officers attached to the reinforcement groups. The majority of unstated cases were students. Where the type of 'student' was stated an appropriate category was chosen. For example a 'law student' would be categorised as a 'professional' and a 'farm student' as rural.

Of further interest to the background of both sergeants and lieutenants is the fact that 11.66 per cent and 12.69 per cent respectively, nearly double the Battalion percentage, came from rural occupations. This may indicate that a bush ethos (in this instance that the bush cultivated better soldiers) was believed and applied in the selection of junior officers and NCOs. Men of rural or bush backgrounds may have been regarded as ideal types to lead small groups in combat. These figures suggest that the independence of thought associated with rural occupations, was viewed as a valuable commodity for the selection of section leaders. Overall, however, the occupational background of the 1st Battalion's sergeants was overwhelmingly 'blue collar'. Although the occupational background of sergeants did not debar them from promotion, it does seem to have inhibited the likelihood of further advancement. Despite this bias there existed some sound reasons for selecting officers from professional and clerical backgrounds. Literacy and clerical skills were essential to the conduct of an officer's duties with the ability to understand manuals, written orders and compose reports being important requirements.

Table two: Comparison of the occupations of 1st Battalion lieutenants and sergeants.⁶

| | Lieutenants | Sergeants |
|----------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Professional | 22.22 | 11.66 |
| Clerical | 34.92 | 5 |
| Tradesman | 4.76 | 15 |
| Labourer | 3.17 | 16.66 |
| Industrial & Manufacturing | 1.58 | 16.66 |
| Transport | 4.76 | 13.33 |
| Commercial | 6.34 | 8.33 |
| Rural | 12.69 | 11.66 |
| Seafaring | 0 | 0 |
| Mining | 0 | 0 |
| Domestic | 4.76 | 1.66 |
| Other/Unstated | 4.76 | 0 |
| Total | 99.96 | 99.96 |

While previous military experience and occupation contributed to the selection of officers within the 1st Battalion, a further bias is evident in the religious background of officers, most notably in the lack of Catholic officers. A compelling fact that gives some poignancy to the speculation of bias is that of the Battalion's original thirty-two officer's only one was Catholic. That figure is a disproportionate one when one considers that 17.86 per cent of the Battalion was Catholic and of those men 20.10 per cent, a figure higher than the Battalion average, had been serving in the AMF at the war's outbreak. One would have expected a higher ratio of Catholics within the commissioned ranks, especially given that previous military service was a preferred prerequisite for officers of the expeditionary force; twenty-seven of the thirty-two officers who embarked in 1914 had served in the militia. One would have expected, in an egalitarian force, that the

⁶ Figures are based on the examination of the attestation papers of 63 lieutenants and 60 sergeants.

distribution of commissions would have been proportionate to the main religious denominations particularly given that figures for the occupations held by the Battalion's Catholics are comparable with those of the Battalion overall, 11.95 per cent held professional and clerical positions while 48.91 per cent came from labour intensive categories.⁷ Yet Catholic professional and clerical workers were not reflected proportionately in the composition of the Battalion's officers. Furthermore, if courage and leadership on the battlefield are considered as worthwhile attributes for potential officers, then Catholic soldiers could not be said to be lacking as they accounted for 16.89 per cent of military awards granted in the field to the Battalion. On this point it is worth highlighting the figures relating to Methodist soldiers within the Battalion. That group contributed to 12.16 per cent of awards won, a figure nearly three times that of their overall representation within the Battalion, and one that raises the question of whether, as a group, they were more motivated by a sense of duty than other denominations. The presence of a Methodist padre may have had some moral influence on these men.⁸

Table three: Religion as a percentage of various sub-groups of the original 1st Battalion, as represented on 1st Battalion embarkation roll.

| Religious Denomination | Whole Battalion (1030 men) | Officers (32 men) | NCOs (156 men) | AMF Volunteers (177 men) |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Church of England | 61.26 | 78.12 | 62.82 | 58.19 |
| Roman Catholic | 17.80 | 3.12 | 14.10 | 20.90 |
| Protestant/Presbyterian | 12.71 | 15.62 | 14.10 | 11.86 |
| Methodist | 4.27 | 3.12 | 1.92 | 5.64 |
| Other/Unstated | 3.88 | 0 | 7.05 | 3.38 |
| Total | 99.92 | 99.98 | 99.99 | 99.97 |

Of 184 Catholics in the Battalion only one was a commissioned officer and twenty-three non-commissioned representing 0.5 and 12.5 per cent of that group respectively. Presbyterians and Protestants form a comparative group numbering 131 of whom five were commissioned officers and twenty-three non-commissioned representing 3.8 and 17.5 per cent respectively. The relative percentages for Anglican officers were 3.9 and 15.8. The trends of these figures seem to confirm Lloyd Robson's query as to the veracity of claims about the egalitarian nature of the AIF and of the democratic character of Australian society.⁹ These figures when viewed in

⁷ This figure is considerably lower than the overall figures for the AIF provided by A. G. Butler. Butler recorded 64 per cent of the AIF as being tradesmen and labourers. He did not categorise industrial or transport workers and presumably incorporated them into figures for tradesmen, labourers and miscellaneous (four per cent). See Butler, v. 3, p. 890. The transport sector in Sydney with its rail, tram and road networks was a large and unionised sector. This sector (combining transport, railway and tramway workers) accounted for 8.75 per cent of 1st Battalion occupations.

⁸ A thoughtful consideration of the intersection of religion and front line experience (based on questionnaires distributed to officers and men who served) is provided by John Baynes in his study of the 2nd Scottish Rifles at the Battle of Neuve Chapelle, 1915: *Morale: A study of men and courage*, Leo Cooper, London, 1987 [1967], pp. 199-208. He found that officers, when compared to the Battalion's soldiers, were more likely to rate religion as an important influence on morale, 50% as opposed to 10%, p. 204.

⁹ Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First AIF 1914-1918', pp. 748-749. See also John F. Williams, *The Quarantined Culture*, pp. 249-251.

conjunction with Robson's findings, appear to support the notion that a deliberate bias existed in preventing Catholics entering into the commissioned ranks.

The one Catholic who was appointed was Lieutenant Geoffrey Street, a student of Sydney University and clearly a young man of some ability.¹⁰ He was to hold the position of Australia's Minister for Defence during the Second World War until his tragic death in an aeroplane crash on 1 August 1940. Exceptional ability, it seems, was recognised and counted for something. Yet even Street's appointment appears to have been tailored for the company to which he was assigned. F Company, to which he belonged, had the highest Catholic representation among its AMF men.¹¹ Of its eighteen AMF men, eight were Catholics, eight Anglicans, one was a Presbyterian and another a Baptist. In all other companies Anglican representation was clearly in the majority with the exception of H Company which could claim only eight militiamen.

The bias that was evident in the selection of officers at the outset of the war was evident throughout the war. A bias in terms of occupation and religion against Catholics was still evident in the selection of the commissioned officers of the Battalion's reinforcements, 55.17 per cent of whom came from professional and clerical backgrounds while only 8.62 were Catholic, a marked improvement on the original Battalion but one still well below the percentage of Catholics enrolled in the Battalion.

Table four: Religion as a percentage of 1st Battalion Reinforcement officers.

| Religious Denomination | Officers 1st-26th Reinforcements (58 men) |
|-------------------------|---|
| Church of England | 51.72 |
| Catholic | 8.62 |
| Protestant/Presbyterian | 24.13 |
| Methodist | 8.62 |
| Other/Unstated | 6.88 |
| Total | 99.97 |

