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SABRETACHE

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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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Editorial

Soon after the publication of the last edition of *Sabretache* the Australian, US and UK governments announced AUKUS. To say that the response has been dramatic is an understatement. The adoption of nuclear-powered submarines represents a significant change in Australian defence planning. Despite the remonstrations of France and those opposed to nuclear power, the dropping of the current contract makes strategic sense. Australia will have a better submarine fleet for operations alongside allies in the Pacific and northern waters. The transfer of this type of technology also represents a major change in alliance thinking in Washington.

Although Australia has used US defence technology for decades the transfer has not always been complete. During the Gulf War, according to a member of the defence science community, US forces refused to work alongside Australian RAAF aircraft as the US-based technology was incomplete. Only after an upgrade was arranged were they happy to continue operations. This presents a problem for high-tech defence purchases: will the system be fully compatible when things get hot? As the US has traditionally been very careful with defence transfers, particularly regarding nuclear technology, this is a valid question. Whether the threat from an increasingly aggressive China will result in full technology transfer will remain to be seen. But we can only hope that the past is not repeated.

Justin Chadwick

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Colonel E. A White: From Trooper to Honorary Colonel of 10th Light Horse

Barry Bamford¹

The decision to write about Colonel Ted White is based on the fact that he is one of the few, if not the only, soldier who has held almost every rank in the 10th Light Horse Regiment, a West Australian militia unit, part of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps.²

Writing accounts of civilian soldiers must be prefaced by the fact that individual military stories are underscored by civilian life. Ted White is no exception. In the course of his military career he married, raised a family and at the same time progressed through the ranks of the Commonwealth Bank, eventually becoming a senior branch manager in Perth, and retiring as a senior administrator. Such dual roles in society are indicative of volunteer civilian soldiers.

Edward Astley White was born and raised in Western Australia. As a young man he enlisted in the Australian army towards the end of the Second World War, during which time he rose to the rank of sergeant in the Australian Intelligence Corps, serving in New Britain as well as with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan. After the war he returned to his career in the Commonwealth Bank.

When the Korean conflict developed in 1950, Ted was again attracted to the ranks of the army. He relates that his mother was wise enough to say to him, "There's going to be another war--for goodness sake go and get yourself a commission before it really starts." Heeding this advice Ted presented himself to the 16/28th Battalion, one of the local Citizen Military Force (CMF) infantry units, and applied for reinstatement of his previous army rank with the view to gaining a commission. The battalion commanding officer's response was that even though he had been discharged as a substantive sergeant, his background in the Intelligence Corps did not qualify him to be an infantryman and accordingly he was required to enlist with the rank of 'private' if he wanted to join the infantry. Ted agreed to do this and immediately enrolled in a non-commissioned officers' (NCO) training course. Soon after he was transferred to the fledgling Western Australian University Regiment and commenced preliminary officer training.

1 Dr Barry Bamford is a retired lecturer in education at James Cook University in north Queensland, and has qualifications in qualitative research. As a younger person he was a member of 10th Light Horse between 1960 and 1979, during which time he rose to the rank of captain.

2 The Regiment was reduced to a squadron during Ted White's tenure as Honorary Colonel.



Image 1: 10th Light Horse troop formation in the early 1960's. A sabre troop from 'B' Squadron rests during a convoy break.
Source: Author

Before he was able to complete this training he was transferred in his civilian job to the coastal town of Geraldton, north of Perth. Here his army career received another setback. In Geraldton the local CMF unit had recently changed from an infantry unit to 'C' Squadron of 10th Western Australian Mounted Infantry (10 WAMI), which was an armoured corps unit. Even though he had completed a great deal of preparation as an infantry NCO and was recommended for promotion to corporal, events did not work out well for Private White.

I fronted up to the OC of 'C' Squadron, who told me that although I had a background in Intelligence and Infantry I knew nothing about armour, and therefore I'd have to start off as a trooper. I did this and in fact was drilled by sergeants who hadn't caught up with the latest drill manuals and alterations to drill -- and were instructing us to do the wrong things. I had to put my finger in my mouth and just put up with it.

Anyway within about two years I became a lieutenant, and that would have been about 1954.³

At that time 'C' Squadron members were about a hundred strong, a significant number for the size of the town, but the command structure was unbalanced. There were two captains, no lieutenants and a group of very keen sergeants, including an ex-squadron sergeant-major whose parade ground expertise was substantial, if not always accurate in terms of the latest manuals. The presence of such experienced personnel created expectations, down to the lowest levels of command, that being in

³ All quotes inserted in this manner, unless specifically noted otherwise, are taken from interviews conducted with Ted White over a number of weeks in November 1997.

the civilian army was not just a game. There were skills to be learnt and traditions to be upheld. The ethos of light horsemen of previous eras was not far below the surface.

Transferred back to Perth in his civilian employment in 1955, Lieutenant White continued his service with 10 WAMI. He became second-in-command of 'B' Squadron, initially under command of Captain D. Cummuskey and later Major T. Edmondson. This posting commenced an association with 'B' Squadron that was to last for over ten years. His return to Perth also coincided with another significant event in the history of the regiment, the introduction of British-made Ferret Scout Cars as the main armoured fighting vehicle of the regiment.

During World War Two up until 10th Light Horse was disbanded in 1944, the regiment was the only remaining fully horse-mounted light horse regiment in Australia, with direct links to the First World War. The regiment was reformed in 1949 as a unit of the Australian Armoured Corps, with a regional title of 10th West Australian Mounted Infantry, a title that a few years later was restored to 10th Light Horse. Following the reformation, the emergent regiment was equipped with a make-shift establishment of vehicles. The main armoured vehicles were cumbersome Canadian Scout Cars used as reconnaissance vehicles, and Staghound Armoured Cars that supplied main armament fire support through a 37 mm cannon. When Ted White joined 'C' Squadron the squadron's sabre troop organisation was



Image 2: Northam Range area, 1956.

Lieutenant Ted White (centre) as Chief Gunnery Instructor supervises the mounting of a .30 Browning machine gun into the turret of a Mk2 Ferret.

Source: E.A. White.

based on four vehicles, consisting of two Canadian Scout Cars and two Staghound Armoured Cars. As the regiment's tactical role and establishment emerged, military authorities decided that a dismounted capability was necessary to supplement the reconnaissance capability now assigned to the unit, and subsequently 'assault' sections based on the organisation of an infantry section were added to each sabre troop. The sections were carried in a number of different types of vehicles, including Whites Scout Cars as well as a variety of soft skinned B-vehicles,⁴ that were often also used as command vehicles.

In the early nineteen fifties the vehicle establishment began to change. The considerably more mobile British-made Ferret Scout Car was introduced to replace the aging Canadian vehicles and a formal establishment of four Ferrets to a sabre troop was promulgated. One Staghound per troop was retained as the main fire support vehicle and another British-made vehicle, the Saracen Armoured Personnel Carrier, was introduced to carry the troop's assault section. With minor variations in vehicle numbers and types, this organisation of six, all-wheeled vehicles became the basic sabre troop composition for the next fifteen years. The relatively spacious Saracen, with appropriate modifications, also doubled as an effective command vehicle.

With the rapid change in vehicle establishment most junior officers and senior NCO's in the regiment were required to obtain detailed knowledge of the new vehicles. Ted White was no exception, and he completed a Ferret driving and servicing course to obtain a Ferret driver's license soon after returning to Perth.

In the years that followed Lieutenant White was promoted to captain and assumed command of 'B' Squadron. He occupied this posting for the next ten years and, in retrospect, considered this time to be the most satisfying of his army career.

I had a wonderful time -- but the time I enjoyed more than anything was being OC 'B' Squadron, because, of course, you knew all your men intimately, down to every trooper. You know the story! Recruits came in and you got to know them. You had much more intimate connection with everyone. In fact we socialised in one another's homes from time to time, which was great, it built up wonderful *esprit de corps* with in the Squadron.

My personal association with Ted White began during the time he was Officer Commanding (OC) 'B' Squadron. My first impressions were of a resolute if not sometimes implacable commander -- and one incident in particular remains indelibly imprinted on my mind. This was an encounter during an annual camp in the Lancelin training area north of Perth, in about 1965.

In the time it took him to become OC 'B' Squadron, Ted White served under

⁴ B-vehicles are any vehicles that are not armoured vehicles. For example, a Landrover is a B-vehicle, as is a Ford truck.

all commanding officers of the regiment. As lavish as his appreciation is for these commanders and their different characteristics, he singles out particular attention for the professional dedication of Lieutenant-Colonel Dudley Cummuskey. Colonel Cummuskey had served as a troop leader in a British armoured car squadron in Italy during the Second World War, and was a man of considerable army experience. Colonel Cummuskey was commanding officer during the camp mentioned above and, as was almost characteristic of this commander, the culminating exercise of the two-week annual camp involved a tactical operation in which the three sabre squadrons of the regiment were placed in highly mobile roles. In this exercise the two Perth sabre squadrons, 'B' and 'C' Squadron, advanced south along the main coast road that ran through the Lancelin training area. To call the thoroughfare at that time, a 'road,' might be somewhat of an exaggeration. In fact it was a narrow dirt track, pitted with limestone outcrops that could, and often did, easily disable wheeled vehicles such as those used by the regiment.

Against this advancing force was set 'A' Squadron from Northam as the 'enemy'. About this time the French-made Entac guided missile system was in vogue, and was considered to be one of the main threats to armoured vehicles at that time. To make the 'A' Squadron enemy vehicles more distinctive, simulated Entac systems were rigged up on the Mark 2 Ferrets. Used ammunition boxes were attached to each side of the vehicle turret, and out of these protruded the nose cones of expended rocket propelled grenade projectiles. Added to this was a camouflage design created by spattering the vehicle with local mud, and the result was a distinctive enemy vehicle.

During the camp exercise, as Troop Leader of 3 Troop 'A' Squadron, I was given a task against the advancing squadrons. I was to engage the advancing troops at close quarters from ambush positions and as soon as they deployed was to retreat further south and repeat the process. To enable the advancing troops to know they had been engaged and to add to the realism of an ambush, attached to the troop was a Landrover towing a trailer, on top of which was secured a 37mm cannon.⁵ This fired a blank round to simulate the ambush, a task very enthusiastically undertaken by Warrant Officer Allan Harris, who was Squadron Sergeant-Major of 'A' Squadron at that time.

My troop had spent most of this particular day operating just in front of the advancing troops. I was waiting to initiate another ambush when Colonel Cummuskey approached in his umpire's vehicle and said to me, "The OC 'B' Squadron is sitting with his headquarters on the road fork about two miles (3 kilometres) back. I want you to see if you can engage him." During the next hour I hid my vehicles two hundred meters off the road and waited until the screening troop of the advancing squadron had passed, then moved back north along the line of advance. Eventually

⁵ At this time Staghounds had been withdrawn and a Ferret with a wide band of masking tape around the turret was used as a fire support vehicle. Hence the need for the Landrover and trailer.

I mounted an attack on the OC 'B' Squadron which involved a discharge of the 37mm at the parked vehicles, a mad dash with my vehicles across open ground, and a dismounted attack by my assault section, blank rounds and all, on the rear of 'B' Squadron headquarters.

The result was not what I expected. During the proceedings the OC 'B' Squadron sat impassively on top of his command vehicle watching what we were



Image 3: Part of a 10th Light Horse convoy moving into the Lancelin training area in the mid-1960's. Roads in the main training area were undeveloped and hazardous for wheeled vehicles. Source: Author.

doing. When I approached after the 'shooting' had died down, he simply said to me, "Well done sergeant," and resumed perusal of his maps. I was somewhat non-plussed. I had my troop re-mount and moved back down the road from whence we had come, feeling somewhat deflated. Ted White was not prone to over use superlatives!

In 1967 Lieutenant Colonel I.D. Stock replaced Lieutenant Colonel Cummuskey as commanding officer of the regiment, which had now been redesignated, '10th Light Horse.' At about this time Ted White experienced a growing realisation that to remain in his long-cherished posting of OC 'B' Squadron was becoming increasingly untenable. While Colonel Stock proved to be a most effective and popular commanding officer, he had been brought into the regiment from the engineer corps, seemingly because there was no senior officer in 10th Light Horse prepared to assume the task. Ted White considered it important that armoured corps ideals and expectations were reflected as much as possible in the upper echelons of the regimental command and so, now a major, he accepted a posting as second-in-command of the regiment.

Two years later when Colonel Stock left to assume higher command in the Task Force, Ted White, now a fully qualified Lieutenant-Colonel, assumed command of 10th Light Horse Regiment.

Ted White's tenure as commanding officer of the regiment lasted between 1970 and 1973, and spanned a period of intense social and military change in Australia. Perhaps the most significant of these changes were the cessation of fighting in Vietnam and a not altogether unrelated gradual decline in the fortunes of 10th Light Horse as a full regiment. It is also significant that during his tenure Ted White orchestrated yet another change in the vehicle establishment of the regiment. By the end of his tenure the much used and often maligned Ferrets had been replaced by tracked M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carriers, these vehicles being viewed at that time as more appropriate for a modern armoured regiment. The 'new' 1-1-3 carriers started arriving at 10th Light Horse in 1969, and it didn't take long for them to become an integral part of the unit's training.

In May 1973, Ted White was promoted to full colonel, and appointed Commander of the 5th Military District Training Group. From there he retired from active duty on 31st December 1976. However, he had not yet finished with 10th Light Horse.

Shortly thereafter I had the honour to be made Honorary Colonel of 10th Light Horse. I was Honorary Colonel from 1977 to 1981. So I had over twenty years active service with the regiment, which probably would have been a record, I would think. Starting off as a trooper and finishing up as the Honorary Colonel.

What more can be said?

In Egypt, before their embarkation to Gallipoli and again after their return to Cairo, the Australian light horsemen were not renowned for their *manières sophistiquées* in civilian circles. Their distinctive head-dress of slouched hat and emu plumes made them conspicuous, and in the streets, bazaars and whorehouses of Egypt they created for themselves – perhaps not always deserved -- a reputation as being boisterous and rowdy as well as openly indifferent at times to all forms of rank and authority. A leaning towards opportunistic larceny was certainly not confined to the non-commissioned ranks. Shortly after arrival in Egypt in 1915 the Australian commander Harry Chauvel found that many of his horses had lost condition during the sea voyage from Australia, and he set about culling large numbers of these animals. Chauvel's immediate superior, General Birdwood was alarmed at the number of culled animals, and reduced it by three-quarters. As providence would have it, a few nights later a newly arrived shipment of horses from Australia stampeded, and scattered across the desert outside Cairo. Chauvel and his men were assigned the task of rounding up the horses, and when the task was completed

the number of horses in need of culling in Chauvel's light horse regiments had dropped to almost nil, much to the frustration of a suspicious Director General of Remounts who was: 'only too glad to have his numbers again, rather than make an issue of it'.⁶

In the latter-day 10th Light Horse Regiment there was no lack of such boisterous behaviour. In the early days of the newly formed regiment, static camps were held in the army barracks at both Karrakatta and Northam. Often these locations were the scenes of rowdy and sometimes reckless behaviour, and it is not unfair to say that Ted White made his own contributions to such events. He was present when some of the almost legendary events occurred, outside the official military proceedings of the regiment. From my earliest days in the regiment I had heard stories of a Staghound main armament being discharged outside a mess window during one of these static camps. The story circulated around the campfires and messes for years, with embellishments and variations, but as Ted White relates, the incident did occur. It appeared that one night during an annual camp in the Northam Camp Area, the officers of the regiment, when Ted White was a lieutenant, visited a nearby Gunners' mess. On leaving for their own lines at the end of the evening, they found their Landrovers had been filled to the roof with unbaled hay, with a note indicating that this was to feed their horses. The following morning a somewhat



Image 4: 10th Light Horse carriers, Lancelin Training Area. M113A1 carriers started arriving at 10th Light Horse in late 1969. Vehicles are shown during a training exercise near the wreck of the Greek freighter Alkimos, c.Jun 1970. Source: Author.

