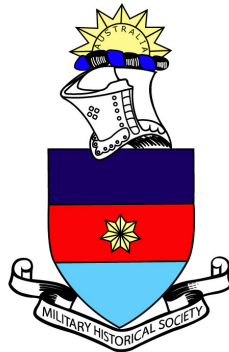


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Sabretache



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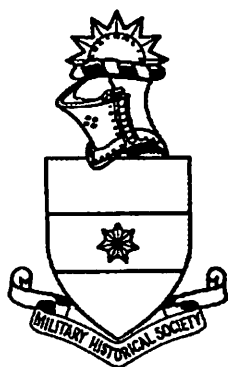
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Shell Shock and Australian Soldiers in the Great War

Dr Joanna Bourke¹

Battle fatigue, psychological stress, or neurasthenia continue to constitute a significant proportion of non-fatal casualties in war. It was first seen as a problem of immense proportions during the First World War. In this article, the debates surrounding what came to be called "shell shock" will be examined. In particular, the years between 1914 and 1918 saw a shift in medical discourse surrounding organic versus psychological interpretations of ill-health. Despite the incorporation of these dramatic new medical knowledges into military medicine, the relationship between psychological illness and malingering remained ambiguous. In the longer term, men whose bodies were tortured by their minds gained little—if anything—from the furious debates surrounding shell shock. In the words of Lieutenant Colonel K J Barrett, these men remained the "wandering Jews of medicine".²

Shell shock was primarily a phenomenon of the First World War. For the first time, the technology of war included high velocity, explosive shells employed in frightening and seemingly endless bombardments. As instruments of terror and death, these shells were hells apart from cannonballs. Given the levels of physical and psychological fear engendered in front line warfare, any estimate of mental conflict must err on the low side. The only statistics we have refer to men who were admitted to hospitals or receiving pensions for shell shock. On the Western Front between April 1916 and March 1919, 12,600 AIF soldiers were admitted to Base Hospitals suffering from psychoneurotic illnesses. Each year during the war, over 15 per 1,000 AIF soldiers were rendered unfit for further military service through various forms of mental illness.³

The causes of shell shock were widely debated. Some of the explanations were wild. For instance, the *Returned Soldier* reported, on 21 May 1918, that men who suffered shell shock were those who had not played games as boys. According to their report, an "English medical man of wide repute" argued that if he were allowed to take ten middle-aged civilians and explode a shell near enough to shock them without causing outward injury, he would be able to tell immediately which of the ten had played games at school. More sensibly, medical officers rapidly came to see that there were certain things which predisposed soldiers to suffer from shell shock. Major J T Jones believed that the small number of shell shock cases within the 47th Battalion in 1916 and 1917 was due to the fact that they were fighting battles of movement, the men were experienced soldiers and therefore knew what to expect, and the battle was successful. In his words, "war neuroses have never been found numerous among tried troops in any successful battle of movement."⁴

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² Lieutenant Colonel K J Barrett, letter from M R Walsh to Sir Lewis James Morshead, no date but 1917, AWM 3DRL/250 item 59.

³ Colonel A G Butler, *The Australian Army Medical Services in the War of 1914-1918*, Canberra, 1943, table 57.

⁴ Major J T Jones, "Medical Report. 47th Battalion", 1916-1917, p. 16, AWM 41/319 X

The Australian Army Medical Corps could not adopt such situational explanations. Their responsibility to ensure that wounded or sick soldiers were returned to the front lines as soon as possible depended on accurate medical diagnosis and treatment: malingerers had to be distinguished from the "truly ill" and organic wounds had to be distinguished from psychological illnesses.

In the early years of the war, the medical corps tended to regard shell shock as an organic illness caused by the violent concussion of a nearby exploding shell that paralysed the *nervi nervorum*.⁵ The bursting of a large shell in a closed space such as a trench led to "commotional shock" as the sudden rise of atmospheric pressure produced minute haemorrhages in the brain.⁶ Burial in the debris of an exploding shell was also a causal factor.⁷ By the middle of the war, however, psychological arguments had gained sway. Charles S Myers was at the forefront of this shift, arguing that emotional disturbance was sufficient cause for shell shock.⁸ People became aware that many suffering soldiers had never been near a shell.⁹ By 1922, Sir Frederick W Mott (a leading organicist in the early years of the war) was arguing that only five per cent of shell shock cases were due to "commotional disturbance produced by proximity to the explosion of a large shell."¹⁰

There were many varieties of psychological explanations. Some maintained that, like all neuroses, shell shock was a "reactive" disorder. By this, they meant that it was the consequence of a failure of psychological adaptation. All servicemen found that military life caused mental conflict. Those who failed to adapt were not necessarily mentally inferior: they could be "too individualistic" and thus unable to merge with the "herd". Other medical officers (more attuned to psychoanalytical theories) stressed suppression. According to E Fryer Ballard in 1917, servicemen who were (quite naturally) terrified under shell fire, "suppress it to the subconscious". However, the time came when the censor failed and fear would develop into symptoms of neurasthenia or anxiety neuroses.¹¹ The President of the British Psycho-Analytic Association, Ernest Jones, agreed. According to him, war neuroses confirmed Freud's thesis that the mind contained beneath the surface "a body of imperfectly controlled and explosive forces" that were in conflict with civilisation. War was "an official abrogation of civilised standards. The manhood of a nation is in war not only allowed, but encouraged and ordered to indulge in behaviour of a kind that is throughout abhorrent to the civilised mind, to commit deeds and witness sights that are profoundly revolting to our aesthetic and moral disposition. All sorts of previously forbidden and buried impulses, cruel, sadistic, murderous and so on, are stirred to greater activity, and the old intrapsychical conflicts which, according to Freud, are the essential cause of all neurotic disorders, and which had been dealt with before by means of

⁵ For discussions of the organic and the psychological explanations, see Millais Culpin, *Recent Advances in the Study of the Psychoneuroses*, London, 1931, p. 15 and Sir Walter Langdon-Brown, R G Macdonald Ladell, Frank Gray and F G Crookshank, eds, *The Place of Psychology in the Medical Curriculum and Other Papers*, London, 1936, p. 21.

⁶ Sir Wilmot Herringham, *A Physician in France*, London, 1919, p. 140 and Frederick Walker Mott, *War Neuroses and Shell Shock*, London, 1919, pp. 2-3.

⁷ J Mitchell Clarke, "Some Neuroses of the War", *Bristol Medico-Chirurgical Journal*, XXXIV, July 1916, pp. 49-72.

⁸ Charles S Myers, *Shell Shock in France 1914-18. Based on a War Diary*, Cambridge, 1940.

⁹ *Returned Soldier*, 19 January 1923, p. 3.

¹⁰ Sir Frederick Walker Mott, "Body and Mind: The Origin of Dualism" *Mental Hygiene*, VI.4, October 1922, p. 684.

¹¹ E Fryer Ballard, "Some Notes in Battle Psycho-Neuroses", *Journal of Mental Science*, LXIII.262, July 1917, pp. 402-3.

'repression' of one side of the conflict are now reinforced, and the person is compelled to deal with them afresh undertotally different circumstances."¹²

These debates had important implications for the treatment of suffering soldiers. If shell shock were a paralysis of the nerves regulating nutrition or a disorder of metabolism, then massage, rest, and dietary regimes had to be invoked. Thus, shell shocked men with hysterical symptoms needed a vigorous (even painful) massage, while those suffering from neurotic disorders required gentle massage because their nerves were hypersensitive or overtired. For these doctors, it made sense to apply the most powerful agent for stimulating nerves to activity—that is, electric shocks. Thus, Captain Leonard May jotted the following in his diary of 11 January 1917: "I also put the Fardic Battery over the Neurasthenic case in my ward, and gave him the longest spark I could with 3 dry cells in parallel on to a jolly fine coil."¹³ Doctors who favoured this treatment were more liable than most medical men to view the sufferer as a malingerer. Thus, electric treatment contained a strong element of torture. Indeed, in 1915 the Australian government was forced to establish a committee to enquire into the use of electric shocks on one soldier (Gunner William Walter Perry) on the grounds that it constituted "legal cruelty" and "torture".¹⁴ Not surprisingly, this technique was said to be "almost infallible": the shell shocked soldier might stand one or two applications, but "quickly recovered under the prospect of daily repetition."¹⁵

Medical officers who favoured psychological explanations were much more eclectic in their favoured cures. Psychotherapeutic treatments included persuasion and re-education. Hypnosis could also be effective. One of the most important of the psychological cures was suggestive psychotherapy, where an "atmosphere of cure" was created in a ward and patients were provided with simple explanations for their incapacities together with easy remedies. These doctors also recommended rest and quiet surroundings (for the mildly afflicted) and work (for others). By removing the cause of worry, a man might be cured. For mildly neurotic men, Australian medical officers prescribed a few days' rest in bed, with careful attention paid to sleep, diet, and the evacuation of the bowels. J W Springthorpe was typical. In his diary for 28 December 1917, he recorded his reaction to a visit to the ward run by the English specialist in shell shock, Charles S Myers. Springthorpe said that his method of treatment was "less rigid, less systematised and more personal, and not attaching the same weight to dreams—perhaps just as good results—much of Freud misleading—Systemisation—as in Army regulations—stiffens into rigidity—official, ineffective."¹⁶ The seriously afflicted needed to have their thoughts direct away from the body and back into the peacetime world of employment. Brooding over the war had to be avoided, at all costs.

In this way, under the discipline of psychology, shell shock came to be treated as though it was a disease of the "will", rather than of "nerve force". This had important ramifications for the mentally ill as it made men increasingly blameworthy for their own illnesses. There were two other ways in which the shift from organicist to psychological explanations was seen to worsen

¹² Dr Ernest Jones, "War Shock and Freud's Theory of the Neuroses", in S Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, Ernest Simmel and Ernest Jones, eds, *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neuroses*, London, 1921, pp. 47-8.

¹³ Captain Leonard May, "Diary", entry for 11 January 1917, AWM IDRL/490. Also see J W Springthorpe, "Diary", entry for 15 July 1915, AWM 2DRL/701 item 2.

¹⁴ "Alleged Malingering", *Australian Medical Journal*, 4 December 1915, pp. 537-38.

¹⁵ Sir John Collie, *Malingering and Feigned Sickness*, second edition, London, 1917, p. 9 and Donald C Norris, "Malingering", in William Brown Doherty and Dagobert D Runes, eds, *Rehabilitation of the War Injured. A Symposium*, London, 1945.

¹⁶ J W Springthorpe, "Diary", entry for 28 December 1917 to 3 January 1918. AWM 2DRL/701 item 2.

the status of shell shocked men. First, a physical cause was more reassuring than explanations that carried with them the taint of insanity or cowardice. Consequently, the organic explanation was preferred by soldiers.

In April 1918, an article in the *Returned Soldier* failed to mention psychological explanations for shell shock but said that it was either caused by pressure produced by shells which forced air into the cavities of the body or by the ensuing vacuum which produced violent disturbance within the body. Similarly, the consulting physician to the forces overseas, Major-General Sir W P Herringham, noted that some men suffering from shell shock repeatedly insisted that they "had not been in the least afraid, but that the condition was due to some physical cause which they could not explain."¹⁷

Secondly, for servicemen, organic explanations had one major compensation. Wounds (as oppose to illnesses) were granted a high prestige during the war. Thus, men suffering from shell shock were divided into two types. The category "shell shock wounded" was reserved for soldiers where there were signs and symptoms of concussion of the brain or spinal cord of a severe nature caused by a specific explosion. The category "shell shock sick" was reserved for all others.¹⁸ As J W Springthorpe noted, "shell shock sick" were dealt with as if they were malingerers.¹⁹ The organicist explanation for shell shock enabled soldiers to be regarded as wounded—a much higher status that ill and infinitely better than insane. When the condition was considered to be organic, soldiers were allowed to wear a wound stripe. However, the increased popularity of psychological explanations, stopped this practice for all except those men suffering the most severe forms of shell shock.²⁰

There was a more insidious side to all these debates. Concern about such high levels of psychological ill-health were related to fears about malingering. The accusation of malingering was strongly disputed by medical specialists. For example, George Rutherford Jeffrey pointed out that the most serious cases of neurasthenia occurred in men who could be shown to be of "steady and fearless character", both before and during the war; the same symptoms were apparent in both seasoned soldiers and raw conscripts; in a large number of cases, these men pleaded to be sent back to the front line; and many did return to the battlefield, only to collapse again.²¹

Irrespective of what neurologists and psychologists were saying, regimental medical officers and non-medical military officers in the front lines continued to believe that a large proportion of soldiers suffering from nervous shock were feigning it. Some were.²² In the words of Lieutenant Colonel A M Wilson, there was no clear line of demarcation between "true shell shocks" and "pseudo-shell shock—including mental exhaustion and physical fear".²³ Furthermore, it was pointed out, there were many benefits accruing to men feigning shell shock or prolonging their symptoms. Most obviously, it got them out of the war. In addition,

¹⁷ Sir Wilmot Herringham, *A Physician in France*, London, 1919, pp. 135-6.

¹⁸ Circular from the Surgeon-General, Director of Medical Services, Fourth Army, 17 November 1916, AWM 25/885/2.

¹⁹ J W Springthorpe, "Diary", entry for 19 September 1917, AWM 2DRL/701 item 2.

²⁰ Lieutenant Colonel Walter Summons, "Medical Work Seen in the Australian Military Hospitals", p. 6, AWM 25/481/147.

²¹ George Rutherford Jeffrey, "Some Points of Interest in Connection with the Psychoneuroses of War", *Journal of Mental Science*, LXVI.273, April 1920, p. 133.

²² For instance, see Wilfred R Bion, *The Lond Week-End 1897-1919. Part of a Life*, London, 1986, p. 186.

²³ Lieutenant Colonel A. M. Wilson, "Shell Shock and Allied Conditions", p. 1, AWM 25188518.

pensions were at stake. Thus, in 1921, the Repatriation Commission accused men suffering from shell shock of exaggerating and prolonging their symptoms "in order to obtain some or all of the possible monetary and other benefits that may accrue. It is possible that some of these are what may be termed 'unconscious malingerers' very often made so by inefficient diagnosis, lax treatment, excessive sympathy on the part of the Local Committees, members of various social organisations, etc." They believed that some of these men were "pure malingerers".²⁴

In practical terms, part of the problem faced by these medical men was that they believed that all that separated the genuine shell shocked man from the malingerer was "intention". Thus, Thomas W Salmon argued that "the cardinal point of difference is that the malingerer simulates a disease or a symptom which he has not in order to deceive others ... he lies and knows that he lies. The hysteric deceives himself by a mechanism of which he is unaware and which is beyond his power consciously to control. He is usually not aware of the precise purpose which his illness serves." In other words: "in both, a disease or symptom is simulated ... The hysteric is a malingerer who does not lie."²⁵

In a textbook on malingering, another expert drew a distinction between malingerers who made a "conscious effort to deceive others only" and "hysterics" who indulged in "subconscious malingering" that "always commences with self-deception". In both cases, deception was present, but while the hysteric revelled in examination, the malingerer loathed it: "The hysteric by his conduct shows that he is in great measure, unconscious of the unreality of his symptoms; the malingerer, on the other hand, conscious of the unreality of his symptoms, is suspicious and ill at ease."²⁶

These definitions, however, were not particularly helpful. Most doctors also recognised that a malingerer might sincerely believe himself to be ill. As Arthur Hurst said: "a man who pretends to be paralysed for a sufficiently long period may well end up by genuinely believing he is paralysed just as the German people have repeated the official lies as to the cause of war so frequently that many now doubtless believe in the truth of what they originally knew to be untrue."²⁷

In his diary on neurasthenia during the war, Charles S Myers noted that "pure" malingering was "comparatively rare", but that "many cases arise from the combination with the effects of conscious or unconscious suggestion, or from a voluntary or involuntary surrender by the soldier of his control over his emotions; they are then largely of the nature of self-inflicted (mental) wounds."²⁸ Doctors were reminded that they had a very serious duty to perform when distinguishing between men who consciously feign and those who unconsciously dissemble. In war, the consequence of an incorrect diagnosis was serious.

