

# CASCABEL

Journal of the

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION  
(VICTORIA) INCORPORATED

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An RAAF Caribou takes off from Port Moresby during an aid airlift in 2007 (AAP)

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Article <http://www.digradio.com.au/news/stories/2009/02/20/2496496.htm>

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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.

**RAA Association (VIC) Inc  
Committee**

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9702 2100  
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SSGT Brian Cleeman  
BDR Lindsay Pritchard

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(10 Mdm Regt Assn)

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Shepard Webster & O'Neill Pty Ltd

**MUSEUM TRUST**

**Curator:** SSGT Brian Cleeman  
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65 Princes Hwy  
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38 Fd Bty 5221 7666  
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Geelong

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Queen St  
Colac

**CONTENTS AND SUBMISSIONS**

The contents of CASCABEL Journal are determined by the editor. Articles or opinions of authors & contributors are their own, and do not necessarily represent or reflect the official position of the RAA Assn (Vic) Inc, Australian Army, the committee, the editor, staff or agents.

Article style, clarity and conciseness remain the responsibility of the article owner or author.

Submissions for the **July 2009** issue are required no later than **1<sup>st</sup> June 2009** unless otherwise arranged with the Editor.

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# The President Writes

The Annual Church Parade held at St George's Uniting Church was well attended by members of the Association and the Regiment. The Regimental Padre, Charles Greene, gave the address.

The Band again supported this activity in their usual excellent fashion. I should make mention that our Band was augmented by 4/19 PWLH Band. This appears to be a very successful way of ensuring the survival of both bands and their ability to continue to present the best musical arrangements.

The recent tragic events caused by the bush fires in Victoria have touched us all in one way or another.

2/10 provided about 60 trained soldiers to the Victorian Bush Fire Assistance organisations.

Regular and Reserve soldiers from a number of units were deployed throughout the State.

Anzac Day is rapidly approaching. A dawn service will be conducted again this year at the Sargood Barracks in East St Kilda.

Arrangements for the 2009 Gunner Dinner are well under way. It is intended to hold the Dinner at the Caulfield RSL again this year.

The Whitelaw Prizes for 2008 were awarded to Capt Reed Powney, 22 Bty; WO2 Stephen Deakes, Band; LBdr Michael Messer, 38 Bty; and Cpl Cameron Gardiner, RHQ. Congratulations to all.

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

Regards to all

Neil Hamer  
MAJ (R)



## From the Colonel Commandant



For those who do not know me, a short introduction. I joined the Army and went to Duntroon in 1962. On graduation I was allotted to Artillery and served in air defence for a short period. After converting to field artillery, I served in South Vietnam where I was Battery Captain of 104 Field Battery, the last Battery to deploy there. This is still the last Artillery unit or sub-unit to see operational service in its primary role. Later I was the Battery Commander of 108 Field Battery and as a Lieutenant Colonel, the Artillery instructor at Command and Staff College.

My other appointments were mainly in equipment acquisition and logistics and included postings to the UK and USA. I finished my service in 1999 as the Commander of the Army Technology and Engineering Agency at Maribrynong.

I have been a member and President of the Artillery Association in the ACT, and am now a member and former Vice President of the Artillery Association in Victoria.

On being invited to consider the position of Colonel Commandant, I hesitated for some time while considering what I would contribute in such a position. It is an interesting position, being both honorary and having no command status. The primary function is to “foster esprit de corps, the general welfare of the Regiment, its units and sub-units and its standing in the community”. This gives a fairly broad range of options. My initial considerations have identified several groups of serving and retired Gunners in Victoria. In fact, groups is too cohesive an expression for some elements of the Gunner community. Therefore, my initial priority is to get to know the various groups, and to encourage communication within and between them. I would therefore, welcome approaches from any Gunner related organisation or individual. I hope to meet most of you in the course of my journey.

I have had the opportunity to meet the Gunner community on a couple of occasions to date:

- I would like to commend 2/10 Field Regiment for the salute at the Shrine on Australia Day. It was conducted with the expertise and precision one would expect of the Regiment.
- The Annual Artillery Church Parade at Saint Georges East St Kilda Uniting Church on the 8<sup>th</sup> February was well attended and was also an inspiring occasion.

On taking up my appointment as Colonel Commandant, I would like to acknowledge the work done by my predecessor, Brigadier Doug Perry, over the seven years he held the appointment. He has worked long and well for the Regiment, and although he deserves a rest, I am sure that we will continue to see him attending to Gunner matters.

Thanks to Doug and to Neil Hamer for their welcome in the last edition of Cascabel.

Best wishes  
Brigadier Neil Graham (Retd)  
Colonel Commandant, Southern Region  
Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery



# Membership Report

## March 2009

### Current Membership as at 17 Mar 09

Life Members	204	(207)
Annual Members	50	(49)
Senior Annual Members	19	(19)
Serving Concessional Members	8	(8)
Affiliates	35	(37)
Others (CO/CI, Messes, etc.)	12	(12)
Libraries	5	(5)
RSL's	<u>1</u>	<u>(1)</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>334</u>	<u>(338)</u>

### Vale

It is with regret that we note the passing of Maj L J Davis. Maj Davis was aged 93. He joined the Association in 1980 and became a life member in 1987.

I have no other information about Maj Davis.

### 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  
0419 533 067  
Email [nhamer@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nhamer@bigpond.net.au)





## YOUNG DIGGER IN TRAGIC CIRCUMSTANCES

### PERHAPS YOU CAN HELP

The Association Committee received an email, via Keith Rossi at the RSL, from LTCOL Susan Coyle outlining the tragic circumstances of CPL Darren Gibson.

Darren is one of the survivors of the recent Victorian bush fires. His family however did not survive.

He lost his wife, Leslie, daughter, Kiana (4), Son, Jai (3) and daughter, Ava (2). He is survived by his son, Brock, from a previous relationship.

Darren joined the army in 1990 as a gunner. In 1997 he transferred to RASigs. He has served in JTS, School of Sigs and 104 Sig Sqn at 1 CSR.

He has been deployed to Cambodia (93) Bougainville (01), Solomon Islands (04) and Iraq (06).

An account entitled **Trust Fund for Darren Gibson** has been established with DEFCREDIT. LtCol Coyle and Capt Gerard Lusher are the signatories to this account.