6 A. J. Hall, *Chauvel of the Light Horse*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press (1978), p. 48.



Image 5: Colonel E.A.White, Commanding Officer, 5th Military District Training Unit, inspecting a 5th Military District Band, c. May 1974.
Source: E.A. White.

piqued commanding officer of 10th Light Horse, Lieutenant Colonel K.D. Howard, commandeered a Staghound Armoured Car, and crewing it with himself as crew commander, Captain B. Fisher, OC 'A' Squadron and the Adjutant, Captain T. Edmondson as gunner, directed the stunned driver, awed by the seniority of the crew, to drive the vehicle to the now empty Gunners' mess and:

... put the 37 against the mess window and just let go [with a blank round]. Karumpa !! Of course it blew the bloody window straight out, there was glass everywhere.

The untold part of this story, and many others like it, is the money taken from the officers' pays at the end of camp to make good the damage.

Seeming indifference to superior rank is also evident in another of Ted White's early experiences in the regimental mess. This incident involved a visiting brigadier who was heard to comment that 10th Light Horse Officers' mess was one of the quietest messes he had ever been in. Apparently the estimation once again came to the attention of Colonel Howard who, one evening in the mess some time later, instigated a 'game' called, 'The Three Man Lift.' In glib and deceiving tones Captain Edmondson cajoled the visiting brigadier into taking part in an experiment to demonstrate how smaller men could lift a larger, more powerful man, which the brigadier was. With one officer, Lieutenant P. Bohen pinning the brigadier's legs in prone position on the floor, and Ted White holding firmly with linked arms back-to-back, Captain Edmondson calmly unzipped the victim's fly and poured half a bottle of milk into the opening in the brigadier's dress uniform.

"What was all that bull about?" demanded the brigadier angrily as he struggled and

tore loose from the men who held him.

“Well the three of us got a ‘lift’ out of it, sir,” returned the nonchalant Captain Edmondson.

Anyway, he finished up taking it pretty well except that he really made a mess of my uniform. I had to take my blues home to my wife, my newly married wife and get her to repair them for the formal dining-in night back in Perth.

Other events were not as boisterous or exhibited such disregard for the rank structures of the army. But, especially in his time as commanding officer, Ted White rarely missed an opportunity to promote and enhance the *élan* for which light horsemen later gained such a reputation. He was never hesitant to demonstrate the pride he had in the abilities of the men with whom he served. He relates with a great deal of satisfaction his unit organising a semi-formal lunch, with four courses, appropriate wines, white tablecloths and all, for a visiting CMF general, while the regiment was camped in the isolated outer reaches of the Lancelin training area. The general had previously been warned that the regiment was on hard rations and that meals would be somewhat rough. What the general was not aware of was that, through a number of contacts within the regiment, the manageress and kitchen staff of the Lancelin Inn, a hotel located on the southern edge of the training area, were in the mess kitchen, using a Wiles cooker to convert available rations into special dishes.

At another time I recall Lieutenant Colonel White monitoring the progress of a mobile exercise with an extension lead and speaker from the radio in his command vehicle, with the motor running outside a mess tent in the middle of nowhere, while he gave a running commentary about the tactical exercise in progress, to visiting officials inside the tent. I also remember on more than one occasion during camp exercises, cursing Ted White while I stood my troop ‘to’ in the middle of the night waiting for an attack from ‘enemy’ around the perimeter. An attack that more often never came.

In 1915 the British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote:

They are great soldiers, these Australians ... there is a reckless dare-devilry, combined with a spice of cunning which gives them a place of their own in Imperial ranks.⁷

As a commanding officer, Ted White was never reckless -- but the summation suits him well. He exhibited dare-devilry and cunning in his conduct as a soldier and as a commanding officer of his regiment, these perhaps tinged with more than just a touch of the Australian larrikin. Such characteristics, together with the scope of his service, have earned him a memorable place in the history of 10th Light Horse.

Epilogue

Following his retirement from the army Ted White continued his civilian employment until his retirement in 1990. After the death of his wife he moved to a small apartment in the Perth suburb of Nedlands, and fended for himself. In the years that followed he maintained interest in a number of social clubs and was inevitably invited to various formal and social occasions conducted by military units, 10th Light Horse in particular. He never lost his straight forward manner, and was always interested in sharing past experiences while enjoying a beer.

Ted White died on 12th June 2021 at the age of 96, and to para-phrase a term often used in the past – ‘Now he belongs to the ages.’



Image 6: Ted White (left) enjoying a beer at a 10th Light Horse Cambrai Dinner in 2018. Also seated facing the camera are from left to right: incumbent OC 'A' Squadron, 10th Light Horse, Major Duane Nurse, Colonel Ken and Sue Ashman. As a Captain, Ken Ashman was adjutant of 10th Light Horse for a period during the 1970's. Source: Richard Jones.

7 *The Digger*, Vol 1 No 11, 13 October 1918, p. 1. (Quoting Arthur Conan Doyle's original statement in the *London Times*.)

RAAF Station Darwin Airfield Defence 19 February 1942 - Part One

Sean Stuart Carwardine¹

Introduction

The commencement of Japanese bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 is etched into the Australian psyche and was undoubtedly a dark day for the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Popular understanding of the attack on RAAF Station Darwin specifically, provides a notion that the RAAF was unprepared for such an event. It is claimed by some authors that the RAAF did not undertake any airfield defence on RAAF Station Darwin prior to and during the bombings, and many assert that the base was evacuated entirely following the attacks on 19 February 1942. In describing the aftermath of the bombings, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported, 'After the raid, the RAAF station was practically deserted, and four days later 278 men were still missing'.² Activities conducted by the RAAF on that day ripple through historical books and a vast array of good research has been conducted on the subject. However, what has not yet been thoroughly investigated is the full scope of airfield defence planning for the station by the RAAF before and during the events of 19 February 1942.

1939 - 1940

From as early as 1939, Wing Commander Eaton, commanding officer No 13 Squadron Darwin had been negotiating with RAAF Northern Area Headquarters (NAHQ), the Air Board and RAAF Headquarters for resources for the defence of the Station.³ In support of his requests Eaton quoted the Air Board Memorandum (ABM) No 5 Station Defence policy (June 1939, 1st Version) for the defence of his airfield. The policy allowed commanding officers to enlist airmen to man

1 Sean Carwardine's PhD thesis was entitled 'Defending the Nest: A History and Analysis of Airfield Defence Policy in the Royal Australian Air Force'. He has written three articles: 'The Development of the RAAF's Aerodrome Defence Scheme 1929-1939', 'Ground Defence of Palembang airfields for the RAF Regiment' and 'Security Forces in High Intensity War'. He has also lectured junior ground defence officers as part of the Initial Ground Defence Officer Course at the RAAF Security and Fire School at RAAF Base Amberly. He has also provided a paper and presentation for the RAAF Security Force Conference and presented a historical lecture for No 2 Security Force Squadron birthday and the dining in night.

2 'Darwin Panic And Unpreparedness', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 1945, p. 3.

3 Wing Commander Eaton was one of two officers (Wing Commander Brownell of RAAF Station Pearce) who initiated the RAAF Guard mustering formation.

aerodrome defence flights at RAAF stations. In October 1939, Eaton addressed a message to the Secretary of the Air Board advising that under the ABM he planned to enlist airmen specifically to man low-level anti-aircraft machine gun defences. Following Eaton's request, RAAF Headquarters sent a message to all RAAF stations in Australia and requested a list of how many machine-gun posts they had on their stations and whether airmen were required for machine gun defences.⁵ Upon being overwhelmed by responses in the affirmative, RAAF Headquarters created a new 'Guard' mustering on 17 November 1939. At this early stage, the allocation strength of Guards at a unit or station was based on the number of machine-gun posts required for the protection of the base. Subsequently, in early 1940 Eaton received 16 Guards to man four low-level anti-aircraft machine-gun posts in defence of Parap Aerodrome. Many records describe the Guards conducting other duties that included local protection and guarding against intruders and sabotage. One incident in March 1940 records a Guard firing upon intruders who attempted to flee once being challenged.⁶

Eaton established additional low-level anti-aircraft machine-gun posts at RAAF Station Darwin while also maintaining the four at Parap aerodrome. Also, in July 1940 Eaton was required to secure the RAAF transmitter station at 11 Mile Post.⁷ That same month he was directed to establish and secure a replenishing centre at Katherine aerodrome (that held 40,000 gallons of fuel and 1,980 gallons of oil). By November 1940, Batchelor aerodrome also required defending. Subsequently, Eaton deployed airmen of the Guard mustering to each of the sites.

By December 1940, ten more Guards arrived at RAAF Station Darwin bringing the total to 26 airmen, three corporals and two sergeants.⁸ Further, within Darwin's supportive defence, an Army section was temporarily attached to Daily Waters storage area for guard duties on a rotational basis and, only a few months later, was then withdrawn. Northern Area Headquarters (NAHQ) was directing the security of the Advanced Operational Bases (AOBs) in the northern area, and Eaton was instructed to place Guards at all AOBs in the Northern Area.⁹ Additionally, NAHQ outlined in a message to RAAF Headquarters that the establishment tables for RAAF Station Darwin Guard mustering needed to be increased to support these

4 'Guards – Provision of', NAA A1196, 25/501/3; Sean S. Carwardine, 'The Development of the RAAF's Aerodrome Defence Scheme 1929-1939', *Sabretache*, 58, 1, (2017). Every RAAF station was to develop and man both PAF and CAF Aerodrome Defence Flights. These Flights would have low-level AA machine gun and ground defence machine gun defence. At this stage any airmen from the station headquarters qualified by RAAF armourers to man the Flights would take up positions on hearing air riad sounding.

5 'Guards – Provision of', NAA A1196, 25/501/3.

6 RAAF Unit History sheets, No. 12 Squadron Feb 39–Feb 48, NAA A9186, 33.

7 RAAF Unit History sheets, No. 12 Squadron Feb 39–Feb 48, NAA A9186, 33.

8 'Guards – Provision of', NAA A1196, 25/501/3.

9 RAAF Unit History sheets, No. 12 Squadron Feb 39–Feb 48, NAA A9186, 33.



Image 1: Aerial view of RAAF Station Darwin.
Source: NAA A1196, 37/501/99.

additional taskings.

Not surprisingly, by late 1940 the Guard mustering in Darwin was overstretched, being on rotational duty to Bathurst Island, Wyndham, Drysdale, Port Hedland, Batchelor, Daily Waters (after the Army withdrawal), Katherine, RAAF Station Darwin and the civilian aerodrome. Yet despite this, RAAF Station Darwin and Parap conducted an aerodrome defence training exercise. During the exercise, and following Eaton's aerodrome defence plan, all aircraft were dispersed between the two airfields. The newly installed air raid siren was tested, and the low-level anti-aircraft machine-gun posts were manned, ready for attacks from air raids.¹⁰

During this time, Eaton continued to demand that Northern Area Headquarters 'take action' to inform the Air Board of the shortages of equipment and personnel and raise concerns regarding an inadequate supply chain.¹¹ Eaton's lack of resources even extended to uniforms, evidenced by his request to 'purchase a local sewing machine to repair the boots and shoes of airmen, as they could not get new ones promptly through the RAAF supply system'.¹²

1941

There are indications in the records that RAAF Station Darwin's situation in relation to airfield defence throughout late 1940 and into 1941 was a product of internal tensions and poor administration within Defence and RAAF Area Commands. Darwin was reported to be a critical aspect of any future air campaign and grand plans were made for extra bomber and fighter squadrons to be based there. In practical terms, however, the support required from RAAF Headquarters was lacking.¹³ This shortage of support led to military and RAAF staff's direct pleading to the Air and Military boards throughout 1941, requesting approval of extra manpower, arms, and equipment. Despite these efforts, the Air and Military boards did not release vital assets north despite them being available in the south.¹⁴

On 12 February 1941 at 6 am, Eaton carried out a mobilisation practice for RAAF Station Darwin. Inspecting this activity he concluded that many officers showed an 'inefficient or lagging nature' towards their duty and leadership. Eaton addressed the officers and outlined that the practice of aircraft dispersal was not satisfactory and he insisted that the officers 'correct this'.¹⁵ During this time, RAAF

10 RAAF, Ground Defence Schemes Policy, NAA A1196, 15/501/75 PART 1.

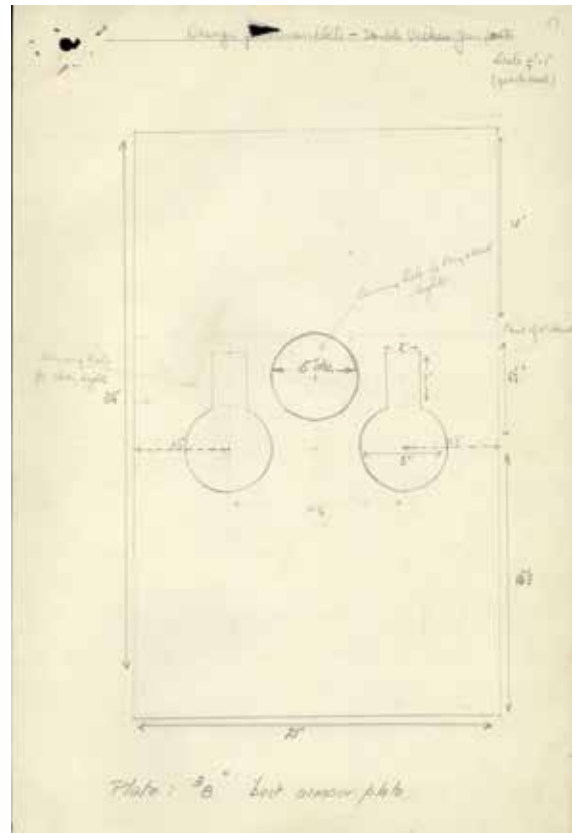
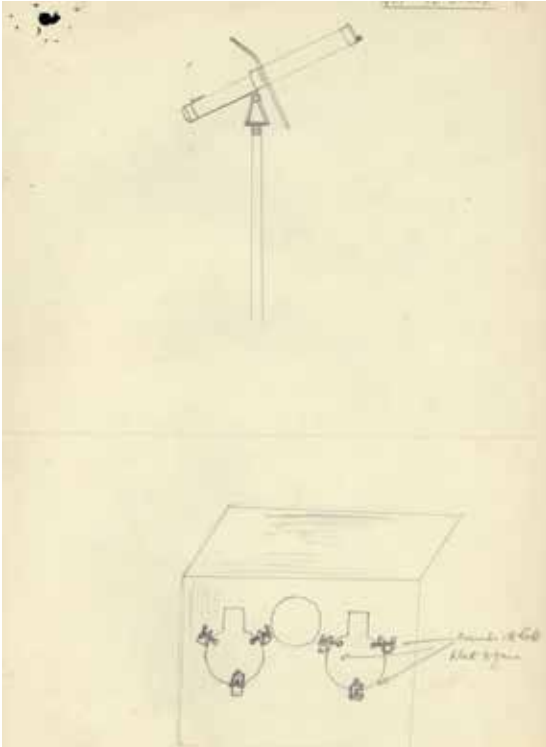
11 Tom Lewis and Peter Ingman, *Carrier Attack Darwin 1942: The Complete Guide to Australia's own Pearl Harbor*, Avonmore Books: Kent Town, (2013), p. 13.

12 Lewis and Ingman, *Carrier Attack Darwin 1942*, p. 13.

13 Lewis and Ingman, *Carrier Attack Darwin 1942*, p. 37.

14 Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942: Australia's Darkest Hour*, Methuen: Sydney, (1981), p. 151.

Images 2 and 3: Front armoured plate design by Wing Commander Tindal. These armoured plates were ordered for all the twin Vickers machine guns at Darwin, however from the records they were never produced. Source: NAA A1196, 37/501/99.



Headquarters informed Eaton that splinter proofing was to be installed at all stations.¹⁶ A lack of resources again

struck Eaton as he was advised that funding was not available to build the directed splinter proof aircraft pens.

In line with the ABM, Eaton continued to build his airfield defence capability. He allocated airmen to fight fires and organised firefighting courses. In May 1941 Guards and Armament staff finished building the remaining low-level anti-aircraft machine-gun posts.¹⁷ That same month, the first of 15 anti-gas courses were held. The first course had 159 airmen taking part in anti-gas training over the first two weeks of June. Throughout 1941 Guards continued to rotate through all AOBs and bomb storage areas at Wyndham, Millingimbi and Bathurst Island.

In mid-1941, Eaton was reprimanded by his higher command. Since Eaton had taken command of RAAF forces in Darwin, he had been forwarding messages directly to RAAF Headquarters and the Air Board. NAHQ sternly reminded Eaton and RAAF Headquarters of the chain of command and directed that all

¹⁵ Operation Records RAAF Station Darwin 1941, Directorate of Air Force History (DIRH).