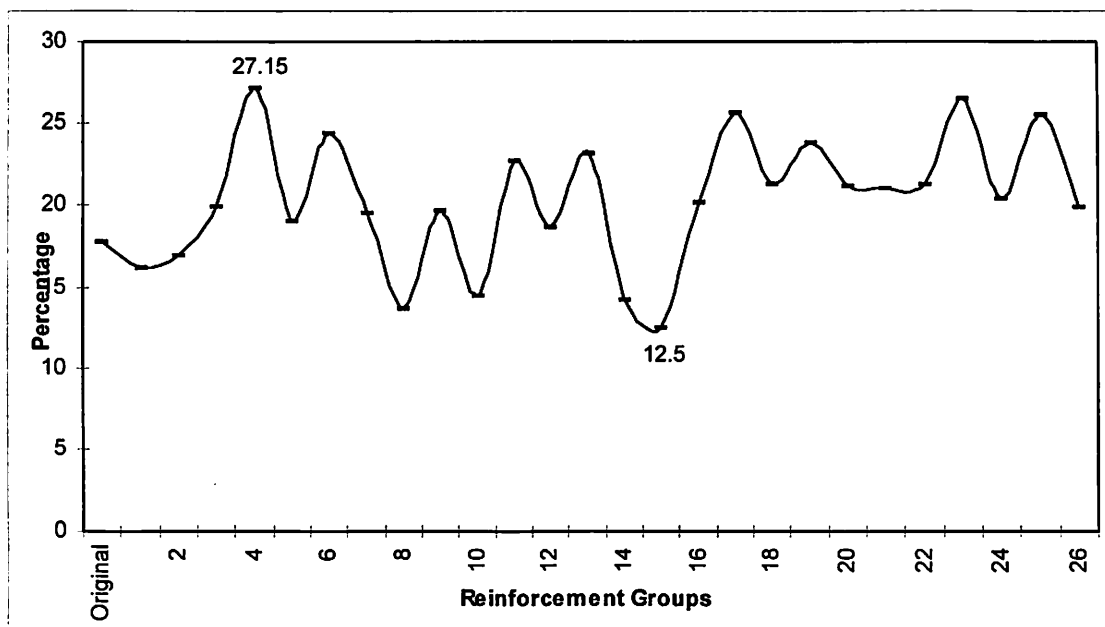
The lower percentage of Catholics selected as officers may have reflected a suspicion about Catholic loyalty toward Britain and the Empire. However, Catholic response to enlistment as evidenced by the records of the 1st Battalion was consistent throughout the war and it is clear that neither charges of disloyalty levelled at Catholics during the conscription referenda, nor resentment over the British treatment of Irish rebels following the Easter Uprising in Dublin, had any effect on the number of Catholic enlistments. In relation to the Uprising, the volunteers most likely to have reflected any signs of Catholic disaffection would have been those found in the 19th and 20th reinforcement groups. These two groups were recruited during the period that the rebellion and execution of the rebel leaders occurred. They, and those that followed, contributed a higher percentage of Catholic volunteers than the original Battalion. In fact,

¹⁰ Street's religion is recorded on the 1st Battalion embarkation roll and on his attestation papers, Personal dossier, Australian Archives (ACT).

¹¹ In 1914, Australian battalions had eight companies. These were combined to form four soon after the 1st Division's arrival in Egypt.

generally, the percentages of Catholic volunteers in the reinforcement groups was higher than those in the original Battalion [see table five].

Table five: Graph depicting level of Catholic representation within 1st to 26th Reinforcements for 1st Battalion.



One other consideration in the selection of officers, and one that has been ignored in Australia's Great War literature, was a man's physical stature. A comparison of the height of officers and sergeants reveals that they differed considerably from the other ranks. Officers were generally taller and it is within that group that notions of the tall bronzed Anzac are more likely to be evident than among the ordinary soldiers [see table six]. Sixty per cent (60.86) of officers were over 5'9" as opposed to only 44.05 per cent of sergeants and 25.88 per cent of the Battalion overall. Seventy-two per cent (72.22) of the Battalion were, in fact, under 5'9" a figure that suggests the legendary tall Anzac type represented, in reality, a significant minority. This height difference may, in fact, have had a basis in class bias. One would expect that men from the middle/upper class would have been the beneficiaries of physical growth resulting from better diet and living conditions.

Table six: Comparison of the height of 1st Battalion officers, sergeants and other ranks.¹²

| Height | Commissioned officers | Sergeants | 1st Battalion |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------|---------------|
| 6'0" and over | 11.59 | 10.16 | 1.78 |
| 5'9" and over | 49.27 | 33.89 | 24.10 |
| 5'6" and over | 33.33 | 33.89 | 46.87 |
| 5'3" and over | 5.79 | 20.33 | 20.08 |
| 5'0" and over | - | 1.69 | 4.91 |
| Total | 99.98 | 99.96 | 97.74 |

A comparison of these figures with those of British recruits for the period up to 1916 reveals that height differences between Australian and British soldiers were not as dramatic as has generally been imagined. Differences were no doubt exaggerated by comparison of Australian troops with British 'bantam' battalions and some territorials—particularly those from heavily industrialised towns and cities—who were notably smaller. However, the mean heights for British recruits aged 18 years, 21 to 23, and 24 to 29 years old, at least up until 1916, were approximately 5' 7¼", 5' 8" and 5' 6" respectively.¹³ Nearly three-quarters of the 1st Battalion fell within (46.87 per cent) and below (24.99 per cent) the mean figures for British recruits.

It is an inescapable fact that there existed a definite predilection toward an 'officer-type' in the selection of the 1st Battalion's officers. A man's physical size appears to have had some influence, even if an unconscious one, in the selection of officers. This physiognomic aspect coupled with the consideration of occupation and religion in the appointment of officers within the 1st Battalion reveals the emergence of a distinct 'officer-type'. Whether this was replicated in other AIF battalions (while likely) will only be revealed by comparative studies. Officers of the 1st Battalion were likely to be tall, Anglo-Celtic, educated at a private school or university and/or from the professional classes residing in the more affluent suburbs of Sydney. In effect the Australian 'officer-type' embodied the very characteristics of class and education synonymous with the stereotypical British officer. This similarity is little considered in descriptions of the AIF officer corps which, in the main, are based around the premise that most AIF officers rose through the ranks and were therefore more egalitarian.

¹² These figures are based on the examination of the heights provided on the attestation papers of 224 1st Battalion soldiers. In addition, the heights of forty-four 1st Battalion soldiers who formed part of 'the Waratahs' are also incorporated (see Alan Clark, *The Waratahs: South Coast Recruiting March, 1915*, Self published, Nowra, 1994, pp. 43-57). The heights of 69 commissioned officers of the 1st Battalion and 59 sergeants were examined separately.

¹³ R Floud, K Wachter and A Gregory, *Height, health and history: Nutritional status in the United Kingdom, 1750-1980*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 135-138.

Australia's Military Board 1905-76 — some stray thoughts on a defunct institution

Warren Perry¹

Some of the most neglected aspects of Australia's Military History can be found in the Administrative and Training institutions of the Australian Army such as the now defunct Military Board and the Australian Command and Staff College at Queenscliff, Victoria, to quote just two of many examples.

In the issue of *Sabretache* for October-December 1996, however, Major Hans Zwillenberg broke the ice of this neglect by contributing an article entitled 'The Military Board Proceedings 1905-76'.² Twenty-two years have now passed since the Military Board was abolished in 1976. Therefore, to many today, inside and outside the Army, the name 'Military Board' conveys no significance. Functionally speaking, it was a departmental committee for making decisions and for making recommendations to the Minister to whom it was responsible. Its membership was prescribed by legislation. Its powers were prescribed by regulations made under the *Defence Act 1903*. Its decisions could be vetoed by the Minister. In short the Military Board was responsible to its Minister for the command and general administration of the Australian Army in lieu of a C-in-C such as General Hutton from 1902 to 1904 and General Blamey four decades later, from 1942-1945.

The deliberations of the Military Board were secret in the sense that they were not open to the public. Before the War of 1914-18, the Military Board had Consultative Members, who were Militia officers. It is unlikely that they were often consulted because in the period from 1919 to 1939 there were no such members.

Major Zwillenberg's discussion about General Hutton advocating the employment of Australian troops in British Empire wars overseas was based on something alleged to have been said on the subject in the book, *An Army for a Nation*, by Dr John Mordike. But this subject of where and why Australian troops should be employed at home or overseas was, and is, a political not a military question. It was a matter for the statesman and not for the soldier to decide. Any views on the subject expressed either publicly or privately by a soldier could only be unofficial unless spoken about under Ministerial instructions. My own studies during the past 40 years or more on Hutton's work in Australia have shown me that General Hutton was a good servant of the Australian governments he served before and after Federation.³ In saying this I am aware of contrary views that exist today in Australia.

¹ Major Warren Perry, MBE, ED, MA (Melb) 1st CI Hons, BEc (Sydney), FRHS. Federal President of the Military Historical Society of Australia, 1964-68.

² The Military Board was created on 12 January 1905; it went into abeyance during the War of 1939-45 when its functions were discharged by the appointment of a C-in-C for the second time in the history of the Australian Army since Federation in 1901. The 1st C-in-C was Major General Sir E T H Hutton (1901-04) and the 2nd C-in-C was General Sir T A Blamey 1942-45.

³ Warren Perry, "The Military Forces of NSW 1893-96: General Hutton's work of re-organising, reforming and revitalising them". Published in *United Service*, Sydney, Vol. 49, No. 3, Winter 1996, pp. 5-25.

The Military Board was the counterpart, but on a much reduced scale, of the Army Council in the now defunct War Office in London. The Military Board was created on 12 January 1905 and its original functions were set out in *Military Orders Nos. 1-10* of the Commonwealth Military Forces of Australia, dated 18 February 1905. These functions were amended over time.⁴

Why did the Military Board come into existence? As mentioned above, it was the Australian version of the Army Council at the War office, London, the origins of which can be traced to the Report of the Esher War Office (Reconstitution) Committee. The Military Board replaced the so called C-in-C system for the command and administration of Australia's military forces.

