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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

The recent events in Ukraine have highlighted the precarious nature of peace even in a seemingly unobtrusive place as eastern Europe. While the intention of Russia has been to reclaim Ukraine as its own for some time, as has been seen with the annexation of Crimea and the Dombas, the invasion remains an infringement on sovereign territory. The reaction from the West has been interesting and shows how the Cold War remains influential in some military planners' minds. While the West, but in particular the United States, will not directly support Ukraine through mobilisation of NATO or US forces, it will do so by proxy in delivering arms and munitions. Dependent on Russian commitment and desire for victory, this situation may not continue. Using a simple calculation of force sizes, if the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, really wants Ukraine then he will occupy the country. But he will encounter the same resolve from the occupied population as has been seen historically, such as Afghanistan. How this plays out will depend on the West's willingness to continue to send materiel and the impact of sanctions on the Russian economy. We can only hope that this will be enough to lead to a resolution.

Justin Chadwick

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A Clipped Wing: The Darwin Tally Board of No 54 Squadron, RAF

Daniel J Leahy¹

Introduction

Between February 1942 and November 1943, Japanese fighter and bomber aircraft penetrated Australian airspace, with sites around Darwin receiving the greatest attention from the munitions they brought. Like the Battle of Britain, the Battle of North Australia was an air war, though unlike the European battle, that over Australia consisted of a series of air raids that were seemingly unrelated in strategic terms and with no intention of being the precursor for a later invasion.²

The Supermarine Spitfire—an iconic fighter aircraft of the Second World War which became the ‘darling of the British public’ after the Battle of Britain—was used to defend northern Australia from January 1943.³ No. 1 Fighter Wing, consisting of Nos. 452 and 457 Squadrons, RAAF, as well as No. 54 Squadron, RAF which had arrived in Australia from the United Kingdom in August 1942⁴ had its first aerial victory in the Darwin area on 6 February 1943 when Flight Lieutenant Bob Foster shot down a Mitsubishi Ki-46 (aka ‘Dinah’) reconnaissance aircraft.⁵ Spitfires continued to be used for the area’s defence until the end of the Second World War.

1 Daniel J. Leahy, BInfoTech, BA (Hons), is a PhD candidate at the University of New England investigating the archaeology of Second World War air power in Australia. He has had an interest in wartime aviation particularly of that used in the South West Pacific for over 20 years and has visited numerous aircraft wrecks and air power sites in Australia and Papua New Guinea during that time.

2 Mark Clayton, ‘The North Australian Air War, 1942-44’, *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, 8, (1986), p. 33; Colin De La Rue, ‘The Battle of North Australia: The Archaeology of a World War Two Airfield Site’. In *Darwin Archaeology: Aboriginal, Asian and European Heritage of Australia’s Top End*, Patricia Bourke, Sally Brockwell and Clayton Frederickshon (eds), Charles Darwin University Press: Darwin (2004), p. 97; Peter Stanley, ‘The Myths of the Darwin raids’, *Wartime*, 17, (2002), p. 39.

3 RAAF History and Heritage, *Aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force*, Big Sky Publishing: Newport (2021), p. 246.

4 No. 457 Squadron Operations Record Book, RAAF, August 1942, National Archives of Australia (NAA) A9186, 143.

5 Bob Alford, *Darwin’s Air War, 1942-1945: An Illustrated History Commemorating the Darwin Air Raids*, (2nd edn), The Aviation Historical Society of the Northern Territory: Winnellie (2011), p. 94; Anthony Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires: The Real Battle for Australia*, NewSouth Publishing: Sydney (2011), p. 42-43.

This paper looks at the first large scale air raid on Darwin in which No. 1 Fighter Wing took part and at the life of one artefact salvaged from the wreckage of a Japanese Zero shot down during combat on that day.

Darwin Raid No. 53

On the morning of 15 March 1943, 22 Mitsubishi G4M (aka 'Betty') bombers of the Imperial Japanese Navy's 753 Kokutai took off bound for Darwin.⁶ Escorted by 27 Mitsubishi A6M Zero (aka 'Zeke') fighters from 202 Kokutai led by Lieutenant Minoru Kobayashi, their targets included the Darwin waterfront and the naval oil fuel installation area located on Stokes Hill.⁷ The raid was described by No. 54 Squadron, RAF, as follows:

Big Japanese raid this morning consisting of 22 bombers and an unknown number of Zeros as escort. The formation coming over in bright sunlight was very reminiscent of the Battle of Britain, and most of us had not seen such a sight since that time.⁸

On the ground, members of the 19th Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery went into action for the first time, describing the air battle in their War Diary:

All gun sites clearly saw the enemy bomber formation consisting of 22 'Bettys' in 3 tight 'V' formations. There was also an unknown number of hostile fighters some of which were identified as type 'Zeke'. The fighters were not in formation. The "Bettys" flew over the town of Darwin from West to East at a height of about 24,000 feet. Dog fights could be seen going on between Spitfires and Zekes.⁹

Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Flying Officer Granville Allen Mawer, flying with No. 54 Squadron, RAF, was piloting one of those Spitfires and recorded his combat with one of the Zeros as follows:

One got on my tail and sent tracer past my left wing but followed it past in an overshoot. I kicked the rudder to follow and when I had closed to 50 yards [46 metres] opened fire, allowing one ring's worth of deflection on the sight.

6 Tom Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South: Japan's Air War Against Northern Australia, 1942-45*, Avonmore Books: Kent Town (2017), p. 99.

7 Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 99; Waldemar R. Pajdosz and Andre R. Zbiegniewski, *3/202 Kokutai*, Kagero: Lublin (2003), p. 74.

8 No. 54 Squadron, RAF, Operations Record Book, March 1943, NAA A9186, 89.

9 19th Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery War Diary, March 1943, Australian War Memorial (AWM), AWM52, 4/16/23/4.

He began to roll and I continued firing until the range had opened out to 200 yards [183 metres]. Intense flames then flickered from his underside. It was his belly tank, which he must have forgotten to jettison when the action began. He rolled onto his back and went straight down. I followed, giving him squirt after squirt ... He burnt like fury and was doing about 450 mph [724 km/h] when the wings tore away ... I pulled out at 1000 feet [305 metres], going like the clappers, and headed back for the 'drome.¹⁰

Despite the Spitfire pilots' claims at shooting down numerous bombers and fighters on the day, Japanese records indicate that just one Zero—manufacturer's number 6540 piloted by Petty Officer 2nd Class Seiji Tajiri of 202 Kokutai—was lost during the engagement.¹¹ Tajiri's Zero was seen to crash into Darwin Harbour approximately 300 metres south of West Point and 200 metres offshore.¹² The remains of the pilot were never recovered. Eight bombers from 753 Kokutai were also damaged, with Japanese records indicating that 40 per cent of their aircraft required attention from ground crews on Timor before they could return to their base at Kendari.¹³

As for the defenders, the official historian, Douglas Gillison, later wrote that 'four Spitfires were lost, but the only casualty was Squadron Leader Thorold-Smith'.¹⁴ This statement is quite simply incorrect as two more young Spitfire pilots died as a result of the raid, yet Gillison's claim continues to be reproduced in descriptions of the engagement.¹⁵ Sergeant (later Flight Sergeant) Albert Edward Cooper bailed out of Spitfire AR620, but was killed when he was struck by the aircraft's tailplane.¹⁶ Flight Sergeant (later Pilot Officer) Francis Leslie Varney made a forced landing in his Spitfire, AR619, near the Kahlin Hospital where he was immediately admitted but died the following day.¹⁷ Both Cooper and Varney were serving with No. 54 Squadron, RAF, and were initially buried at the Berrimah War Cemetery

10 Granville Allen Mawer, *Diary of a Spitfire Pilot over the English Channel and over Darwin*, Rosenberg Publishing: Dural (2011), p. 161.

11 Alford, *Darwin's Air War*, p. 99; Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 107; Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 100.

12 Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 107; Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 100.

13 Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 106.

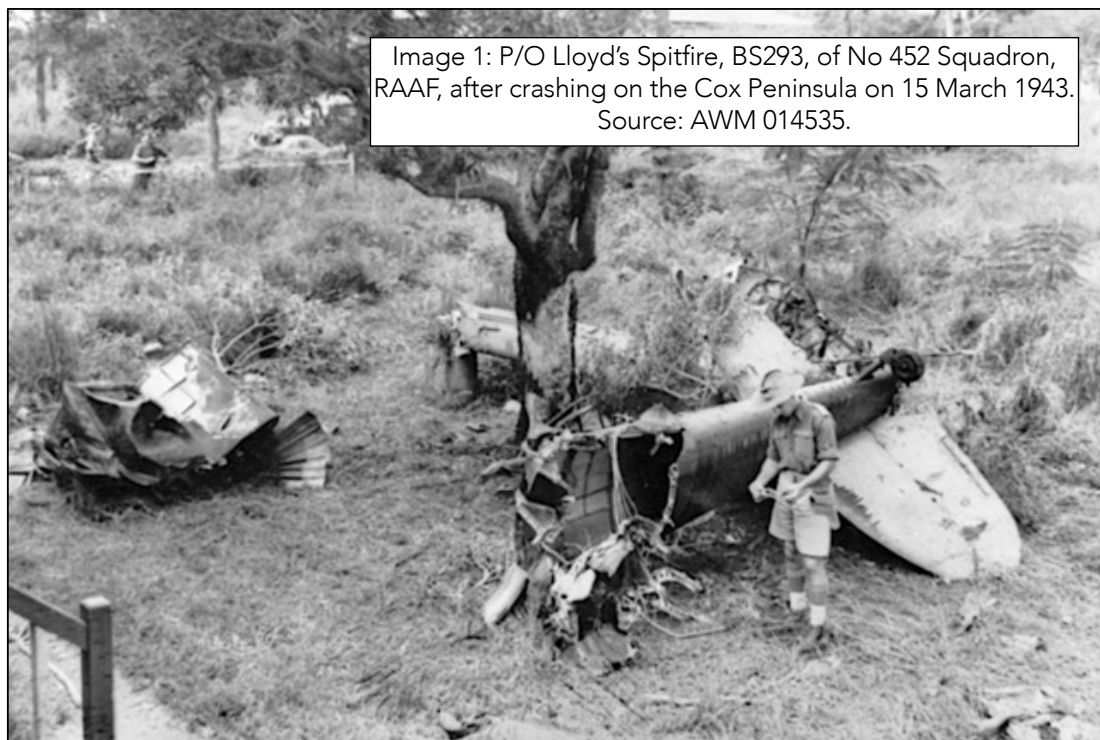
14 Douglas Gillison, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945: Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, Australian War Memorial: Canberra (1962), p. 652.

15 See, for example, Peter Dunn, 'Japanese air raids at Darwin, NT, on 15 March 1943', *Australia @ War*, updated 21 February 2020, <https://www.ozatwar.com/darwin05.htm>, accessed 26 June 2021.

16 Gordon Birkett, 'RAAF A58 Supermarine Spitfire Mk.V & Mk.VIII', ADF-Serials, updated 13 May 2019, <http://www.adf-serials.com.au/2a58.htm>, accessed 26 June 2021; Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, pp. 77-78, 117; Jim Grant, *Spitfires over Darwin 1943*, (2nd edn), TechWrite Solutions: South Melbourne (2003), pp. 52-53; Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 99.

17 Birkett, 'RAAF A58 Supermarine Spitfire Mk.V & Mk.VIII'; Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, pp. 82-83, 117; Grant, *Spitfires over Darwin 1943*, pp. 52-53; Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 99.

before being reinterred at the Adelaide River War Cemetery in September 1945.¹⁸ Squadron Leader Raymond Edward Thorold-Smith, the commanding officer of No. 452 Squadron, RAAF, remains missing in action while piloting Spitfire BS231 and, having no known grave, is formally commemorated on Panel 6 of the Northern Territory Memorial located at the Adelaide River War Cemetery.¹⁹ Pilot Officer Clive Percival Lloyd, also of No. 452 Squadron, RAAF, parachuted to safety after bailing out of Spitfire BS293 over the Cox Peninsula (Image 1).²⁰ A fifth Spitfire—BR468—flown by Flight Sergeant Arthur Evan Batchelor of No. 457 Squadron, RAAF, suffered engine damage in combat but was soon repaired and returned to service.²¹



18 Graves Registration Cards for Albert Edward Cooper (G.B.1) and Francis Leslie Varney (G.C.10), NAA A8234, 13.

19 Graves Registration Card for Raymond Edward Thorold-Smith (Panel 6), NAA A8234, 98; Birkett, 'RAAF A58 Supermarine Spitfire Mk.V & Mk.VIII'; Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 117.

20 Birkett, 'RAAF A58 Supermarine Spitfire Mk.V & Mk.VIII'; Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, pp. 83-85, 118; Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 100.

21 Confirmatory Memorandum of Aircraft Accident – Capstan BR468, NAA, A9845, 271; Alford, *Darwin's Air War*, p. 99; Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 117.

The Tally Board

Days after the air raid, divers from HMAS *Malanda*—a motor launch that had been requisitioned by the Royal Australian Navy in 1942 for use as an examination vessel, tow boat, and net layer—salvaged a two-metre section of the wing as well as the starboard tailplane of Petty Officer Tajiri's Zero.²² The remainder of the wreckage had apparently been washed out to deeper water by the rushing tides and has, as of the time of writing, yet to be located.²³

On 25 March 1943, the following entry was made in the Operations Record Book for No. 54 Squadron, RAF:

Fishing operations proceeding in the harbour to recover the remains of one of the Zeros shot down in the raid of March 15th. Several fragments recovered, of which we hope to get our share.²⁴

This was followed by the squadron's entry for 28 March 1943:

The Navy's fishing activities in the harbour have resulted, among other discoveries, in the recovery of about 5 feet [1.5 metres] of the wing-tip of the Zero shot [down] by F/O Mawer on 15th March. On examination this proved to be an alloy of magnesium, which accounts not only for the lightness of the Zero but also for the ease with which it can burn. The E.O. pronounced the construction to be much inferior to that of our Spitfires, but remarked on the ease with which very large numbers could be turned out.²⁵

The next day the wing tip was presented to No. 54 Squadron, RAF, with the event being described in the unit's Operations Record Book as follows:

The Zero wing has been added to the Squadron relics and will, we hope, return to England with us. In the meantime it will hang in the Officers' Mess.²⁶

The wing tip would be used by the squadron as a tally board to record its aerial victories while involved in the air campaign over the North Western Area of Australia. It was reportedly 'much admired' by visitors during squadron gatherings.²⁷

22 Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 107; Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 100; Northern Territory Government, 'Malanda HMAS (FY37)', Northern Territory Library, <http://www.ntlexhibit.nt.gov.au/items/show/1425>, accessed 26 June 2021.

23 Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 107; Lewis, *The Empire Strikes South*, p. 100.

24 No. 54 Squadron, RAF, Operations Record Book, March 1943, NAA A9186, 89.

25 No. 54 Squadron, RAF, Operations Record Book, March 1943, NAA A9186, 89.

26 No. 54 Squadron, RAF, Operations Record Book, March 1943, NAA A9186, 89.

27 No. 54 Squadron, RAF, Operations Record Book, April 1943, NAA A9186, 89.

Markings: 10 May 1943

The earliest known photographs of the tally board were taken on 10 May 1943, with a number of images of the artefact appearing with that date in the collection of the Australian War Memorial (Image 2).



Image 2: Members of 54 Squadron, RAF, with the tally board at Winnellie, 10 May 1943.
Source: AWM NWA0323.