The link between shell shock and cowardice was one which upset soldiers. For instance, Private Herbert Fiveash had been wounded in the lungs. After a long period of recuperation, he was sent back to the front lines and trained for the anticipated second Battle of Ypres. In

²⁴ The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act. Report of the Repatriation Commission for the Year Ending 30th June 1921*, no. 173, Australian Parliamentary Papers, session 1920-1921, vol. IV, p. 19.

²⁵ Thomas W Salmon, "The Care and Treatment of Mental Diseases and War Neuroses ('Shell Shock') in the British Army", *Mental Hygiene*, 1.4, October 1917, pp. 527-8.

²⁶ Frederick Walker Mott, *War Neuroses and Shell Shock* London, 1919, p. 179.

²⁷ Arthur F Hurst, *Medical Diseases of the War*, 2nd edition, London, 1918, pp. 28-9.

²⁸ Charles S Myers, *Shell Shock in France 1914-18. Based on a War Diary*, Cambridge, 1940, pp. 40-1.

protest against being sent back to risk his life after having been seriously wounded once, his eyesight gradually deteriorated until he was practically blind. In his words: "Let it be understood that such symptoms of shock as I had were not readily familiar either to doctors or sufferers. Indeed it was felt by myself as a confession of cowardice and a thing never to be made known to others lest one be regarded as a weak contemptuous kind of 'runner away' from the line of duty."²⁹

Similarly, the Australian surgeon, Herbert M Moran, told a story of a man who, when crawling on a reconnaissance mission, put his hand into the decomposing body of a Turk. Since that time, he was unable to get the smell off his hand and suffered from gastric symptoms. He dreaded being sent from the front lines "for he knew that he would interrogated with cold cynicism by some specialist sitting at his ease ... and that at the end he would be labelled with a diagnosis which meant that he had funk'd it in front of the enemy. But what was he to do? He couldn't get that right hand clean?"³⁰ For many, there was little to differentiate the soldier who began screaming in the trenches in an attempt to be moved behind the front lines from the shell shocked man wandering dazed further and further behind the line.

Throughout the war and afterwards, this tension between medical specialists, front-line medical officers, and the military hierarchy about the nature of shell shock remained. The increased (albeit half-hearted) willingness of military authorities to label neurasthenic men "sick" rather than malingerers was fortunate: it certainly reduced their risk of being punished by imprisonment, dishonourable dismissal from the army, or Field Punishment. However, there were much more pragmatic reasons for this shift in terminology. It was very difficult for the Australian army to claim that so many soldiers were malingerers, particularly since they had volunteered to fight in the first place, and many were experienced soldiers. If these men were to be labelled cowards, they would have to be punished as such, but this would permanently wreck morale.

A more important explanation for the willingness of military authorities to adopt pathological or psychological explanations for shell shock was political. Many of the shell shocked men were of a high social class. In the year ending 30 April 1917, while the ratio of officers to men at the Front was 1:30 and of wounded officers to men 1:24, the ratio of officers to men in hospitals for shell shock was 1:6.³¹ It would have been politically difficult to accuse these men of cowardice. This class dimension to the rhetoric concerning what was sickness and what was malingering is most clearly seen in the distinctions made between different types of shell shocked soldiers. Thus, most sympathy was reserved to those suffering anxiety neuroses (the form predominately experienced by officers) as opposed to hysteria (the form predominantly reserved for privates).

Certain sections of the medical profession provided a socio-cultural explanation for these distinctions. According to them, privates experienced hysteria because of the conflict between two primal instincts: self-preservation and the esteem of the herd. This conflict was settled by the occurrence of some disability—paralysis, mutism, contraction, anaesthesia—that incapacitated them from further participation in the conflict, thus removing the conflict between instinct and duty. It was alleged that the more highly educated officers were less able

²⁹ Private Herbert Fiveash "Private Memories", AWM Mss. 1217, p. 129.

³⁰ Herbert M Moran, *Viewless Winds. Being the Recollections and Digressions of an Australian Surgeon*, London, 1939, p. 153.

³¹ Thomas W Salmon, "The Care and Treatment of Mental Diseases and War Neuroses ('Shell Shock') in the British Army", *Mental Hygiene*, 1.4, October 1917, pp. 514-5.

to be convinced by this crude solution. Their education and military discipline taught these men to suppress their instinct of fear. Therefore, they experienced anxiety neuroses. As Major-General Sir W P MacPherson and his team summarised it: "Any soldier above the rank of corporal seemed possessed of too much dignity to become hysterical."³² For military authorities, hysteria was more likely to conceal cowardice.

What about the attitudes of other soldiers? Whether viewed as "unconscious malingerers" or "genuinely ill", shell shocked soldiers at the front generally received a sympathetic response from their comrades. The rhetoric of the war stressed that everyone was at risk. Although the medical profession were anxious to establish who were most susceptible to war neuroses, in the field no-one doubted that all could fall victim: the young, old, strong, feeble. Furthermore, soldiers hesitated before condemning their mates who had "broken" under stress of shelling: they had at least acknowledged that they owed something to the state and—more importantly—to their mates. Furthermore, no one could deny that the war was horrible and that more men did not go mad surprised some. Everything paled beside the conditions at the Front.

Sympathy was not the characteristic response of military doctors or of civilians back home. Again, the main conflict was between medical and military considerations. Although Medical Officer, Charles Huxtable, confessed to having "pangs of remorse", he defended the need to be tough if military requirements were to be met.³³ There were pragmatic considerations. Thus, Major H R J Harris noted that, at Pozieres, he was less concerned with distinguishing "genuine" cases of shell shock from men suffering from "stark fear" because in both cases evacuation was imperative in order to avoid a "disastrous moral effect".³⁴ Although there was a risk that if men claiming to be shell shocked were allowed to remain behind the front lines, more men would be persuaded to feign it, it was better to keep them away from active service so that they would not be able persuade other soldiers to go with them: "one man who has the wind up will tend very much to put the wind up his mates also".³⁵

In the AIF, most doctors were civilians and they tended to be more sympathetic towards suffering soldiers than medical officers trained within the Regular service. In 1916, the Adjutant General, G H Fowke, wrote that soldiers who failed to "maintain mental equilibrium" could not be allowed to escape disciplinary action merely on the grounds of a medical diagnosis of shell shock. In his words: "It has too often happened that Officers and men who have failed in their duty have used such expressions [as shell shock, neurasthenia etc.] to describe their state of non-effectiveness, and Medical Officers without due consideration of the military issues at stake, have accepted such cases as being in the same category as ordinary illness". However, he continued, it was for a Court-Martial to decide "whether the evidence as to the existence of actual disease is such as to justify absolving an offender from penal consequences." For this reason, shell shocked men were to be kept as near as possible to the front lines until the genuineness of their illness was verified by a military court.³⁶

³² Sir W P MacPherson, Sir W P Herringham, T R Elliott, and A Balfour, *Medical Services. Diseases of the War*. Volume II, London, 1923, pp. 17-8.

³³ Charles Huxtable, *From the Somme to Singapore*, Kenthurst, New South Wales, 1987, pp. 29-30.

³⁴ Major H R J Harris, "Narrative", pp. 3-4, AWM 41/2/8/12.

³⁵ Corporal G M Whish, "War Diary of RMO 25th Battalion Special Note Re. NYDN", AWM 25/481/81.

³⁶ Adjutant General G H Fowke, "Secret Circular", 14 October 1916, AWM 7

Readapting to Australia was often difficult. Many people lacked sympathy for the afflicted. Ward masters and attendants on board transport ships back to Australia, had to be warned never to call their shell shocked patients "loony" or "lunatic".³⁷ Wives were reminded to be kind towards their husbands and not assume that their altered behaviour was due to lack of love rather than "the disruptive shellshock to the normal harmonious vibrations of the body cells."³⁸ Indeed, they were sometimes sneered at for being drunkards.³⁹ They were housed in asylums for civilian lunatics.⁴⁰ Pension authorities searched for reasons to refuse them pensions.⁴¹

Furthermore, servicemen who had suffered as a result of their wartime experiences soon faced a new threat: denial of their existence. Shell shock did not end with the war. Men continued to suffer. Hospitals dedicated to helping shell shocked men were kept short of money and many sufferers were dismissed from care prematurely as Government resources were transferred to other groups. The debates about the causes of shell shock remained peripheral to men's experience. From the military perspective, they continued to be regarded with suspicion as malingerers. The new insight that their sufferings had psychological origins made their status within Australian society more uncertain as they came to be thought of as "insane" rather than "wounded". The war left these servicemen stranded in no-man's land, isolated from both the sane and the insane.

³⁷ "Outline of Administration of (Mental) Special Medical Ward on Board Transport", no date, p. 2, AWM 25/273/1.

³⁸ *Returned Soldier*, 10 October 1919, p. 13.

³⁹ "What is Shell Shock?", *Returned Soldier*, April 1918, p. 17 and letter from "Disgusted", "Shell Shock Cases", *Diggers' Gazette*, 1 December 1920, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Copy of report by Lieutenant Colonel Sinclair, 8 December 1915, AWM 25/399/18; The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia. *Australian Soldiers' Repatriation Act. Report of the Repatriation Commission for the Year Ending 30th June 1924*, no. 141, Australian Parliamentary Papers, session 1923-1924, vol. IV, p. 19; *Diggers' Gazette*, 21 May 1921 and 21 November 1921, pp. 3 and 5.

⁴¹ J W Springthorpe, letter to the Repatriation Commission, 14 July 1920, AWM 2DRL/701 item 15 and *Australian Parliamentary Debates*, Session 1934-35, vol. 146, 19 March 1935, p. 1245.

The Trophy Tradition¹

Mark Clayton

*When A stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him,
he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted,
and divideth his spoils—Aristotle, Politics, Bk.i, ch.2, sec.16 (c.330 BC)*

Trophy collecting, despoilation and looting are even older than Methuselah. In The Old Testament for example, God promises that Abraham's seed shall possess 'the gate of their enemies'. We read elsewhere that Joshua (xxii), 'when he sent away the children of Manasseh, presented them with the spoil of their enemies as a mark of honour. ... David also, in referring to that part of the spoil which he was sending to his friends, the elders of Judah, entrusted it to them with these words: "Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD"'.² The origins and antiquity of this practice are also revealed to us through the etymology of the word trophy which derives from the French *trophée*, the Latin *tropæum* and ultimately, from the Greek τροπαιον meaning turning, putting to flight, defeat. It also refers, in Greek and Roman parlance, to 'A structure erected (originally on the field of battle, later in any public place) as a memorial of a victory in war, consisting of arms or other spoils taken from the enemy, hung upon a tree, pillar, etc. and dedicated to some divinity'. These meanings had scarcely altered by the late seventeenth century when Dryden, in his epic work the *Æneid*, penned the following:

'Around the posts hung helmets, darts, and spears, And captive chariots, axes, shields and bars, And broken beaks of ships, the trophies of their wars' (vii, 254).

Trophy was also adopted by the hunter and the athlete during the sixteenth century, referring in these instances to anything that served as a token or evidence of victory, valour, power skill etc. It is in this context, of course, that we recognise its most modern meaning.³ Why then, have contestants—both ancient and modern—felt the need to collect and display trophies? It is evident, even at a superficial level, that the trophy can represent proof of victory. ... 'If one has taken the enemy's weapons [then] it would seem likely that one has defeated the enemy. If one has deprived the foe of the possibility to fight, so one must be the victor'.⁴ Victory on the battlefield had to be made manifest if it was to have any lasting significance and it became important therefore to show as many trophies as possible. This meant that trophies had to be brought back and paraded before the home populations. Those who had stayed at home could then participate in the victory celebrations, their lingering anxieties assuaged by the evidence that lay before them. Trophies taken in the heat of battle of course were far more valuable than those that were *res nullius*, abandoned by an enemy in retreat. Similarly, those that were

¹ This article is the first of a series by Mark Clayton entitled, *To the victor belongs the spoils—a history of the Australian war trophy collection*.

² Quoted in H Grotius, "De Iure Praedae Commentarius", *Commentaries on the Law of Prize and Booty*, Vol.1, A translation of the original manuscript of 1604 by G L Williams with the collaboration of W H Zeydel (Oxford University Press, 1950), pp.335-336.

³ J A Simpson & E S C Weiner (Eds), *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, Vol. XII (Clarendon Press, Oxford), p. 583.

⁴ B M Holquist, *The Metal Trophies of the Swedish State, 17th Century War Weaponry and Politics* (International Association of Museums of Arms and Military History Xth Congress, Stockholm, 1984), p. 366.

recovered from particularly righteous and spiritual causes (eg, the Crusades) were sometimes invested with sacred qualities that could be used to further the victor's advantage. The Romans may have been the first to institutionalise the trophy custom, creating rituals, pageants and celebratory forms which persist to the present day. The triumphal arch is one such form, an enduring and universal symbol which serves to highlight the fundamental victory-trophy nexus. 'In the [ancient] triumphal procession a very great part was played by the trophies, the symbols of victory ... triumphal arches were raised and triumphal processions ... marched through the capital cities'.⁵

It can be said on this basis that trophies also served as vehicles for propaganda. Triumphal arches can today be found throughout the world, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris being perhaps the most famous example of this ancient architectural form. There are lesser examples to be seen also in many parts of Australia and New Zealand, many of which—in keeping with the Roman tradition—are also flanked by captured enemy weapons.⁶ The ancients used all manner of justification to uphold the trophy tradition. Pronouncements on the subject, by some of their greatest intellects, helped to reinforce their sense of moral, intellectual, and philosophical certitude. Who, after all, would dare challenge the utterances of a Plutarch on such matters?

'You are doing nothing that is harsh or unjust; rather you are following the most ancient of laws, which bestows upon superiors the goods of their inferiors: a law that has its beginning in God and its final effect in the beasts'—Camillus [xvii. 3-4]⁷



Ballarat's triumphal arch and Avenue of Honour, c.1931.
Note the trophy guns flanking the arch columns (Museum of Victoria's photo archive No.262).

⁵ Ibid, p.365.

⁶ Ballarat's (Vic) triumphal arch is probably the best known example. Bega (NSW) and Beaufort (Vic) also have impressive memorial arches.

⁷ Grotius, *op. cit.*, p. 48. The author distils a vast weight of precedent and draws on the laws of God, nations, nature, war, logic, and even canon law to conclude—not surprisingly—that trophy seizure is justifiable.