Although Col W T Bridges, RAA, was the first Chief of the Australian General Staff from 1 January 1909, he was not, in January 1905, 'the senior member of the first Military Board'. That was Colonel (later Major-General) Sir J C Hoad.⁵ The first President of the Military Board in 1905 was Lt-Col the Hon J W McCay.⁶

The following announcement in respect of the first meeting of the Military Board was published in *The Herald* of Melbourne on Thursday evening 12 January 1905:

The Military Board

The first meeting of the Commonwealth Military Board was held this morning at the Victoria Barracks, Melbourne in the room of the Minister of Defence. There were present:- The Minister of Defence, Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon J W McCay (presiding); Colonel J C Hoad, DAG, senior officer of the board; Lieutenant-Colonel W T Bridges, chief intelligence officer; and Lieutenant-Colonel H LeMessurier, chief of ordnance. The sitting was, of course, not open to the press, and nearly the whole time was occupied in work mainly of a preliminary character. A great mass of reports and other papers were tabled for consideration, and will be dealt with at future meetings.

Until Bridges became Australia's first Chief of the General Staff on 1 January 1909, the Principal Staff Officer on the Military Board was the senior officer of the Adjutant-General's Department. This followed the practice at the War Office, London until 1904 when the first Chief of the General Staff there was appointed.

During the period, from roughly 1906 to 1912, Brudenell White a, future member of the Military Board, was a student for two calendar years at the Staff College, Camberley from 1906 to 1907, and from 1908 to 1912 he was attached to the Imperial General Staff at the War Office, London. It was a time when Lord Haldane, as Secretary of State for War, was taking a very special interest in the Imperial General Staff of the British Empire to make it into what he called a 'Thinking Department' freed from all executive responsibilities.

Military Orders of the Military Board were issued from 1905 to 1924 when they were replaced by Military Board Instructions which became known within the Army as MBIs. The new title

⁴ See also GO, No. 3 of 1905 for the new system of command and administration.

⁵ For a biographical sketch of Hoad see Warren Perry, "The Military Life of Major-General Sir John Charles Hoad", *The Victorian Historical Magazine* August 1959, pp. 141-204. This is the most extensive research work yet published on Hoad who died in Melbourne on 6 October 1911 while on sick leave.

⁶ Later Lieutenant-General the Hon Sir James Whiteside McCay, MP, Militia Officer, Lawyer, Journalist and Scholar. He was an original Infantry Brigade Commander of the 1st AIF.

was much more specific than that of Military Orders. Nevertheless, that might not have been the reason for the change.

On Wednesday, 5 April 1911, *The Argus* of Melbourne published a leader on Changes in the Organisation of the Military Board (p. 12). This leader was a critical analysis of two different systems for the top level command and administration of armies. The first of these was the C-in-C system, illustrated by the Hutton system in Australia after Federation in January 1901. This was the system in operation basically when Hutton came to Australia and assumed command in January 1902. He did not 'invent' or introduce the system, but merely took over and developed the system that was in existence when he assumed command. The other system, which *The Argus* designated the 'Military Board' system, was adopted in Australia soon after Hutton relinquished command. This change was not in any way a reflection on General Hutton.

After the South African War of 1899-1902, the British Government subjected the top level command and administration of the British Army at the War Office, London, to a very searching and detailed examination because it had been dissatisfied with the conduct of the War. The Balfour British Government adopted the Esher War Office (Reconstitution) Committee Report (1904). Immediate effects of the adoption of this report were: The abolition of the post of C-in-C; the creation of a 'new style' General Staff at the War Office, London; and the creation of an Army Council. These reforms were also adopted by the Australian Government but later and more gradually than at the War Office, London.

In January 1905, the Australian Government introduced the Army Council system for the command and administration of Australia's Military Forces but it gave this body the local designation of Military Board.

In a press interview in Melbourne on Friday 27 April 1906, the former Minister of Defence, Lt-Col the Hon J W McCay, spoke of the Military Board. He said when the Military Board was created the previous year, he dissented from the view then prevalent that greater political influence could be exerted on the command and administration of the Australian Army by the Military Board system than by the previous C-in-C system. 'The extent of political influence', said McCay, 'depended on the attitude of the Government of the day'. He then spoke briefly about General Hutton by saying that despite 'all Hutton's energy' he could not do as much as he wanted to do because factors of time and geography would not permit him to complete his program of reforms in the time allotted. McCay added 'Even when we had such an officer as General Hutton, an enormous number of things had still to be done on his behalf by his staff'.⁷

But this leader in *The Argus* in April 1911 indicated plainly that this 'new' Military Board system was having some problems in operation: 'All over the world there has been a vast amount of controversy regarding these two different systems, each of which has its merits and defects'.

This leader expressed in effect the opinion that the Military Board system would be, in contrast to the C-in-C system, the ideal one if it were to consist of say half a dozen men with the highest military attainments, with agreed objectives and a strong spirit of co-operation for their attainment. But, said the leader, such a Military Board may rest in dreams but not in reality which is a vast field of controversy. This uncontrolled controversy usually reflects ineffective

⁷ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 April 1906, p. 9.

chairmanship. However, in 1911 some Australian officers probably believed chairmanship had little to do with soldiering.

Some important thoughts on the Military Board, its functions and its role in the Administration of the Australian Military Forces will be found in Dr A N Lewis' *Australian Military Law*⁸ which was published by the author in Hobart in 1936. In its Preface he said, 'This small work started as a series of lectures to a militia unit'. Elsewhere in the Preface he reminded serving officers in 1936 that 'The Australian Military Forces are seriously hampered by the dearth of textbooks and nowhere is this more apparent than in the sphere of Military Law'. I remember the time that this book was published in 1936. My CO influenced a Mess decision not to buy a copy. But in writing this paper in 1997, I do not know myself of any book on Australian Military Law that can be called a successor to Dr Lewis' book published in 1936. I still have my copy of this book.

Until the close of the War of 1939-45 Australia's most outstanding Minister for Defence since Federation was probably Senator Sir George Foster Pearce who had been a member of the Australian Senate continuously from 1901 to 1938. Most of this time when his Party was in office he spent as Minister for Defence. He was interested in his ministerial duties, like John Curtin later, and he worked with great industry to increase his knowledge, widen his experience and increase his skill and usefulness as a cabinet minister and his competence in Parliament as his government's spokesman on matters of defence. He was moreover a man of great integrity and moral courage as his biographer, the late Sir Peter Heydon, has shown.⁹

As the War of 1939-45 was drawing to a close, the C-in-C, AMF General (later Field Marshal) Blamey wrote a letter dated 23 July 1945 to the Minister for the Army, the Hon F M Forde, MP. This letter concerned the revival after the close of the war of the Military Board and its reorganisation and change of functions from largely matters of daily administrative routine to matters of military policy and advice to the Government. Space forbids any proper discussion of this important letter here which eventually found its way into a 'too hard basket' it seems and was thereby 'lost' for more than thirty years. Since then, I believe, a copy has been placed in the Australian Archives, Canberra.

In the period from Federation to the outbreak of the War of 1939-45 Australia cannot boast of a succession of brilliant Ministers for Defence of the calibre of say Viscount Haldane of Cloan, who was the British Secretary of State for War from 1905 to 1912.

About July 1964, the CMF Member of the Military Board, Major-General D R Kerr, CBE, went overseas officially on a study tour to investigate and report on matters of interest to the CMF component of the Australian Army. The countries visited by General Kerr were the UK, Canada and the USA. He flew from Sydney probably in July 1964 direct to London. The study tour lasted about 6 weeks and General Kerr flew home direct from New York to Sydney. In due

⁸ Lt Col Arndell Neil Lewis, MC, ED, LLD, Geologist, Lawyer, Politician and Artillery Officer, born 23 November 1897 at Symmons Plains, Perth, Tasmania. He served in the War of 1914-18 with the 1st Brigade AFA (AIF). He died in Hobart on 27 December 1943.

⁹ See Sir Peter Heydon, *Quiet Decision: A Study of George Foster Pearce*, MUP 1965. See also Warren Perry, 'The Rt Hon Sire George Foster Pearce: Trials and Triumphs of an Australian Defence Minister', *Defence Force Journal*, Canberra, No. 75 March/April 1989, pp. 43-55.

course he submitted his report to the Military Board, which by that time was located in Canberra.¹⁰

It is always a special pleasure to seize on the autobiography of a Minister of State, who had been the President of the now defunct Military Board, so rarely is this institution written about in memoirs and the like by one who has played an official part in the proceedings of that Board. Such a person was the Hon Sir John Oscar Cramer. He has recorded some of his impressions, in his Memoirs, *Pioneers, Politics and People*, of being the President of the Military Board and as such being the ministerial head of the Department of the Army. But before going to his first meeting of the Military Board, probably in March 1956, he was carefully and adequately briefed by the Secretary of the Department of the Army. He therefore knew what his role was after he took his seat at his first meeting. He said:

I was the president of the Military Board, but it seemed to me that the previous ministers had never acted in this capacity or if they did it was on rare occasions. The records indicated that the Chief of the General Staff had always acted as chairman of the board when it met and all decisions were approved by him. The decisions of the Military Board were of the utmost importance and I decided I would take my place as president, and chair the next meeting. I don't think the Chief of the General Staff liked the idea. I gained the impression that the individual members of the board were rather restrained in expressing their personal points of view. They were all high-ranking officers but were subject to the authority of the Chief of Staff. Only the Minister had authority over him.