¹⁶ RAAF Station Darwin Dispersal of Aircraft, NAA A705, 171/6/180.

¹⁷ Operation Records RAAF Station Darwin 1941, DIRH.

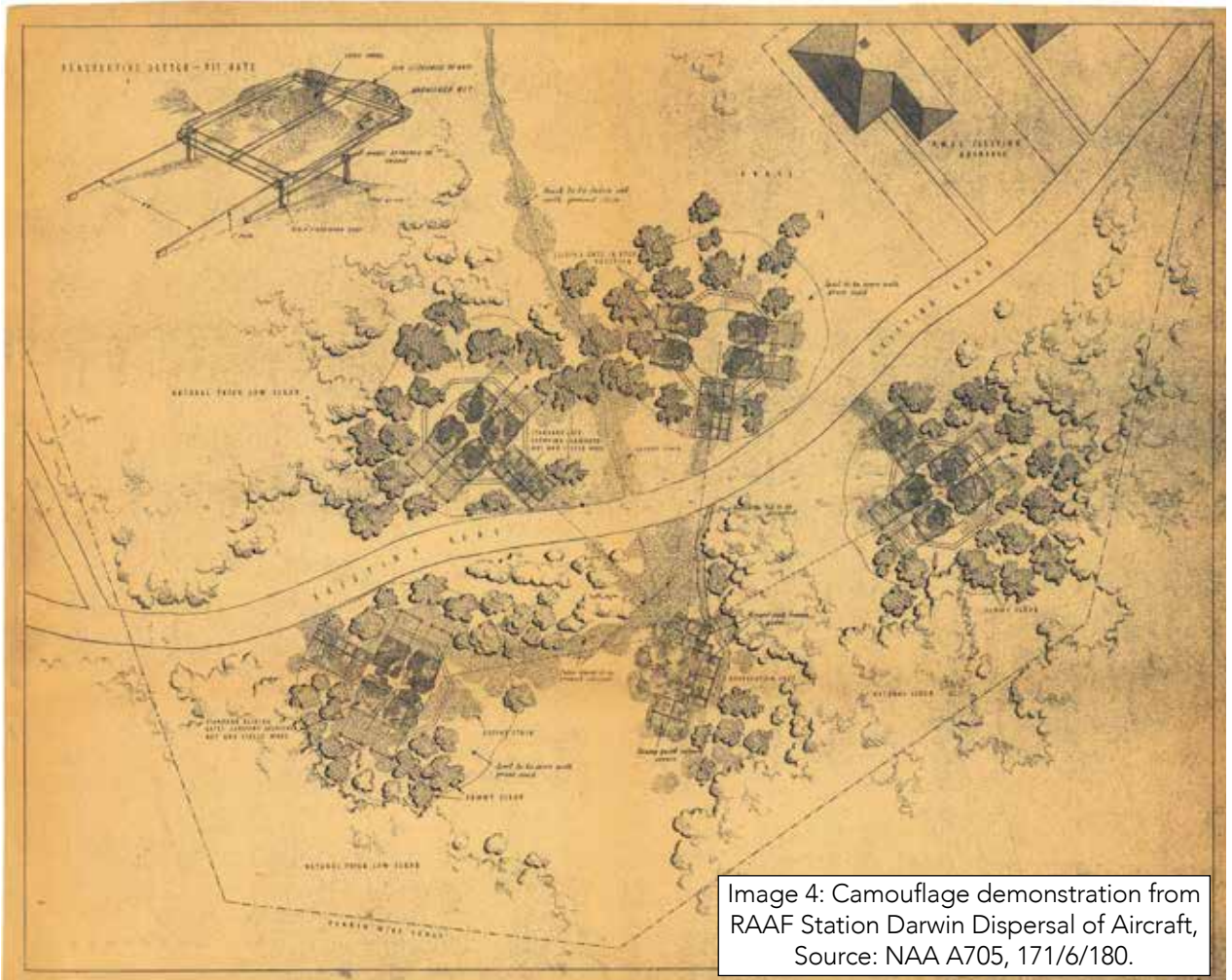


Image 4: Camouflage demonstration from RAAF Station Darwin Dispersal of Aircraft, Source: NAA A705, 171/6/180.

communications from Eaton were to be directed through NAHQ. NAHQ then replied to RAAF Headquarters pointing out the lack of reliable supply chains and basic resources, 'The position in Darwin is much more acute than other stations'.¹⁸ Further, the Operational Record Book (ORB) of the NAHQ for this period notes, 'There is a need to improve supplies to Darwin'. By the end of July 1941 no decision had yet been made regarding Eaton's supplies and nor on the increased strength of the Guard mustering at RAAF Station Darwin.

During August 1941 Eaton requested bombsights, barrels for Vickers machine guns and Vickers (ground version) machine guns for aerodrome defence, more camouflage netting, anti-gas respirators, engine parts, 500 helmets and water bottles. During that month, No 1 Stores Depot at RAAF Tottenham in Victoria issued to RAAF Station Darwin two Browning machine guns and 359,000 rounds, which took three weeks to arrive.

¹⁸ Operation Records RAAF Station Darwin 1941, DIRH.

On 15 September 1941 Eaton, ignoring the NAHQ directive, directly communicated with the Air Board in Melbourne and demanded an increase in the entitlement and provision of rifles and revolvers for his station. It took a month for the Air Board to advise Eaton that first, he should communicate through NAHQ, then a request to change his established entitlements needed to be approved before any weapons could be provided. The entitlement change requests were sent, and the transfer of this equipment began on 21 October 1941 from No 1 Stores Depot.

On 7 October 1941 Eaton was posted out of RAAF Station Darwin, and Group Captain Scherger took command of the station. In November Scherger received six Browning machine guns and 100 revolvers, however NAHQ immediately directed that two machine guns were to be transferred to the Army in Darwin.¹⁹ On 23 November 1941 Scherger sent a message directly to RAAF Headquarters requesting a policy for arming all RAAF personnel (not only Guards) at AOBs noting that he intended to issue rifles to these airmen from his stores. Two days later Scherger organised an aircraft to transport three Guards from RAAF Station Darwin to Broome aerodrome under 'special orders' to protect that airfield which further stretched Guard numbers in Darwin.

In December 1941 Scherger again messaged RAAF Headquarters about the inadequacy of the establishment table for Guards at RAAF Stations. For RAAF Station Darwin the establishment table, based on the ABM, allocated 60 Guards. Out of the 58 Guards that had already been posted to RAAF Station Darwin at that time, 35 were attached to the AOBs for security duty. Scherger could not provide security at RAAF Station Darwin or Parap aerodrome without redirecting other technical/trades airmen to those duties. According to the ABM, other airmen's tasking for guard duty was only to be undertaken 'in emergencies'.

1942

Early January 1942 Wing Commander D.E. Walker commanding officer of RAAF Station Darwin was finding the implementation of the RAAF ABM No 5 Station Defence difficult based on his resources and manning. Walker sent a message to the Air Board on 3 January advising, '... vide A.B.M.5 cannot be employed unless and until Air Board provide standard equipment'. These difficulties would not change even when on 15 January 1942, the newly formed North-Western Area Headquarters (NWAHQ) assumed command of all RAAF units. Both Group Captain Scherger and Air Commodore Wilson were posted into NWAHQ.²⁰ On 16 January 1942 Squadron Leader Walker, now temporary Commander of RAAF Station Darwin, completed the Station Demolition Scheme designed to destroy all

19 Operation Records RAAF Station Darwin 1941, DIRH.

20 Operation Records North Western Area Headquarters 1942, DIRH.

aspects of the airfield in the event of invasion.²¹ This scheme gave the responsibility of various destruction tasks to RAAF officers; however, the main destruction of the aerodrome was to be completed by the Army. Walker also ordered that Guards man every low-level anti-aircraft machine-gun post during daylight hours. Between 19-23 January 1942, the RAAF's civilian camouflage expert attempted to complete the station's camouflaging, however, due to the lack of civilian construction workers and paint, which had failed to arrive, this operational task was not finalised.²²

On 3 February 1942, less than three weeks before the bombing, Wing Commander Griffith took command of RAAF Station Darwin. Griffith found the station was still lacking rifles and other supplies that had been requested in 1941, and he later stated 'this was a significant concern' of his command at Darwin. In addition to the issue of reduced supplies and resources, there was an influx of airmen (who were not trained as Guards) into RAAF Station Darwin following invasions of the northern islands, stretching supplies further.

The ORB of RAAF Station Darwin records that files were destroyed in the bombing, however defence planning reports have since been located. These records show that during his first few days at Darwin Griffith managed to obtain .50 calibre Browning machine guns from the Americans. Defence training of personnel also

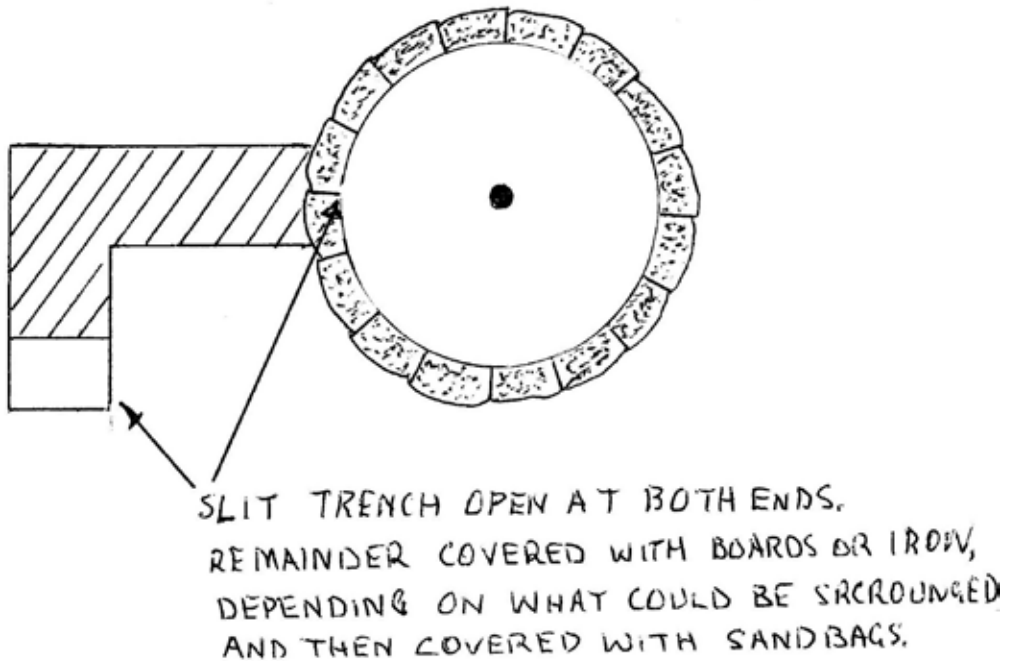


Image 5: Sketch of gun position construction. Source: Wilf Bowie diary.

21 Darwin – Planning: Demolition Scheme Royal Australian Airforce, Darwin Aerodrome – Policy in connection with protection and denial of RAAF Establishments, Aerodrome and Seaplane bases – February 1942, AWM54, 625/5/6.

22 Operation Records RAAF Station Darwin 1942, DIRH.

occurred with Squadron Leader Swan arranging rifle training, daily bayonet and unarmed combat skills training for all airmen on the station. For the remainder of the month, regular air raid training took place.²³ Additionally, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Air Commodore Bladin, outlined in multiple messages of the precautions RAAF stations needed to take in protecting their aircraft from attack. He insisted that, if possible, aircraft should be moved to satellite aerodromes which, according to him, ‘... will often deceive the enemy regarding our strength and disposition ... even flying then to a suitable ground a few miles away’. All messages insist that aircraft should be housed in ‘paddocks’ opposite the airfield or hidden in the bush.²⁴

Air Commodore George Jones’s Visit

On 10 February 1942, Griffith forwarded a message directly to Air Commodore George Jones at RAAF Headquarters. This message detailed RAAF Station Darwin’s defence organisation including personnel trenches, dispersal of aircraft,



Image 6: USAAF P40 shot down on 19 February 1942.
Source: AWM 044606.

low-level anti-aircraft machine-gun posts, building protection, drummed petrol and oil protections, bomb dump and small arms defence and the protection of the operations room.²⁵ Griffith’s plan included the dispersal of aircraft and slit trenches for protection as detailed in the ABM.

According to Griffith, ‘The Station Defence Organisation has been re-

23 James D. Rorrison, *Nor the Years Contemn: Air War on the Australian Front 1941-42*, Palomar Publications: Buranda, (1992), pp. 66-67.

24 Operation Records RAAF Station Darwin 1942, DIRH.

25 Report on Administrative Problems in N.W. Area – February 1942, NAA A1196, 37/501/99.

drafted to meet all reasonably predictable circumstances, and particularly to protect personnel and equipment from bombing and sea bombardment, whilst putting up a considerable volume of fire against attacking aircraft'.²⁶ He indicated the trenches were being improved (for wet season) and extended, '...to provide accommodation for all personnel'. Griffith noted that the 'old type' of trenches (dug in a straight line) would be modified to a 'V' or 'L' shape for better protection.²⁷ Griffith outlined that splinter proofing was being constructed about the operations room, the signal section, first aid posts, Area Combined Headquarters and Station Headquarters. However, he noted that RAAF Headquarters were delaying the funding for such protection for aircraft.²⁸ All drummed fuels and oils were dug underground in slit trenches (camouflaged), and the bomb dump was dispersed, camouflaged and protected by Guards. Griffith also planned a second station headquarters in a remote area of the airfield in the event of destruction of the operations room.²⁹

Also following the RAAF ABM, Griffith moved all aircraft that required servicing away from RAAF Darwin. Griffith outlined the machine gun defence of this dispersal area, stating 'The dispersal zone will be heavily protected with .5 A/A guns arranged to give mutual protection and crossfire'.³⁰ Griffith considered that the dispersal point on the south-eastern side of the airfield below the north/south runway was the best. This area had a more significant cover by natural camouflage on the aerodrome.

Griffith outlined that while his agreement with the Americans for the supply of 12 machine guns was of great benefit, the Americans were unable to staff them, therefore as the Guards were suitably trained, they would man the additional posts. Major General David Blake, Officer Commanding 7th Military District – Northern Territory, was taken on an inspection of the machine gun posts by Scherger and later described the low-level anti-aircraft machine guns being placed around the aerodrome in below ground posts.³¹

According to some author's descriptions of events on 19 February 1942, 'defence [of airfields] from the ground, was nominally the responsibility of the Army...the air force did not operate its AA guns'.³² This assertion may be a result of the Air Board, Military Board and War Cabinet direction at the time that the Army could provide men for anti-aircraft aerodrome defence. However, the inter-service agreement and the ABM stated that the service that owned the establishment, such as an airfield, was responsible for providing its own local defence (internal to the

26 Report on Administrative Problems in N.W. Area – February 1942, NAA A1196, 37/501/99.

27 Report on Administrative Problems in N.W. Area – February 1942, NAA A1196, 37/501/99.

28 RAAF Station Darwin Dispersal of Aircraft, NAA A705, 171/6/180.

29 Report on Administrative Problems in N.W. Area – February 1942, NAA A1196, 37/501/99.

30 Report on Administrative Problems in N.W. Area – February 1942, NAA A1196, 37/501/99.

31 Findings and Further and Final Report – Commission of Inquiry on the Air-Raid on Darwin 19th Feb. 1942, NAA A816, 37/301/293.