The remains of Japanese markings are clearly visible on the artefact. The overall camouflage used on the Zeros encountered during Raid No. 53 was described by those pilots of No. 452 Squadron, RAAF, who took part as being ‘glossy golden brown paint with the red [Japanese] sun clearly apparent’.²⁸ The *hinomaru* (red circle of the sun)—a roundel identifying the aircraft as belonging to the Japanese military—would have been painted on both the upper and lower surfaces of each wing as well as the port and starboard side of the Zero’s rear fuselage.

Parts of the underside of the wing tip were then painted over with icons representing the activities of No. 54 Squadron, RAF, while based in Australia. Two black swans were painted over the *hinomaru*. Anthony Cooper suggested that this was a form of graffiti painted by members of a Western Australian RAAF unit

28 ‘Raid 53 on Darwin – part played by 452 Sqdn.’, NAA A9652, Box 30.

as the species of bird is a well-known symbol of that state.²⁹ However, this image represents the two swans sent to British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, by Australian Attorney-General and Minister for External Affairs, H.V. Evatt, in 1942. Churchill was a collector of rare birds and made mention to Evatt that his male swan had died.³⁰ The gift was reportedly made in exchange for a promise from Churchill that ‘certain things of much more consequence to the war effort should be shipped from the UK’—namely, the Spitfires and personnel that would go on to form No. 1 Fighter Wing.³¹

To the right of the *hinomaru* are eight shot-or nip-glasses of alcohol. As a graphical depiction of the ethnic slur for someone of Japanese origin or descent, these represent the eight Japanese aircraft the squadron had claimed to have destroyed prior to the photograph being taken. Table 1 lists the details of each of these claims.³² Similar imagery was painted on the individual Spitfires of No. 54 Squadron, RAF, flown by those pilots who had claimed to have shot down Japanese aircraft.³³

Table 1: Claims of Japanese aircraft destroyed by No. 54 Squadron, RAF, from 6 February 1943 to 2 May 1943.

Date	Pilot	Destroyed
6 February 1943	F/Lt Foster	1 Ki-46 ‘Dinah’
2 March 1943	S/Ldr Gibbs	1 A6M ‘Zeke’
15 March 1943	F/Lt Foster F/Lt Norwood F/O Mawer F/Sgt Biggs	1 G4M ‘Betty’ 1 A6M ‘Zeke’ 1 A6M ‘Zeke’ 1 A6M ‘Zeke’
2 May 1943	S/Ldr Gibbs F/O Farries	1 A6M ‘Zeke’ 1 A6M ‘Zeke’

To the right of these victory markings is the badge for No. 54 Squadron, RAF, described in blazon as, ‘A Lion rampant Azure semee of Fleur-de-Lys Or’, with the

29 Cooper, *Darwin Spitfires*, p. 109; Stephen Munro, ‘The Black Swan: A Western Australian icon’, *The People & Environment Blog*, 19 July 2017, <https://pateblog.nma.gov.au/2017/07/19/the-black-swan-a-western-australian-icon/>, accessed 26 June 2021.

30 ‘Black swans for Mr Churchill’, *The Age* (Melbourne), 15 October 1942, p. 2.

31 ‘Two swans for Churchill’, *The Mirror* (Perth), 9 January 1943, p. 10.

32 No. 54 Squadron, RAF, *Victories in Australian Theatre from 6/2/43 to 20/6/43*, NAA A11326, 8/1/INT.

33 Andrew Thomas, *Spitfire Aces of Burma and the Pacific*, Osprey Publishing: Oxford (2009), p. 15.

lion representing Belgium and the Fleur-de-Lys representing France – countries where the unit served during the First World War.³⁴ The squadron's motto—*Audax omnia perpeti* ('Bold to endure anything')—is also included at the bottom of the badge.³⁵

Markings: 1 July 1944

The last photograph of the tally board to appear in the collection of the Australian War Memorial is dated July 1944 and shows members of the Empire Parliamentary Delegation standing alongside the artefact (Image 3). The Operations Record Book for No. 54 Squadron, RAF, indicates that members of the 'British and Canadian Parliamentary Delegation' visited the unit at Livingstone airfield on 1 July 1944 and that an aerobatic display was conducted by Pilot Officer D.N. Dalton.³⁶



Image 3: Members of the Empire Parliamentary Delegation with the tally board, probably at Livingstone, July 1944 AWM NWA0850.

34 RAF Heraldry Trust, '54 Sqn', RAF Heraldry Trust, 9 June 2016, <http://www.rafht.co.uk/index.php/2016/06/09/54-sqn/>, accessed 26 June 2021.

35 RAF Heraldry Trust, '54 Sqn'.

36 No. 54 Squadron, RAF, Operations Record Book, July 1944, NAA A9186, 89.

At first glance it is easy to see that the number of shot glasses painted between the *hinomaru* and squadron badge, representing claims of Japanese aircraft shot down, has increased to 27. Additional victory claims have also been marked – 18 broken shot glasses to the right of the squadron badge, representing Japanese aircraft damaged in combat; and a further eight glasses with a question mark superimposed on them below the squadron badge, representing Japanese aircraft that could not be confirmed as shot down, but claimed as ‘probably destroyed’.

Two swastikas have also been painted above and to the right of the squadron badge, presumably recognising the unit’s prior service against German forces in Europe. Additionally, a government-type building has been painted below all other markings – it is possible that this was done to commemorate the visit of the Empire Parliamentary Delegation.

Identification Of Parts

Using a modified version of the defabrication survey method described by archaeologist, Silvano Jung, whereby a plan of a complete aircraft is pulled apart and linked with the surviving archaeological material, it has been possible to determine exactly what section of the wing had been salvaged.³⁷ Image 4 shows the result of this process with the 1944 photo of the Zero’s wing tip (Image 3) plotted against a line drawing of the wing of a Mitsubishi A6M2 Model 21 Zero.³⁸

The section recovered had formed approximately 1.7 metres of the aircraft’s port wing and included the mechanism for folding the outer wing tip in an effort to conserve deck space when the Zero was to be stored aboard an aircraft carrier. It was however missing its navigation light, both the leading and trailing edges, and the pitot tube. As these components are also missing from earlier photographs, it is assumed that they were lost during the aircraft’s wrecking incident, or were removed prior to No. 54 Squadron acquiring the artefact.

Fate

The tally board remained with No. 54 Squadron, RAF, throughout the unit’s deployment to Australia. It is possible that the tailplane of a Japanese Army bomber shot down on 20 June 1943 may have replaced the original tally board in some

37 Silvano Jung, ‘A defabrication method for recording submerged aircraft: observations on sunken flying boat wrecks in Roebuck Bay, Broome, Western Australia’, *Bulletin of the Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology*, 31, (2007), pp. 27-28.

38 Line drawing adapted from Artur Juszczyk, *Mitsubishi A6M Zero*, Mushroom Model Publications: Redbourn (2001), p. 11.

fashion for a period of time.³⁹ As per the hopes described in the squadron's March 1943 Operations Record Book, the Zero wing tip ended up in the United Kingdom – the tally board is reported to have been on display in the No. 54 Squadron Officers' Mess at RAF Coltishall in Norfolk until the unit's disbandment there on 11 March 2005.⁴⁰ No. 54 Squadron was reformed as the RAF's Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Operational Conversion Unit at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire on 1 September 2005.⁴¹ At the time of writing the author has been unable to ascertain whether the tally board is now located at RAF Waddington.

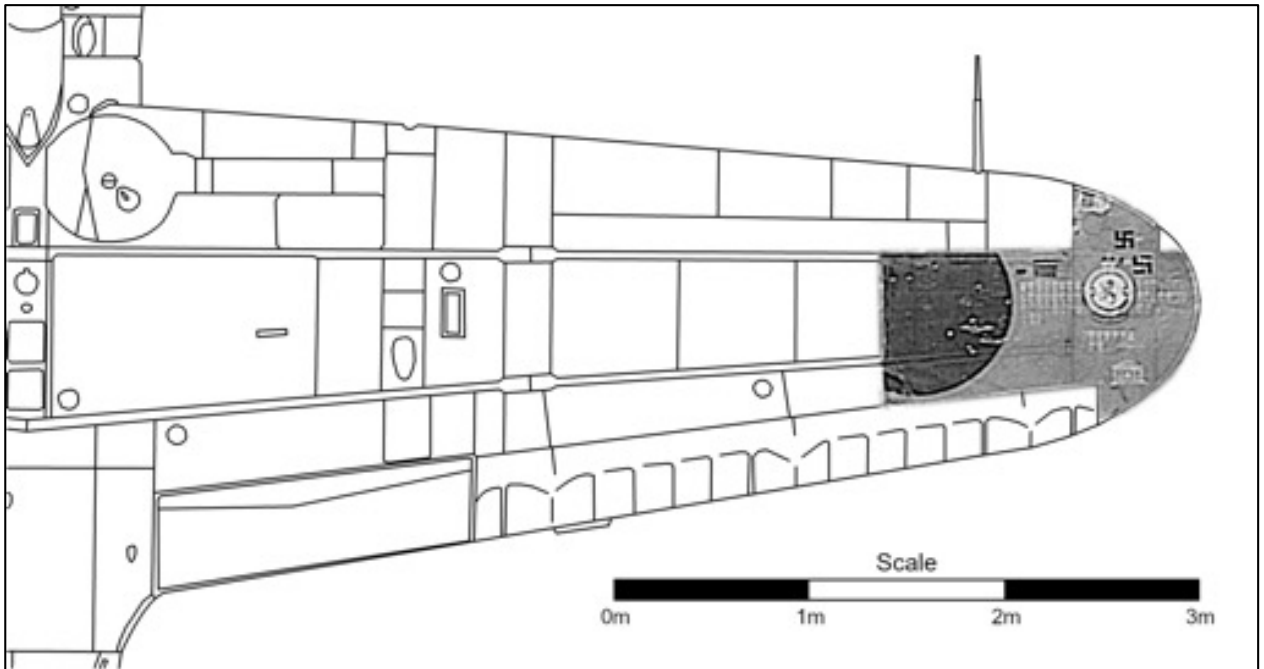


Image 4: Representation of the area of a Zero's wing from which the tally board was made (Leahy 2021, after Juszczak 2001).

39 Greg Blackmore, '54 Squadron scoreboards', *A Spitfire over Darwin*, 27 January 2020, <https://spitfireoverdarwin.home.blog/2020/01/27/54-squadron-raf-scoreboards/>, accessed 11 January 2021.

40 Mawer, *Diary of a Spitfire Pilot*, p. 164.

41 RAF, '54 Squadron', *Royal Air Force*, 2021, <https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/squadrons/54-squadron/>, accessed 26 June 2021.

Flying Officer Granville Allen Mawer—the RAAF pilot credited with shooting down Petty Officer Tajiri's Zero—was killed on 26 September 1943 when his Spitfire, JL314, collided with Spitfire EE677 during a training flight near Manton Dam in the Northern Territory.⁴² He was buried at the Adelaide River War Cemetery later that day.⁴³

Discussion

The wing tip of Petty Officer 2nd Class Seiji Tajiri's Mitsubishi A6M2 Model 21 Zero, manufacturer's number 6540, can be seen as both a functional and symbolic artefact of the Second World War. It was functional as it formed part of the wing that was required to allow the aircraft to fly, while it also provided Allied investigators some insight into the construction of Japanese fighter aircraft in early 1943.

As a symbol, however, the artefact has gone through a number of changes. At first it is painted with the hinomaru, Japan's national insignia used to show the aircraft's origin, and a symbol of pride to those from that nation. In the hands of No. 54 Squadron, RAF, the artefact is reused as a trophy and the symbolism applied to represent the Japanese aircraft shot down by the unit is derogatory. However, the application of the squadron badge, the swastikas, and the swan motif all represent the origin and experience of the RAF unit. In the 21st century, the artefact as a whole has remained a symbol of No. 54 Squadron's time in Australia during the Second World War.

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42 Preliminary Report of Flying Accident or Forced Landing for Spitfires EE677 and JL314, NAA A9845, 80.

43 Graves Registration Card for Granville Allen Mawer (F.C.9), NAA A8234, 13.

Almost a Victoria Cross!

The Five Wars of George William Harrison

Trevor Turner¹

On the morning of 9 October 1905, the body of an elderly man was found floating in the Murrumbidgee River at Wagga Wagga near Warby Island. An inquest determined that the body was that of George William Harrison an old age pensioner, aged between 67 to 70 years, who had been missing for almost two months. He had last been seen leaving the Golden Hotel on 23 August 1905 where he had been drinking and it is believed he had fallen into the river upon returning to his hut by a path along the river's edge.² A detailed description was given of his shanty near the police paddock at Wagga where he lived. The interior of his hut gives the image of an ordered, disciplined and proud man – altogether different from the pathetic vagrant so often depicted:

On the small table are a pepper tin, a knife and fork, a candlestick, and a few odds and ends - just as the old man left them three weeks ago. An axe, maul, and wedges in the corner serve to indicate that in all probability Harrison had been a bushman. And above all and everything is the distinctive neatness and cleanliness of everything. There is probably a story to be gathered of the life of the one-time owner of this dwelling. Who can guess it?³

This writer was correct. There was a story to be gathered. George William Harrison was born at Balinasloe in County Galway in May 1830. He enlisted into the 43rd (Monmouthshire) Regiment of Light Infantry at Mullingar, Westmeath on 17 January 1845 and was allotted regimental number 2143. He was then aged 14 years and eight months, illiterate and without a trade or profession. As an under-age boy soldier he was made a bugler. He would remain a bugler until May 1859. During these first 14 years of service George Harrison was a good soldier. He took advantage of the military schools system becoming semi-literate and gaining his education certificate. It was in India that he developed an addiction to drink. He was court martialled and imprisoned on five occasions between April 1859 and April 1861 for 'habitual drunkenness'.⁴ He then enters a period of recovery and was promoted corporal in New Zealand in February 1864. In October 1865 he was

1 Trevor Turner is a former South Australian, born and raised on Kangaroo Island, now living in Sydney. He retired in 2011 after 38 years in the Regular Army and has been a member of the MHSA for more than 40 years.

2 NSW Coroners Report 1018/1905 of 21 October 1905.

3 'Missing Old-age Pensioner', *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, 14 September 1905, p. 3.

4 General Courts Martial Registers, National Archives, Kew (NA) WO92/2.

promoted sergeant. Sadly, at New Plymouth, New Zealand he was again arrested for drunkenness, being court martialled on 8 January 1866 and reduced to private. During his career he had appeared 18 times in the regimental defaulter's book.

The 43rd (Monmouthshire) Regiment of Light Infantry

In September 1851, the Regiment departed Cork for the Cape of Good Hope, landing at East London, where it marched to King William's Town and took an active part in the third Kaffir or Xhosa War.⁵

On 26 February 1852 the iron-hulled HMS *Birkenhead*, carrying a large contingent of soldiers and their families on their way to Algoa Bay on Eastern Cape, was wrecked off Point Danger. A sergeant and 40 privates of the 43rd Regiment were also aboard the ship. Only 14 of that detachment survived, one being Bugler George Harrison. During the war in Africa, the 43rd Regiment lost three officers and eighty men, including those lost in the *Birkenhead*.

Indian Mutiny

On 28 November 1853 the Regiment sailed for India where, on 24 December 1854, at Bangalore, they were presented with the South Africa Medal (1853) for the Kaffir War, including Bugler George Harrison.⁶

During the Indian Mutiny the 43rd Regiment were engaged early. On 3 June 1858, eight companies marched to Kirwee, which was quickly taken. Bugler Harrison's first action was at Girwasa in December 1858. On 14 May 1861, when at Fort George in Madras, the 43rd was paraded for the presentation of Indian Mutiny medals by Major General McCleverty. Again, this included Harrison, who received his second medallic distinction.

