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The aims of the Society are the encouragement and pursuit of study and research in military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment and kindred matters; the promotion of public interest and knowledge in these subjects, and the preservation of historical military objects with particular reference to the armed forces of Australia.

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Sabretache

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Editorial

Anniversary celebrations for VP Day paralleled those of VE Day earlier in the year with subdued ceremonies and restricted numbers due to COVID-19. This, though, did not alter news coverage of the event in print, television and digital media. As the last of those who served don their medals for maybe the last time, other veterans equally deserve our attention. This is particularly apparent for service personnel who have operated in conflict zones that have not been the focus of public attention. Ken Marsh's paper argues for the need for recognition of the veterans who served in Malaysia during the second Emergency and demonstrates that there a still some niches of Australian history that demand our attention.

Justin Chadwick

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Military and Political Risk in South-East Asia 1971-1989

Australia's Commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements and the Integrated Air Defence System

Ken Marsh

For almost two decades Australia maintained a Mirage fighter force at Butterworth in Northwest Malaysia during the 1968-89 Communist Insurgency War, or the Second Malaysian Emergency (SME). Australians at Butterworth incurred danger from hostile forces and both countries risked political embarrassment. An army rifle company that became known as Rifle Company Butterworth (RCB) was deployed to Malaysia as a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) in response to the identified terrorist threat.

Permanent deployment of foreign forces within its borders was inconsistent with Malaysia's non-aligned foreign policy. The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) presence was accepted as a necessity because of Malaysia's lack of air defence capacity. The Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), which allowed the RAAF presence, did not include a permanent army company, this being agreed to later. Political sensitivity meant the deployment's real purpose was hidden from the Australian public. Almost fifty years later the Australian Department of Defence still denies the facts of this deployment and the serious threat posed by the SME thus denying Butterworth veterans their proper recognition and entitlements.

This paper reviews the SME, the development of the FPDA and associated Integrated Air Defence System (IADS). It discusses the military and political risk associated with the Australian commitment to Malaysia. Previously classified high-level security documents accessed from the National Archives of Australia reveal the concerns held by Australia's senior Defence officials and show the secrecy surrounding the deployment of the RCB. The case is made for warlike service recognition for Butterworth veterans.

Five Power Defence Arrangements and Air Defence

In 1968 Britain announced its plan to withdraw forces from Malaysia and Singapore, leaving them without the assurances of the Anglo-Malaysian Defence Agreement.

In response, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, Malaysia and Singapore agreed to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA). These required all parties to consult on required action should Malaysia or Singapore be threatened with external attack. Both nations had virtually no naval or air defence capability. As an interim measure Australia committed two Mirage squadrons and support units to Butterworth as the mainstay of the IADS to deter external aggression. Under the command of an Australian Air Vice Marshall it became operational on 1 September 1971. The commander had 'emergency powers to employ assigned forces of all five countries to meet a surprise attack'. The FPDA came into effect on 1 October with the formal agreements being signed on 1 December 1971.[1]

Twelve months earlier Ench Zain Azraai bin Zainal Abidin, Under Secretary to the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told Australia's Deputy High Commissioner, A.D. Campbell, that 'air defence was the one, and really the only, area where Malaysia's defence forces needed supplementing by visiting forces'.[2] This was reflected in the Malaysian/Australian agreement of 1 December:

> The Government of Malaysia agrees that the Australian force stationed at Butterworth, composed of two squadrons of fighter aircraft and their supporting units and from time to time an infantry company, may continue to be stationed there, so long as that is mutually agreed, in accordance with the purposes expressed in the Five-Power Communique of the 16th of April, 1971. With the object of securing mutual agreement, the Government of Australia and the Government of Malaysia will consult together over any proposal to alter the size or character of that force.[3]

Malaysia believed the FPDA and the RAAF presence at Butterworth was consistent with its non-aligned stand. Reporting on the meeting with Zain, Campbell told Canberra that

> For the present, however, Malaysian officials accepted that their proposals for neutralising the region under great power guarantees were unrealistic. In any event, neutral countries as well as others had an inherent right to make purely defensive Arrangements for themselves and this is what the Five Power

1 Carlyle A. Thayer, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangements: The Quiet Achiever', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 3, 2007, pp. 79-81.

2 A.D. Campbell, Australian Deputy High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur, Record of Conversation with Ench Zain Azraai bin Zainal Abidin, Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 December 1970, NAA A4359, 221/4/31/4 Pt 2.

3 Five Power Defence Arrangements, Exchange of Notes between Australia and Malaysia, Signed on behalf of both Governments by Y.B Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen Al - Haj bin Tengku Ismail, P.M.K. (Tengku Sri Mara Raja), Deputy Minister of Defence, Malaysia, and H.E. Mr. J.R. Rowland, High Commissioner for Australia, 1 December 1971, NAA A6534, 1971/21.

> arrangements represented to Malaysia - a self-defence system for Malaysia itself not directed against any other countries or, indeed, involving any country outside the Five Power group.[4]

The agreement permitted the presence of an Army Company 'sometimes, but not regularly'.[5] Three months after the agreement was signed, correspondence on behalf of Sir Arthur Tange, Secretary of the Department of Defence, confirmed a permanent army company at Butterworth as a ready-reaction force. Training, he observed, was used to cover its true security role.

> … In addition, Malaysian reluctance having been overcome, the ANZUK force will now provide one infantry company on rotation through Butterworth on a full-time basis, ostensibly for training, flag-showing and a change of scene. The presence of this company will provide the Commander with a ready-reaction force which he can use inter alia to supplement elements available to him under the joint Malaysian-RAAF Plan, but short of an actual overt breach of security the Commander cannot use these troops for guard or other security duties.[6]

Tange's letter highlighted Australian concern regarding Malaysia's ability to protect Australian assets, acknowledging a higher level of risk than it would normally accept.

> Given the division of responsibilities agreed with the Malaysians, the fact that the Base is their property and occupied by them, and the sensitivity of the matter - especially the performance of their personnel - it is recognised that security standards at the base will continue to fall short of those we should like to obtain. We must accept, in remaining at Butterworth, a higher degree of risk than we would if the Base were under the exclusive control of the RAAF.[7]

This deception of training to hide the real purpose of the army deployment to Butterworth under the pretense of training continued as the security situation deteriorated.

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4 A.D. Campbell, Australian Deputy High Commissioner, Kuala Lumpur, Record of Conversation with Ench Zain Azraai bin Zainal Abidin, Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 17 December 1970, NAA A4359, 221/4/31/4 Pt 2.

5 Cambridge English Dictionary, definition 'from time to time'.

6 Arthur Tange, Secretary, Department of Defence, Security of Butterworth, 71/316e, 2 March 1972. NAA A703, 566/2/148 Pt 5.

7 Arthur Tange, Secretary, Department of Defence, Security of Butterworth, 71/316e, 2 March 1972. NAA A703, 566/2/148 Pt 5.

Image 1: Air Base Butterworth with Penang in the distance. RAAF Sabre jets lined up along the main runway also used by the RMAF operational aircraft..
Source: Russell Linwood.

The Early Years

Following their defeat in the 1948-60 Emergency the Malayan communists withdrew to the Southern border region of Thailand. Here, in relative safety, they regrouped, rebuilt, trained, and prepared to renew their campaign to control Malaysia.[8] The SME commenced on 17 June 1968 with an attack on a Malaysian police convoy close to the Thai border in which 17 police officers were killed.[9] In the early years they focused on rebuilding their underground networks and supply structures throughout

8 Ong Weichong, *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism: The Second Emergency, 1968-1989*, Routledge, New York, 2015, p. 49.
9 Lim Cheng Leng and Khor Eng Lee, *Waging an Unwinnable War: The Communist Insurgency in Malaysia (1948-1989)*, Xlibris, 2016, p. xxxi.
10 Ong, *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism*, p. 53.

Peninsular Malaysia, testing themselves against Malaysian security forces and used their successes for propaganda purposes.[10] The communist actions, according to Ong Weichong and Kumar Ramakrishna, evolved into 'a serious security threat' to the Malaysian government that included 'assassinations, sabotage and bombings against government personnel … [and] open bloody battles'.[11] Australia's senior military officers, meanwhile, were considering the security situation before the IADS and FPDA came into effect.

In March 1971 Australia's high commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, J.R. Rowland, raised the Butterworth situation with Canberra. Concerns over operations against the communists in the nearby border area – about 80 kilometres away – were heightened by the discovery of communist camps near Kulim - approximately 20 kilometres - and evidence they were moving back into what had been a 'bad area' during the Emergency. He foresaw circumstances that he believed could make Butterworth an attractive future target. These included reprisals to increasing Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) operations against the terrorists or a politically motivated attack against the Mirages as the enemy considered Butterworth a foreign base.[12]

On 11 March 1971 *The Herald* carried the story 'Our Defences are Down', written shortly after the communists had bombed a bridge close to the Butterworth Air Base.[13] Approximately six weeks later the Canberra News claimed the Base was vulnerable to attack by the terrorists.[14] Both alleged the Base was ill-prepared to cope with the communist threat. Other documents in the Department of Air file,[15] holding copies of these articles, show Butterworth security was under active consideration. Nonetheless these reports, along with one other, are referenced in the first of two reports prepared by Wing Commanders J.A. Downie SR (GD) (Senior Ground Defence) and R.D. Barnes PM (Provo Marshall) as illustrating the publicity given to the situation in Australia.[16] Recognising the available intelligence on file in

11 Ong Weichong and Kumar Ramakrishna, 'The "forgotten" insurgency that failed', *Malaysian Insider*, 15 October 2013; www.themalaysianinsider.com/sideviews/article/the-forgotten-insurgency-that-failed-ong-weichong-and-kuma-ramakrishma

12 J.R. Rowland, Australian High Commissioner Kuala Lumpur, Air Base Butterworth - Security, 207/2/2, 11 March 1971, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.

13 Up to 30 June 1903 some 390,261 medals and 982,070 clasps had been issued - Hansard; Commons Sitting; 14 July 1903, Vol 125 c572

14 'Our Vulnerable Base' *The Canberra News*, 22 April 1971, pp. 5-6.

15 RAAF Butterworth – Ground defence plans, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.

16 Security of Australian Personnel and Assets - Air Base Butterworth, 564/8/28, 6/10/1PM Pt1 (53), 27 April 71, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.

17 Security of Australian Personnel and Assets - Air Base Butterworth, 564/8/28, 6/10/1PM Pt1 (53), 27 April 71, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.

18 Report of Visit by SR(GD) and PM to Headquarters Air Base Butterworth 4th to 12th May 1971, 564/8/28, 25 May 1971, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.

Australia was incomplete,[17] a visit to Butterworth in May was arranged to allow a more detailed second report.[18]

They noted that the Malaysian political and security situation had been unstable since the end of the 1948-60 Emergency. Riots in 1967 and 1969 had culminated in the formation of the National Operation Committee while dissident action in the Kulim district had drawn attention to the possible vulnerability of Butterworth.[19] While considering the likelihood of Butterworth being targeted was low, they noted 'the possibility of attacks cannot be ignored'. While Malaysia was responsible for peacetime security Australia had assumed responsibility for the security of its own assets as requested by Malaysia. The RAAF relied primarily on its own resources to secure its interests. Other sources, such as the Australian Army element at Butterworth and the Malaysian Military Police (MMP), responsible for 'entry control and part of the normal base patrol measures' could not be relied on.[20] The Malaysian Ministry of Defence had advised that the MMP could be 'withdrawn by a higher authority in part or in toto in an internal security situation', something the authors saw as 'a most unsatisfactory situation for the base commander'. The future of Commonwealth forces at Minden Barracks on Penang was uncertain and the presence of an Army Company could not be guaranteed owing to planned and unplanned absences.[21]

The ambiguity surrounding Base defence plans was also of concern. The RMAF and SSP were not integrated into the RAAF plans meaning, in effect, there were 'three relatively unco-ordinated agencies concerned with base defence'. It was essential, they wrote, that 'the base be treated as an entity for the purpose of defence planning.[22] Their recommendations included an Australian or ANZUK army company be available to the OC Butterworth at all times he considered it necessary or, alternatively, two flights of RAAF Airfield Defence guards be permanently deployed to the base; and the finalisation of a shared defence agreement for the base without delay.[23] The shared defence plan, dated 8 September 1971, placed all forces, Malaysian and Australian, under the command of the RAAF Officer Commanding.[24]

Barnes and Downie believed the Mirages were vulnerable, noting 'the aircraft are lined wing tip to wing tip … Under these arrangements any destructive

19 Security of Australian Personnel and Assets, A703, NAA 564/8/28 Pt 3.
20 Security of Australian Personnel and Assets, A703, NAA 564/8/28 Pt 3.
21 Security of Australian Personnel and Assets, A703, NAA 564/8/28 Pt 3.
22 Report of Visit by SR(GD) and PM to Headquarters Air Base Butterworth 4th to 12th May 1971, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.
23 Report of Visit by SR(GD) and PM to Headquarters Air Base Butterworth 4th to 12th May 1971, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.
24 Operation Order No 1/71, Shared Defence of Air Base Butterworth, 8 September 1971, NAA 561/19/21 Pt 1.

Image 2: RCB troops maintain day and night surveillance of the perimeter fence from atop the Traffic control tower.
Source: Russell Linwood.

action affecting one … could spread to others'. However, they considered 'protective measures such as revetment would be extremely costly and could be misconstrued by the local population'.[25] Revetments were constructed a few years later.[26]

In January 1973 the Defence Committee, Australia's peak defence decision making body, considered the implications of the planned withdrawal of the Australian battalion from Singapore. One decision was to advise Australia's ANZUK partners that the practice of providing an army company from Singapore to Butterworth 'for security duties' would be replaced a company rotated from Australia. The deception, noted by Tange in March 1972,[27] would continue with all

25 Report of Visit by SR(GD) and PM to Headquarters Air Base Butterworth 4th to 12th May 1971, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.

26 Attached to: AUSTEO, 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', Para 21, attached to Hamilton R.N, A/First Assistant Secretary Strategic and International Policy Division, Review of Butterworth Deployment, 22 October 1976, Reference: DEF 270/1/4. NAA A1838, 696/4/4/5 Pt 3.

27 A.H. Tange, Secretary, Department of Defence, Security of Butterworth, 71/316e, 2 March 1972, NAA A703, 566/2/148 Pt 5.

