

CASCABEL

Journal of the

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION
(VICTORIA) INCORPORATED

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Major Hamer presenting the Association Plaque to Ken Anderson & Jo Parker during the Association Visit to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum

Photo Courtesy SSGT Reg Morrell

Contents

Article	Pages
Assn Contacts, Conditions & Copyright	3
The President Writes	5
From The Colonel Commandant.....	6
Membership Report	7
Vale Major General John Stevenson AO CBE (Retd).....	8
The Second Battle of El Alamein	11
Aussie Gunners Pull Their Weight In Afghanistan	12
The Battle For Hong Kong	13
2/7 Field Regiment.....	17
Church Parade	20
Not Everyone Welcomed The Aussies.....	21
Bravery Under Fire	24
Association Visit To The National Vietnam Veterans Museum	29
Towing The Line	31
RAA Association Cocktail Hour.....	33
RAA Association(Vic) Inc Corp Shop.....	34
Some Other Military Reflections	35
Parade Card	39
Changing your address? See cut-out proforma	39

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CASCABEL

Journal of the

----- ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION (VIC) INC -----



FOUNDED:

First AGM April 1978
First Cascabel July 1983

COL COMMANDANT:

BRIG N Graham

PATRONS and VICE PATRONS: 1978

Patron: LT GEN The Hon Sir Edmund
Herring

KCMG, KBE, DSO, MC, ED

Vice Patron: BRIG Sir William Hall KBE,
DSO, ED

1982

Patron: BRIG Sir William Hall KBE, DSO,
ED

Vice Patron: MAJGEN N. A. Vickery CBE,
MC, ED

1999

Patron: BRIG K. V. Rossi AM, OBE, RFD,
ED

Vice Patron: MAJ GEN J. D. Stevenson AO,
CBE

2008

Patron: BRIG K. V. Rossi AM, OBE, RFD,
ED

Vice Patron:

PRESIDENTS:

1978 MAJGEN N. A. Vickery CBE, MC, ED
1979 MAJGEN J. M. McNeill OA, OBE, ED
1981 COL A. (Sandy) Mair ED
1984 MAJ P. S. (Norman) Whitelaw ED
1988 BRIG K. V. Rossi AM, OBE, RFD, ED
1991 MAJ M. Taggart RFD, ED
2004 MAJ N Hamer RFD

JOURNAL NAME:

CASCABEL - Spanish - Origin as small bell
or Campanilla (pro: Kaskebell), spherical bell,
knob like projection.

CASCABLE - English spelling.

ARTILLERY USE:

After 1800 AD, it became adjustable. The breech is closed in large calibres by a CASCABEL(E) screw, which is a solid block of forged wrought iron, screwed into the breech coil until it pressed against the end of the steel tube. In the smaller calibres, the A bore tube is carried through to form the CASCABEL(E)

[Ref: "Text Book on Fortification Etc", Royal Military College, Sandhurst, by COL G. Philips, RE, 4th Ed, Ch-1, P9, para 28,1884].

[Source: COL Alan Mason, Vic, May 1993].

CASCABEL HISTORY:

The name was put forward by the first editor, LTCOL Rob Gaw, and accepted because of its unique and obvious Artillery connection.

ASSOC LOGO:

Our Assoc Logo is the 1800 AD 9 Pdr Waterloo Field Gun. Copy is taken from Device, Badge and Motto of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, as approved in 1833, by HM King William IV.

LAPEL BADGE:

Copy of the left arm brass gilded gun once worn by GUN SGTS above the chevrons on each arm. Brassards worn by IGs at North Head were embroidered with this insignia. Selected by MAJ Warren Barnard, 1984 Assoc Committee.

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The President Writes

The Annual General Meeting of the Association was held on the 6th November at the Caulfield RSL. I would like to thank the outgoing Committee for the time and effort they have put in on your behalf.

The incoming Committee is: President, Maj Neil Hamer; Vice-president, LtCol Jason Cooke; Secretary, Mrs Rachel Decker; Treasurer, SSgt Reg Morrell; Members, Immediate Past President Maj Merv Taggart; Curator SSgt Brian Cleeman; Cascabel Editor Bdr Lindsay Pritchard; 10 Mdm Regt Assoc Representative WO2 Lionel Foster; Maj Robin Smith., Capt Peter Wertheimer, and Lt Tom Mclean.

The seventh Annual Golf Day was held at the Berwick Montuna Golf Club. Twelve players competed for the prestigious Perpetual Trophy. It was won this year by Allan Jackson with Peter Rowley a close runner up.

Eighteen members, family and friends attended the visit to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island. I personally would recommend a visit to anybody who has not already done so.

At the time of writing, the 2/10 activities for St Barbara's Day had not been finalised. It is intended that separate activities will take place at each barracks. I will be able to tell you more after the event in the next edition.

A reminder that Church Parade will be held at St Georges, next to Sargood Barracks, on the 8th February 2009.

Last, but by no means least, the posting of Colonel Commandant (Southern Region) changed on the 4th December 2008. Brig Doug Perry has moved gently to one side, (after seven years) and Brig Neil Graham has agreed to take up the position.

My personal thanks to Brig Perry for the support he has given this Association and I hope to see "Deb and Doug" continue to attend both 2/10 and Association activities.

I welcome Brig Graham to the job, and I am sure he will very ably carry out, in his own style, the functions of the position.

All the very best for the coming year.

I look forward to seeing you at the next Association Function.

Regards to all

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Neil Hamer".

Neil Hamer
MAJ (R)

FROM THE COLONEL COMMANDANT

This is my last submission to CASCABEL in my official capacity. After 7 years as Colonel Commandant RAA (SR), I have reached the extended retirement age and on 4 December I will hand over to Brigadier Neil Graham.

I first met Neil when I attended JSSC in Canberra in 1983. The other Gunner Officer on that course was Maj Gen Tim Ford and at the next RAA Conference at Puckapunyal we will meet again as Colonels Commandant for a brief reunion.

Neil is also known to your committee as he readily joined our Association on retirement from Regular service some 6 years ago and I trust that you will extend the same welcome to him as you extended to me back in 2001.

The major Regimental function for this year was the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the battle of Coral and the subsequent granting of the honour title "Coral" to 102 Bty in recognition of their action. The formal parade was followed by the dedication of a memorial at Mount Pleasant and a plaque for 12 Fd Regt at The War Memorial and all followed by a National Gunner Dinner and numerous other dinners and ceremonies for all of the participants at Coral and Balmoral and their families.

When I took up the reins 7 years ago, my aims were to encourage social interaction between the Reserve and Regular components of our Regiment and also to include each and every Gunner in all activities, and to recognise the contribution and effort of every Gunner who has ever served our Regiment. To achieve these ideals, I established an extended list of contacts and did my best to extend the range of communications beyond this publication and to represent the Regiment and its Members as often and as diligently as I could manage.

Whilst I feel that I have achieved some improvement in each field of my endeavours, I know that more could have been done and to this end I have briefed Brigadier Graham and my fellow Colonels Commandant on my shortfalls and unfinished projects.

On the social side, I have seen the annual Gunner Dinner evolve to an all ranks function and most recently a mixed function. My initial reaction was that this would be a retrograde step and indeed none of the changes have resulted in any real increase in attendance or success of these functions. As I have based my engagement as Colonel Commandant almost exclusively by involving my partner Deborah, I am now convinced that this process of evolution is both desirable and productive.

In regard to recognition, I have been determined to recognise the contribution of Gunners past in every way and in particular at the inevitable funerals when on many occasion I have been called upon to deliver a form of Military Eulogy or attend in some other formal or representational capacity and where appropriate details of service have been available I have ensured that an appropriate vale notice was published in this journal as well as the National RAA Liaison Letter. Further, in that regard there is published the eulogy delivered at the recent funeral of Maj Gen John Stevenson, a fine Gunner and a strong supporter of our Regiment.

In conclusion, I have had a busy and rewarding tour as your Colonel Commandant and look forward to maintaining the further friendships that I have made over the last 7 years.

My final message to you is maintain you mutual support, involve your partners in you service and social activities, encourage membership of your Association and above all keep communicating. After all that is the hallmark of Gunners.

1 December 2008



Membership Report

December 2008

Current Membership as at 31 Dec 08

Life Members	207	(206)
Annual Members	49	(48)
Senior Annual Members	19	(19)
Serving Concessional Members	8	(8)
Affiliates	37	(36)
Others (CO/CI, Messes, etc.)	12	(12)
Libraries	5	(5)
RSL	1	(1)
<u>Total</u>	<u>335</u>	<u>(368)</u>

New Members

We welcome the following members to the Association.

Maj G I Walker ED as an Annual Member and Bdr R J Poole as a Life Member.

The National Service Association of Australia Geelong and District Sub-branch have applied for, and been accepted as, Affiliate Membership.

I would remind Annual Members that once you attain the age of 80 years your membership becomes free-of-charge (no annual subs).

It is necessary for you to register your date of birth with me so that you can be placed in the no subs category. Nineteen members (Y S) are currently registered.

The usual reminder about the **proforma** on the **last page below the Parade Card**.

If you have not already done so, it would be appreciated if you would provide the information requested so that our files can be kept up to date. This proforma should also be used to notify us of any changes in the future. It would also help if you could provide any information about your occupation, achievements and other service to the community.

Would you also please let me know if you have been awarded an ADM.



Neil Hamer
MAJ (R)
Membership Co-ordinator

Contact: Telephone: 9702 2100
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Email nhamer@bigpond.net.au



VALE MAJOR GENERAL JOHN STEVENSON AO CBE (RETD)

Arthur Burke

Major General John Dennis Stevenson AO CBE (Retd) passed away on 30 July 2008 following some nine months of failing health.

This tribute is an amalgam of a formally recorded interview which I had with General John in 1998 and the masterly eulogy which his son-in-law, Geoffrey Nettle delivered at the celebration of John Stevenson's life on 6 August. To reduce almost 83 years of a very active life down to an acceptable size for publishing has been a daunting task. To comply, I have concentrated more on the Gunner aspects of his 40-year military career.

From birth in Melbourne on 13 August 1925, John Stevenson was destined to be in the Army. His father, Colonel George Stevenson had served with distinction in the Boer War, had been appointed a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) for his service at Gallipoli and a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for achievements in France during the Great War. John completed his secondary education at the Geelong Church of England Grammar School in 1942 when the Second World War was at full volume in both Europe and the South-West Pacific. He wanted to enlist immediately.