The 43rd in New Zealand – Gate Pa and Te Ranga

In September 1863 the 43rd Regiment was again ordered for active service, this time in New Zealand. It was here that Harrison was promoted corporal on 24 February 1864. The significant event for the regiment whilst in New Zealand occurred on 29 April 1864, when five companies of the 43rd, under Lieutenant Colonel Henry Booth, took part in the disastrous assault of the Gate Pa, near Tauranga with the

5 Now known as the Xhosa Wars - also known as the Cape Frontier Wars or Africa's 100 Years War.

6 Medal Roll, NA WO 100/17.

68th Regiment, Naval Brigade, Royal Artillery and flying column under command of General Duncan Cameron.

The attacking force of 150 of the 43rd L.I., under Lieutenant Colonel Booth, who commanded the attack, and 150 of the Naval Brigade, under Commander Hay of HMS *Harrier*, charged simultaneously and crossed the open ground with only slight casualties and carried the breach created in the Pa's defences by the artillery. Now inside the enemy's position the Maori defenders met them with a determined and bloody resistance. Colonel Booth, Captain Robert Glover and Ensign Charles Langlands, of the 43rd, and Commander Hay, Naval Brigade, were first into the Maori stronghold and were immediately killed or mortally wounded. Within minutes almost every officer in the assaulting force had been cut down, including the 43rd's sergeant-major, John Vance and Colonel Booth being mortally wounded. The men, now leaderless and confused by the intricacy of the Pa's inner defences, panicked. The attacking force retired to take cover outside the position. The remnant of the 43rd followed, leaving a large number of their dead or wounded in the Maori position. Amongst those who tried to stem this chaotic, infectious retreat and rally the men was the 43rd's adjutant, Lieutenant George Garland. According to regimental records,

... in spite of all Lieutenant Garland's entreaties to persevere, they fell back upon the nearest cover; he and three or four others alone remaining, until forced to make their escape from the Pa. These men were afterwards specially thanked by H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief, and one of them, Colour-Sergeant W. B. Garland, received a medal for distinguished service in the field.⁷

Colonel Booth remained seriously wounded in the field overnight until brought in next morning, but later died. As a result of their actions that day Lieutenant George Garland, ensign's Spencer Nichol, William Clark and John Garland, Colour Sergeant William Garland⁸ and three men - Corporal George Harrison, privates William Bridgeman and Charles Maitland were Mentioned in Despatches for the steadfast manner in which they remained with Lieutenant Garland trying to maintain their position and stem the retreat and in their attempts to aid the stricken officers. Private Bridgeman's lower right arm was amputated the following day.⁹ Ensign Spencer Nicholl, of the 43rd, who was severely wounded in the head that day, wrote:

The first company was led by Bob Glover, who was killed on the spot by a

7 Richard George Augustus Levinge, *Historical Records of the Forty-Third Regiment, Monmouthshire Light Infantry*, W Clowes & Sons: London, (1868), p. 255.

8 Later Garrison Sergeant Major, General Staff Corps.

9 Chelsea papers, NA WO97-1522-056.

bullet in the temple, not a minute after he had been in. Hamilton was shot in the mouth, Muir in the heart, Utterton in the neck. The whole four of them were shot as soon as they got into the pah. Poor Peter Glover, who was commanding the rear company, was up to his brother as soon as he was shot; he was not shot till just as we were leaving the pah, he was hit in the belly, and the doctors thought he would recover, but he died two nights after. Clarke was shot in the right arm, and I had the top of my head taken of, but neither of us are very bad. When we had been in the place for a quarter of an hour the sailors called out, 'The Maoris are coming down upon us in thousands,' and immediately turned tail and ran, and then there was a regular panic, and our men followed their example. Old Garland tried several times to rally the men, but it was no use. They left poor Booth in the pah all night. The Maoris took his watch from him. I am glad to say they touched none of the wounded.¹⁰

At Gate Pa the regiment lost six officers, including their commanding officer, their sergeant major and eight men killed and three officers and 22 men wounded. The regiment, now under Major Francis Synge, next took part in the engagement at Te Ranga several weeks later on 21 June and Corporal Harrison was again present with his company.¹¹ The regiment was then sent to Taranaki for garrison duty on the West Coast where Harrison was promoted sergeant. It was at Te Ranga that Captain Frederick Augustus Smith, commanding No 2 Company, received the Victoria Cross for his actions upon being the first to enter the Maori trenches. He was promoted brevet major for his actions at Gate Pa.

In March 1866, with the regiment's pending return to England, Harrison, his time almost expired, decided to remain in New Zealand as a settler. Having again been reduced to private for drunkenness. Harrison was discharged at New Plymouth on 24 March 1866. Although he had completed 21 years of service only 16 years and 283 days accounted towards his pension. He was granted a deferred pension of 6 pence a day due in 1890 on achieving the age of 60 years. Of his 21 years with the regiment he had served two years at the Cape of Good Hope; eight years ten months in India and two years four months in New Zealand.¹²

Waikato Regiment and Opotiki Rangers

Having difficulty finding work Harrison enlisted into the 1st Waikato Regiment of militia at Tauranga on 23 October 1866, as a substitute for Private James Long. Re-allocated Long's regimental No. 1210, he was now described as being aged 34 years,

10 Wellington *Independent*, 26 November 1864, p. 3. Nicholl was commended for his actions that day and his promotion to lieutenant is dated 29 April 1864. Lieut.Col., died 1909.

11 NZ Medal Roll, NA WO100/18.

12 Discharge Papers – George Harrison, NA WO131-0017-048.

single and 6ft 1½in tall and a soldier by occupation. Harrison also served briefly as an artificer with the Imperial Commissariat whilst detached from the 1st Waikato. He eventually received a land grant for this militia service at Opotiki near Tauranga, where the 1st Waikato Regiment's Left Wing – No's. 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9 Companies – had been allocated their land in June 1866.¹³ After the Waikato Regiments were disbanded in 1867 George served with the Opotiki Rangers as a volunteer, as did many other former Waikato Regiment soldier settlers in that district.¹⁴ The Rangers were involved in a number of actions against the Maori, particularly in February 1868.

Unfortunately, the physical and financial efforts required, compounded by the government's complete abandonment of these soldier settlers, forced George, and many others, to abandon their land and leave the district.

Armed Constabulary and Desertion

Always a soldier, Harrison returned to the only profession he had known. He enlisted into No. 7 Division of the New Zealand Armed Constabulary (NZAC)¹⁵ on 4 November 1868 at the gold-mining town of Thames, where he had worked on the diggings. This service was short. At this time the NZAC was beset with many serious problems. They were generally ill-disciplined, poorly led, badly officered and without proper logistical support. There was also great rivalry and jealousy between many of its officers. Alcohol abuse was also prevalent.

Constable Harrison was present, as part of a larger force, at the siege and capture of Te Kooti's mountain stronghold, Ngatapa, from 31 December 1868 to 4 January 1869, with 62 men of his No 7 Division under Sub-Inspector Duncan Brown, who was killed, and Acting-Sub-Inspector Sydney Capel, who was wounded. On 4 January, during a fierce storm and under a heavy fire, a party of 30 men of No 7 Division attacked the pa and secured a position close under one of the outer parapets where they remained all night to continue the assault with shovel, axe and rifle next morning. The strong-hold finally taken, No. 7 Division departed Ngatapa on the night of 9 January for the New Zealand's west coast campaign against Titokarwaru.¹⁶

13 George received town lot 832 at Opotiki and 50 acres, lot 209, at Waimana.

14 The Rangers were raised at a meeting conducted on 29 August 1867 at the Masonic Hotel at Opotiki, with Henry Abbott Mair (brother of Captain Gilbert Mair, a New Zealand Cross recipient) being elected captain. They were formally gazetted in September 1867.

15 The NZ AC were raised in 1867 as the local defence force upon the British regiments departing New Zealand.

16 The AC force at Ngatapa, also included elements of No. 1, 3, 6 and 8 Divisions.

Harrison deserted the NZAC on 23 January 1869 during the gruelling campaign against Titokawaru on the West Coast. This is a curious event for an old soldier like Harrison. However, his 'habitual' drinking may have also assisted his departure.

Lost Discharge Certificate

Previously, on 22 December 1868, Constable Harrison had made application for the return of his discharge certificate from the 43rd Regiment, previously supplied upon his enlistment into the NZAC. On 20 January 1869 Colonel Moule forwarded the discharge certificate to No 7 Division at Nukumaru on the west coast. Colonel George Whitmore, commanding on the west coast, advised that Harrison had deserted and returned the discharge certificate. It is not confirmed if Harrison received his much prized discharge certificate – it appears he may not have.

Prize Money and Australia

In 1870 Harrison is again a miner on the Thames goldfields where he became aware of the Banda-Kirwee Prize money being available to those who were present at this Indian Mutiny campaign. The 43rd Light Infantry was one of three European regiments involved¹⁷ – private soldiers were entitled to £50 prize money. Harrison made a claim in 1870 but the prize payment had been made to his mother in 1868 – Harrison's whereabouts being 'unknown'.¹⁸

Harrison now decided to try his luck on the Australian goldfields in NSW and Victoria. In fact, he took whatever work he could in these outback regions particularly cutting and splitting timber. Unfortunately, he was still afflicted by drink which greatly affected his employment prospects. It would continue to do so.

NSW Soudan Contingent and Camel Corps

Whilst working in the Australian bush in early 1885, and hearing of an expeditionary force being raised in NSW for the Soudan, Harrison immediately made his way to Sydney to enlist. The fact that he was enlisted at all is extraordinary, as applications for the new contingent were strong and competitive. He claimed his age as now being 45 years – he was actually 54! A single man born at Aughrim, Ireland he stated

17 Those regiments were: 12th Lancers (left wing); 43rd Regiment and 6 Coy, 14th Brigade Royal Artillery.

18 On 24 December 1867, the men entitled to the Banda and Kirwee prize money received their first instalment at Aldershot, a private's share being £50, and that of a sergeant £100. Almost 120 men received the payment.

he was a miner and had previous service with the 43rd Regiment in Africa, India and New Zealand. As he may no longer have had his original discharge certificate he may well have used his named medals and other documents to prove his military credentials. Incredibly, he was enlisted on 20 February 1885 and allotted number 334. He was again described as being 6 feet 1 inch tall, with blue eyes, grey hair and, after years in the harsh Australian outback, was now of a dark complexion.

Private George Harrison embarked from Sydney with B Company, NSW Soudan Contingent, aboard the *Iberia* on 3 March 1885. On 23 April 1885 in the Soudan 55 men from the NSW Contingent were detached for service in No 3 Company of the newly raised local Camel Corps under Lieutenant Sparrow of D Company of the NSW Contingent. Harrison was one of those selected from B Company to form this detachment. His time with the Camel Corps was short. As could be expected his age was against him in the terrible heat and conditions of the desert. Harrison returned to B Company on 3 May 1885. The NSW Soudan Contingent's service was equally short and it arrived back in Sydney in late June and dispersed. They were formally disbanded on 3 July 1885. Shortly thereafter Harrison assembled in Sydney with other former members of the Camel Corps for a group photograph.

The now 56-year-old Private George Harrison was present at the parade at the Moore Park Agricultural Show Grounds in Sydney on 13 February 1886 to receive his Egypt Medal, with clasp Suakin 1885, from the Governor of NSW, Lord Carrington.¹⁹

No employment

Upon return from the Soudan Harrison again struggled to find employment – his drinking also hindered him greatly. As a result, he regularly called on the NSW Sudan Patriotic Fund during 1885 for charitable payments as he continued to be unemployed and 'ill'. He applied for further financial assistance from the fund in June 1886. The sum of £25 was granted with the clear understanding this was indeed a final payment.

Tells his own story

In Sydney in November 1887, at the age of 57, Harrison related his story to a journalist in an attempt to find permanent work as he was aging and his health failing.

¹⁹ *Town & Country Journal*, 20 February 1886, p. 392.

I have spent the best part of my life in defending the honor of my country, I have risked my life and shed my blood for my country; and now, when I am in want, and am willing to work, I find that all the avenues of life are closed to me. ... For twenty-one years and two months did I carry my life in my hand, ready and willing to go forth and face death at a moment's notice. I joined the service as a boy, and by the rules of the British army pension service does not count until one has reached the age of 18 years. That being so, although I had served my full time the full period had not been put in to enable me to claim a pension.²⁰

In fact, his was a deferred pension of 6 pence a day payable on attaining the age of 60 years, due in 1890 - and his records clearly states this – however, only sixteen years and 283 days of his service counted towards a pension. His records indicate he applied for a pension or ‘relief’ in December 1883 at the office of Colonial Pensions at the Treasury in Sydney, but was informed he was not entitled until 17 May 1890, when he turned 60. George summarised his service as:

I was sergeant in the 43rd Light Infantry, sometimes styled the 43rd Foot. — I have five medals and two bars. In the years 1851-2-3 I served in the Kaffir War; in the years 1857-8-9, I was engaged in the Indian Mutiny. In the years 1864-5-6, I was engaged in the New Zealand campaign. After that I left the regular service, but volunteered from the Thames Gold field to assist in suppressing the trouble that arose after the Poverty Bay Massacre; subsequently I served with the New South Wales contingent in the Soudan.

States to have been wounded and claims the Victoria Cross!

I was twice wounded, once in the Indian Mutiny, and once in the New Zealand War. For my conduct at the latter place I was recommended for the Victoria Cross for distinguished bravery. I was one of a party who stormed a pah at Tauranga. We forced our way into the pah, and then found that we were exposed to a very heavy cross fire. It was a terrible scene; in a space of twenty-five minutes 185 men, including twelve officers, were killed. Colonel Booth, who was leading the attack, was shot down, mortally wounded. I at once went to his aid and in the teeth of a shower of deadly lead, picked him up, placed him across my shoulder, and bore him to a place of safety. I was shot in the shoulder. Still I did not give up the task I had in hand. I made my way as best my failing strength would allow, three other men seeing the condition in which I was came to my assistance. Their names were also sent in with mine, and recommended for the cross.²²

20 Sydney *Evening News*, 15 November 1887, p. 3.

21 Sydney *Evening News*, 15 November 1887, p. 3.

22 Sydney *Evening News*, 15 November 1887, p. 3.

Harrison's military records state that he was never wounded. That is not to say that he did not receive some minor injury that did not require hospitalisation. At that time a period of hospitalisation was required to be recorded as 'wounded'. The other three men he states as also being recommended for the 'cross' when assisting him with Colonel Booth, were Colour Sergeant William B. Garland, privates William Bridgeman (wounded, lower arm amputated) and Charles Maitland. It was not the Victoria Cross they were recommended for but a Mention in Despatches, as they were 'brought to the notice for good service in this engagement and received the thanks of H.R.H.H The Field Marshall Commanding-in-Chief'. Colour Sergeant Garland also receiving the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

When asked why the Victoria Cross was not granted Harrison simply responded that he was not interested in gaining such distinctions – that after his discharge he spent time on the Thames Goldfields and later in Australia.

At the time I was full of enterprise and thought but little of obtaining distinction in that way. My ambition was to make a fortune, so I went on to the gold fields. But in 1884, when I found that fortune did not smile upon me, I set myself to obtain the distinction to which I consider I was justly entitled. One of the Government officials of this colony made an application in the matter for me.