It was not until the early seventeenth century however that an attempt was made—by the Dutch—to formulate a comprehensive legal justification for trophy collecting, one that would, they hoped, withstand international scrutiny. The circumstances which caused this seminal work to be commissioned are no less interesting. When the Spanish carrack *Catherine* was seized by the Dutch in 1603, the proceeds were distributed in large part to the Dutch East Indies Company. Many of the Company's shareholders—noticeably those of the Mennonite sect, who disapproved of war under any circumstances—looked askance upon these government favours. Some withdrew from the Company threatening to start up a rival organisation that would devote itself to peaceable commerce. The States General and government, being so seriously embarrassed and alarmed by the widespread criticism of their actions, commissioned one Hugo Grotius to write a defence of their policies. Grotius's treatise, *De Iure Praedae Commentarius* (Commentary on the the Law of Prize and Booty) remains to this day one of the classic texts of international law.⁸

One can distinguish in this seminal work the 1907 Hague Convention ruling on war booty which, in turn, gave rise to a host of related AIF Routine Orders concerning war trophies.⁹ Thus, it can be shown that the rationale and rules governing the formation of Australia's massive WW1 trophy collection were formulated by a twenty-one year old Dutchman, three centuries before Gallipoli. Grotius, like many in his profession, also uses precedent to demonstrate a continuity of practice, a link between his world and the customs of the ancients. It is possible on this basis to talk in terms of an ongoing custom that spans a millennium, and which links the AIF and Roman legions. It is in this sense that I refer throughout this discussion to a 'trophy tradition'. The *De Iure Praedae* transformed custom into law, and gained for that tradition an enduring sense of integrity and international respectability. The tradition was here to stay, but it remained for the French to effect one final transformation. The wars of the French Revolution and Napoleon were the first to be fought by volunteer citizen soldiers, motivated by notions of collective idealism rather than self interest. Soldiers, previously drawn from the 'margins of society', were now entitled to enter the nation's pantheon where their ashes 'were to be mixed with those of France's [other] great men'.¹⁰ The interests of the State and the individual were aligned as never before because 'now, at least in public, the gain was said to outweigh the personal loss'.¹¹

Along with the world's first republic was born 'the cult of the fallen soldier', an idea which would thereafter become increasingly aligned with the centuries-old trophy tradition.¹² Trophy guns, won in the heat of these—and subsequent—righteous clashes came to be regarded, for the first time, as potent reminders of individual courage and sacrifice. They too were now imbued with spiritual and symbolic significances and as such, became increasingly associated with the rituals of military and civic commemoration. It was only a matter of decades before these reverberations were also being felt across the Channel. The progression from curio and ornament, to civic memorial and sacred relic, unlike the transformation which had affected the soldiering profession was, for the most part, very gradual. Periodically however, governments and other tradition makers would seek to reinterpret and refine the tradition's ancient precepts.

⁸ H. Grotius, "De Iure Praedae Commentarius", *Commentary on the the Law of Prize and Booty*, Vol. 1, A Translation of the Original Manuscript of 1604 by G L Williams with the collaboration of W H Zeydel (Oxford University Press, 1950).

⁹ T E Holland, *The Laws of War on Land—Written and Unwritten* (Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 54.

¹⁰ G L Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers, Reshaping The Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹² For a full analysis of the 'cult' see Part II of G L Mosse's *Fallen Soldiers, Reshaping The Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

Thus, a frugal English Government seeking to reconcile the growing public interest in war trophies with those somewhat more urbane concerns of the Exchequer, hit upon the masterful idea of turning its arsenal of Waterloo trophies into civic statuary. The idea of overlaying an ancient commemorative form with contemporary symbolism offered a number of important advantages. What could be more satisfying (or cost-effective) for the victor, than to recast the spoils of war into something that was simultaneously noble, public, and enduring? And what could be more humiliating for the vanquished than the knowledge that his guns had been transformed into an object of aesthetic delight, in a form that would serve evermore to remind the world of his greatest military defeat. Thus, when in 1836 the London City Council proposed erecting an equestrian statue of the duke of Wellington, the Government undertook to help defray the cost by contributing '£1,520 worth of bronze metal taken in Wellington's victories'.¹³ There soon appeared a second gun-metal monument (to Nelson), which was followed—in 1846—by yet another equestrian version of the duke, sitting this time atop the triumphal arch at Hyde Park corner.

Once again the Government became involved, contributing more than ten tons of captured Waterloo cannon towards both projects. An old English nine-pounder, also used at Waterloo, was added to the crucible from which the duke's head was to be poured. The *Examiner*, feeling compelled to comment on this variation, added that this trifling contribution seemed 'hardly enough ... to make the nose of such a hero, for the head that held the world in awe'.¹⁴ The Wellington War Memorial was greeted with so much contempt and derision that eventually, 'with the duke long in his tomb', an excuse was found for it to be removed in 1883. Described as a 'monstrosity of ironmongery' and 'a gigantic triumph of bad taste over public opinion', it singularly extinguished the Government's short-lived enthusiasm for turning trophies into statues.¹⁵ It was against this background that Britain inherited its largest ever haul of trophy guns, being the spoils from the Crimean War (1853-1856). Some 1,500 iron guns and hundreds of brass cannon were shipped back to England at a time when the country's tradition makers—smarting from the Wellington statue episode—were still trying to discover new commemorative uses for the growing inventory of trophy guns. Suggestions that these guns might also be melted down and made into gates were publicly derided as 'paltry parsimony'¹⁶ and immediately compared with 'that senseless statue in Hyde Park'.¹⁷ One solution though which had gained a degree of acceptability in Britain, and which might easily be expanded, was that of displaying obsolete and captured weaponry in public spaces alongside civic buildings. One *London Times* correspondent, eager to contribute to the growing debate about the country's war trophies, pointed out—in 1856—that 'four field pieces' had graced the Chelsea Hospital terrace since 'time immemorial'.¹⁸ Some found there way into museums and in a rare demonstration of largesse the Home Government sent others off to the Australian and New Zealand colonies, as tokens of appreciation for their patriotic support. But what to do with the rest?

The issue assumed some public importance when in September 1856, in the *London Times*, a veteran of the Crimean War—the bloodiest of all conflicts—expressed his 'mortification' at

¹³ F D Munsell, *The Victorian Controversy Surrounding The Wellington War Memorial* (The Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), p. 1.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p.26.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.1.

¹⁶ *London Times*, 16 September 1856, p. 8.

¹⁷ *London Times*, 10 September 1856, p. 12.

¹⁸ *London Times*, 16 September 1856, p. 8.

finding the guns, captured from the Russians at Sebastapol, 'lying neglected and covered with rust ... in an obscure corner' of the Woolwich arsenal. ... In the midst of deep snow and mud, and often under fire from the north forts, had we to remove these guns, comforting ourselves, however, with the idea that they were going to England as the trophies of our success and the proud result of our sufferings and privations. ... We feel deeply, Sir, the neglect of these things, which cost us so much blood to win.'¹⁹ Here was evidence of the arms profession's new found status, and here too were the first suggestions that enemy gun metal could serve a purpose other than public ornamentation. This notion that war trophies were also representative of personal sacrifice, never an element of the Greco-Roman custom would, by the following century, emerge as a fundamental tenet of the trophy traditions in both Australia and New Zealand.

There emerged from this mid-century debate one other very important idea. ... 'if these guns are to be broken up, [then] surely a bronze cross cast from them would be a slight recognition. ... to distinguish the men who fought in the trenches.'²⁰ Referred to later as the Victoria Cross, this bronze medal remains the highest of all British military awards. In this tiny cruciform decoration we can distinguish the intersection of the ancient and modern trophy traditions, overlaid with potent Christian symbolism. The ultimate recognition of individual valour, its instigation in 1856 signified both a continuation and reinterpretation of the trophy tradition. The enemy's weaponry, paraded now in a somewhat abstracted form, was now irrevocably linked with the ideals of individual courage, sacrifice and memory (most VCs were awarded posthumously). These significances were to be greatly amplified during the first world war which produced 29.5 million casualties, and 633 VC awards.

Australia was one of the few nation's to contribute a volunteer army to that conflict and yet—proportionally—it suffered the most casualties of any British Army. It seemed inevitable, given these circumstances, that these trophy guns should eventually acquire an almost sacred significance.

Elements of the tradition were in evidence in Australia, long before 1914. The military ethic after all had been implanted here in 1788, creating a climate that was ideal for the cultivation of ancient martial practices. Thus, when Governor Phillip's convict huntsman was mortally wounded with a barbed spear in December 1790, he ordered that a punitive expedition return with 'two prisoners and the heads of ten aboriginal men.'²¹ Some aboriginal dead had their ears, fingers, heads or skin removed as trophies, indicating that the tradition may by then have acquired a more literal, sporting dimension. Contemporary descriptions of these encounters were also couched in the language of the game trophy hunter. ... 'One fine tall fellow appeared on the top of the hill ... but in a moment one knocked him down and the other shot him through the head. ... The Aborigine's ear was sliced off, salted and pocketed.'²² Crimean War trophies also began arriving in the 1860s, barely a decade after the first Australians had departed for the Maori Wars.²³ As if to emphasize its 'Europeanness' the colonial administration set about copying the trophy arrangements of London and Paris. Effete forms, once the property of the Russian Emperor Alexander, now stood guard alongside the colony's churches, parks and civic buildings in places like Launceston, Melbourne, Sydney and

¹⁹ *London Times*, 10 September 1856, p. 12.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12

²¹ R Broome, "The Struggle For Australia: Aboriginal-European Warfare 1770-1930", in M McKernan & M Browne (Eds.), *Australia: Two Centuries Of War And Peace* (Allen & Unwin, 1988), p. 94.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 114.

²³ These can still be seen in Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart and Launceston.



Parramatta Park, Sydney, 1906 (Mitchell Library No.10868).

Adelaide. This attachment to tradition was felt particularly keenly in Parramatta (NSW) where the marriage of trophy and classical traditions was most perfectly aligned.

Understanding and acceptance of the tradition's precepts grew with our voluntary involvement in a succession of military forays. Our Boxer Rebellion Naval Contingent, for example, was presented with a ten foot bronze cannon weighing two tons. This can still be seen, a century later, guarding the main gate to Sydney's Garden Island Dockyard.²⁴ Chinese cannon were also brought back at this time with examples still to be seen in Victoria and New South Wales.²⁵ The Boer War Contingents also returned with captured enemy guns. On this occasion however the officer commanding the Australian forces had to formally apply to the British for permission to take back to Sydney the gun which had been captured by the NSW Mounted Rifles. 'It is a fine specimen of Krupp's best twelve pounder. Truly a great trophy for the brave lads to bring back with them'.²⁶ It seems hardly surprising then, given this insight, that so few trophy guns were ever recovered from these early Australian campaigns.

A number of Boer War guns did however end up in museums, their historical and technological significances seemingly overshadowing their trophy value.²⁷ Significantly, a small number of these were also arranged prominently in parks, alongside of the more

²⁴ Said by Bob Nicholls (*Bluejacket and Boxers*, Allen & Unwin, 1986, p.127) to carry the date 1595, 'and an inscription showing it to be a present from Phillip II of Spain to the Chinese'.

²⁵ At HMAS Jervis Bay, and in a private collection near Colac (Vic).

²⁶ Text credited to Captain W W R Watson, NSW Mounted Rifles, and exhibited alongside the captured gun now on display in the Australian War Memorial, ACT.

²⁷ One 75mm field gun (Nr. 10, Fr. Kp., 1897) is now displayed at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Another 38mm Krupp (Fabr. Nr. 12963, 1896) is held in storage by the Queen Victoria Museum in Launceston, Tasmania.

traditional stonework memorials (ie, obelisks and cenotaphs).²⁸ These then were the first flowerings of the modern Australian trophy tradition, a combination of commemorative symbolism, public space and enemy hardware which was to take root and flourish in these Antipodean climes, in the years following the Armistice.

The symbolic arrangement of gun and memorial had gained such favour here by the early twentieth century that a number of communities, rather than break with tradition, installed obsolete British guns alongside their Boer War memorials, rationalising that they provided 'a most fitting and effective touch'.²⁹ These surrogate trophies can still be seen in such places as Perth (Tasmania), Ross (Tasmania), Longwood (Vic) and Geelong (Vic). And as if to underline their traditionalism the citizens of Geelong also renamed the site of their new Boer War memorial, calling it 'Transvaal Park'.

A related development which did much to condition the public's attitude towards these matters, particularly during the last decades of the nineteenth century, was the widespread use of guns as ornamentation and decoration. Then as now, municipalities would use obsolete government ordnance in much the same way that we, today, would use garden statuary. Often found in parks and botanic gardens, these silent sentinels were expected—in some ill-defined way—to simultaneously inspire, beautify and edify the masses. In 1913, for example, the Northcote Council was asked to consider a proposal to install two massive 8" naval guns alongside the City's main thoroughfare, and in the middle of its recently completed rookeries. Supporters highlighted the 'decorative' and 'ornamental' effects, and at least one Councillor enthused about 'their valuable effect in instilling a military spirit into the boys'.³⁰

An understanding of the nature of the First World War, and its impact on Australian society is critical to this investigation as it helps to explain the enduring importance of the Australian trophy tradition. Much has already been written of course about the stone memorials which began to proliferate here (as elsewhere) at around the same time, and in similar circumstances. Stone or metal, monument or trophy, these features can, and should, be viewed as parallel responses to a common crises.

Australian historians, in seeking to explain the frequency and significance of First World War memorials have properly highlighted the scale of the conflict, the unprecedented casualty rates, and the fact that Australia was almost alone in contributing an entirely volunteer force. Australia suffered the highest casualty rate (in proportional terms) of any combatant nation, and yet only one of these 60,000 war heroes (Major-General W T Bridges) was ever repatriated for burial on home soil. As one Australian poet was to observe many years later, 'something in that first [war] Demanded stone'.³¹ Stone possessed qualities of permanency and steadfastness which combined easily with the symbolism of the obelisk, the cenotaph and the statue to give Australians and New Zealanders a potent and traditional commemorative medium befitting these great sacrifices. Hundreds of stone war memorials were erected in Australia in the years immediately after the war, so many in fact that we ended up with more WW1 memorials (per head of population) than any other country in the world.³² Never since then have Australians

²⁸ These include the 75mm field gun (Fried Krupp, Essen, 1897, Nr. 7) in Perth's (WA) King's Park, and the 88mm (Fried Krupp, 1875, Nr. 1485) field gun in Gatton's (Qld) Lyttleton Park.

²⁹ *Weekly Times*, 13 February 1904, p. 14.

³⁰ *Northcote Leader*, 1 March 1913. The Northcote Council endorsed the project after a very public and acrimonious debate. Although the guns remain in situ they continue, even now, to attract public criticism.

³¹ G Page, *Smalltown Memorials*, Paperback Poets, Second Series 5 (University of Queensland Press, 1975), p. 13).

³² *The Australian Encyclopaedia* (Australian Geographic Pty Ltd), Vol. 8, p.2985.

felt the need to express themselves this same way. Memorials, when viewed in this context, 'were there to give men each year the funeral they had never had.'³³ Cenotaphs in the literal sense, they provided a focus for public and personal grief. Trophy guns for the first time were also widely used for commemorative purposes, these steel memorials often preceding their more traditional counterparts.³⁴ Some 987 (guns and mortars) were distributed throughout Australia by September 1922, specifically for memorial purposes.³⁵ Recent studies have shown, by way of contrast, that the sum of all other Australian memorials (which includes statues, cenotaphs, obelisks, columns, crosses, arches, gates, cupolas, urns, halls, clocks, hospitals, rotundas, avenues, parks etc.) is around 1455.³⁶ Though never previously acknowledged, the trophy gun was by far the most common WWI commemorative form.

A similar situation existed on the other side of the Tasman although, unlike Australia, a tradition of military commemoration had already taken root there. The Australian landscape in 1914 was almost devoid of monuments, the building blocks of heritage. By erecting thousands of memorials, the sons and daughters of this newly formed nation were, in effect, constructing a popular memory: 'All these soldiers and obelisks, columns and angels protruding from the Australian countryside form a type of artificial memory network. Investing Australia with monuments was a way of giving the place a memory, rather than giving memory a place. A war memorial in the main street of a small town seemed a simple but effective memo-technique for the nation—a stone and marble Art of Memory.'³⁷ Unlike Australia, the UK already had a long tradition of preservation and military commemoration.