However, at this father's insistence, John entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon for the three-year war course. With scholastic achievements as a dux in Latin, first in class in mathematics and a good performer in cricket, Australian Rules and the 880 in athletics, John enjoyed life at Duntroon especially the relative barracks luxury and delicious meals compared with those at his former boarding school.

Aussie Rules were not part of the RMC curriculum at that time rugby ruled. John Stevenson became a formidable player, earning his lifelong nickname of 'Punchy' for his method of softening up the opposition in the scrum at the breakdown. So much did John embrace this code that he captained the Melbourne Rugby Union Football Club to a premiership win in 1954 and later coached the ACT rugby union team, now the ACT Brumbies. His support for Army rugby was legendary.

Graduating into Artillery in December 1946 and too late for active service, Lieutenant Stevenson, along with classmates John Salmon, Dick Cubis and Brian Loveridge joined A Field Battery with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. Returning to Australia with the battery at the end of 1948, John began a number of courses at the School of Artillery which led to his selection for the Long Observation Course at Larkhill in England. Despite its name, this was predominantly a series of locating courses followed by an attachment to the British 7th Armoured Divisional Locating Battery in Germany.

On return to Australia, Captain John was posted to the composite field / embryo locating / light anti-aircraft 1st Field Regiment which was spread between Middle and North Heads in Sydney. He became the inaugural battery commander of 104th Locating Battery before being sent to Korea, attached to the Headquarters 1st Commonwealth Division.

On return to Australia in 1953, John was appointed the adjutant/quartermaster of 10th Field Regiment on the Mornington Peninsula, Victoria. Despite the massive influx of 18 to 20 year olds from the 1950's National Service Scheme filling out the unit's manning, John made time to pursue his passion for rugby, joined the Melbourne club at South Yarra and captained their premiership win in 1954.

The adjutant/quartermaster's job must have been relatively easy in those days, for Captain John also found time to woo a young nursing sister from western Queensland who had been introduced by his RMC classmate, John Salmon. John Stevenson married Vivienne Ann Cotton in Brisbane on 6 July 1955 and began a 53 year union, ended only by his passing. Geoff Nettle described the next few years as 'a fruitful union' for with the rapid fire accuracy of which any member of the Artillery would be proud, by 1958 he with Ann had brought forth three daughters, Jenny, Wendy and Suzie

The Stevenson's first married accommodation was at Captain John's next posting the Royal Military College, Duntroon. Then Staff Cadet John Bullen describes Stevo's priorities as being 'our instructor in Rugby and our coach in Artillery'. This posting prepared John nicely for Staff College at Fort Queenscliff, Victoria in 1958 which, in turn, qualified him to become the Brigade Major (BM)

at Headquarters Northern Command, Brisbane. All this happened, remember, whilst producing and caring for three young daughters.

Finally, it was time for Major Stevenson to return to the Gunners and on the opening day of the fledgling 4th Field Regiment at Wacol, 4 May 1960, he marched-in as the second-in-command to John 'Happy Jack' Studdert. As if Ann was not busy enough at this time, John invited his newcommanding officer and the adjutant, Pat Gowans to dinner and a bed at their Bardon married quarter that night because the Officer'. Mess was not yet functioning. But this was typical of the warm hospitality and strong friendships which the Stevensons established throughout their life together and Ann merely took it in her stride.

These were tough and trying times as the new unit was raised from scratch. Nevertheless, with his dedication to working hard and playing hard, 'Punchy' established the beginnings of a unit rugby team and with few other service teams available, played his side with quite pleasing results in local civvy competitions.

Twelve months later, Major John not only completed his Tactics 5 course for promotion at the Jungle Training Centre, Canungra, but was then retained as a member of the staff. With his continued short posting cycle, but next with the carrot of promotion to lieutenant colonel, he was then appointed the General Staff Officer Grade One in the Directorate of Military Training at Army Headquarters, Canberra. This was June 1962 and with the look forward of a two-year posting, Ann and John purchased their first house in Campbell. Was this stability at last?

On 9 June 1964, Lieutenant Colonel John Stevenson took over the reins of command of 4th Field Regiment at Wacol from Joe Hooton who was off to the US Armed Forces Staff College. The new CO admitted his technical and tactical field gunner experience within the new Pentropic Division organisation *modus operandi* was limited. 105th Battery had been kept up to strength as the priority force plan artillery unit, but this had been at the expense of the 101st Battery which had returned from Malaysia in 1963 and then suffered the loss on posting of most of its key personnel and many of its gunners. John's superiors in both artillery and command headquarters imposed unrealistic pressures to man two batteries for field exercises.

John's leadership and diplomacy were tried to their fullest for the next 18 months, but with the experienced Majors Craig Beck and Bill Silverstone in the unit, he successfully transitioned it from a peacetime Pentropic organisation to a light-scaled Tropical Warfare establishment. The final test was launching 105th Field Battery as the first Royal Australian Artillery unit to serve in the Vietnam War. By Stevenson's own admission, he loaded 105th Battery at the expense of 101st breaking up trained teams within the 105th because of the urgency and short notice of this launch. Nevertheless, he directed some very realistic final testing exercises which stood Peter Tedder 105th in good stead in Vietnam.

Just when John's command including the newly raised 108th Field Battery was settling down, he was posted back to Canberra as the Assistant Military Secretary in early 1966. He never returned to a Gunner appointment for the remainder of his fulltime career as higher level command and staff appointments now took control of his life. A benefit of this was stability for Ann and the girls in their Canberra home for the next six years. John was posted to Vietnam to take command of the 1st Australian Logistic Support Group from his RMC classmate and life-long friend, Ian Gilmore. When this position was raised to a colonel's appointment, John was promoted and remained in command. In recognition of his exceptional service in this role, John Stevenson was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 1970 Queen's Birthday Honours List. Colonel Stevenson returned to Canberra as the Deputy Director of Military Plans in January 1970. Almost two years later, he was promoted brigadier and appointed the Commander Headquarters 6th Task Force and Southern Queensland Area, in Brisbane. At 46 years of age, Geoff Nettle pointed out that John was 'right in the middle of mainstream' military at this time.

The post Vietnam War reorganisation of the Army raised the command status of Tasmania to a Brigadier's appointment and John was chosen for this position. Despite thinking at the time that they were being 'sent to Coventry'. in June 1973, Brigadier and Ann Stevenson threw themselves professionally and socially, wholeheartedly into this new environment and in Geoff's words, 'fell in love with the place and the people in it'. he [bringing] a new level of discipline and professionalism. [and] she charming the squatocracy.. A vessel's collision with the pylons of the Hobart Bridge brought a sudden operational urgency to this idyllic life, but with characteristic

leadership, John organised almost every piece of Bailey bridging in the Army to reconnect the city of Hobart across the Derwent River.

By now, there was an almost empty nest at home. Eldest daughter, Jenny had begun tertiary studies and was destined to marry and remain in Tasmania; Wendy had remained in Brisbane to finish school then move to university in Melbourne; and Suzie was completing school in Hobart prior to taking off for the Australian National University in Canberra. Ann and John thought long and hard about settling down in Tasmania with their many local friends.

However, the rise of the new Fraser government created a new Defence system of command and early in 1976, John was elevated to major general to become the inaugural General Officer Commanding Logistic Command in Melbourne. Back on his home turf, General John seemed to relish every aspect of this appointment – operational logistic priorities, ceremonial parades, aide-de-camp to Her Majesty the Queen, Army concerts at the state theatre and military tattoos at the MCG were all taken in his stride – and all ably supported by Ann. On the family side, Wendy married Geoff and their Melbourne world seemed a perfect place for the Stevensons. Major General John was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia in the 1980 Australia Day Honours for his services as GOC Logistic Command.

Geoff Nettle's eulogy reminded that the world is not perfect and after three years, Major General John Stevenson was appointed the Chief of Logistics in Canberra. As the only other Gunner officer in Logistics Branch in 1980, I found it refreshing for an Arms officer to be captaining this organisation and, under his indirect guidance, learnt much about the impact of the logistic system on operational planning. It was also an area of amusement to other staff members when these two Gunners celebrated Royal Australian Artillery Day and Saint Barbara's Day within the logistic walls.

At just 57 years of age, Major General Stevenson reached statutory retirement and completed almost 40 years of dedicated service to the Australian Defence Force. Feeling far too young to retire, John and Ann returned to Melbourne, purchased a house in Stevenson Street, Kew and he threw himself headlong into a range of occupations – chairman of the Industrial Mobilisation Course (later its National President) and writing for Dennis Warner and others on defence matters. Such was his contribution to a work on defending northern Australia that one of the carriages on the Darwin rail was recently named after him. Regrettably, he was too ill to attend the naming ceremony, but Ann was there in his stead.

John was always an active member of Legacy, became National Chairman of the Order of Australia Association, was President of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia, Patron of the Melbourne Rugby Union Football Club, and was an enthusiastic participant in activities at the Naval and Military and Athenaeum Clubs. Somehow, he managed to fit regular tennis and occasional golf into this very full life.

Neither were his links with the Army nor his Gunner roots overlooked after leaving the service. General John became the Honorary Colonel of the Melbourne University Regiment (1982-88), Colonel Commandant RAA Victoria (1988-92) and Representative Colonel Commandant RAA (1989-92).

Barely perceptible during my interview in 1998, the onset of the insidious disease progressed slowly at first then more pronounced in the last few years. A major setback late in 2006 began to number John

Geoff Nettle's summation was masterly. John Stevenson was . a gregarious man who delighted in the company of others and in what they did and knew. He was a charming companion and generous host, a gentleman of the old school whose urbanity was as intuitive as it was instructed. John Stevenson was, too, a family man – a devoted husband, an adoring father and a loving grandfather for whom the greatest pleasure lay in the gatherings of family occasion recognise that his death is – a blessing. For even a hard man can only take some much pain, and by the end of it all, he *had* taken more than enough.

Vale Major General John Dennis 'Punch' Stevenson AO CBE – military leader, loving family man, rugby devotee, gentleman, and always a Gunner. Gone to that Great Gun Park up above at 83 years young.