If you feel that you would like to help Darren and his family the details are:

**Account Name: Susan Coyle**

**BSB: 803205**

**Member Number: 16773**

**Account Number: 20780757**

**All contributions will be very gratefully appreciated.**

*Neil Hamer*



## Letter to the editor

Dear Lindsay,

Seasons greetings and congratulations on an excellent issue. The Jan issue arrived on Christmas eve and it was opportune to sit and absorb yet another interesting range of articles that brought back memories of those 'arty' years so long ago.

COL Farley's account of the Military Vehicles reminded one that all the types mentioned had been either traveled in (under adverse conditions as described so well) or driven (my Mack license was obtained at Langwarrin).

However a particular memorable event in the late 1950's at Site 17, Seymour demonstrated the strength of the White Scout car. How I came to be in it at the time is not recalled, possibly a recce as I was TARA Bombardier or Sergeant at the time. The crew comprised the driver, one officer (name escapes me) in the front passenger seat and some 3 OR's in the back sitting on whatever one could find. On exiting the main entrance of Site 17 (turning east towards Trawool), and almost over the centre of road traveling at a snail's pace it seemed, a civilian vehicle (Ford V8) also traveling east collided 'head-on' with the White about 'midships'.

The idiot civilian driver had been noticed on a few prior occasions traveling at high speed on this section of the road. The effect of the impact was to throw everybody about (there being no seat belts then) as the vehicle seemed to jump a little sideways and continue to move across the road a few feet before the driver pulled up. All personnel duly picked themselves off the floor and exited the White to examine the vehicles. The Ford was a write-off. The radiator almost back to the windscreen. The driver was in a bad way and was subsequently collected by ambulance for hospital treatment. Apart from a slightly bent doorstep on the Left side, the White vehicle was otherwise showing no obvious signs of damage. The occupants were not injured although somewhat shaken by the experience. The journey was terminated at that point and all returned to base for a check up by the MO being thankful that we had been so well protected from what could have been serious injury. I wonder if any of the occupants are still around to add to this narrative?

Kind regards,

Phillip Richardson LT  
2 Fd Regt





2nd/10th Field Regiment, Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, cordially invites  
you and your partner to,

*The Grand Artillery Ball*

*To be held*

*Saturday 9 May 2009*

*7.30pm for 8pm*

*State Ballroom  
Sebel Citigate Albert Park  
65 Queens Road  
Melbourne Victoria 3004*

*Gentlemen: Mess Dress Winter or White Jacket, Black Tie, Lounge Suit  
Ladies: Cocktail or Evening Wear*

The cost for the evening will be \$100 per person which will include drinks for the night, a two course dinner and entertainment.

A special accommodation rate of \$165 for a Sebel suite and \$145 for a Citigate suite for the evening has been negotiated with the hotel for those guests wishing to stay overnight at the venue. Guests can book accommodation by calling 1800 633 888 and mentioning that they are with the Department of Defence. To view go to [www.mirvachotels.com](http://www.mirvachotels.com)

Return transport to the function venue will be made available from Monash Barracks Dandenong and Newland Barracks Geelong. There is ample car parking at the venue at a flat rate cost of \$14 for the night. There is limited off street parking in the surrounding area.

**RSVP: Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009 (with payment) to Captain Alan White on**  
[alan.white1@defence.gov.au](mailto:alan.white1@defence.gov.au) or Captain Dan Cairnes on [daniel.cairnes@defence.gov.au](mailto:daniel.cairnes@defence.gov.au)

Payment can be made by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), Australia Post money order or cheque made out to 2/10 FD REGT OFFICERS MESS. EFT details are located at the bottom of the invitation. Please post the form below and if not paying by EFT include money order or cheque.

-----  
**TO: The Ball Committee, 2/10 FD REGT, 8 CHAPEL ST, ST KILDA EAST 3183.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

METHOD OF PAYMENT: EFT / CHEQUE / MONEY ORDER

Enclosed is a cheque / Australia Post money order for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Name \_\_\_\_\_

Guest Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Enquires, seating preferences or dietary requests to [alan.white1@defence.gov.au](mailto:alan.white1@defence.gov.au) or [daniel.cairnes@defence.gov.au](mailto:daniel.cairnes@defence.gov.au)

2/10 Fd Regt Officers' Mess BSB: 063144 ACCOUNT: 10083859 QUOTE: [Surname] GAB
---

## ***2/8th Field Regiment***

Formed in Australia during the first year of the Second World War, the 2/8th Field Regiment served in Egypt and Syria, in the Middle East, and on Borneo, in the Pacific. It was one of the 9th Division's three field regiments and it fought as part of the "famous division" at El Alamein and Brunei Bay.

Throughout 1940, as the size of the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) increased from one to four infantry divisions, new artillery units were also continuously raised – 15 field regiments were raised by the end of the year. Among these were the 9th Division's 2/7th, 2/8th, and 2/12th Field Regiments.

Men for the 2/8th initially came from Australia's eastern states. The regiment's 15th Battery was raised at the start of May 1940 and the 16th Battery was raised two weeks later. In October 1941, while the regiment was in the Middle East, artillery units were reorganised and a new battery, the 58th Battery, was formed.

The regiment did its initial training using 18-pounder guns and 4.5-inch howitzers. In the middle of November the regiment left Australia for the Middle East and arrived in Egypt in the middle of December, before moving to Palestine. Southern Palestine was being used as a base for the Australians, where they could complete their training, and the 2/8th went into camp at Kilo 89.

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 of its units forward towards. Consequently, the 2/8th did not go forward with the infantry and instead contributed to the force defending Mersa Matruh fortress. The regiment received its first 25-pounders at Matruh, where it remained from May until the end of September. The regiment then moved to Sidi Barrani, where it helped to prepare the defences. The gunners left Sidi Barrani in October and returned to Palestine, where they rejoined the 9th Division. In January 1942 the Australians moved to Syria, where the 2/8th built gun sites along the high positions overlooking the coast at Jdaide.

By July the war in North Africa had become critical for the Allies, with 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 Alamein where the 2/8th "came of age". The regiment reached the Alamein front on 5 July, taking up position at Ruweisat Ridge, and were in action five days later.