What is more, it had an existing and extensive network of local and large metropolitan museums which included dedicated military museums. The use of monumental and trophy commemorative forms, when considered in the Australian context, also implied a continuity with earlier British history, suggesting—in some abstract way—that it was even possible to make sense of a war whose traditions stretched back to the glorious days of Blenheim and Waterloo.³⁸ While these social theories have helped us to understand the role of commemoration, and its relationship to the ANZAC tradition, they fail to explain just why Australia had more trophies than monuments, and why the former were treated with as much reverence as the latter? A closer look at the cause, rather than the effect of mass attrition is also needed here to fully appreciate how trophy guns were integrated into this 'memo-technique'.

The First World War was a contest without precedent, involving static, unseen armies and massed firepower. Artillery emerged from this contest as the dominant force, affecting not only the outcomes but the language and landscape of the battlefields. The combatants were forced to dig trenches in order to escape the constant 'barrages' and 'sieges'. By 1918 the French were discharging, on some fronts, more than half a million rounds each day—at Waterloo Napoleon's artillery had not fired 10,000 rounds—calculating its efficacy in terms of the

³³ K. S. Inglis, "Memorials of the Great War", *Australian Cultural History*, No. 6 (1987), p. 5.

³⁴ Some memorials were still being planned and constructed in the mid 1930s almost a decade after the distribution and dedication of war trophy guns. See for example Mark Clayton's case study "Commemorating War: The Hawthorn Experience", *Sabretache*, Vol. XXXII, July/September 1991, No. 3, pp. 25-33.

³⁵ McKernan, p. 72. Significant numbers (over and above this civil quota) were also erected by Defence Forces.

³⁶ K S Inglis & Jock Phillips, "War Memorials in Australia and New Zealand: A Comparative Study", *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 96, April 1991, p. 187.

³⁷ D. Gilfedder, "The Mobile Monument: Circulation and the Mobile Art of Memory", *Transition* (RMIT, 1990), No. 31, p.57.

³⁸ P Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 9.

tonnage discharged for each German casualty. 'War had indeed industrialised itself, and the medium of that industrialisation was the gun and the shell.'³⁹ Survivors would consistently refer to the shrapnel, the shell shock and the bizarre appearance of their surroundings which were being denuded and continually tilled by high explosives. To this nightmare would be added an even more insidious weapon, the poisonous gas shell. As Paul Fussell later explained, 'the main business of the soldier was to exercise self-control while being shelled.'⁴⁰ Little wonder then that the survivors, regardless of nationality, came to attach so much significance to the capture, repatriation and display of enemy weaponry.

It is no less surprising, given this background, that trophies should have been so readily absorbed into the rituals of commemoration in a place like Australia that cried out for memories. The AIF, it might be said, were simply modern gladiators with modern weapons upholding an ancient tradition. Ironically, the first Australian trophies were naval guns captured in—what were formerly—Australian territorial waters. These actions occurred months before the AIF had even set foot in Europe and the Middle East. Not a single shot was exchanged when, in October 1914, the KGS *Komet*, used by the German administration in New Guinea, was captured by HMAS *Nusa*. Armed with a single 1 lb Hotchkiss QF gun, history records that the *Nusa*'s proud captain later 'led the way in [to Rabaul], his prize following her captor.'⁴¹ Far less auspicious however was the performance of the Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force (AN & MEF) which was landed at Rabaul, at the same time, in order to secure the territories of the German Protectorate. A Court of Inquiry convened in Australia early the following year found that there was a prima facie case of looting against three senior officers and one sergeant from the AN&MEF. The Court found 'that the administration of ... the Expeditionary Force was deplorable', and that one senior naval officer had 'consigned large quantities of curios, muskets, ammunition etc, direct to the Newcastle Naval Depot which he had previously commanded before joining the Expeditionary Force.'⁴² These were still early days and the distinction between 'loot' and 'trophy', so comprehensively described in the *De iure Praedae*, would need to be further explained to the troops. It was less than a month after these events that the cruiser HMAS *Sydney* succeeded in destroying the German raider SMS *Emden*. The Australians wasted no time in removing from the shattered wreck a 4" gun which was eventually taken back to Australia and installed in Sydney's Hyde Park, becoming the nation's first official trophy of war (This gun can still be seen at the corner of Liverpool and College Streets). The British attached so much importance to this initial success that they also obtained a second, identical gun from the same shattered wreck.

This was later exhibited throughout North America, becoming the main attraction at the massive Allied War Expositions of 1917 and 1918. Visitors were left in no doubt however that Enland's *Emden* gun, the pièce de résistance, was anything other than a British war trophy. AIF troops captured thousands of trophy guns and mortars during the next four years, 1,320 of which were shipped back to Australia as trophies.⁴³ Referred to officially as the Australian War Trophy Collection, it is this massive haul which continues to sustain the Australian trophy tradition.

³⁹ J Keegan & R Holmes, *Soldiers* (Hamish Hamilton Ltd, 1985), p. 97.

⁴⁰ Fussell, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴¹ S S McKenzie, *Official History of Australia in the War 1914-18, The Australians At Rabaul* (Angus & Robertson, 1927), p. 131.

⁴² Australian Archives (AA) CRS MP 367/1, File 580/2/2745.

⁴³ Commonwealth of Australia. House of Representatives, *Debates*, Vol. XC (24 October 1919), p. 14008.



Australia's first trophy gun, c.1922. 10.5cm gun (by Fried. Krupp)
recovered from SMS Emden (Mitchell Library No.16630).

Britain, which was equally determined to have its share of the spoils had, by war's end, adopted a particularly hard-line approach to these matters by urging that peace negotiations should be made subject to 'the return of every gun, trench mortar and machine-gun, and tank that has fallen into the hands of the enemy. ... The Germans are already boasting that they have emerged from the conflict with an undefeated army, and it is surely not in the interests of the [Allied] cause for which we have fought so successfully that they should be able to foster this sophistry by filling their museums with these trophies as standing memorials of their military achievements in the great war.'⁴⁴

The AIF's haul was in fact by no means the world's biggest trophy collection, the American version being 2½ times larger.⁴⁵ It needs to be said however that the Australians collected far more trophies per head of population than any other combatant nation, a fact which could scarcely be ignored. Their enthusiasm for collecting led them accumulate not only the most (per capita), but also the largest trophy guns ever seized during the war.

Is it any wonder then that historians, seeking to understand the origin and meaning of the ANZAC tradition, should continue to focus on this peculiar proclivity? 'In the period March 27 to October 5, 1918, the Australian Army Corps of five divisions represented a little less than 10 per cent for the whole of the British forces on the Western Front, but its presence was far, far greater even in the cold light of statistics. The Australians captured 23 per cent of the prisoners, 23½ per cent of the enemy guns and 21½ per cent of the ground wrested from the Germans.'⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Lt-Col Sir Arthur Leatham, "Provincial Museums and War Trophies", *RUSI Journal*, Vol. LXIV, p. 109.

⁴⁵ Report No. 979, 13 May 1920, *Distribution of War Devices And Trophies*, for the U. S. House of Representatives, 66th Congress, 2d Session, p. 4.

⁴⁶ J Laffin, "Western Front 1917-18, The Cost of Victory", *Australian At War* (Time Life Books, 1988), p. 162.



The Australian trophy tradition had been all but extinguished by the middle of the 20th century. This Japanese naval gun (c/n 199), captured at Hong Kong in 1945 by the crew of HMAS *Strahan* (and now displayed at Strahan, Tasmania), is one of the very few trophy gun memorials to be erected in Australia after the Second World War.

These were proud achievements by any standards, and these were memories that might well survive a transplant to the other side of the world, to a land still 'devoid of monuments'. Australians thus came to possess a trophy tradition of their own, one that flourished during the inter-war years. There was scarcely a community which did not flaunt some evidence of the ANZAC's prowess and sacrifice and so it seemed, for ages at least, that the memories would never fade. But as the fellows rotted and the barrels rusted, then so too did the memories begin to dim. In Australia, the imperatives for linking trophies and memorials have become less and less compelling, undermined by growing traditions of dissent, multi-culturalism and nationalism, and the parallel decline of patriotism. The public display of captured enemy weaponry had all but ceased by the Vietnam War, replaced instead by the more benign practice of using obsolete allied armaments.⁴⁷ The Trophy Gun Tradition has undergone a gradual and subtle transformation, re-emerging in a form that can more accurately be described as a Gun Tradition. While the key elements of the ancient tradition still persist (viz, weaponry, memorials, public spaces, and civic and military ritual), the ANZAC significances which rendered it so distinctive (relative to other national trophy collections) have been steadily eroded. Standing guard over today's tradition are the ubiquitous 25 Pounders, 3" mortars and bofors guns, many of which have been purchased from army disposals by municipal councils and RSLs, usually for a few hundred dollars.

⁴⁷ This writer knows of only one Vietnam trophy, and two WW2 trophy guns on public display in Australia, outside of a museum or military establishment. These are located at Charters Towers (Qld), Strahan (Tas) and Mareeba (Qld), respectively.

These latter-day sentinels have largely replaced the Krupps of yesteryear which, often as not, were captured by local lads in the course of some now famous European battle. It is particularly ironic that in many instances it have been the keepers of the tradition, the RSL branches, that have abetted this decline by selling and scrapping their original trophies.⁴⁸ Recent estimates suggest that the original collection may now shrunk by as much as 80%. Few of those that remain are even recognised as trophies, their appearance and location having both been significantly altered. Only occasionally is the symbiotic trophy-memorial relationship preserved in its entirety. Although public interest in these ancient weapons has increased dramatically during the past decade, their trophy values are seldom, if ever recognised. Government, commercial, private, community and heritage interests are now all caught up in what seems like a mad scramble to recover their military past. Scarcely a month passes without the announcement of yet another initiative to restore 'the old gun', and it is interesting to observe that this same scenario is being acted out in countries such as Canada, New Zealand and the United States which inherited the same tradition.⁴⁹ The Werribee City Council has been trying (unsuccessfully) for the last three years to regain title to its WW1 trophy: a saga which has many parallels throughout the country. It is all too evident, however, that these eleventh hour pangs of conscience are motivated more by notions of antiquarianism and heritage conservation, rather than a sense of spirituality or allegiance to tradition. And with each cycle of restoration and rededication comes a new layer of meaning which gradually clouds the purpose of both artefact, and tradition. Thus, the shining plaque alongside Launceston's (Tas) Crimean War trophy—installed in 1990—commemorates the 130th anniversary of that city's Artillery Association, an event which bears no relationship whatsoever to the events which took place—140 years previously—at Sebastapol.

Another plaque, alongside Mt Gambier's (SA) trophy records the completion of a new rotunda (built to house the trophy), and the fact that the gun was restored by members of the City's veteran and vintage car club. Seldom nowadays do the memory and the monument, or the archive and the artefact, declare the same beliefs and deeds. Communities elsewhere have even begun to commemorate the memory of their trophies, in much the same way that they had acted, decades earlier, to mark the passing of more personal memories. In 1990 for example—almost forty years after it had been removed and disposed of in the interests of public safety—the Sandgate (Qld) Sub-Branch of the RSLA published a booklet which detailed the wartime and post-war history of its particular trophy.⁵⁰ Increasingly, as in this last instance, it is the memory being sustained at the expense of the artefact. Similarly, private interests (particularly collectors) are now having to shoulder much of the responsibility for these one public memories. It would be tempting indeed, given this trend, to speculate about the future of such a bellicose tradition whose symbolism would seem to have all but faded. It must be remembered however that we are talking here about a tradition that has endured for more than a millennium. The ANZAC trophy tradition may be waning and yet, those park guns seem to just keep on sprouting!

⁴⁸ In the early 1980s for example the Mittagong (NSW) RSL sold its FK16—allegedly for \$1,000—to a company that supplied movie props.

⁴⁹ See *The Southland Times* (NZ), 16 November 1991, p. 13 and the *Clarinda Herald-Journal* (Iowa, USA), 4 March 1982, p. 1.

⁵⁰ Untitled booklet dated 1990, given to the this writer by the Sandgate Sub-Branch of the RSLA. This Turkish C96 (Nr. 2065) was partially restored by the Army's 2/14th Light Horse Regiment in 1992 and is now displayed near the entrance to their Enoggera Barracks (Qld).

A Sergeant of the 23rd Bn AIF

Trevor Turner

Some years ago whilst rummaging in the damp cellar of an Adelaide junk shop I happened upon several very old glazed picture frames. They had been stacked, quite forgotten, in a dark corner their glaze frosted over in a layer of thick dust. Sorting through them they appeared to be of no consequence until, wiping the dust from one, I made an unexpected and quite exciting discovery. Looking at me from under the streaked glass was a fine contemporary photograph of a young AIF (Australian Imperial Force) soldier of the Great War 1914-18. The image beneath the glass, though large and detailed, had a clarity and freshness I had not expected. More importantly this discovery identified both the young soldier and his unit. These, however, were not to be this find's most outstanding feature.

Once taken home and cleaned, the relic revealed was a fine 63cm by 47cm glazed frame containing an 18cm by 30cm hand tinted coloured photograph mounted on a large card backing piece. Mounted upon the lower arm of the polished wooden frame was screwed a small rectangular brass plate with the impressed inscription, 'SERGT. R. STANDLEY HAINES 23RD BN A.I.F' (note that Stanley is spelt incorrectly).

The photograph is interesting for a number of reasons. It is not the usual studio portrait normally encountered with Great War photographs, but rather one taken outside in a damp yard or garden. Undoubtedly its finest feature is that it has been hand coloured or 'tinted'. Though faded now at a glance can be seen the brown khaki of his uniform and the splashes of green of the tree in the background. His hands and face are also flesh toned.

The most distinguished coloured item, however, is the red and brown diamond shaped colour patch of the 23 Battalion, 6 Brigade AIF, on his upper arm, just below his epaulette. Great care has also been taken to highlight the small brass 'A' (for ANZAC) upon the patch, signifying his service at Gallipoli. This special distinction was introduced in 1917 to distinguish those veterans of the Gallipoli campaign. It is believed that this unique badge was first suggested by General Gellibrand to General Godley early in 1916, and that the



badges first appeared in late 1916. Unfortunately by war's end the number of Gallipoli veterans still serving with their units had been greatly reduced, by four years of murderous trench warfare, to only a handful in each battalion. Of further interest are Sergeant Haines muddied boots, his pistol in its open holster: less lanyard, his ammunition pouch and other items of his personal equipment. His slouch hat also has its brim turned down. On his right arm only are the three chevrons denoting his rank and above them, but visible only with the aid of a glass, the crossed metal semaphore flags of a signaller. Visually it is a very pleasing photograph from a perspective not usually seen.

Royal Stanley Haines was born in the Adelaide suburb of Miller Park at Semaphore in June 1896. He enlisted in the AIF in Melbourne on 24 February 1915. At this time he was living with his father, Frederick Haines, at Adelaide Street in the Melbourne suburb of Murrumbeena, and was employed as a packer. Like many of his generation, Roy had previous military experience with the Senior Cadets, under the Compulsory, or Universal, Military Training Scheme established in 1911. He had served almost four years, his last 12 months with the Caulfield Cadets as a signaller, experience that was to be fully utilized during his service with the AIF. Having obtained his fathers written permission to enlist Roy went into camp at Broadmeadows on the outskirts of Melbourne. After initial training he was eventually posted to 23 Battalion of the newly raised 6 Brigade on 25 March 1915. He is described at this time as being five feet eight inches tall and weighing eight stone ten pounds, with a dark complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. He gave his religious denomination as Baptist. He also stated to have distinctive scars on his left forearm and right knee. After little more than two months training Roy embarked with his battalion aboard the *Euripides* on 8 May 1915.