Second Battle of El Alamein - 2140 hours 23 October 1942

I recently read Colleen McCulloch's 'The Thornbirds' and was both surprised and enthralled by her description of the opening barrage of the second battle of El Alamein. I'm sure all old (and present) gunners will be moved, as I was, by the effect such a barrage had on the gunners who took part in it. One can almost smell the cordite!

Regards, Bill Severino ex - P Battery, 15 Field Regiment, Dandenong.

Eight hundred and eighty two British guns and howitzers spoke together. The heavens reeled, the ground lifted, expanded, could not settle, for the barrage went on and on without a second's diminution in the mind-shattering volume of noise. It was no use plugging fingers in ears; the gargantuan booming came up through the earth and traveled inwards to the brain via the bones. What the effect must have been on Rommel's front the troops of the Ninth in their trenches could only imagine. Usually it was possible to pick out this type and size of artillery from that, but tonight their iron throats chorused in perfect harmony, and thundered on as the minutes passed.

The desert lit not with the light of day but with the fire of the sun itself; a vast billowing cloud of dust rose like coiling smoke thousands of feet, glowing with the flashes of exploding shells and mines, the leaping flames of massive concentrations of detonating casings, igniting payloads. Everything Montgomery had was aimed at the minefields-guns, howitzers, mortars. And everything Montgomery had was thrown as fast as the sweating artillery crews could throw it, slaves feeding the maws of their weapons like small frantic birds a cuckoo; gun casings grew hot, the time between recoil and reload shorter and shorter as the artillerymen got carried away on their own impetus. Madmen, maddened, they danced a stereotyped pattern of attendance on their fieldpieces.

It was beautiful, wonderful-the highpoint of an artilleryman's life which he lived and relived in his dreams, waking and sleeping, for the rest of his anticlimactic days. And yearned to have back again, those fifteen minutes with Montgomery's guns.

The Thorn Birds, Colleen McCullough (1977), Harper and Row, New York pp- 369,370.

Article supplied by Bill Severino ex - P Battery, 15 Field Regiment, Dandenong.



AUSSIE GUNNERS PULL THEIR WEIGHT IN AFGHANISTAN

DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE

MSPA 304/08 Thursday, 18 September 2008

16 'Gunnery' from the Darwin-based 8/12 Medium Regiment are providing vital fire support to International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan National Army troops in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan.

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) Gunnery have fired over 140 fire missions involving over 2500 artillery rounds so far in the first deployment of Australian artillerymen in their primary role since ADF operations ceased in Vietnam in 1972.

Brigadier Brian Dawson praised the contribution the Australian Gunnery are making. "They are undertaking an extremely demanding job in some of the harshest and most austere operating environments. The Gunnery are required to live virtually beside their guns and are required to react at very short notice to fire missions at any time of the day and night," Brigadier Brian Dawson said.

Since late March the Gunnery have been serving with the British 7th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery. They provide accurate and timely artillery fire as part of the wider Task Force Helmand organisation.

"This deployment is unusual in that our Gunnery are working as part of a United Kingdom (UK) unit and operating with their equipment. Our Gunnery are standing side by side with their UK mates and have been involved in supporting numerous operations, including support to the recent movement of key generator equipment to the Kajaki Dam in Helmand.

"In the true tradition of our Armies, the Australian and UK Gunnery have bonded extremely well and are enjoying this unique, albeit dangerous, experience," Brigadier Dawson said. Prior to this deployment the Gunnery completed six months training in the UK preparing for their deployment. The Australian gunners employ the 105mm L118 Light Gun, a similar weapon to the ADF's L119 Hamel Gun.

The deployment is conducted under a bilateral arrangement and will enhance the training and experience of the Australian Gunnery. This deployment will be followed by a similar embedding of Gunnery from Townsville's 4th Field Regiment later this year.

Media Note: Vision of the Australian Gunnery in action with their UK unit will be fed to television networks, Press Gallery, Parliament House. Still imagery is available at <http://www.defence.gov.au/media/download>.

Media contact: Defence Media Liaison: 02 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664



The Battle for Hong Kong

The Attack

The Japanese crossed the border from China into the New Territories just as the news of Pearl Harbour was reaching the outside world.

Warned by good intelligence, Hong Kong's defenders were all in position.

Waiting for the Japanese on the Mainland that December 8th were the Mainland Brigade, consisting of three of the four most experienced infantry battalions available to the garrison, the 2nd Royal Scots, the 5/7th Rajputs, and the 2/14th Punjabis. Supporting them were No. 1 Company Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC), mobile guns of the Hong Kong Singapore Royal Artillery (HKSRA), and elements of all units necessary to support an army in the line. All came under the command of Brigadier Wallis.

The main weight of the defenders manned the Gin Drinkers Line (the one, weakly prepared, defensive line across the Mainland). It had not even been intended to defend this line until the unexpected arrival of two Canadian battalions (the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada) just three weeks before. These two battalions, in conjunction with the 1st Middlesex (arguably the best prepared of all the infantry battalions) made up the Island Brigade under Brigadier Lawson.

Forward of the Gin Drinkers Line, C Company Punjabis and elements of the Royal Engineers had already started fighting a delaying rearguard action, blowing up bridges and tunnels in front of the advancing Japanese.

The Loss of the Gin Drinkers Line

These pre-dawn activities were out of sight and out of mind as far as Hong Kong's citizens were concerned, but the 08:00 bombing attack on Kai Tak Airfield, Sham Shui Po Barracks, and Kowloon changed all that. The Colony and its people now knew that war had arrived.

The key strongpoint of the Gin Drinkers Line expected to hold out for at least a week was the Shing Mun Redoubt. In the area of the line held by the Royal Scots, it was manned by A Company's HQ and number 8 Platoon, and elements of 1 Mountain Battery HKSRA.. The senior officer was A Company's commander, Captain 'Potato' Jones.

Two hours after nightfall on December 9th, Japanese attacked the Redoubt from Needle Hill just to its north 'Redoubt' is a poor term for a few pillboxes joined by concrete tunnels, surrounded by wire and manned by around 43 personnel. By early morning of the 10th, the Japanese held the position having killed 3, captured 27, and let 13 escape.

The Royal Scots fell back to the next high ground Golden Hill. There were no defensive positions here, apart from a few scrapes, and the ground was as hard as rock. Early on December 11th the Japanese attacked initially with mortars which inflicted horrific casualties as they burst on earth that was more like concrete.

The majority of the Royal Scots fell back in extreme disorder as a Japanese infantry attack followed, but D Company struck back and re-took the position. However, by this time it was clear that the Gin Drinkers Line had been irreconcilably compromised, and leaving 28 dead behind the Royal Scots were pulled off the hill.

Evacuation

Maltby, the GOC, had decided to evacuate all troops from the Mainland. Those holding the western part of the line were to fall back via the ferries of Tsim Sha Tsui, while those holding the east were to fall back via Devil's Peak.

The evacuation proceeded smoothly, apart from a party of Punjabis who became lost and ended up forming a defensive barricade around the Star Ferry in Kowloon, holding off the Japanese while the last ferries left, and the Hong Kong Mule Company who had to leave most of their mules on the Mainland due to a lack of lighters to take them off.

By early on December 13th, the evacuation was over. In delaying the Japanese by five days, Maltby had lost just 66 dead from a total force of 14,000.

Reorganisation

From December 13th, all that lay between the Japanese and Hong Kong Island was a narrow stretch of water. Armed with good intelligence, they took the opportunity to destroy much of the Island's military infrastructure with shells and bombs. It became a war of counter-battery fire as the batteries on the Island fired back though many were destroyed in the process.

With all forces back on the Island, there was a reorganization. Two new brigades were formed, East Brigade under Wallis and West Brigade under Lawson; the dividing line ran due south from the east side of Causeway Bay. East Brigade consisted of the Rajputs on the waterfront with the Royal Rifles and 1, 2, and 3, Coy HKVDC behind them, and West Brigade consisted of the Punjabis on the waterfront and the Winnipeg Grenadiers and 4, 5, and 7 Coy HKVDC behind them, with the Royal Scots forming a bridge between the two Indian battalions and 6 Coy HKVDC in a number of locations. The Middlesex manned the majority of the pillboxes defending the Island and therefore reported into both Brigades.

Bombs and Shells

The scale of the shelling and bombing has long been underestimated. The whole north shore of the Island from The Peak down to the waterfront came under intense fire. Military areas were hit Mount Davis Fort, Belchers, Pinewoods, troop concentrations, the pillboxes; institutions were hit Central Police Station (two killed), Bowen Road Hospital (over 100 hits), the Royal Naval Hospital in Wanchai (over 100 hits), the Bank; and residential areas rich and poor were struck with great loss of life.

However, the biggest single explosion came not from enemy action but from a simple mistake. On the night of December 12th, the barge Jeanette, laden with tons of dynamite from Green Island, was accidentally fired on by Z Company Middlesex from pillbox 63. The resulting double explosion killed everyone on board and blew in most windows of Central district.

Twice the Japanese asked formally for surrender and were rejected. At least once they probed the north shore of the Island as a preparation for the invasion. Then, in a lucky strike (the smoke clearly visible in some aerial cine-film taken at the time) they set a paint factory and oil tanks in North Point ablaze.

Where Will They Come From?

By December 18th, the Island was a mess. Maltby had lost a further 54 dead, many of the pillboxes were useless, and the infrastructure was so badly damaged that it was almost impossible for vehicles to proceed down some of the northern streets such as King's Road.

Among both officers and men, the only question is where the Japanese invasion will fall. Will it be Central? Not the best place for a landing, but with good embarkation points in Tsim Sha Tsui. Or will it be North Point? The shortest sea crossing, but much further from Victoria.

By 19:30 on December 18th, the question would be answered.

The Invasion

Well before midnight on December 18th the 5/7th Rajputs ceased to exist as a fighting unit. Killed, wounded, captured, or simply isolated, they had been torn apart as the Japanese assault troops charged through them and made for higher ground. By dawn their assault has paused in the west thanks to the refusal of the HKVDC Hugheseliers to let them pass, but their penetration to the south has reached Wong Nai Chung Gap.

The whole of December 19th is dominated by the fighting for the Gap. Initially defended simply by Lawson's West Brigade HQ, 3 Coy HKVDC, elements of 5AA regiment, elements of the HKSRA, and the HQ of D Company Winnipeg Grenadiers, the battle sucks in A Coy Winnipeg Grenadiers, the entire 2nd battalion Royal Scots, Royal Engineers, and many odds and sods. The Japanese are soon effectively in control, but the day results in 451 fatalities amongst the defenders, the majority in this little valley.