32 Lewis and Ingman, *Carrier Attack Darwin 1942*, p. 133.

airfield). Therefore, a RAAF commander was responsible for providing the stations' small arms anti-aircraft and internal ground defence.³³ Under the agreements, the Australian Army was only required to provide anti-aircraft defence within the battlefield's 'tactical environment', external to the RAAF base. Blake had assessed that the airfields were within the anti-aircraft defensive zone of his anti-aircraft guns, but this did not extend to the provision of small arms (for low-level anti-aircraft guns).³⁴ Relying on Blake's assessment of the defensive zone, Griffith had requested that the Army supply trained men to man his .50 calibre machine guns on the airfield. Griffith later noted that the Army had 'refused' his request based on their resourcing restrictions.³⁵

In the weeks leading up to the bombing Griffith reported that he had 11 twin Vickers machine gun posts established that were being manned day and night by Guards.³⁶ He also had directed that RAAF Guards would man the 'grouped defence' at the main dispersal point (protected by the .50 calibre and Vickers machine guns). On 10 February 1942 in a message to the Air Board and RAAF Headquarters, Griffith requested a further 20 machine guns (for an extra ten machine-gun posts) stating they were 'urgently required'. He also requested another ten .50 calibre machine guns and reasoned, 'they are effective at a much greater height than the .303'.³⁷

In the message, Griffith also detailed the lack of Guards, stating he still only had a total of 58 Guards, 35 of which were attached to the AOBs. He noted that in his previous January report, he detailed his requirement for seven Guard posts (a total of 28 Guards), eight permanently manned machine-gun posts (total of 32 Guards), and two permanently manned spotter posts (total of six Guards). Overall, Griffith needed 66 Guards but only had 23 for RAAF Station Darwin. In addition to the January request Griffith now required an additional 81 Guards for current and new posts, including guarding of working areas, dispersal bomb dump post, stores dump, headquarters and signal section guarding. He also outlined that if he obtained the extra machine guns as requested, he would also need an additional 36 Guards (on top of the 81 already required). If approved the strength of the Guard mustering at RAAF Station Darwin would be 218 (equal to two RAAF Airfield Defence Squadrons of Guards).

On the same day, after Griffith had forwarded the above correspondence, 100 Guards arrived by train in Darwin for posting with other RAAF units to the

33 Ground Defence Schemes. Policy, NAA: A1196, 15/501/75 PART 1.

34 Findings and Further and Final Report – Commission of Inquiry on the Air-Raid on Darwin 19th Feb. 1942, NAA A816, 37/301/293.

35 Findings and Further and Final Report – Commission of Inquiry on the Air-Raid on Darwin 19th Feb. 1942, NAA A816, 37/301/293.

36 Report on Administrative Problems in N.W. Area – February 1942, NAA A1196, 37/501/99.

37 Report on Administrative Problems in N.W. Area – February 1942, NAA A1196, 37/501/99.



Image 7: Cpl Simons and Sgt Bowie. Simons was the first RAAF Guard to die (19th February 1942 at Darwin) from enemy engagement. Source: Author.

northern islands.³⁸ However, the Guards discovered their units had already deployed, and these Guards were then sent to RAAF Station Darwin to await further orders. Therefore, Griffith obtained an unexpected but temporary boost in the numbers of RAAF Guards for his defence plan. Two days later, Griffith implemented on the 12 February a 'Password System' at the Station, which was mandatory for security and all Guards were ordered to challenge all personnel.

Air Commodore Jones's Report

While the additional Guards got to work building the extra machine-gun posts, on 12 February 1942 Air Commodore G. Jones briefly visited RAAF Station Darwin for an inspection. Two days later, back in Melbourne Jones presented his report on concerns regarding RAAF Station Darwin to the RAAF Headquarters where he supported Griffith's request for extra Browning and Vickers machine guns to be issued 'as soon as possible'. Jones also supported Griffith's proposal of more camouflage nets and armoured plating for the front of low-level anti-aircraft machine guns (designed by Wing Commander Tindal). In relation to Guard numbers, Jones supported only 36 out of the 124 additional Guards Griffith required, but then stated that RAAF tradesmen should not be redirected for guarding duties. Jones disagreed with Griffith's plan for dispersal of aircraft. According to Jones, Griffith's plan for the dispersal of aircraft from RAAF Stations Darwin to satellite aerodromes was a 'failure' and advised RAAF Headquarters that Griffith's plan was, '... to the men, a sign something like a retreat from Darwin'.³⁹

Following Jones's report, RAAF Headquarters supported all his recommendations. However, in hindsight, if Griffith had followed Jones's plan and moved the dispersed aircraft back to RAAF Station Darwin from the satellite servicing aerodromes, there could potentially have been many more aircraft destroyed during the bombings on the 19 February 1942.⁴⁰

38 Volume 2 – Headquarters, Darwin NT – Personnel Occurrence Report – 1/1941- 46/1942, NAA A10605, 493/1.

39 Rorrison, *Nor the Years Contemn*, p. 148.

40 Rorrison, *Nor the Years Contemn*, p. 148.

The AIF Artillery Units: A Protected Species

Graham McKenzie-Smith¹

The Second AIF Artillery

When war was declared in September 1939 Australia responded by raising the Second AIF which was initially an infantry division (6 Inf Div) and supporting troops. The artillery component was three field regiments for the division and one for the British corps artillery which was to support the division. 2/1 Fd Regt was raised in NSW, 2/2 Fd Regt in Victoria and 2/3 Fd Regt in SA and WA while 2/5 Army Fd Regt was raised in Queensland and Tasmania for the corps artillery. With the increased use of tanks 2/5 Army Fd Regt was converted to become 2/5 A/tk Regt in January 1940 and renamed 2/1 A/tk Regt in February.

2/1 Fd Regt and 2/2 Fd Regt had already left for the Middle East when, in May 1940, the Australian government decided to expand the AIF to a corps of two divisions and corps troops. For 7 Inf Div 2/4 Fd Regt was raised in Victoria while 2/5 Fd Regt and 2/6 Fd Regt were raised in NSW and 2/2 A/tk Regt in Queensland. As corps artillery 2/7 Army Fd Regt was raised in SA and WA and 2/8 Army Fd Regt in Victoria and Tasmania, while 2/1 Med Regt was raised in NSW and 2/2 Med Regt in Victoria. In July 1940 the AIF was expanded again when 8 Inf Div was raised with 2/9 Fd Regt (NSW), 2/10 Fd Regt (Qld), 2/11 Fd Regt (Vic) and 2/3 A/tk Regt (NSW).

The third convoy taking troops to the Middle East departed in May 1940 and carried 18 Inf Bde Gp (including 2/3 Fd Regt and 2/1 A/tk Regt) as well as a range of reinforcements, corps troops and technical units. When Italy joined the war the passage through the Red Sea was restricted and the convoy was redirected to Great Britain, where they arrived in June, just after the withdrawal from Dunkirk. The units on board were reorganised to form Austral Force, an understrength division with two brigade groups. The two batteries from 2/3 Fd Regt were attached to the brigades, while Regt HQ took on a CRA role as HQ Arty Gp, AIF in UK. A battery of 2/1 A/tk Regt was also attached to each brigade with Regt HQ, the other two batteries and many of the technical and corps troops used to form 70 Inf Bn which was later renamed 2/31 Inf Bn.

Meanwhile in the Middle East insufficient field artillery equipment meant that in July 2/1 Fd Regt was converted to 'Y' Anti Aircraft Regt, which became 2/1

1 Graham, a member of MHSA in Perth, has been researching the Australian Army in the Second World War for many years and the Army History Unit published *The Unit Guide* in 2018. This article is built around the profiles of the AIF artillery units and asks why so many were maintained well past their potential role in future operations.

Fd Regt (AA) in August before reverting to 2/1 Fd Regt in September.

In September 1940 the Government agreed to form a fourth division (9 Inf Div), to be built around Austral Force in the UK and that they would move to the Middle East. 2/3 Fd Regt and 2/1 A/tk Regt were reformed and returned to 6 Inf Div on arrival. It was decided to use the trained corps artillery for the new division rather than raising new units, so the renamed 2/7 Fd Regt and 2/8 Fd Regt joined the division. The lack of medium guns allowed 2/2 Med Regt to be reorganized as 2/12 Fd Regt and 2/3 A/tk Regt was transferred from 8 Inf Div. To restore the corps artillery the renamed 2/9 Army Fd Regt and 2/11 Army Fd Regt were transferred from 8 Inf Div, while 2/1 Med Regt was reorganized as 2/13 Army Fd Regt. Finally to complete the artillery for 8 Inf Div, 2/14 Fd Regt (Vic, SA) 2/15 Fd Regt (NSW) and 2/4 A/tk Regt (Vic) were raised.

Middle East

With some exceptions the artillery regiments then worked with their divisions in the Middle East. 2/1 Fd Regt, 2/2 Fd Regt and part of 2/3 Fd Regt took part with 6 Inf Div in the Western Desert campaign, then with 2/1 A/tk Regt went to Greece. Parts of each unit fought on Crete, often in an infantry role. 2/4 Fd Regt, 2/5 Fd Regt, 2/6 Fd Regt, 2/2 A/tk Regt and part of 2/1 A/tk Regt fought in Syria with 7 Inf Div.

Only 2/12 Fd Regt and 2/3 A/tk Regt were besieged in Tobruk with 9 Inf Div while 2/7 Fd Regt and 2/8 Fd Regt worked with British units on the Egyptian frontier. All four regiments were with the division at El Alamein and this was to prove to be the last time that the massed artillery of an Australian division was to be used

As corps artillery units 2/9 Army Fd Regt worked with a British division in Syria and 2/11 Army Fd Regt was preparing to enter the fight when the Armistice was declared. 2/13 Army Fd Regt had a period of garrison duty in Darwin before they arrived in the Middle East in September 1941 and were reorganized as 2/1 Med Regt but did not see action before they returned to Australia.

Defending the Homeland

In 1939 the pre-war militia fielded seventeen field regiments, one for each of the fifteen infantry brigades and one for each cavalry division. As Australia mobilised new units were formed, including five new field artillery regiments and eleven militia anti-tank regiments.

With the Japanese advance towards Australia 1 Aust Corps was recalled

from the Middle East with 7 Inf Div and the corps troops units arriving in March 1942 and the 6 Inf Div units arrived in August, by which time Australia was home for 32 field regiments, three medium regiments and 12 anti-tank regiments. When 9 Inf Div units arrived home in early 1943 they brought another three field and one anti-tank regiments.

Papuan Campaign

Before the Japanese landing in Papua 13 Fd Regt and 14 Fd Regt had been sent to Port Moresby and were joined in September 1942 by 2/1 Fd Regt and 2/6 Fd Regt, while 2/5 Fd Regt was sent to Milne Bay. There were limited opportunities to use, and supply, field artillery in the Papuan campaign so only two batteries from 2/5 Fd Regt and one from 2/1 Fd Regt, along with single troops from 13 Fd Regt and 14 Fd Regt were used in the front line, while the regiments were stationed for the defence of the base areas at Port Moresby and Milne Bay. 2/1 A/tk Regt and 2/2 A/tk Regt were used in beach defence roles in rear areas.

Formation of 'Jungle' Divisions

For future operations the three AIF divisions (6, 7 & 9) and three militia divisions (3, 5 & 11) were reorganised in early 1943 as 'jungle divisions' which only included a single field regiment and an anti-tank battery. These divisions now only needed six field regiments. Overall, the army had been reduced and the four remaining militia divisions (1 (Sydney), 2 & 4 (WA) and 12 (NT)) retained their structure supported by ten field regiments, with another four in the two armoured divisions. Five others were in garrison roles in the rear areas of New Guinea.

By July 1943 this left ten fully equipped and manned field regiments which were allocated as corps artillery in WA or North Queensland or were grouped in the Helidon area of South Queensland as 'spare' regiments. Despite their being little likelihood of action required against tanks, the renamed tank attack regiments were retained in the four militia divisions while two were in garrison roles in New Guinea and three joined the 'spare' units in South Queensland. The three medium regiments also waited for a role. Outside the divisions training on the Atherton Tableland and the divisions at Darwin and in WA, this grouping of 'spare' artillery units waiting at Helidon for a role was the largest troop concentration in Australia at that time.

In early 1944 a second field regiment was added to each AIF 'jungle' division' which were now waiting in North Queensland to be allocated a new role north of New Guinea but not the former militia divisions which were taking over in New

Guinea. In October a third field and the tank attack regiments were returned to each AIF division, still waiting, but not for the former militia 'jungle' divisions.

6 Division Artillery Units

2/3 Fd Regt had been sent to the Townsville area in May 1942 where they worked with 5 Inf Div and then to Cairns in January 1943, before they re-joined 6 Inf Div at Wondecla in June as their sole artillery regiment. 2/2 Fd Regt had returned from the Middle East in August 1942 and was attached to the RAA Depot in the Hunter region of NSW until July 1943 when they joined the corps artillery on the Atherton Tableland. They re-joined 6 Inf Div as their second artillery unit in January 1944. 2/1 Fd Regt joined 1 Inf Div around Sydney when they returned from New Guinea in July 1943 before joining the corps artillery in Queensland in February 1944. It was September before they re-joined 6 Inf Div to complete their field artillery allocation. The renamed 2/1 Tk Atk Regt joined the 'spare' artillery units at Helidon when they returned from New Guinea in October 1943 where they waited until December 1944 to re-join the 6 Inf Div.

7 Division Artillery Units

2/4 Fd Regt was left behind in South Queensland with the corps artillery when 7 Inf Div moved to Port Moresby for the Papuan Campaign in August 1942 but re-joined the division at Ravenshoe as their sole field regiment in May 1943. Then they participated in the attack on Lae in September and the advance up the Ramu Valley. They returned to Strathpine with the division in March 1944 and then to Kairi in August where the division waited for another role. 2/5 Fd Regt remained in rear areas of New Guinea under various commands until January 1944 when they joined the 'spare' artillery units in South Queensland. However, they re-joined 7 Inf Div at Strathpine in May as their second field regiment before moving with them to Kairi in August. 2/6 Fd Regt stayed in rear areas in New Guinea until they joined 9 Inf Div at Finschhafen in October 1943. They returned to join the 'spare' artillery units in South Queensland in January 1944 before re-joining 7 Inf Div at Kairi in October as their third field regiment. 2/2 A/tk Regt was also left behind in South Queensland when 7 Inf Div moved to New Guinea, but moved there in November 1942 where they had a beach defence role at Oro Bay and then at Milne Bay. The renamed 2/2 Tk Atk Regt returned to join the 'spare' artillery units in South Queensland in October 1943. They moved to Darwin in June 1944 to take over the anti-tank role for NT Force, but soon left to re-join 7 Inf Div at Kairi when they were allocated their full complement of artillery units.

8 Division Artillery Units

2/10 Fd Regt, 2/15 Fd Regt and 2/4 A/tk Regt accompanied 8 Inf Div to Malaya and were captured at Singapore. 2/14 Fd Regt had moved to Darwin in July 1941 to replace 2/13 Army Fd Regt and remained there until January 1943. They then moved to Sydney with 1 Inf Div. In January 1944 they moved to Finschhafen to relieve 2/12 Fd Regt and worked with 5 Inf Div in their advance to Madang. Here they stayed until January 1945 when they accompanied the division to Jacquinot Bay where they were containing the Japanese garrison at Rabaul until the end of the war

9 Division Artillery Units

Following the victory at El Alamein the artillery units of 9 Inf Div returned to Australia in February 1943 and concentrated at Kairi. Here the division was converted into a 'jungle division' and 2/12 Fd Regt was retained as their only field regiment. They moved to New Guinea in August for the assault on Lae and Finschhafen before returning to Ravenshoe with the division in March 1944 where they waited for a new role. 2/7 Fd Regt was allocated as corps troops in July 1943 and remained at Kairi until May 1944 when they were allocated back to 9 Inf Div at Ravenshoe as their second field regiment. 2/8 Fd Regt was also allocated as corps artillery in July 1943 and remained with them until they re-joined 9 Inf Div as their third regiment in September 1944. The HQ of the renamed 2/3 Tk Atk Regt joined the corps troops but as each 'jungle division' had a tank attack battery, the batteries were distributed to 4 Inf Div, 6 Inf Div, 7 Inf Div and 9 Inf Div and served with them in Torres Strait and New Guinea. The batteries re-joined Regt HQ in October 1944 when a full tank attack regiment was allocated to each division, and 2/3 Tk Atk Regt re-joined 9 Inf Div at Ravenshoe.