The battalions of the 6 Brigade duly arrived in Egypt and disembarked during 10 and 12 June. It was here during the arduous training in the desert that Roy's former military training began to emerge and on 6 June he was promoted corporal. After more desert training, the 23rd Battalion began to arrive at Gallipoli by stages during September. Roy adapted well to the harsh conditions, the nightmare that was Gallipoli, and to the heavy responsibilities that fell to a young twenty year old corporal. However, late in September 1915, and after fierce fighting at Lone Pine, Roy fell ill to one of the many diseases and illnesses that ravaged the peninsula. On 24 September he was finally evacuated and listed simply as sick. This was the beginning of a number of illnesses and injuries that were to plague Roy during his service with the AIF. Before he left Egypt he would again be admitted to hospital with a sprained ankle and an injured shoulder and back.

After the evacuation of Gallipoli, and while Roy was still recovering from his injuries, the 6 Brigade began leaving for France, on 13 March 1916. Roy followed a few weeks later. Shortly after arriving in France, and not yet fully recovered, Roy again sprained his injured ankle. He was admitted to hospital and placed on the supernumerary list. However, Corporal Haines' regimental abilities had not gone unnoticed. In early October 1916, Roy was detached from the 23rd Battalion and sent to England to aid his recovery. There he was taken on permanent strength of the 6th Australian Training Battalion at Lark Hill as an instructor. He was promoted temporary sergeant on 23 October 1916. After seven months at Lark Hill, and his ankle now healed, Roy relinquished his temporary rank and returned to the 23rd Battalion. As a corporal he arrived in France on 6 June 1917. Twelve days later he was again promoted, this time as the battalions signalling sergeant.

During the next 12 months, the 23rd Battalion was continuously in and out of the line with other battalions of the 6 Brigade. Sergeant Haines proved himself to be a competent and reliable senior NCO on many occasions during this period, particularly when leading parties on

the hazardous task of repairing broken telephone lines, often under heavy shell and machine gun fire. Although injury and illness free during this time the fierce fighting and terrible conditions eventually took their toll. On 1 June 1918 Roy was evacuated to hospital with PUO (pyrexia of uncertain origin-also known as Trench Fever), and again placed on the supernumerary list.

After several months in hospital and an Australian Convalescent Depot he returned to his unit on 4 September, just days after the very successful action by the 23rd Battalion at Mont St. Quentin. This same action also saw Private Robert Mactier gain the 23rd Battalion's only Victoria Cross of the war. Sadly it was to be a posthumous award. Private Mactier, single handed, and in daylight, jumped out of the trench, rushed past the block, closed with and killed the machine-gun garrison of eight men with his revolver and bombs, and threw the enemy machine-gun over the parapet. Then rushing forward about 20 yards, he jumped into another strong point held by a garrison of six men who immediately surrendered. He then continued on, disposing of a further machine-gun, until he was killed at close range by another machine-gun. Roy Haines then saw out the last weeks of the war with his battalion.

After a short period of leave Roy returned to England in late January 1919 and eventually to Australia aboard the *Fraser Montes* on 8 April of that year. Unfortunately Roy was still plagued by injury. On 6 May, while still at sea, he was admitted to ship's hospital, again with a severe sprain to his already damaged ankle. A 23rd Battalion original, Number 1013, Sergeant Royal Stanley Haines was finally discharged in Melbourne on 22 July 1919, after four years and five months service with the AIF. For his war service he received the 1914-15 Star (named to Pte, 23 Bn AIF) and the British War Medal and Victory Medal (both named to Sgt, 23 Bn, AIF). He was just 23 years of age.

Roy Haines' military service was not in any way outstanding, in fact it would seem very uneventful: he received no awards for gallantry or commendations, nor was he mentioned in any action with an individual of prominence. He was simply an ordinary man caught up in extraordinary times.

Today Roy's portrait and its glazed frame have been restored to their former condition. During its restoration a concealed studio mark of 'Wilson Photo Company, Murrumbena, Melbourne' was found. It can only be imagined that Roy's proud parents may have had the large photograph and frame made up from a smaller portrait he had sent them from France. The portrait would indicate this to have been after June 1917, when Roy had been promoted sergeant upon his return to his battalion in France. The contemporary colouring of this photograph adds a new and interesting dimension to what would have been just another 'old soldier' photograph. Unfortunately its full impact is lost in the transition from the large size colour to the small black and white reproduction provided here.

However, first and foremost a medal collector, I now keenly desire the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal awarded to Roy Haines. For without these his story and its on going research will be incomplete. As for his portrait, one can only wonder as to how such a fine relic as this came to rest in the damp cellar of a junk shop, but then that's one of the joys of collecting.

Sources:

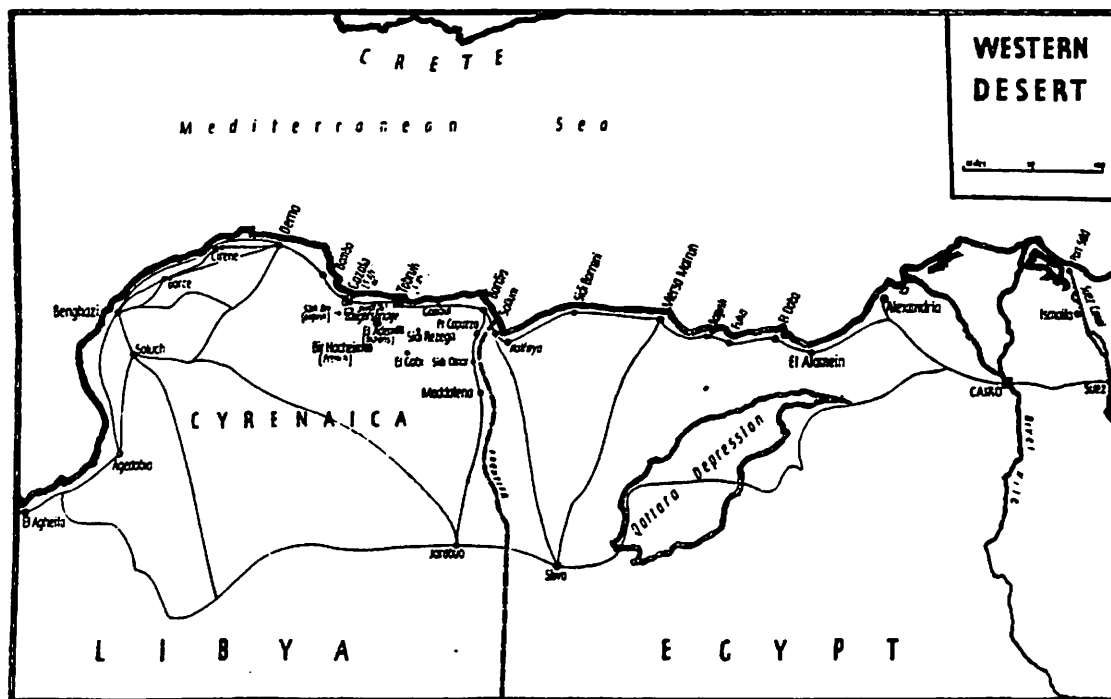
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The Australians' Attack at El Alamein — on Trig 29, Hill 28, or Kidney Ridge?

Barry Clissold

Uncle Thomas, now dead, was a favourite relative of mine who had been a Flight Sergeant with 31 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force and had known the Australian 9th Division at Tarakan in 1945. Although he was an engineer for his squadron's Beaufighters, and enjoyed that, I always suspected that he would have preferred soldiering with the 9th Division, particularly in Egypt in 1942. He had maintained, on many occasions, that the 9th had been the best division of the 2nd AIF. And although he wasn't this soldier he had longed to be, he became a military historian.

Sometimes Uncle Thomas and I would discuss his research notes, and he made many, on events he was particularly interested in. One such discussion, on a cold night in Canberra, was on his views of the battle of El Alamein. On this occasion he had been annoyed that some British historians, notably Basil Liddell Hart, had concluded that Kidney Ridge, a position west of the Miteiriya Ridge, had been of considerable strategic value to Rommel and his Afrika Korps, and had been captured by the 51st Highland Division. But in Uncle Thomas' view the position prized by Rommel was not Kidney Ridge but Trig 29, some 14 miles north west of El Alamein, and three miles north of Kidney Ridge, that had been captured by the 2/48th Battalion of the Australian 9th Division. Clearly Uncle Thomas wanted to argue with Hart's misconception and establish who captured what and how, and to establish beyond any doubt that it was Trig 29 that was so vital to both Rommel and Montgomery. For it provided an



outstanding observation platform from which Rommel could direct his artillery against the British 8th Army's October 1942 offensive at El Alamein.

Born in Adelaide Uncle Thomas took a natural, and keen, interest in the 2/48th Battalion which was predominantly South Australian and the most decorated battalion of the 2nd AIF. And it was because of what they did, what Percy Gratwick did, what Bob Shillaker and Mick Bryant did on 26 October 1942, what the British historian did and what the 51st Highland Division did not do that we talked on that cold night. Around us on the floor I think we had more than half of Uncle Thomas' library, and certainly all those that referred to the Battle of El Alamein I should perhaps firstly add that while not all military historians might share Hart's view there are those who will choose to believe his assessment in the Rommel Papers, which he edited, that Kidney Ridge was the feature Rommel referred to as Hill 28, a feature which dominated its surroundings west of El Alamein and was of great strategic value to both sides. The alternative, and a view shared by Uncle Thomas and myself, is that the feature Rommel identified as Hill 28 was in fact Trig 29, not Kidney Ridge. Well, things happened like this and I'll let you be the judge.

By June 1942, Rommel occupied Tobruk. By July, the Germans and their Italian allies had advanced to within 100 miles of Alexandria, their advance along the coast road having been turned back by the 2/24th and 2/48th Battalions of the Australian 26th Brigade on 10 July 1942. Some 25 miles further south battles raged around Deir el Shein between resting units of Rommel's Africa Korps and the 8th Army's 13th Corps. By the end of July, however, both armies were relatively quiescent—the British were critically short of men and Rommel was finally short of ammunition. Now, El Alamein and the 8th Army's new commander, Lieutenant General Montgomery prevented further German advances eastward. From Britain, and then during a visit to the battlefield in August, Winston Churchill demanded the German threat on Alexandria be removed, but more importantly, that the Germans be defeated or destroyed. In response, a series of allied long-range patrols infiltrated German-held Tobruk to begin a steady harassment of Rommel's supply links. Then, during September and October, reinforcements continued to arrive to strengthen Montgomery's growing force. Training of these new arrivals in desert operations was given priority and the Australians took part in the training of the 51st Highland Division, which had not yet seen action.

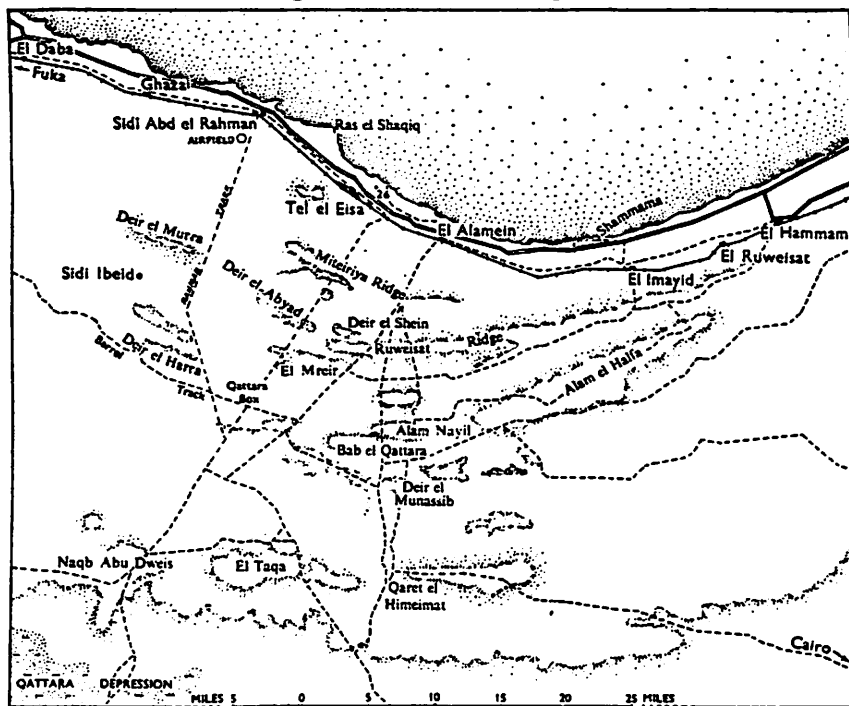
By 10 October, the 9th Australian Division was ready to go into battle, better armed and better prepared than ever before. It was to learn that it would soon spearhead the long-awaited allied offensive. Our interest focusses on A Company 2/48th Battalion and its important role in the forthcoming battle.



Bob Shillaker as a Lieutenant in 1941

It wasn't until 16 October 1942 that Captain Bob Shillaker, the commander of A Company attended a Battalion Orders Group with Lieutenant Colonel 'Tack' Hammer, commanding officer of the 2/48th Battalion, to learn that the offensive, Operation Lightfoot, later to be described as the Battle of El Alamein, was to be launched within the week. Following his own briefing, one of Shillaker's junior commanders, Lieutenant Taggart, told his 7 Platoon that a large scale attack was soon to take place involving the whole of the 8th Army, the object being to destroy the enemy, preventing a further drive eastward and to force their retreat.

The Australians were to oppose, initially, the 164th German Division, the Bersaglieri and Trento Divisions, the 15th Panzer Division and the Littorio Armoured Division. Later Rommel was to swing in the German 90th Light Division against them. The Australians were part of 30 Corps, which would attack in the north with all four infantry divisions forward. In order from the north, they were: 9th Australia, 51st Highland, 2nd New Zealand and 1st South Africa—all Dominion units. The troops of 7 Platoon A Company learned later that Montgomery's plan was for the Corps to advance in simultaneous attacks in the north and in the south—the decisive blow being with the Australians in the north. Both attacks would start at 2200 hours, 23 October 1942, and were designed to gain possession of the enemy defences, including minefields and field gun areas, to make a passage for armoured forces through the enemy



El Alamein

positions. Following this phase, attacks from the north and south would be ordered to pinch out the enemy infantry forces that were holding the centre.

The objective for the first phase was called the Oxalic Line, a line running due south from the coast then swinging south east, slightly east of Kidney Ridge and through the Miteiriya Ridge, which would be an objective for both the New Zealanders and the South Africans. Both the features identified as Trig 29 (a hill),

and Kidney Ridge (which was not really a ridge but more a series of low rises in the shape of a kidney bean), located to the front of the Australians and the Highlanders respectively, were outside the perimeter of the Oxalic Line and were not objectives in Phase 1.

The temperature had dropped to below 10 degrees and despite the cold, there were high spirits as the 2/48th Battalion dismounted from trucks south of Tel el Eisa railway station. Nervous energy, the repeated adjustment of webbing and weapons, talking and smoking, kept out the cold and doubts that some might not survive the night. Then, abruptly, the offensive began at

2140 hrs on 23 October 1942 with the desert and night erupting in a deafening noise as shells whined overhead with flame and smoke highlighting the distant skyline.