28 Defence Committee, Minute of meeting held on 11 January 1973, Five Power and ANZUK Arrangements and Withdrawal of Australian Battalion and Battery, Agendum No. 1/1973, Minute 2/1973, 11 Jan 1973, NAA 7942, F59.

public references to the need of training.[28]

A secret minute of the Chiefs of Staff meeting on 28 June 1973 confirmed security as the Army's prime role and concluded it should be placed under the control of the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) RAAF Butterworth:

> In noting that COMANZUKFOR [Commander ANZUK Forces] would have no command or control responsibilities towards the Australian Army Company providing security at Butterworth, CGS suggested that the Company be placed under AOC Butterworth. CAS considered that the AOC should have appropriate authority to control the use of the Company for the protection of the RAAF Base, as this was the primary task of the Company.[29]

In July Army Headquarters in Canberra instructed 'the line to be taken in discussing the role of company, particularly with troops involved, should be that deployment of company provides an opportunity for training and developing the elements of RAAF at Butterworth.' This changed the emphasis then given to security. It further stated that the rotation accorded 'with Australian national policy of deploying troops overseas for training exercises' while making it clear the RCB would 'have a continued responsibility for the protection of Australian assets, property and personnel within the perimeters of Air Base Butterworth'.[30] The 'line to be taken in discussing the role of company, particularly with troops involved' was clearly an instruction to keep the troops ignorant of the deployment's true nature. However, the order reaffirmed the primary, but unpublished, role for the 'continued responsibility for the protection of Australian assets, property and personnel within the perimeters of Air Base Butterworth'. This accorded with the decisions recorded in the Secret Minutes of both the Australian Defence Committee of 11 January 1973 and the Chiefs of Staff of 28 June 1973.

Plan Asbestos, issued by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, authorized the deployment of the company from Australia. It required the Army to ensure the deployment met training standards 'required by OC RAAF Butterworth in matters associated with the security duties of the company'. Further, the company was placed under the Operational Control of the OC RAAF who exercised administrative control for transport, leave, off-base movement and general conduct.[31] This directive ensured the Army was properly trained and available to the OC RAAF whenever

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29 Chiefs of Staff Committee, Minute of meeting held on 28th June 1973, Agendum No. 24/1973, Minute 38/1973, 28 June 1973. DMOP File 307-H-2 pt 1.

30 Army Canberra to MILCOMD Sydney, Rotation of the AS Rifle Co at Air Base Butterworth, OPS 24851, 25 July 1973.

31 Chiefs of Staff Committee, Australian Joint Service Plan, AJSP No. 1/1973, Plan Asbestos, File Ref. 71/1511, August 1973, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

required for security purposes.

The sensitivity of the situation was again reflected in an October 1973 report of the unnamed Vice Chief of General Staff (VCGS) on his return from Butterworth.

> The deployment of this company to Butterworth has in recent years assumed a real importance because of security. Although the Malaysians may be expected to have assumed that this is the case, publicly and privately the position is maintained on both sides that the deployment is for exercise purposes. [underscored in original][32]

The VCGS also reported on the difficulties arranging training exercises with the Malaysians. While the host nation 'would be very happy to participate in combined exercises' they had 'no formal training programme of Army training exercises in the area … however, opportunities will probably come about for the company to take part on an ad hoc basis in a number of minor training activities with Malaysian troops'. The first deployment from Australia took place at the end of August that year and was due to be replaced in December.[33] Clearly the cost of a permanent deployment from Australia for ad hoc minor training opportunities does not add up. It only makes sense within the context of the military threat to Butterworth.

The Conflict Intensifies

Following an acrimonious split resulting in the emergence of three communist factions, 1974 saw an eruption of 'spectacular acts of revolutionary violence as each CPM faction vied for the legitimacy and leadership of the communist movement in Malaysia and Singapore'. Factions 'tried to outdo each other in open battle with the government and among themselves'. By July 1974 Wing Commander J.I. Brough, reported the RCB understood its primary task was the security of Australian 'assets, property and persons' and not training as it had previously believed. Brough noted that for 'political reasons it was not possible to state this in low security classification documents'.[35]

Increased security measures were introduced at Butterworth following rocket attacks on the RMAF Base near Kuala Lumpur on 31 March and a military

32 Defence Planning Division, VCGS Visit to Malaysia, The Butterworth Company, 11 October 1973. Directorate of Military Operations and Plans File # 307-H-2. Subject Army Detachments to Butterworth.

33 Defence Planning Division, VCGS Visit to Malaysia, The Butterworth Company, 11 October 1973.

34 Ong, *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism*, p. 61.

35 ARA Infantry Coy at But, 11 October 1974. NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

Image 3: Quick Reaction Force from D Company 6 RAR following a turn out to an alert on the northern end of the Air Base Butterworth.
Source: Russell Linwood.

Image 4: RAAF Mirage fighter in protected revetments built in the mid-1970s to increase protection against CT indirect rocket and mortar attack.
Source: Russell Linwood.

Image 5: QRF squads from B Coy 1 RAR fully armed with personal weapons and some carrying extra heavy weapons by day in a show of strength to deter CT attack. .
Source: Russell Linwood.

Image 6: Due to the expectation of casualties, every RCB rotation included extra medics and medical evacuation drills were practiced regularly including with the on-base RAAF SAR helicopter flight.
Source: Russell Linwood.

establishment on Penang on 1 April 1975 and advice received from the RMAF regarding 'possible threats to Butterworth'. These included 'controlled access to the base and vehicle search, dispersal of aircraft and patrols on aircraft lines. The RMAF … also planned dispersal of their aircraft to other bases'. The Chief of Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshall Rowland, advised the Minister that the 'period of tension is expected to last until at least 22 April and probably for another month'.[36] Following communist activity close to the Base the Air Office was advised of 'Increased security consisting of 5 standing patrols of half section strength deployed during hours of darkness, one section picket of aircraft lines and AIRMOV (Air Movements) area and normal ready reaction section will continue until at least 8 August 75'.[37]

On 4 September 1975 the *Straits Times* reported a series of incidents throughout the year. Rocket attacks on military and police bases around the country, targeted assassinations of police Special Branch officers, 'particularly in Perak but also in Kuala Lumpur and further south', the bombing of the National Monument and, the day before, a hand grenade attack on Field Force Headquarters in Kuala Lumpur as the officers assembled for their morning parade.[38] These targeted attacks were in stark contrast to the start of the first Emergency when the communists 'unrestricted reign of terror … proved to be a misjudgment' alienating the population. Prime Minister Tun Razak said the enemy had 'launched a seven-year campaign to seize control' and were building to the next stage of their strategy to 'engage in protracted war'. He believed the "new emergency" could be won before they reached that stage.[39]

On 7 October Air Marshall Rowland informed the Minister regarding events at Butterworth. He attached the current Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) threat assessment to which Air Office had added its comments. Noted were:

> the upgrading in training and military status of the CTO [Communist Terrorist Organisation] ... a significant diversification of, and increase in, the forces available with a capability of launching an attack against Air Base Butterworth ... a marked increase in recent months in the use of modern weapons by the CTO including M16 rifles, 7.62 SLR, 9 mm sub-machine guns, and M79 grenade launchers … evidence of 81/82 mm mortars

and the fact the 'CTO also appears to have a quantity of 3.5 inch rockets which they have used during the past six months in attacks against military installations'.[40]

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36 CAS Butterworth Base Security, 418/4/12, 3 April 75, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

37 HQBUT, Siterep Butterworth and North Peninsular Malaysia, DCR 005/05, 7 August 75, NAA 564/8/28 Pt 8.

38 'Red Strategy', *The Straits Times*, 4 September 1975, p.12.

39 'Red Strategy', *The Straits Times*, 4 September 1975, p.12.

40 CAS Security of Butterworth, 7 October 1975, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

Air Office summarised the situation as follows:

> The security situation in Malaysia has deteriorated in the past year, particularly during the past six months. The CTO has become bolder in its actions and has been willing to attack military installations with 3.5 inch rockets for the first time. Malaysian intelligence authorities have commented on the upgrading in training and militant status of the CTO and the CT determination and enterprise in confronting the Malaysian security forces.
>
> There is no evidence to suggest that Air Base Butterworth will be singled out as a target for attack in preference to another military installation in future operations but, equally, there is no reason to suppose that the Base will be excluded from attack in preference to others.
>
> The CTO has demonstrated his capacity to mount operations against the security forces during the past year. Based on these incidents, there is an increased likelihood of attack on Air Base Butterworth - probably by use of 3.5 inch rockets. There is a lesser probability of an attack using mortars.[41]

Rowland expanded on the implications of possible rocket and mortar attacks:

> The recent intelligence information concerning possible CTO [Communist Terrorist Organisation] intentions to launch rocket attacks on bases in Malaysia increases our concern regarding the security of areas around the base. Intelligence sources consider there is a possibility that CTs [Communist Terrorists] have or are able to obtain 81/82mm mortars to supplement their known supplies of 3.5 inch rockets. Mortars are crew served weapons which are accurate area weapons of considerable destructive force against targets at maximum ranges of 4,700 metres. The attached map shows that at a range of 3000 metres from the Butterworth Base, a perimeter of 16,000 metres is formed. To compound the problem of defence, the area within the perimeter includes a large number of Malaysian houses, a network of roads and several hectares of padi-fields, all of which offer CTO assembly and firing bases.[42]

He expressed concern at the lack of security surrounding the Base. The 6th Malaysian Infantry Brigade, responsible for off base security, was engaged in operations over an 80 square mile (approximately 210 square kilometre) area with 'no units allotted for the defence of the area surrounding the base' and a lack of any known plan to respond to security threats to it. Although the CAS believed a minimum of two battalions were necessary to provide an effective deterrent, he recommended that the Minister request the Malaysian Prime Minister to 'allocate at least one battalion

41 CAS Security of Butterworth, 7 October 1975, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.
42 CAS Security of Butterworth 554/19/33 (87), 7 October 75, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

to the area immediately surrounding Butterworth for area defence'. A week later Air Vice Marshall N.P. McNamara, the Deputy Chief of Air Staff (DCAS) informed the DJS (Defence Joint Service, a high level Defence committee) that

> base planning has taken into account the requirement for blast shelters should the situation deteriorate further. The requirement for blast protection of aircraft against ground burst weapons and small arms fire together with aircraft dispersal is currently under review.[44]

The DCAS also warned that to 'ignore the threat of attack is to risk an extremely high loss in terms of assets with attendant military ignominy, and in terms of political, psychological gains for the CTO'.[45]

Interestingly, a draft brief prepared for the DCAS regarding Butterworth security observed an 'increase in the level of defence preparedness including signs of defensive works against rocket attacks' could result in '[a]gitation for the withdrawal of RAAF units from Butterworth; or at least dependent families … Such a "withdrawal" would be politically advantageous to the CTs and potentially damaging to Australia's prestige in SEA'.[46] The October 1975 JIO study, 'The Security of Air Base Butterworth', identified a 'distinct threat ... to Australian personnel and their dependents' from 'the use of booby-traps and minor acts of sabotage'. RAAF married quarters next to the Base were identified as likely targets.[47] Despite concerns both in 1971 and late 1975 over the construction of defensive works the October 1976 draft 'RAAF Presence at Butterworth' noted: 'Action has recently been taken to construct revetments to give some protection to the Australian aircraft at Butterworth against attack'.[48]

These increased concerns regarding the security of Butterworth coincided with the eruption of terrorist activity. It also exposed Australia to the potential of significant political embarrassment. It was 'well into 1977', according to Weichong Ong, that the Security Forces began countering the terrorists 'at the tactical level' while the enemy stubbornly pursued 'all-out armed struggle' into 1981.[49] As late as 1983, historian Richard Clutterbuck believed, a potential threat remained from a disaffected 'Chinese population which could arise from the strains of an economic

43 CAS Security of Butterworth, 7 October 1975, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

44 Butterworth Security, 14 October 1975, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

45 Butterworth Security, 14 October 1975, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

46 Brief for DCAS Concerning Security of Butterworth, 564/8/28, which appears to be an attachment to SRGD-AF Security Butterworth, 554/9/33, 3 October 1975, NAA 564/8/28 Pt 8.

47 'The Security of Air Base Butterworth', JIO Study No. 13/75, October 1975, NAA 696/4/5 Pt 3.

48 Attached to: AUSTEO, 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth,' Para 21, attached to Hamilton R.N, A/First Assistant Secretary Strategic and International Policy Division, Review of Butterworth Deployment, 22 October 1976, Reference: DEF 270/1/6. in NAA A1838, 696/4/4/5 Pt 3.

49 Ong, *Malaysia's Defeat of Armed Communism*, pp. 65-66.

recession, or from political exasperation caused by excessive discrimination against the Chinese, or from an explosion of racial trouble such as occurred in May 1969'.[50]

Political Risk

Australia's commitment to the FPDA was intended to show its support for the region and a willingness to be involved in regional security. That included a preparedness to expose its troops to danger.[51] In 1976 the Department of Defence developed a paper in preparation for a review of the Australian presence at Butterworth by the Australian and Malaysian governments at the end of that year. The paper acknowledged that political developments in the region and the significant development of Malaysian and Singaporean defence capability meant the Mirage deployment had largely achieved its objectives. Its continuing presence exposed Australia to what may have been unwanted risk.[52]

Butterworth was considered to be a potential communist target. Used by the RMAF 'for counter-terrorist operations' it was also the 'closet major airbase' to their bases.[53] The risk of attack, especially a surprise 'one of short duration by light mortars or rockets' was deemed possible, if unlikely.[54] Two-thirds of Australia's tactical fighter force, or around 20 per cent of the RAAF's operational command was exposed.[55] If an attack occurred or was expected, Malaysia's priorities may have been determined by operational requirements and not necessarily the protection of Butterworth.[56] Malaysia had the option of moving its aircraft to other bases - an option not available to Australia - and may not have sought the same level of protection for their own fleet.[57]

This situation would likely have caused concern in Australia, including public pressure on the Government. Australia could have been in a difficult position. Malaysia was highly unlikely to accept more Australian troops given their staunch opposition to the involvement of foreign forces in the insurgency. Australia likewise wanted to avoid being drawn into the internal security situation 'without assurance of significant support by other allied forces and with unpredictable consequences'. The situation may have been beyond Australia's capacity.[58]

Any withdrawal in the face of a military threat or political pressure may have

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50 Richard Clutterbuck, *Conflict and Violence In Singapore And Malaysia, 1945-1983*, Graham Brash, Singapore, 1984, p. 288.

51 Five Power Arrangements: Command and Control - Departmental Working Paper, NAA A4359, 221/4/31/4 Pt 2.

52 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.

53 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.

54 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.

55 'Review of RAAF Presence at Butterworth', 10 Sept 1976, NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 3.

56 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.

57 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.

Image 7: Warning signs that left no doubt what would happen, complementing the decisive Rules of Engagement were positioned along the entire airbase perimeter
Source: Russell Linwood.

had negative consequences for both nations. The withdrawal of Australian forces or a refusal to allow them to be used in an operational deployment would be seen as a failure to honour an agreement. Australia stood to lose credibility in the region. On the other hand, a withdrawal may well have undermined 'international confidence in Malaysia's ability to handle its security problems',[59] a lose-lose situation for both nations.

RAAF Presence Valued

As the review was being prepared, Group Captain J.R. MacNeil, Defence Advisor in Kuala Lumpur, presented his views on the matter to his superiors, the High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner, for passage to Canberra. He believed Malaysia valued the Australian presence at Butterworth and 'might wish the force to stay, under present conditions, because of the assistance it gives to Malaysia' in different ways. The RAAF, he wrote, assisted

> … the RMAF in running the largest of the four RMAF bases in West Malaysia … Because of its location and size Butterworth is very important to Malaysia in its efforts to contain the CPM [Communist Party of Malaya] forces, and withdrawal of the RAAF, or significant reduction in its size, would markedly reduce the effectiveness of the base and/or require large diversions of RMAF effort to Butterworth from other bases. The general level of achievement of

58 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.
59 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.