The following is the formal reply that was received:

September 29, 1884, Horse Guards, War Office, London. Sir, I am directed by the Field Marshal, Commander-in-chief, to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 12th ultimo, transmitting the application from George Harrison, late of the 43rd Foot, to be granted the Victoria Cross in recognition of his gallant conduct at the assault on the rebel pah near Tauranga during the New Zealand war in 1864, and in reply I am to acquaint you for the information of the Colonial Secretary, that at this length of time it is impossible to take the matter into consideration. I have to add that although this man's name with others was brought to notice for his conduct in the action referred to, Sir Duncan Cameron stated that although the conduct of those mentioned was worthy of commendation, he did not consider that he should, under the circumstances, be justified in recommending them for any special reward.²³

Harrison now further explained the actions at the Gate Pa battle for which he believes he was commended:

How I came to be placed among that list was in this way: When in the trenches at New Zealand I was next to the captain of the company. The captain was shot through the neck, and he fell I picked him up and carried him to where I

23 Sydney *Evening News*, 15 November 1887, p. 3.

thought he would be safe, but when I put him down he was dead.²⁴

It appears from his statement that he assisted both Colonel Booth and carried the dead Captain Edwin Utterton from harm's way. During the advance Utterton was shot in the neck and killed. Utterton, late of the 23rd Regiment and a veteran of the Crimea and Indian Mutiny, had only exchanged into 43rd Regiment in September 1862.

It is very possible that George and his comrades may have at some time initially been considered for the Victoria Cross – the act of attempting to save life under fire certainly fits the criteria – that Colour Sergeant Garland received the DCM also adds credibility to his story.

No Employment

Harrison's complaint now was that he was unable to obtain any work. That he was no longer suited for heavy work and was looking for less strenuous employment due to his ailing health and age. When asked if he had tried to find such work he replied he had, even making representations to the Governor and former Premier of NSW:

Yes, for months —I may say for years. I have seen Lord Carrington. He was greatly interested in what I had to say, but even through his influence I did not succeed in getting employment. The position I have applied for has been that of messenger, for which, by reason of my military training, I think I am well suited. Two years ago I laid my case before the Right Hon. W. B. Dalley. He gave me the following recommendation: —

Marinella, Manly, January 28, 1886: My dear Mr. Speaker— If there is a vacancy in the staff of messengers, the bearer has seen such distinguished service and has been so highly decorated for valor that he is a worthy object for public employment. I believe Lord Carrington is interested in him, as is undoubtedly Gen. Richardson, Believe me, &c, W. Bede Dalley.²⁵

Even that recommendation did not get Harrison a position.²⁶ When in Melbourne the following year he had also pressed the military authorities at the Victoria Barracks for possible employment opportunities using his long and varied military career as a résumé. He obtained the following letter from Major Pereguine Fellowes, then Deputy Assistant Adjutant General of the Victorian Military Forces:

24 Sydney *Evening News*, 15 November 1887, p. 3.

25 William Bede Dalley was acting premier of NSW and despatched the NSW Sudan Contingent. General John Soame Richardson (late Capt., 12th Regt in New Zealand) had been Colonel and commanded the Contingent.

26 Sydney *Evening News*, 15 November 1887, p. 3.

Head Quarters, Victoria Military Barracks, February 7, 1887. I have perused the letters in possession of Mr. Geo. Harrison, late sergeant in the 43rd Regiment, and also the records of his regiment, by which it appears that Mr. Harrison has done good service, and was specially mentioned for valor in the New Zealand war. I should think he would fill the position of messenger, hall porter, or commissionaire to the satisfaction of anyone who might employ him. His case is certainly a deserving one. (Signed) P.H.T Fellows, Major D.A.A.G.M. Forces.²⁷

Harrison then simply summed up his situation as:

I might give you many other letters in proof of my honesty and sobriety; but I should not farther explain my case. The simple facts of the whole case are these: I am hard up, I want employment. Do you know where I could get work? What I should like would be a post of messenger in the Government service.²⁸

But it was a plea in vain. There is a reason he did not get the government employment he so keenly wished for, even after the intercedence of the Governor and the former acting Premier of NSW and the DAAG of Victoria. Harrison, like so many other old soldiers, was afflicted by drink and had become 'unreliable'.

A vagrant's life

George returned to the various goldfields and rural communities of western NSW eking out a modest living as he was able. In 1895 he was now aged 65 years and had become an elderly vagrant living in a humpy between the river and the police paddock at Wagga Wagga. In 1900 George became eligible for the newly introduced NSW aged pension which he was granted. Curiously he had made no further contact with the imperial pension's officer at the NSW State Treasury for his deferred Army pension of 6 pence a day that he became eligible for in 1890.

Sadly, Harrison's elderly sister, Jane Harrison in Manchester, had made numerous enquiries for George of the New Zealand Defence and Chelsea Hospital authorities, all of whom stated nothing had been heard from him since 1883.

At the time of his disappearance at Wagga Wagga Harrison was described as about 67 years of age, (he was in fact 76) 5 feet 11 inches high, medium build, slightly stooped, round shoulders, grizzly grey hair, beard, whiskers and moustache, beard clipped closely, sallow complexion. This description is very similar in all respects

27 Captain Pereguine Henry Thomas Fellows, an Imperial officer appointed to the colonial Headquarters staff with the local rank of major. Later Chief Constable of Hampshire. He died in 1893.

28 Sydney *Evening News*, 15 November 1887, p. 3.

to his description upon leaving the 43rd Regiment and enlisting into the NSW Soudan Contingent. The inquest into his death provided a verdict of 'drowning by drunkenness'. George Harrison was buried in a pauper's grave at Griffith in NSW on 21 October 1905.

His Medals

What became of Harrison's medals is not known. Were they secreted about his tidy bush hut on the Murrumbidgee River or did they go to support his meagre needs and alcoholic affliction? Curiously, his lone South Africa 1834-1853 medal was noted as being sold at a London auction house in 2008.²⁹

Interestingly, whilst it is known he received the South Africa Medal (1853), the Indian Mutiny Medal and the Egypt Medal with clasp Suakin 1885, he also received two New Zealand Medals! In 1871 he made claim for and received an imperial issue impressed named medal to the 1st Waikato Regiment for his service with the Imperial Commissariat.³⁰ Much later he applied for another New Zealand Medal for his service with the 43rd Regiment. This was a late issue medal granted via the Adjutant General's List No. 139.³¹ He would also have been entitled to the Khedives Star for the Soudan which had arrived in Sydney in April 1888. These stars were only distributed upon application for forwarding to a local community official such as mayor or police magistrate for issue. It is almost certain that all went to fund his alcoholic dependence.

Conclusion

This has been the story of George Harrison – one of the Queen's old soldiers – veteran of the 43rd Light Infantry with hard service in South Africa, the Indian Mutiny, in New Zealand at the terrible battles of Gate Pa and Te Ranga; with the 1st Waikato Militia and the Opotiki Volunteer Rangers, then the deadly assault on the mountain fortress of Maori rebel Te Kooti with the Armed Constabulary and finally the NSW Soudan Contingent and the Camel corps – and a shipwreck survivor.

29 Dix Noonan Webb Lot 779 – 19 March 2008. Described as a 'later issue', named in 'South Africa 1877-79' style to Private rather than Bugler.

30 New Zealand Government Gazette 1871 & AD32/3002.

31 WO100/18: New Zealand Medal Roll

'Craftsmen of the Army' understanding the Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (AEME) in the Second World War

Graham McKenzie-Smith¹

Introduction

The outbreak of the Second World War saw the Australian Army in the process of converting to motor transport and the responsibility for maintenance was divided, with the **Mechanical Engineering Branch** of AAOC providing base workshops, but many other corps also had workshop units. AEME was formed as a separate corps in December 1942 based on the Mech Eng Branch and over the next few years they took over the mechanical workshop function for almost all corps. This paper will generally cover the units that eventually joined AEME, except for the workshop platoons that remained integral parts of the AASC transport companies. The varied army workshop units are best understood by considering their role in the chain of units that maintains the army's mechanical assets.

First line repairs (or unit repairs) were carried out by tradesmen attached to a unit. These include minor repairs and adjustments, servicing, brake-linings, tune-ups, prop shafts, radiator swaps, fan belts and hoses, as well as exchanges of minor assemblies such as axle shafts and differentials. Essentially everything that could be done in less than four hours and only needed the tradesman's personal toolbox. This work was usually done in the unit lines by the Light Aid Detachment which was attached to each unit.

Second line repairs (or field repairs) involved the exchange of components or major unit assemblies, such as an engine, transmission or clutch, and may involve multiple exchanges. The vehicle or equipment would be evacuated from the unit to the supporting workshop, which was equipped to make the repair, but it stayed 'owned' by the unit while under repair and was returned to the unit on completion. This work was done by the field workshop units which had multiple reorganizations during the war, starting as Army Field Workshops and evolving to Brigade Workshops by 1945.

Third line repairs (or medium field repairs) were done by the base workshop units which worked on vehicles or equipment whose repair at a field workshop would

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 introductions to the various types of AEME units that are individually profiled in *The Unit Guide*.

take too long, or was too complicated, so the vehicle or equipment was handed back to AAOC and a replacement issued to the unit. The vehicle or equipment was then returned to ordnance stock when the specific repair was completed, or written off to be used as spares. Fourth line repairs (or base repairs) were carried out on ordnance stock deemed to be beyond local repair (but still repairable) and included the assembly line approach to upgrade an equipment type. Again, these base workshop units had multiple reorganizations and involved Advanced Workshops and Base Workshops as well as Area Workshops which also catered for the first and second line repairs for local units in base areas. Until late 1943 the base workshop units had few staff of their own, with the personnel being supplied by separate Workshop Companies so they could be moved between workshops as required.

A number of specialized workshops for motor vehicles, armoured vehicles, mechanical equipment, watercraft were also formed, as well as for anti-aircraft and radar equipment. The management and co-ordination of these workshop units were controlled by the senior mechanical engineer at the HQ of each, army, corps, division and base area, while the training units produced the tradesmen needed for the task.

AEME Headquarters

Prior to the formation of AEME in December 1942, when most equipment maintenance was undertaken by the Mech Eng Branch of AAOC, each ADOS in the division HQ had a Chief Ordnance Mechanical Engineer (COME) who was responsible for the ordnance workshops and similar units attached to the division. When AEME was established as a separate corps, they adopted a similar hierarchy of positions to other corps. At LHQ the corps was headed by the Director of Mechanical Engineering (DME). He was represented at Army and Corps HQs by the Deputy DME (DDME) and at division HQs by the Assistant DME (ADME), although this position was usually known as Chief Electrical and Mechanical Engineer (CEME). At smaller HQs they reverted to the norm with the Deputy Assistant DME (DADME) controlling the workshops. Each of these commanders had a small staff and the unit carried a similar title to its commander.

Light Aid Detachments

The Light Aid Detachment (LAD) was the small unit (one officer and between 19 and 29 men) which was attached to a unit to undertake their first line maintenance. Within a division LADs were attached to division HQ, each brigade HQ, each artillery regiment, the machine gun battalion and the engineer group. Others were

attached to various signals HQ, each armoured and motor regiment and to any collection of units that was not serviced by other types of workshop. The LADs varied in organization depending on the type of unit being serviced and the type of equipment used, tracked or wheeled, artillery or infantry. Included in the mix of tradesmen in the LAD were mechanics, fitters, armourers, electricians, and drivers as well as a storeman and a cook. Most LADs remained with their host unit throughout the war, living, working and fighting with them.



Image 1: Vehicles being repaired by
319 LAD, Morotai, May 1945.
Source: AWM 089574.

The host unit's vehicle drivers were expected to conduct routine servicing of their vehicle and one of the roles of the LAD was the inspection of unit equipment to ensure standards were maintained and to detect any issues before a failure made the equipment unserviceable. The LAD carried out minor repairs and adjustments, essentially everything that could be done in less than four hours and only needed the tradesman's personal toolbox. The work was usually done in the unit lines.

By November 1939 38 LADs had been formed in the militia, numbered

1 to 38. When 6 Inf Div was raised for the Second AIF, the LADs to be attached to their units started from 2/39 LAD. New LADs were raised for the AIF over the next 12 months and when it was decided to raise more militia LADs in late 1940, the earlier militia units were renumbered from 201. Eventually 72 AIF LADs were raised, numbered from 2/39 to 2/110 along with 142 militia units numbered from 201 to 342.

Field Workshops

The field workshop units concentrated on second line repairs to vehicles and equipment from the units being serviced, which involved the exchange of components or major unit assemblies and could involve multiple exchanges. The vehicle or equipment would be evacuated from the unit to the supporting workshop which was equipped to make the repair, but it stayed 'owned' by the unit while under repair and was returned to the unit. However, the distinction between second and third line repairs often became blurred, especially in base areas, and they also did work on ordnance depot stock, especially in the Middle East. The field workshop units had multiple reorganizations during the war.

The initial type of field unit was the Army Field Workshop which was a corps level unit, but one was available for each division. As well as the HQ, the unit had a large main workshop with general engineering, mechanical transport and instrument sections along with three Recovery Sections. The emphasis was on recovering and restoring equipment from the battlefield. The workshop HQ also supervised the LADs attached to the division. When the Second AIF first went to the Middle East, no base workshops were sent as it was assumed that RAOC workshops would be responsible for third line repairs, but the army field workshops were over-strength to allow them to also do such repair if necessary. Four army field workshops were formed for the AIF and provision was made for five to be formed in the militia. The diversion of most of 2/1 Army Fd Wksp to the UK in the Third Convoy caused considerable rearranging of these units in the Middle East.

In early 1942 the army field workshops were split to form Army Ordnance Workshops which were corps units to do third line maintenance, as well as Divisional Ordnance Workshops which were attached to each division for second line repairs. The main workshop was reduced and the recovery sections given some workshop capacity to become Brigade Sections. Three divisional ordnance workshops were formed in the AIF with the other army field workshop becoming a base workshop. Divisional ordnance workshops were formed for the militia divisions (numbered 50 to 58) but the two proposed for the corps troops were further divided as Independent Brigade Group Ordnance Workshops. Nine similar units were formed to work with units in the smaller states.

All these units joined the new AEME when the Corps was formed in December 1942 and initially the main change was to delete 'ordnance' from the unit names, except that the Army Ordnance Workshops became Infantry Troops Workshops and the Divisional Workshops were named after the division. In June 1943 the next reorganization saw the divisional workshops disbanded and the brigade sections expanded to form Brigade Workshops which continued until the end of the war as the principle field workshops undertaking second line repairs.

Base Workshop Units

Third line repairs (or medium field repairs) were done by the base workshop units which worked on vehicles or equipment whose repair at a field workshop would take too long, or was too complicated, so the vehicle or equipment was handed back to ordnance and a replacement issued to the unit. The depot would then pass the equipment to the workshop for repair. Fourth line repairs (or base repairs) were carried out on ordnance stock which was deemed to be beyond local repair (but still repairable) and often involved an assembly line approach to upgrade an equipment type. These base workshop units had multiple reorganizations.

In common with other ordnance units, the Advanced Ordnance Workshops in the Middle East were established with a small HQ element. Personnel were supplied by separate Ordnance Workshop Companies which also supplied tradesmen to numerous small workshops in the troop concentration areas. Similarly in Australia, the pre-war static workshops were in areas of troop concentration for training and manned by men from the ordnance workshop companies.

In 1941 a program was started to develop static workshops at places that were safe from seaborne attacks, had transport facilities and were within reach of the troop concentration areas after mobilisation. A single Base Ordnance Workshop was proposed for Bandiana (Vic), with Advanced Ordnance Workshops at Charters Towers and Toowoomba (Qld), Muswellbrook and Bathurst (NSW), Nungarin (WA) and Mataranka (NT). The previous workshops in the capital cities and camp workshops then came together as L of C Area Ordnance Workshops to meet local needs and Fortress Workshops at the defended ports. Later, Tank Ordnance Workshops were developed at Bandiana, Muswellbrook, Wallangarra and Nungarin.