Corps Artillery Units

After leave, the corps artillery units concentrated in South Queensland where they were progressively joined by the 'spare' artillery units. In February 1943 a battery from 2/9 Army Fd Regt moved to join Merauke Force in Dutch New Guinea and the rest of the regiment joined them in March 1944. The renamed 2/9 Fd Regt re-joined the corps artillery on the Atherton Tableland in November and they remained there waiting for a role until the end of the war. In January 1943, 2/11 Army Fd Regt left for Darwin where they rotated between the fortress area and a camp at 49 Mile. The renamed 2/11 Fd Regt left for New Guinea in September 1944 where they remained in a reserve role at Nadzab until April 1945 when they

moved to Bougainville. They saw out the war supporting the advance south by 3 Inf Div. 2/1 Med Regt reached South Queensland in June 1942 and stayed there with the 'spare' artillery regiments until July 1943. With few likely roles for a medium regiment they were converted to 2/13 Comp AA Regt and although a troop from their HAA battery served in New Guinea, they remained in South Queensland until June 1944 when they moved to the Atherton Tableland. Here they were again reorganized as 2/1 Med Regt in November 1944, but they waited with the corps troops for a role until the end of the war.

Militia Artillery Units

With little no threat to the Australian mainland the period between July 1943 and June 1944 saw ten militia field regiments disbanded, along with six militia tank attack regiments and a medium regiment, while two others were converted to composite anti-aircraft regiments. Most of these came from the units previously deployed in Australia with the militia divisions and although a second field regiment had joined each of the AIF 'jungle' divisions, the reduced troop numbers in New Guinea meant that there were still fourteen regiments acting as corps troops or 'spare' in South Queensland waiting for a role. Six of AIF regiments were returned to the AIF 'jungle' divisions and two more militia regiments were disbanded before the end of 1944.

The Final Campaigns

The AIF divisions and their artillery units waited on the Atherton Tableland to be allocated a role for most of 1944 and well into 1945, while the three militia divisions 'held the fort' in New Guinea. For 1945 Australia was required to relieve the remaining US units in New Guinea and when MacArthur insisted that ten brigades be used, 6 Inf Div was allocated the role at Aitape. Rather than passively defending the base they advanced towards Wewak with one brigade forward along the coast and a battalion in the hills. Only one field regiment at a time was used in the advance with the other two in reserve, while 2/1 Tk Atk Regt retrained to operate some mountain guns or mortars, but spent most of their time as infantry.

On New Britain 5 Inf Div advanced to Wide Bay to contain the Japanese garrison at Rabaul and were supported by 2/14 Fd Regt who were getting their first taste of action. On Bougainville 2 Aust Corps had five brigades which advanced north and south from Torokina, initially supported by 2 Fd Regt and 4 Fd Regt, the only militia field regiments to see out the war in action. They were joined in April 1945 by 2/11 Fd Regt who were seeing their first action except for a detachment which had come under fire in Syria.

After a long wait 9 Inf Div was allocated the landings at Tarakan and Labuan. 2/7 Fd Regt landed with 26 Inf Bde Gp at Tarakan in May 1945, while the other two field regiments landed at Labuan in June before being used as detachments supporting the infantry mopping up in North Borneo and Sarawak. 2/3 Tk Atk Regt were used to handle stores and as infantry. 7 Inf Div was allocated the last offensive operation of the war with the landing at Balikpapan in July 1945. All three field regiments were landed and assisted their brigades, but no artillery concentrations were required. 2/2 Tk Atk Regt undertook infantry and supply duties.

Two more of the spare regiments were disbanded before the end of 1944 and while these final campaigns were underway the pool of 'spare' artillery units remained at six until July 1945 when two more militia regiments were disbanded. At the end of the war four regiments (two field and two medium) were still waiting for a role in Queensland.

A Protected Species

The Australian Army had 37 field regiments in World War Two (22 militia and 15 AIF) and although only three of the militia regiments remained at the end of the war, all of the AIF regiments remained operational (except the two captured at Singapore). In 1943 it had been decided that only a single field regiment was required in jungle warfare for each division, with two others in the corps artillery as a reserve, but the other seven AIF regiments were retained in South Queensland. Although a second regiment was added to each division in May 1944, and a third in October, rarely was more than a single regiment used in any subsequent operation. The eight militia brigades in the final campaigns made do with three field regiments while the nine AIF brigades could call on three times that number.

For defence against tanks the Army fielded fifteen anti-tank regiments (11 militia and four AIF). Only one of the militia units served overseas and that was the only one to survive beyond mid-1944. Although there was no likely threat from tanks in future operations, the renamed AIF tank attack regiments were restored to the AIF divisions in October 1944. Their war diaries demonstrate that they did some anti-tank training, but spent most of their training in infantry, mortar and field artillery work, and in subsequent operations hardly unpacked their anti-tank guns.

Were the AIF artillery regiments a protected species in World War Two? In a climate where all other parts of the army were having to justify their manpower, were the militia artillery units sacrificed to keep the AIF units alive well beyond their justifiable life? The scale of artillery established in the pre-war militia and in the Second AIF was justified at the time by the experience of the large set-piece battles on the Western Front in World War One, but El Alamein was the only action where this scale was used by the Australian Army in World War Two.

Nino Bixio and a Chapel: Australian And New Zealander PoWs' Post-War Connections to a Church at Campo 57, Gruppignano, Udine, Italy

Katrina Kittel¹

On 3 September 1993, fifty years to the day since the signing of the 1943 Italian armistice, New Zealander Dominican Father Ambrose Loughnan stood on the curved front steps of a chapel on the site of former Campo 57. He looked at the congregation, observing that most attendees could not have recalled the war.

Fifty years ago, I stood in this chapel and attended a Mass. It was the 3rd of September 1943. I was a soldier. I was twenty three years old, a prisoner of war, captured in North Africa... This chapel had been built in 1943, and on a few occasions I went to the quarry to bring stone in the army lorries to help in its construction.

Loughnan delighted to see the holy water font on the left-hand side of the chapel door, which he placed there over fifty years ago. It was during his stint in Campo 57 that Loughnan considered becoming a priest after the war.²

Private Ambrose Loughnan was caught up in the last stand of the 6th Field Regiment at Sidi Rezegh and the loss of Belhamed near Tobruk during Operation Crusader. Loughnan was wounded in the neck and taken prisoner on 1 December 1941. Within days he embarked on an Italian hospital ship and placed in a cabin by himself - a padded cell. There was nowhere else to put him. After a brief stay in a Bari hospital Loughnan was cared for by Dominican nuns at Piacenza before the move to Campo 57 in northeast Italy.³ More of New Zealand's soldiers were killed or taken prisoner during Operation Crusader than in any other campaign the division fought in the Second World War.⁴

In December 1941, just before Loughnan's arrival, a visiting legation tallied 1008 POWs at Campo 57. Most of the prisoners at that time were Australians, from campaigns in North Africa, with only 34 New Zealanders.⁵ The longest-haul Australian prisoners spent two years in the camp, having been captured in

1 Katrina Kittel is an independent historian. Her book *Shooting Through: Campo 106 escaped POWs after the Italian Armistice* was published 2019. Katrina is working on a book about Campo 57.

2 Ambrose Loughnan, *Full Circle to God*, Loughley Books: Ohoka (2000), p.1. Loughnan's service number was 1164.

3 Loughnan, *Full Circle*, pp. 3-4, 7-8, 221.

4 . 'The New Zealand Division In Operation Crusader – An Overview', <https://www.sidirezegh.co.nz/Operation-Crusader-An-Overview>, accessed 21 September 2021.

5 Red Cross report by Lambert, visit to Campo 57 on 9 December 1941 (Bill Rudd collection).

early 1941 and reaching Campo 57 by the second half of 1941, later departing to German captivity after the Italian armistice in September 1943. In December 1942, Loughnan would have witnessed the camp swelling with the arrival of more Allied POWs including the July 1942 veterans of Alamein. A visiting legation in that month reported that Campo 57 held 1797 Australians and 1685 New Zealander POWs, as well as lesser numbers for other nationals including 441 Hindus.⁶

Nino Bixio

Taken prisoner of war following the 26/27 July 1942 battle at Ruin Ridge, Alamein, Australian Sapper Bill Rudd embarked on the Italian vessel, *Nino Bixio*, on 16 August 1942, heading for Italian captivity. The two-ship convoy left Benghazi bound for Brindisi in Italy, escorted by two Italian destroyers and two motor torpedo boats. At 3:17 in the following afternoon, 17 August, British submarine HMS *Turbulent* had plotted its course to intercept the convoy and seized its opportunity. It fired four torpedoes in an attempt to knock out both merchant ships despite their strong naval protection. *Turbulent* immediately submerged, successfully escaping a depth-charge counterattack. The near-new *Nino Bixio* suffered direct hits to Hold Number



Image 1: Chapel at Campo 57.
Source: Author.

6 Swiss legation report number 8, visit to Campo 57 on 28 December 1942 (Bill Rudd collection).

One containing Anzac, South African and British POWs and to the engine room, disabling both the vessel's propulsion and power supplies. A third torpedo grazed the rudder without exploding but did enough damage to cripple the ship's steering. *Nino Bixio* settled in the water but did not sink, though many had jumped overboard in anticipation that she would do so. Bill Rudd, who lived to almost 102 years of age, could never forget his first-hand experience of the chaos and carnage of Hold Number Two:

I remember a sudden tremendous thud and the "whoompf" of the torpedo bursting into the hold...Looking down on the bottom of the hold was like watching a surreal merry-go-round. It was still daylight and the clear white and jade-green water was swirling around in a clockwise direction with bodies, clothing, petrol drums that had served as urinals and all sorts of gear revolving at a mad pace. The water was also rising rapidly and the smell of cordite hung thickly in the foetid air...On deck it was a scene of complete confusion. Those on the deck immediately above the hold, mainly guards, had been blown to bits. There were remains of humans hanging in the rigging and body parts littered the bloody deck. An anti-aircraft gun was a mangled twisted piece of steel, crushed under steel deck beams which had been hurled upwards by the force of the explosion and then crashed back onto the ship. POWs were pouring up from other holds and many, mainly Indians, were jumping off the decks into the sea.⁷

Nino Bixio was taken in tow by *Saetta* and was beached early the following morning off the naval port of Navarino in Greece. As both Bill and Charles remembered, unwounded New Zealanders and Australians were left to the last to disembark. They were put to work cleaning up the ship, reeking with the smell of death. Bill later learnt that the casualties from Hold Number One were at least 116 New Zealanders, 41 Australians, 16 British and 11 South Africans, more than one-third of all prisoners in the hold and over half of the 309 Anzacs on board. To Bill's understanding, seven Free French POWs in Hold Number Two were killed but he could not find a figure for Indian POWs in Hold Number Three. Bill's post-war research informed him that some 4,500 Allied POWs were loaded on to *Sestriere* (with surnames A-M) and *Nino Bixio* (with surnames N-Z). Subsequent research revealed this surname split applied to the majority, as some POWs swapped boarding passes or for other reasons boarded without fitting this demarcation.⁸ Most of the Australians were from Western Australia, particularly those of 2/28th Battalion which had high numbers captured at Ruin Ridge.⁹

7 Bill Rudd's Campo 57 site, <http://campo57.com/products.html>, accessed 21 September 2021. William Rudd's service number was VX39694.

8 Bill Rudd's Campo 57 site; research communications with Kittel; subsequent collaborative and independent research by Katrina Kittel and Bill Rudd.

New Zealander survivor of the Nino Bixio, Private Charles Watkins, 25th Battalion, became a post-war research colleague to Bill. Charles offered Bill some of his recollections of 17 August 1942. Charles was halfway up the walls of Hold Number Two on a catwalk that ran around the bulkhead.

I was playing bridge with another Kiwi and two Australians. The torpedo then burst into the hold, ending the game...we pulled up some of the injured with ropes and others on a bit of a stretcher made from the remains of one of the wooden ladders... You had to walk over dead bodies to move anywhere... Medical facilities were minimal, but some sort of order began to emerge, but it was too late to save many of the wounded.¹⁰

While some POWs drowned in the sea soon after the torpedo hit, others reached makeshift rafts and drifted around the Mediterranean Sea for up to weeks without food or water, with resultant murder and cannibalism in order to survive.

Bill Rudd and Charles Watkins eventually moved on to Campo 57, a prison camp described by Ambrose Loughnan as 'living in a camp space of only a few acres...all these people in a confined space'.¹¹ Six decades later, on his extensive research website, Bill summarised his arrival to Campo 57. He alludes to more than three decades of saying little about his war:

I stumbled into Campo 57, Gruppignano, Udine after a long train trip up the boot of Italy from Bari. It was dark and I was among a small rag-tag group of POWs, ex El Alamein, who were among the survivors from the Nino Bixio... Cpl Gordon Dare of the 2/24 Battalion was one of the curious onlookers watching our small party trudge in to 57...and nursed me through successive attacks of amoebic dysentery, influenza and jaundice after my arrival.¹²

Alamein veterans like Bill who dragged their feet into camp in late 1942 were malnourished and wearing insufficient clothing for the approaching intensely cold winter of north-east Italy. Bill was one of the POWs to have a comparatively brief stint of about four or five months in the camp, arriving late 1942 and departing in April 1943 for Campo 106.¹³

9 Research by Katrina Kittel for *Shooting Through*.

10 Charles Watkins cited on Bill Rudd's Campo 57 site. Service number for Watkins was 46177.

11 Loughnan, *Full Circle*, p.12.

12 Bill Rudd's anzacpow site, https://www.anzacpow.com/welcome_letter, accessed 21 September 2021. The website aifpow.com is an earlier version of the anzacpow.com site.

13 Research by Katrina Kittel for *Shooting Through*.

Campo 57 and a Chapel

For prisoners of war, the availability of and access to spaces for commemoration of the dead, for solace and faith worship may have offered a lift to morale. From her research into the Australian prisoners at Stalag Luft III, Kristen Alexander concluded that some POWs drew on religious beliefs and practices to manage and make sense of their captivity whereas others ‘struggled to find religious consolation during challenging times or lost their faith altogether’. Alexander noted that ‘church services held in each compound were well-attended by devout and once-a-year Christians alike’. She observed that ‘There is a powerful nostalgic element of religious practice which creates strong emotive connections to home, loved ones and fellow worshippers’.¹⁴

Behind barbed wire at Campo 57, days of special significance for groups of POWs such as Anzac Day and religious celebrations like Christmas, as well as days of significance to individual POWs including birthdays and anniversaries, may have triggered moments of existential reflection, emotion and quiet grief about one’s injuries and the death of comrades, as well a deep concern that loved ones at home may die before they return home.

Adrian Gilbert cites POW Jack Vietor’s conclusion that ‘It was very rare that even the most harrowing combat altered anyone’s religious outlook’. Gilbert also cites Reginald Dexter that ‘In adversity, so easy to turn to the Church for comfort—to attend the services merely as somewhere to get out of the rut of idle camp life’. Gilbert



Image 2: Hanging cross, chapel Campo 57.
Source: Author.

14 Kristen Alexander, ‘Emotions of Captivity: Australian Airmen Prisoners of Stalag Luft III and their Families’, PhD thesis, UNSW, Canberra (2020), p.229, 244.

states that padres found themselves ministering to men of denominations other than their own: 'Adherents to religions other than Christianity had to make their own ad-hoc provision', Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of the Indian Army included. Whereas doctors had a well-defined role, Gilbert asserts that a padre's purpose behind barbed wire was less defined. He adds: 'On the positive side this allowed an energetic and dedicated clergyman to carve out a position for himself that would be of great benefit to those under his care'.¹⁵ Kristen Alexander noted that 'Some chaplains participated in the camp social life and provided quiet support through their presence'.¹⁶

An Italian chaplain appointed to Campo 57 to minister mostly to the guards, Father Giovanni Cotta, exemplified the positive influence of a chaplain (or padre) among the prisoners. Father Cotta was respected for his Sunday Mass services but a deeper respect was gained, according to POW accounts, through his active engagement with prisoners. Father Cotta would likely have known about the shootings of POWs who ran at the wire perimeter, and of a POW shot during a cricket match in May 1943. He may have known of the frequent collective punishment of prisoners and of too-frequent night-time parades in bitterly cold weather while barrack searches were undertaken by guards.