> the RMAF would drop if there was any large reduction in RAAF strength at Butterworth.[60]

Australia's presence at Butterworth enabled the Malaysian Air Force to more effectively conduct operations against the enemy from the base.[61] The Shared Defence Plan protecting Australian and Malaysian assets was under the command of the Officer Commanding RAAF Butterworth.[62] The QRF provided by the Australian Army Company was activated as required to respond to possible enemy threats, including picket duty and being deployed as standing patrols.[64] This was of real benefit to Malaysia.

Was This Qualifying Service?

In 2014 the Rifle Company Butterworth Review Group petitioned the House of Representatives Parliamentary Petitions Committee for a review of their service. In response, the Department of Defence's Nature of Service Branch (NOSB) developed a paper for the Committee's information. It claimed a senior researcher had conducted extensive and thorough research into RCB service. This included 'all available official documentation held at the War Memorial and National Archives Australia'. While Defence acknowledged a level of threat existed, it assiduously avoided high level previously classified secret documents showing the company's prime security role. NOSB downplayed the threat, emphasizing the 'training' role in what can only be described as selective use of data.[65] Colonel Murray Thompson, Acting Director General Military Strategic Commitments, told a Committee hearing into the matter on 29 October 2014:

> There was a communist insurgency, but it was extremely low level. It was actually along the border areas of what it now Thailand, and certainly by the mid-seventies it would be described as banditry more than a comprehensive insurgency. There were very limited attacks on any Malaysian constabulary, because it was a police action. The military were not deployed against them –

60 'Review of RAAF Presence at Butterworth', 10 Sept 1976, NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 3.
61 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.
62 Shared Defence of Air Base Butterworth, Operation Order No.1/71, NAA A703, 565/19/21
63 Commanding Officers' reports – Monthly reports unit history sheets (A50) – Base Squadron, Butterworth, 1944-1988, NAA A9345, 75.
64 HQBUT, Sitrep Butterworth and North Peninsular Malaysia, DCR 005/05, 7 August 75, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.
65 Background Paper, Parliamentary Petition, 3 March 2014, Rifle Company Butterworth 1970-1989. Nature of Service Branch, 28 April 2014, Para. 19.
66 Testimony of Colonel Murray Thompson, Acting Director General Military Strategic Commitments, VCDF Group, Department of Defence. Canberra, 29 October 2014. Commonwealth of Australia, Official Committee Hansard, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Petitions, 'Petition on reclassification of service by the Rifle Company Butterworth 1970-89'.

only very occasionally.[66]

Thompson's statement is clearly false as demonstrated in this paper. The eruption of violence in 1974 was followed by attacks on military and police installations and the targeted assassinations of Special Branch police officers throughout Peninsular Malaysia. This period saw increased security concerns at Butterworth, including the building of revetments to protect the Mirage fleet. Contrary to Thompson's claim the Malaysian Army conducted ongoing operations throughout the country for the duration of the war.[67]

Thompson was introduced to the Committee by the Hon. Stuart Robert, Assistant Minister for Defence, 'as a subject matter expert'. Robert said Thompson could 'speak first hand on what was like to be there at the time' because he had lived at Butterworth with his parents.[68] Ignoring the fact it was called Thailand at the time and apparent confusion over on the meaning of 'constabulary', what qualifies a child to speak with authority on military and security matters? Further testimony supported this evidence.

Vice Admiral David Johnston, Vice Chief of the Defence Force repeated this line on 16 December 2019. He denied any 'state of war or military emergency … in Malaysia after … 11 August 1966', claiming defence personnel at Butterworth 'did not incur danger from hostile forces'.[69] Malaysia's armed forces were clearly engaged in operations against communist insurgents for the 21 years of the SME,[70] including operations from Butterworth.[71] Australia's JIO recognised the vulnerability of the Base, service personnel and their families to communist attacks.[72] Senior Defence officials knew they needed to act to save Australia from military ignominy[73] and to avoid unnecessary embarrassment to Australia and Malaysia diplomatically.[74]

Justice Robert Mohr completed his 'Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies

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67 Sharon Bin Hashim (ed.), *The Malaysian Army's Battle Against Communist Insurgency 1968-1989*, (trans. Mohamed Ghazemy Mahmud). Originally published in Malay as 'Tentera Darat Menentang Insurgecy Komunis 1968-1989', Army Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, Kuala Lumpur, 2001, p. 113.

68 Commonwealth of Australia, Official Committee Hansard, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Petitions, 'Petition on reclassification of service by the Rifle Company Butterworth 1970-89', Testimony of Colonel Murray Thompson, Acting Director General Military Strategic Commitments, VCDF Group, Department of Defence. Canberra, 29 October 2014.

69 Letter, David Johnston, AO, RAN, Vice Admiral, Vice Chief of the Defence Force, to Mr Kenneth Marsh, EC19-006588, 16 December 2019. Personal File.

70 Hashim (ed.), *The Malaysian Army's Battle Against Communist Insurgency 1968-1989*, p.113.

71 Air Base Butterworth - Security, 207/2/2, 11 March 1971, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 3.

72 'The Security of Air Base Butterworth', JIO Study No. 13/75, October 1975, NAA 696/4/5 Pt 3.

73 Butterworth Security, 14 October 1975, NAA A703, 564/8/28 Pt 8.

74 'The RAAF Presence at Butterworth', DEF 270/1/4, in NAA A1838, 696/6/4/5 Pt 5.

in Respect of South-East Asian Service 1955-75' on behalf of the Australian Government in February 2000. He concluded that veterans qualified for the service pension or warlike service when the presence of an armed enemy is proven, or the troops are told they will be endangered by an enemy.[75] The Honourable John Clarke, QC, was tasked by the Government to take into account the development of repatriation legislation including historical and current provisions, parliamentary statements and court decisions.[76] In the 2003 'Review of Veterans' Entitlements', he concurred with Mohr, stating that

> If then, the military authorities consider that a particular area is vulnerable to attack and dispatch armed forces there, they are sending forces into harm's way, or danger. This was the second point made by Mohr - that veterans ordered to proceed to an area where they are endangered by the enemy will not only perceive danger, but to them the danger will be an objective one based on rationale and reasonable grounds. In these circumstances, what the historian says he or she has learned since the war about the actual intention of the enemy is hardly relevant.[77]

Conclusion

Australia's commitment to the FPDA incurred political and military risk from a resurgent communist insurgency. Additional security measures were implemented to protect the Mirage squadrons and Australian personnel at Butterworth as the communist threat intensified. These included the permanent deployment of an Australian Army infantry company as a quick reaction force. Owing to political sensitivities at the time the real purpose of the deployment was hidden under a pretense of training. While the Base was never attacked, possibly owing to the company's deterrent effect, the fact remains that personnel at Butterworth and their dependents incurred danger from the communist terrorist organisation. Based on available evidence, and contrary to Defence Department claims, Butterworth operated under warlike service conditions and veterans from the era are deserving of such recognition.

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75 'Review of Service Entitlement Anomalies in Respect of South-East Asian Service 1955-75', 2000, pp. 8-10.

76 Review of Veterans' Entitlements, Appendix 1, Terms of Reference, 2003.

77 Review of Veterans' Entitlements, Chapter 11:60, 2003.

A Chance Find
Doug Forster's writings on his war experience

Bruce Forster

Douglas William Craig Forster was born in Melbourne in 1899. His father, William Cuthbert Durham Forster, was a businessman, who with his father and sister owned and managed a clothing factory in Hosier Lane, off Flinders Street, in Melbourne. Doug's grandfather, William Mark Forster, was a philanthropist who founded the Try Boys Society to look after homeless street children, which is still active in Melbourne, with its patron being the Governor of Victoria. The family lived in Middle Brighton and Doug attended a private primary school run by an aunt. He then attended Wesley College where he excelled at English and Latin. His parents divorced when he was ten years old, his father marrying again a year or so later, and his mother, Florence, moving to Sydney, and also marrying again. Doug and his siblings remained with his father. He was taken out of Wesley College when he was 14 and, after working in his father's factory for a short time, was sent to a property, owned by a friend of his father, in southern NSW to work as a jackeroo.

In 1918 he returned to Melbourne and joined the AIF. Following his return to Australia he took up a small soldier settlement farm in north east Victoria. As with so many, he walked off the farm when butter prices collapsed in the late 1920's/ early 1930's and the start of the Great Depression, and returned to Melbourne. It was about this time he met his future wife, Grace Crosby, the daughter of English migrants who arrived around 1900. Four of her older brothers and two younger brothers of her father also served in the First World War, one uncle dying in Belgium. Doug and Grace married in 1935. In 1939 Doug rejoined the army and was sent to Colac in western Victoria to mainly guard Italian POW's. Grace and their four children also moved to Colac from Melton in 1943. Doug and family remained there after the war.

Doug was always very interested in local politics, was an avid reader and a regular letter writer to the local paper. He a member of the local Presbyterian church choir, and for many years sang each Sunday morning to piano accompaniment on the local radio station. At 65 he retired, and with Grace travelled around Australia for an extended period, finally moving to Upwey in Melbourne. Unfortunately, the house burnt down in bushfires in the mid-1960's, with Doug lucky to have escaped, after helping older neighbours. It was fortunate Grace was away from the house at the time. They bought another home in Ferntree Gully, but later moved to Canberra for a few years, before returning to Melbourne. Doug died in Melbourne in 1991 and Grace in 2002.

These are his wartime writings.

Doug Forster's Departure and Return from War, 1918

Thrust into Broadmeadows Camp on enlistment mid-March 1918 two country chaps attracted my attention, which seemed mutual, for we teamed up. They were slightly taller and broader-shouldered than I, and one day and one year older – Tom Jolly and George Paynter. Though Tom and I could have joined a Public Schools' unit, George not being of that ilk, we stuck together, missing a troopship, and continuing non-commission studies, from which we pulled out hearing of the re-advance on Paris by the Germans. The troopship we missed, we heard later, had berthed in Sierra Leone for coaling, and a number of deaths from some disease occurred. With the assistance of my parent and teenage sister and her two girlfriends, and the subjective help of a step-mother, they were entertained at the home in Middle Brighton a couple of times, and at a country home of a friend of the family's at Paradise in the Dandenong's. Thus, we became firm chums.

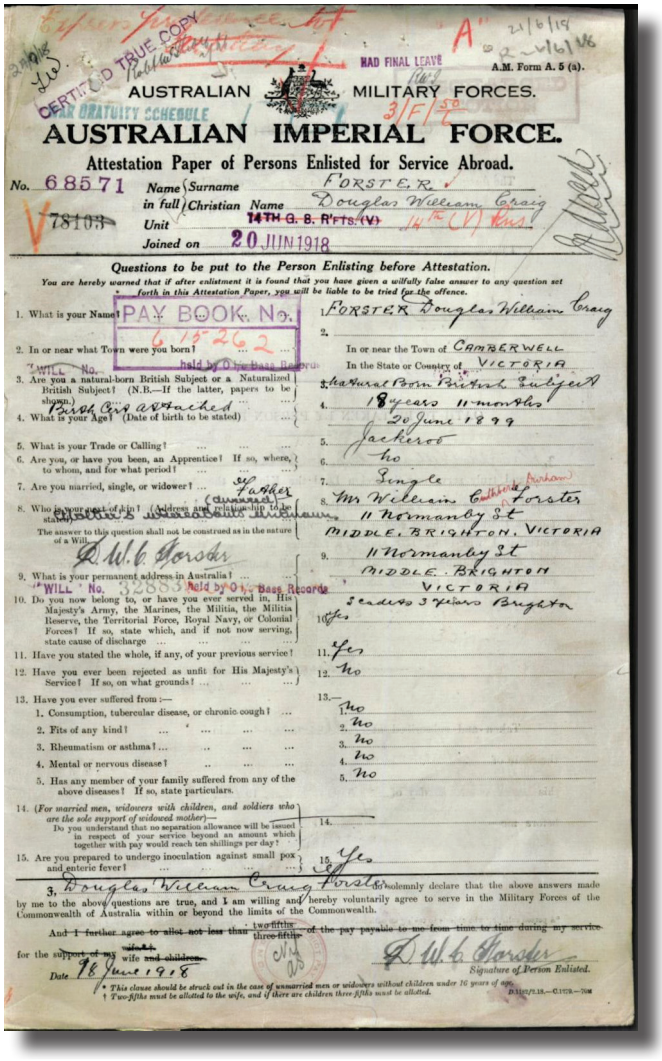
Image 1: The Forster family, showing Doug in his AIF uniform. Source: Author.

Boxing contests were held in the camp. Tom showed his prowess by punching his way through four elimination rounds, only to succumb to influenza before the final bout, but entered the ring. Tenaciously he fought with the idea of an early knock-out, but wheezing breath and near exhaustion induced the referee to stop the fight, though he was leading, in my opinion, by a margin of points. I was fortunate to dodge the flailing fists of my final opponent, a light-horseman, tall, thin as a rope, which as you would imagine, made it a lucky punch to the solar plexus, winning the verdict, a £4 prize, bantam-weight champion of Broadmeadow's Camp, and the opportunity of gifting silver hatpins, with silver knobs on the points, to my sister, her two friends, and step-mother for their goodness entertaining.

Embarking from Adelaide, after a train trip from Melbourne, on the "Boonah", an erstwhile vessel trading horses to India before the war, possibly during it, of 3000 tons, and picking up no less than a thousand troops around the eastern coast. A crowded ship when hammocks were hung over the dining tables after 'lights out', the vessel's rolling motion had every man's bottom striking the other from either side. I doubt, if a submarine or mishap occur, whether sufficient lifeboats or rafts would accommodate a third of the human cargo. Some discarded the crowded below deck to swing ourselves from anything above in the cold night fresh air, until a wave amidships scattered a half-drowned mob slithering down the only steep gangway to below. Blankets waved from rigging and rail the following day. Ferrying across the Bight was an exercise in stamina sea-legs, hunger because of sea-sickness, and the incident above and its like. Not until Perth did we have a full compliment of 20 at our table, we three and two others fortunate enough to sit to 3 meals a day. A sergeant-major, who used to give us gipp in camp, lay supine and green against a bulkhead for days. We were cruel with our comments.

