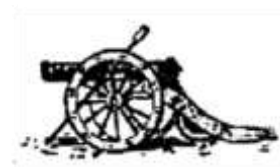


# CASCABEL

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A Trench Mortar. Details on page 28

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# The President Writes

All of a sudden the year is more than half over. Time surely does fly when you are having fun, or so I am told. I am assured by other members of the Committee that we are definitely having fun!

The Gunner Dinner held at the Caulfield RSL was, in my opinion, a success again this year and we **should continue to hold a dinner each year. I have a little more to say about this year's dinner later in this issue.**

The Reserve Forces Day March was held on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July. I canvassed the email members of the Association, about 110, and received 49 replies. 7 said they would attend, but 2 of the 7 said that they would probably be away. This canvass of members was done to satisfy Brig Bavington that it was not a viable proposition for the Association to parade. The Brig also wanted all the marchers to **attend in a "uniform" of grey trousers, navy blue jacket and beret; similar to that worn by the National Service Association.**

I attended the march as a spectator. The format was a more formal parade with a march on, march past and march off. There was a few minor glitches, but the parade on the whole was good.

The army has sanctioned the wearing of unit colour patches on the uniform sleeve. The catch is, whilst the unit members are expected to wear them, the army will not pay for them. The Association has purchased 250 patches and these will be issued to unit members on the completion of their recruit training.

We have still not been able to finalise a date for the Cerberus visit. With a bit of luck, we may know something in the near future.

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

Regards to all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Hamer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Neil Hamer

MAJ (R)



## FROM THE COLONEL COMMANDANT

Greetings once again. Since my last newsletter there have been several significant Gunner occasions:

- ANZAC Day
- 2/10 Fd Regiment conducted their usual Dawn Service at the Chapel St Depot. We were privileged to have the presence of two PNG representatives, one of whom **was one of the original “fuzzy wuzzy angels”**. **It was a great to have them with us**, but I felt very sorry for them as it was a particularly cold morning.
- Thanks to the Regiment for inviting Gunner groups back to Sargood Barracks for their post march get together. There were a couple of artillery and engineer associations who took advantage of the offer.
- The 2/10 Fd Regt Open Day in May was welcome. It was very interesting to see their mortar equipment and to hear how things are developing in the Regiment. We also had the opportunity to see the simulator for training of forward observers, however we did not have any visitors who were willing to test their skills at directing artillery fire.

The Gunner Dinner was held at Caulfield RSL on Friday 25 June. This was a mixed function, well run and enjoyed by all. We were privileged to hear from Major General Barry, President of the Defence Reserve Association about the challenges facing the Reserves at the moment.

In conjunction with a meeting of the RAA Historical Sub Committee, the Representative Colonel Commandant (Major General Tim Ford) assembled a group of selected "RAA Elders" at a conference at Puckapunyal in May. The meeting was briefed on the RAA response to evolving Army Reviews. Key points were:

- The introduction of a Counter Rocket and Artillery System, involving:
- The re-role of part of 16 AD Regt,
- The purchase of new equipment, including long and medium range radars,
- The impact that this will have on other budgets effecting Artillery.
- The upgrade of surveillance capability with unmanned aerial vehicles.
- The restructure of Regular regiments to include one 12 gun battery and 3 observation batteries.
- That the decision on Reserve Forces from the Force Management Review is likely about mid next year.

In the near future there will be significant changes relating to the Australian Army Artillery Museum, the Historical Company etc. Brig Doug Perry has been appointed as the Victorian representative on an interim RAA Historical Society. More will be learned at the main Regimental Conference later this month. This will be the main focus of my next article.

It is with regret that we note the passing of Major General John Whitelaw. He was already a lieutenant colonel when I joined the Army in 1962, and his service was always something we would seek to emulate. His contributions to Artillery are addressed in other articles in Cascabel. He will be sadly missed.

Best wishes

Brig Neil Graham, AM

Colonel Commandant, Southern Region

Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.





## MESSAGE FROM COMMANDING OFFICER 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment RAA



To all Gunners

It has been another busy start to 2010 and I am pleased to say that the Regiment has embraced the next round of challenges with a positive attitude and professionalism, as expected. Since my last report, there has been a lot of decision both internally and externally about the future of the Artillery Corps in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. Let me provide a summary of the address I gave at the Gunner Dinner 2010 and highlighting other salient points.

Before I elaborate on recent events, I would like to acknowledge two of my Regular Army staff whom have recently been posted to operations overseas, at very short notice, and upon their return they will be posted out of the Regiment. Both of them have been instrumental in the success of the Regiment over the past two years providing excellent support and guidance to me on the complex issues facing the Regiment today. To both, MAJ Arnaud Ng and WO2 Wayne Morris thank you for your support and dedication to the Regiment throughout your posting, good luck and stay safe on your current deployment and best wishes to you and your families. MAJ Ng was my Executive Officer and WO2 Morris was the SMIG 22 Fd Bty. Both will be missed.

The Regiment has focused on the sustainment of the Mortar capability created as a result of conversion from guns to mortars as directed. This has been an exciting piece of work as we are collectively challenged on the fundamentals of our trade as we apply them as artillerymen embedded within infantry battalions on a weapon very familiar to the infantry. I have created a Mortar Training Cell at RHQ in order to track, record and validate these decisions. This is extremely important as this will shape the way the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division employs mortars in the future.