For at least one funeral at the camp in 1942, the recreation hut was prepared as a church space with a small pulpit made of stools. When draped with blanket and sheets, these offered a resting place for a coffin.¹⁷ Alex Barnett noted that POWs broached the subject of a church with Father Cotta, saying they would consult with him and authorities through design and construction.¹⁸ Ambrose Loughnan recalled the utilisation of one half of a barracks as a makeshift chapel. Loughnan described his admiration for Father Cotta: 'a little elderly man with white beard, and yet with a young complexion. He had big, brown, almost childlike eyes. He was never afraid to act on our behalf with the military authorities that ran the camp'. Father Cotta, Loughnan understood, convinced the notorious camp commandant Colonel Calcaterra that some form of spiritual space within the camp would benefit the mental health of prisoners. Loughnan recalled that in 1942 Father Cotta's hopes for a church began to take shape as he arranged construction. Prisoners who worked on the chapel would be eligible for extra rations. Loughnan observed that 'Catholics I did not recognise before came "out of the woodwork". I don't blame them either for when food gets scarce you will try anything for extra rations. So there were lots of

15 Adrian Gilbert, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe 1939-1945*, John Murray: London (2006), pp. 226-229. For POWs' use of Pope-issued hymn/calendar small notebooks, see Katrina Kittel, 'Hymns and hints: a prisoner of war's notebook', *Sabretache*, LIV, 4, (2014), pp.4-12.

16 Alexander, 'Emotions of Captivity'.

17 Ken Fenton, *Alamein to the Alps: War in the Piedmont with Mission Cherokee and the Lost Anzacs 1943-45*, Frontier Press: Nelson (2011), p.213.

18 Alex Barnett, *Hitler's Digger Slaves: Caught in the Web of Axis Labour Camps*, Australian Military History Publications: Loftus (2001), p.81.

volunteers'. Construction was under the direction of the Italian military forces who administered Campo 57.¹⁹

Of Father Cotta, Bill Rudd wrote: 'The ageing, white-bearded but highly energetic and resourceful priest convinced the Vatican to donate building materials and with plenty of volunteer labour from the prisoners, constructed the chapel'. The chapel – la chiesetta – was in compound Number One.²⁰ Loughnan went to work at the local quarry to gather stone, driven there in an army lorry to fill it up, and watching progress until the outer shell of the building was finished. 'There was an altar inside, and doors and windows were complete. There were no seats, but there was a bell, which I remember being blessed by Father Cotta and which was given the name of Barbara'.²¹

Prisoner Doug Frame, a 2/3rd anti-tank gunner captured at Ruin Ridge the same day as Bill Rudd, recalled helping with the collection of stones from a river. He recalled that the labourers numbered about twenty. As Doug was not a Catholic, he was mostly an onlooker to the construction. 'The Italians of course were engaged as the artisans and skilled builders. The prisoner worker received a little extra bread as payment'.²² Campo 57 POWs' rationale for volunteering may have been merely to have extra rations, to establish a faith space, or to do something different to break the monotony. Motivation to work on the chapel may have been multi-faceted or simply a nudge by a POW mate.

A few days before the post-armistice roundup of Campo 57 internees in September 1943 by German battle troops, Father Cotta held the only Eucharistic celebration in the chapel. Loughnan attended this Mass, recalling that just before the chapel was opened, news came – 'for certain this time' – that Mussolini had fled and that Italy was without a government. The Mass was held the following morning. 'As we came out of the chapel',



Image 3: Exterior of chapel.
Source: Author.

19 Loughnan, *Full Circle*, pp. 9, 12-13, 1.

20 Bill Rudd, Campo 57 website.

21 Loughnan, *Full Circle*, p.13.

22 Douglas Frame, interview with Katrina Kittel.

Loughnan remembered, ‘we found that German soldiers had surrounded the camp and were pointing machine guns at us!’²³

POW Alex Barnett added that camp commander ‘Calcaterra, in cohorts [cahoots] with the Germans, made accusations against the priest, denouncing him as a collaborator with the Australian prisoners...he pointed to the church built by prisoners, to corroborate his argument. The Germans desecrated the ill-fated church’.²⁴

Image 4: Interior of chapel at Campo 57.
Source: Author.



Post-War Connections

Original structures of Campo 57 remain. In addition to the chapel, these include the foundations of two huts in Compound 2, the original guard's quarters and cook house plus a partially modernised house made of compacted earth built for the camp commandant. The chapel was adopted in 1990 by members of the Udine chapter of ANGET, Associazione Nazionale Genieri e Trasmettitori (the National Association of Engineers and Signallers), a non-political, not-for-profit brotherhood of retired Italian military engineers. After the war the chapel and some of the surrounding land was purchased by the Municipality of Premariacco. General Stefano Carraro, Chairman of ANGET Udine, signed a ten-year rolling rent-free lease with the Mayor of Premariacco. ANGET planned to restore the

²³ Loughnan, *Full Circle*, p. 15.

²⁴ Barnett, *Hitler's Digger Slaves*, p. 82.

chapel as a dedication to all those who, in war and peace, had served in the corps of engineers. The wording recorded on the plaque on the outside wall expresses that this restoration initiative is a sign of Christian brotherhood with the prisoners who built it: ‘in segno di fratellanza cristiana con i prigionieri che la eressero.’²⁵

Most ex-POWs would likely have lacked inclination or financial means to return to captivity locations during their post-war lives. A small number of ex-POWs did return to the Campo 57 site. A Udinese newspaper reported on the return of former POW Doug Frame and his meeting with ANGET. Frame expressed his satisfaction to the association’s president, General Carraro, when they discussed plans to restore the chapel to original condition.²⁶

In 1992 Loughnan heard about ANGET’s goals for the chapel. He wrote to General Carraro saying he would be delighted, as a Dominican father, to celebrate the sacred mass signalling the restoration. On 3 September 1993, Loughnan readied to present Mass on the chapel’s steps. The interior restoration was not quite complete but well underway. ‘By the time I arrived the whole roof had been repaired, retiled and the timber inside varnished. The cement floor had been repaired and renewed’. The chapel was the only building he recognised on site. He did recall ‘of course the mountains of the Italian Dolomites in the distance, and also a tiny village called Gruppignano that was about two kilometres away across open fields’.²⁷ During his Mass, Father Loughnan spoke of September 1943’s watershed events:

It was during that week, as some of you will remember, that Mussolini had fled, and there was no government for Italy as a consequence. When the Mass was finished, we came out of the chapel to see that German soldiers had surrounded the camp. They took us to Germany. The chapel was closed. It is a great joy for me to say this Mass for peace and as an act of reconciliation for many of us...in a world so sadly broken by that supreme stupidity of all humanity, may this chapel be a sign to win peace for all peoples.²⁸

In the middle of the Mass, Loughnan briefly paused, ‘seized by the loneliness and the sorrow of the memory’ of men in Piacenza hospital – one blinded, another with his lower jaw shot away and another who had stopped a burst of machine gun fire to be in continual pain until he died in hospital. Loughnan was saddened too by thoughts of the paucity of detail in brief telegram communications to next of kin regarding the nature of their deaths.²⁹

25 Bill Rudd’s campo 57 site.

26 ‘Tornato Douglas l’australiano’, *Messaggero Veneto di Udine* (undated). Courtesy of Doug Frame. Translation of article by Kittel.

27 Loughnan, *Full Circle*, p. 191.

28 Loughnan, *Full Circle*, p. 1.

29 Loughnan, *Full Circle*, p. 8.

In 2013, ten years after Loughnan's Mass, a visit by Cate Carrigan and a large group of family members exemplified the pilgrimages of POWs' descendants to the site. Cate viewed a wooden crucifix by the prisoners, 'now lovingly protected in a glass and wood cabinet. It stands around 80cms tall and written on the back are the signatures of the prisoners who helped build it, including our father Carl Carrigan'. As ANGET members learnt that the crucifix had been removed by a priest and taken to another church, they fought to have this artefact returned to the chapel. They told Cate that POWs fashioned the cross. The Carrigan brothers wrote on 1940 enlistment documents that they were Roman Catholic.³⁰ Doug Frame, who was in the same regiment as Carl and Paul Carrigan, recalled that prisoner labourers numbered about 20 and needed to be Roman Catholics, but he did not clarify if this was a strict requirement by Father Cotta or by camp administration.³¹ The number of POW signatories on the cross is approximately 26. With the prospect of extra rations for participation, the signatories may include those who professed to be of Catholic faith.

Another striking feature of the chapel is a large cross hanging above the altar which was specially painted by Professor Ezio Casarin, a local artist. The artwork depicts Christ's hands secured to the cross with barbed wire. Behind his hands are scenes of Campo 57. Three men depict Allied POWs. As Sandra Crashley describes within Loughnan's book, 'Behind Christ's legs is a scene of the watchtower with Italian soldiers guarding the barbed wire perimeters. Beneath his feet are helmets and flowers, a reminder that the Italians also lost many soldiers as POWs in the same war'.³²

Bill Rudd's memories of the Nino Bixio tragedy and Campo 57 never left him. It was not until after the death in 1976 of a close friend since Campo 57, Gordon Dare, and the subsequent request by Gordon's widow for information about their war, that Bill reflected on her words that she had never heard them speak about it. 'That was true,' Bill wrote on his website, 'We seldom did.'³³ The request by Gordon's widow catapulted Bill into four decades of research and writing about POWs in Europe. Bill Rudd as an ex-POW and a Nino Bixio survivor, was concerned that there were no graves that could be honoured by future generations for the POWs who died en route to Campo 57. He thought about options for commemoration at the Campo 57 site. He reasoned that the chapel built within the confines of an Anzac POW camp, albeit a camp mostly confined to non-commissioned ranks, could house a commemorative plaque that lifted its significance to higher potential: 'a significant Anzac Memorial'. In 2013, plans by what Bill Rudd referred to as 'a

30 Cate Carrigan, <http://italytothealps.blogspot.com>, accessed 21 September 2021; Barnett, *Hitler's Digger Slaves*, p.286; NAA B883 for NX51288 Carrigan and NX51289 Carrigan.

31 Doug Frame, interview; Kittel's research to identify signatories of the crucifix.

32 Sandra Crashley, in Loughnan, *Full Circle*, Foreword (page unnumbered). Sandra attended the 1993 Mass.

33 anzacpow.com site.

consortium of Anzac survivors of the camp and colleagues' — a group with Bill, Charles Watkins and John Tesser at its core — were well underway for a memorial plaque that listed the names of those 157 Anzacs who perished as a result of the attack on Nino Bixio. This request was accepted by ANGET. Charles Watkins died in 2013.³⁴

In 2014, when all was ready for the plaque installation, Bill Rudd at age 96 returned to Italy with his son Tony. In the company of researcher Leigh Thompson and Australian Ambassador to Italy Mike Rann, they sat in the front row inside a packed chapel, 72 years to the day of the torpedoing of the Nino Bixio. Other onlookers watched from outside. A lengthy Catholic service ensued with attendant priests, distinguished officials representing Italian government at multiple levels, Army corps, ANGET members, banner bearers and a bugler. Bill read aloud the names of the veterans listed on the plaque while poppies were placed in corresponding niches. Bill Rudd, like Doug Frame and Ambrose Loughnan before him, attracted the clicking of civilian and news cameras. Regardless of the incomplete understandings by the Italian journalists, invited guests and local people of the nature of captivity conditions for the POWs packed into this space under the command of a fascist commandant, the reception to Bill Rudd was one of 'enthusiasm and kindness' and 'a good deal of curiosity', as Loughnan described of his visit eleven years earlier.³⁵



Image 5: 17 August 2014 service unveiling plaque listing Anzac POWs died as a result of attack *Nino Bixio*.
Source: Author.

Just before Cate Carrigan and her family group stood in the chapel in September 2013, my husband and I visited. The intertwined iconography of crucifixion and captivity depicted in the altar, artwork and artefacts is a stark and solemn welcome mat. I viewed the names on the wooden crucifix. When the POWs signed their names on its reverse, they could not predict their respective outcomes, within the camp and later in their war. It is easy for visitors to assume that the signatures were done during chapel construction or completion. My research to identify the signatories revealed that one of them, Albert Bullivant, died in the camp in July 1942, indicating that signatures may have written before construction began.³⁶ Perhaps the group worshipped together; perhaps the men were all from the same hut; perhaps the group celebrated their start at construction. The signatures were written before mid-April 1943 as several of the signatories including the Carrigan brothers departed Campo 57 for Campo 106 at that time.

I met with the regional delegate for ANGET Friuli, Giuseppe Munno, but with a language barrier I could not stretch my Italian to inquire about his understanding of the camp's history. Was the camp portrayed in local historical narrative as a well-run camp with sufficient distribution of food, clothing and medication? I wondered too whether he had learnt from visitors, particularly POWs' descendants, of the camp's notoriety among the Anzac POWs as detailed in their first-hand accounts. Munno, in his speech at the 2014 service which I viewed with translations on DVD, said that ANGET had become aware that the chapel represents a reality that was at risk of being erased from memory. He acknowledged the presence of a prison camp on this site in a period of 'dark history' where 'brothers' were imprisoned. He declared that while ANGET exists, and the Municipality of Premariacco renews the lease, ANGET will continue to keep it as it is, in memory of the men who spent part of their life at Campo 57.³⁷

The chapel which had only one Mass during wartime became a place of remembrance and commemoration decades after the Second World War ended. The actions of ANGET and words of Signor Munno, together with the actions and initiatives by aged ex-POWs Loughnan, Watkins, Frame and Rudd, as well as visits to the camp site and chapel by ex-POWs' descendants exemplify a deeply-felt shared history and the complexity of the collateral of wartime carnage and captivity.

34 Correspondence, Bill Rudd and Katrina Kittel; Bill Rudd document collection.

35 Video, audio, translation of speeches, 2014 service, courtesy of Bill and Tony Rudd; Loughnan, *Full Circle*, p. 191.

36 Kittel's research to identify signatories. Albert Bullivant was NX2464.

37 Video, audio, translation of speeches, 2014 service.

Legion does not fight Legion

Michael Firth¹

There has always been a sense of mystery around the French Foreign Legion, a home for outcasts and where people can hide from the rest of the world. The legion has formed its own family, looking after its members, defending its own and never betraying the legions honour. A tough disciplined fighting force defending the colonies of France. Besides mutinies and desertions, the question is that 'have units of the legion ever fought other legion units'?

The situation of legion fighting legion could only occur if the legion was trying to satisfy the needs of two different masters which could go against the legions unwritten code of 'Legion does not fight Legion.' One of the few times the legion found itself in this possible situation was during World War Two with the partial occupation of France providing the legion with two masters being Marshall Petain, leading the Vichy French (VF) forces, and General de Gaulle's Free French (FF) Forces.

The situation of the divided French forces occurred between the fall of France in June 1940 and the aftermath of the North African Operation Torch landings, November 1942. By June 1943 the French Committee of National Liberation (CFLN) had been formed combining the previously pro-Vichy French Army of North Africa with the Free French to form the new French Liberation Army (AFL). It would only be during this time of separation that there would be any instances of legion fighting legion occurring.

Before April 1940, the distribution of French Foreign Legion units was:

Metropolitan troops (mainland France):

Foreign Infantry Regiment (REI); 11 REI, 12 REI

Foreign Volunteer Provisional Regiment (RMVE);

21e RMVE, 22e RMVE, 23e RMVE

Divisional Reconnaissance Group (GRD); GRD 97

Foreign Legion Provisional Half-Brigade (DBLE); 13 DBLE

(unit took part in the battle of Narvik)

Army of North Africa:

Algeria; 1 REI (part)

Tunisia; 1 REI (part)

Morocco; 2 REI, 3 REI, 4 REI

Army of Levant (Syria and Lebanon): 6 REI (mainly station in Lebanon)

Tonkin Division (Indochina): 5 REI.

With the fall of France, the legion units in France were disbanded with their members being allowed to be repatriated to legion units in the French colonies. At this time, the 13 DBLE was in England following its evacuation from Norway. The members of the 13 DBLE were provided with the opportunity to join de Gaulle's free French troops or be repatriated to North Africa. Only about 900 members of the French military personnel remained in England with the rest being repatriated.

Most colonies pledged their allegiance to the Vichy government with the remainder deciding to stay neutral or siding with de Gaulle. In England, de Gaulle formed the Brigade of Legion France (BLF) from the French troops who had not wanted to be repatriated. Meanwhile, the 13 DBLE was renamed the 14 DBLE before reverting back to its original name by November 1940. In the Vichy area of France, the Army of Armistice was formed containing amounts its units, the legion units from the French colonies. A lot of the troops remained loyal to the Vichy government which contributed to the belief that as long as the forces remained loyal or neutral, it removed a major reason for the German forces to occupy the rest of France.