Arriving in Durban for coaling and anchored mid-harbour, after a placid journey over a relatively calm sea, we learned the four year strife of Europe had ended, to be superseded by a scourge of Spanish influenza. Our assessment of the German surrender was that they knew we were coming! There for a week, we could only admire the city, with its framing hills, rickshaws and decorated Zulu rickshaw runners, and wide golden beaches facing the ocean. A few fellows did throw rafts overside to go on a binge in the near dockside but were picked up immediately by military police. While an hour's butcher, storeroom, cleaning and submarine watch-outs accrued to our unit, suspiciously evident of our officer-in-charge mucking-up to higher brass, poker, housey-housey, crown and anchor and (under the lap) two up, still engaged the days sprawled, crowded on deck in continuing sun, the sameness alleviated by a barge laden with fruit and other goodies under the auspices of an Australian woman (name unfortunately forgotten) married to an anti-Aussie white South African, who came daily. Twice she brought concert parties to entertain us

from the barge. A one-day diversity was a bath parade. Driven by a storm to the security of the harbour, the water swarmed with dreadnought jelly fish, their domes over a foot wide, tentacles two or three. None 'let on' leaving the communal shower.



AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

Attestation Paper of Persons Enlisted for Service Abroad.

No. 68571 Name (Surname) FORSTER.
in full (Christian Name) Douglas William Craig
Unit 14TH G. S. R'FLS. (V) 14th (V) Bns
Joined on 20 JUN 1918

Questions to be put to the Person Enlisting before Attestation.

You are hereby warned that if after enlistment it is found that you have given a willfully false answer to any question set Forth in this Attestation Paper, you will be liable to be tried for the offence.

1. What is your Name? PAY BOOK No. — FORSTER Douglas William Craig
2. In or near what Town were you born? — In or near the Town of CAMBERWELL
In the State or Country of VICTORIA
3. Are you a natural-born British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown) — Natural Born British Subject
4. What is your Age? (Date of birth to be stated) — 18 years 11 months — 20 June 1899
5. What is your Trade or Calling? — Jackeroo
6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? — no
7. Are you married, single, or widower? — Single
8. Who is your next of kin? (Address and relationship to be stated) — Mr William Forster — 11 Normanby St MIDDLE BRIGHTON VICTORIA
The answer to this question shall not be construed as in the nature of a Will.
9. What is your permanent address in Australia? — 11 Normanby St MIDDLE BRIGHTON VICTORIA
10. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Territorial Force, Royal Navy, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and if not now serving, state cause of discharge — 5 cadets 3 years Brighton
11. Have you stated the whole, if any, of your previous service? — yes
12. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? — no
13. Have you ever suffered from:—
1. Consumption, tubercular disease, or chronic cough? — no
2. Fits of any kind? — no
3. Rheumatism or asthma? — no
4. Mental or nervous disease? — no
5. Has any member of your family suffered from any of the above diseases? If so, state particulars. — no
14. (For married men, widowers with children, and soldiers who are the sole support of widowed mother)— Do you understand that no separation allowance will be issued in respect of your service beyond an amount which together with pay would reach ten shillings per day? —
15. Are you prepared to undergo inoculation against small pox and enteric fever? — yes

I, Douglas William Craig Forster, solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and I am willing and hereby voluntarily agree to serve in the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia within or beyond the limits of the Commonwealth.

And I further agree to allot not less than two-fifths/three-fifths of the pay payable to me from time to time during my service for the support of my wife and children.

Date 18 June 1918

D. W. C. Forster
Signature of Person Enlisted.

* This clause should be struck out in the case of unmarried men or widowers without children under 16 years of age.
† Two-fifths must be allotted to the wife, and if there are children three-fifths must be allotted.

Image 2: Forster's enlistment papers.
Source: NAA B2455.

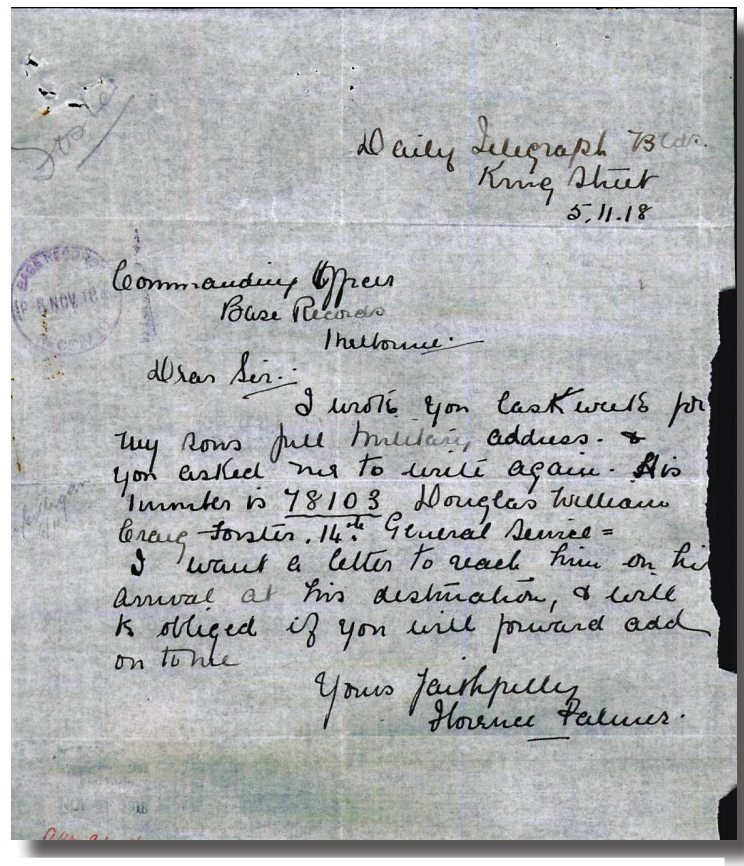
We three capered as with ash burns, a barred door no escape. 'Jelly' stings were drawn up also by the pump. A hilarious mob, already through, greeted us when we saw the light of day.

Our seclusion in the bay was understood by most of us as protection from the 'flue raging in the city, but when a troopship berthed at the coaling station south, a day before departing on the return home, suspicions of liberty derived, made a talking point for a few days. After all, natives were on our decks during 3 days of coaling to tip coal bask into bunkers as they were hoisted aboard by ship's crane. The homing troopship, I found later, had an uncle aboard, relating bribing a foreman to leave loading ramps unshifted overnight, the empty coal train trundling a human load the ten miles skirting the harbour to the city at a couple of 'bob' a head, divided between foreman, driver, fireman and guard on the train. After all, there was method in our restriction! And less method in allowing the natives on the deck to do the bunkering, although guards were posted amidships to prevent any intrusion while work went astern, for two days out the scourge struck. A few chaps, and before one could say Thursday or Friday, inert fellows crowded the deck, or sweltered below in their hammocks, the less affected attending the others' needs. Four medics took over the herculean task attending the worst and delirious cases in a restricted bunkhouse, the few sailors' quarters. We three were not badly

effected – a low fever – doing our best until the 'flu calmed down, the medics to intense cases and those recurring. The padre, after a slight bout, remained aloof in his upper-deck officers' quarters for the rest of the voyage, declining to take further risk among the men. The Captain, therefore, said the last rites over the grotesque canvas encased corpse consigned to the sea. A medic explained the vertebrae had contracted head to heel and had to be encased that way; the skin had also turned black. Another chap, in his fever, had jumped overboard into inviting cool waters.

The atmosphere became cooler, the seas higher as we found our course had wandered from the direct east-south-east to eventually sight St. Pauls island on the off-chance castaways had been stranded there. A school of whales and a few ice floes were passed on our way, a new experience, at least for most. The ship circumnavigated the four hundred foot landmark, hooting three times at intervals, arousing no more animation than numberless goats leaping from crag to crag on its rocky, forbidding surface.

Home! We were pointed toward Fremantle and, hopefully, a spot of leave on terrafirma. New cases of Spanish flu kept cropping up, and medicos, even with volunteers, were finding it hard to cope. Awaited a couple of days in the bay, came two tugs – to pilot us in? No! In circumstances the Defence should be ashamed, the worst sick were craned into these narrow, low-lying vessels, choppy waves saturating the human cargo on to Woodman's Quarantine station. Without that circumstance, we remained quarantined aboard, but when a ferry boat passed there and back three times daily to one of


Daily Telegraph Bldgs.
King Street
5.11.18

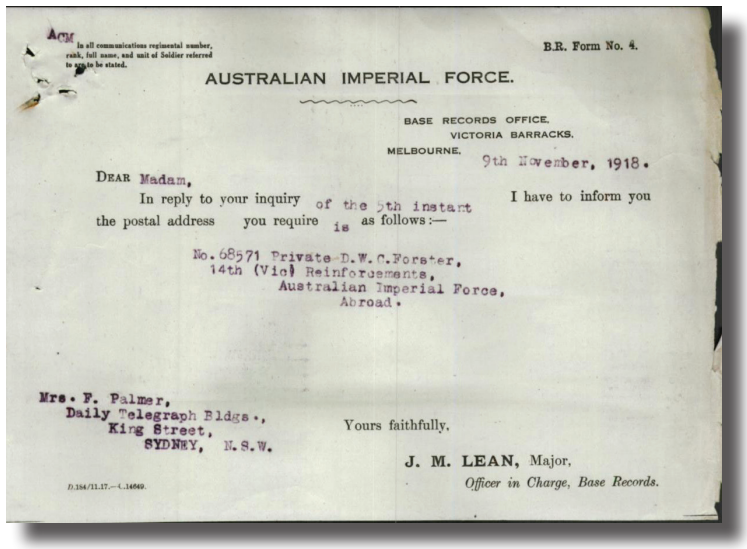
Commanding Officer
Base Records
Melbourne.

Dear Sir.

I wrote you last week for my sons full Military address. & you asked me to write again. His number is 78103 Douglas William Craig Forster. 14th General Service. I want a letter to reach him on his arrival at his destination, & will be obliged if you will forward address on to me

Yours faithfully
Florence Palmer.

Image 3: Letter from Forster's mother to Base Records, 5 November 1918. Source: Author.



Acm In all communications regimental number, rank, full name, and unit of Soldier referred to must be stated.

B.B. Form No. 4.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

BASE RECORDS OFFICE.
VICTORIA BARRACKS.
MELBOURNE.

9th November, 1918.

DEAR Madam,

In reply to your inquiry of the 5th instant I have to inform you the postal address you require is as follows:—

No. 68571 Private D.W.C.Forster,
14th (Vic) Reinforcements,
Australian Imperial Force,
Abroad.

Mrs. F. Palmer,
Daily Telegraph Bldgs.,
King Street,
SYDNEY, N.S.W.

Yours faithfully,

J. M. LEAN, Major,
Officer in Charge, Base Records.

D.184/11.17.—C.14649.

Image 4: Letter from Forster's mother to Base Records, 5 November 1918. Source: Author.

the islands - Rottenest or Garden – it was natural to ask why it hadn't been commissioned to take our sick. There again we lingered, land in sight. Until – early one summer's morning someone shouted, and a shipload of expectant humanity crowded the lee rail, for we had heard rumours. Authorities had evidently heard them too, for it was 'up-anchor', steam-up-up overnight. The newly formed Returned Soldiers League had amassed a fleet of small vessels – motor boats, yachts etc. Looming from the beachhead to relieve our monotony with exercise and picnic on an uninhabited portion of either Rottenest or Marden islands. Gnashing of teeth must have been heard on the mainland as we showed them our stern, theirs and ours!

Steaming south, we turned left around an edge of our continent and navigated calmer waters of the long and pretty St. Georges Sound, bounded by western hills, Albany, as we approached, a scattering of houses anchored in isolation on a slope as we, a greater number of souls, were to be anchored mid-stream. Talk of revolt began to mount; six or seven weeks confined to the stinking, crowded ship! However, those of us too talkative, like Tom, and George and I, and a dozen or so others were saved by the bell. A compromise between authorities and wharfies, in a claim for double flu-risk pay while delayed off Fremantle must have occurred, for a coal barge drew alongside the following day. Wharfies flung their cargo aboard, while we malcontents were assigned, in three or four shifts, to bunkering and spreading the coal below. As an amused sergeant remarked, 'Natives don't have to wash. Coal dust is all the same to their colour. You'll have to do some scrubbing'.

About midday the following day our prison ship steamed out of the Sound directed across the bight to Adelaide and immediately quarantined on Torrens Island. By ballot our mob had the good fortune to be installed in the comparative luxury of the second storey of the only two-storey brick building, NSW below us, the rest in

tents, arriving shortly before Christmas Day. It didn't take long finding land-legs, for cricket against each State and football stretched ship-weary legs. Only then was I aware of Tom's athletic prowess beside boxing. He went into everything with enthusiasm. Cricket, numerous over 50s, bowling two or three wickets an innings, fielding quick of foot and a good catcher. At rugby a tear through; in Australian rules, played as a challenge, for he had never played before, revealed a quick temper when, rugby fashion, tucked ball under arm and refereed up to bounce every ten yards. On the fourth decision, he kicked the ball to blazes, and walked off the field. Given the all clear mid-January, we six-bob tourists were disbanded to our various states.

With a year each experience of jackerooing on Falkimer's stud sheep stations – Widgiewa and Moonbria – and a liking for outdoor life, I made application for a Water Commission block, through Repatriation, but was suggested to learn about cows first, thus was sent to Werribee Research Farm, where met Billy May, for bovine experience. Taught to arise from warm beds before five and dawn, we six students learned to bring in the herd quietly to the shed, otherwise, we were told, the milk would become cheese! And how to handle a pitchfork heaving heavy green Lucerne onto an ever heightening wagon load, concluding with aching arms and backs by evening.

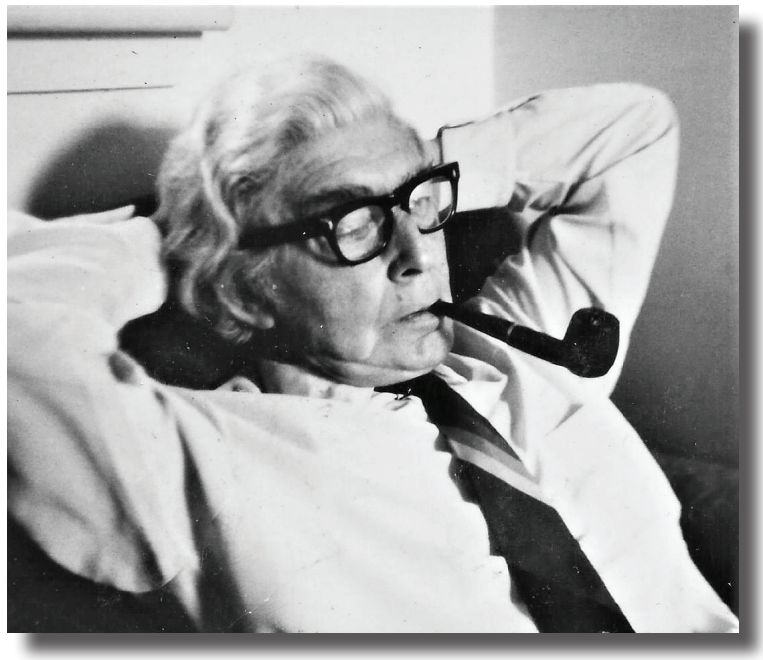


Image 5: Doug Forster at 65. Source: Author.