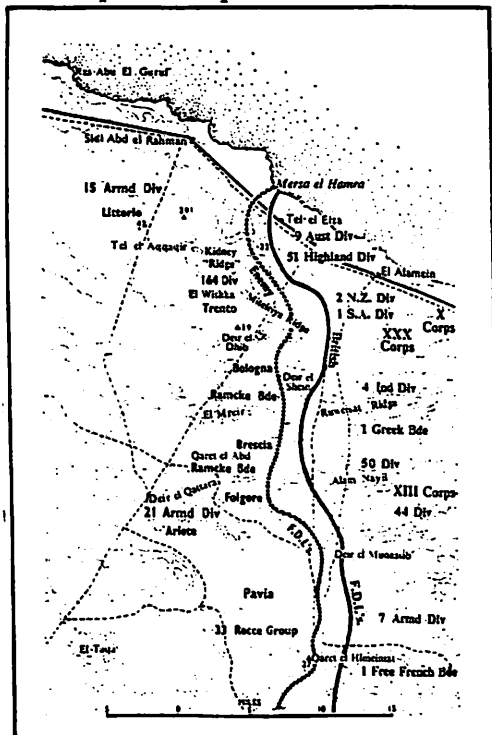
The men of A Company 2/48th Battalion waited for their sister companies in the 2/24th Battalion, who preceded them in the advance, to signal that the enemy's first line had been taken. At 2330 hrs the order, "On your feet", was greeted by grunts and they were off together with C Company, which was the other rear company, in the advance. Despite fairly heavy fire from German artillery, mortars and machine guns, the advance suffered few casualties. Seventy prisoners were taken as the Germans withdrew, defending at intervals as they went. Keeping direction in the dust and smoke was difficult despite the positioning of a Bofors gun on the centre line firing down the axis of advance with tracer every five minutes. The benefits of the brigade's night exercise on 18 October, which everyone now realised had been a rehearsal, paid off.

At 0345 hrs on 24 October A Company halted their advance. Taggart immediately had his platoon digging-in in anticipation of the counter-attack he expected to come. But Rommel withheld his infantry, instead pounding the Australians with artillery and mortar directed from the Trig 29 feature. At this time no one knew what was happening to the rest of the division although Taggart told the platoon that the brigade had reached its objective. On the left, the 20th Brigade was still short of the objective; and behind, the forward battalion of the 2/13th Battalion was about ¾ mile short. On their far left, the 51st Highland Division was still one mile short of the objective and Kidney Ridge.

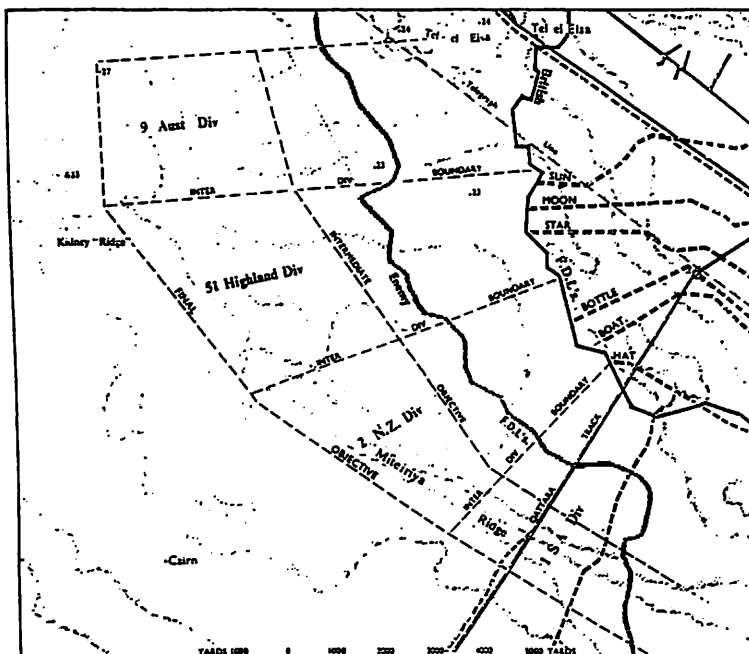
In 7 Platoon, they knew that the final objective had not been reached, for it was intended that the Australians would eventually swing north and attempt to roll up the Germans to the coast.

But now their advance was blocked by the Germans on Trig 29. Back at the railway station at Tel el Eisa, Shillaker had told his company that the planning staff had recognised the tactical value of Trig 29 and the danger it would present if the Germans continued to hold it. Although not more than 20 feet higher than the surrounding desert, Trig 29 and its flattened spur dominated the battlefield, and the lower ground northwards to the railway running west to Sidi Abd el Rahman. Its danger had been known at the time of planning the advance to the Oxalic Line but it was decided that the feature could not be included in the initial objective as the depth of the attack and the frontages allotted to each division were already at their maximum.

So, while A Company dug in, plans were being developed to attack Trig 29. A few enemy tanks approached the position on the afternoon on 24 October and, much to the delight of A Company, an Italian officer, splendidly attired in his white



Positions of opposing forces—23 October 1942. Trig 29 and Kidney Ridge are located in north-western sector



Divisional boundaries are shown for westward advance commencing on 23 October 1942. The Oxalic Line is shown as broken line, Final Objective. Trig 29 and Kidney Ridge are outside this line.

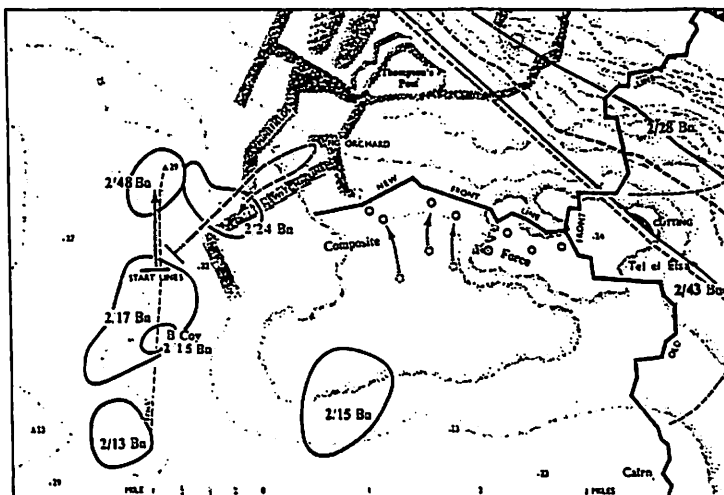
underpants, and four of his men, surrendered. Shillaker recalls that during the preparation for the attack on Trig 29 things were not terribly good for the health, mainly because of inquisitive tanks lurking in the area. Hammer's Orders Group was interrupted by German artillery and machine gun fire with everyone taking cover in weapon pits left behind by the Germans. It was here that A Company lost Sergeant Major Bill Ziesing who copped what seemed to be a nice clean bullet wound through the leg from one of the tanks: he was to die at a medical aid post.

For most of the day everyone gazed westward, eyes still stinging from cordite and dust, for signs of a German counter-attack. It didn't come and then on the morning of 25 October Lieutenant Taggart called 7 Platoon together with news that at midnight an advance would be made on Trig 29. A and D Companies would lead the battalion to a first objective, short of the Trig. Hammer's plan called for C Company, mounted on carriers, to pass through A and D Companies and, racing to within 300 yards of the objective, dismount and lead the assault with A and D closing up in support. B Company was to be held in reserve. Taggart had said that the Germans would react violently as they realised the importance in holding the position.

The attack on Trig 29 was one of the wildest ever with some of the most bitter and bloody hand-to-hand fighting experienced by the battalion. The approach to the start line, and its crossing, about 1,600 yards from the objective, was preceded and accompanied by a tremendous bombardment directed into the German positions. And if that noise wasn't enough, a German counter-bombardment shell hit a B Company truck loaded with mines just as A and D Companies crossed the start line at midnight on 25/26 October 1942. Like falling dominoes a further six trucks, similarly laden with mines, exploded and burned, and a great wall of fire shot into the sky turning night into day. The noise was deafening and all the crews were killed. This proved a signal for the Germans to saturate the area with artillery. John Glenn, who wrote the battalion's history, *Tobruk to Tarakan*, described the result as a ghastly, raging inferno. Order was restored by Major George Tucker, officer commanding Headquarters Company and Captain Jim Potter, the battalion's Quartermaster. Under heavy enemy fire the remainder of the trucks were loaded with all available stores for transport to the objective once secured. (Both Uncle Thomas and I rummaged around the books on the floor to find Glenn's unit history to confirm that this happened in the early stages of the attack and not as Barton

Maughan has recorded in Australia in the War of 1939-1945 Series One Army Volume III *Tobruk and El Alamein* that it occurred as soon as the objective had been taken.)

With this great fire to their rear, A and D Companies advanced steadily north toward Trig 29. It was here Shillaker kept the A Company advance moving. Knowledge and experience had taught him when to command his troops to keep going or everyone down or keep up Mr Taggart. With



Dawn on 26 October 1942 sees 2/48 Battalion on Trig 29

German artillery exploding now to his rear Shillaker knew that due to its higher muzzle velocity gun the burst of German shells, on detonation, would maintain a predominantly forward direction and, therefore, if they were falling even a few yards behind it was not necessary to go to ground. Upright, A Company advanced: dust, smoke, noise and darkness enveloping them as German tracers and small-arms fire sparkled and cracked past. Memories are vague in recalling that initial 900 yard advance to the first objective. Nor is much remembered of A and D Company troops crouched in bright moonlight as the ground trembled for another 5 minutes before the artillery bombardment on the German position stopped. Then the carriers, four abreast with C Company (commanded by Captain Mick Bryant) aboard, thundered through them, engulfed in noise and blinding dust, up onto Trig 29.

It was here that I was better informed than Uncle Thomas as he did not know that Captain 'Zac' Isaksson, who had led the carrier dash onto the objective, had told me that although the plan had been to stop 300 yards short of the objective before dismounting, he and Bryant, decided to go all the way. He had explained to me that the Germans were still holed-down from the preliminary artillery bombardment on the position and they had not fully recovered when the Australians charged the position. The smoke and the acrid stench of cordite, the cries of terror and triumph and the rattle of both Bren and Spandau would have been terrifying as C Company fought its way to the crest. Isaksson was directing his carriers in support and sent back some of the mortar carriers to ferry up supplies, equipment and mines.

Captain Geoff Edmunds had now arrived on the objective with his B Company realizing, for the first time, that his driver had been killed in the German attack on his trucks. Soon they were all together ripping into each other, German and Australian; helmeted Australian against helmeted and capped German. A screaming group from C Company, led by Corporal Albrecht, moonlight glinting on their bayonets, charged across fireswept ground towards a dugout which quickly materialised as a dug-in German Mark III tank. It was carnage. Troops from A Company came under heavy fire from the west flank and Shillaker called for Taggart to take 7 Platoon forward to remove a machine gun dugout which was holding up the advance.

In the wild melee that immediately followed, Taggart staggered and went down hit by the German Spandau, then Bill Purse, then Alf Geyer fell. The platoon was quickly down to seven

as they hit the ground as Spandau bursts searched their ranks. Then Percy Gratwick jumped to his feet, grenade in his right hand Lee Enfield in the left and charged the Spandau. Gratwick took out not only the Spandau but also a mortar crew. He would have been hard to see, a scrambling, dusty ghost-like figure dimly lit by moonlight and flashes from mortar and grenade flashes, tracers flicking at his body. Then he was gone and there were only six left of Taggart's platoon. Shillaker, out on the left with his rifle upheld, urged his company forward following the German distraction from Gratwick's charge and sacrifice. The Australians rallied with rifle and bayonet. German prisoners were being taken but most died where they fought. At terrible cost, Trig 29 fell.

In recalling these events to me much later, Shillaker made little of his personal leadership nor that anything special had occurred. For him it had been another action, well planned and superbly executed by well-trained and determined troops. That they were tired from days of continuous action, with little sleep in the preceding three days, only made their effort more outstanding. But in the early hours of that morning, on 26 October 1942, he had been concerned that the Germans would counter-attack early. His opposition was formidable—ground troops, artillery, tanks, planes, machine guns and mortars, and his hold on the position would remain tenuous until reinforcements arrived and minefields were laid to the north and west of the Trig. The ground was rocky and digging was limited in most areas to two feet; defences had to be built up rather than built down. The Australians' reorganisation on the objective was made under fire from German machine gun and mortar fire and Isaksson's carriers were busy providing close supporting fire until they had to go back to ferry-up reorganisation supplies.



El Alamein, 1942—Captain Bob Shillaker in non-regulation headgear, surveys the battleground from his shallow trench.

There was little time for A Company to relax and reflect—well here we are. We won. Let's all sit down for a few minutes and have a fag and tell each other how good we are. Their lives now depended on re-organisation and Shillaker decided that he would wait until the next day before he'd tell them how good they were. Uncle Thomas became absorbed in my retelling of Shillaker's thoughts and of his now blurred images of the Germans—troops lining up preparing to attack the Australians, bombardments from enemy artillery and mortars, more troops, more line-ups, tanks on the fringes and lots of noise and lots of dust.

We must pause in the story here to consider what the Australians had captured. And there is confusion because Hart, the British historian in his translation of Rommel's papers, regarded the feature that Rommel termed Hill 28, as Kidney Ridge, which was some three miles further

south from the position identified by the Australians as Trig 29 and in a sector blocking the westward advance of the 51st Highland Division. Rommel attached great importance to the feature he referred to as Hill 28 as it dominated the battlefield, permitting observation of about 5,000 yards in all directions. The Australians prized the feature for the same reason.

Immediately upon its capture, Rommel set about its recapture. He records in his papers that the feature was lost to the British—a general term to include both British and Dominion forces—sometime around midnight on 25/26 October. This coincided with the timings of the attack by the 2/48th Battalion on Trig 29. Rommel records that attacks during the morning and afternoon of 26 October were launched against what he called Hill 28 by the German 15th Panzer Division, the Italian Littorio and a Bersaglieri Battalion, supported by artillery. Colonel Hammer records in the battalion's war diary that on the morning of 26 October, the Germans turned all his fury on Trig 29. Until 0900 hrs the whole area was subjected to intense artillery concentration. In the afternoon, 300 infantry moved into position 1,500 yards north of Trig 29. Rommel expressed concern that all these attacks failed.

Uncle Thomas looked at me knowingly; the accounts were similar, suggesting descriptions of the same actions. So how could all this action have taken place on Kidney Ridge as Liddell Hart identified Hill 28 to be? First, Kidney Ridge was still being defended by the III/15th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and an Italian armoured regiment on 26 October. It was not until the morning of 27 October that a battalion from the 51st Highland Division's 7th Motor Brigade actually got onto the eastern half of the Kidney Ridge as it fought its way toward Trig 33. Elements of the 2nd Armoured Brigade were temporarily to straddle the feature in support of the battalion—the 2nd King's Royal Rifle Corps.

Clearly Kidney Ridge was not Trig 29 which had been captured the day before by the Australians. And if further proof were needed that Hart had miscalculated, Rommel himself provides the evidence. Uncle Thomas and I looked at page 311 of the Rommel Papers. There it was, we looked at ourselves reassuringly, Rommel wrote to his wife Lu about the situation on 28 October, at about 2100 hours a tremendous British drum fire started to pound the area west of Hill 28. Soon hundreds of British guns concentrated their fire into the sector of the II/125th Regiment north of Hill 28. With triumph Uncle Thomas explained; this confirms that Trig 29 and Hill 28 are one and the same. For, on 26 October, Rommel's II/125th Regiment was defending positions about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north east of Trig 29 and the Australians. Kidney Ridge was four miles to the south, and the area referred to by Rommel as Hill 28 was now the observation site for directing a preliminary Allied bombardment against the II/125th Regiment on 26 October. And, Uncle Thomas confided in me, if more proof is needed we look no further than the 2/48th Battalion's War Diary for in it Hammer records that, on the afternoon of 25 October, a patrol of Germans was ambushed by the Australians, killing several and taking three German prisoners, including the Commanding Officer of the II/125th Regiment. He was carrying up-to-date map traces on the same scale as used by the 2/48th Battalion, showing the feature identified as Trig 29 to be the same as identified on his trace as Hill 28. Importantly, the traces showed minefield locations to be avoided.