Here the Minister's narrative digressed momentarily so to speak to make the following explanation:

The Secretary of the Department no doubt had some private talks with some of the members of the board, and he warned me I was getting into a very sensitive area and could expect some violent reaction. I felt, however, that if I was to be anything but a mere figurehead I would want the members of the Military Board to be frank, and encouraged to say what they thought, even if it did offend their colleagues or the Chief of Staff. In my opinion, the Military Board was the best means I had of directing the Army to its greatest advantage.

The Minister for the Army then explained his next move as follows:

Together with the Secretary, I prepared a written statement of direction setting out how I wanted the board to operate and why I expected every member to speak his mind without restraint of any kind. I assured them there would be no repercussions and that discussion on the board would be confidential, even if they were directed against me or against the Chief of Staff. It was a very bold stand to take.

The President at this meeting of the Military Board then waited with some anxiety for the next move, after all Members had read their copies of the Presidential statement. The President, the Hon J O Cramer then said:

The Chief of Staff was the first to speak. He said: 'Mr Minister, this instruction breaks away from all tradition as I know it. I will have to consider my position.' I replied firmly

¹⁰ Letter from Major General D R Kerr, CBE to Major Warren Perry dated 15 July 1978.

but not offensively: 'CGS, there are only two things you can do: comply with the instruction or resign.' The atmosphere was a bit tense but soon all the members spoke and expressed the view that the change of approach would improve discussion. Before the meeting ended, the CGS had fallen into line and we finished in a very happy and convivial spirit. This system operated during the eight years I was Minister, and I endeavoured to be present at every meeting of the board.

The new approach certainly created free discussion, which I believe was a very beneficial result. I got to know in a personal way all the top brass and paid a visit to every command: Eastern Command which was in New South Wales, Southern Command in Victoria, Northern Command in Queensland, South Australian Command in South Australia, Western Command in Western Australia and Tasmanian Command in Tasmania. This enabled me to meet and to know the leading officers and a good number of the non-commissioned officers.

Throughout the existence of the Military Board, from 1905 to 1976, as an instrument for the command and administration of the Australian Army, it was subject to much criticism. Some of this criticism was hostile, sometimes it was ill-formed, and sometimes it reflected an inability of members of the Board to co-operate effectively in applying this system to the conduct of a continuing task, namely the command and administration of the Australian Army.

The reasons for the unsuccessful performance of the Military Board, especially in its earlier years, can nowadays only be largely surmised. In these earlier years the Military Board was a new and unfamiliar instrument for the exercising of the function of command and administration at the top level of Australia's military forces. Many of its military members of those years would have been trained in the 'their's not to reason why' school. Some may not have been particularly articulate in arguing a case at the conference table for or against a recommendation. A pooling of ignorance does not lead to increased knowledge and good decisions. Such situations tend, rather, to lose the object of the business in hand and drift towards aimless and irrelevant discussion. An effective and skilled chairman can of course arrest this kind of drift to unproductiveness. But to assume that the meetings of the Military Board were always conducted under the chairmanship of skilled and effective chairmen is a big assumption. Even nowadays effective chairing of any kind of meeting surprises and fills with admiration a discerning audience.

The Military Board, after an existence of 71 years was abolished on 9 February 1976, and the Chief of the Australian General Staff was invested with the additional powers of command over Australia's land forces.¹¹

Some may consider this investing of a staff officer with powers of command to have been a compromise, if not a retrograde step, and to have blurred the hitherto clear-cut demarcation between the functions and powers of a commander and of a staff officer. Until 1976 the CGS was a staff officer and not an executive officer. He had no powers of command himself. Nevertheless, he did exercise powers of command but on behalf of his Minister, who was and is responsible to the Cabinet and to Parliament for the fitness of the Army to execute Government military policy.

¹¹ See *Australian Army—the soldiers' special supplement*, dated 5 February 1976 'Order of the Day'

So where is to be found the advantage of investing the CGS with powers of command which, in reality, he enjoyed before the abolition of the Military Board on 9 February 1976? It is true, as Major Zwillenberg has pointed out in his *Sabretache* article, that the functions of the Military Board were seen in a different light by different senior officers. He quotes an extreme case concerning General Monash who was, however, never a member of the Military Board. Nevertheless Monash¹² had all the 'ingredients' for a perfect 1st Military Member of the Military Board. These different attitudes of Members of the Military Board over the years of its existence militated also against its success as a means of exercising powers of command and administration.

Further research may show that the Military Board was not as effective at times as it might have been because of the ineffectiveness of its members to conduct its meetings as a team. This method of decision making demanded in reality that meetings be conducted by a skilled chairman and in some instances these chairmen, who were usually the 1st Military Members, may not have been as chairmen up to the standard of say General Monash. But Monash, as a Militia officer, was not eligible to become a 1st Military Member.

Major Zwillenberg ends up his interesting paper on the Military Board with a summary of his findings for the guidance of research workers who wish to examine the nature and extent of these records of the Military Board.

These stray thoughts here on the Military Board will close with a few thoughts on its records, which have since February 1976 become non-current records.

At the beginning of this paper it was pointed out that today the Military Board is one of the Australian Army's defunct higher level military institutions. But because an institution is defunct it should not be inferred that a study of its records, its methods of discharging its functions, how it was organised and staffed and how far short of the ideal the performances of this Military Board sometimes was, is of no value. Indeed the examination of this Military Board's records, by persons trained in research and who are conversant through study and experience with the subject matter of these records, should reveal lessons which can be usefully applied in present-day Army administration.

¹² For an excellent study of Monash's performance as a chairman see F M Cutlack's Foreword to *War Letters of General Monash*. See also Brig Geoffrey Drake Brockman's *The Turning Wheel*. Perth, WA (1960).

A tale of two BAOR athletic medals

Richard Murison¹

This tale starts in Germany in 1947 with 1st Battalion The Gordon Highlanders, continues in Australia at HQ Logistic Command, Albert Park Barracks, Melbourne in 1973, and was drawn together in Canberra and Edinburgh 1996-97. Then, researched at Cameron Barracks Inverness with the Regimental Secretary The Highlanders, it ends in 1997 with the donation of two BAOR² athletic medals.

At the end of the World War, three battalions of Gordons were stationed in Germany as part of the Allied Occupation Forces. At first, the sense of relief, the satisfaction of being alive and the expectation of remaining so, overlaid the reaction to the tragedy of Europe's devastated lands and uprooted people. Soon, however, occupying a hostile Germany involved recurrent problems. The Nazi ideology did not vanish overnight, nor the reverence for Hitler. A pall of misery and defeatism hung over the sullen Germans. The Gordons' work of policing the country and restoring law and order involved endless duties, which as time went on became a trite round of road checks, curfew and security checks, guards and searches. Moreover, the high expectations of victory were blighted by the sad plight of countless dispossessed persons, slave workers of the Nazis and refugees from all over Europe.

In 1947 1st Gordons were stationed at Meeanee Barracks, in the depressing environment of the coaldust-coated rubble of Essen in the Ruhr, which had been shattered by Allied bombing. Many men, who had survived the rigours and trials of the War, were waiting for demobilisation and a return to the uncertainties of civil life in an exhausted Britain. The 1st Gordons' activities were as reasonably varied as could be arranged to combat the general feeling of malaise that began to set in. Among the young men serving in 1st Gordons in 1947 were Lt W D L Ride,³ Lt R C B Chancellor,⁴ Lt J T D Durbin, 2/Lt J C Kennaway,⁵ Sgt L Dunn, Sgt V Mansour, Cpl R Carruthers and Dvr B Keithley. Both Lt Chancellor and Sgt Mansour did very well in athletics, seriously resumed after the war during the summer of 1946. That year the Battalion was just beaten by 1st Bn The Black Watch in the 153rd (Highland) Brigade Games held at Duisburg Stadium. The next year brought success, with the Battalion winning an overwhelming victory in the 6th (Highland) Brigade Games again held at Duisburg Stadium. One of the medals in this story was gained by Sgt Mansour at these games for the 4×400 metres relay.