To avoid being cut off, Wallis ordered all elements of East Brigade to re-form in the hills north of Stanley. This well-chosen position would leave him in touch with West Brigade, with the insurance of the Stanley Peninsular to his south should he need to fall back. Unfortunately he did not know that Lawson had been killed at 07:00 that morning and thus West Brigade was not under effective control.

Counterattacks

On December 20th A Company Punjabis was told to relieve the Repulse Bay Hotel which had come under attack that morning. At the same time East Brigade struck West along the same road. The Punjabis got no further than Shouson Hill, whose commanding peak was already held by the Japanese. East Brigade penetrated as far as the hotel and castle Eucliffe (just to the hote's south west) before coming to a halt thanks to Japanese forces on Middle Spur and Violet Hill.

On December 21st East Brigade made an individual attack on the Japanese holding Wong Nai Chung Gap. The plan was to drive north to Tai Tam Gap, then head due west via Gauge Basin to the area that now houses Park View. However, this attack was halted by strong Japanese resistance in the Red Hill area. Some elements were redirected via the Repulse Bay Hotel and made it as far north as The Ridge.

Meanwhile, the all-important north-south line had been stabilised thanks to the Middlesex on Leighton Hill. The Japanese desire to charge due west along the waterfront and take Victoria had been thwarted, thus their strategy change to forming a bulge in the hills (Mount Nicholson, Mount Cameron) south of the racecourse. With (from the Japanese point of view) Leighton Hill being impassable, and the Stanley area a sideshow, the focus became the Middle Gap Wanchai Gap Magazine Gap line from which they would be able to descend into the capital.

Surrender

By December 23rd, as this bulge into West Brigade's lines was being created, East Brigade had been squeezed into the Stanley Peninsular. While they would be able to take no more part in the battle for Hong Kong from this position, they were in arguably the best location for a long holdout.

Christmas Eve saw no great change. The street fighting in Wanchai intensified, and the defenders in the hills above Central were pushed further back. Casualties were mounting fast. Dawn the next day saw the Stanley defenders pushed back further than St. Stephen's (scene of not the biggest, but certainly the most sadistic, massacre of the fighting), the defenders in the hills pushed further west than Wanchai Gap, and the Wanchai defenders pushed west of Mount Parish, almost to where the Hopewell Centre is today.

By 15:15 Governor Sir Mark Young, after consultation with Maltby who himself had consulted with those defending Victoria, ordered the surrender.

In Stanley, cut off from normal communications, the fighting continued until early next morning. By 02:30 all firing had ceased. Hong Kong had been captured. Of the 14,000 defenders, 1,500 lay dead. Almost twice that number would die in the three years and eight months of captivity and deprivation that were to follow.

The Battlefields Today

Life moves on, time moves forward

Hong Kong has witnessed frenetic development since 1941 but Tony Banham tells keen eyed visitors to the battlefields what they may still see today.

You could spend years in 21st century Hong Kong and never realize that a battle took place here, but in fact the remains are all around. Citizens commuting past the bronze lions outside the HSBC HQ will seldom look too closely. Perhaps a few will notice the shrapnel scars from the shelling of December 1941, but almost none will look closely enough to see the shrapnel still embedded in the eastern-most animal's rump.

The Shing Mun Redoubt and the North Shore

On the mainland a surprising number of the Gin Drinkers Line pillboxes remain though the piece de resistance (in more ways than one) is the almost intact Shing Mun Redoubt. Further south, the

Kowloon railway clock tower around which Forsyth's Punjabis made their epic defence as others escaped on the Star Ferry is still there. It has borne the honourable scars of war damage for sixty years, but last time I looked it was covered with scaffolding. Will it be repaired to its virginal history-free state like (on an admittedly vaster scale) Berlin's Reichstag?

On the north shore of Hong Kong Island (the scene of the invasion of December 18th), little is left. The shoreline in general is a hundred metres further north, and forty years newer, than that which the Japanese stormed. Yet reminders remain. The Salesian mission of massacre fame is still there, as is the Lye Mun Redoubt (though it now houses the Museum of Coastal Defence). But all the north shore pillboxes are now gone, the last to be demolished being PB63, arguably the most significant historically as it was from this location that the shots were fired that destroyed the Jeanette and everyone on board.

Not much of the all-important line that prevented the Japanese breaking through to Victoria has escaped the developers. The Lee Theatre (a strongpoint then) was knocked down in the early 1990s, and today is the site of the Lee Theatre Plaza. Morrison Hill already half demolished in 1941 has now been completely flattened. Only Leighton Hill is still there, though for the last twenty-four months a huge construction project has seen a multi-tower, multi-story block of flats being erected on its summit. What percentage of its future inhabitants will know that in 1941 its environs resembled the Somme, and its slopes were covered in Japanese dead?

Further west the Wanchai police station still stands, as does the badly-bombed police HQ in Central, with Flagstaff House and the Governor's Residence in between. The 'Legco' building also still shows shrapnel scars.

The Wong Nai Chung Gap and Stanley

To the south, much of the Wong Nai Chung Gap battlefield is preserved. Wong Nai Chung Valley itself has disappeared, long since filled in and flattened to house a cricket pitch or two, and tennis courts. Bust the hillsides to the east and west still house 3 Coy HKVDC's pillboxes and Lawson's West Brigade HQ respectively. Battlefield debris lies just metres from the busy road that bisects the island today.

Stanley has grown since 1941, though the Police Station, St. Stephen's, and Bungalow C are all still there. The cemetery through which Parker's D Company, Royal Rifles of Canada charged on Christmas day is still much as it was, though enlarged post-war to accept the bodies of many killed in Stanley's defence, and civilians from the internment camp.

Almost all the coastal gun sites are as they were at the end of the war, except for Belcher's which is again today the site of a major new housing project. Mount Davis and Pinewoods are especially well preserved, and the eagle-eyed can still pick up pieces of shrapnel from the dust.

Finally, although they are not battlefields in the traditional sense, what of the POW camps? They've all gone. North Point, Argyle Street, Sham Shui Po, Mau Tau Chung, all were sited on prime building land. What would it feel like to live in a housing estate built on the misery of deprivation and dysentery, brutality and beri-beri? There would be no point in asking. The inhabitants would be unaware of the past, just as Londoners of Spitalfields wouldn't know that they were living on the Hospital Fields in which thousands of their unfortunate forbears were buried. Life moves on, time moves forward; but there is always something about a battlefield.

Wong Nai Chung Gap Trail

At the beginning of 2006, Hong Kong's first battlefield trail was established at Wong Nai Chung Gap. The starting point of the trail, which consists of ten stations in total, is opposite the Park View housing development at the south east corner of the gap. If reaction to the trail is positive, it is possible that others will be created over time, perhaps covering the fighting around Shing Mun on the mainland, and Stanley village in the south of the island.

Reprinted from the Hong Kong War Diary Website

<http://www.hongkongwardiary.com/>



2/7th Field Regiment

The 2/7th Field Regiment began to take shape in late April 1940. Its first recruits had previously been members of the militia artillery brigades in South and Western Australia. The first South Australians came from the 13th Field Brigade, were sworn in on 20 May at the state recruiting depots at Wayville, and went into camp at Woodside. The first group of Western Australians came from the 3rd Field Brigade and were sworn in at Swan Barracks on 15 May, before going on to Northam camp. The South Australians made up regiment's 13th Battery and the West Australians made up the regiment's 14th Battery. Although the regiment had been raised around the same time as the 7th Division, in October it was instead allotted to the 9th Division. The division's other artillery regiments were the 2/8th and 2/12th Field Regiments. Later, in October 1941, when the regiment was in the Middle East, a third battery, the 57th, was formed.

In November the regiment's two batteries were finally brought together. On 17 November 13th Battery left Woodside and travelled by train to Port Adelaide's Outer Harbour, where it joined the 2/48th Battalion and other auxiliary units, aboard the troopship Stratheden. The Stratheden reached Fremantle four days later, where 14th Battery embarked on 22 November.

The Stratheden was part of conveying Australian and New Zealander troops to the Middle East. The voyage took just under a month and on 17 December the Stratheden reached the harbour at Kantara, on the edge of the Sinai, and the regiment travelled by train to Palestine, going into camp at Qastina. It remained in Palestine for four months, training with 18-pounder guns and 4.5-inch howitzers.

In March 1941 the 9th Division was brought from Palestine to Libya to garrison the area east of Tobruk, but the division did not have enough vehicles to bring all its units forward. In April the 2/7th Field Regiment moved to Ikingi Marut, Egypt, and in May to Mersa Matruh, where it and the 2/8th Field Regiment contributed to defending the 'fortress'. (The 2/12th Field Regiment followed the infantry to Tobruk). It was not until the end of July, while still at Matruh, that the regiment received most of its 25-pounders.

After three months at Matruh, at the start of September, the 2/7th moved closer to the front, taking up a position between Halfaya Pass, controlled by German and Italian troops, and Sidi Barrani, which was being developed into a fortress by British Commonwealth troops, in the Coastal Sector. While here, the 2/7th and 2/8th employed a 'sniping gun', where a 25-pounder would go forward in the morning, observing enemy artillery fire, and fire several shells in reply, before retiring to its own lines.

The gunners remained in the western desert until October. By this time nearly all Australian troops had been evacuated from Tobruk and the 9th Division was reforming in Palestine. The 2/7th, however, was sent to the Royal Artillery's Almaza Base Depot, Cairo, where it became the depot training regiment at the Middle East School of Artillery. In early 1942 the 9th Division moved to Syria, and in February the 2/7th took over defensive positions at Bsarma, near Tripoli, from the 2/5th Field Regiment.

By June the war in North Africa had become critical for the Allies, with the German and Italian forces reaching El Alamein, in Egypt, about 112 kilometres west of Alexandria. The 9th Division was rushed to the Alamein 'box' and held the northern sector for almost four months. It was at Alamein where the 2/8th 'came into its own'. The regiment reached the Alamein front in July and, having been placed under the command of the 9th Division's 26th Brigade, took up position at Kilo 91, east of El Alamein, on 8 July. The regiment went into action two days later. On 10 July, attacking inland from the coast, the 26th Brigade attacked the German positions at Tel el Eisa.