Attacking inland from the coast, the division's 26th Brigade attacked the German positions at Tel el Eisa on 10 July. The attack was supported by all three of the division's regiments, with the 2/8th being involved in the heavy fighting between 10 and 12 July, as the Germans counter-attacked. On one occasion the 2/8th fired 1,250 artillery shells in one hour and a half. When the division's 24th Brigade made its attack towards the Ruin Ridge, on 17 July, the 2/8th was again heavily involved in the action and remained so for the rest of the month. Casualties were heavy, with the 2/8th having the highest figures of the field regiments. The 2/8th remained in action, supporting operation Bulimba, the 20th Brigade's attack at the start of September, and the main Alamein offensive at the end of October and the start of November.

Alamein was a vital success for the Allies and one of the war's turning points. The 9th Division, however, was needed elsewhere and in January 1943 began returning to Australia. The 2/8th arrived in Melbourne on 24 February and was given leave before moving to Queensland in April.

The gunners spent the next "two long and frustrating years" in northern 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 2/8th moved to Morotai in May, where they received several 75 mm howitzers, in addition to their 25-pounders.

With troops having already made an amphibious landing on Tarakan in May, the rest of the division landed on Labuan Island and Brunei Bay on 10 June. Coming ashore in landing craft, the 2/8th supported the 20th Brigade as it pushed inland. There was little Japanese resistance, though, and

during the campaign the gunners were mainly confined to defensive and harassing fire tasks. On 20 June the 58th Battery landed on Lutong, Sawarka, in support of the 2/13th Battalion.

Following the end of the war and Japan's surrender, the ranks of the regiment thinned, as men were discharged or transferred. In mid-November the gunners not due for discharge were transferred to the 2/4th Pioneer Battalion, as part of Kuching Force. Those left in the regiment returned to Australia in December and the following month, on 30 January 1946, the 2/8th Field Regiment was disbanded.

## Glossary

[Battles for Tobruk](#) ; [North Borneo](#) ; [El Alamein](#) ; [Morotai](#) ; [Mersa Matruh](#)

## Battle Honours

- nil

## Casualties

- 34 died

## Commanding Officers

- [Percy, Alan](#)

## Decorations

- 1 OBE
- 2 DSO
- 2 MC
- 1 MBE
- 1 DCM
- 2 MM
- 8 MID

For more information please see [Honours and Awards](#) database

## Collection Items

Search for related [collection items](#)

## References

- 2/8 Australian Field Regiment Association, *2/8 Australian Field Regiment remembers World War II 1939-1945.*, (Tasmania: 2/8th Field Regiment Association, 1992)
- *AWM52: 4/2/8 2/8 Field Regiment war diary*
- Edwards, Paul Bathurst, *Of things that used to be : five and a half years a gunner*, (Hawley Beach, Tas.: P.B. Edwards, 2002)



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## RAAF retires old warhorse

JESSICA JOHNSTON

February 20th, 2009



**THE `warhorse' of the sky will be retired from RAAF base Townsville, with all Caribous being phased out at the end of the year.**

The iconic aircraft have been a common sight in Townsville skies for over three decades \_ and particularly in the last year since the entire Caribou fleet was relocated to the Garbutt RAAF base.

Commanding Officer 38 Squadron Wing Commander Anthony Thorpe said it was with mixed emotions that crews would farewell the faithful aircraft, after 45 years in service.

"The guys in the unit are very proud of what they do and the capability the Caribou provides, they are also very sad to see it finally retire from service," he said. "It has a fair bit of history, having operated throughout South East Asia and notably it has been a presence in Townsville now for quite a number of decades."

Wg Cdr Thorpe said the Caribou had been involved in operations since it was flown from Canada in 1964.

"The aircraft was significantly involved in supporting Australian forces in Vietnam," he said.

"It was designed from the outset as a short take off and landing aeroplane to operate on unprepared strips, like dirt and grass.

"It is also designed as a cargo and troop carrier, with a ramp on the back to load and unload quite easily.

"It is powered by a twin radial piston engine, the last of its type effectively within the air force."

Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon said the Caribou's retirement had been brought forward \_ despite the fact that a replacement aircraft would not be in place until 2013.

"The Caribou fleet is suffering badly from a range of ageing aircraft issues, and contains asbestos parts which I am determined to weed out of the Defence Force," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"Despite its outstanding track record, the Caribou is now well beyond its sustainable life of type.

"The Caribou fleet suffers from corrosion, fatigue and obsolescence issues that make them increasingly difficult and costly to maintain."

Mr Fitzgibbon said a leased fleet of five additional Hawker Pacific B300 King Air aircraft would undertake light air transport tasks as an interim measure.

"These aircraft will be phased into the Townsville-based 38 Squadron as the Caribou is progressively retired toward the end of 2009.

"Three King Air 350 aircraft, currently operated by army, will also be transferred across to 38 Squadron."

While saddened, Wg Cdr Thorpe said his air crews were looking forward to the challenges working with new aircraft would bring.

Reprinted from the Townsville Bulletin Website

[http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/article/2009/02/20/40101\\_news.html](http://www.townsvillebulletin.com.au/article/2009/02/20/40101_news.html)

## **A4 DHC-4 Caribou**

When the decision was being made in the 1960s on the elusive "Dakota replacement", it was not an easy choice; the aircraft which best measured up came from the rugged lineage of the de Havilland Aircraft of Canada (DHC) stable. The RAAF was already familiar with the DHC Beaver and Otter, and the short take-off and landing (STOL) field performance of the Caribou was ideal for a transport for Army support work.

The Caribou is a twin-engined light tactical transport with rear-opening ramp doors to allow rapid loading and unloading. The prototype first flew on 30 July 1958. Eighteen aircraft were ordered for the RAAF in May 1963 and the first aircraft, A4-134, was handed over at the DHC plant at Downsview, near Toronto, Canada, on 25 February 1964. Three aircraft were then ferried by No 38 Squadron crews 25,700 km (16,000 miles) to Australia, via the Atlantic, Europe and Indian Ocean, arriving at Richmond on 22 April. The initial 18 aircraft were serialled with scattered numbers between A4-134 and A4-210.