Looking at the BLF forces under de Gaulle, the battles they were involved in between June 1940 and June 1943 included:

- a) September 1940: The Battle of Dakar (French West Africa): the Vichy forces stopped the BLF and British forces from landing forcing them to withdraw from the area
- b) October 1940: Battle of Gabon (French Equatorial Africa): The BLF forces including the French Oriental Brigade (BFO) landed and defeated the Vichy forces forming a base for de Gaulle to use for recruiting and training his forces.
- c) February to April 1941: Battle of Karen: British and free French forces fighting the Italian forces in Eritrea and Ethiopia
- d) June to July 1941: Operation Exporter: Commonwealth and free French forces fighting Vichy forces in Lebanon and Syria
- e) October 1941 to May 1943: North Africa Campaign: Free French forces fight with the 8th Army in North Africa
- f) November 1942: Operation Torch: American and British forces landing in French North Africa initially fighting against Vichy forces, the North African Army. These landings lead to the operations in Tunisia which saw the total defeat of German and Italian forces in North Africa.

With the Allied victory after the Operation Torch landings in North Africa, several things occurred of which one was the German occupation of Vichy France and the disbandment of the French Army of Armistice. In North Africa, the Vichy Army of North Africa aligned itself with the Allies against the Axis forces forming the AFL. There still remained some tension between ex-Vichy units and units which had sided with de Gaulle. In looking at the campaigns listed above, the only

period of time when de Gaulle's legion units would have been facing Vichy legion units would have been during Operation Exporter, the battles in Lebanon and Syria, 1941.

The forces deployed by the Allies in Operation Exporter in the Lebanon area included the 7th Australian Division with attached British units, the 6th Australian Divisional Cavalry, British 6th Infantry Division made up of two British Brigades (added at a later date) and the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade. Attached to the Indian brigade was the 1st Free French Light Division. This division contained:

Brigade d'Orient (BFO)

1st Free French Brigade

1st Battalion of Foreign Legion (I/13 DBLE)

1st March Battalion (1 BM)

3rd March Battalion (3 BM)

2nd Free French Brigade

1st Battalion on Marine Infantry (1 BIM)

2nd March Battalion (2 BM)

4th March Battalion (4 BM)

1st battalion of Naval Fusiliers

1st Moroccan Spahis group

1st battery Field Artillery (4 x 75mm Guns)

1st company of tanks (9 x H-39 tanks)

Circassian Cavalry group (approx. 450 troops).

On the Vichy side, the Army of the Levant contained four battalions of the 6th Foreign Legion Infantry Regiment (6 REI) assigned to different areas of defence with other Vichy troops. The 6 REI assigned areas are as follows:

South Lebanon Sector

Saïde Sub-sector: IV/6 REI

Central Lebanon Sector

Task Force Albord: III/6 REI

Task Force Barre: I/6 REI

Task Force Rougie: II/6 REI.

Operation Exporter commenced on 8 June 1941 with the allied forces crossing the Palestine-Lebanese border along three main lines of attack. The 21st Aust. Brigade took the coastal route heading towards Tyre while the 25th Aust. Brigade took the central route towards Merdjayoun. The inland Desert Column was made up of the 5th Indian Brigade Group supported by the 1st Free French Light Division, heading towards Quneitra and Deraa then onwards to Damascus. While the Indian forces moved forward, the 13 DBLE remained in reserve until the 19 July

when they assaulted the mountain peaks around the village of Kissoué just south of Damascus.

These would lead to the situation were the 13 DBLE would come up against units of the defending Vichy forces including battalions of the 6 REI. With the prospect of legionnaires fighting legionnaires, the commander of 13 DBLE, Colonel Montclar stepped down and was replaced by Major (Lt Col.) Dimitri Amilakvari. There seems to be several references to possible points of interaction between legion units of either of the two sides.

The most documented point of conflict is listed on the 20 June 1941 when advanced elements of the 13 DBLE probed positions held by advance units of the III/6 REI in Kadam, a southern suburb of Damascus. The story of the incident is that the two advanced elements met with shots being fired. In the exchange a Belgian legionnaire with 13 DBLE was killed and a Corporal with III/6 REI was wounded. At about this point Amilakvari had his bugler blow 'Boudin' to assemble his scattered troops only to have a return call from the defensive positions. After ordering a cease fire, Amilakvari with his deputy approached the defensive positions to find it held by a Sergeant and several troops of the III/6 REI. After a brief discussion, Amilakvari found the Sergeant had orders to hold his position until '1.00am' so he told his troops to have a rest as he would not advance until 2.00am as well as well as offering assistance to the defending unit, if was needed.

A less documented incident is indicated to have occurred at nightfall on the same day during the approach to Ghouta, south of Damascus, when Captain de Bollardiere was leading a patrol of forward scouts. During the advance there was a burst of fire forcing the patrol to ground. A challenge was shouted from the direction of the shots and Bollardiere responded with 'Foreign Legion, who are you?'. The reply was also 'Foreign Legion' and after a short discussion, he was told the unit he was facing was the 7th company. Knowing he only had four companies in his unit, he ordered the legionnaire forward after telling he told him he had fired on other legionnaires. Bollardiere told the legionnaire that he was still in the legion and ordered the person to fall in behind his patrol and marched off.

The final reference found is only mentioned in passing in only one reference which is not substantiated by other sources. It is a report by Lieutenant Baulens, 6 REI, claiming his unit on the 10 June, fired on a column of trucks carrying 'Gaullist legionnaires' with the location as south of Damascus. This is report is not reference in any other source and could have been different free French unit being mistaken for legionnaires.

It does appear there were a couple of instances during the campaigns in Lebanon and Syria when legion units did fire on legion units, but this appears to have been only isolated occurrences. Unfortunately, further heated confrontations did occur after the end of the campaign when Vichy forces were offered the opportunity to join de Gaulle's free French forces or be repatriated back to North Africa. Nearly all the Vichy forces chose repatriation even after some very forceful tactics employed

by the free French. After World War Two although 13 DBLE was not disbanded, it was treated badly by the French army for having sided with de Gaulle. It finished the war fighting in Alpine regions before being despatched to Indochina.

It was unfortunate, due to political reasons, that incidents did occur when legion did fire on legion during Operation Exporter but there was no direct deliberate conflict. For the rest of this campaign, legion officers always made attempts to make sure legion did not fight legion. The 13DBLE survive today as an active unit of the French Foreign Legion but the 6 REI was disbanded in 1955. The symbols, history and traditions from 6e REI was adopted by the 6th Foreign Engineer Regiment (6e REG) when it was formed in 1984. The unit 6e REG was renamed as 1st Foreign Engineer Regiment (1er REG) in 1999.

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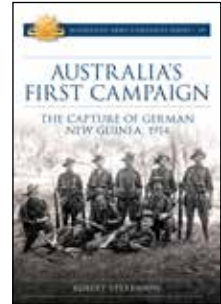
Reviews

Australia's First Campaign: The Capture of German New Guinea, 1914

Robert Stevenson

Big Sky Publishing, Newport NSW, 2021

Paperback, \$19.99



Australia's First Campaign is number 29 in the Australian Army Campaigns Series, and follows the now familiar format of a relatively succinct narrative, well larded with photos, maps, tables and text boxes. The main title refers to the campaign to seize Germany's New Guinea and Pacific Island colonies at the outbreak of WW1 as the first to be undertaken by federated Australia, albeit still at the instigation of Britain. As such, and given that the actual 'shooting war' occupied little more than a full day – 11 September 1914 – author Robert Stevenson takes the opportunity to provide a comprehensive background to the campaign. This is especially of value to readers unfamiliar with the circumstances of Australia's military and naval preparations before the war, and of Germany's colonial project during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

This process of contextualising is carried over very effectively into the description of the campaign itself. For while there are other accounts available, notably in two volumes of the official history of the war, Stevenson provides an informative analysis of the formation and composition of the various units of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF), made up as it was of one Navy and two Army battalions. Neither Jose in vol.9 of the official histories nor Mackenzie's much more satisfactory version in vol.10 delve into the particularities and personalities of ANMEF in this detail, nor do they problematise its conduct in the manner adopted by Stevenson. For example, having explained the strategic, operational and tactical levels of warfare, he offers an appraisal of the degrees to which the New Guinea campaign succeeded at these levels. Along the way, he also provides some fascinating insights into the capabilities and behaviours of various individuals involved.

Australia's First Campaign is an interesting and useful examination of an enterprise that was to have a marked effect on Australia's place in the affairs of the Pacific region. In common with other titles in the series it lacks notes and referencing; nevertheless it merits a place on the shelf of anyone seeking a more up-to-date version of the campaign's course and consequences.

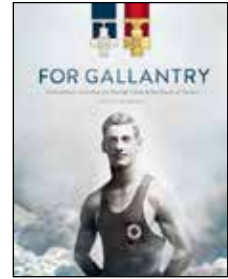
Paul Skrebels

For Gallantry: Australians Awarded the George Cross and the Cross of Valour

Craig Blanch

UNSW Press, Sydney, 2021

Hardback, \$69.99



For Gallantry is a chronicle of Australian recipients of the top honour available for non-combat bravery, both civilians and armed forces personnel, and tells of the acts that led to such recognition.

Australia made use of British Imperial awards until 1975 when a uniquely Australian honours and awards system was adopted. Initially, awards for the highest level of gallantry included the Edward Medal, the Albert Medal and the Empire Gallantry Medal, inaugurated by the British monarch of the time. In 1940, King George V created the George Cross (GC). This award was retrospectively made to all living recipients of the earlier awards and remained the top award until the introduction by Australia of its Cross of Valour (CV).

The book is presented in three main sections, each of which is bannered by the medal in question. These sections present information on all Australian recipients of the top award of the time. The first section addresses the ‘George Cross exchange awards’ covering the period 1915 to 1937, being the dates of the first and last Australian recipients of the Edward Medal, the Albert Medal or the Empire Gallantry Medal. These recipients had their medal replaced with the new George Cross. The second addresses the ‘Direct George Cross awards’, covering the period 1941 to 1976. The third section addresses ‘The Cross of Valour’, covering the period 1988 to 2002, during which five CVs have been awarded.

A very nicely constructed and presented format is used to provide information to the reader. There is at least one photograph of each recipient and, where possible, photographs of the context/location of the brave act/s. The actual citation comes first, followed by an expansion of the circumstances of the act/s and then, a broader story of the recipient’s life. This logical construction makes it very easy for the reader to choose the level of detail to which they may delve.

Each recipient’s story is supported by notes which are tightly packaged at the end of the book and an Index completes this support material. A pleasing feature is the recognition afforded in the Acknowledgement to at least two prominent members of the MHSA well-reputed for their level of expertise in medals.

This is a most handsome 194-page publication, constituting a companion volume to *For Valour*, a well-known publication on the military equivalent of the highest awards for bravery. It is well written and believed to be the first known coverage of all Australians to be recognised for gallantry under non-combat conditions. Recommended for both medal enthusiasts and historians alike.

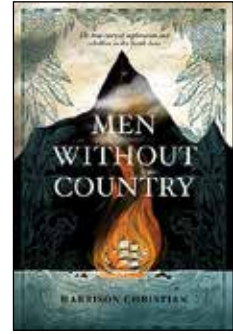
LtCol Russell Linwood, ASM (Retd)

Men Without Country: The true story of exploration and rebellion in the South Seas

Harrison Christian

Ultimo Press, Ultimo, 2021

Paperback, \$34.99



This book reinforces my decision never to go on Mastermind. It lists 40 books in the bibliography. I have ten books on the subject and only three of them are on Mr Christian's reading list. I feel sure if I went on Mastermind they would ask questions from the 30 books I haven't read.

Harrison Christian is a descendent of Fletcher. This family connection may have planted the seed for this book, but he has spread his research widely and doesn't rely on anecdotes his granny told him. The writing is journalistic, well researched, economical and, thank goodness, never tries to be a historical novel.

The 18th century exploration of the Pacific is well covered, albeit with a wide brush, but comprehensive enough to set the background for the political situation on Tahiti. The arrogance of European sailors expecting to anchor in the bay and raid the food supplies of a people who were sustainable, but not producers of excess food for sale, is illustrated well, starting with Cook.

The tale of the mutiny is well told. Bligh's temper was the biggest part of him. The trigger for the mutiny on that morning is still elusive. He lists far more mutinies on other ships, especially British, who would have you believe that it was a rare occurrence. But the Admiralty's retaliation was severe and sadistic. The captain of the *Pandora* that was sent off to find the mutineers and bring them home, had the same people skills as Bligh so the *Pandora* cruise went well.

I was interested to see how Harrison Christian, being a descendent would handle the awful story of the mutineers' life on Pitcairn Island. At this point I will mention that I have a book *The Pitcairners* by R.B. Nicholson published in 1965 which has eluded Harrison. The telling of the tale by John Adams is much the same, unreliable and changes depending on who he was talking to. However, Harrison may possibly have listened to his old granny because he points out that the histories written were dictated by the unreliable John Adams to a variety of white blokes who wrote it down and nobody bothered to ask the Polynesian men who went to Pitcairn and especially not the Polynesian women, who outlived the lot of them.

Harrison takes seriously interviews with Teehureatuaona (Jenny) who left Pitcairn in 1817. An article in the *Journal of Pacific History*, called 'Dusky Damsels, Pitcairn Island's Neglected Matriarch of the Bounty Saga' by a Robert Langdon, shows that historians are finally pursuing oral history from people who aren't blokes.

However, the question of whether Fletcher Christian made it back to England or whether he was killed on Pitcairn is examined. We could all think back

with amusement on the years of speculation that Elvis Presley is alive and well and living in the Beenleigh Caravan Park. Fletcher Christian's celebrity was of Elvis proportions at the time. There's a whole new interpretation to the expression 'Bounty Hunter'. In an era without photographs, people who claimed to know him and his family, swear they saw him in England. This book is the first time I have given this speculation any credence.

If Fletcher Christian got back to England and lived out his years quietly with the support of his family, this is not an opportunity he shared with the other mutineers who were slaughtered on Pitcairn. This is not what happened to the Polynesian women, some of whom were most probably silly teenage girls at the beginning with no thought to the future, and some of whom were literally kidnapped for the sexual satisfaction of the mutineers. Living quietly at home is not what happened to the mutineers being returned to England on the *Pandora*, nor the crew who perished at sea. The image of Fletcher Christian as a romantic hero changes to being the infamous Ronnie Biggs with no scruples whatsoever.

I think this book can be called 'a good read'. It occupied a wet Sunday very well and will slip into my Bounty collection very nicely. If this book is your introduction to the Bounty saga, it will fire you up for further reading.

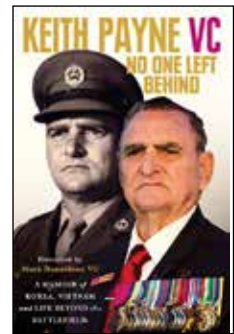
Gail Gunn

Keith Payne VC: No One Left Behind

Keith Payne VC (with Tony Park)

Pan MacMillan, Sydney, 2021

Hardback, \$49.99



From the outset this is a terrific book to read. Keith Payne is the sole living recipient of the Victoria Cross, the last one awarded to an Australian before the introduction of the Victoria Cross of Australia. Partly because of this, and his wider role as a veterans' advocate, work he still carries out in conjunction with his wife, Payne is a very well-known and popular figurehead. This story, written with the assistance of Tony Park, tells us why.

The reviewer needs to say up front that he had a very similar childhood in the same bush community outside of Ingham as Payne. Although a generation apart, our pathways crossed several times after I joined the Army as a means of making my way in life, like he did. I first met him in early 1970 at Duntroon where he was my squad instructor in the essential basic infantry skills. Many years later we share common interests in the Military Historical Society of Australia. The man has not changed much in my view; he is still a soldier's soldier with one focus: to do all he could to train and support soldiers to maximise their chances of survival. Long

out of uniform, he still does what he says in this book.

It starts with entertaining tales of growing up in the Depression and the war years in North Queensland, where many Allied troops were stationed pending their deployment. His early engagement in Army cadets, then the militia prepared him well for service in the Regular Army for he was soon deployed to the Korean War after basic training that today might be regarded as 'dangerous'. The secondary title of the book starts to become evident in this section.