The attack was supported by all three of the division's artillery regiments, with the 2/7th being involved in the heavy fighting that followed when the Germans counter-attacked. Fighting continued for five days, during which time the 2/7th fired 20,129 rounds.

The 2/7th remained in action during the following months, supporting Operation Bulimba, the 20th Brigade attack at the start of September. During the main Alamein offensive at the end of October and the start of November, the 2/7th supported the 20th Brigade's advance. During the 13 days of battle, the regiment fired 65,594 rounds of high-explosive shells. Once the breakthrough occurred, the regiment participated in the pursuit of enemy troops and went as far as El Daba. The 2/7th was one of the few Australian units that left the divisional area during the battle.

Alamein was a vital success for the Allies and was one of the war's turning points. The 9th Division, however, was needed elsewhere and began returning to Australia in January 1943. The 2/7th arrived in Fremantle on 18 February and in Melbourne a week later. The regiment was given leave before moving to Queensland in April.

The gunners spent the next two years in north Australia, training first at Kiri and then Ravenshoe, on the Atherton Tablelands. Indeed, the war was almost over before the regiment again went into action. In April 1945 the division was transported to Morotai, which was being used as a staging area for the Oboe operations on Borneo.

The first phase of the Borneo operation was an amphibious landing on Tarakan Island by the 26th Brigade and the 2/7th. Coming ashore in landing craft, following the infantry, the regiment landed on Tarakan on the first day of the invasion on 1 May. Preceding the invasion, five guns from the regiment's 57th Battery landed on Sadau Island to help cover the landing. The regiment was frequently called upon to give artillery support, shelling heavily defended Japanese positions. The regiment fired more than 37,000 shells during the campaign.

Following Japan's surrender and the end of the war, the regiment's ranks thinned as men were discharged or transferred. The last members of the unit left Tarakan in December and the 2/7th Field Regiment was disbanded in January 1946.

The Australian commander on Tarakan, Brigadier D.A. Whitehead, later wrote it was "good to know" that he had a whole artillery regiment to support his operations on the island. .It was certainly good to know,. he wrote, .that the Regiment was the 2/7th.

Glossary

Woodside Camp ; Northam ; North Borneo ; Tarakan ; El Alamein ; Morotai ; Mersa Matruh ; Tobruk Siege

Battle Honours

- nil

Casualties

- 45 died

For more information please see the Roll of Honour and Second World War Nominal Roll (external website) databases.

Commanding Officers

- Eastick, Thomas Charles
- Green, William Joseph

Decorations

- 3 DSO
- 1 MC
- 4 MM
- 2 MID

For more information please see Honours and Awards database

Collection Items

Search for related collection items

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http://www.awm.gov.au/units/unit_10374second_world_war.asp



Hadide, Syria. 1942-03. "C" Troop, 14 Battery Of The 2/7th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, At A Practice Shoot On The Roadside Forty Miles North East Of Tripoli. Shown Is:- Sergeant G.H. Gwynn. Photo ID 023856

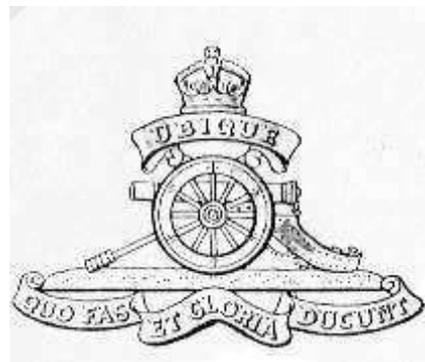


Ravenshoe Area, Qld. 1945-02-14. The Duke Of Gloucester, Governor General Of Australia, (7), Watches A Gun Crew From E Troop, 2/7 Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery In Training. Identified Personnel Are:- Gunner M Rumbelow, (1); Sergeant K B Clark, (2); Gnr K E Cragen, (3); Gnr G J E Moylan, (4); Lieutenant General Sir Leslie J Morshead, (6). Photo ID 086695

Photos reprinted from The Australian War Memorial Website



Annual
Artillery Church Parade
10 am, Sunday, 8th February 2009



at
Saint Georges East St Kilda Uniting
Church
4 Chapel Street, St Kilda

All Gunners, past and present, and their families are
invited to join us at our annual church parade.

Enquiries to Robin Smith on 9435 6352

Not Everyone Welcomed the Aussies

NAME: Bob Talbot

DATE: 1915 - 1918

UNIT: Australian Artillery Regiment

LOCATION: Belgium, France

Not everyone in France and Belgium thought the Australian soldiers were wonderful in World War I, as Gunner Bob Talbot discovered.



Gunner Bob Talbot in kilt while in Edinburgh on leave.

Writing in his diary on 14 April 1916, Gnr Talbot described arriving at a small railway station 12 miles behind Ypres and seeing the guns flashing.

"We ride six miles in the mud (on bicycles) & are billeted in a farm house for a week," he wrote. "Farmer's wife says Australians are worse than the Germans."

Having been on the receiving end from both sides for the past two years, you can understand the poor farmer's wife being just a touch upset.

But apart from that, Gnr Talbot says the French were very welcoming to him and his mates when they arrived from Australia.

On 9 April they arrived at Havre at 2am after more than 50 hours on the train journey from Marseilles, passing through Lyons and several other large towns.

"Are treated well by the French people, often given coffee & cigarettes. (France is a lovely country, best train journey I have ever

had to do.)"

After five days of wet weather the battery was equipped with guns, horses and harness and left for the front.

"One team jibs & we do not reach station till 12 o'clock. Four of us are mounted on bicycles. I am not too good on machine, several spills. All horses and guns entrained & leave Havre for the front."

Having withstood the wrath of the farmer's wife for a week, the battery moved on Easter Saturday.

"Leave our billet at Boore & move up about 7 miles to Estair, again mounted on bicycles. Acting mounted orderly to Major Riggall. Rains hard & arrive about 3 miles behind the firing line very wet & cold but are billeted comfortably in a farmer's barn."



Bob Talbot with Justin MacCartie who was later killed in action.

had to do.)"

On Easter Sunday they were allowed to sleep in till 7.30am and woke to a lovely sunny day.

"Guns sound very close. We see many aeroplanes some being fired at by German guns also Germans being fired at by British who do much better shooting than the Boshes."

The Battery was soon in the thick of the fighting.

"There is a dressing station here and wounded coming in nearly every day mostly from bomb wounds. There is

also a cemetery close by where a great many British soldiers of different regiments are buried and now also the resting place of many brave Australian lads who shall never see sunny Australia again."



Gunner Talbot's Emergency Reserve card.

Over the next year, Gnr Talbot took part in battles in France and Belgium. On 16 April 1917, he records they were rudely awakened about 4am.

"One of our infantry outposts has come back to say that the Huns have broken through. We pull our clothes on lively & get out. The Germans were right on us & started sending up flares two hundred yards in front - we stand to our guns till the Huns are pretty near all around but are not allowed to shoot on account of our own infantry. At last the major gives the order to clear out & we do only just in time. As it is two of our lads were taken prisoners. Same morning our inf counter attack and our guns are retaken & Germans driven back to their old line."

By the end of July Gnr Talbot's battery was again in the thick of things.

"The date of the big stunt. At 3.50am the guns start with a fierce bombardment also a mine or two goes up on our left. Mac & I and three other sparks from our B [Battery] face to the sweat of a forward stunt & move forward at about 4.30 for the front line loaded to the hilt with all sorts of signalling gear including a mile of wire. We reach the line where the Germans had been hunted out of & find that Brigade H.Q. had established a station there to send back by light to H.Q. Our party move forward here to our infantry & find them 1000 yards further on. The 30th Division of Tommies are here & are just about to be relieved by the 18th. But they had not taken their objective so things are in a hell of a mess. An excited staff officer is here with 5 prisoners who are all very frightened - shells are falling like hail - snipers are very bad & cant hear yourself speak for machine gun & rifle fire - Germans are preparing for counter attack - but we let go one of our pigeons which will fly back to Army H.Q. & we soon had our artillery on to them & finish counter attack.

"The 18th Div carry on the attack from here and we manage to find an old Hun dugout made of concrete, a machine gun position - a few dead Huns here - also capture one in the dugout. He had hid himself up a stairway but was found by one of our chaps who covered him with his revolver - Comes down very frightened - We eventually get a line laid back, which does not last under the hellish shellfire for more than 10 minutes - so we decide to run back every message - a very rotten performance, but we get through and are relieved next day - not at all sorry."

Gnr Talbot spent some time in hospital and eventually received his long awaited leave pass which enabled him to go to London. He wasn't too impressed with London so headed for Edinburgh.

"Are having a terrible good time here - these Scotch people will always do me," he wrote.

While in Scotland, Gnr Talbot wrote to his eldest brother, Willie, enclosing his diary and asking him to look after it for him. Willie and another brother, Jack, had given the book to Bob Talbot before he left for the war.

"It might be a bit interesting to you but if you get it OK look after it for me as from nearly any of the dates I can recall some funny experience or other," he wrote.

Then it was back to the war where he discovered his best mate Mac (who was often mentioned in the diary) had been killed. On 4 October 1917, Gnr Talbot took part in action in the vicinity of Remus Wood. Lt F.W. Lord in his recommendation for a decoration wrote:

"After his Officer had been killed, this man voluntarily went over with the infantry and endeavoured to establish a signal station on the Ridge. He was working under very heavy fire and when I saw him was calling up Brigade. Shortly afterwards a shell struck their station killing and wounding several of the party, and breaking the lamp. Throughout the operation this man displayed fine courage and did his duty without Officer or N.C.O."

Gnr Talbot was awarded the Military Medal for his actions. He survived the rest of the war despite many narrow escapes and returned to Australia where he was demobbed on 29 July 1919.

The material for this article was supplied by Mr R.J. Talbot of Queensland

Reprinted from The Australian War Memorial Website

<http://www.australiansatwar.gov.au/stories/stories.asp?war=W1&id=34>



WARNING ORDER

GUNNER DINNER
Caulfield RSL.

18th of July, 2009,

Further details will be published in the next Cascabel.



Bravery under fire

In the days leading up to ANZAC Day 1995, a small group of Australian troops displayed a special kind of bravery. While working at the Kibeho refugee camp in southern Rwanda, they witnessed the Rwandan army carry out a revenge attack on Hutu refugees, some of whom had taken part in the Rwandan genocide the previous year. The Australians could not stop the massacre, but they courageously continued to work under fire to save as many civilians as possible.