In July 1964, three aircraft on ferry from Canada were diverted from Butterworth, Malaysia, to deploy with the increasing Australian involvement in South Vietnam. The RAAF Transport Flight Vietnam (RTFV) was formed on 20 July and these three aircraft were flown to Vung Tau, to be joined by a further three in August. In 1965 a seventh aircraft was added and in June 1966 RTFV became No 35 Squadron. During nearly eight years of operations in Vietnam, the Caribou, which used the call-sign 'Wallaby' (with No 35 Squadron becoming known as "Wallaby Airlines"), carried over 600,000 passengers.

The first RAAF Caribou was lost on 1 July 1964 when A4-134 was written off in a heavy landing at Nowra Naval Air Station. The following November a further seven aircraft were ordered to replace this loss and the six deployed to Vietnam. These Caribou were delivered in 1966, with scrambled serials between A4-225 and A4-236.

Australia's Caribou detachment in Vietnam began winding down in June 1971, and the last aircraft arrived back at Richmond on 26 February 1972. Meanwhile, since 1965, a flight from No 38 Squadron had been operating from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, providing transport support

for the PNG Defence Force. Until their withdrawal in 1975, the crews of the three Caribou of the detachment flew nearly 27,000 hours.

A final four Caribou were delivered over the 1968–71 period, serialled between A4-264 and A4-299, and with these aircraft the RAAF supported survey operations in Indonesia in addition to various United Nations and Red Cross commitments. From March 1975 to November 1978 a white No 35 Squadron Caribou in United Nations markings operated with the UN Military Observer Group in India-Pakistan (UNMOGIP). Duties entailed resupply and remanning observation posts to monitor the cease-fire line in the North-West Frontier. During the fighting in Timor in 1975, Caribou aircraft of No 35 Squadron, in Red Cross markings, flew daily mercy missions from Darwin carrying supplies to refugees in East Timor.

One of the Caribou's great virtues is its capability to operate from relatively crude dirt strips that cannot be used by other military transports. This light 'footprint' has been lacking in any of the Caribou's competitors or successors. The aircraft has been used by the RAAF for flare-dropping missions, medical evacuation, search and rescue and paratroop training exercises, but the main task is the airlift of troops, civilians, supplies, ammunition, mail and food.

On 1 July 1976, No 35 Squadron relocated to RAAF Townsville from Richmond, and formed a composite unit with Iroquois helicopters in support of the Army in north Queensland. When the Iroquois later transferred to the Army, Nos 35 and 38 Squadrons formed No 84 Wing of the Operational Support Group. Until 1988, two Caribou served at Butterworth with Transport Support Flight, and later No 79 Squadron, supporting Mirage operations and the deployed Army infantry company, as well as duties for the embassies in the region. Detachments from No 38 Squadron provided search and rescue and local transport requirements for Darwin and Pearce, as well as supporting Army units with training exercises. An ongoing requirement for No 38 Squadron is the support of the Parachute Training School at HMAS *Albatross* at Nowra.

On 30 May 1991 the Minister for Defence announced the Caribou fleet would be reduced from 21 to 14 aircraft, and A4-164 was the first withdrawn from service in November 1992. Aircraft withdrawn from service will be stored at Amberley to provide a source of spares for the fleet.

In December 1992, No 38 Squadron moved to Amberley and continues to operate the venerable Caribou in support of the Australian Army. The unit was the training unit for maintenance personnel and aircrews for both Nos 35 and 38 Squadrons until the amalgamation of the four separate Caribou operating facilities in 2000, with the Caribou now solely operated by No 38 Squadron. In addition, No 38 Squadron Detachment B operates Caribous from RAAF Base Townsville.

Reprinted from RAAF Museum Point Cook Website

<http://www.raaf.gov.au/raafmuseum/research/aircraft/series3/A4.htm>



# **WARNING ORDER**

**GUNNER DINNER**  
Caulfield RSL.

**18<sup>th</sup> of July, 2009,**

Further details will be published in the next Cascabel.

## Never Trust an ANZAC

The Yankee Officer gazed in awe  
As we told him "Listen Sport,  
The best damn Gunners in the world  
Are the Kiwis we have in support"

He agreed with us on their accuracy  
But one thing he couldn't quite ken;  
Was how, in the time other gunners "Fire One"  
The Kiwis are pumping out TEN!

Now the Dig's never stuck for answer –  
And mishandles the truth, so tis said;  
So we answered his question on the rate-of-fire  
By saying "Their guns are BELT-FED"

"Belt fed 25-Pounders!!  
Hell, man, I just can't agree.  
Why, it's never been known in our Army;  
This is something I just gotta see".

When he left we forgot all about it,  
It was just part of a digger's day.  
And nothing more was said in reference  
'Til a Yank Major turned up one day.

He enquired of our Loot, "Where's these Kiwis  
They're pretty good Gunners, tis said.  
And one thing I must do is meet them  
For I've heard their guns are belt-fed"

The Loot then tried to convince him  
That it was just a joke; but I guess  
You just can't disprove to a Major  
What he's heard in the Officer's Mess.

On the map he was shown where to find them  
And he trotted away like a kid.  
While our Loot gave up all hope for Diggers  
And cursed all the 'lying' they did.

The end of the story came later  
And was laughed at for months by the Div,  
For the Major was further 'exploited'  
When he reached 'Where the Kiwis live'

He'd gone down to see those 'New Weapons'  
And nearly dropped dead on his feet  
When informed by a typical Gunner  
That these Wonders were now OBSOLETE

"OBSOLETE Belt-fed 25-Pounders!!  
It's a shock I will never forget

We consider OUR Army the most up-to-date  
But we've never had that weapon yet"

Said the Kiwi, "It's been out for months now  
We now use a gun twice as good.  
You stack four shells on top – like a Bofors  
One HE and three made of wood"

Now the Major just couldn't believe it  
And, knowing the Kiwis, who could?  
But he humbly asked of the Gunner  
"Tell me guy, why are three made of wood?"

Said the Kiwi "You know how the Chinese  
Have great wooden doors on their pits  
As thick as the hide of a Provost  
And nothing can blow them to bits?"

Well, we aim this new gun at the bunker  
And fire the four shots you see.  
The three bits of wood go KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK  
And he opens the door and cops the HE"

Now the yarn did the rounds of Korea  
Was enjoyed for a while then died out.  
But, back in the States, there's a Major  
Whom everyone's worried about

For although he is known to be harmless  
It is to his wife quite a shock;  
That all they can get him to utter  
As he stares into space, is KNOCK, KNOCK.