The Australian Sentinel on the Battlefield

Michael Firth

Introduction

In the doctrine of armoured warfare, the survivability of any tank is said to be related to the balance of three features: protection, firepower and mobility. To this group we can add tactics and training. During World War Two not all tanks achieved this balance, with some features being favoured more than others. This saw the production of well-protected tanks with limited mobility or the use of one-man turrets so placing a heavy burden on a single crew member. With the desperate need for armoured vehicles, some designs were quickly rushed into production before all the teething problems had been sorted out, while other designs of local manufacture appeared to be fanciful. During the first half of World War Two, and due to its heavy reliance on overseas supplies of major pieces of military equipment, Australia decided, or was forced to – depending on your point of view – to design its own tank. The tank became known as the Australian Cruiser Tank, AC1 or 'Sentinel'.

The Sentinel

Following the declaration of war in 1939 the Australian government began looking to its own defence and came to the decision it would need to produce more of its own equipment including armoured vehicles. Based on the events in Europe it was decided 340 tanks were required to form an Armoured Division with an additional 500 tanks for corps troops and reserved stock. By August 1940 a design committee had been formed to design a tank to fill this role and issued a memorandum for the proposed 'Australian Cruiser Tank' on the 11 November 1940.

The proposed tank was to weigh between 25 to 30 tons, armoured protection equivalent to 50 mm, a speed of 30 miles per hour, a range of 150 miles with a crew of four or five. The main armament was to be the two-pounder gun supplemented by two Vickers 0.303" machine guns. This specification was changed within the next couple of months to incorporate many of the components of the United States' M3 medium tank producing a slightly heavier vehicle. The final design was called the Australian Cruiser Tank Mark 1 (AC1) or Sentinel.

By early 1941 a wooden mock-up had been produced followed by test models being delivered between January and June 1942. The test models were for automotive tests, gunnery tests and a mass production prototype. The first

production model appeared in August 1942 with sixteen more completed by the end of October of the same year. The assembly plant was at Chullora in New South Wales with the Government Railways acting as the main co-ordinating contractor. A very unique feature of the Sentinel was the hull being cast in one piece which was unique to this armoured vehicle. In the end only 65 AC1's were produced being relegated to home defence roles or propaganda purposes. Some of the AC1's were modified to appear as German tanks in the 1944 film, *The Rats of Tobruk*.

Image 1: Work on the cast hull of an AC1, June 1942. Source: AWM P06227.002.

Main Sentinel Variants

Australian Cruiser Tank Mark 1 'Sentinel' (AC1)
Armament: one 2-pounder anti-tank gun, two 0.303" Vickers Machine Guns
Crew: 5
Weight: 27.5 Tons
Armour: front 65mm, sides 45mm, top 25mm, turret sides 45mm, turret top 35mm
Turret ring: 137 cm
Engine: 3 x V8 Cadillac petrol
Power Output: 246 kW
Range: 175 km
Speed: 48 km/hr
Status: 65 units produced, serial numbers 8001 to 8065

Sub-Variants:
a) AC1A fitted with one 6-pounder antitank and one 0.303" Vickers machine Gun, design only
b) AC1B fitted with one 25-pounder antitank and one 0.303" Vickers machine Gun, design only

Australian Cruiser Tank Mark 2 (AC2)
Same as AC1 but fitted with two diesel engines, project abandoned due to lack of engine supply.

Australian Cruiser Tank Mark 3 'Scorpion' (AC3 Scorpion)
Armament: one 2-pounder anti-tank gun, two 0.303" Vickers Machine Guns
Engine: 400HP Pratt and Whitney Radial
Status: planned, not produced

Australian Cruiser Tank Mark 3 'Thunderbolt' (AC3 Thunderbolt)
Armament: one 25-pounder field gun/howitzer, one 0.303" Vickers Machine Gun
Crew: 4
Weight; 29 Tons
Engine: Perrier-Cadillac
Status: 1 unit produced, planned serial numbers 8066 to 8265
Sub-Variants:
a) AC3A fitted with 178cm turret ring, proposal only

Australian Cruiser Tank Mark 4 (AC4)
Armament: one 17-pounder anti-tank gun, one 0.303 "Vickers Machine Gun
Crew: 4
Weight: 30 Tons
Range: 300 km
Speed: 56 km/hr
Status: design incomplete 400 units planned
Sub-Variants:
a) AC4A fitted with one-25 pounder antitank and one 0.303" Vickers machine Gun, design incomplete 110 units planned

Although the Sentinel was produced, be it in limited numbers, it was relegated to training or propaganda roles as the supply of tanks from the United States was able to fill all the Australian armoured requirements. The question has always remained that if the Sentinel was used in combat, how would it have performed against the other medium tanks of the day?

Image 2: AC1, c 1942. Source: AWM 133677.

Selected Medium Tanks of WW2

The following medium tanks of WW2 have been selected for comparison to the AC1 Sentinel with the criteria that the tanks were being designed, produced or operational at the time of the Sentinels development. Because the British system used the terminology of Cruiser and Infantry tanks, vehicles of each type have been selected for the comparison purposes. The ten tanks selected for comparison are:

British Tanks

A) Matilda Mk2 (Infantry Tank): the first pilot model was ready for trials by 1938 with production commencing in 1939 and first seeing action in May 1940. It ended the war as a basis for specialised vehicles and was used by the Australians in the Far East. Compared to the Sentinel, the Matilda was better armoured but underpowered, travelling at lower speeds.

B) Valentine Mk3 (Infantry Tank): designed in 1938, it entered production in May 1940 and service later in the same year with a crew of three. It was produced

in over ten variants moving to different hull construction, up gunned to a 6-pounder main gun and changes of engine types. The Valentine Mk3 weighed less than the Sentinel, had one less crew, approximately the same physical size, less power and travelled at half the speed with half the range.

C) Crusader Mk VI (Cruiser Tank): was the last in the line of Cruiser tanks with pilot models appearing in late 1940 and in action by June 1941. The last version of this tank was produced with thicker armour and fitted with a 6-pounder main gun. It had the same number of crew as the Sentinel, weighed less, with thinner armour and less range but about the same speed.

USA Tanks

A) M3 Medium Lee/Grant: was basically considered an interim design with a mock-up completed in 1940 and production starting in June 1941, with the main gun mounted in a sponson on the right hand side of the vehicle. It was supplied with two styles of turrets depending on the Allied force it was supplied to and first saw combat with British forces in May 1942. Compared with the Sentinel it had a larger main gun, less armoured protection, less range but basically the same power and speed.

B) M4 Medium Sherman: the design was standardised in October 1941 as a replacement for the M3 medium tank and had the main gun moved back to a turret mounting. It was produced in a variety of models depending on hull manufacturing method, engine type and suspension type. It first saw combat with the British forces during the battle of El Alamein and then appeared in nearly all Allied theatres It had the same number of crew as the Sentinel, weighed slightly more with a larger main gun. Although its engine provided greater power it had a shorter range and less speed.

Soviet Tanks

A) T-34/76A: the prototype of the T-34 was accepted as the standard tank of the Soviet army in December 1939 with the first production models appearing at the end of 1940 and seeing combat in June 1941. It had well sloped armour, wide tracks to lower ground pressure, a diesel engine and a turret mounted main gun. Although the Sentinel was faster than the T-34 it had less power, a smaller main gun and weighed less.

German Tanks

A) Panzer III: the first models of the Panzer III appeared around 1937 and went on to become the mainstay of the German army while undergoing a series of armament and armour upgrades. It was lighter than the Sentinel with lower speed and smaller range but a higher power/weight ratio.

B) Panzer IV: designed during the same period as the Panzer III as a support

tank, it remained in production throughout World War Two. Having similar speed and range as the Panzer III but with a larger armament as well as a better power ratio than the Sentinel.

Italy

A) M13/40: the design for this tank was started in 1939 being based on the M11/39 but with thicker armour and a larger gun. It soon went into production arriving on the Western Desert battlefield late 1940. During the next 12 months it was fitted with a more powerful diesel engine. Compared to the Sentinel it had one less crew, half the weight, thinner armour, less range, lower speed and less power.

Japan

A) Type 97 Special: was the Type 97 Chi-Ha Medium tank fitted with a new turret mounting a 47mm anti-tank gun providing a small increase in weight. It was still smaller than the Sentinel, weighing just over half its weight with a smaller range and lower speed although the gun had better penetration figures.

Sentinel Comparison

In comparing the above medium tanks with the Sentinel AC1 most have a similar number of crew members and overall vehicle dimensions. The main areas of comparison can be seen as Weight/Armour, Speed/Power and Armament.

Weight/Armour: The Sentinel was significantly heavier with thicker main armour than the Italian and Japanese medium tanks while being the lighter with the lesser or similar armour thickness as the T-34/76A or M3 medium. Although the British tanks all weighed less than the Sentinel, only the Matilda Mk2 had thicker armour while the others have a similar or slightly less armour thickness.

Speed/Power ratio: While the Sentinel AC1 was the fastest of all the tanks, its power to weight ratio was only better than less than half of the tanks selected. The vehicles having the best power/weight ratio were the T-34/76A, Crusader Mk VI and Panzer III. The rest had a similar or slightly lesser power/weight ratio than the Sentinel.

Armament: The main weapon of the Sentinel was the standard main gun of the British tanks of the period with similar characteristics as the main gun of the Italian M13/40. The main guns of the other selected medium tanks were of larger calibre with better penetration.

Conclusion

Using the tables as a basic point of comparison, the Sentinel AC1 appears to have better capabilities than the standard British and Italian tanks of the period. It also managed to outclass the Japanese tanks as well but it fell short against the US medium tanks and the Soviet T-34/76A. The German tanks of the period while being lighter with thinner armoured had a higher power/weight ratio.

While fitted with a 2-pounder main gun the Sentinel was outclassed by the German, Soviet and US medium tanks in combat while it would have been successful against the Italian and Japanese medium tanks. If fitted with a 6-pounder, the Sentinel would have nearly been the equal of most other medium tanks of the period. This does not take into account the areas of tactics and training which would have greatly affected the performance of these tanks in combat. Overall it could be argued the Sentinel AC1 would have been a good medium tank during the early years of World War Two. By the middle of the war, however, it would have been outclassed by the later versions or improved tanks it would have faced in combat. In regards to this, depending on its capabilities in jungle environments, the Sentinel could still have operated against the Japanese forces.

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Marching for three Weeks on One Third Rations
The Evacuation of Stalag Luft 7 Bankau January-February 1945

Steve Dyer

It is a truth not yet universally acknowledged, that wherever there is a significant military endeavour, there will be found an Australian. During the Second World War, the German Prisoner of War (POW) camps held some 1,500 Royal Australian Air Force airmen. One of those was Gus Hughes at *Kriegsgefangener (POW) Lager Nummer 7 der Luftwaffe*. This was located at Bankau, 300km south-east of Berlin in what is now Poland [and known as Baków].

On 12 January1945 the Soviet Army burst across the Vistula River, rolling back the German defences. Six months previously, on 19 July 1944, the German High Command Preparations for the Defence of the Reich order demanded planning for 'moving prisoners of war to the rear'. By 17 January the Soviets were 60 km east of Bankau. Now was the time to implement those plans

What follows is Gus's story of the evacuation of Stalag Luft 7, based on his terse diary and an interview. It is amplified from time to time from other sources. As it was impractical to mobilize the 1,565 Bankau Kriegies simultaneously, at least three groups of marchers were formed. Inevitably, therefore, other Kriegies' accounts differ from Gus Hughes's in the detail of times and stopping places.

THURSDAY, 18 JANUARY 1945
Stalag Luft 7, Bankau [Baków]
To bed early, fully dressed, things prepared for a rush order of moving. Rations for 2½ days issued. 2100 hrs air raid, two bombs less than 1000 yds from barrack.

FRIDAY, 19 JANUARY 1945
Bankau [Baków] - **Kreuzburg** [Kluczbork] – **Konstadt** [Wołczyn] – **Winterfeld** [Zawišč], **28 km**

0100 hrs Germans told us of the move. 0520 hrs we moved off.
Terrible cold 5 below. Don't know where we are going. Progress slow, roads slippery, wind cold, evacuees, trucks, carts etc. Passed through Kreuzburg.15 mins rest, clothing thrown away. Going heavy, packs heavy & cumbersome. Passed Konstadt. Arrived Winterfeld 1630 hrs barns our billet.

Gus recalled that he traveled light: 'We took… two blankets each... We owned nothing - you had your cups, tin mug, plates'.

At Winterfeld the 1,565 POW marchers from Bankau crammed into barns and farm buildings for the night.

The rumor mill that morning said the destination was Stalag Luft III, Sagan, some 100 km away. They knew that each step in that direction took them further from liberation by the Soviet armies.

What they did not know was that liberation by the Soviets might not mean freedom.

In Moscow, that very day, the Soviet Government notified the United Kingdom Embassy of the USSR's view that liberated POWs might, "pending their repatriation, be employed on work in aid of the common war effort."

If Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front forces caught up with the Bankau marchers they might find themselves exchanging compulsory marching for the Third Reich for compulsory work for the USSR.

Unaware of this threatening political development, the Kriegies continued westward.

SATURDAY, 20 JANUARY 1945
Winterfeld [Zawišč] – **Karlsruhe** [Pokój], **20 km**

Awakened 0200 hrs moved off 0400. Arrived Karlsruhe. 1130 brick factory (20 kms). Marching telling on us.

The brick factory and the kilns filled with freezing POW, then overfilled as successive waves of marchers arrived and were crammed in.

Their rest was short. If they were to keep ahead of the Soviet advance, they had to cross the River Oder before the bridges were blown up.

Karlsruhe [Pokój] – **en route Oder River**, **10km**

20.00 hrs moved off on forced march to cross Oder meant to do 30 kms. Firing in distance Joe [Soviet Army] near at hand, also tell from the Germans [attitude].

SUNDAY, 21 JANUARY 1945
En route Oder River - Nicholas Ferry [nearest town Mikolin]
– **Baukwitz** [Buszyce], **10 km**

At midnight they were still straggling south towards the River Oder. It was minus

13°C.

Frost forming, snow at midnight, moon disappeared, intense cold,

'We'd struck the snow in England, but nothing like this... I'd never struck the snow as bad... The bitumen road that was there was just like glass with the frost'.

Cross Oder at Nicholas Ferry 0430, bridge mined.

The surge of Kriegies through the bottleneck at the Oder had overwhelmed the billeting arrangements, forcing the marchers and their guards to disperse in search of shelter.

Passed through village, meant to stop, no billets, moved on to Baukwitz 41 kms.

22 men missing, escaped on foot.

'A few... tried to escape, but they were just being bloody stupid. I think they were mainly concerned they'd get caught by the Russians. Just a quick duck and a run. You could see for miles where they had gone anyway - no point in it. You can't escape in the snow with no clothes and no food. It was better to be with a mob'.

MI9's clandestine communications system had already advised the POW camps in Germany that 'In view of increasing German ruthlessness and lack of regard to Geneva Convention, Chiefs of Staff rule that under present circumstances it need no longer be considered duty of P/W to escape but it is not forbidden to do so'.

This deposited the responsibility for any escape attempts back firmly on those with least idea of the military situation.