When AEME took over the workshop function in December 1942, all units dropped Ordnance from their name, leading to Base Workshops, Advanced Workshops, L of C Area Workshops and Tank Workshops, all largely manned by tradesmen from the Workshop Companies. In January 1944 the workshops were reorganized with the workshop companies disbanded and the men joining their respective workshops which were formed into a series of standardised sections that could be moved around between workshops as workload varied over time. Some

base workshop units, such as Infantry Troops Workshops had been derived from field workshop units, so were covered in the previous section, while other specialist units such as third line tank workshops are covered later.

Specialist Workshops

While the LADs undertook first line maintenance for units in the field, and the many variations of field workshops mainly did the higher maintenance for the generalist units, a range of specialist workshops were also formed to meet the maintenance needs of specific units.

Anti-Aircraft Workshop Units

An AA Ordnance Workshop Section was raised for the each of the AIF AA regiments



Image 2: Men of 71 LAD repairing shrapnel damage, Western Desert, 1942.
Source: AWM 025217.

sent to the Middle East and were co-ordinated by a workshop HQ attached to the AA brigade. These ordnance workshop sections maintained the regiment's guns as well as their vehicles and if individual batteries were deployed away from workshop facilities, a workshop sub-section was formed, usually as temporary unit.

In early 1942, ordnance workshop sections were also raised for the light AA regiments along with one for each of the heavy AA and searchlight battery. In the metropolitan areas an ordnance workshop section often serviced several batteries. If a LAA battery was detached, it often had a workshop sub-section attached. In December 1942, AEME took over the workshop function and all units were renamed to delete reference to their ordnance background.

In early 1943, an AA Workshop Company were formed in each area to co-ordinate the various AA workshop sections and later when composite AA regiments were formed, these formed workshop companies which absorbed the HAA and SL workshop sections and the LAA sub-section which came with the batteries that formed the regiment. As the war moved away from Australia and the static air defences were wound down, these workshop companies were formed into Fortress Workshops and some later became Area Workshops.

Motor Vehicle Workshop Units

Although all levels of workshops were involved in repairs and maintenance of motor vehicles, a range of workshops were established with a focus on such work. In the Middle East, L of C Recovery Sections were formed to operate along the lines of communication between the army field workshops in the forward areas and the advanced ordnance workshops in the base areas. When they returned to Australia they maintained vehicles in NT and New Guinea. Specialized ordnance workshops were formed to work on vehicles along the convoy routes towards Darwin.

When AEME took over the maintenance function in December 1942, these units became Motor Transport Workshops and others were formed in each state. Until 1943, AAOC managed the supply of vehicles through the No 1 Sub Depot of each ordnance depot, but from late 1943 these were separated as Ordnance Vehicle Parks and later many motor transport workshops were reorganized as Vehicle Park Workshops.

The routine servicing of their vehicles was undertaken by each army unit and an essential role for AEME was the regular inspection of all vehicles, to ensure the unit was following acceptable standards for their vehicle use and maintenance. The Motor Transport Inspection Sections were formed to standardise this role in late 1943 until the role was transferred to Unit Maint Insp Sec LHQ in early 1945. To supervise and co-ordinate the vehicle repair work being undertaken by civilian contractors, Trade Repair Control Sections were formed in late 1944.

Armoured Vehicle Workshop Units

Armoured vehicles required significant maintenance and as they may require recovery and repair of battle damage in the field, a range of field workshop units were needed to cover first, second and third line repairs and maintenance. These units evolved over the period of the war.

Each armoured regiment had a LAD to provide some first line maintenance, especially for the wheeled vehicles and initially each brigade had an Armoured Brigade Group Ordnance Workshop for first and second line repairs to the armoured vehicles. These were then combined with the brigade's ordnance field park to form the Armoured Brigade Group Ordnance Company. When AEME took over the workshop role, this company was split to form the Armoured Brigade Workshop. A similar progression worked for the motor brigades which evolved from the pre-war cavalry brigades.

For third line repairs, each of the armoured divisions had a Division Section of the Armoured Corps Ordnance Workshop and a similar unit was raised for 3 Army Tk Bde Gp. These became Armoured Troops Workshops with the formation of AEME. Later in the war some armoured regiments were reorganized as independent units for use in tropical areas and Armoured Regiment Workshops were formed to cover all except depot level maintenance.

As tanks arrived from the United States, tank depots were established and Ordnance Tank Depot Workshop Sections were established close to the ports to receive and prepare the tanks. These became Tank Depot Workshops when transferred to AEME and later other similar units were formed as the armoured units were disbanded to prepare the tanks for mothballing. Large tank depots were also formed inland from the coast and at the state borders where the rail gauge changed and these had Tank Ordnance Workshop Companies to undertake fourth line maintenance. These later became Tank Workshop Companies.

Mechanical Equipment Workshop Units

As mechanical equipment, such as bulldozers, became available, RAE units were formed, or converted, to operate them in forward and base areas with first and second line maintenance being undertaken within the unit workshop sections. AAOC and later AEME formed separate workshops to undertake third line maintenance. In late 1944, AEME took over second line maintenance and Mechanical Equipment Workshops were formed to accompany each engineer mechanical equipment company. They were supported by mechanical equipment spare parts sections that were formed by the RAE to overcome deficiencies in the supply of spare parts from the ordnance stores system.

Watercraft Workshop Units

Army water transport was operated by the RAE and after previous ad-hoc arrangements, they formed water transport maintenance companies in New Guinea. AEME took over the responsibility in mid-1943 and formed Watercraft Workshop Sections, some of which were organized from the engineer companies. The workshop at Brisbane evolved into the Base Watercraft Workshop. The watercraft workshops maintained a range of vessel types, but specific Landing Craft Workshop Sections were formed to join the landing craft companies. Difficulties in locating suitable workshop sites in forward areas led, in mid-1944, to the formation of Floating Watercraft Workshops based on converted large car ferries. By 1945 Floating Docks had been developed to avoid building slipways in these forward areas. Also in 1945, several Workshop Craft Operating Sections were formed which would allow smaller floating workshops to be operated.

Radar Workshop Units

Radar evolved quickly during the early years of the Second World War with the air force taking the lead in the air search role and the navy in the surface search role at sea. Surface search from land and later fire control of guns were army responsibilities and radar was adapted to that role by the Special Radio Detachments.



Image 3: M3A1 Stuart tank being spray painted at 2nd Australian Tank Ordnance Depot, Melbourne, 1943.
Source: AWM 051954.

The name was adopted as a security measure which carried through to the AEME units formed to maintain the radar sets. Radio Maintenance Sections were formed in each fortress area and Radio Maintenance Companies formed in Sydney and Brisbane to control the sections.

Other Specialist Workshop Units

A range of specialised small workshops units were operated by AEME. With limited supplies of rubber, several Tyre Recapping Sections were formed in mid-1943 to work initially on the overland convoy routes to Darwin but later, as Mobile Tyre Repair Workshop Sections in other forward areas. As suitable plant was developed, Mobile Gas Generating Sections were formed in 1944 to generate various gasses for both medical and industrial uses. As electronic equipment became more complex, several Telecom Workshop Sections were formed in 1945 to work with signals units. AAOC had maintained an Experimental Workshop which was taken over by AEME before it was absorbed into the Design Division of the MGO Branch at LHQ.

AEME Training

Until 1943 the AAOC training depots in each state had a workshop wing to train most of the mechanics, but other corps depots also trained their own mechanics. In March 1943, the newly formed AEME established their own training centre at Ingleburn (NSW) and except in Western Australia the workshop wings of the AAOC training establishments transferred to Ingleburn. LHQ E & ME School concentrated on higher level training for officers and armament artificers. AEME Trng Centre undertook the lower-level training with a Recruit Training Battalion to take raw recruits and a Workshop Training Battalion to provide conversion training to civilian and military craftsmen. They also held units and individuals between postings. Until early 1944 a smaller AEME Training Centre operated in WA.

‘Craftsmen of the Australian Army’

The corps history is *Craftsmen of the Australian Army: The Story of RAEME* by Theo Barker and was published by the Corps Committee in 1992. When raised in December 1942 AEME had inherited some 15,000 men (all ranks) and by 1945 this had only grown to 20,813. They served in 596 units maintaining the full range of Army equipment (except the AASC trucks issued to units). Throughout the war they kept the Army ‘on the move’.

'Feel Fair': Narrabri Shire's POWs held in Japanese Captivity 1942-45, as mentioned in NX41219 Haig 'Jock' Logan's wartime diary

Katrina Kittell¹

Narrabri-born Haig 'Jock' Logan (NX41219), 2/30th Battalion, became a prisoner-of-war of the Japanese on 15 February 1942 following the Fall of Singapore. Jock's wartime diary begins in January 1944, after his work within 'F' Force on the Thai-Burma railway ends, and four months before his return to Changi POW camp.² Among the Australian POWs briefly mentioned in Jock's diary, are 18 soldiers from the Narrabri Shire of northern New South Wales, or its close vicinity.³ Most of these 18 POWs were captured within their respective units on same day as Jock but their captivity experience and outcomes varied.⁴ Most diary mentions are when these POWs are at Changi POW camp with Jock from late April to September, 1945. Where Jock's POW colleagues mentioned in this article were taken prisoner on a different date, it is stated.

Jock signed his oath of enlistment at Tamworth on 28 August 1940, stating his occupation as cabinet maker and his next-of kin as his father, Henry Logan, of Maitland Street, Narrabri. Jock resided at 45 Barwon Street before he was 'taken on strength' as a private, 7th R.R. Battalion, on 6 September 1940. He was transferred into 2/30th Battalion on 5 February 1941. One month before Jock sailed for Singapore on 29 July 1941, Jock's younger brother, Robert 'Bob' Logan, enlisted for the RAAF at Sydney. Bob Logan, born 1922, was a clerk for Logan & Co. Pty Ltd of Narrabri at the time. Jock disembarked Singapore on 15 August 1941. Jock was soon suffering from malaria. His subsequent transit locations included: 23 October

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2 S. Mason, descendant of the Logan family, provides permission to cite Jock's diary.

3 Sources used to identify POWs mentioned by Logan, or likely matches, included Department of Veterans' Affairs World War Two Nominal Roll; National Archives of Australia B883 Second Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers 1939-1947; Missing, wounded and prisoners of war cards (Red Cross Society) held University of Melbourne Archives. Not all possible matches can be identifiable due to the uncertainty whether Logan uses actual or informal name, nor does this article include all possible matches to POWs cited.

4 Many of the NAA B883 files accessed for this paper include a Changi copy of the Service and Casualty Form pages (maintained at Changi camp after capitulation and until 1943). For the casualty form pages viewed, most are stamped with a 'Missing, Prisoner of War' stamp with the adjacent Date of Casualty column stating 16/2/1942, whereas the Changi copy equivalent states the date of casualty as 15/2/1942.

1941 at Kota Tinggi, 28 November 1941 at Malacca, then north to Batu Pahat (Johore State). When Singapore fell on 15 February 1942, Jock was soon heading into Changi camp with other newly captured Australian POWs.

Large work forces left Changi during 1942 and 1943 to work on the



Image 1: Service record photograph of 'Jock' Logan.
Source: NAA B883, NX41219.

Thai-Burma railway and other locations. Jock entrained with 'F' Force; his group departed Changi on 22 April 1943. Don Wall, one of the (non-Narrabri) POWs mentioned in Jock's diary, was presumably the Don Wall who collated a book post-war entitled *Heroes of F Force*. The role of 'F' Force, formed at Changi, was to assist in the construction of the Thai-Burma railway. Don Wall wrote that most of the members of 'F' Force arrived back in Changi on 17 December 1943. Wall cites David Griffin (NX69235) who recalled that he and fellow Changi POWs were 'totally unprepared for the human wreckage which returned to Changi as the survivors of 'F' Force'.⁵

Jock's diary begins in January 1944. He notes that on 24 April at 3.30pm, he departed Kanchanaburi. Arriving at Singapore safely on 29 April 1944, he goes to Changi and receives

four letters from his mother. He sees familiar faces including Condon, Bob Gibbs, and J. Delaney. Jock's diary mentions work on the aerodrome and at Changi camp where he works on the gardens and goods trailers.

On 14 February 1945, Jock writes that he works on the aerodrome early, observing that the men worked 'fairly hard'. He adds: 'Leo Hogan, Ossie Vincent's friend, makes me a new diary out of Red Cross envelopes.' Of his own health, he is succinct: 'Feel fair.' Jock's 'Leo Hogan' probably matches Norbert Leo Hogan (NX57364), born in Brewarrina 1903. Hogan's occupation was as a 'clerk examining accounts records and stores.' He was married and living in Manly when he enlisted into 2/20th Battalion, to embark HMT *Queen Mary* at Sydney on 2 February 1941 bound for Malaya. He became a POW at 41 years of age. Regarding Hogan's friend 'Ossie Vincent', Ossie may have been 2/30th Battalion's Horace Vincent (NX15563).⁶ Horace Vincent was born at Narrabri in 1917. He was from Bellata in 1940. His father lived in Maitland Street, Narrabri when Vincent put pen to paper to enlist into the Army at Paddington, 17 May 1940. Horace Vincent died from beri beri on 12 August 1943. He was cremated, then buried in Kanchanaburi War

5 Don Wall, *Heroes of F Force*, self-published (1993). Wall cites David Griffin NX69235 on page 140.

Cemetery. Wall's book includes an honour roll of 'F' Force POWs. Wall lists Horace Vincent (NX15563) from Narrabri, as dying at Neike.

In early March 1945, Jock had a 'long talk' with a Percy Smith, likely to be Percy Smith (NX68420), born 1898 at Narrabri. The oldest of the Narrabri-raised POWs mentioned by Jock, Percy Smith was married, his wife living in Marrickville. After enlisting on 3 March 1941 at Paddington, Percy became a driver for 2/3rd Motor Ambulance Convoy in Malaya. Percy was released from Japanese captivity and emplaned at Singapore on 16 September 1945 for Labuan, the initial stage of his journey home. Considering the wartime deaths of three other Percy Smith servicemen identifiable via DVA's World War Two Nominal Roll, Narrabri's Percy Smith was fortunate to survive his war. Engaging in a long talk with Jock on 23 April 1945 was 'Gordon' Gaffney, probably Leslie Gordon Gaffney (NX71862), born in 1915 at Inverell, who enlisted at Paddington on 25 March 1941. His captivity period included work in 'E' Force.

Later in March 1945, Jock diarises: 'Write letter card home. See Bill Smith'. The identification of this POW is difficult. Bill may have been a nickname, or middle name. Among possible matches is William Benjamin Smith (NX25803), born Narrabri in 1910. He worked as a labourer and was a share farmer of 'Lochinvar', Culoora—located between Narrabri and Wee Waa—when he completed his attestation form on 26 June 1940 at Tamworth. He was placed into 2/18th Battalion. As did many of Jock Logan's soldier friends, Smith underwent training at Tamworth and in Sydney. He boarded HMT *Queen Mary* at Sydney on 2 February 1941 bound for Malaya, disembarking sixteen days later. Following recovery at Changi in early September 1945, he embarked HMT *Arawa* on 19 September 1945 for his journey home.