*Signed: Banjo  
Pete Paterson ('Banjo')  
Ex 1<sup>st</sup> Bn, RAR  
Korea '52 - '53, '54 - '55  
Now c/o Radio 4KQ, Brisbane.*

The original handwritten poem was found in an old locker at Papakura Military Camp, (New Zealand) in 1964 by (then Gunner) Kerry Huston. Kept as a memento, it has travelled the world. Found again in 2008, it was reproduced above on 31 May, 2008. It is fitting that this day saw "Tribute '08", an official "welcome home" to the NZ troops, (including 161 Battery, 16 Field Regiment, Royal New Zealand Artillery) from Viet Nam.

Article supplied by Kim Mc Grath via Craig Cook & Reg Morrell (email)



## Lavarack, Sir John Dudley (1885 - 1957)

Birth: 19 December 1885, Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Death: 4 December 1957, Buderim, Queensland, Australia

Cultural Heritage: English

Occupation:

- army chief-of-staff
- army officer
- governor



Sir John Dudley Lavarack (1885 - 1957), by William Dargie, 1942, courtesy of Australian War Memorial. ART22029. .

LAVARACK, Sir JOHN DUDLEY (1885-1957), army officer and governor, was born on 19 December 1885 at Kangaroo Point, Brisbane, third child of English-born parents Cecil Wallace Lavarack, a draughtsman who became a major in the Queensland Defence Force, and his wife Jessie Helen, née Mackenzie. Educated at Brisbane Grammar School, John was a prominent member of the cadets. He gained high marks in the examination for a commission in the Permanent Military Forces and on 7 August 1905 was appointed lieutenant, Royal Australian Artillery. His junior regimental postings took him to Sydney, Brisbane, Townsville, Thursday Island and Queenscliff, Victoria.

On 10 October 1912 at St George's Anglican Church, Queenscliff, Captain Lavarack married Sybil Nevett Ochiltree. He attended the Staff College, Camberley, England, from early 1913 until the

outbreak of World War I. After working at the War Office, London, he was promoted brigade major of the 22nd (British) Divisional Artillery in February 1915. The division was sent to France in September; in November it was redeployed to Salonica (Thessaloniki), Greece. By May 1916 Major Lavarack was staff officer, royal artillery, at the XVI Corps' headquarters.

Lavarack had been appointed to the Australian Imperial Force in February 1915. Although he made many requests, he was not permitted to leave Macedonia and link up with his countrymen until July 1916 when he joined the 2nd Division for the operations at Pozières, France. He commanded two field batteries and was brigade major of the 5th Divisional Artillery during the subsequent fighting on the Somme and the advance to the Hindenburg line. One of the few Australian officers with staff-college training, he was transferred in May 1917 to the headquarters of the 1st Division where he worked under Colonel (Sir) Thomas Blamey: it was probably in this period that an antipathy developed between the two officers that continued for the remainder of their careers.

By December Lavarack was a lieutenant colonel and general staff officer, 1st grade, of the 4th Division, commanded by Major General E. G. Sinclair-Maclagan. Lavarack took part in battles at Dernancourt (April 1918), Villers-Bretonneux (April), Hamel (July) and Amiens (August). Maclagan and he had taken the major hand in planning the operation at Hamel which set the pattern for later Australian successes. For his war service Lavarack was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (1918) and the French Croix de Guerre (1919); he was also appointed C.M.G. (1919) and thrice mentioned in dispatches.

Returning to Australia in September 1919, Lavarack was posted to the Royal Military College, Duntroon, Federal Capital Territory, as director of military art. In 1924 he served as a staff officer on the headquarters of the 2nd (Militia) Division, Sydney. In March 1925 he was made director of military training at Army Headquarters, Melbourne. Promoted brevet colonel in 1926, at the end of the following year he went to London to attend the Imperial Defence College. He was the first Australian army officer to complete the course; a fellow student was (Sir) Frederick Shedden.

Back home, in early 1929 Lavarack was given the post of director of military operations and intelligence at Army Headquarters. He found himself in keen debate with Shedden who was secretary of the defence committee. Shedden and the Naval Staff claimed that Australia's defence should rest on the Royal Navy. Lavarack, as adviser to the chief of the General Staff, argued that Japan would attack in the Far East when Britain was preoccupied in Europe. Therefore, he contended, the Australian army had to be prepared to deal with a possible invasion. He published his views in the *Army Quarterly* (1933).

In January 1933 Lavarack became commandant of the R.M.C. On 21 April 1935 he was promoted temporary major general (substantive in June) and took over as C.G.S., superseding a number of more senior officers. Intelligent, with a quick and incisive mind, Lavarack was impressive in appearance. He was 5 ft 11½ ins (182 cm) tall, with a dark complexion and blue eyes. Lieutenant General (Sir) Sydney Rowell, who had worked under Lavarack, recalled that he 'had a fine brain; he wrote brilliantly and spoke convincingly'. While he 'did not possess the most equable of temperaments and could be a difficult master . . . at other times he was a delightful character with a wide range of interests'.

As C.G.S., Lavarack renewed his arguments with the navy and Shedden, and also challenged successive ministers for defence—Sir Archdale Parkhill, H. V. C. Thorby and G. A. Street—over the government's reliance on the Royal Navy and its insistence that army funds be spent on coastal defences rather than the field force. Lavarack found himself increasingly at odds with the government. The release (apparently by senior army officers) of information to the press that was critical of government policy led ministers to mistrust the army. Lavarack's appointment as C.B. (1937) was delayed because politicians were dissatisfied with him.

In 1938 the government appointed a British officer, Lieutenant General E. K. Squires, as inspector general of the Australian Military Forces. John Hetherington claimed that 'some Ministers had begun to suspect soon after [Lavarack] became C.G.S. that his reports were framed to tell them less what they should know than what he believed they would like to know'. Yet, as Brett Lodge has argued persuasively, it 'would be more accurate to say that Lavarack was telling the government too much of what it did not want to hear: that its defence policy was bankrupt'. He had pressed his case strongly, but he might have achieved more with a different approach.