According to other accounts, the escapees who Gus mentioned had hidden in the brick factory at Karlsruhe when the other POW marched out and were still there when the Soviet advance rolled through.

Issue from kitchen ½ cup of soup, no bread, hungry.

The Kriegies had marched more than 40 km since leaving Winterfeld at 4 am the previous day. They did this on the measly rations issued as they left Bankau - two thirds of a loaf of bread, a tin of meat, a bit of sausage, a smidgen of honey and margarine - plus whatever they had saved from Red Cross food parcels.

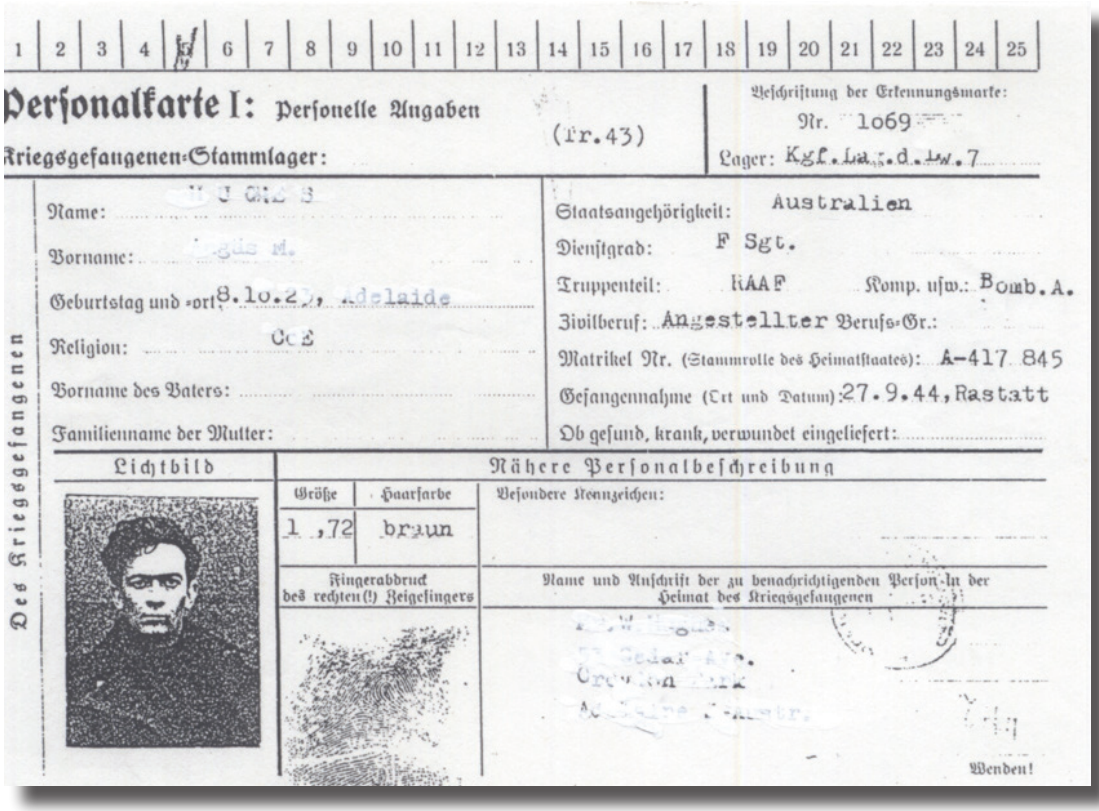
The bitter wind and the unaccustomed exertion of lugging loads on icy roads drained their strength. The orderly columns of three abreast quickly disintegrated as they struggled forward in the snow. The roadsides were a scum of inessential or bulky items, abandoned books, musical instruments and bags. Those who had made or improvised sledges could ease the load on their backs from time to time, and share the pulling with their mates. A wagon trailed the column collecting those unable to maintain the pace.

MONDAY 22 JANUARY 1945
Baukwitz [Buszyce] **- St Jenkwich** [Jankowice Wielkie], **20 km**

There was to be no rest despite the harrowing night march. The new rumor which galvanized the guards was that the Soviets had crossed the Oder River! Gus Hughes recorded:

0200 roused by guards dogs moved 0430, arrived 1030 at St Jenkwich 20 kms. Bread six to a loaf. Day rest. Frostbitten feet and hands, deadly sight.

Elsewhere others of the Bankau contingent were roused from where they slumped.


1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben (Fr.43)

Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager:

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke: Nr. 1069 Lager: Kgf.La.i.d.Lw.7

Name:

Vorname:

Geburtstag und -ort: 8.10.2[illegible], Adelaide

Religion: CofE

Vorname des Vaters:

Familienname der Mutter:

Staatsangehörigkeit: Australien

Dienstgrad: F Sgt.

Truppenteil: RAAF Komp. usw.: Bomb.A.

Zivilberuf: Angestellter Berufs-Gr.:

Matrikel Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatstaates): A-417 845

Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): 27.9.44, Rastatt

Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingeliefert:

Des Kriegsgefangenen

Lichtbild

Nähere Personalbeschreibung

Größe	Haarfarbe
1,72	braun

Besondere Kennzeichen:

Fingerabdruck des rechten(!) Zeigefingers

Name und Anschrift der zu benachrichtigenden Person in der Heimat des Kriegsgefangenen

Wenden!

Figure 1: POW personal file card. Gus's Kriegie card – he 'liberated' his at Luckenwalde, so someone had carried the Bankau camp records all the way there!
Source Author.

Warning shots from the guards encouraged them to their feet and they trudged off to Schönfeld [Obórki].

TUESDAY 23 JANUARY 1945
St Jenkwich [Jankowice Wielkie] – **Wassen** [Wiazow], **3 km**

0830 hrs left for Wassen raining, then… snow, cold. Arrive 1600, 3 kms. Billet barn with cow. A day's rest .

The other Bankau Kriegies at Schönfeld [Obórki] faced a 25 km march through deep snow to another night in barns. Fatigue, crushing cold and lack of food was draining them by the minute and they variously recorded their destination for the day as Wassen, Wansen, Hansen, and Wessen. Staying alive was infinitely more important than correct spelling.

WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 1945
Wassen [Wiazow], **0 km**

Despite rumors that the Soviets were in Brieg [Brzeg], only 20 km away, the reunited Bankau marchers now had a day's rest, sheltering from the snow.

THURSDAY 25 JANUARY 1945
Wassen [Wiazow] – H**eiderdorf** [Łagiewniki], **26 km**

Then [left] 0400 hrs arriving Heiderdorf 1315 (barn) 26 kms Passed Lamsdorf [POW] who were also marching.. potatoes found.

Some 3,000 from Lamsdorf [Stalag 344 – previously Stalag VIIIB], were now on the road for their third day, just some of the tens of thousands of POW being evacuated ahead of the Soviet advance. Bankau and Lamsdorf kriegies exchanged shouted news and greetings across the valley as they headed west. The Lamsdorfers thought the war could be over within days.

FRIDAY 26 JANUARY 1945
Heiderdorf [Łagiewniki], **0 km**

A days rest

…and another barn steadily losing its less important timbers to keep the fires going against the cold outside and four inches of snow overnight.

SATURDAY 27 JANUARY 1945
Heiderdorf [Łagiewniki] – **Pfeffensdorf** [Ksiaźnica], **25 km**

9th day. Left 1100, snow fallen steady, going tough bread issue.
As we left farm being evacuated. Roads crowded with old people as hungry as we. Conditions in Germany bad. Arrived Pfeffensdorf 1700 25 kms.

SUNDAY 28 JANUARY 1945
Pfeffensdorf [Ksiaźnica] – **Stansdorf** [Stanowice], **22 km**

Left 0400. Good morning, but still cold, several cases of frostbite, more expected. 1230 Stansdorf 22 Km bread & marg issue. Snow falling, strong wind. Hated the thought of being turned out in it.

At Stansdorf, at the end of day of marching through below zero temperatures and snowfalls, some were housed in an old prison camp. Most were again in farm buildings. The rumor factory promised, firstly that the marchers would rest for two or three days then be put on a train, and secondly, that the war would end today; just as Nostradamus had predicted. Neither came to pass.

MONDAY 29 JANUARY 1945
Stansdorf [Stanowice] – **en route Peterwitz** [Piotrowice], **12 km**

Left 1730 As usual snowing & bitterly cold, roads icy, drifts beginning to form, approaching the hills going bad, snow a foot deep, very tiring. Before starting received 8 rye biscuits in lieu of bread, food had been practically nil for 30 hours & the cold began to tell on us. Chaps falling out *exhausted towards midnight (by road side).*

In the course of the forced march from Bankau, one in twenty of those who set out would be left behind to receive medical attention.

TUESDAY 30 JANUARY 1945
to Peterwitz [Piotrowice], **11 km**

12th day. Weather worse, blizzard blew up & we were in a pretty plight.

'we'd just be a gaggle of people hundreds of yards long just walking along under guard'.

The agony of hunger and exhaustion in the minus 25°C cold was prolonged by retreating German transports clogging the snowbound road and obstructing the

march.

0100 hrs the column forced to halt midway thro pass in hills. The column stretched for miles. Trucks & vehicles stuck in drifts. In one hour started again 0230 field cookhouse overturns.

Arrive Peterwitz… in terrible state 200 men suffering from frostbite.

WEDNESDAY 31 JANUARY 1945
Peterwitz [Piotrowice], **0 km**

13th day remained there. A double bread issue & marg.

THURSDAY 1 FEBRUARY 1945
Peterwitz [Piotrowice] – **Prausnitz** [Prusice], **16 km**

Left 0810 hrs 16 kms to Prausnitz at 1230. Weather milder.
Stay 5 days.

Milder weather brought rain and thawing ice and snow. Roads that had been slippery ice sheets were now slush. Some marchers who had lugged sleds behind them for a fortnight now abandoned them. They again culled their possessions of the least important items, shouldered their loads, and continued the slog westwards. Worn down through hunger and exertion, more of the marchers fell out of the column to be collected by the transport trailing the grim procession – a steam engine pulling two lorries and a trailer. Today's rumor was of transport for the next stage of the journey.

In Australia, the Government had lost track of Stalag Luft VII and its inmates. The Australian High Commissioner in London reported that the Germans were known to be planning to evacuate all prisoners to Goerlitz in daily stages of 20 kilometres. He presumed that the Soviet advance, the weather, and the prisoners' health had probably prevented any evacuation of the camp.

FRIDAY 2 FEBRUARY 1945
Prausnitz [Prusice], **0 km**

Two issues of bread, four ½ cups of soup.
Exchange 18 carat gold ring - 2 loaves
Pair of boots 1 loaf & 8 potatoes,
One new shirt & undervest & pants 1½ loaf.

Silage for cattle eaten by men. Waiting for transport, reminded me of tales from France during the victorious march of the German army - now tables reversed. Roads full of evacuees.

The relatively warmer weather and the rest from marching gave the Kriegies a temporary break from the grinding slog of putting one foot in front of another.

Although they still did not know exactly what would happen to them next, they knew the war in Europe was nearly over. They could dare to dream of liberation.

What they did not know was that the British Government had agreed with the Soviet proposal that liberated POW work for the war effort before repatriation. True, His Majesty's Government believed some conditions should be imposed. The ex-POW should only work under British Officers, close to the camps, and should not be moved to meet labour requirements.

SATURDAY 3 FEBRUARY 1945
Prausnitz [Prusice], **0 km**

Another day in billets, resting.

SUNDAY 4 FEBRUARY 1945
Prausnitz [Prusice], **0 km**

Today's rumors were that the Soviet army was only 20 miles away and that the Kriegies would move out tomorrow to Goldberg – to catch a train!

Meanwhile, at Yalta the Big Three – Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin - were meeting to carve up post-war Europe and, as an aside, decide the fate of the liberated POWs.

MONDAY 5 FEBRUARY 1945
Prausnitz [Prusice] – **Goldberg** [Złotoryja], **9 km**

Stalag Luft VII was on the road again, its German jailers still hoping to avoid the Soviet advance. By now, Gus recollected, they were hardly an organised group

'There was a camp administration, but we'd just be a gaggle of people hundreds of yards long just walking along under guard. There was an equivalent of a Warrant Officer - he looked a bit like Rommel. We used to call him Rommel.

He really looked after us... I think he'd been a soldier from the First World War. He seemed to take more of an interest in us than anyone. He was pretty severe

with us but you could feel that he was arguing with other people about us. He was looking after us more so than working against us. That was my feeling'.

At the time, Gus's diary focused on immediate concerns:

18 day… 0600 moved to Goldberg for transport 9 km. Roads a sea of slush. Sledges dumped, Sagan our destination good food (R[ed] C[ross]) & fags.

The snow was disappearing from the fields as the Kriegies set off through light drizzle on what they hoped was their last day of marching. By mid-day they had arrived at Goldberg railway station.

While they were at Goldberg the Australian rejection of the British agreement with the Soviet proposals that POW be put to work had drawn a 'Most Immediate' cabled response from the British Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

> It seems to us... there will be no certainty what will happen to them or how they will be treated... the best course would be to... provide that work... should be on a voluntary, not compulsory basis... We are accordingly communicating with the United Kingdom delegation at the Three power meeting... to try to secure agreement of the United States... to our proceeding on this basis.

Figure 2: Map of the march. There are numerous variants of this presentation, suggesting that an entrepreneurial artist was at work while they sat behind the wire at Luckenwalde awaiting repatriation.
Source Author.

During the next week the Australian Legation in Moscow communicated its Government's views on POW directly to the USSR's People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs:

> The victorious advance of the Red Army into German territory will have secured, and will continue to secure, the release of many prisoners of war of Allied nationality... the Australian Government wishes to point out... [it] cannot agree to Australian ex prisoners of war performing any labour duties on a voluntary or compulsory basis.

There is no record on file that the Soviet Government responded to (or even noticed), the Australian claim.

Figure 3: A general view, with PsOW cooking over a 'blower' cooker. Source Author'.

Goldberg [Złotoryja] – **Sagan** [Zagan], **100km**

Into cattle trucks 58 men. Doors locked and windows barred: Train journey on & off, stopping & starting. Arrived Sagan late evening [POW] camp evacuated.

The Kriegies spent the night in the train in a siding.

TUESDAY 6 FEBRUARY 1945
Sagan [Zagan] – **Cottbus**, **75 km**

Moved off again 0230 [for] Luckenwalde

WEDNESDAY 7 FEBRUARY 1945
Cottbus – **Luckenwalde** , **105 km**

The stop-start rail journey continued.

THURSDAY 8 FEBRUARY 1945
Luckenwalde – **Stalag IIIA**, **2 km**

[Day] 21 Detrained at dawn marched [2 Km] to Stammlager IIIA. Conditions poor, food appalling 1/6 loaf 25gram marg 1/3 litre soup 3 potatoes.

Gus's tally of the facts of the trip showed that in 21 days they had walked some 250 km on 3⅓ loaves of bread, 24½ rye biscuits, 1/8 packet of margarine and 13/30 tin of meat.