On 11 May 1945, Jock chats with fellow prisoners in Changi regarding any news about Frank Ferrari and 'Bob Gibbs'. Bob may be Robert Gibbs (NX29924), born 1911 at Casino. His father William was at Cheviot Hills, Narrabri, when Gibbs enlisted 11 June 1940 at Paddington into the 2/30th Battalion. Gibbs sailed to Singapore on the same ship as Jock. Gibbs was recovered from Adam Park, Singapore, to embark on the *Esperance Bay*, 22 September 1945. Enlisting at Paddington on the same day as Gibbs was Reginald Melbourne (NX31375), known to Jock as Reg. Born in Narrabri four years before Gibbs, Melbourne was married to Jessie and was occupied as a share farmer when he filled in the pink attestation document to enlist into 2/15th Field Regiment. Leaving Singapore on the *Tamaroa* on 29 September 1945, he arrived at Sydney, 20 October 1945.

'Frank' Ferrari was likely to be Frances Ferrari (NX58230). Born at Mungindi, 1913, Ferrari's father Joseph Ferrari lived at 3 Maitland Street, Narrabri in 1940. On 19 July 1940 at Paddington, Ferrari signed up and was placed into

6 Regarding Leo Hogan, another possible match is NX47563 Martin Leo Hogan, 2/30 Bn, POW 15/2/1942, alive Changi 4/9/45.

2/6th Field Company, to embarking on the first day of August 1941, reaching the Middle East late in September. On the first day of February 1942, he embarked in Suez for Batavia, to disembark three days after the Fall of Singapore. He is reported missing and POW in Java on 7 March 1942 and taken to a Thai camp at Moulmein, Burma. At Singapore on 29 September 1945, he stepped aboard the *Tamaroa* bound for Sydney, touching Australian soil on 20 October 1945.

A 'Padre Barrett' is mentioned by Jock in May 1945. Among possible matches is Humphrey Barrett (NX40985), born England, and at West Narrabri when he presented to recruitment officers at Tamworth, 10 July 1940. His mother Gladys Tomlinson resided at 'Cooma', West Narrabri. Padres offered spiritual support and church services provided time for reflection on POW colleagues who had died. Jock mentions the death of a 'Lofty Condon' on 5 July 1945. One possible match, John Condon (QX12228), born Narrabri 1907, was located at Emerald when he enlisted in July 1940 at Rockhampton. This soldier's service record photo shows he stood 6'2" tall in the measurements of the time, perhaps indicating a match to a nickname of 'Lofty'. John Condon's unit was 10th Australian General Hospital. John Condon died in Malaya on 24 June 1945—earlier than the date Jock diarises—suffering from beri beri, dengue and metatarsal carcinoma. John Condon was exhumed at Johore, to be reburied at Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore, on 2 May 1946. The discrepancy of Jock's diary entry with the officially reported date of death indicates that Jock recorded an incorrect death date or spelling of surname, or that 'Lofty' Condon is not easily found on DVA's roll. 'Lofty' may not have been an Australian national. Moreover, 'Lofty' may have been short of stature and not tall.

At some point during these tail-end months of Jock Logan's captivity, Jock learns of the death of Frederick Hardman (NX39076). Jock writes of Hardman on an envelope: 'Fred Hardman, 55 Kilo [camp] Thailand Oct 1944.' Narrabri-born in 1919, Hardman enlisted on 18 July 1941 at Paddington. His next-of-kin was his father Harold Hardman who lived 16 Denison Street, Narrabri. Hardman disembarked in Singapore on 25 September 1941. He served as a sapper in 2/6th Field Company in Java, disembarking there on 18 February 1942, three days after the fall of Singapore. He was taken prisoner in Java in March 1942. As was Jock Logan, Hardman was sent to Moulmein and to work on the Thai-Burma rail. Hardman died of dysentery in a Thai camp on 28 November 1943 and is buried in Burma's Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery. A double blow to his family, Frederick's brother, Dudley Hardman (NX15578), born Narrabri 1919, was killed in action in Syria on 18 June 1941.

On 26 July 1945, Jock listens to a talk given by 'Doug Frazer who is making pottery' and who is also working on paper repurposing. Douglas Fraser (NX40359) was born at Inverell in 1913 and was at Narrabri when he visited recruitment officers at Tamworth to join the 2/18th Battalion on 20 June 1940. Douglas's occupation was a potter. He was recovered in Singapore less than two months after this talk.

On 14 August 1945, Jock writes that he sees ‘Arthur Cameron at 3pm.’ Jock fixes his patent flint cigarette lighter for him. Jock wonders whether Arthur is ‘a bit in dumps?’ Arthur Cameron (NX40607) signed up at Tamworth, 27 June 1940, stating he was married to Marjorie. He served in the 2/18th Battalion and was 41 years old when taken prisoner. On the same day entry, Jock adds that ‘Tom Smith from Wee Waa under shower’. This Tom Smith leans well towards being Thomas Smith (NX35838), born at Wee Waa in 1912. He enlisted into the 2/19th Battalion on the same day as Arthur Cameron, 27 June 1940, but Smith did so at Wagga Wagga. Smith stated his address as Clear Ridge, Wyalong, and his occupation as schoolteacher. Smith travelled to Singapore aboard HMT *Queen Mary*. Smith’s journey home begins on the *Duntroon* on 18 September 1945, to step onto Sydney soil on 7 October 1945. His rank was staff sergeant at time of his discharge in 1946.

Jock’s reference to a ‘Vic’ may fit another veteran with the surname Cameron: Victor Cameron (NX40502) from ‘Aberfeldie’, Bellata, north of Narrabri. Enlisting the same day and place as Victor Cameron—25 June 1940 at Tamworth—was James Delaney (NX40487), 2/18th Battalion. James probably is the ‘Jim Delaney’ mentioned by Jock as looking ‘well’ on 23 August 1945. James Delaney was born at Narrabri in 1913. At Narrabri, he worked as a tractor and motor truck driver. Recovered at Changi on 4 September 1945, Delaney embarked HMT *Arawa* at Singapore on 19 September 1945 for his journey back to Australia.

Jock’s handwriting is unclear as to whether he refers to a Jock or Jack, with surname Murphy, who was ‘from Thorndale’. A good-fit match is Francis John Murphy (NX72657), born in 1908 at Mungindi. He, and his mother Isabella, were at Thorndale, Mungindi, in 1941. Mungindi is located within the Moree Plains Shire. Murphy, in the 2/18th Battalion, embarked on 29 July 1941, as did Jock Logan. Murphy is in Johore on 23 August 1941. Released from captivity just over four years later, Murphy, suffering from malnutrition, leaves Singapore and disembarked from the hospital ship *Manunda* at Labuan on 21 September 1945. He’s taken to the 9th Division POW reception camp on 1 October, and is emplaned at Labuan on 5 October 1945, deplaning Sydney, 11 October 1945. Jock Logan’s turn to embark *Manunda* comes on 5 October 1945 and he stepped onto Sydney soil on 27 October 1945.

Less-common surnames assist with identification of a veteran. Jock’s mention of ‘Swaddling’ likely refers to Malcolm Swaddling (NX40282), born Maitland in 1916, and at Moree when he signed up at Tamworth on 19 June 1940 to enter the



Image 2: Service record photograph of Francis Murphy.
Source: NAA B883, NX72657.

2/18th Battalion. His father was 'A.W. Swaddling, c/- Crane & Co.' of Moree. Swaddling was reported alive at Changi on 4 September 1945. On or about this date in 1945, Jock and many of these Narrabri-region POWs mentioned by him, were reported alive in Singapore, and in readiness for repatriation home.

Although Ramalli is not mentioned in Jock Logan's diary, Cecil Ramalli (NX55040) was born in Moree in 1919, and lived at Mungindi. Ramalli enlisted at Paddington on 27 June 1940, the same day as Arthur Cameron and Tom Smith. He stated his mother, Adeline, as next of kin. He would have farewelled his mother by 2 February 1941, the day he embarked the *Queen Mary* for Singapore in early 1941. Thomas Smith also embarked with this cohort. Lance Corporal Ramalli served in 8th Division Signals. His captivity locations included Fukuoka, Japan, and the coal mines of Nagasaki. When he was repatriated, he was severely malnourished, weighing just 38 kgs. Cecil Ramalli became a well-known talented player of rugby league, becoming the first Indigenous and Asian member of the Wallabies.⁷

As Rohan Goynes observes (*Sabretache*, March 2022), veteran vignettes gleaned from accessible primary and secondary sources provide glimpses into a community's service during the Second World War.⁸

收容所 Camp	泰福岡 昭和17年10月1日	番 號 No.	泰三 2123
姓 名 Name	RAMALLI Cecil	生年月日 Date of Birth	1919. 6. 10
國 籍 Nationality	澳	No.	NX55040
階級身分 Rank	LANCE CORPORAL (ARMY) 陸軍 兵長	所屬部隊 Unit	8 Divisional Signals
捕虜場所 Place of Capture	シナボルネオ島	捕虜年月日 Date of Capture	昭和17年2月15日
父ノ名 Father's Name	RAMALLI George	母ノ名 Mother's Name	RAMALLI (WHITE) Adeline
本 籍 地 Place of Origin	MUNGINDI. N.S.W. AUSTRALIA.	職 業 Occupation	岸 販 賣 A
送 報 先 Destination of Report	MRS. G. RAMALLI (MOTHER) MUNGINDI. N.S.W. AUSTRALIA. 同ノ母	特 記 事 項 Remarks	

Image 3: Prisoner index card of Cecil Ramalli.
Source: NAA B883, NX55040.



Image 4: POW post. Source: Author.

⁷ Cecil Ramalli: <https://www.rugby.com.au/news/anzac-legends-cecil-ramalli-2021420>.

⁸ Rohan Goynes, 'From South Coast to South Vietnam: the men from Merimbula', *Sabretache*, Vol 63, No 1, (2022), p. 54

Australian Merchant Navy Memorial Rededication, Canberra 2019

Rohan Goyne

The Australian Merchant Navy Memorial was rededicated by the Minister for Defence, Senator Linda Reynolds, on 20 October 2019 after fund raising by the Merchant Navy Memorial Fund which was to expand the memorial to recognise the bravery of the crews.

As a result of the fund raising campaign, four concrete blades were included on a new section of pavement (Image 1) as two blades on each end of the memorial on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra.

The new blades contain the names of the merchant navy members who lost their lives in World War One and World War Two. Between December 1941 and August 1943, 38 merchant ships were sunk in Australian waters by Japanese submarines and hundreds of crew were lost.



Image 1: The Australian Merchant Navy Memorial on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra after its rededication in 2019. Source: Author.

The names of merchant seamen killed in 1914-1918 (Image 2) and merchant seamen killed in 1939-1945 (Images 3-5) shown below provide a silent and powerful testament in bronze to this largely omitted conflict in Australian waters which was suppressed at the time by the wartime censors. The names are drawn from the Commemorative Roll held by the Australian War Memorial. For any aspiring author the listings on the panels are the basis for a very weighty tome which needs to be written and published.



Image 2: Australian merchant seamen killed 1914-1918. Source: Author.



Image 3: Australian merchant seamen killed 1939-45, panel 1. Source: Author.

The number of Australian merchant ships lost between 1941-1943 also underlines the largely undefended Australian coastal shipping lanes where Japanese submarines could operate virtually unchallenged.

The work of the Merchant Navy Memorial Fund to expand and rededicate the memorial with the inclusion of the individual names of merchant seamen who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country must be applauded.



Image 4: Australian merchant seamen killed 1939-45, panel 2. Source: Author.



Image 5: Australian merchant seamen killed 1939-45, panel 3. Source: Author.

Reviews

Call Sign Vampire: The Inside Story of an Australian Field Hospital during the Vietnam War

Rod Searle, Denise Bell, Paul Danaher
and Gregory Anderson

1st (Aust) Field Hospital Association, Inc, 2021
Hardback (slipcase), \$149.99 + post



The 1st Australian Field Hospital played a vital part in Australia's war in Vietnam. Its facilities saved countless Australian lives and played a vital part in the medical organisation during the conflict. *Call Sign Vampire* sets out, and achieves, a comprehensive investigation of the workings of a field hospital. Rather than a narrative, the authors have written chapters that are thematically driven—a breath of fresh air in the crowded narrative military historiography. Personal memories from those who served and who were patients combine to create a very evocative book that are complemented by hundreds of images. The latter are, at times, confronting, with photographs of casualties and surgical procedures. However, without these the real meaning and purpose of the hospital would be misplaced.

Every aspect of the hospital is dealt with. From the arrival of casualties via aeromedical 'dustoff', through triage, surgery and convalescence, to other medical services, such as pathology, dentistry, psychiatry and physiotherapy, each area is covered. Facilities, personnel and recreation are included to make a fully-rounded history.

This lavishly illustrated and beautifully produced book is a deserving commemoration of those who served in Vietnam. *Call Sign Vampire* is highly recommended and the authors deserve congratulation.

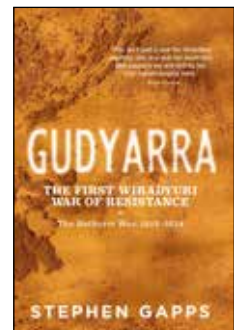
Justin Chadwick

Gudyarra: The First Wiradyuri War of Resistance: The Bathurst War, 1822-1824

Stephen Gapps

New South, Sydney, 2021

Paperback, \$34.99



Gudyarra is the Wiradjuri word for war. And war there was. In 1824, around Bathurst, the Wiradjuri had had enough of the expansion into their country that was described by white

explorers with such glowing terms that there was an indecent rush to move their cattle and sheep up towards what is now called Bathurst and ruin the Wiradjuri's carefully nurtured land.

Readers may recall a book I reviewed about 18 months ago called *The Convict Valley*, about the early years of Newcastle. I thought a lot of things were familiar in Gudyarra, so I consulted *The Convict Valley*, and not only is it the same time in history, but it is set just down the road in Bathurst. Some events overlap.

I suggested in my review that the *Convict Valley* book could have been more balanced with the inclusion of an opinion from an Indigenous person. Perhaps the author of Gudyarra, Stephen Gapps heard me because he has included oral history to these events from tribal elders who were told of the massacres by survivors. As the Aborigines always had an oral tradition and managed to retain a vast amount of knowledge in their head, I am not prepared to dispute their version of events. Our acceptance of 'facts' in history rely on the written word. There is no shortage of the written word with correspondence between Governor Macquarie and Earl Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary in London. There were private letters, memoirs, newspaper articles and the forum that preceded Facebook – Letters to the Editor. A good many correspondents used a pseudonym to hide behind.

There were always differences in attitudes amongst the settlers. One Letters to the Editor writer who called himself 'Philanthropus' suggested 'the British should pay rent for the lands they had taken' and assured the reader he will set an example by 'voluntarily give, not less than one farthing per acre!' Others thought the blacks should all be shot on sight. This, unfortunately, was the attitude that prevailed.

Up till 1824 there was reasonable harmony between the settlers and the Wiradjuri, who were renowned for their warrior status, but this got whittled away by white men wanting sex with black women; black men saying 'no'; white men doing it anyway; black men setting fire to huts and spearing sheep in retaliation; and white men massacring a dozen or so blacks to teach them a lesson.

There are terrible tales of white punitive expeditions that couldn't find any male warriors to kill so they settled for women and children. White settlers were neither punished nor expected to write a report on how many blacks they killed. Blacks were told to complain through the proper channels, but when they did they were ignored. The blacks speared cows and sheep, the settlers shot women.