Lavarack worked closely with Squires to prepare the army for war before departing in May for a tour of Britain. He returned in September, after hostilities had begun. Squires was appointed C.G.S. and Blamey was selected to command the new 6th Division, A.I.F. Still out of favour with the government, Lavarack was promoted lieutenant general and given Southern Command. To add to his difficulties, Blamey saw him as a potential rival, and was able to use Lavarack's temperament as a justification for denying him a series of important appointments. 'Joe' Lavarack, as he was known, certainly had an unpredictable and 'wicked temper which rose like a flash and often subsided quickly'. He was passionately fond of sport, such as golf and tennis, but, when he lost, there was often an extraordinary display of bad humour. For all that, he could be charming and personable. Essentially a shy man, he was sensitive to any perceived slight to his rank or position.

When the government decided in March 1940 to raise the 7th Division and Blamey was given the newly formed I Corps, he refused to have Lavarack as commander of the 6th Division because of his 'defects of character'. Against Blamey's wishes, the government chose Lavarack to command the 7th and he reverted to major general to accept the appointment. He arrived in the Middle East in November. At the end of March 1941 Axis forces under General Erwin Rommel attacked in Libya. The 18th Brigade of the 7th Division was rushed to Tobruk to support the 9th Australian Division under Major General (Sir) Leslie Morshead.

Faced with a rapidly deteriorating situation, General Sir Archibald (Earl) Wavell, the commander-in-chief in the Middle East, ordered Lavarack to Tobruk in early April as head of Cyrenaica Command. He organized the defence of the fortress, deploying Morshead's division on the perimeter. On 13 and 14 April the garrison repelled a strong assault by Rommel's forces. Wavell directed Lavarack to take over Western Desert Force, but Blamey advised that Lavarack was unsuitable for high command. On 14 April Lavarack returned to his division in Egypt.

The remaining two brigades of the 7th Division played a major role in the allied invasion of the French mandated territory of Syria in June 1941. Lavarack exercised effective leadership over his formation which advanced in two columns, one on the coast and the other inland near Merdjayoun. Seizing an opportunity, he changed the axis of the advance, thrusting towards Jezzine and catching the Vichy French commander unawares. The French counter-attacked and Lavarack had to reconstitute a force at Merdjayoun.

In the midst of these battles Lavarack was promoted (18 June) lieutenant general to command I Corps, Blamey having become deputy commander-in-chief in the Middle East. The corps took responsibility for conducting almost the whole of the Syrian campaign. Reorganizing his force, which included British, Indian and Free French troops as well as the 7th Division, Lavarack supervised the capture of Damascus and Damour. An armistice came into effect on 12 July. For his commands at Tobruk and in Syria, in which Wavell said that he had shown 'abilities of a high order', Lavarack was appointed K.B.E. (1942) and mentioned in dispatches.

Following the outbreak of war with Japan, plans were made for I Corps to sail to the Far East. By late January 1942 Lavarack and his senior staff were in Java, ahead of the troops. Lavarack cabled the Australian government, endeavouring to prevent the first of his units from being retained in Java. He was unsuccessful in this effort, but the remainder of his men were diverted to Australia. His support of a British proposal to deploy the corps in Burma annoyed the Australian government. He left Java by aeroplane and arrived in Melbourne on 26 February. In March he was acting

commander-in-chief of the Australian Military Forces before Blamey assumed the appointment on his return from the Middle East. Next month Lavarack took command of the First Army with responsibility for the defence of Queensland and New South Wales. His two years in the post were a time of frustration. Blamey overlooked him when an army commander was required in New Guinea.

In February 1944 Lavarack flew to Washington to become head of the Australian Military Mission. He was military adviser to the Australian delegation at the United Nations Conference on International Organization held at San Francisco in April-June 1945. As the war progressed he became increasingly disappointed by his lack of active command, and was anxious to preserve his military reputation. Some politicians accused Blamey of shelving him. Lavarack claimed that he had always been loyal to Blamey and, contrary to Blamey's assertions, had never coveted his position. Lavarack returned to Australia in August 1946 and retired on 18 September.

That month it was announced that he had been appointed governor of Queensland. He was sworn in on 1 October 1946, the first Australian-born to hold the post. In 1951 his term was extended for another five years and there was to be a further extension of one year from 1 October 1956. He was appointed K.C.V.O. in 1954 and K.C.M.G. in 1955. Because of ill health he was relieved of his duties on 25 January 1957. Sir John died on 4 December 1957 in his home at Buderim, Queensland. He was accorded a state funeral and was cremated; his estate was sworn for probate at £38,024. His wife, who had been president of the A.I.F. Women's Association during World War II, survived him, as did his three sons, all of whom served in that war.

According to the Brisbane *Courier-Mail*, Lavarack had discharged his duties as governor 'with a quiet and modest dignity' and had 'impressed all who met him with his soldierly sense of duty, his friendly accessibility in social intercourse, and his desire to be of service to people in all parts of the State'. He had, moreover, made a substantial contribution to the Australian army. Despite a fiery temperament, he was an educated and articulate officer, and, as a commander, 'showed himself to be a determined and competent leader'. The Lavarack Barracks at Townsville are named after him. His portraits by George Bell (1919) and (Sir) Ivor Hele (1941) are held by the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

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<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A150080b.htm>



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## The Coastwatchers 1941-1945

*Watched and Warned and Died that We Might Live*

[The epitaph on the Australian Coastwatchers Memorial at Madang]

The first coastwatching organisation was established in 1919 by Captain J G Clare, RAN, who believed there was a need to develop a network of observers to monitor the islands to Australia's north. The Coastwatchers on the northern and north-western coasts of Australia were usually cattle-station managers or missionaries and in Papua and New Guinea, usually plantation managers who had lived in the islands for some years and so had local contacts and local knowledge. By the mid-1920s their area included the Bismarck Archipelago.



*Some of the Coastwatching teleradio stations in the South West Pacific area, December 1941 – December 1943.*

In 1935, Commander R B M Long, Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI) in Melbourne worked to close the gaps in the coastwatching service. He sent Eric Feldt – a retired Royal Australian Naval officer with many years' experience of the civil service in New Guinea – to be in charge of intelligence there. Feldt, himself an Islander, knew the other islanders, the planters and the government officials and was trusted by them.



*A local wireless telegraphist operator operating an AWA 3BZ teleradio at Segi Coastwatchers station, British Solomon Islands.[AWM 306814]*

With Japan's entry into the war this island screen became the front-line. The Coastwatchers communicated by radio through existing radio stations or by teleradios that had been loaned by the Naval Board. They were given some instruction and a code with which to make their reports on any hostile movements and to report any item of intelligence value. It was a lonely and precarious existence.