By way of comparison, at Stalag Luft I the daily ration scale in January 1945 was 250-400 gm potatoes, 300 gm bread, 50 gm barley, and a small piece of margarine, supplemented (perhaps) with swede/turnip/cabbage, two or three times a week and an occasional piece of sausage.

No wonder that all of the 1,493 Bankau boys who arrived at Luckenwalde were severely malnourished. One in ten was too weak to attend parades, and a further one in eight had serious health problems such as frostbite, dysentery, bronchitis or septic feet.

'The camp we went to (IIIA), there was twenty - thirty - forty thousand there, from Russians to Americans, to Australians, to English, all in various sections...'

Three days later, 11th February, at Yalta, the Big Three indicated how POWs liberated by the Allied forces would be handled. The earlier plan for involuntary labour was now off the agenda. Article 4 of the Yalta Agreement provided that all sides were able to use their own transport to repatriate the POW.

But this could only take place 'in agreement with the other party'.

And obtaining this agreement was not straightforward.

By mid-March the Allies had become very dissatisfied with Soviet handling of liberated POW. United States' President Roosevelt sent a personal note to Stalin, requesting adherence to the Crimea [Yalta] Agreement on POW. The Australian Legation suggested that Prime Minister Curtin do likewise.

The reason for dissatisfaction can be seen from Gus's description of how the need for 'agreement with the other party' played out at Luckenwalde when the Soviet troops arrived on 22 April 1945.

'after the Russians arrived… a convoy of American trucks came to pick up the camp and they were turned back by the Russians and we were there for approximately a month afterwards…

'But we went to a different part of the camp altogether, that's where the Germans used to be. Our rations were a little better, but not much.

'Our meal for the day... we used to call it 'whispering grass'... its like grass and water and I suppose there's a bit of horsemeat in it somewhere, and that's what its called – "whispering grass" '.

The POW remained under detention at Luckenwalde until the Soviets agreed to an evacuation on 19 May 1945.

'The Americans picked us up and took us in trucks to Halle Leipzig... we flew from Halle Leipzig to... Brussels... (we stopped there a night),,. Then we flew from Brussels to England by Lanc [Lancaster bomber]'.

Endnotes

1945 POW marches
John Herington in *Air Power Over Europe 1944-1945*, pp 497-498 describes the herding of POW westward in 1944-45.
The bigger picture is shown in John Nichol & Tony Rennell's *The Last Escape: The Untold Story of Allied Prisoners of War in Germany 1944-1945.*
The Long Road, by Oliver Clutton-Brock & Raymond Crompton is a history of Stalag Luft VII, Bankau, including the march.

Bankau Stalag Luft VII
One of many *Stammlager* ('Stalag'), shorthand for POW camp. 'Luft' was short for Luftwaffe, meaning that the camp was for allied aircrew POW and administered by the German air force, whereas a Stalag was under the army.

Soviet POW Proposals
Australian Archives CRS A705, 32/6/106 contains these as well as the British and Australian responses. Intermittent reports of Australians in POW camps are in CRS A705, 32/6/104.

Lamsdorf
The 500-mile trek of POW being evacuated from Stalag Luft VIII, Lamsdorf is recounted by the participants in Jim Holliday's The RAAF POWs of Lamsdorf.

M19's Advice
Quoted in *MI9: Escape and evasion 1939-1945*, by M.R.D. Foot & J.M. Langley, p. 292.

Rations
The Stalag Luft I rations are from S. C. Rexford-Welch, *The Royal Air Force Medical Services, Vol. 1, Administration*, p.579. 'Whispering Grass' is possibly a play on, or misquotation of, the German *Veizegrutzen* - a wheat gruel.

The Changi Chapel National Prisoner of War Memorial Now and Then

Rohan Goyne

Located on the grounds of the Royal Military College at Duntroon, Canberra, the National Prisoner of War Memorial – otherwise known as the Changi Chapel – was opened on 15 August 1988. Originally the Roman Catholic chapel at the Changi prisoner of war camp on Singapore Island, It was constructed in 1944 by Australian prisoners of war from the materials available to hand in the Changi camp.

Two prisoners were prominent in its construction, Lieutenant Hamish Cameron-Smith, who served in the British Engineers and was an architect in civilian life, and Lieutenant Hugh Simon-Thwaites. The initial structure was of a crude hut before the more elaborate chapel was built. They combined to design the structure which reflected the materials available and also the environment on Singapore Island, being an open air chapel.

Image 1 (above): Changi Chapel, c. 1945. Source: AWM P00425.004.

Image 2 (right): Changi Chapel, c. 1945. Source: AWM P00425.001.

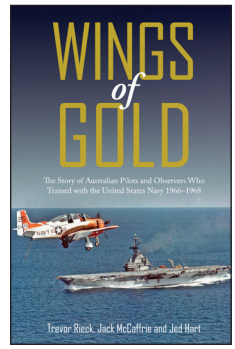
In 1945, after the Japanese surrender, the Australian War Graves Registration Unit was sent to Changi to help with the repatriation of Australian prisoners of war. The decision was taken to preserve the chapel and plans were made to disassemble it. The chapel was carefully measured, dismantled and packed into gun boxes to be returned to Australia.[1]

The chapel remained in storage after its arrival to Australia until its reassembling on the grounds of the Royal Military College in Canberra in August 1988 and designation as the National Prisoner of War Memorial. Celebrating its thirtieth anniversary in 2018, the Changi Chapel remains a significant feature of Australia's military heritage located in the nation's capital.

Images 3 and 4:
Changi Chapel, today.
Source: Author.

1 P. Dowling, *A Tour of Canberra's Military Heritage*, National Trust of Australia (ACT), 2007.

Reviews

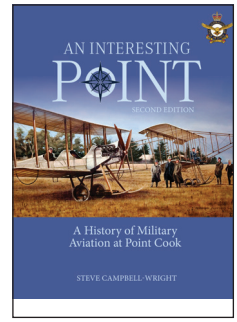


Wings of Gold: The Story of Australian Pilots and Observers Who Trained with the United States Navy 1966-1968
Trevor Rieck, Jack McCaffrie and Jed Hart
A$34.99
Big Sky Publishing, Sydney, 2020
Hardback, 304 pp

In the official history of Australian naval operations in south-east Asia, historian Jeffrey Grey alludes to a shortage of navy pilots to satisfy commitments to assist the US Navy in Vietnam. In *Wings of Gold: The Story of Australian Pilots and Observers Who Trained with the United States Navy 1966-1968*, that problem of naval aviator numbers has been explored in detail. The government decision to support rotary anti-submarine warfare provided a lifeline for the Fleet Air Arm which was destined for disbandment by 1963. As events in south-east Asia evolved, and the lifespan of HMAS *Melbourne* was extended, the government rescinded the decision to cease fixed wing flying. Consequently, Skyhawk fighter bombers and Sea Venom fighters were introduced. This expansion resulted in a shortage in pilots, many of whom, knowing of the impending demise of the Air Arm, had departed the Navy. Normally RAN pilots would be trained at RAAF facilities, such as Point Cook, and observers with the Royal Navy. However, in the circumstances a quicker method was needed, and a training deal was negotiated with the US Navy for RAN pilots to train in the US.

Drawing extensively on interviews with those who were involved, Wings of Gold tells the story of the negotiation, deployment and training of the Australian pilots and observers. All facets of their experience are examined in detail, including personal life, but the most valuable is the training programs that were undertaken. *Wings of Gold* is a useful book for anyone interested in naval aviation and the processes involved in training pilots and observers. The personal interviews serve as an excellent primary source for researchers and readers who like to know how it felt to those who were there. Richly illustrated, *Wings of Gold* fills the gap in the historiography of this little known, but important, period in RAN history.

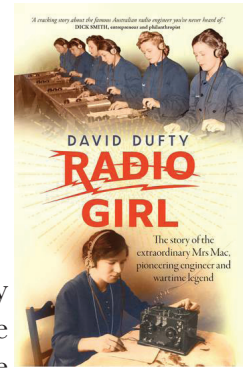
Justin Chadwick



An Interesting Point: A History of Military Aviation at Point Cook (Second edition)
Steve Campbell-Wright
$29.99
Big Sky Publishing, Sydney, 2019
Hardback, 252 pp

A richly illustrated celebration of an important place in military aviation in Australia, *An Interesting Point: A History of Military Aviation at Point Cook* explores the development over a hundred years of Point Cook. From its beginnings prior to the First World War when aviation was in its infancy, through two world wars and beyond the Cold War, Point Cook played a pivotal role in the RAAF and now serves as a museum. This second edition, with revisions and expansion, is a narrative history that should be read by all those interested in Australia's air force.

Justin Chadwick

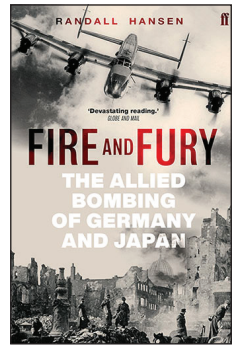


Radio Girl: The Story of the Extraordinary Mrs Mac, pioneering engineer and wartime legend
David Dufty
A$29.99
Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2020
Paperback, 302 pp

Occasionally you hear of someone who has had an extraordinary life. Someone who has been fortunate to be at the right place at the right time and clever enough to take advantage of the gifts that have been given to them. One such larger than life character was Violet McKenzie. A woman who never felt constrained by living in the male-dominated world of the early twentieth-century, Mrs Mac, as she was known to many, was fascinated by electrical componentry from a very young age. As an early adopter of radio, she successfully ran a business and encouraged women to learn about radios and later Morse code. As the world slid towards war in the late 1930s she began a long struggle to get women radio operators into service to help in the transmission of messages and then the cracking of Japanese naval codes.

David Dufty has written a narrative history that deftly weaves the story of Violet McKenzie and her world, placing her within the context of Australian industry and military developments during the interwar period. Her determination and resolve come to life through Dufty's adroit handling of the material and approachable writing style.

Justin Chadwick

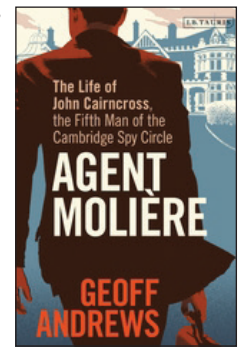


Fire and Fury: The Allied Bombing of Germany and Japan
Randall Hansen
A$29.99
Faber and Faber, London, 2020
Paperback, 536 pp

The topic of strategic bombing has been the focus of historians both justifying and criticising its use by the Allies during the Second World War. Much of the focus has been on the assault on Germany by Commonwealth and US air forces exploring its purpose, efficacy and morality. The equally damaging bombing of Japan has not received the same attention. However, in Randall Hansen's updated *Fire and Fury: The Allied Bombing of Germany and Japan* this has been disparity has been rectified. In detail he investigates the personalities, equipment, training and operations that were strategic bombing. Hansen covers much territory that has been written about before, but he writes in such an engaging manner that for the knowledgeable reader it is no chore to reacquaint themselves with the material. This new edition covers the attack on Japan, which by his own admission should have been in the original publication (possibly why it was only published in the US). This gives a much better-balanced approach to formulate an answer to the necessity of strategic bombing and its impact on the recipients and those who inflicted the damage.

Hansen's conclusions are interesting and valuable, proving that this is a topic that still requires discussion and analysis. Fire and Fury is a valuable addition to the historiography of Allied bombing during the war.

Justin Chadwick



Agent Molière: The Life of John Cairncross, the Fifth Man of the Cambridge Spy Circle
Geoff Andrews
$40.00
Bloomsbury, London, 2020
Hardback, 302 pp

Most people have a knowledge of the Cambridge spy circle of Donald Maclean, Kim Philby, Guy Burgess and Anthony Blunt and their work collecting intelligence and forwarding it to the Soviet Union during the Second World War and into the early Cold War period. But to this list must be added the French literary scholar of Scottish heritage John Cairncross. Although junior to Maclean and Burgess at Cambridge, Cairncross held similar ideals of the impact of fascism in Europe and role that the Soviet Union could play in defeating it. Almost the stuff of legend was the identity of the 'Fifth Man' in the spy circle when it was exposed with Cairncross being publicly accused

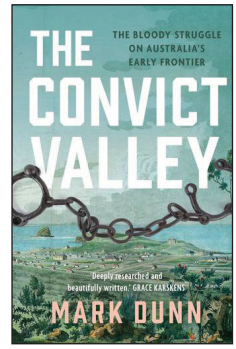
in 1990.

The literature on the spy circle is broad but that of Cairncross not so. *Agent Molière: The Life of John Cairncross, the Fifth Man of the Cambridge Spy Circle* uncovers the man who tried to reconcile his alienation in a public service that was not accepting of taciturn intellectuals who did not come from a similar background. Cairncross appears as a complex man whose life was varied and interesting. Friends with literary greats, like Graham Greene, and well-travelled, Cairncross's resignation from the civil service after exposure as a spy opened a distinctly new chapter in his life.

While the life of Cairncross is interesting enough it is the background events, as seen by him, that are equally fascinating. The attitude of senior public servants toward the Spanish Civil War, dealing with rise of Hitler, the Munich crisis and the treatment of the Soviets, all are presented using archival and personal material. This excellent biography by Geoff Andrews satisfies the need for an investigation into the 'Fifth Man' and dispels many myths perpetuated by espionage writers – both fictional and non-fictional.

Justin Chadwick

The Convict Valley: The Bloody Struggle on Australia's Early Frontier
Mark Dunn
$32.99
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2020
Paperback, 294 pp



I don't usually read parochial Australian histories of how our town went from terra nullius to the wonderful place it is now. This is partly because these histories usually perpetuate the standard myths of white Anglo-Saxon early settlers and no previous tenants. It is also because my penchant for wandering through old cemeteries reveal names on headstones of many early pioneers with decidedly un-British names. Johannes Karl Holzman springs to mind. He was my grandfather's grandfather and his ilk doesn't get a mention in histories.

Mark Dunn starts with the geological history of the Hunter River area, way back to Gondwanaland. The flora of the area is listed with botanical names (I never knew the Kurrajong was a Brachychiton). With all that research, it is curious that the author described early building methods as 'wattle and plaster'. The traditional British building method was called 'wattle and daub' which is why the Acacia was called "wattle", it was local and lent itself very well to this established building method.

Initially the book follows the parochial path. However, as we are talking of only 20 years after white settlement in Sydney, the expansion north to a fertile valley (with lumps of coal lying around) probably sets a pattern for all the expansion in the

rest of the country.

This is the black armband version of Australian history we were warned about. It is very well researched and I don't intend going through all the journals, private letters and Government publications the author went through to find a fault in his assumptions.

Why Weren't We Told? asks Henry Reynolds. Probably because we are too close to having convict ancestors who followed the emancipist philosophy and the free settlers who wanted to perpetuate the class system in Australia, determined to maintain the privilege. Do you really want to know how many convicts your ancestor flensed on a regular basis? As recently as the Great War, any prospective recruit with lash marks on his back was rejected.