A small, mountainous country in central Africa, Rwanda is mainly populated by two ethnic groups: the minority Tutsi and the majority Hutu. When the Belgians ruled Rwanda, the Tutsis held a privileged position. When the country became independent in 1962, the Hutus gained power and many Tutsis were forced to flee to neighbouring Uganda.

In April 1994, negotiations to end a Hutu Tutsi civil war broke down when the president of Rwanda, who supported the peace plan, was assassinated. Hutu extremists then perpetrated genocide on Tutsis and moderate Hutus. Half a million Rwandans were killed in a little over three months. At Kibeho, as throughout the rest of the country, the Hutu militia attacked the village church, blasting holes in the walls with rocket propelled grenades and murdering about 3,000 people who had sought sanctuary inside.

Innocent people were dying in their thousands, but the international community did nothing. The genocide ended only because the Tutsi rebel army, the Rwandese Patriotic Front, defeated the Hutu government and took power in July 1994.



An Australian peacekeeper stands amid the remains of Kibeho camp two weeks after the massacre, May 1995.

AWM [P02211.017](#)

Eventually the United Nations (UN), which had retained a small mission in the country during the genocide, established a new expanded UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and the Australian government, after long deliberation, decided to provide the medical contingent, along with an infantry company to provide security. The Australian component of UNAMIR arrived in Rwanda in August 1994 (see [Wartime 27](#)).

In February 1995 the first Australian contingent completed its tour and was replaced by another. Although the civil war had ended more than half a year previously, hundreds of thousands of “internally displaced persons” (IDPs) . refugees who have not crossed an international boundary were still living in camps in southern Rwanda. The largest of these was Kibeho, which sprawled over nine square kilometres and held between 80,000 and 100,000 people.

The new Tutsi government believed the camps were sheltering many people who had taken part in the genocide, and feared the camps could become the base for a Hutu guerrilla army. After the United Nations had been unable to persuade the refugees to voluntarily return to their homes, the Tutsi controlled Rwandan army began planning a military operation to close the camps by force.



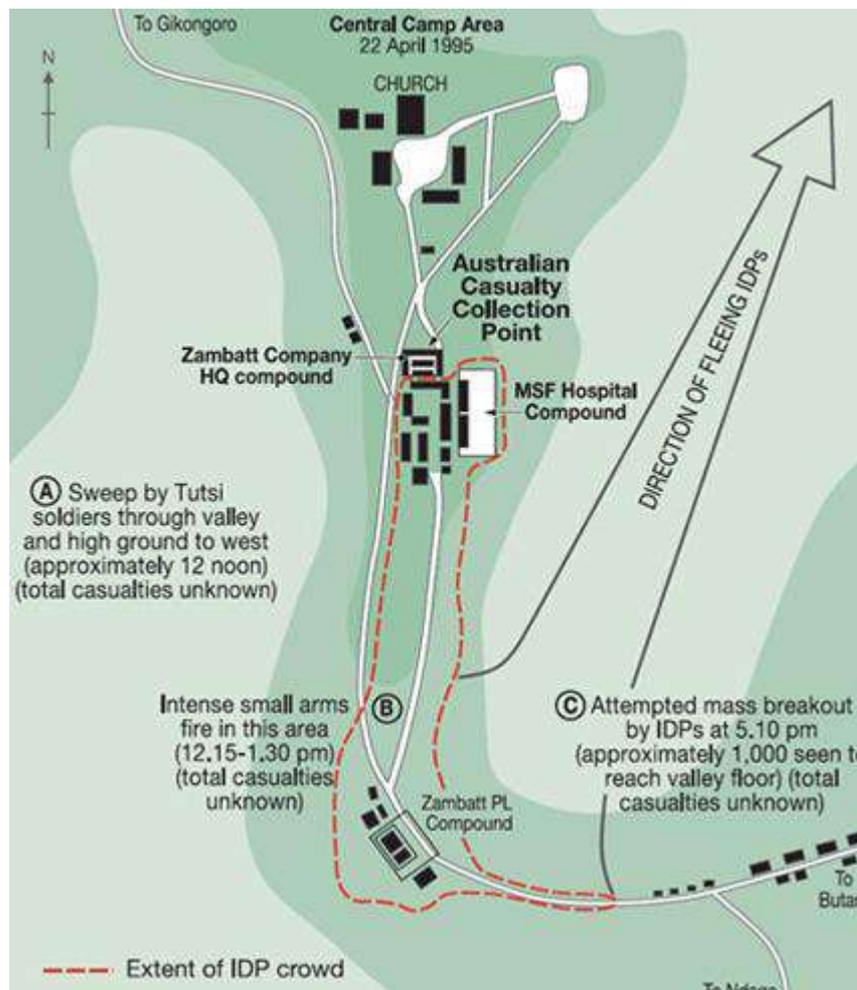
On 18 April, about one thousand Rwanda army troops arrived at Kibeho to shut down the camp. The UN mission, taken by surprise by the Tutsi government's action, hastily requested the Australian contingent put together a force consisting of a medical section with an infantry platoon. Early the next morning, it left for Kibeho with orders to provide medical assistance to the refugees before they began their journey home.

When the Australian convoy reached the massive camp, they drove past abandoned shelters, discarded possessions and smouldering campfires and wondered where all the people had gone. The answer came when they reached the hill above the church and found that the Rwandan army troops had herded the entire camp population into an area 1,000 metres long and 500 metres wide on the ridgeline below. One Australian soldier compared the scene to a football crowd, another to cattle crammed into a feedlot.

The Australians made contact with the UN force already at Kibeho, a Zambian infantry company, and then with the Rwandan army, who limited the medical team to only briefly treating the refugees once they exited the camp. Before the people could reach the Australians, they had to pass through a checkpoint where genocide survivors pointed out individuals who had taken part in the killings. Rwandan soldiers would arrest these men and women, take them away and presumably execute them. Each evening the Australians left Kibeho, but the Zambian troops remained in the camp overnight.

On 22 April the Australians arrived at Kibeho to find that many refugees had been killed or wounded during the night. About half of those injured had gunshot wounds caused by Rwandan soldiers; the other half had machete wounds from Hutu militia members, who

were trying to terrorise the refugees into remaining in the camp so as to provide the militia with a “human shield”.



This map, based on an Australia Army map of the incident at Kebeho, shows the Zambian (Zambatt) compounds and the path taken by the fleeing refugees (IDPs).

The wounded were being treated at a hospital run by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF - Doctors Without Borders), so the Australians set up their medical station there. While the medics worked on patients, the infantry went out with stretchers and retrieved more casualties. About 10 am, shots were fired towards the hospital. In response, Lieutenant Steve Tillbrook, the Australian infantry commander, moved the Australians to the Zambian company compound for protection.

Shortly after, in heavy rain, the Rwandan troops moved into the hospital compound and started shooting. The refugees stampeded. Some tried to break out of the camp but were hunted down in the valley by troops forming an outer cordon. Others surged over the razor wire barrier surrounding the Zambian position and swamped the compound. Lance Corporal Andy Miller was knocked over by the rush and separated from his infantrymen. After being hit by a stick and a rock, and having to brandish his Steyr assault rifle to ward off further attacks, Miller got back to his men. They then fixed bayonets in case they

needed to defend themselves, the first time Australian infantrymen had done so since the Vietnam War.

Despite the gunfire and stampede, the Australian medical team, led by Captain Carol Vaughan-Evans, continued to work, using a sandbag wall and a truck for cover. When calm returned, the Australians were required to remove all able-bodied refugees from the compound, but the medics and infantrymen were also able to collect the wounded and evacuate 25 seriously injured patients by helicopter to hospital. One of these was a small boy named Buregeya, whom Vaughan-Evans recalled was “just riddled with shrapnel and bullets” but managed to survive his ordeal.

The staff from the MSF hospital had escaped to the Zambian compound and told Tillbrook that there were still some doctors in the building. Tillbrook and two soldiers ran to the hospital, crossing a large open area as Hutu militia and Tutsi-government soldiers traded fire. The Australian officer found the French doctors and took them back to the Zambian compound. Later, a panicked MSF doctor told Tillbrook that another person was still in the hospital. Tillbrook went out again with two more soldiers, found the woman hiding in a cupboard, and returned safely.



After the Kibeho massacre, the Australian Medical Support Force returned to the camp to treat sick and wounded refugees, May 1995.

AWM [P02211.021](#)

Later, as the medical evacuation helicopters took off about 5 pm, Australians on board saw at least a thousand refugees rush out of the camp. The Tutsi troops stood on the ridges and fired down on them with automatic rifles, rocket propelled grenades and a .50-calibre machine-gun. The soldiers then moved through the valley in the still pouring rain, bayoneting or shooting the wounded.

As the rest of the Australians prepared to leave Kibeho that night, SAS medic Trooper Jon Church (who would later be killed in the 1996 Black Hawk training accident) found a bawling three-year-old girl and decided to rescue her. Another medic bandaged her arm to make it appear that she was injured, and she was given a biscuit laced with Diazepam. When the sedative put her to sleep, she was hidden in one of the ambulance storage bins and taken to an orphanage. As Vaughan-Evans later wrote, “We always remember that as a small victory. Despite all the [Rwandan army] did to that mass of humanity, we got one little girl out of there.”

That night, still shocked by the events of the day, the Australians camped at a small village just north of Kibeho. As Tillbrook later wrote, they had been placed in an impossible situation: "We didn't like what was happening, but we knew that we couldn't do anything to stop it. What we could do, though, was help as many of the wounded as we could." If the Australians had opened fire at the Rwandan army, they would probably have been wiped out, and the Rwandan government would certainly have demanded the immediate removal of the UN mission.

On 23 April, the Australians returned to Kibeho to treat casualties and recover bodies. Warrant Officer Rod Scott of the medical section organised teams to move through the massacre site to count the dead. Pools of blood and drag marks indicated where Rwandan soldiers had removed bodies overnight, and the Australians were prevented from looking in huts and latrines where corpses could have been hidden. In the areas of the camp to which the Australians had access, they counted 4,050 dead. Both the UN and the Rwandan government minimised the numbers killed. A senior UN military officer visited Kibeho that day and decided that 2,000 people had lost their lives; the Rwandan government later claimed that only 330 had died.