After the capture, torture and murder of Percy Good, an elderly copra planter on Buka Island, off Bougainville, all civilians were enlisted into the RAN in the belief that their combatant status would protect them if they were captured by the enemy.

In 1942 when General MacArthur assumed supreme command of the South West Pacific Area it was decided that the Coastwatchers should become part of the Allied Intelligence Bureau under the direct command of General Headquarters (GHQ). By then there were over a hundred teleradios all linked to their own centre, either Port Moresby, Rabaul, Tulagi or Vila and all using a special, rarely used frequency to avoid attracting attention



*Coastwatcher Captain Martin Clemens, a member of the Solomon Islands Defence Forces who remained on Guadalcanal throughout the Japanese occupation, is pictured here with local policemen.[AWM 043648]*

The Coastwatchers were supported by all three services. Aircraft dropped their supplies and submarines and PT boats landed them and removed them. The assistance and loyalty of the local population was essential: they performed a vital role in guerrilla operations and intelligence gathering.

A small Australian army signals unit, the New Guinea Air Warning Wireless Company (NGAWW), also existed as a single entity between February 1942 and 1945. In October 1942, the unit was officially renamed 'New Guinea Air Warning Wireless (Independent) Company' as part of New Guinea Force and later, as part of the Corps of Signals in October 1943. These Army 'spotters' served in the valleys, highlands and around the coastline of New Guinea and nearby islands as signallers. All members of the unit were volunteers and their unit colour patch was a double diamond, being the 'independent' unit (later 'commando') insignia. By 1943-1944, the NGAWW had 75 outposts in New Guinea and surrounding islands in the South-West Pacific Theatre of Operations. The unit was disbanded in 1945 and its members have been commemorated with a plaque in the grounds of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

More than 600 Coastwatchers served in Australia, New Guinea and the Pacific Islands during World War II. They included RAAF, AIF, RAN, 1 WRAN, (Women's Royal Australian Naval Officer) US Marines and US Army personnel, members of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Defence Force and 13 civilians. The thirty eight Coastwatchers who died are not always identifiable on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial since their names are listed with their operational units and not as Coastwatchers.

6]

### 'Ferdinand'

Commander Eric Feldt, RAN, decided that the organisation needed a generic codename to distinguish the Coastwatchers' activities from other areas of naval intelligence also under his control. He was also keen to choose a name that wouldn't indicate the nature of their activities to any casual listener. He chose the name 'Ferdinand', from the popular children's classic, *The Story of Ferdinand*, which was written by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson, and first published in 1936.

I chose Ferdinand ... who did not fight but sat under a tree and just smelled the flowers. It was meant as a reminder to Coastwatchers that it was not their duty to fight and so draw attention to themselves, but to sit circumspectly and unobtrusively, gathering information. Of course, like their titular prototype, they could fight if they were stung.

[Eric Feldt, *The Coastwatchers*, Melbourne, 1946, p.95]

The Coastwatchers often had to move their camp to avoid discovery by the enemy. Moving was difficult because they also needed between twelve and sixteen carriers – usually local indigenous men – to help them carry their radio and equipment. Their radios were powered by car batteries, which were charged by a petrol engine weighing 70 pounds (30 kilograms).

Most of the teleradio sets used by the Coastwatchers were Type 3B. They consisted of a transmitter, a receiver and a loud speaker which were transported in three metal boxes measuring 60cm x 30cm x 30cm. The men with teleradios transmitted messages in the 'Playfair' code, but the 100 or so others without teleradios could only pass a message to Naval Intelligence by sending a runner to the nearest radio base, sometimes days away. Later in 1942, the Navy replaced the 'Playfair' code with a high-grade cypher code that was specifically devised by the cryptographers for the 'Ferdinand' operations. It was called the 'Bull' code.

Reprinted from the Australian Government Department of Veterans Affairs "Australia's War 1939 – 1945" website

<http://www.wv2australia.gov.au/index.html>

Article

<http://www.wv2australia.gov.au/coastwatcher/>



# **SOME OTHER MILITARY REFLECTIONS**

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

## **3. Military Communication – phones and radios**

I am not all that aware of how military personnel currently communicate with each other, but I know that at my advanced age I have learnt to use a mobile phone although only to ring others or receive their calls. If I want cricket I switch on the TV!

I cannot remember any wireless or radio sets in National Service, although I am sure they would have played a big part when I (we) lined the streets of Melbourne for the Royal Visit of Queen Elisabeth II in 1954.

But as soon as I became a Gunner, I was introduced to the “line” side of things as well as the “wireless<sup>1</sup>.”

### **Line**

One would have hardly set up the command post but a signaller would poke his face into the tent and ask where the officer would like the “OP line” to be connected. Apparently the vehicles M1 or M2 had started from the observation post end of the deployment and had worked their way back to the gun position.

Theoretically this could be done with the two-stranded cable being fed out from the back of the Jeep with a device to hook it overhead onto branches of trees.

Reality was generally quite different. Two signallers would have between them a reel of wire on a metal rod. The men would have walked much of the distance between OP and gun position. As the cable from each reel ran out, there would be the need to connect the wires to a fresh reel.

This was an operation in itself, needing good quality pliers and the knowledge of how to tie a reef knot while at the same time making sure that the connection was sound. Anyway, by either means or yet a variation on them, the line would get through. The GPO would be able to talk with the OPO, by just cranking the handle on his phone set.

The only trouble was that there was often more than one phone and it was not always easy to distinguish which one had rung. Besides this, it needed two hands to ring on the phone, one being needed to hold the set and the other to turn the crank handle.

But of course one could find oneself talking to no one. Somewhere along the line from gun position to OP there would be a break of some sort. Out would go the signallers, who would have to stop every now and then and speak to which ever end that could receive them. By trial and error they would find the break and repair it.

While the pamphlets and military films always showed this in daylight on a dry day, there was every chance that repairing the line would be at night over very tough ground in a typical Puckapunyal downpour. “Theirs not to reason why”!

### **Wireless**

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<sup>1</sup> I have been led to understand that the British called them wirelesses, while the Americans used the term, “radio”

The wireless that I first encountered as a Gunner was the good old WS 62 (Wireless Set No. 62). It was about the size of ten packets of A4 paper, and came with a bag of head sets and some “wet batteries.”