I found the chapters on the relationships with Aborigines fascinating. It was commented on by early explorers and settlers that the countryside was the end result of a millennia-old fire management policy which produced open grassland and wooded areas. The Aborigines were guides through the wilderness and they showed the early explorers where the established paths over mountains were. They worked as labourers and shepherds and harvested the crop, sometimes stealing the corncobs and if they were pissed off they would set fire to the crop. It would appear that farmers who treated their Aborigines kindly were less likely to be set on fire than those who shot a few to teach them a lesson. The free settlers who used the lash excessively were more likely to have a convict revolt. Apparently, the Aborigines have a long memory and subscribe to the philosophy that revenge is a dish best served cold.

Governor Darling excused the sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women as 'irregularities'. Let's not pretend that these 'irregularities' were not common or the catalyst for many a massacre of Aboriginal people. The story of the Myall Creek massacre is told.

Tales of settlers who couldn't get on with their neighbours because one maintained his rage that the 'better' people were entitled to better land make this book very entertaining. Some of these people I wouldn't like to have as an ancestor anyway.

Eventually everyone settled in and settled down and no longer wanted the convict stain on their respectable little towns, so the convicts were moved on to Port Macquarie and then Moreton Bay where 'a native black, waiting there in ambush, did give this tyrant his mortal stroke' as the song goes, which would indicate nothing changed for the convicts.

Newcastle was just settling in nicely when sailing ships gave way to steam ships, and guess who had the coal, sitting there in the ground waiting since Gondwanaland.

At this point the book returns to the parochial and if you don't know Newcastle and the Hunter River valley, you probably won't be excited about what

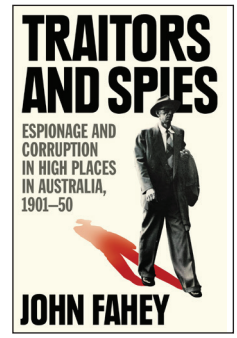
family got to run the local pubs and who got their roads fixed up.

Oh, I did like this book. I wish we had been taught Australian history at school. There was an excuse that 'Australia has no history', but the political stoush between emancipists and those who opposed them in itself is a great subject.

However, the shortcomings in this excellent research is lack of input from the Aboriginal point of view. It's all very well archeological digs revealing how often the Hunter River flooded and the massive extent of the middens of oyster shells, but there has to be some oral tradition we could tap into. If the Kalkadoon people can retell their elders' tales of watching Burke and Wills pass by with their camels, it is not impossible there exists an oral tradition around Whibayganba.

Gail Gunn

Traitors and Spies: Espionage and Corruption in High Places in Australia, 1901-50
John Fahey
$34.99
Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2020
Paperback,



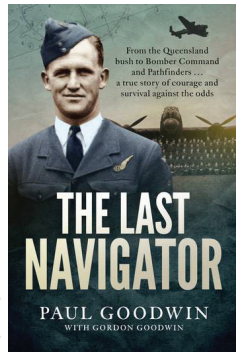
Australia's First Spies (reviewed in *Sabretache* December 2019) was former intelligence officer John Fahey's impressive foray into intelligence agencies in Australia and this follow-up is like its predecessor. Commencing at Federation Fahey steers the reader through the avenues of intelligence gathering in Australia. It is a world of intrigue, espionage and ineptitude. Each chapter focuses on a particular episode, such as wartime contingencies, the surveillance of aliens and identification of persons of interest. Fifth columnists, communists, Jehovah Witnesses and right-wing organisations are the targets of surveillance and subterfuge. Fahey discusses the various organisations and people that were of interest to government and those who ran the departments creating a picture of the processes, problems and arguments.

At times *Australia's First Spies* can be rather chatty in its use of language, which lessens the strength of the book to an extent and some of the excursions into the machinations of overseas intelligence agencies seem a little long. However, these criticisms are really minor and do not detract from the book.

Australia's First Spies is solid narrative history that is targeted at a wide audience and will appeal to any reader who would like to learn more about Australian intelligence agencies, processes and personalities in the first half-century from Federation.

Justin Chadwick

The Last Navigator
Paul Goodwin with Gordon Goodwin
$32.99
Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2020
Paperback, 327 pp



This is the story of Squadron Leader Gordon Goodwin, DFM, DSO as told by his son Paul Goodwin. Paul has taken his father's memoirs written for family consumption, listened to his father's stories over the years, read and researched to verify his father's accuracy and come up with a most readable homage to his father, Bomber Command and Pathfinders. Along the way he has listened to his mother's memories and produced a very human portrait of civilian life in England during the Blitz.

I have always preferred biographies of and by ordinary diggers (if you can consider a Squadron Leader an 'ordinary digger') to worthy biographies of the top brass. Paul Goodwin reveals lots of 'stuff' that makes this book very interesting. like, who wore heated flying suits, the precarious life of a gunner, the procedure for bailing out. All of which inspires the reader with admiration for the men who were at the sharp end of the fighting.

One has seen most of the movies about the RAF during WW2, and read lots of facts and figures, but it is the little personal details that stick in one's mind. Like, why in movies do they all speak as though they are straight out of Oxford when statistics indicate that air crew came from many places and all strata of society? Well, because pilots went to the BBC for elocution lessons. Pointless having someone shouting down the radio giving instructions if their regional accent makes them impossible to understand, especially in an emergency.

There are lovely descriptions of the art of flying a Lancaster bomber, a love affair despite being fired at, the noise, the fear and the cold. My jaw dropped when I learned the Lancaster did not have power steering and fighting the controls in a tricky situation required great strength. I remember my old Falcon station wagon without power steering - that was bad enough. I never cease to be amazed at the primitive equipment that was cutting edge stuff during WW2.

Carrier pigeons were on board to fly home when their modern radio was kaput.

There's a photo of a Lancaster Pathfinder air and ground crew lined up, five rows on the ground and two rows along the entire wing span. I have seen this photo before, but it never ceases to impress.

Gordon married an English girl, the wedding photo reflecting the fashions of the time. It was considered 'not done' to get married in the full white regalia so their wedding photo looks like a replica of my in-laws, same time, same dress, same uniform.

I must say I had a great laugh at the story of the tinned peaches. When in

1994, I met mother-in-law No. 2, a lady who had survived the Blitz, she opened a tin of peaches in my honour. Nearly fifty years after rationing had ceased, I appreciated what a compliment that was.

There are nice thumbnail sketches of flying colleagues, some who survived and some who did not, all told with warmth, but not forgotten.

Even before the war ended in Europe, Gordon was approached by Qantas to join their staff as a navigator and so found himself on the crew of flying boats out of Rose Bay in Sydney. The description of flying boats fills one with nostalgia. Navigating over vast oceans required the navigator to stick his head out of the plane to read the stars. He remained with Qantas until the advent of the Jumbo jet with the computer that replaced the navigator.

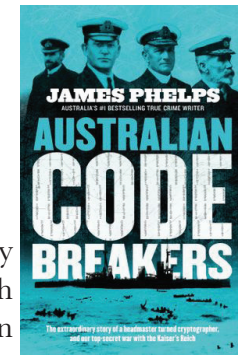
I really liked this book. Gordon was obviously a 'people person' who went from humble beginnings in Bundaberg (Bert Hinkler doesn't even get a mention till page 46) to a very valued cog in the RAF wheel at a crucial time in history. You may recall I reviewed a biography of Air Marshall David Evans. His recollections of flying the Queen and Prince Phillip around Australia in 1954 were merely that the cloud base over Sydney was 640 feet that day. You will be pleased to hear that Gordon flew the same people around and he has some warm anecdotes about Prince Phillip.

My personal opinion is that the technical details of the planes was adequate for those with aviation fuel in their veins but not so technical that one flipped over that page. I would welcome an RAF opinion on this point.

This book was my travelling companion on a recent flight to Queensland with Qantas in its 100th year to visit my mother who is in her 100th year. I noted that Gordon's English bride would have been in her 100th year. Our aircraft had power steering, computer-controlled everything, pressurised enclosed cabin and no carrier pigeons. We were all wearing face masks in fear of the 2020 pandemic. But nobody was shooting at us and there was little possibility we would end up in the North Sea.

Gail Gunn

Australian Code Breakers
James Phelps
$34.99
Harper Collins, Sydney, 2020
Paperback, 352 pp



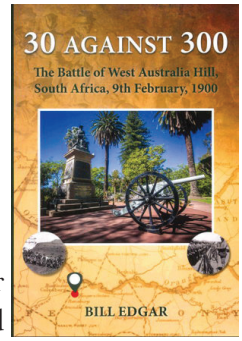
The role of intelligence gathering is crucial to any country involved in a war. That being said, Australia was confronted with this situation in August 1914. As luck would have it a German

merchant ship was trying to escape from Melbourne's Port Phillip, realizing that the ship might have code books which could prove invaluable to the Australian efforts in breaking German codes the ship was boarded and a Captain J.T. Richardson was able to remove the code books. This book describes the efforts the Australian Navy went to, to break those codes. The author has written a very readable story beginning with the outbreak of World War One and how the Australian Navy was able to gather personnel who were able to crack the codes and pave the way in destroying the German Navy's East Asia Squadron.

The book incorporates seventeen chapters taking the reader through a story of the long hours required by the code breakers in diligently decoding the German messages and relaying them to higher Naval authority. A chapter is devoted to SMS *Emdenwhich* which was destroyed by Australians HMAS *Sydney*. The book also has eight pages of photos depicting the principle players in the story. I found that once I began to read Australian Code Breakers I wanted to know what was next as each chapter unfolded it described the long hours and lack of sleep the code breakers had to endure, the sense of urgency that was required to firstly de-code the messages and then pass on the information in a timely manner. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in Australian history and also anyone interested in how the fledgling Royal Australian Navy was able to change the course of the war. All in all a good read.

Mike English

30 Against 300: The Battle of West Australia Hill, South Africa, 9th February, 1900
Bill Edgar
A$24.99
Tammar Publications, Perth, 2020
Paperback, 67 pp



In the Western Australian Legislative Assembly on 5 October 1899 the Premier John Forrest proposed the motion that should war be declared in South Africa, Western Australia would offer to assist the Imperial Government by despatching a military force to the Transvaal. The motion was passed and in early November 1899 the unit that was subsequently known as the 1st West Australian Mounted Infantry (WAMI) left Albany for Capetown.

Dr Bill Edgar has written this book as a 'resurrection piece' for a notable but little-known action that took place in the early phases of the conflict. He also has new readers in mind and is hopeful that this new publication will further the interest of Australians in the Boer War. He sketches the origins of the Second Boer War 1899-1902 by touching on the history of the early Dutch settlers and their desire

for political independence; the effects of the discovery of gold and diamonds and the eventual clash of British political and economic interests with the isolationist policies of the Boer republics.

The pivot on which the book turns is the delaying action fought on 9 February 1900 between a small group of 1st WAMI troopers and Boer forces who were advancing in strength to cut off a strategic British encampment. Deployed from the main British force, the West Australians took up defensive positions on hills to block the Boers, whose numbers were estimated to be around 300 and possibly more. The determined Boer assaults throughout the day against the troopers were frustrated by the defenders' accurate rifle fire and the protection they gained from hastily constructed rock shelters. By nightfall their water had run out and, with ammunition low, the defenders withdrew.

During the action Trooper Alex Krygger showed bravery in his defence and protection of the wounded Sergeant Hensman. Although recommended for a Mention in Despatches rumours began to circulate that Krygger had been nominated for the Victoria Cross (VC). So extensive were these rumours that his image, complete with the VC, was printed on the cigarette cards of the day. Edgar suggests that the non-award of the VC was possibly due to Krygger's conflict with his commanding officer. Official recognition of the action came when the British commander subsequently named the feature 'so magnificently defended' as West Australia Hill.

The narrative of the action is covered in several fast-paced chapters and is ably assisted with the use of maps and photos. The significance of the battlefield came to light during a site inspection in 2000 and 2019 when archaeological methods were applied to an investigation of the terrain.

By citing in his introduction the opposition voices raised in the Australian colonial parliaments against the sending of troops to support the British, Edgar highlights the interest that the Boer War created in Australian society at the time. He notes that little attention is now paid to that conflict although more lives were lost in that relatively short war of two and a half years compared to ten years in Vietnam.

30 Against 300 should be seen as a very acceptable contribution to reviving interest in the Boer War. The book uses personal recollections to hold the attention of the general reader and the military specialist. Readers outside of Western Australia may also be encouraged to research actions involving their own colonial forces in that conflict. I see this book being a definite addition to the bookshelves of those who are interested in all aspects of Western Australia history especially those with a military focus. I further suggest that it will suit all who have an interest in Australia's involvement in the Boer War. Recommended.

Richard Farrar

Technology

London's World War One Air Defences
The Balloon Apron

Rohan Goyne

The balloon apron was developed as a defensive response to the aerial warfare bombing campaign being conducted by Germany against London during 1917-1918 as part of the first London Blitz. Germany had commenced a strategic bombing campaign against London utilising Gotha twin engine bombers operating from airfields in occupied Belgium in 1917.

The balloon apron (one element of that defence) compromised three barrage balloons, each spaced 500 yards apart and joined together by a heavy steel cable. The balloon apron defence had been developed at short notice with the materials available at hand.

In 1917, the British first deployed two balloon aprons east of the British capital and by April 1918 a further seven had been deployed. The aprons failed to catch any Gotha bombers, however their deployment across the known flightpaths of the bombers forced the enemy formations to fly at a higher altitude thus reducing the overall effectiveness of their bombing patterns.[1]

Figure 1: Frank Dobson, *The Balloon Apron*, 1918.
Source IWM ART 2001.

1 P. Chasseaud, *The Frist World War,* Times Books, Glasgow, 2018, pp. 213-214.

The painting by Frank Dobson of the three balloon aprons deployed to protect the Kynoch factory from the Gotha bombers was commissioned by the Ministry of Information. 'A very interesting record will be of the Balloon Barrages', wrote Dobson at the time, 'which go up in the evening to protect the Kynoch factory on Canvey Island'. Kynoch's was a leading supplier of munitions and explosives hence an obvious target for the German strategic bombing campaign.

Figure 2: A balloon apron, 1918.
Source: IWM Q61156.

Society Matters

Letter to the Editor

I enjoy reading the reviews in Sabretache and learn from the variety of books covered there. I was very interested in the June 2020 edition including the review of *The Battles for Kokoda Plateau*, a book I look forward to reading. I need, however, to challenge one sentence in the book review: 'The first Australian soldiers to meet the Japanese were elements of a militia unit, the 39th Battalion'.

The book under review may have asserted that claim but the claim is incorrect. The official Army History covering the Kokoda Campaign, by Dudley McCarthy, makes clear (on pages 124-125) that the first organised resistance to the Japanese Army in that Campaign was carried out by the Papuan Infantry Battalion. This Battalion comprised Australian Officers and Senior NCOs who led indigenous soldiers and one unit of the Battalion ambushed Japanese soldiers 'about 4pm' on 23 July 1942. That historic encounter is officially commemorated annually on that date by the Government of Papua New Guinea as their Remembrance Day.

All the best,

Greg Ivey

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