The attack, capture, and defence of Trig 29 was one of the most important actions undertaken by the 9th Division in the Battle of El Alamein in 1942. It was also a critical one for the 8th Army in that Rommel used most of his available reserves attempting to dislodge the Australians. It must rank as one of its finest actions of the war for the professionalism in its execution and the courage and determination of those involved. Its use of carriers in the attack proved decisive. On that day all men of the 2/48th Battalion distinguished themselves in battle. In the very highest of tradition Percy Gratwick was awarded the Victoria Cross, Bill Kibby won the Victoria Cross for outstanding courage during three actions between 23-31 October,

including Trig 29 and particularly during the reorganisation period in which his platoon suffered heavy casualties. 'Tack' Hammer was awarded the Distinguished Service Order, both Bob Shillaker and 'Zac' Isaksson won the Military Cross, and Kingsley Albrecht and Bob Kennedy were awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal. For their actions on that cold and wild night, George Tucker, Geoff Edmunds and Jim Potter were awarded MIDs. Commendation Cards were awarded to Private Jack Ralla and Private S L Mitchell, a stretcher bearer.

Hart can now be corrected: the 9th Australian Division captured Trig 29, also known as Hill 28, from the Germans on 25/26 October 1942, and the eastern half of Kidney Ridge fell to the 51st Highland Division on 27 October 1942. Well, that's briefly the story, an account of the action on 25/26 October 1942 at El Alamein. The story will be different if you accept Liddell Hart's explanation that Hill 28 was Kidney Ridge. But Uncle Thomas and I agree that Hart got his locations wrong.

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Acknowledgement

I am indebted to Brigadier Zac Isaksson and Major Bob Shillaker for their time and kind assistance in recalling and piecing together memories from so long ago. And without Dallas Hamilton, Secretary of the 2/48th battalion of Western Australia, it would not have been possible.



Bob Shillaker (left) with members of A Company hold a defensive position at El Alamein

An ANZAC Memorial In Israel

Neville Foldi

In late 1994, while visiting family who were on an Australian Government posting to Israel,

I was able to visit war cemeteries with graves of Australians who died during the Palestine campaign of 1916-1918. Thanks to the help of the representative of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, I was even able to get to cemeteries at both Gaza and Deir el Belah in the Palestinian Autonomous Zone (formerly the Gaza Strip).

I discussed these visits with a friend at the Australian Embassy, Tel Aviv and he told me about an ANZAC Memorial built at Be'eri near Gaza, but not in the Autonomous Zone. He had visited the site, but the only information he could find on record at the Embassy was details of a visit by an Australian party on 1 November 1992. This visit followed a ceremony the previous day at Beersheba to mark the 75th anniversary of that battle. Those visitors included six members of the Australian parliament, led by Dr. Andrew Theophanus MHR, the Australian Ambassador to Israel at the time, Mr William Fisher, and the National Secretary of the Returned and Services League, Mrs June Healy.

I was surprised at this apparent lack of information, particularly in view of the level of attendance at the 1992 ceremony, and I decided to find out as much as possible of the story of the memorial. My intention was strengthened by a visit to the site.

The current Australian Ambassador, Mr Peter Rodgers, facilitated my visit to Be'eri, which is situated some nine kilometres South East of Gaza city, outside the Autonomous Zone, and between the city and the position of the headquarters of the ANZAC Mounted Division at the second battle of Gaza in April 1917.

The memorial is a white rendered structure in the form of a stylized A, and the overall shape is intended to remind the viewer of a slouch hat with the side turned up. The initial view is striking. A small plaque on the Eastern leg indicates that the memorial was dedicated on 24 April 1968 by Asher Joel, OBE MLC(NSW) (now Sir Asher Joel, KBE AO), National President Australian ANZAC Memorial and Forest. The plaque also records that the memorial is a tribute by Australian Jewry. In the immediate approach to the arch of the A there is a large rock set into the paving and engraved, in both Hebrew and English, as follows:

**ANZAC MEMORIAL
IN MEMORY OF THE
AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND CORPS
WHO FOUGHT IN ISRAEL DURING WWI WWII
THE MONUMENT IS LOCATED OPPOSITE GAZA
WHERE THE UNITS FOUGHT AGAINST TURKS
IN APRIL 1917
THE MONUMENT IS IN THE SHAPE OF AN A
WHICH IS THE FIRST LETTER OF ANZAC
BUILT BY THE KEREN KAYEMETH LEISRAEL JNF
WITH THE HELP OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES
IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND
DEDICATED APRIL 1968 ARCHITECT YEDIDYA EISENSHTAT**



Part of the Memorial Forest, looking towards Gaza

The surrounding Memorial Forest of Australian eucalypts is said to contain 100,000 trees. Gum trees grow well in Israel and many, sent from Australia, line country roads. Smelling the air on the day of my visit was reminiscent of the Australian bush on a hot day and demonstrated that the forest is a fitting surround to the Memorial.

On my return home I first wrote to the National Secretary of the RSL,¹ feeling confident that the background to the 1992 visit would be well recorded. The result was not encouraging. I received a photocopy of an article published in *Stand To* in November 1992,² dealing briefly with the Beersheba ceremony and illustrated by a photograph of a commemorative service at El Alamein!

My next step was to seek help through those Australian Jewish organisations which may have been involved in the planning and construction of the Memorial.

Correspondence with the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies brought some information from the Consul-General of Israel in Sydney and, most importantly, put me in touch with Sir Asher Joel. I met Sir Asher in Sydney and he gave me access to his personal papers relating to the Memorial.

For many years Sir Asher has been involved in the community life of New South Wales. A devout worshipper at the Great Synagogue of Sydney he has been responsible for, or closely involved in, organising such events as Royal Visits, Papal Visits, the Captain Cook Bicentenary celebrations and the opening of the Sydney Opera House. I have no doubt that he and the Director of the Jewish National Fund in Australia, Mr S J Gerstl, should receive the credit for this moving tribute to soldiers from Australia and New Zealand.

¹ Letter dated 3 February 1995

² Letter dated 15 February 1995



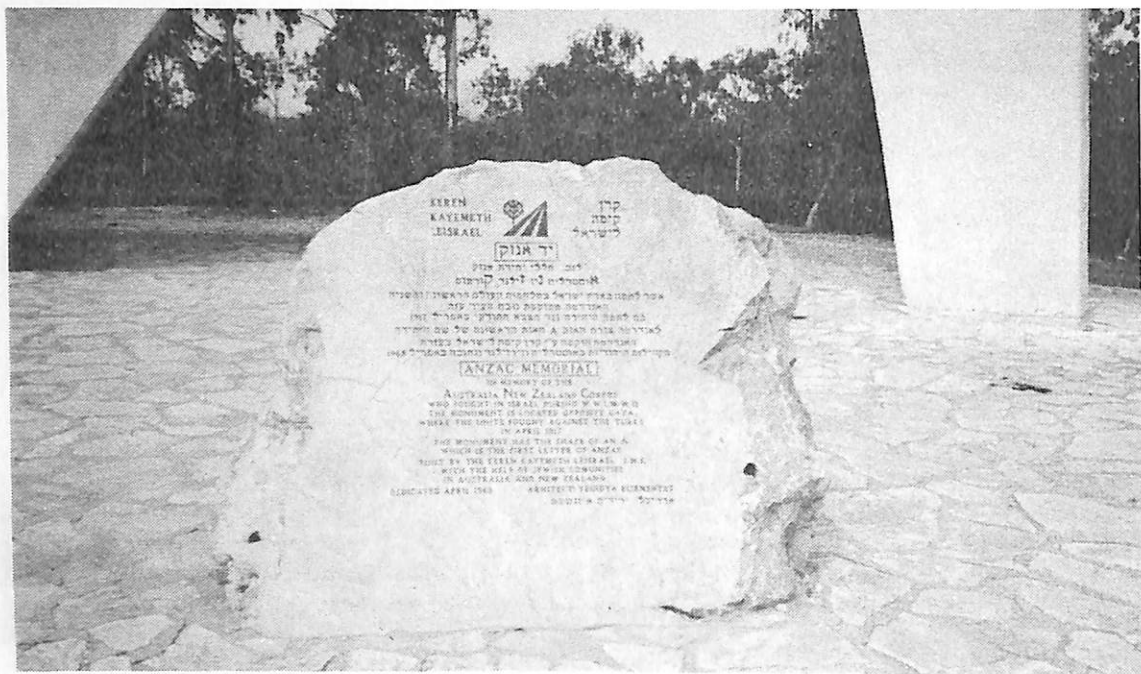
The Be'eri ANZAC Memorial

It is worth noting that Prime Minister Harold Holt was the first Patron of the Memorial Committee. On his death in December 1966 the new Prime Minister John Gorton (now Sir John Gorton GCMG AC) accepted the position of Patron. These appointments firmly established official Australian backing for the project, although that backing seems to have diminished in recent years.

The service to inaugurate the Memorial was held at Be'eri on 24 April 1968. The party from Australia included Sir Arthur Lee, KBE MC and Bar, National President of the RSL, Sir Asher Joel and Mr Max Wassner, President of the Jewish National Fund in Australia and New Zealand. They were joined on site by a crowd estimated at more than 400 persons. Among these were the Ambassador of Australia, Mr G Landale, Mr J Sapir, Minister Without Portfolio and representing the Government of Israel and Mr J Tsur, World Chairman of the Jewish National Fund.

In 1972 a plaque representing the Be'eri Memorial, made from copper mined at Timna (site of King Solomon's Mines) and mounted on olive wood, was presented to the Chairman of Trustees of the Australian War Memorial, Sir Edmund Herring, KCMG KBE DSO. The present location of this gift is to be confirmed.

From discussion with Sir Asher I believe that it was clearly intended that ANZAC Day commemorations would be held at Be'eri. Indeed, this was the case from 1968 to 1977. Then came a change.



The engraved stone

In 1978 the ANZAC ceremony was held at the War Cemetery at Beersheba, which contains 174 Australian war graves. Prior to that service the Australian Ambassador laid a wreath at Be'eri in a private ceremony. This change caused considerable concern not only in Australia but also in Israel. The President of the RSL, Sir William Keys AC OBE MC, wrote to the Minister for Foreign Affairs³ seeking a review of the decision. The Minister advised⁴ that the Australian Ambassador to Israel, Mr W P J Handmer, decided on the change of venue after considering that:

- Be'eri was not a Commonwealth War Cemetery;
- the area was relatively inaccessible and insecure, and cannot be reached by any form of public transport; and
- continued celebration at Be'eri might lead to a drop in support.

The Minister concluded by saying that "Be'eri should not be excluded from the arrangements put in hand on ANZAC Day in Israel". From my examination it seems that ANZAC Day visits to Be'eri ceased after 1977, except for the 1992 visit. The 1994 ceremony was held at the Jerusalem War Cemetery, which contains graves of 143 Australians and records the names of another 240 who have no known grave. I understand that the 1995 ceremony was held at Beersheba.

The reasons given for the change from Be'eri might no longer be valid, except for the site not being a Commonwealth War Cemetery. Given the improving situation in the Autonomous Zone it seems unlikely that any ANZAC observance would be interrupted or threatened. Also,

³ Letter dated 8 December 1978

⁴ Undated letter, apparently sent in January 1979

there is a kibbutz not far away and if public transport is not available appropriate arrangements could be made. As to a possible drop in support the question must be, "by whom?" Australians and others have demonstrated a willingness to visit relatively inaccessible ANZAC Cove for dawn ceremonies. Perhaps members of the Diplomatic Corps are reluctant to travel far. On the other hand, better signposting of the area would assist visitors.

In my view the change in commemorative arrangements, with apparently no prior consultation, paid scant regard to the efforts and generosity of those who made the Memorial possible. Commonwealth War Cemeteries have a valid role in Australian overseas observance of significant anniversaries, such as ANZAC Day, Armistice Day and days of local importance to Australian forces. Nevertheless, particular memorials such as Be'eri also have a strong emotional claim, not least because they are the result of popular support as distinct from a Government obligation.

I intend proposing to the authorities that ANZAC Day ceremonies in Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Zone be held every second or third year at Be'eri (maintained by the Jewish National Fund) and in other years at War Cemeteries (maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) in rotation. In addition to this modest change, those organising future 'pilgrimages' to significant areas where Australians fought and died should include War Cemeteries, the Be'eri Memorial and sites in Israel and the Palestinian Autonomous Zone.

In this year particularly we should remember those from Australia, New Zealand and other Allied countries who served in the Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1916/1918.

"they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles,
they were stronger than lions" —2 Samuel 1:23

Service Records

Anthony Staunton

Royal Australian Navy

Australian Archives advise that for RAN service records they refer persons to the Department of Defence¹. The address to contact is

DSP/SOR
Building D2/24
Department of Defence - Navy
Russell Offices
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Australian Army

In 1993 the Soldier Career Management Agency (SCMA), part of the Department of Defence, transferred all soldier's dossiers from the 1914-1918 War to the Australian Archives National Office. Since then we have had many enquiries from researchers asking about dossiers from the War of 1939-1945, pointing out this material is now also in the open access period under the Archives Act 1983. At the moment all 1939-1945 individual dossiers are still held by the SCMA in Melbourne.²

Currently, access to the 1939-1945 dossiers can be gained in two ways

- If you are a relative of the serviceman, no matter how distant, you can write directly to the SCMA at GPO Box 393D, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001 stating your relationship to the serviceman.
- If you are not a relative of the serviceman you can write to the Victorian Office of the Australian Archives at GPO Box 4325PP, Melbourne, Victoria, 3001.

Royal Australian Air force

Two Commonwealth Record Series that have recently been registered with Australian Archives. One CRS relates specifically to officers, while the other series relates to NCOs and other ranks. These records are still with the Department of Defence, but Applications for Access to any person's file can be lodged with ACT office of the Australian Archives. The information that is necessary in successfully locating a RAAF file is the full name of the serviceman/woman as well as their service number. The series:

- RAAF Officers - A9300 RAAF Personal History Files of Officers, alphabetical series 21 May 1921- 01 Mar 1959 (Contents Date Range: 21 May 1921-c 31 Dec 1950)
- RAAF NCOs and ORs - A9301 RAAF Personal History Files of Non-Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks, numerical series 21 May 1921- 01 Mar 1959 (Contents Date Range: 21 May 1921-c 31 Dec 1950)

¹ The information on RAN and RAAF records is from a letter from Access and Information Services, Australian Archives dated 28 March 1995. Internet address ref@aa.gov.au.

² Client Focus, Quarterly Newsletter for clients of the national Office of the Australian Archives, March 1995 Number 19 page 3

The files (A9300 - 293.4 metres) and (A9301 - 1431 metres) are held by CA 46, Department of Defence Central Office - Discharged Personnel Records Office, Office of the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff - Personnel (ACPERS-AF)

Both series were created in 1921 (at the same time as the RAAF itself) to hold personal and service history information on individual RAAF officers, NCOs and ORs. The personal history files consist of folders arranged alphabetically for officer's and by service number for NCOs and ORs containing various RAAF forms and cards detailing aspects of the servicemen's life and career in the RAAF. Information relating to separation from the RAAF is also held on the file. The series was discontinued in 1959 upon the creation of CRS A703 [Correspondence files, multiple number (Canberra) series] and records of those serving at that date were top-numbered into CRS A703. A related file is A705 Correspondence files, multiple number (Melbourne) series (1 Jan 1922 - 1 Mar 1959).