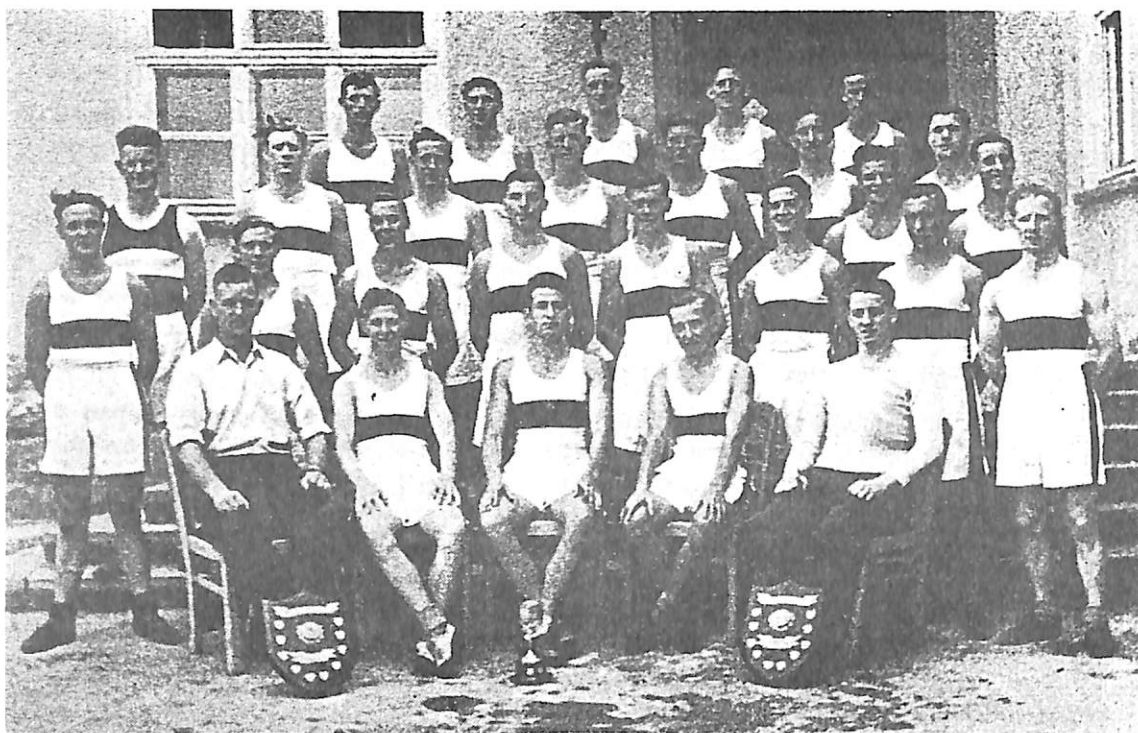
¹ After retiring from The Gordon Highlanders, Major R W C Murison, was appointed to the Australian Regular Army, and served over 15 years in the Royal Australian Infantry in various staff appointments. He is a Federal Councillor, Military Historical Society of Australia.

² British Army of the Rhine (BAOR).

³ Later Emeritus Professor WDL Ride AM MA DPHIL FTSE FRSA, Visiting Fellow, Australian National University since 1988, Member Council ANU 1987-91, Scotch College Melbourne, The Gordon Highlanders 1944-48, Universities Hong Kong and Oxford.

⁴ Brigadier JJ Shelton DSO, MC of Canberra, a member of Military Historical Society of Australia, and Colonel RCB Chancellor MBE were instructors at the Staff College, Camberley at the same time.

⁵ The career of James Kennaway, Cameron Highlanders National Service Officer, as novelist, script writer and playwright was cut short by his death at age 40 in a car accident. His first novel *Tunes of Glory* was subsequently made into a successful film. He wrote four other substantive novels.



Athletics team, 1947

Highland Regimental life comprises an interplay of duty, music, discipline, release and recreation. Running parallel to the formal and informal systems of discipline are the accepted forms of release and recreation; what might be called winding down. At Essen, an education wing was started, a unit library formed, painting classes encouraged and sport increasingly began to fill the leisure hours, and for some many working hours too. Cricket, soccer, hockey, rugby, squash, boxing and athletics were all popular, and good for morale at a time of shortages and of uncertainty about the future. Relations between the Soviet Union and Western Allies were worsening over the struggle for Berlin.

In 1948 "there was a feeling of grey austerity, of post-war exhaustion, of nervous tension, of being on the brink of a nuclear war" due to the Berlin blockade and airlift.⁶ According to the Regimental History this was not an easy year, with the introduction of National Servicemen being an irritating and profound change, and the amalgamation with the 2nd Battalion causing a furore.⁷ At the same time, the tasks of an occupying force had a sameness about them, which made life at Essen boring for the soldiers. As release and recreation, athletics was a benefit both for individuals and the new amalgamated Battalion with all its problems.

⁶ Some 53 RAAF aircrew took part in the Berlin airlift. RAAF aircrew on exchange with RAF squadrons started flying into Berlin soon after the blockade started on 24 June 1948. The main group returned to Australia on 30 October 1949, the blockade having been lifted on 12 May 1949.

⁷ 'The Army is not like a limited liability company, to be reconstructed, remodelled, liquidated and refloated from week to week as the money market fluctuates. It is not an inanimate thing, like a house, to be pulled down or enlarged or structurally altered at the caprice of the tenant or owner; it is a living thing. If it is bullied, it sulks; if it is unhappy it pines; if it is harried it gets feverish; if it is sufficiently disturbed, it will wither and dwindle and almost die; and when it comes to this last serious condition, it is only revived by lots of time and lots of money'. Winston Churchill, *Daily Mail*, 17 December, 1904.

In May 1949, 1st Gordons were airlifted into Berlin, where the blockade was over, although relations with the Russians remained sour. The second of the medals in this story, cherished for 25 years or so by Mr Vic Manson of Melbourne, was won in 1949 in the Berlin Olympic Stadium, the site of the notorious 1936 Games. It was presented by the GOC British Troops Berlin, Major General G K Bourne⁸ to Sgt Victor Mansour. Athletics was given prominent attention in the Regimental Journal in 1949 with a photograph of the combined 1st Gordons athletic and tug-of-war teams, who beat six teams competing in the British Troops Berlin Inter-Unit Championship that year.⁹ The 1st Gordons won all the track events, which were run on a relay basis, consisting of teams of four in each event, and gained places in all the field events. Lieutenant Chancellor, Sgt Mansour, Cpl Carruthers and Dvr Keithley are named in this 1949 photograph, together with Lt Col VDG Campbell DSO OBE,¹⁰ the Commanding Officer, and Captain A R Cornock,¹¹ the team captain. All the names and times for the results of the British Troops Berlin Individual Athletic Meeting, held on 17th and 18th June are published in the Regimental Journal. Lieutenant Chancellor and Sgt Mansour ran with Pte Piggott and LCpl Williamson in the winning team for both the 4×400 metres and 4×800 metres. The Gordons were fortunate in having a first class German athletic coach for two weeks before this meeting—a sign of changing relations as time passed.

Winning all the track events for the Inter-Unit Championship led to 1st Gordons being at the Rhine Army (BAOR) Athletic Meeting at Hanover on 12 July. The team was the same as in Berlin, and so Sgt Victor Mansour must have competed in Germany with the best athletes in BAOR after the war. In the BAOR Championships Lt Chancellor won the 800 metres. Later on that year at Aldershot, Capt Cornock (100 yards and 220 yards) and Lt Chancellor (440 yards and 880 yards) qualified for the finals in the Army Individual Championships.

In Australia many years later, in 1973, I was serving in Melbourne as SO2 (Trg) HQ Logistic Command, and I met public servant Mr Vic Manson, the Directorate of RAEME librarian. Over the next couple of years, having both served in 1st Gordons, we enjoyed any opportunity to chat about the Regiment. One day, Vic Manson showed me his two athletic medals, which he later gave me to keep.

In Canberra, almost another twenty five years later and more than twenty years since I had seen Vic Manson, I showed these two medals to Major J T D Durbin¹² a retired Gordon Highlander. Major Durbin was able to link Vic Manson to Sgt Victor Mansour on two counts, believing he must have altered his name slightly. First, he recalled Sgt Victor Mansour as anti-tank Sgt and PRI Sgt in 1st Gordons and that he was demobilised around 1950. Major Durbin during that time was the Carrier Officer, with Sgt Les Dunn as his platoon sergeant. Secondly, Major Durbin recalled that, in 1964, Victor Mansour, a civilian living in Melbourne, had been in UK on behalf of the Australian football association. Mr Mansour, who had called on 1st Gordons in Edinburgh,¹³ met up with Major Durbin and CSM Les Dunn at Redford Barracks.

⁸ later General Sir Geoffrey Bourne, Director of Operations, Malayan Campaign 1954-56.

⁹ The Regimental journal has a photograph of Major General G K Bourne presenting the British Troops Berlin inter-unit challenge cup to Captain A R Cornock. Six teams competed including 1st Bn Queen's Royal Regiment and 1st Bn Royal Welch Fusiliers. Events were 100, 200, 400, 800 1,500 and 5,000 metres, and 110 metres high hurdles.