Marrying young in 1954, he describes a life of service where his wife Flo raised the Payne clan largely on her own during his many absences from home. He describes his tour of duty in Malaya with 3 RAR and continuing desire to serve in regimental and training roles which he filled, including the advent of national service to support the war in Vietnam. His signature determination to impart fighting ability to the National Service officers comes out clearly at the Officer Training Unit Scheyville, sometimes achieved through 'Payne' way of getting things done. Any reader who knows him will readily see the truth in this genuine man, also known for saying things as he sees them – not exactly politically correctly – when he felt it necessary.

His hearing loss from Korea worked against him while he sought a posting to the Vietnam war. He deployed with the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, service with which he was employed as an advisor to and field commander of Montangard soldiers. It was during this time at Hill 668 near Ben Het in the Central Highlands that he was engaged in a desperate battle for survival against overwhelming odds. On 24 May 1969 Payne was commanding 212th Company of 1st Mobile Strike Force Battalion when attacked by the North Vietnamese. The book best tells the incredible story and illustrates his determination to save as many men as he could.

Returning to Australia he was posted to Duntroon in 1970 as an instructor, the cadets in awe of his legendary man short in stature but large in life. Following service with Army Reserve units, he was medically discharged in 1975 and set about a life in civilian street, to go - in his words - fishing. He found civilian life hard, especially dealing with PTSD and needing to work to raise his large family. He sought to re-enlist in 1977 but was rejected, despite his connections and his VC.

He secured a period of service in Oman as a captain in that army, and this gave him both income and a sense of belonging amongst soldiers. But he found life difficult on his return to peacetime Australia. The 1987 Welcome Home parades revived his spirits and he and other notables, such as Normie Rowe, embarked on helping fellow veterans deal with their wars and the poor treatment many received on coming home. He returned to Vietnam several times, including twice to Hill 668, in part to try to locate a missing colleague. His ability to connect with Indigenous people went back to his childhood and is still evident today through a strong relationship with the Aboriginal soldiers of the Regional Force Surveillance Units

operating across Northern Australia. For services to the veteran community, both he and Flo were awarded the OAM. Keith was later elevated to the AM.

Being an assisted autobiography, this book is eminently readable, and as far as the reviewer knows the man personally, honest. Payne brooked no fools, irrespective of rank, and this might have stymied his career a little. However, there are a lot of people who owe their survival on the battlefield, and in the fight against PTSD and at times indifferent bureaucracy, to this legendary soldier/citizen.

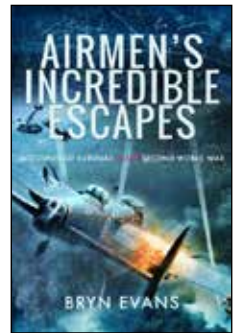
LtCol Russell Linwood, ASM (Retd)

Airmen's Incredible Escapes: Accounts of Survival in the Second World War

Bryn Evans

Pen and Sword, Barnsley, 2020

Hardback \$75.00



Flight Sergeant Lloyd Leah died in 2016, aged 93. If his German captor had been a better shot, Lloyd would have joined the ranks of 'Killed In Action' in 1944. Or, more likely – given the circumstances – tipped into an unmarked grave and still be listed as 'Missing'. His extraordinary story of survival involving being shot down, shot, life as a POW and then escaping, and ground-braking post-war surgery, is but one of three dozen remarkable accounts in Bryn Evan's book *Airmen's Incredible Escapes*. The final chapter, 'So Many More', sketches a further dozen stories that were excluded because of lack of space.

Generally, each chapter leads off with hint of what is to come, such as 'The Jungle is the only refuge', or 'Friendly fire' is just another enemy', and a paragraph or two giving the broad outline of the event. Evans provides brief accounts of the escapes, arranged in chronological sequence. He includes at least a portrait photograph and the necessary details of name, age, rank and squadron without becoming a stereotyped presentation. In addition, where the information is available, he provides a sketch of the airman's post-war life and career.

The extensive index and bibliography identify not only published and archival sources but two dozen private collections and about 40 veterans accounts. This is one of the strengths of the book: it is based on the recollections of the individuals concerned, through interviews, their own writings, or their contemporary Intelligence interrogation reports of events. But there is no clear indication of where that material is now. This is an important and pressing problem for historians, especially now. A careful reading of the book reveals that at least a quarter of the airmen mentioned had died prior to publication.

Intertwined with the stories are sober comments and summaries reminding

the reader of the risks, the role of chance, and the lingering post-war effects of the war in the air, including what would now be included in PTSD.

While the book's cover depicts a night-time air combat over Germany, the author's interests go beyond Europe and Bomber Command and operational flying. Misfortune can be, and is, found anywhere, among the ground crew, while training, operational transport flying, ferrying aircraft, and in fighters in incidents in the Middle East, Burma, New Guinea, and even to Queensland.

There are Americans, Englishmen and, for the Australian audience, there is an unlisted bonus: more than half of the narrow escapes involve Australians.

Declaration of interest: I provided reference material for one chapter: that was my sole involvement in the book.

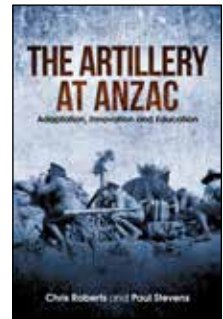
Steve Dyer

The Artillery at Anzac: Adaptation, Innovation and Education

Chris Roberts and Paul Stevens

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2021

Hardback, \$34.99



Paul Stevens and Chris Roberts are two authors in a position to write about artillery. Stevens, a major general who was the School of Artillery commander, and Roberts, a brigadier who has written on Gallipoli, both had distinguished military careers.

In *The Artillery at Anzac* they argue that the Gallipoli campaign was a period for Australian and New Zealand artilleries of adaptation, innovation and education. Static warfare was not expected, nor were the lack of guns and ammunition. Noting the limited training before the war, particularly unit and combined-arms, exacerbated by the part-time nature of the forces, the authors state that most artillery commanders were satisfied with preparedness before the campaign.

A review of the pre-war artilleries provide a useful background to the state of the artilleries before the war and the operational detail is excellent. Of importance is the authors' observation that commanders 'were breaking new ground' and that, overall, they learnt quickly and appropriately. A good selection of colour maps and photographs (though colour correction is terrible) compliment the book.

There have been a number of books concentrating on artillery recently, *The Artillery at Anzac* is a worthy addition to this canon.

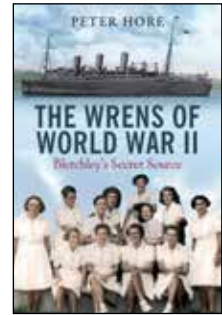
Justin Chadwick

The Wrens of World War II: Bletchley's Secret Service

Peter Hore

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2021

Paperback, \$29.99



Now that all the participants in the Bletchley operation are safely deceased, we can enjoy books, movies and TV series informing us what was very secret during the war.

Peter Hore morphed from a Royal Navy captain to a naval historian. With this book he has gathered together interviews with ex-WRENS, articles when publishers realised that the little old lady down the road had an interesting past, biographies and autobiographies.

The ladies assembled for this listening operation were mostly middle class, many of whom had studied or worked in Germany and were competent with the language. As each lady is introduced to the narrative, there is a thumbnail sketch of her, mostly interesting, obviously taken from a life remembered back from old to middle-age. As each lady's tale is told, unfortunately, information is frequently repeated.

I found the book slow to start, but my interest picked up considerably when the *Bismarck* arrived on the scene. Hore writes naval adventure better than he writes about women. Apparently the ladies listening to the German radio contributed a great deal to the Royal Navy's success in sinking this iconic ship. However, they were annoyed when they gave valuable information about the *Scharnhorst* trying to escape the English Channel after the sinking of the *Bismarck* and they were not listened to. Betty Bowen was still angry about it 60 years later.

The WRENS frequently complained that they got little feedback about the value of the information they gathered, but it was most gratifying to be have one of their machines labelled, 'this machine sunk the *Bismarck*'.

Obviously these ladies were valuable because they started exporting them to Singapore and once on the move, they were liable to the normal dangers of war. Ships were torpedoed and WRENS were lost. They were also allowed to participate in normal naval life, like lining the upper deck of their vessel with the male ratings as they arrived in port in Mombasa. They all had tears in their eyes. So did I reading it.

As I said, Hore writes naval adventure well, and the sinking of the *Empress of Canada* describes the sinking of a passenger ship in wartime, and the rescue efforts very well. An interesting story about the Italian submarine that sank the *Canada*, which was carrying among others, 303 Italian POWs. Apparently the Italian submarine surfaced, demanded they handed over one particular Italian POW and that being accomplished, it dived again and left the other 302 Italian POWs to die. And 197 of them did.

However, he does some terrible racial stereotyping about the survivors. I expect he knows by heart the Flanders and Swan epic 'The English, the English, the

English are best, I wouldn't give twopence for all of the rest'.

There are a few laughs in the book, like the radio operators in Gibraltar picking up Chicago taxi calls. Mainly, though, they picked up headaches from concentrating. They became familiar with individual radio operators 'fist' and enjoyed Germans being indiscreet. When we said, loose lips sink ships, the Germans should have listened. One U-boat radio operator told his mate on shore 'we're stopped. Waiting for a convoy'.

I thought a little more could be said about the Enigma earlier on. If a new person coming to Second World War history picked up this book, the first half of the book would be confusing not knowing exactly the significance of sending coded messages to Bletchley.

I thought the Navy showed a very commonsense approach to their WRENS. There was a suggestion that they put WRENS on naval vessels because they could have listened better out at sea closer to the action, but this was rejected. However, they did not get the sack if they got married.

Spare a thought for the postwar life of WRENS who had to sit quietly and listen to tales of adventure and drama from returning men and never being allowed to say, 'That's not true, now when I was listening in to conversations, we overheard ...'

Gail Gunn

Cold War Warriors: Royal Australian Air Force P-3 Orion Operations 1968-1991

Ian Pearson

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2021

Hardback, \$39.99

In 1968 the P-3 Orion was introduced into service with the Royal Australian Air Force. Over the following 23 years this aircraft flew a range of missions, many unknown to the public. In *Cold War Warriors* Ian Pearson recounts the story of the Orion, its crews and their missions. Drawing on extensive interviews with crew members, Pearson traces the aircraft's development, the Australian fleet and operations. Of particular interest are the many missions to find Soviet nuclear submarines operating near Australian waters and the ongoing process of upgrading and modification to improve capability.

In a large format and richly illustrated, *Cold War Warriors* is a fitting tribute to the aircraft and those who flew them.



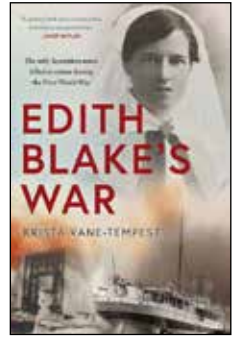
Justin Chadwick

Edith Blake's War: The only Australian nurse killed in action during the First World War

Krista Vane-Tempest

NewSouth Books, Sydney, 2021

Paperback, \$34.99



We are doubly fortunate that Edith Blake wrote so many letters home and that they were treasured by her family and kept till her great niece Krista Vane-Tempest got her hands on them and decided Auntie Edie deserved to go down in history.

Edith Blake is the only Australian nurse killed in action during the Great War. She was on board a hospital ship heading to France to collect the wounded when her ship was torpedoed. The ship sunk in eight minutes, so being from Sydney and being a swimmer did not save her.

This is the first book I have read on the career of a Great War Australian nurse. I have read biographies of two famous English ladies who did service as volunteers, but not fair dinkum nursing sisters.

Vane-Tempest has done enough research to fill in the historical details mentioned in her great-aunt's letters. Her research has been thorough and rarely strays into irrelevancies. A lot we know, like the medical services on Lemnos with no tents, no medical supplies, the wounded who lay on the beach at Gallipoli sometimes for three days without so much as a glass of water. Our author thankfully avoids clichés like you-know-who and his donkey.

There is very little dissent in this book. The official black and white, them and us, nasty Germans and brave British line is adhered to but occasionally the British War Office is accused of being blinkered, like sending a memorandum to medical staff to ignore the 'over-coloured stories' the nurses were told by wounded from Gallipoli.

Nurse Blake spent her war intending to get to France. She never got there. She tended the wounded in Alexandria, joined hospital ships moving wounded around the Mediterranean, then taking Canadian wounded back home. There are some fascinating insights into the world of hospital ships and the gentleman's agreements for U-boats not to sink them.

It occurred to me as I was reading the chapter on HMHS *Britannic* that the massive loss of life when her sister ship the *Titanic* went down, may have saved many lives during the Great War. Shipping rules and regulations changed so much after the *Titanic* disaster, and raised people's awareness to a degree that nobody had to beg people to please get in the lifeboat, and passengers quit sinking ships in an efficient manner.

One rule for abandoning ship that fascinated me was that it had to be done in silence so that shouted orders could be heard. How is Hollywood going to

reproduce scenes like that without a sound track of screaming females?

For a time Nurse Blake worked with German POWs. This caused a dilemma between her professionalism as a nurse and knowledge of the death and destruction caused by the Germans.

There is a very good chapter on Zeppelin bombing of Britain. I never knew the extent of this.

I really enjoyed this book. Female nieces who come to this masculine subject find different perspectives, thanks to which we are now better informed.

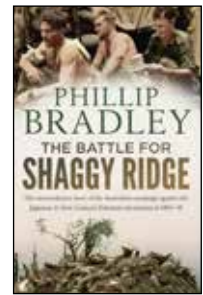
Gail Gunn

The Battle for Shaggy Ridge

Phillip Bradley

Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2021

Paperback, \$32.99



Phillip Bradley has been busy lately. *The Battle for Shaggy Ridge* is his third book in three years. However, before you think that this has impacted on the quality of his work it is safe to say that it has not. Like his previous works, this book draws on an extensive range of interviews, diaries and memoirs of Australian, Japanese and US combatants to develop an understanding of events experienced by those on the ground. The difficulty of this campaign is recorded in detail and the description of combat has an immediacy that is compelling. As with his other recent titles, *The Battle for Shaggy Ridge* is solid narrative history that will appeal to a wide audience.

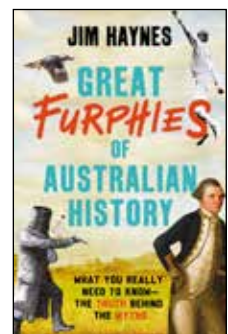
Justin Chadwick

Great Furphies of Australian History

Jim Haynes

Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2021

Paperback, \$29.99



All countries have stories that for whatever reason become distorted from the original and develop into myths. Some are foundational while others develop over time. Jim Haynes, in *Great Furphies of Australian History*, explores some of the myths with the intention to de-bunk them. Haynes investigates common misrepresentations, such as the Great South Land, Captain Cook, Ned Kelly and the Gold Rush. Military historians will be particularly interested in the long chapter

on Breaker Morant, whom Haynes believes was a victim and deserves exoneration. Whether you accept Haynes's conclusion will depend on where you sit on the fence regarding the Morant trial, but seems poignant at the moment (see *Sabretache* editorial September 2021).

The focus on colonial history means more contemporary myths are unfortunately left unexplored (think of the many from the Vietnam era), but there are enough to interest those who prefer knowing something from the last century.

While readers may not agree with some of his reasoning, and the paucity of references mean that there is no way of cross-checking his sources, Haynes has written an entertaining book that looks at some Australian myths and is recommended reading.

Justin Chadwick

Australia Remembers series

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2021

Paperback, \$14.99, Hardback, \$24.99

Anzac Day, Remembrance Day & War Memorial

Allison Paterson

Customs and Traditions of the Australian Defence Force

Allison Paterson

Len Waters: Boundless and Born to Fly

Catherine Bauer



It is not often that books aimed at a young audience are presented for review in *Sabretache*. However, the *Australia Remembers* series is a welcome addition to the many titles that are currently available.

Anzac Day, Remembrance Day & War Memorial explores the meaning and importance of military commemoration and include memorials and medals. *Customs and Traditions of the Australian Defence Force* looks at ceremony, uniforms, flags and badges, amongst many other topics. The third title, *Len Waters: Boundless and Born to Fly*, looks at the contribution of Aboriginal RAAF pilot Len Waters, his combat achievement and the world in which he lived.

Educational books have a specific purpose, but occasionally have a wider appeal. *Customs and Traditions of the Australian Defence Force* and *Len Waters: Boundless and Born to Fly*, are such titles. For those parents/grandparents who would like to introduce their children/grandchildren to the importance of the Australian military then these books are an ideal start.

Justin Chadwick

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