The Kibeho massacre was a horrific and disturbing event for all members of the Australian contingent in Rwanda. Many would later be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Four who served at Kibeho – Corporal Andy Miller, Warrant Officer Rod Scott, Lieutenant Steve Tillbrook, and Captain Carol Vaughan-Evans – were awarded the Medal of Gallantry for their actions, the first time Australian soldiers had been awarded gallantry medals since the Vietnam War.

Further reading:

- Narelle Biedermann, *Modern military heroes* (Milsons Point, NSW: Random House Australia, 2006)
- Peter Londey, *Other people's wars: a history of Australian peacekeeping* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2004)
- Linda Polman, *We did nothing* (London: Penguin Books, 2004)

Author

Dr John Connor is Senior Lecturer at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra. He is writing a volume of the official history of Australian peacekeeping and post-Cold War conflicts.

Reprinted from Wartime # 39



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VISIT to National Vietnam Veterans Museum

On the 15th November, 2008, the RAA Association visited the National Vietnam Veteran Museum. On arrival, we were treated to morning tea followed by an introduction/overview of the Museum by Ken Anderson. We then proceeded to a camouflage tent, where we watched a moving audio-visual exhibit and dioramas showing aspects of the war. We were then permitted to look and walk around the museum, which has a collection of over 6000 artefacts, including an L5, Centurian Tank, Bell AH-IG Huey Cobra Helicopter gunship.

At midday, we sat down to a two course meal followed by tea and coffee, which was organised by Jo Parker. After lunch, our President, Major Hamer presented our Association Plaque to the Museum Representatives, Ken Anderson and Jo Parker in appreciation of our visit. Thank you to the members, who sent me their apologies for not being able to attend this outing. May I recommend to any person, who has not visited the Museum, to try and do so. I know you will not be disappointed.

Overall, it was a very enjoyable visit, to those attending the museum and they were (excluding rank), Neil Hamer and Dione, Robin and Jan Smith, Merv and Mina Taggart, Geoff Rebbechi, George Wilson, Bill and Chris Mentiplay, Stan Lee, Brian Cleeman, Reg Morrell and guests.

Reg Morrell



Group photograph of Members & Guests



Captain Rebbechi checking out the museum



105 mm Howitzer (L5) display

Photos & Article supplied by SSGT Reg Morrell



Towing the line

Navy News

Volume 49, No. 14, August 10, 2006

By John Perryman

The largest single commitment by the Royal Australian Navy to Vietnam was the provision of a destroyer on a rotational basis to the United States Navy's Seventh Fleet for service on what became known as the 'gunline'.

RAN warships provided naval gunfire support from March 1967 to September 1971. They also participated in Operation Sea Dragon, the bombardment of North Vietnamese military targets and the interdiction of supply routes and logistic craft along the coast of North Vietnam from the Demilitarized Zone to the Red River Delta, from April 1967 until it was suspended in November 1968.

The first RAN destroyers to deploy to Vietnam were the Charles F. Adams class guided missile destroyers (DDG) Hobart, Perth and Brisbane. The Australian DDG's were well suited for the task of providing Naval Gunfire Support (NGS). Armed with two 5 inch 54 calibre gun mounts that fired a standard 76 lb High Explosive (HE) shell, they were capable of bringing down accurate 5 inch gunfire at a rate of 40 rounds per minute on targets at ranges beyond 14 nautical miles in most conditions.

The Daring class destroyer HMAS Vendetta was also deployed for service on the gunline. Her main armament consisted of six 4.5 inch guns that were capable of providing accurate and rapid fire to a range of nine nautical miles at a rate of 16 rounds per gun per minute. In good conditions Vendetta's guns were capable of expending up to 100 rounds per minute.

HMAS Hobart was the first DDG to join the US Seventh Fleet on 15 March 1967 beginning the six monthly rotation of RAN destroyers for service on the gunline. Hobart and Perth deployed three times to Vietnam, Brisbane twice and Vendetta once.

The destroyers carried out NGS missions in all of South Vietnam four military regions and Hobart and Perth were actively involved in Sea Dragon. Hobart and Perth came under fire on a number of occasions. Perth was hit once during her first deployment and Hobart suffered two killed and seven wounded when she was mistakenly hit by missiles fired from a United States Air Force jet aircraft.

Hobart was awarded a US Navy Unit Commendation in recognition of her service in Vietnam while Perth received both the US Navy Unit Commendation and the US Meritorious Unit Commendation.

This honour allowed both ships to fly distinguishing pennants known as 'burgees' from their masthead when alongside for the duration of their commissions.

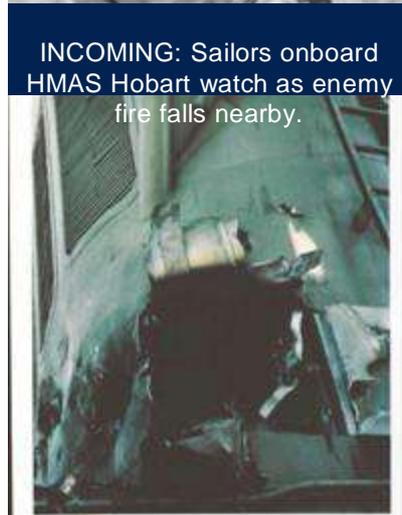
In their five years service in Vietnam, the four gunline destroyers steamed over 397,000 miles and fired 102,546 rounds.



SWELL TIME: HMAS Parramatta pushes her way through the swell.



INCOMING: Sailors onboard HMAS Hobart watch as enemy fire falls nearby.



HIT: Damage to HMAS Hobart funnel after coming under fire

Following in Vung Tau Ferry's wake



SUPER TROOPER: HMAS Sydney was known as the Vung Tau Ferry after being converted to a fast troop transport carrier during Vietnam.

By Brett Mitchell

Mention the Vung Tau Ferry to any Vietnam veteran and they will immediately recall HMAS Sydney, the former aircraft carrier that was later converted as a fast troop transport and destined to become the mainstay of naval logistic support operations for Australian forces in Vietnam.

Commissioned in 1948, HMAS Sydney was a keystone in the development of Australia's post war naval aviation capability and served with distinction in the Korean War. HMAS Sydney was converted for troopship duties in the early 1960s and began her first voyage to Vietnam in May 1965, transporting the First Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, from Sydney to Vung Tau in southern Vietnam.

Between 1965 and 1972, HMAS Sydney undertook 25 voyages to Vietnam and transported 16,094 troops, 5,753 deadweight tons of cargo and 2,375 vehicles. On her first voyage four days were taken to unload cargo in Vung Tau. On subsequent voyages this turn around time was reduced to a matter of hours.

On every voyage HMAS Sydney was ably supported by at least one escort that provided a measure of protection against potential hostile forces. She had up to four escorts in 1965 and 1966, including at times the flagship HMAS Melbourne. Other escorts included HMA Ships Anzac, Derwent, Duchess, Parramatta, Stuart, Swan, Torrens, Vampire, Vendetta and Yarra.

In 1966 the Vietnam supply line was supplemented by two Australian National Line (ANL) cargo ships, Jeparit and Boonaroo. These ships were chartered by the Department of Shipping and Transport on behalf of the Australian Army to transport military vehicles, ammunition, aid and canteen supplies.

In March 1967 members of the Seamen's Union refused to man Jeparit and Boonaroo. To overcome this difficulty, Boonaroo was immediately commissioned by the Royal Australian Navy with a full naval crew for one return voyage to Cam Ranh Bay and Singapore.

In the case of Jeparit, existing crew who were prepared to continue to serve in the ship were supplemented by a Royal Australian Navy detachment. She made 21 voyages under the Red Ensign with a combined Merchant Navy / Royal Australian Navy crew. Further industrial action in

December 1969 prompted the Federal Government to commission Jeparit as one of Her Majesty Australian Ships. HMAS Jeparit made a further 17 incident free voyages under the Australian White Ensign. In all she carried 175,000 deadweight tons of cargo to Vietnam before returning to ANL control in March 1972.

ROLL OF HONOUR

RAN sailors who lost their lives while serving in Vietnam

Royal Australian Helicopter Flight Vietnam

LCDR Patrick John Vickers, February 22, 1968

LEUT Anthony Austin Casadio, August 21, 1968

PO O'Brian Cedric Ignatious Phillips, August 21, 1968

Acting SBLT Antony Jeffrey Huelin, January 3, 1969

LS Noel Ervin Shipp, May 31, 1969

HMAS Hobart

CPO Raymond Henry Hunt, June 17, 1968

ORDSMN Raymond John Butterworth, June 17, 1968

Clearance Diving Team 3

AB Bogdan Kazimierz Wojcik, June 21, 1970

Reprinted from Navy News

<http://www.defence.gov.au/news/NAVYNEWS/editions/4915/feature/feature02.htm>



RAA Association Cocktail Hour

The Association Committee organised a Cocktail Hour at Chapel Street, Depot on the 24th October, 2008, but unfortunately, due to insufficient numbers, this function had to be cancelled. A special thank you to those who responded by way of an apology or desiring to attend. As it turned out, the Cadre Staff of 2/10 Fd Regt arranged for a Cocktail Hour in the Sergeants' Mess on the same evening, and were kind enough to extend an invitation to the RAA Association. Several Association members attended and were made most welcome.

An enjoyable evening was had by all those in attendance.

Reg Morrell.



**RAA Association (Victoria) Inc
Corps Shop**

The following items may be purchased by mail, or at selected Association activities.