¹⁰ Later Major-General V D G Campbell CB DSO OBE DL

¹¹ Later Major-General A R Cornock CB OBE

¹² Major J T D Durbin MBE LLB WS NP, former Territorial Army Lieutenant Colonel. He is a Gordon Highlanders Museum Committee member, and a member of the Society for Army Historical Research and the Military Historical Society of Australia.

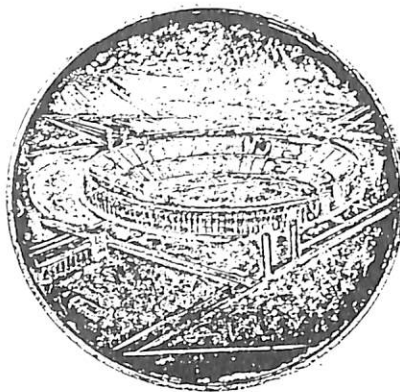
¹³ 1st Gordons at Edinburgh in 1964 proceeded in early 1965 to Borneo for one year during Indonesian Confrontation. Among those serving at Edinburgh were Major J T D Durbin OC D Company, Captain

A year later, I talked again to Major Durbin in Edinburgh, when I took the two medals to Scotland. After telephone conversations with Colonel (Retd) R C B Chancellor and RSM (Retd) L Dunn, Major Durbin confirmed that Sgt Victor Mansour had been indeed a member of the athletics team. A few days later at Cameron Barracks, Lt Col A M Cumming OBE and I looked at the regimental journals, finding the entries and photographs to complete this story.

Thus by extenuating coincidences Major Durbin and I drew together the story of two BAOR athletic medals, which have been looked after in Australia for fifty years. It was a natural decision to donate them to the Regimental Museum in Aberdeen, officially reopened in 1997 by HRH The Prince of Wales, Deputy Colonel-in-Chief The Highlanders (Seaforth, Gordons and Camerons).



1947 Medal, obverse and reverse. Reverse inscribed '6(H) Brigade Group Inter Unit Athletic Meeting 4 x 400 metres relay 1947'.



1949 Medal, obverse and reverse. Obverse inscribed, 'British Troops Berlin'. Reverse depicts Stadium for 1936 Berlin Olympic Games.

B Company, and CSM L Dunn. In Borneo, OC D Company was Major Durbin for the first half and Major Murison for the second half, with WO2 Rab Carruthers as CSM D Company for the whole year. The RSM in Borneo was WO1 Les Dunn. Corporal B Keithley was PRI Staff in Borneo; discharged in 1966, he migrated to Melbourne, Australia, with his wife and two daughters.

Book review

Arms in the service of Queensland 1959 – 1901, J S Robinson, 1997, self published, PO Box 88, Kedron, Qld, 4031, hard cover, dust jacket, 240 pages, \$39.50.

Here at last is the book so many collectors and historians have been waiting for. There was hardly anyone more qualified to write on the subject, Stan Robinson being a collector extraordinaire of antique firearms, a world authority on capping breechloaders as well as an experienced shooter/handloader and a historian who is particularly interested in 19th century Queensland.

This book, like Tony Harris' *The military small arms of South Australia 1839–1901*, effortlessly combines weapons with history. It is a highly readable account of the colonial government's attempt to arm its police and defence forces with the best available or something like it for as little as possible and naturally not quite getting on top of the problem.

The author's extensive research over many years has produced an invaluable record of what was purchased, when and from whom, when delivered, and as far as possible, how disposed of. The work is well illustrated with over 140 good b&w photographs, drawings, maps, and reproductions of official correspondence. Three of the appendices provide a quick reference guide to the weaponry while the naval vessels and forts are extensively discussed and illustrated — an inestimably helpful resource for the researcher. — Syd Wigzell

New publications noted

Naval Video Time Capsules: Part One — Battleships at War 1941/42

Available is a series of Naval video programs which feature rare archive film which has remained unavailable and unseen for a great many years. There are so far 10 videos in the series.

Highlights of Part One include HMS *Howe* fitting-out, commissioning for the very first time and leaving the Clyde. HMS *Anson* departing Rosyth and arriving at Scapa Flow base. The loss of HMS *Hood*, with the hunt and destruction of the *Bismarck*. The triumphant scenes of the Fleet's arrival back at Scapa Flow with HMS *Rodney*, *Victorious*, *Norfolk* etc. The historic Atlantic Voyage of HMS *Prince of Wales* with Winston Churchill, including her sweeping through the lanes of a very large east-bound convoy. Her ill-fated arrival at Singapore, with a vivid portrayal of her subsequent loss with HMS *Repulse*. A rare penetrating look at life on board HMS *King George V* during wartime conditions. Also very spectacular views of the Home Fleet with HMS *Duke of York*, *Renown*, *Victorious*, *Arethusa*, *Kenya* etc. in severe heavy Arctic seas when on Russian Convoy patrol during the month of March 1942.

Others in the series are: Part Two - Britannia Goes to War; Part Three - Close Up for Action Stations; Part Four - Colour Camera at Sea WWII; Part Five - Tragedy and Triumph; Part Six - Perilous Waters; Part Seven - The Hazards of Russian Convoys; Part Eight - The Great Armada Operation Torch; Part Nine - D-Da Y Reflections of Operation Neptune; and Part Ten - British Pacific/East Indies Fleets (1st Phase).

Every program is a minimum of 60 minutes duration, consisting entirely of rare archive film and each is priced at £21.90. Discounts for multiple copies. For foreign/overseas orders please remit

Every program is a minimum of 60 minutes duration, consisting entirely of rare archive film and each is priced at £21.90. Discounts for multiple copies. For foreign/overseas orders please remit in sterling £24.95 which includes airmail postage. Further information from NVTC, BECX HOUSE, ESCRICK, NORTH YORKS YO4 6JH.

James Goldrick. *No Easy Answers: The Development of the Navies of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka 1945-1996*. Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs, No. 2, Lancer Publications, New Delhi, ISBN 1 897829 02 7

This is a book about navies and about navies working with very limited resources in less than ideal circumstances. The author is a Commander in the Royal Australian Navy. He was born in 1958 and joined the RAN College in 1974. He assumed command of HMAS *Sydney* (FFG 03) in December 1996. *No Easy Answers* brings together for the first time in a single volume the history of the development of the modern navies of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

A particular strength is its comprehensive examination of the evolution of naval force structures and the accompanying development of truly national doctrine and policies. The tensions of relations with the British Royal Navy in the years after the independence of India and Pakistan and the search within both nations for a coherent naval strategy which did not rely upon received Western thought is dealt with at length, as are the efforts made by the two navies to obtain modern ships and weaponry in the 1960s. The 1971 war at sea receives comprehensive treatment with the benefit of material from both India and Pakistan, as well as from external observers within the region. New insights are given on the submarine campaign and into the successful attacks by Indian missile craft on targets at sea and ashore.

Well-illustrated and extensively footnoted, this book will be valuable for those interested in the history of Indian Ocean navies and navies in general.

Doug MacKinnon and Dick Sherwood (Eds). *Policing Australia's Offshore Zones: Problems And Prospect*, Centre for Maritime Policy, University of Wollongong, 1997

This monograph comprises the proceedings of the "Policing Australia's Offshore Zones: Problems and Prospects" conference jointly hosted by the Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, and the Centre for Maritime Policy, University of Wollongong, at Canberra in April 1997.

Jack McCaffrie and Alan Hinge (eds). *Sea Power In The New Century: Maritime Operations in Asia-Pacific Beyond 2000*, Australian Defence Studies Centre

This book looks at aspects of modern sea power in the Asia Pacific and speculates on how sea power is likely to evolve in the region during the first decade of the 21st Century. Specifically, its primary aim is to help provide insight into how navies and air forces in the Asia Pacific are likely to link maritime strategies, operations and force structures to national interests beyond 2000. Also, it aims to outline new technological and doctrinal developments that impact upon the development and exercise of modern sea power. The main target 'audience' for this book is serving military personnel and representatives of forward looking industries that must keep abreast of strategic and technological factors affecting maritime operations and force structures in the longer term.

Letters

Dear Editor

Just a brief line of appreciation—and a little feedback. May I express my thanks for the high standard which has been maintained by our Journal. I feel that we owe a debt to those who, on an occasional, and in a number of instances, regular basis, contribute such interesting articles which are not only informative but most enjoyable. Both the 'Book Reviews' and 'New Publications Noted' are, similarly, of considerable interest.

While not a collector, I was particularly pleased to see the details of the Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 published (I would liked to have seen the Commonwealth Gazette details authorising the award of this medal included in the article).

I always find that the 'Letters' page(s) and 'Members' Notices' contain items which draw my attention as did the item concerning the *Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans*.

Around the Water Cart by 'Joe Furphy'—brilliant; so full of interesting material. There was no item in this segment which was not of interest to me.