The signaller would settle himself with his WS 62 on the ground in some convenient spot in the command post together with all of his bits and pieces. These would include official army pamphlets and also some reading matter of a dubious nature – well thumbed and part of a signallers’ common library.

Since officers at the OP seemed to delight in the call, “Fetch Officer,” it was essential that the GPO could easily reach the head sets. All too often the WS 62 was far too close and everything that was transmitted, including the chatter of nefarious fishermen out in the bay, would permeate the peace of the CP.

Murphy’s Law dictated that the communications were excellent, well as good as could be, when there was no firing taking place, but a great challenge in the middle of a shoot.

## **Netting**

If I am using the right language, the WS 62 did not have the frequencies installed, as the 25 set would have later on. The operator of the command set would have to get all his subordinate sets on to the right frequency and keep them there.

So before deployment, wireless operators needed to know the time of day, the time when the net would be established and the frequencies. This was OK in theory, but rarely exercised in practice. If I could be paid a dollar for every time that I had to stand there and endure the netting procedure I would be a rich man.

The procedure came with its routine and accompanying noises. There was the whistle and wine as the signaller twiddled the knob and moved either side of the frequency. Voice procedure would be full of “Net now” commands. Finally, the command set would seek to hear that all the subordinate set operators were on the net. It was a pleasure to have a “sig’ diagram” in one’s hand and hear the various operators “net in,” to be followed by the command set operator’s voice expressing a note of joy and perhaps surprise.

Once I had to do this netting early one morning. The WS 62 was on the back of a truck. I climbed in and pulled back the tarp that covered it. I then frantically fiddled with wires and knobs, trusting that I would have enough power and savvy to respond when my call sign came up for confirmation. My “guardian angels” worked overtime and it was with great relief that at the appropriate juncture I reported that I was receiving the command set “loud and clear,” with the latter confirming this.

## **But ...**

While the sets, being relatively sealed, were relatively reliable, the wet batteries were not. They could lose their power without much warning. Re-charging was often nearby with the use of a charging set (known as a *chaw horse* [sic] in the vernacular) which had theoretically been placed in a hole to reduce its noise when charging.

The other feature which is imprinted on my mind is the difficulty the signallers had in getting a good contact between the set and their ear phones. The amount of spit that had to be used to get good electric contact might have averted the current drought if it had been saved.

## **Time**

Apart from the netting procedure, the other routine that always amused me was when time was sent over the net. Having successfully got all the stations on the net to respond and check back,

the senior station operator would announce with some authority in his voice what the time would be in so many seconds.

The seconds would be counted off in five and then singles, a bit like New Year is now observed on television. Viz., "When I say time, the time will be sixteen-thirty<sup>2</sup> hours. Twenty seconds. Fifteen seconds. Ten seconds. Five, four, three, two, one, time. The time now is sixteen thirty hours."

The signaller would then nominate the next senior station to read back the time thus confirming that it was correct.

However, it would not be the first time that amidst all the radio traffic that the operators would use an expletive and then mutter that "the time is roughly half past"! It was just as well that our guns were not supporting real infantry in an advance under a barrage with that sort of precision.

### **The C45/B42 radio set**

This set was double the size of the WS62. One could have thought that the long wheel-based Land Rover was specifically designed to take this set in its rear cabin.

To overcome the battery problems, the theory was that the radios would be charged by running the motor when moving or stationary. But whoever had this thought in the first place had not allowed for the "wicked soldiery" who would drain the fuel from the Land Rover for their own purposes and then claim that it was used for battery charging! So it was back to wet batteries and the like.

### **The AN/PRC 25 set**

Progress was seen to be made when the 25 radio set came on issue. This was a pre-calibrated piece of equipment with a satisfactory range. For years those of us in command posts had listened through the night hours to the other waffle on the net that would come from civilian sources, particularly from fishermen. That was now history.

The 25 was so accurate as regards its frequency that on one occasion having lost contact with range camp, I decided that it was they who had "wandered off." I then moved to neighbouring frequencies until I had located them. Having done that, I had the nerve to suggest that they should re-net theirs. I probably paid for that piece of cheek.

The 25 set had its CES. It became a favourite for stock taking. The absence of vital parts of the CES did not help radio communication and signallers developed their own methods of building up stocks of parts.

### **By line of mouth**

At the 1962 camp on the final day for course shooting, the OP was fairly close to the gun position. This was just as well as communications by both radio and line failed. I am not sure how I had the nerve to arrange it but I spaced OP personnel within shouting distance of each other between OP and gun CP. By this means the fire orders were relayed back and forth. I would never recommend it as a DS solution, but for the occasion it worked and no IG was on position to report it!

### **The Don R**

Way back in the days of cavalry, the riders were equipped with a piece of saddlery in which they placed the written messages that had to be taken across the battlefield generally under fire. This method was supplemented by the "runner," who would have to negotiate his way to and from the front through shellfire, barbed wire, mud and many other hurdles.

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<sup>2</sup> Or "one six three zero" for the purists

Of course, there was also the poor pigeon<sup>3</sup>

Motor bikes presented another option by the Second World War. Even MUR had some of these, although its regimental military police thought they were ideal for holding up the public when supporting an MUR convoy.

### Finally, “Sig” pads

Every fire order needs to be recorded scrupulously in legible writing. Hence great care is taken in the selection of OP signallers. In the event of an incident, the “sig” pad was a vital piece of evidence at any inquiry. Any tampering with it was tantamount to guilt. Following an “incident,” the cry would go up for the “sig” pad. It would soon be under lock and key.



CAPT Mick Benson, RASigs, lectures BDR Barnes and GNRs MacGregor and Sommner in the former artillery training depot at Warragul when the unit was P Bty., 15 Fd Regt, RAA



<sup>3</sup> Not all suffered the fate of the one in the *Blackadder* series!

## Parade Card

(as at 28 March 2009)

### 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

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Serving Y/N \_\_\_\_\_ If so, Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Awards, Decorations, Medals, Etc. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Brief Service History \_\_\_\_\_

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Additional Information (Committee, Unit Rep, Etc) \_\_\_\_\_

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*Please Use Additional Blank Sheets if Space Insufficient*

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