PRICE LIST

<p>Badges, etc</p> <p>RAA Assn (Vic), members \$5.00</p> <p>RAA badge cuff links \$9.00</p> <p>Key ring, RAA badge \$4.00</p> <p>Key ring, RAA (Pewter) \$4.00</p> <p>Ties</p> <p>Blue with single red gun \$30.00</p> <p>RAA Burgundy with gold gun \$43.00</p> <p>RAA Navy with gold gun \$43.00</p> <p>St Barbara Stripe \$43.00</p> <p>Books</p> <p><i>Kookaburra s Cutthroats</i> \$39.00</p> <p><i>Aust Military Equip Profiles</i> \$13.50</p> <p><i>AMEF Profile Leopard Tank</i> \$17.00</p> <p>ENQUIRIES:</p> <p>BRIAN CLEEMAN (03) 9560 7116</p> <p>REG MORRELL (03) 9562 9552</p>	<p>Stationery</p> <p>Card, RAA badge, with envelope</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Christmas message \$0.20</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">blank inside \$0.20</p> <p>Stickers</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Bumper: <i>Gunners do it</i> <i>with a bigger bang</i> \$2.00</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Square: gold badge, red and blue background \$2.00</p> <p>ORDERS:</p> <p>Most orders will require an additional FIVE DOLLARS packing and postage, which will cover one to several small items. If in any doubt concerning this, or availability, please contact one of the enquiries numbers above.</p> <p>Cheques should be made payable to RAA Association (Victoria) Inc, and be crossed <i>Not Negotiable</i>.</p> <p>Orders to: Mr B. Cleeman 28 Samada Street Notting Hill VIC 3168</p>
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SOME OTHER MILITARY REFLECTIONS

By COL Graham Farley, OAM, RFD, ED (Retd)

2. Military vehicles as I have known them

Introduction

Like the thoughts about Puckapunyal, the following will be concerned not with technical aspects as to whether the vehicles had four wheels, but with my experiences with them. Second World War films give the impression that it was fought with Jeeps, six-wheeled trucks and half-tracks. The latter always impressed me, although I have never found out what their advantages were and if there were any reasons why the allies never appeared to operate them.

The 3-tonner

I might as well start at the beginning of my military career, ie. when in 1954 for National Service I was detrained at Dysart for uniform issue and transport to the Puckapunyal camp. During lunch in a cloud of dust and engine noises, a large number of look-alike three-ton green tarpaulin covered trucks roared up and halted in line. Smartly dressed soldiers jumped out of the driving seats to line up with their vehicles.

In our groups (I guess we were in sections of some twenty recruits), we were directed to the rear end of one of these trucks. The tail board was down. I could see a row of wooden slat seats on either side, but there was no one to heave us up on to the tray. I clambered up the best way I could and settled myself down for the short journey. It would not be the last time I was to experience this exercise in the next three months.

Over metal tubing, heavy duty khaki canvas was stretched to provide a prairie-type bullock wagon approach. Seat belts hadn't been thought of in those days. Nor had heating! We just jarred our spines over potholes. The worst part was when being driven over dusty roads. If a ventilation space was not created over the cab roof, then the canvas-covered tray would fill with choking dust which permeated everything.

Strictly speaking, the first two soldiers to board such a vehicle should have deposited their gear and then turned to give a hand to the next two, one on either side. But we were rookies at that stage. We were dressed in our greatcoats with our sausage bag of uniforms at our feet. After a lot of shouting and revving of engines, we moved off, one hundred yards (metres) apart. In later years I would be told that the distance was when the colours on the tactical signs on the vehicle in front started to blur.

On arrival at Puckapunyal, the reverse operation took place, but the ground looked to be a long way down. Would I break my ankle or leg when I jumped! I would have far preferred a leisurely step down but there was all this shouting and hurry up going on around us.

This "fleet" of commercial vehicles,, which was probably a Royal Australian Army Service Corps company, would serve us faithfully throughout the next three months whether to go to the ranges or take us to the train stations for our periodical weekend leaves.

The Jeep

The word "jeep" comes from a corruption of "General Purpose" vehicle. And this is what they were. They must have been around at Puckapunyal but it was not until I was with MUR that I first experienced them. They were four-wheel drive, nuggetty, go-anywhere, vehicles and very easy from which to alight. They also seemed to be indestructible, although most CMF drivers seemed to accept that challenge!

Whereas the civilian 3-ton trucks had been rear wheel drive only, the Jeeps could go most places. They were also fitted with canvas awnings for wet weather, but generally the frame was laid flat at the back of the vehicle.

The six by six prime movers

The GS series had been developed throughout the century but it had been in the Second World War that Studebaker ('Studie') and General Motors (The 'Jimmy'), to name two United States vehicle manufacturers, had perfected them. Gunners always refer to their towing vehicles as 'tractors', a term appropriate to the first 'towers', literally the early farm tractors. The Mack 'tractor' had even a higher ton rating, necessary for the 5.5" guns.

As gunners, we needed these all-wheel drive vehicles to tow our guns. The towing eye on the 25-pdr was a simple one and the hook on the truck was equally so.

While the national service International CL vehicles were new, the Jeeps and six-wheel trucks were wartime stock. While thousands had been left in the Islands and others sold at auctions, the army had still retained and stored sufficient of them to equip the re-raised CMF units. Their maintenance became increasingly a challenge over the years to the boys of RAEME.

RAEME

The Light Aid Detachments (LAD) of the artillery regiments became very important sub units. There was the assumption that to be a member of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers required experience as a motor mechanic or an electrician. The LAD generally had two officers, a number of very skilled senior NCO's and some dozen craftsmen.

The LAD unit camped slightly apart generally on the ruse that its repair facilities required space and were generally non-tactical. They always had a high morale.

Their pride and joy vehicle was their "Wrecker" [sic] or recovery vehicle. These trucks, with their crane jibs, made most civilian garage recovery vehicles look puny. The 'wrecker' was generally the last vehicle in a convoy and most of us gunners were glad that it was there. Rarely was it not used to tow away a broken down vehicle.

When I was with R Bty at Korumburra I was fascinated one morning at the start of camp when some of the army issue trucks were taken down to the civilian garages in the main street where the craftsmen worked in civvie street. Here the vehicles got a free but necessary check up before the long trek to Puckapunyal.

The White Scout Car

These vehicles came complete with a massive roller on the front – again I never learnt what these were for, other than to permit the officers in them to travel with excellent all-round vision. I think it was during the 1959 camp, a very wet one I recall, that the White Scout car was on issue. It was used as a reconnaissance vehicle and presumably could

The Austin Champ

Am I being too cruel to suggest that this vehicle was not one of the best acquisitions of the Army? It came on issue about the same time as the one-ton Commer, of which we seemed to see only a few.

The Austin Champ was supposed to be a replacement for the Jeep. It wasn't in practice. Getting out of the front seat was hard enough, but nearly impossible for me from the back ones. Storage space was limited and there was nothing to which to easily secure a wireless set.

I recall being in a Champ in which the front end failed and it became "pigeon-toed," its front wheels facing into each other. I was not sorry when they were withdrawn. The Commer, although more trouble free, had too large a profile for the battlefield.

The Land Rover

Britain then produced the four-wheel drive Land Rover, a vehicle that became the backbone for reconnaissance parties. It came in two sizes – quarter and three-quarter tons. The military did not have to make many adjustments for military use from the civilian version that became the work horse of the safari country of the world.

The later Land Rovers had space for the new series of radio sets, the C45s. The vehicles were reliable and came with a winch at the front of the engine block. A large capacity trailer was also available for the Land Rover.

When the Italian L5 Pack Howitzer made its appearance there were romantic ideas about it being towed by a long wheel based Land Rover, but gun numbers were never quite sure whether they would have to walk alongside!

The Mack Tractor

I made my acquaintance with these large vehicles when I was posted to the medium regiment. I do not know how many gears they had but they could haul the 5.5" guns with comparative ease. Some of the drivers used to challenge each other to a standing start quarter-mile race, providing no one in authority was looking.

During a night occupation for a medium regiment, there would be a low grinding noise as the 'Macks' faithfully followed the poor soldier walking in front protected only with a white towel draped down his back. The towel, to act as a guide to the driver, would have been of little use if the Mack driver had put his foot on the wrong pedal!

Later vehicles

When Colonel Artillery, I once visited Doug Perry's camp when he was commanding 2/15 Field Regiment, RAA. By now Puckapunyal stretched across almost to Tooborac to accommodate the ricochet areas for the new German Leopard tank.

I arrived at the base camp and sought transport to get to the gun area. I was advised that the water truck was about to go out there, so I conned a ride. This meant I had to climb up to sit in the cabin with the driver. But now the step up was to use the extended axle of the front assembly. Despite my lack of agility I made the climb, but rather shocked Doug when I arrived at his camp on the range, sitting up like 'Jacky'.

Reminiscences

When "Tack Hammer" was GOC of the division, he decided to have a mounted drive-past. Somehow the various QMs were able to draw the necessary vehicles. But the general wanted both to see his soldiers and for them to see him: so all the canvas tarpaulins and much of the metal ribbing was removed.

I guess the drive past was quite impressive. But I wondered how many trucks got back their correct metal ribbings and tarpaulins.

Then there was LIEUT Perce Cooper when he was the regiment's signals officer. In the days of wet batteries and the WS 62s, Perce would acquire a 6 by 6 truck and set it up with generators ("chaw [sic] horses") and have the wet batteries in enfilade all being charged merrily.

Across the muddy tank track rutted range he would come, obviously wet through to provide the all important batteries, charged to the best of his ability, but often with innate defects which rendered their battery life questionable.

Then Perce would retire to his room at S Block where he had provided himself with all the comforts of home. Here he could shower, get warm and get some rest before he repeated the exercise for the next day's manoeuvres. Thank you Perce for all those efforts.

I conclude with the image that is imprinted on the memories of all Gunners who were in the CMF.



The legendary "Jimmy" (GMC) or Studebaker



Parade Card

(as at 28 November 2008)

FEB 2009

08 Church Parade

19 Committee

MAR 2009

19 Committee

?? Arty lunch (all ranks)

APR 2009

16 Committee

25 ANZAC DAY

MAY 2009

09 Grand Arty Ball

21 Committee

JUN 2009

?? Reserves Lunch

(all ranks)

18 Committee

JUL 2009

16 Committee

18 Gunner Dinner

30 Def Res Spt Day

AUG 2009

07 Gunner Dinner

20 Committee

?? DRA Nat Conf

SEP 2009

17 Committee

OCT 2009

15 Committee

NOV 2009

05 A.G.M.

19 Committee

DEC 2009

04 St Barbara's Day

10 Committee

CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND DETAILS UP-DATE

Please forward to:
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Caulfield South Vic. 3167

Rank _____ First Names _____ DOB _____

Surname and Post Nominals _____

Address _____

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Phone (Home, Mobile, Work) _____

Fax and/or E-mail _____

Do you wish to receive Association information by E-mail Y/N _____

Serving Y/N _____ If so, Unit _____

Awards, Decorations, Medals, Etc. _____

Brief Service History _____

Additional Information (Committee, Unit Rep, Etc) _____

Please Use Additional Blank Sheets if Space Insufficient