May I take the liberty of adding a sincere personal THANK YOU for your own first-class contribution.

F J (Jim) Moore

Correction — A Capital Furphy

In the letter headed 'A Capital Furphy' which appeared in the Oct/Dec 1997 issue of Sabretache. '21st, Royal North British Dragoons' appeared instead of '2nd (Royal North British) Dragoons (Scots Greys)'. The Editor apologises for the error. Clem Sargent, the author of the original letter, passes on some comments from Colonel Sutton.

I expect that you have noticed the discrepancy concerning the numerical title of the Scots Greys. You had '21st, Royal North British Dragoons' instead of '2nd (Royal North British) Dragoons (Scots Greys)' which were a unit of the 2nd Brigade of Cavalry which was commanded by Major-General Sir William Ponsonby KQ.

The 21st Regiment of Foot (Royal North British Fusiliers) did not participate in the Battle of Waterloo. The 1st Battalion returned from North America to Britain in June 1815, in July it joined Wellington's army in Europe and participated in the occupation of Paris. After ten years of home service the 2nd Battalion was sent to Holland and participated in the Bergenop-Zoom operation on 10 January 1814. In September it returned to Scotland and was disbanded at Stirling on 13 January 1816.

Colonel Ralph Sutton

Members' Notices

I would like to locate the WW2 Service Medals for my uncle, Mervyn Bruce Hopkins. He is alive and wants to get back his original issue set of medals which were lost (possibly stolen) in Perth in the mid-1980s. He was entitled to, and had received the Pacific Star, War Medal, and Australia Service Medal, which should be impressed with the following details:

WX17548 Cpl M B HOPKINS

I would also like to locate two sets of WW1 Medals belonging to two of my great-uncles, who were entitled to, and had received the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal, and Victory Medal:

957 Sgt R W C HOPKINS

958 LCpl B O HOPKINS

I recently obtained a Mayor of Sydney Silver Soudan [Sudan] Medal, named to 'H. Luke. 206'. He was a Private in D Company, Infantry. Does any member have any more biographical information on 'H Luke' or the whereabouts of his Egypt Medal with clasp 'SUAKIN 1885', and also possibly his Khedive's Star. I note in the Society's 1985 publication, *But little glory: The New South Wales contingent to the Sudan, 1885*, that Pte H Luke is listed with an asterisk indicating the Medal or Medals are known to exist in museums or private collections (see p. 62, & then refer back to p. 56).

Jeffrey Ellis Hopkins
461 Stafford Road
Stafford, Qld, 4053
Home Phone (07) 33565664

Society Notes

1998 Biennial Conference

Elsewhere in this edition are details of the Society's 1998 Biennial Conference. The conference is being held in Melbourne over the Queen's Birthday weekend. There is an excellent array of speakers. On Monday morning the traditional Open Forum with Federal Council will be held with all members welcomed to raise matters of interest. Members are welcome to advise the Federal Secretary of specific issues they would like on the agenda.

Medal of the Order of Australia—Colonel John Neale OAM RFD ED

Members will be delighted to hear that Colonel John Neale RFD ED has been awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in this year's Australia Day Honours. The award was for services to 'veterans, particularly through the Returned and Services League of Australia and the Military Historical Society of Australia'. Colonel Neale was made an honorary Member of the Society in 1994 for his services to the Albury-Wodonga Branch.

Howard Jones in *The Border Mail*, Tuesday, 27 January 1998 wrote, under the heading, 'Colonel's mix of history and help wins award':

At 70 he is one of the Border District's youngest World War II veterans after joining the Royal Australian-Navy in 1942, aged only 15. Colonel Neale loves the water - he swims daily at Riverwood, cycles and walks frequently. His wartime service in ships off northern Australia and in the South West Pacific was mainly in radio work. After the war, he joined civvy street, but became an Army Reservist with the 8/13th in 1948. He went through every rank from trooper to Lieutenant-Colonel, while working 30 years for Arnott's, including many years as an area manager based in Albury. Although he retired from the Army in 1977, he was back in uniform as honorary colonel of the 8/13th from 1986 to 1992. Colonel Neale helped build the museum, based at Victoria Barracks in Albury, into one of Australia's best collections of Light Horse memorabilia.

40th Anniversary dinner

The Victorian Branch reports that their 40th Anniversary dinner was a complete success with a large number of people, including a few interstate guests, gathered at the RAAF Association Club to enjoy a nice meal and hear our guest speaker, Charles 'Bud' Tingwell. Federal Branch was represented by Peter Sinfield and his wife who presented an official minute book to the Victorian Branch.

Member of the Order of the British Empire—J M A Tamplin

John Michael Alan Tamplin, TD, has been admitted as Member of the Order of the British Empire. The award was announced in the British New Year Honours List for his services to the Orders and Medals Research Society. John has been Editor of the OMRS Journal for many years and has served many years as a Committee member, including some years as President, of that society. He is co-author of *British Gallantry Awards* which is widely regarded as the authoritative text on the subject. John has been a member of the MHSA for many years and is well known to many members of this society who are all delighted at the award.

Around the Water Cart

by "Joe Furphy"

Thanks to Branches and individual members who have written to say that they enjoyed "Joe Furphy's" first attempt. He continues to report from around the Water Cart in this issue. Please note that we do not have the facilities to provide copies of original material mentioned. Wherever possible, we have included a source or suggested contact for each item and ask you to seek out the publication mentioned or deal directly with the contact.

- Member Jim Moore of Mollymook, NSW writes re "Crawling Jenny/Jennie" (*Sabretache* Oct/Dec 97, p. 47):

I believe (from reading some years back) that this refers to the "Williams-Janney" MkIV (1917) tank. The term "Crawling" or "Creeping Grip" was used to designate the traction system on many tanks. Many and varied were the names bestowed on the tanks by their crews. I recall reading of "Crawling Big Willie" and well as "Creeping Lord Nelson" etc. It is not too difficult to stretch the imagination and come up with "Creeping (Janney) Jenny".
Thanks, Jim.

- Jim also asks: Perhaps 'Joe Furphy' may be able to assist me. Over some years I have researched material concerning those honoured on the Braidwood (NSW) War Memorial. Despite extensive research one date has eluded me: I believe that, following World War 2, a black granite plaque listing the names of those 'Killed in Action' was added to the plinth of the memorial. About 1950(?), this plaque was unveiled by Lt Col C G W Anderson VC MC. I seek this date. If any of our readers could assist me I would be grateful. I can be contacted at 89 Carroll Avenue Mollymook 2539 telephone 02-4455 2890.
- A plaque commemorating the exhumation of the Unknown Australian Soldier was unveiled on 10 July 1997 at the Australian National War Memorial at Villers-Bretonneaux in Northern France. The plaque records that the body of the Unknown Australian Soldier was exhumed from Adelaide Cemetery near the town.
- Mr Graham Giles of 54 Barnetts Rd, Winston Hills, NSW 2153, is anxious to locate a photograph of his grandfather, number 2327 Trooper Frederick Giles, 6th Light Horse (16th Reinforcements) who enlisted on 15 November 1915 at Casula, NSW. We have already

referred him to a regimental history and other sources but if any member knows of an individual or group photograph which might include Trooper Giles or another possible source of such photographs, would you please write to him.

- In a letter to the *Army Newspaper* (27/11/97), Mr T Anthony of Southport, Queensland, seeks to identify an 80-foot World War 2 Army ambulance launch which he owns and is restoring. It was built in Tasmania and he understands that only five were delivered to the Army in 1945. Numbered AM 1730 to 1734, they were named Koorakee, Koroit, Koumala, Krawarree and Kuranda. He would like to establish which one he has and to talk to anyone who may have served on any of these vessels. Telephone him on 07-5526 4277 or fax 07-5526 4266.
- In the 1996-97 Federal Budget, \$750,000 was pledged for the development of a small museum and visitor information centre at the site of the former Sandakan POW camp in North Borneo. In October 1943, around 2,390 allied POW were held there. Only six survived and, following the recent death of Keith Botterill, only one Australian, Owen Campbell, is alive today. If you have memorabilia relating to Sandakan and the Sandakan-Ranau death marches and would like to donate it to the new museum, contact the Office of Australian War Graves, PO Box 21, Woden ACT 2606.
- National Archives has advised a change of name and address for their World War 1 Personnel Records. Please now send all correspondence to:

National Archives of Australia
World War 1 Personnel Record Service
PO Box 7425 ACT MAIL CENTRE
FYSHWICK ACT 2610