Proclamation of martial law in 1824 gave the settlers open slather to kill the Wiradjuri. They were reinforced by the 40th Regiment who had learned how to fight indigenous people in North America, and afterwards moved on to Tasmania. It has long been my observation that events like this happened all over Australia. Gapps said 'Details of events remained as whispered stories among the colonists, at first shared with caution, then later proudly exaggerated.' I personally have heard people boast about what they did in the good old days in Darwin. I would expand on the quotation above, that the 'proudly exaggerated' claims are frequently denied

when suddenly the boastful person is confronted with disapproval. You only make boasts of killing black people to people who you are confident will not censure you. I find it most ironic that the British, being such a stickler for the law, would transport a man to Australia for the heinous crime of stealing a posh silk handkerchief from a Dandy in the streets of London and then give him a gun to help the British in Australia steal something British law considers sacrosanct – land – from people who owned it since long before the Romans invaded England.

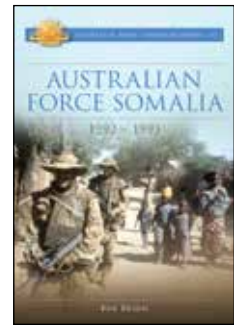
Gail Gunn

Australian Force Somalia 1992-1993

Bob Breen

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2021

Paperback, \$19.99



Anyone familiar with Ridley Scott's 2001 film *Black Hawk Down* will have an idea of the conditions into which the Australian Force Somalia (AFS) was pitched at the end of 1992. With that country an archetypal 'failed state' and largely dominated by gangs of clansmen and criminals, anarchy, violence and starvation were the norm. Following a United Nations' resolution endorsing the US decision to undertake military intervention in Somalia, Australia agreed to send the AFS to assist in creating a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations. Consequently the AFS, consisting of a battalion 'group' organised around the 1st Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) under the current Governor General, then Lt Col, David Hurley, served for four months in 1993 in the Baidoa region of Somalia.

Author Bob Breen is no stranger to the AFS deployment or to 1 RAR generally, having served as an officer in the Army Reserve reporting on Operation Solace (as the deployment was called) and writing extensively on it and other Australian peace-keeping operations, as well as a history of 1 RAR's first tour in Vietnam. This present publication is no.31 in the Army History Unit's Campaign Series, and follows an established format of a moderate length study augmented by plenty of photos, tables and text boxes. Unlike previous volumes in the series I've seen, this one contains comprehensive endnotes and references; to what extent it reprises Breen's other work on the subject I am unable to say.

Australian Force Somalia 1992-1993 has two main aims. One is to document the activities and achievements of the AFS during its deployment. The other is to examine the circumstances surrounding Operation Solace in terms of its effectiveness as an example of 'force projection' – the sending of 'military elements' in order to meet 'Government requirements for military action' (p.30) – and to draw

some conclusions and lessons for future deployments. Given the Campaign Series' remit of promoting 'the study and understanding of military history within the Army' (p.3), the general reader perhaps should be aware that a considerable portion of the book is devoted to this second aim, and might be forgiven for feeling that they are confronted with a set of lecture topics designed for students of the Australian Defence Force Academy. Nevertheless, there are some more broadly interesting aspects even here, notably in the chapter that summarises and evaluates the history of Australian force projection from the Sudan expedition of 1885 to the Vietnam War.

The sections dealing with the actions of the AFS are absorbing and edifying. In particular, Hurley and his men of 1 RAR are shown to have met the challenges thrown up by a set of very stressful and uncertain situations using thoughtful, professional and humane methods. At the same time, they didn't shy away from the application of force where necessary, and the detailed descriptions of several firefights against clan gangs in Baidoa city and criminal elements in the countryside on their own justify the purchase of *Australian Force Somalia 1992-1993*. Breen demonstrates how, in their adoption of 'firm, fair and friendly' tactics, 1 RAR managed to win hearts and minds while standing up to thuggery and bullying, thereby contributing further to the proud tradition of Australian military endeavour.

Much less satisfactory, however, was the way Operation Solace was prepared for and maintained, and this is the particular axe that Breen has to grind – and he does so with frequency and force throughout his analysis. The inabilities and failures of the Australian Defence Force to coordinate, direct and sustain this particular force projection are too numerous and complex to deal with here, but suffice it to say that, according to the author, a very immature, bureaucratic and inadequate system of command and logistics left the AFS to 'make do'. The fact that it managed to do just that is a tribute to the service personnel on the ground. With the likelihood of even more humanitarian and peacekeeping operations to come, it is to be hoped that the shortfalls faced by the Australian Force Somalia are never repeated.

Paul Skrebels

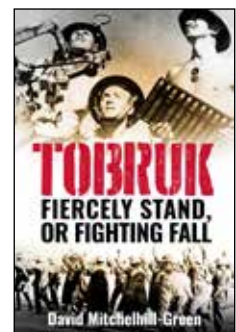
Tobruk: Fiercely Stand, Or Fighting Fall

David Mitchelhill-Green

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2021

Paperback \$29.99

There is a lot to like about this book. Tobruk and the so-called 'Rats of Tobruk' became a cause celebre in the defiant stand against Rommel during the 1941 siege (later claimed to be the first land battle to defeat Rommel) and it still holds a special



place in Australian military history. The subsequent fall to Rommel's forces in 1942 became one of the worst British defeats of the war (the second largest capitulation after Singapore), causing repercussions around the world.

Mitchell-Green does what many of the books written about the sieges and military exploits at Tobruk have failed to do. He has summarised the origins of European interest in North Africa and Italy's original entry into Libya in 1911; introduced key individuals and examines how their First World War experiences shaped later events; discussed the strategic and political prominence of the Libyan fortress and harbour town and examines why it became a focal point in the Desert War for control of the Middle East in the Second World War and a legendary battleground; examined what made the 1941 defence of the fortress successful and compares the tactics and principles of operations then with those that led to the sudden and catastrophic capitulation in 1942; reflected on the worldwide reactions to the capitulation and eventual outcomes for Rommel and his campaign for Egypt. The author identifies an interesting list of some of the basic command errors that contributed to the ebb and flow of the North African campaign: no concentration forces/a lack of clear communications/disobedient commanders (e.g., Ritchie and Rommel) and the consequent impacts on broader strategic aims/questionable competence and complacency/the lack of integration of all arms. Rommel, for example, relentlessly pursued aims that did not support the strategic aims and needs of others or their ambitions (e.g., Kesselring and Mussolini). There was no compelling strategic benefit or real value in going on to Egypt and the port of Tobruk was almost immediately identified as far too small to provide sufficient support for his further aims. Tellingly, the author labels Rommel as a tactician, not a strategist.

So, what worked in 1941? Major General John Lavarack was given Cyrenaica Command and determined that, if possible, Tobruk should be held (for up to two months!). General Leslie Morshead, commander of the Australian 9th Division, was appointed fortress commander to hold the enemies advance while reinforcements were assembled for the defence of Egypt. Their combined experience in the First World War identified the tactics used to successfully defend the fortress, such as thoroughly examine existing defences and upgrade wherever possible; dominate no man's land at all times; no yielding of ground (infantry let the tanks pass and then assaulted the following infantry); allocating only 1 Brigade per sector and 1 in strategic reserve; adapting anything for use; forward placement of anti-tank guns; readiness to counterattack; combine minefields with a mobile reserve; maintain a highly developed artillery force (that was flexible); use defence in depth - the red, blue, and green lines.

So, what did the author identify as the contributing factors in the collapse of the fortress defences in 1942? Some of his conclusions are that there was no unified body of troops and too many non-combatants within the fortress; Rommel was much better resourced this time; defence headquarters was dysfunctional (poor leadership)

and a lack of communication(s); no counter-attack plans and the deterioration of defences since 41 was ignored; a failure to coordinate tactics and respond to shifts in the tide of the battle; the continued misuse of armour; no understanding of the lessons of the First World War and previous assaults on the fortress; and an inability to learn from mistakes and lessons from earlier enemy successes.

Ultimately, I found the book to be an excellent study with clear, concise but comprehensive analysis from early Italian ambitions to the end of the war, covering the Allies impacts on their strategic aims, planning and relationships. And the conflicting needs of the political and military.

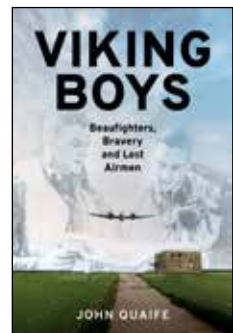
Dennis Mulroney

Viking Boys: Beaufighters, Bravery and Lost Airmen

John Quaife

Big Sky Publishing, Newport. 2022

Paperback, \$32.99



Not having a general interest in the Air Force I was pleased to be given this book. The author has gone to great lengths to record the bravery of a Beaufighter squadron and its service in the Second World War. The book centres on the lives of two, the training they undertook as air crew and how they accomplished the very harrowing task of bombing German shipping in Norway. The steep sides of the Norwegian fjords required the best of the air crew's flying skill, to first attack German shipping while being shot by some very unhappy Germans. To then return to their base in Scotland usually with aircraft with several bullet holes in the air frames and in some cases flying with only one engine operational.

The author, John Quaife, has cleverly weaved other aircrew members and their exploits during the various attacks into the text. I like the fact Quaife has obtained a story from a German sailor who was on the receiving end the Beaufighter's attacks. The author records the principal aircrew of the story from their first enlistment and the training they undertook up to when they were allocated to a squadron. The skill exhibited by the pilots was exceptional in that they would have to fly at extremely low level to avoid detection by German aircraft. Once this was accomplished they would then mount a formation for the attack.

Quaife has provided an explanation of the characteristics of the Beaufighter which should give the reader an insight to the workings of the plane.

Earlier in the war enemy shipping was located in the major ports, but as the war went on this became untenable. German shipping took to hiding in the various fjords and usually close into the sides for added protection. This made the task of destroying the shipping even harder. Air crew training undertaken was of

the highest order. This also meant that air crew did not have it their own way and for some crew it cost them their lives. The two Australian air crew in the story also paid the supreme price. You have to read the story of how and when.

I would recommend this book as an easy to read and informative story of the actions of brave Australian air crews. This book is 252 pages, broken up into easy to read with 29 chapters. It is not overly difficult to read as the author has produced a well-rounded story. I found I could read several chapters at night and then would wait to the next night to continuing reading. All in all, a great read.

Michael English

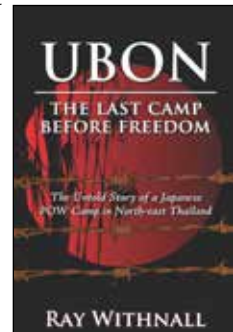
Ubon, the last camp before freedom: the untold story of a Japanese POW camp in North-east Thailand

Ray Withnall

self-published, London, 2020

Paperback, \$17.70, via amazon.com.au

The city of Ubon Ratchathani, popularly known as Ubon, is located in the north-east of Thailand, near the 'Emerald Triangle' border with Laos and Cambodia. It was an important army and air base for Thai forces during the brief border war with French Indochina in 1940, as well as hosting RAAF and USAF forces, and later a Lao refugee camp, during the Vietnam War. Less well-known is Ubon's role as the site of a Japanese POW camp that housed Allied prisoners in 1945.



This 200-page book opens with a general introduction to pre-war Thailand, the Japanese occupation of French Indochina, their demand for 'free passage' across Thailand, their forcible invasion (briefly opposed by the Thais), and the construction of the 'Death Railway' into Burma, using locals and POWs as forced labour. This is followed by 60 pages covering the establishment of the Ubon camp, its purpose, and camp life. Once the Japanese were pushed back from Burma, surviving prisoners in the maintenance camps on the Death Railway were shipped eastwards, as labour for rearguard defences of Indochina. Thus, in February 1945, several thousand POWs were transported to Ubon, where they were used to build a new airfield. Despite occasional atrocities, the lot of the Ubon POWs was generally much better than in their former camps. The last 100 pages of the book cover the liberation of the camp and the surprisingly drawn-out process of POWs and guard repatriation. By August 1945, there were 1500 British, 1500 Dutch, 100 Australians and four Americans in the camp. British SOE operatives were active in North-east Thailand, and in contact with resistance forces, when, on 18 August, camp commandant announced the end of the war to a stunned assembly of the POWs; but it was not until 27 August that the SOE received authority to enter the camp and officially liberate it.

The sick, and the Americans, left the next day by train, the British and Australians remained for another month until transport could be arranged. The Dutch, many from Java, were unable to leave due to Indonesian resistance to Dutch reoccupation, and it was not until February 1946 that they were shipped, not to Java, but Bali. As for the Japanese, repatriation also took some time, and there were still some awaiting transportation home as late as August 1946.

Withnall's account is probably the 'last hurrah' of POW books. He has managed to track down and interview a couple of surviving ex-prisoners, and the descendants of others, as well as Ubon residents who remembered the camp, its occupants, its guards, and the 'Little Mother of Ubon', Khunyai Lai Sirichat (who, with her daughter, risked severe Japanese punishment to covertly supply fruit and vegetables to the prisoners). For this alone, the book is a valuable record of first-hand accounts of an otherwise forgotten camp. Besides interviews, the well-formatted bibliography lists sources from archives in Australia, the UK and US, and a variety of secondary sources.

However, the book does have a number of deficiencies. The lack of Japanese or Thai archival sources is regrettable, but understandable given the language and bureaucratic difficulties. Withnall fails to cite his sources, which may not matter to the casual lay reader, but is annoying to those seeking more accuracy and detail. As with many self-published books, the text suffers from a lack of copyediting.

More significant, however, are the lack of maps and the poor quality of the illustrations. Three 'happy snaps' of hand-drawn maps in the UK PRO are given no scale or comparison with modern mapping. Locator maps of Thailand, and the city and vicinity of Ubon, showing all the places mentioned in the text are a glaring omission: for anyone not already familiar with the local geography, the text will be a struggle. Withnall's own photos of the camp site and the POW-built airstrip, are too small to be useful, and three graphs suffer from poor design and labelling.

The worst feature of the book is its index. Entries for persons are not listed by surname, but by rank or title, or, for those without either, by Christian name. Thus 'Dr Charles Cruikshank' is listed under D, and 'Field Marshall Sir Archibald Wavell' under F. All Ubon prisoners are listed under 'Ubon camp POWs', which heading also contains the entry 'The Dutch remain in camp' filed under T. The index is thus almost impossible to use.

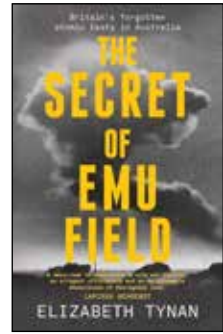
Taken together, these defects make the book of little use to the military historian, which is a great pity. But for the lay reader seeking a narrative history (as opposed to a reference work), the book does fill a significant gap in its coverage of an otherwise forgotten POW camp. As a former resident of Ubon myself, I found it very interesting, despite its defects, and only hope that it will be translated into Thai, as local histories such as this are sorely lacking in that Bangkok-centric country.

The Secret of Emu Field: Britain's Forgotten Atomic Tests in Australia

Elizabeth Tynan

NewSouth, Sydney, 2022

Paperback, \$34.99



There are very few readers who are unaware of British atomic tests conducted in Australia. However, while Maralinga would be thought of immediately, the earlier Emu Field may not. In *The Secret of Emu Field: Britain's Forgotten Atomic Tests in Australia* Elizabeth Tynan redresses this imbalance.

During October 1953 British scientists, accompanied by Australian military and scientific personnel, conducted the 'Totem' atomic trials. The tests were hurried and were to have long-term problems, particularly for the local Aboriginal population. Tynan has written a well-researched and engaging narrative of events that led to the selection of the site, the tests and the (pardon the atomic pun) fall-out years later. Using the accessible archives, of which many in the UK have been retracted or heavily redacted, Tynan explores the reasons for Britain's desire to develop nuclear weapons, the British attitude toward Australia, its government and environment.