Australian Archives on the Internet

The Australian Archives now has its own World Wide Web site. The home page offers examples of some of the important holdings, exhibitions and events planned, publications and important information on how to access the holdings.

The Australian Archives maintains the Archives of Australia site, which has links to other archival institutions within Australia such as all State and university archives. It also links up with professional associations and overseas archives, including the National Archives and Records Administration (USA).

The address is <<http://www.aa.gov.au>>.

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Fax: 06-2093999

PO Box 34

DICKSON ACT 2602

Office of Australian War Graves

The Office of Australian War Graves, located within the Department of Veterans' Affairs, has a dual role: to maintain and care for the war cemeteries within Australia and the region as agents for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; and to commemorate eligible veterans who have died post-war and whose deaths are accepted as being caused by war service.

The authority for the post-war commemoration of Australian veterans whose deaths are accepted as due to war related causes is a Cabinet Decision of 10 March 1922. Since that date, over 170,000 eligible veterans have been commemorated. This already exceeds the 102,000 Australian war dead from all wars. Eligible veterans include Victoria Cross recipients, those in receipt of pension at the special (totally and permanently incapacitated) rate or extreme disability adjustment, certain multiple amputees specified under subsection 27(1) of the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986*, ex-prisoners of war, and those whose deaths have been accepted as being due to war service.

In the case of a burial in a cemetery, the Office will provide and maintain grave kerbing, infill and a headstone with a fine-cast bronze plaque. The plaque details and layout are the same as those for a lawn cemetery plaque. The personal inscription and religious emblem (a Cross or a Star of David) are optional and will be included on request. In the case of a memorial in a Crematorium, the Office will arrange for placement of the ashes in a wall niche, sealed with the official plaque.

Gardens of Remembrance

The Office has established Gardens of Remembrance in all State capital cities and Launceston (but not in Canberra or Darwin). A bronze plaque inscribed with the Service badge, Service number, rank, name, unit, date of death and age will be erected on a wall in the Garden and maintained. This form of commemoration is used when it is the family's preference or when there is, or will be, a private memorial on the grave or in a crematorium or if for some other reason the Office cannot provide an official memorial elsewhere.

Maintenance of Memorials

The Office is committed to the maintenance of official memorials and has staff located at the major war cemeteries in the State capital cities and Launceston, Tasmania where there are adjacent Gardens of Remembrance. Other major war cemeteries are located in Townsville, Queensland and Adelaide River, Northern Territory. These major war cemeteries and Gardens of Remembrance are maintained on a regular basis. Maintenance of official memorials in civil cemeteries and in country war cemeteries is carried out on regular "country runs". These are undertaken as often as resources permit, but at least once a year.

Problems in Overseas War Cemeteries:

War Graves in Libya

Structural and horticultural officials of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission gained access into Libya in late 1992 and conducted a survey of war graves in Libya. Since that time, work has been undertaken to erect temporary grave markers and some 68 headstones. Benghazi Military Cemetery, a particularly debilitated site, has been cleared of unwanted debris.

War Graves in Lebanon

In March 1993 the Commonwealth War Graves Commission was able to make its first inspection of War Cemeteries in Lebanon in ten years, and a thorough works survey was conducted. It was found that an extensive works program would be needed to refurbish the memorials to the 1,777 Commonwealth war dead, including 320 Australians, who are buried there. Most damage has occurred at the Beirut War Cemetery, where virtually all above-ground stonework had been removed. Replacement stonework by way of headstones, Crosses of Sacrifice, and a cremation wall have been purchased and have been stored in Italy for over 10 years. Contracts for the reconstruction of memorials and headstones have been arranged and Commission works staff will visit Beirut and Sidon to oversee the work.

Post-War Graves in West Malaysia

For some years immediately following the Second World War, the city of Taiping in West Malaysia was the principal garrison town for Commonwealth land forces. Servicemen who died, either of natural causes, as a result of accident, or on operations during the Malayan Emergency, are buried in the Christian Cemetery at Kamunting Road, Taiping. Many dependants of Service personnel are also buried there. Upon the withdrawal of British forces from Malaysia in the early 1970s the British Government assumed responsibility for maintenance of those graves of Commonwealth Servicemen and dependants that lie outside War Cemeteries.

While the graves themselves have been tended and maintained by a local contractor engaged by the British Ministry of Defence, the remainder of the Christian Cemetery in Taiping has become dilapidated, overgrown and particularly unsightly. Understandably this has given offence to visiting veterans and to the families of the deceased. The British Ministry of Defence has recently agreed to sponsor a project to relocate the graves of Commonwealth Servicemen and dependants from that cemetery to a plot adjacent to the Commonwealth War Cemetery at Taiping. Families of the deceased will, in due course, be invited to concur with this proposal.

Terendak Garrison Cemetery, Malaysia

Australian and New Zealand casualties from early in the Vietnam War were buried in the Terendak Garrison Cemetery near Malacca. Because the cemetery is situated in the centre of a military base, access to the site is restricted. The Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur can arrange the necessary permits for visitors to enter, but must be notified well in advance.

For information on Australian commemorations contact:

Director of War Graves
Office of Australian War Graves
PO Box 21
WODEN ACT 2606

Book Review

Australian Military Equipment Profiles, Vol.4. The M113 and M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carriers in Australian Service 1962 to 1972, by Michael Cecil, Australian Military Profiles Publishing, Victoria, Australia, 1994, 56 pages, RRP \$16.00

It is not often that this reviewer is asked to review specialised journals such as this one which arrived in the mail last month. At first glance it seems that the slim, but professionally produced booklet is for those with a particular bent towards armoured vehicles and for this volume—especially APCs. However, when one gets into the detail of the matter, there are many areas that one, especially an infantryman, has taken for granted over the many years he has endured being carted around training areas and the like in the back of the “cars”.

This book, which is the fourth such volume in a series on Australia's vehicles and armoured equipment, contains much more than simply technical data. The evolution of the APC from initial concept, through trials, to acceptance, and the myriad of modifications that have taken place since introduction into service has been painstakingly researched and well presented.

As a dyed in the wool grunt, I have to admit that even I found this book interesting. It speaks highly that the vehicle—which is still in service today—is now so accepted and well adapted to the many environments and uses that we demand of it in continental Australia. For those who have served in units which have utilised these versatile vehicles both in Australia and overseas, there is a particular affinity for the vehicle which has saved many aching legs and sore backs. One very interesting area in the book centres on modifications for other uses of the APC, including minigun trials conducted in South Vietnam early in the war.

I am sure there are many—who pride themselves on their knowledge of contemporary Australian military history—who will find new information in this book. For others who want more particular and detailed information on the vehicles and the associated equipment this book has it all. The illustrations and photographs are particularly well done, with many photographs from personal collections of RAAC members.

The author has found a good balance between a technical journal and a potted history and this book should find a place in most Army schools and the personal libraries of those who have spent some time on board the M113s. I, for one, will be looking forward to the next volume on this versatile family of armoured vehicle family of armoured vehicles.

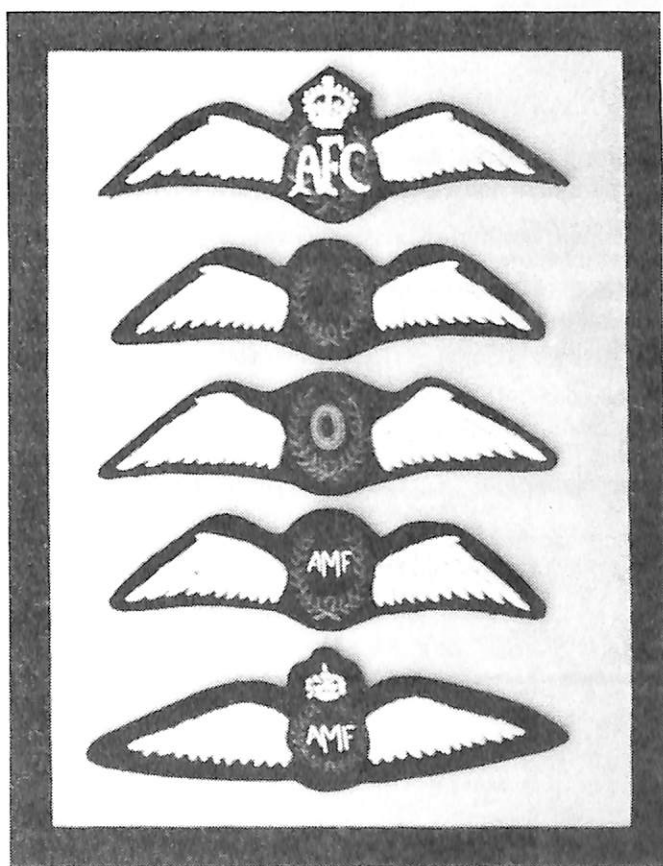
Available from selected bookshops, hobby stores or direct from the publisher in Castella, Victoria. —Gary McKay

Letters

Unobserved observer

A society member who is also an importer passed along the following photograph to illustrate the point that even experienced dealers can get surprised by the quality of reproductions. He had sent overseas a photograph, as it turned out a poor quality photograph, of an Observer's wings and received back the second badge with the "O" missing. The member then realised that the overseas supplier did not have stock of the item and had actually made it to order.

Experienced collectors are very much aware of the difference between original and reproduction material but the Editor is happy to bring it to the attention of the new collector. All the wings in this illustration are reproductions. The Editor would be delighted to receive contributions for future issues from experienced collectors on things to watch out for in purchasing military collectables.



**Wanted — Information relating to the
History of the SLOUCH HAT.**

Such as:

- * Why was it given the name SLOUCH?
- * Names of the different manufacturers over the years.
- * Why did some soldiers wear Slouch Hats and some wear Peak Caps during World War I?
- * Different badge positions on the Slouch Hat.
- * Variations in hat design.
- * Puggaree changes over the years (with and without colour patch).
- * Dress Regulations etc, etc ...

I would also like to hear from soldiers who have interesting or humorous stories involving the Slouch Hat, which would make a book on its history more interesting than just facts and figures.

Rick Grebert
22 Young Street
CROYDON NSW 2132

Internet

I am interested in starting a MHSA homepage and a British Army in Australia homepage. I would also like to obtain e-mail addresses from any MHSA members using Internet.

Anthony Staunton—E-mail: Anthony.Staunton@pcug.org.au

Biennial Conference for 1996**Queen's Birthday weekend****8-10 June 1996**

The South Australia Branch is looking forward to a great weekend, renewing old friendships, making new contacts and also adding to our knowledge and understanding of Australia's military history. For the collector - perhaps an opportunity to swap and trade; for the researcher, perhaps a vital grain of information that may help conclude that project. Whatever your reasons are for attending, the South Australian Branch members will be striving to make everyone feel comfortable and at ease. Guests will be fed and watered well and frequently, while it is hoped you will find our speakers both knowledgeable and interesting.

Accommodation

There is an abundance of accommodation in Adelaide to suit all budgets and tastes. An Accommodation Guide has been prepared to give prospective Conference visitors a guide to accommodation which is reasonably affordable and within easy reach of the Conference venue. Contact the Conference convener for a copy. If you are interested in attending the Conference please contact the Conference convener as soon as possible who will forward you the appropriate information.

Please return expressions of interest forms asap. Further information from

A F Harris
Hon. Secty & Conference Convener,
PO Box 550

MITCHAM SA 5062

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 either a 3.5" or 5.25" 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.

Elizabeth Topperwien
Editor



Application for Membership

I/*We
(Name/Rank etc.)

of (Address)

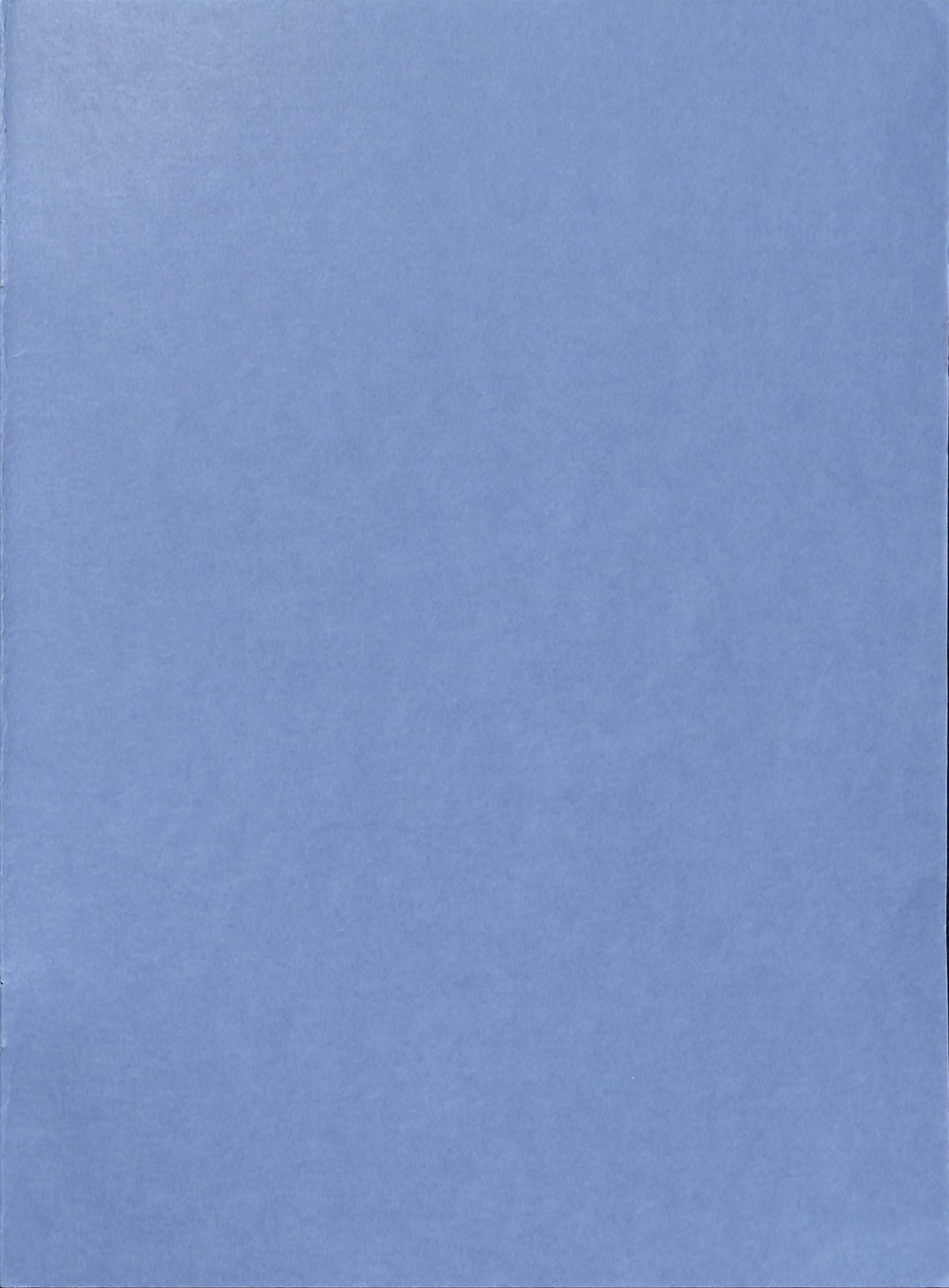
hereby apply for membership of the MILITARY HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA and wish to be admitted as a *Corresponding Member/*Subscriber to *Sabretache* /*Branch Member of the

..... Branch

My main interests are

I/*We enclose remittance of A\$26.00 being annual subscription, due 1 July each year.

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