- Mr Graham Pendreigh of 593 East 1732 Road, Baldwin City, Kansas 66006-8230, USA has written asking for assistance with his research into the history of military combat helmets throughout the world. He is interested in details of helmets of the Australian armed forces since the late 1940s. Can any member help him? If so, please write directly to him.
- Coincidentally, Joe has come across the following from the Albury-Wodonga Branch newsletter: 'Recently the Blake Prize for religious art was awarded for a painting "Christmas Truce 1914". In it, the British troops seem to be wearing steel helmets. But were steel helmets issued in 1914?' (Information to Doug Hunter, Albury-Wodonga Branch).
- Also from Albury-Wodonga: There is a recent portrait of Leslie Maygar VC done for the Tank Museum Puckapunyal. In it, Maygar is wearing a pre-war uniform with an 8th Light Horse colour patch. The portrait is based on a photograph which appears in VC winners books and charts. We rushed to see if the photograph has the colour patch and lo and behold, it has. Is it correct? (Information to Doug Hunter as above)
- On Saturday 2 May, Dr Craig Wilcox, formerly of the Australian War Memorial will speak on 'Citizen Soldiers & Volunteer Force in 19th Century Australia' (up to the Boer War). 10am-12pm at the Society of Australian Genealogists rooms at 24 Kent St Sydney. Bookings are essential and the charge is \$15 (\$10 for members of the Society of Australian Genealogists). Reserve a place by telephoning 02-9247 3953 during business hours. (*Journal of the Society of Australian Genealogists*).
- The Victorian Mounted Rifles (VMR) Museum is currently valuing its stock of badges as part of the Army Heritage Project. One badge which has defied our Albury-Wodonga Branch experts is brass and is in the form of a Star of David over a scroll. On the scroll is an

inscription in Hebrew(?). Does anyone have an idea what it might be? (*Albury-Wodonga Branch Newsletter*).

- Major Rowan Waddy of the NSW Military Historical Society is the historian of the Z Special Unit Association and gave an interesting address on "Australia's Secret War in the Pacific" as the Brigadier John Howard Annual Commemorative Lecture to his Society in May 1977. Major Waddy is in the process of compiling as accurate as possible a nominal roll of those Australians who served in the various elements of Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD). During 1996, Her Majesty the Queen unveiled a Special Forces plaque containing the names of all those killed in SOE and SRD (including Australians) in Westminster Abbey. Major Waddy reports that many names are missing and 15 have already been added. Any member with information might like to contact Major Waddy c/- NSW MHS 397 Willarong Road Caringbah NSW 2229 (*Despatch*, journal of the NSW MHS July/August 1997)
- Members may not be aware that the Society is on the Register of 'Expert Examiners' maintained by the Department of Communications and the Arts under the Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act. The Act allows the export of Australian protected military objects (that is important military objects whose loss to Australia by export might significantly diminish our cultural heritage) only if a permit is issued. The Expert Examiners are often consulted on whether a permit should be issued. Information on the way the restrictions work is on the Internet at <http://www.dca.gov.au/ahnbd/pmch.html>. There were no permits for export issued during 1996-1997 (*Annual Report on the workings of the Act for 1996-1997*).
- The *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* is no longer published in hard copy, though it still appears as an electronic journal on the Internet, where it can be accessed at <http://www.adfa.oz.au/~awm/journal/journal.htm>. The Memorial has a new magazine devoted to Australian military history called *Wartime* which will appear quarterly. It is a glossy magazine with plentiful illustrations. It is available in newsagents at RRP of \$6.95 per issue, or by subscription from the Memorial at six issues home delivered for \$36 within Australia (\$66 overseas) or 12 issues for \$68 (\$128). It is expected that there will be an Anzac Day issue in April 1998, a Long Tan issue in August and a Remembrance Day issue in November. (Letter from AWM: telephone 02-6243 4211.)
- You may not realise the 'cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey' is a military expression! According to 'Despatches', the Newsletter of the Australian War Memorial Foundation (November 1997), small quantities of cannon balls were stored on the decks of naval vessels during the 18th century next to the guns for easy usage and formed the familiar 'pyramids' you may have seen illustrated. The balls were kept in place by frames known as 'monkeys'. Wealthy captains wishing to enhance the look of their ship paid for more elaborate fittings themselves, including having the monkeys made from brass instead of the regulation iron. In extremely cold conditions, brass contracts at a greater rate than iron with the unfortunate result that cannon balls would roll off their frames. Hence the bizarre expression, which is far more innocent than it sounds!

1998 Biennial Society Conference

5 to 8 June 1998

Hosted by

Military Historical Society of Australia

Victorian Branch

Venue:

The RAAF Association,
4 Cromwell Road
South Yarra Victoria.

Conference Administration:

President: Mr Steve Gray, Tel: 03 9749 3806

Secretary: Mr Anthony McAleer, Tel: 03 9739 6587

Co-ordination: Lt Col Neil C. Smith, AM

PO Box 20
Gardenvale Vic 3186
Tel/Fax: 03-9555 5401

E Mail: milhis@alphalink.com.au

Conference Dinner:

A Conference Dinner will be held on Saturday evening 6th June 1998 at the RAAF Association premises, 4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra. Partners are invited to attend. There will be complimentary pre-dinner drinks, table wines and mineral waters with dinner. A full bar service will be available throughout the evening.

Fees:

All inclusive: \$75

Additional guest for Conference Dinner only. \$30

Conference excluding Conference Dinner. \$50

Single day. \$25

Please forward a deposit of \$20 with this registration by 30 April 1998. Cheques should be made payable to the Military Historical Society of Australia (Victorian Branch). The balance of fees will be payable on arrival at the Conference.

Program

Friday 5 June 1998

1600 -1900 Registration & Drinks

Saturday 6 June 1998

0900-1200

Keynote Address: D Day 1944 and Suvla Bay: a comparison — Sir Rupert Hamer

War Memories, History — Ivan Southall, AM, DFC

No Moon Tonight — Donald E C Charlwood

Bluey and Curley: the Gurney Family Collection — Lieutenant Colonel Neil C. Smith, AM

1400-1615

The Working Military Historian — Major Bill Billett, BA (Hons), MA

What's In A Number? Australian Military Vehicle Registration Numbers 1938-1972 — Mr Mike Cecil, Australian Military Equipment Profiles.

CSS *Shenandoah* in Melbourne. The American Civil War Down Under — Mr Barry Crompton

Torpedoes, Targets and Tickell: The Navy in China 1900 — Wendy Rankine

1900 for 1930 Conference Dinner

Guest speaker: Sir William Dargie. Official War Artist

Dinner to be held at the conference venue. Prior booking essential. Coat and tie, uniform or Mess Dress required.

Sunday 7 June 1998

0930-1145

Open Forum with Federal Council

Work In Progress

General Sir Ian Hamilton: a reassessment — Mr Ron Austin, RFD, ED.

1300-1800 RAAF Point Cook excursion

Snacks and trading on return

Monday 8 June 1998

0900-1230

Our Veterans — Mr Lambis Englezos, Friends of the 15th Brigade.

Talk by Mr Don Campbell, Albury-Wodonga Branch

The Way Ahead For Australian Military Historians: Group Discussion — Lt-Col Neil C Smith AM.

Notes from the Editor on contributions to *Sabretache*

While the following are merely guidelines, it certainly helps the Editor in preparing copy for publication if these guidelines are followed. Nevertheless, potential contributors should not be deterred by them if, for example, you do not have access to computers or typewriters. Handwritten articles are always welcome, although, if publication deadlines are tight, they might not be published until the next issue.

Typewritten submissions are preferred. Material should be double spaced with a margin. If your article is prepared on a computer please send a copy on a 3.5' disk (together with a paper copy).

Please write dates in the form 11 June 1993, without punctuation. Ranks, initials and decorations should be without full-stops, eg, Capt B J R Brown MC MM.

Please feel free to use footnotes, which should be grouped at the end of the article (however, when published in *Sabretache* they will appear at the foot of the relevant page). As well as references cited, footnotes should be used for asides that are not central to the article.

Photos to illustrate the article are welcomed and encouraged. However, if you can, forward copies of photos rather than originals.

Articles, preferably, should be in the range of 2,000-2,500 words (approx 4 typeset pages) or 5,000-7,000 words (approx 10 typeset pages) for major feature articles. Articles should be submitted in accordance with the time limits indicated on page 2. Recently, lateness in receiving articles has meant that the Journal has been delayed in publication. Nevertheless, where an article is of particular importance, but is received late, the Editor will endeavour to publish the article if possible and space permitting.

Authors of published articles retain copyright of their articles, but once an article is published in *Sabretache*, the Society, as well as the author, each have the independent right to republish (electronically or in print), or licence the use of the article.

Elizabeth Topperwien
Editor



Application for Membership

I/*We
(Name/Rank etc.)

of (Address)

hereby apply for membership of the MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA and wish to be admitted as a *Corresponding Member/*Subscriber to *Sabretache* I/*Branch Member of the

..... Branch

My main interests are

I/*We enclose remittance of A\$30.00 being annual subscription, due 1 July each year.

Send to: Federal Secretary, PO Box 30, Garran, ACT 2605, Australia