The book moves between two primary timelines. That of the developing testing process and the later Royal Commission into the testing. This provides a valuable context into why this is still important today. The damage from the tests, despite the clean-up, remains and will do so for years to come.

The Secret of Emu Field is an important contribution to our understanding of events in the early Cold War and Britain's use of Australia to forward its nuclear ambitions.

Justin Chadwick

Havoc-06: A Combat Controller on Operations

Troy Knight with Brooke Strahan

Big Sky Publishing, Newport, 2022

Paperback, \$32.99



Military memoirs are the backbone of popular military history. Whether it be the writings of senior officers or the recollections of the private soldier, they provide readers with an understanding of the emotions, strain, and humour of the wartime experience. Troy Knight, with the assistance of Brooke Strahan, has put his military experience onto paper. His time in various combat zones reflects his love of adventure and fulfil his desire to make a contribution.

However, it was as a combat controller that Knight, having passed through special forces training, reached his element. His recollections of operations are

unpolished, and, at times, confronting, but create a sensation of place and experience.

With an immediacy that reflects the adrenaline-fuelled operational experience, *Havoc-06* gives the reader a no-holds-barred experience.

Justin Chadwick

Society Matters

Tribunal to reconsider medallic recognition for Rifle Company Butterworth

Dear Sir,

Since 2006 an advocacy group known as the Rifle Company Butterworth Review Group (RCB RG) has pursued the potential upgrade of their service to 'warlike' status. On 7 April 2022, after a sustained and determined campaign to prove the validity of this claim, an independent Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal was finally announced by the Minister for Defence Personnel and Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Mr Andrew Gee MP.

Australia deployed combat troops to Air Base Butterworth from Nov 70 until the end of the Communist Insurgency in Malaysia 1968-1989 (also known as the Second Malaysian Emergency) with the prime task of protecting RAAF aircraft, personnel and other assets based there.

At the time this deployment was sold to the public as a 'training' activity to cover political and international sensitivities. Among the huge amount of evidence are 19 ex-TOP SECRET and 218 Ex-SECRET documents obtained from official sources. Contrary to official Defence advice to Ministers, that mass of evidence demonstrates conclusively that the deployment of 80 Australian rifle companies (along with NZ and UK rifle companies from the FESR 1970 -73) in that time was anything but 'training'.

The Tribunal will re-examine the level of medallic recognition for Australians, especially since the NZ Government, responding to the same information provided from the RCB RG's research, recently broadened eligibility for the New Zealand Operational Service Medal for veterans who served at the same base carrying out the same task.

Information about the inquiry, and how to make a submission, can be found on the Tribunal's website: <https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au>.

RJ Linwood, ASM
LTCOL (Retd)

Below is information on the upcoming Military History Spectacular to be held in Caloundra in October.

Please note that the text has been supplied and has not been edited for publication.

AUSTRALIA'S MILITARY HISTORY SPECTACULAR

Over the past three decades, 100,000 Australian servicemen and servicewomen have served in war, conflict, peacekeeping and humanitarian and disaster relief operations. Today, their stories remain mostly untold.

We owe it to every veteran of every generation to have their service recognised.

AWM Development Project Booklet extract.

To recognise their service, at least two things are happening. One, the AWM will spend nearly \$500m over 8 years expanding their exhibits and displays. Two, in October this year the MHSA is conducting a Military Spectacular on the Sunshine Coast, Qld over 3 days to honour, respect and commemorate our veterans and their families.

When referring to soldiers, that term includes our airmen and sailors - men and women.

Let's acknowledge that;

*Our soldiers don't start wars, politicians and diplomats do.
The role of our soldier is to restore the peace.*

Having done their job, the surviving men and women finally come home to live out the rest of their lives, many with horrid memories that only their mates can fully understand. They may reunite with a loving family, but often stress arises when those horrors are bottled inside.

In the period since the end of the Vietnam War, our troops have seen service in Iraq, Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Somalia, Solomon Islands, Bougainville, Syria, the Sinai, Israel, Lebanon, Persian Gulf, Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Namibia and Cyprus - in operational and peacekeeping roles. And of course, disaster relief operations, just as we are seeing now on Australia's east coast after massive rain and flooding.

In this time Australia has had 11 Prime Ministers. Yet, from our relatively small ADF, many of our veterans have been deployed to these hostile theatres for 5, 7 or 10 times – and many have served in several of these theatres.

Given the number of deployments and theatres, today it is common to see

men and women with 8 or 10 campaign and other service medals – no, not their father’s on the wrong side as has often been disparagingly cast at those veterans. That’s a slight to their service. We should understand that times are different to many older veteran eras when 2 or 3 medals was the norm. We must respect the modern veterans’ service as the AWM and Military Spectacular indicate.

Soldiers go into conflict. Some engage an enemy. Some support those in the line of fire. Some are killed, some are wounded. Some suffer mental stress. Then, there are their families, waiting at home. What goes through their minds? What anguish and suffering do they have? What understanding and support will be required of them?

Australia’s citizens have been told very little about these theatres by historians or an ill-informed lay media. The ADF has just completed 20 years in Afghanistan, a country that has been in conflict since Alexander the Great. Few stories have been told of ADF successes and achievements. And little has been done to honour, pay respect or commemorate our veterans and their families. Little is known of the inter-action between the branches of our services; little is known of those who suffered horribly but not only survived, have thrived through personal resilience and magnificent family support. And the support of the ADF and, in many cases, the DVA – this may surprise those with previous stories of poor support.

Following are some survival stories of a few amazing veterans.

It’s 1995 and in Rwanda the Hutus had genocided 800,000 Tutsies. The docile observing Belgian force was withdrawn and the UN replaced them with, amongst others, an Australian medical team and infantry company as security. Captain Alexandra Vaughan-Evans, later Alexandra Douglas, was the medical officer in charge and Lt Col Pat McIntosh the infantry and force commander. Arriving the day after the genocide concluded, his task was to remove the mutilated bodies and debris from the team’s area while maintaining stability amongst the warring parties and protect the medical team.

Promoted Major in the field, Douglas’s task was to provide medical support to the civil population including the wounded and injured, pregnant women and deliveries, child vaccinations, general medical treatments and tending our own troops. She led her team through medical emergencies, fighting groups, bombings of the medical centre and administration. In 1996, she was in a local village where she and her medical staff were attending their roles, when the Hutu commander stuck a gun in her face and ordered her and her staff to leave or be shot – he was supposedly the “good guy”. Standing up to the Hutu she continued their humanitarian role with great success. It’s a deeper story and she was awarded the Medal for Gallantry. She later became the first female doctor to work with our SASR. She went on to deployments to Timor-Leste, Iraq and Afghanistan – here she was the surgeon who

treated Sapper Curtis McGrath after his two legs were blown off by an IED. Her expertise saw Curtis successfully evacuated to Australia. He went on to rehabilitate and as a Paralympian, won two gold medals in kayaking; an amazing story itself of resilience and determination. This remarkable woman is currently an anaesthetist and emergency doctor at the Gold Coast Hospital.

Its now 2nd Sep 2008. L/Cpl Mark Donaldson is a member of a 36-man patrol of our SAS, our engineers with metal detectors and EDD dogs, plus American and Afghan troops in Uruzgan Province. While returning to base the patrol was ambushed in a narrow valley by an estimated 100-150 Taliban with rifles, machine guns, mortars and RPGs. Receiving fire from all round positions, the call was made for Dutch Apache gunship helicopter support. Circling overhead at approx. 5,000' the Dutch refused to come lower for fear of receiving fire and departed. An American F-18 dropped some 500lb bombs but had minimal effect. The ground troops were isolated. Of the 12 Australians, nine were wounded. The leash between the dog handler and war dog Sabri was shattered and the dog disappeared in the dust and smoke and was unable to be retrieved by his handler before evacuation. The lost dog devastated the Engineer squadron and his handler.

Donaldson consistently exposed himself to enemy fire and on one occasion ran over open ground to recover an Afghan interpreter and bring him to safety – for his actions that day Donaldson was awarded the Victoria Cross of Australia. Eventually returning to base, the nine wounded Aussies were taken to the Australian treatment centre. Laying on the surgical table, the last thing they saw before their anaesthetic was an Australian flag – purposely placed there for inspiration by senior Nursing Officer, Sqn Ldr Sharon Bown of the RAAF.

Remarkably, the missing dog Sabri was located 14 months later by Americans and returned to the overwhelmed Australians for his return to Australia and his handler. He had been taken in by a Taliban leader and miraculously, treated well as the Talibs knew the danger these dogs provided.

Previously, in June 2004 Sharon Bown was on her 2nd deployment as Senior Nursing Officer in Timor-Leste, travelling in a helicopter to a remote village. In bad weather the helicopter crashed. Sharon had life-threatening injuries and back pain troubles her to this day. Facing medical discharge from the RAAF, within 12 months she regained her fitness and went on to serve after the Bali bombing and to Afghanistan. Her dedication and care for our Aussie troops gave heart and spirit to our wounded and courage when seeing that Australian flag in the operating theatre. Today, she is a Board Member of the AWM.

As a result of Sharon's injuries in Timor, Sqn Ldr Robyn Green was her immediate replacement. Robyn was previously Nursing Officer in charge of the second deployment to Rwanda and whilst that second deployment was not as violent as the first, Robyn and her team suffered the hardship of rival tribal groups and a miserably ineffective UN – but that's another story. Subsequently, Robyn was at the

forefront of a revised Aero Medical Evacuation system that has saved the lives of many wounded soldiers of various nations, including Australian, and a system that is now standard between several allied countries.

Moving on to 2010 in Kandahar. It's a night helicopter operation in pitch black, no moon. Through the dust and dark, the American helicopter ploughed into the ground. Three Australian commandos and one American were killed. An Aussie signaller, Gary Wilson, received multiple broken bones, full thickness burns and brain injury. He was evacuated to the US hospital in Germany and given a 4% chance to live. His partner Renee was flown from Australia to Germany by the Aus Government. A lawyer, she had no medical experience. Now, 12 years later, Gary has a slight speech impediment. He is an Ambassador for Soldier On, gave the keynote speech at the Shrine of Remembrance in 2018 and now runs his own personal training and fitness business. How did he recover from a 4% likelihood of survival? – to quote Gary; “I believe it was the love of my wife Renee, my commanding officers and my Army family, enabling me to find hope when there was none.” Renee is now CEO Australian War Widows Association NSW.

As time goes on technology and methods of warfare change. IEDs are now an instrument of liking to an enemy and an instrument of fear to our troops. Explosive Detection Dogs (EDD) have developed through the Combat Engineer Regiments and their handlers. Sgt Graham Ellis is one of those handlers. Whilst in Afghanistan on one of several deployments, Graham and his dog discovered the largest cache of weapons, ammunition, IED materials and the bomb maker ever found in Afghanistan. But the most remarkable find was a size 16 pink g-string, although without the owner. These dogs are revered by their handlers and soldiers around them and feared by the enemy, which makes Sabri's return all the more remarkable as he had been held by a Taliban leader. They have saved the lives of very many Australian soldiers. Inexplicably, the authorities refuse to give these dogs service medals, let alone gallantry awards. Incidentally, there is a Puppy Program where you can foster a young pup before serious training begins to save more of our soldiers' lives.

In a modern ADF more and more women are providing outstanding service and rising to ranks unheard of a few decades ago.

Maj Gen Cheryl Pearce AM was a female military police officer, eventually commanding 1 MP Bn. She has been UN Force Commander of over 600 mixed nationality police and troops in Cyprus, served in Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for her service. Retired from the Army she is now Deputy Commissioner, Australian Border Force.

COMDR Susan Harris is the first female to be appointed XO of an Australian submarine and currently works on our nuclear submarine program.

COL Amanda Johnson was CO 1st Combat Engineer Regt serving in Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. She is soon to be our Military Attaché in Sri Lanka.

Many more women are providing outstanding service in conflict and operational theatres.

Just as the First World War brought new technologies and necessitated new tactics against aircraft, submarines, rapid fire machine guns, gas, tanks, wireless communications and medical treatments, so the modern soldier must adapt to new technologies and tactics; this is a 'gimme' in war BUT, the big issue now, is the widespread and consistent theatres of global conflict and multiple deployments with impact on veterans and their families. And, an enemy that refuses to abide the Law of Armed Conflict that our troops are required to abide.

As a population, we need to show gratitude and recognise the valuable contribution our veterans give, so unselfishly, to allow us to sleep comfortably in our beds at night. Royal Commissions and Courts of Enquiry need to reflect of service conditions for our relatively small but extensively engaged ADF and its people.

To understand more of our ADF people, you can visit the stories displayed in the AWM and, attend the Military Spectacular in October where you will hear presentations by each of the veterans mentioned in this article. There are more speakers to tell their stories plus, explosive detection dogs, military police attack dogs, band and guns of 1st Field Regt RAA, vehicles and equipment.

Visit www.militaryspectacular.events There is a List of Speakers, draft Program and for you, a red button **REGISTER**. Here you can register your interest to receive updates and new information as it happens. Whilst there is no obligation to buy tickets, if you wish to do so an early bird offering will be sent to you.

The speaker list consists of amazing people and whilst every conflict has them, the stories you will see and hear at the Spectacular, from Private to General, should fill you with pride and emotion, then gratitude and respect.

With the assistance of Sunshine Coast Regional Council and Visit Sunshine Coast, there are post-event tours of military museums and points of interest on the Sunshine Coast. There is also an accommodation package, accessible on the website once uploaded so Register to receive all updates.

Lest we forget

Queensland MHSa
Invites you to join us for our



"Honouring Our Veterans"

This spectacular event is to Honour, Respect and Admire
our Veterans

You will experience:

- Previously little told stories by our veterans of their operational difficulties and achievements from Iraq, Timor, Afghanistan and many other global hotspots
- The reality of operations and peacekeeping since Vietnam
- Sailors and Captains, Privates and Generals, Airmen and Air Marshalls
- Military bands and guns performing military rituals
- Demonstrations of dogs that attack and dogs that save lives
- People and their vehicles, equipments and technologies in a modern ADF
- Social events to mix informally with veterans and hear personal stories

CALOUNDRA RSL, 19 WEST TCE, CALOUNDRA 4551
14-16 October 2022

Visit Our Website to register your interest
and follow our program.

<https://militaryspectacular.events>



MHSA BRANCH OFFICE BEARERS

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

President	Ian Stagoll 165 Belconnen Way Hawker ACT 2614 ian.stagoll@gmail.com 02 6254 0199	2.00pm, last Thursday of the month, Jan to Nov Canberra Southern Cross Club, Jamison
Secretary/Treasurer	James Smith canberrabomber@gmail.com 0414 946 909	

QUEENSLAND

President	Neil Dearberg	2nd Saturday Jan, Mar
Vice President	Russell Paten	May, Jul, Sep and Nov
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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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Secretary	Paul Skrebels PO Box 247, Marden SA 5070 paulnray@bigpond.com	
Treasurer	John Spencer	

VICTORIA

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Secretary	George Ward PO Box 854, Croydon Vic 3136 geofw46@outlook.com	
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WESTERN AUSTRALIA

President	Steven Danaher	3rd Wednesday of every month, Officers' Mess, Army Museum of WA, Artillery Barracks, Burt St, Fremantle
Secretary	Richard Farrar 2a Zamia St, Mt Claremont WA 6010 wasec@mhsa.org.au	
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