There has been some discussion and rumours surrounding the Regiment of recent ranging from returning mortar tubes and the speculation of very limited ammunition for this and the next training years. Obviously I can not go into detail here but please be assured that the Regiment will not be without mortar tubes and will have ammunition for live firing for this and the next training year. As CO

of 2/10, I am comfortable that the Regiment will have weapons and resources for my role to Raise, Train and Sustain the mandated Artillery force elements for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

In fact I am very pleased to announce that at the RAA Conference being held at Puckapunyal at the end of July, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division will be making a presentation titled '*ARES Artillery - Making the most of its Opportunities*'. I will be apart of that presentation providing an update on the conversion to mortars and the residual issues facing artillery units with mortars long term but more importantly the associated opportunities. Late breaking news saw the announcement that the NSW Artillery Regiments of 23 Fd Regt and 7 Fd Regt, maintaining their traditional gun regiment roles and not convert to mortars. I will be able to provide more information post the RAA Conference.

The next major event for the Regiment is the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combined Arms Training Exercise in October. During this exercise 2/10 will be conducting 4 mortar courses on behalf of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division RAA units as well as providing 22 Fd Bty in direct support of the High Readiness Reserve force element training within the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade. This will again see the Regiment stretched to its maximum as we deliver on concurrent main efforts in support of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division highest priorities than that of overseas deployments: HRR and continuation of Mortar Conversion. I am very confident that the Regiment to deliver on both tasks maintain the very high standard we set ourselves.

As you can see there is a lot going on within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division for gunners and it is all extremely challenging, simulating and rewarding. I plan to conduct another Regimental Open Day at Chapel Street where I will be available to answer any questions or concerns that members of the RAA Association and others may have as well as providing an update on the overall direction of the Corps within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

Now for some quick public announcements. The School of Artillery is turning 125 this year and they **are planning an "extravaganza" on the 1<sup>st</sup> September**. As details become available I will inform

the RAA Association but pencil this into your diaries as they will be expecting a huge crowd to turn up and help them celebrate. The other announcement is the potential visit to Puckapunyal during the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade HRR Combined Arms Training Activity in October. The Regiment will be conducting live firing and I am hopeful that I can be given authorisation for visitors to attend. If this is to occur it will be either on the 17 or 18 October.

Of course I offer a very warm invite to visit the Regiment in November for my next Open Day. As I have previously stated, it is an excellent opportunity to discuss all things Artillery amongst friends and fellow gunners.

Feedback and views from Association members are always welcome so please contact me on [jason.cooke4@defence.gov.au](mailto:jason.cooke4@defence.gov.au) if you wish to discuss anything. Again I extend all the best for the second half of 2010 and hope to see you at as many functions as possible.

Ubique

Jason Cooke

Lieutenant Colonel

Commanding Officer

2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment



Editors Indulgence Apology

**It was pointed out to me by our ever alert "Gun Guru", SSgt Barry Irons that I had made a serious omission** in the previous edition of Cascabel. I had failed to include the Issue No. and Date on the front cover.

I felt Shame - Shock - Horror!

Please retrieve your previous Cascabel & insert on the front cover:

NUMBER 103      JUNE 2010

Thank you.

On a far more serious note, my better half - Barbara - and I had the pleasure of attending the recent Gunner Dinner. First time for me for many a year and we both thoroughly enjoyed the occasion. The seriousness of my ramblings is that I fully support the comments (*p12*) made by our President, Maj Neil Hamer. Attendance should be much higher for this type of occasion and I intend to make a concerted appeal to not only all members - but especially those from my time in Artillery. More to follow in a later edition in 2011. Ed



Barbara & I relaxing  
after the Dinner

# Membership Report

## August 2010

Current Membership as at 10 Jul 10

Life Members	199	(201)
Annual Members	49	(47)
Senior Annual Members	16	(17)
Affiliates	35	(35)
Others (CO/CI, Messes, etc.)	12	(12)
Libraries	5	(5)
RSL's	2	(2)
<u>Total</u>	<u>318</u>	<u>(319)</u>

### New Members

We welcome Sgt Leo Thomas Nette, Sgt Piers Quinton Foa and Gnr Geoff Menogue to the Association as Annual Members.

### Resignations

No resignations during this period.

### Vale

It is with regret that we note the passing of MajGen John Whitelaw AO CBE, Col George James Dean ED (joined July 82), WO2 A E (Brian) Hutchinson (joined August 88) and Sgt Igor Eremin (joined May88).

A tribute to MajGen Whitelaw appears later in the magazine.

### **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.



Neil Hamer

MAJ (Retd)

Membership Co-ordinator

Contact: Telephone: 9702 2100

0419 533 067

Email: [nhamer@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nhamer@bigpond.net.au)



## VALE MAJOR GENERAL JOHN WHITELAW AO CBE (RL)

*Thanks to Arthur Burke for this tribute*

Major General John Whitelaw AO CBE (RL) passed away peacefully in Canberra on 19 June 2010.

John Whitelaw was destined to follow a military career. He was born into the military family of Captain, later Major General John Stewart and Esther Augusta Whitelaw on 11 June 1921 at Hawthorn, Victoria just after his father had completed a course at the School of Gunnery in Sydney. Both his brothers, Fred and Norman were also Gunners.

John was educated at the Sydney Boys High School and Wesley College, Melbourne. He started work in 1937 as an indentured clerk with the paper merchants Spicers & Detmold Ltd, Melbourne. The artillery in his blood led to his joining the 10<sup>th</sup> Field Brigade Royal Australian Artillery at Batman Avenue, Melbourne as a senior cadet. On his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, he was appointed a gunner and rose quickly through the ranks to become a gun sergeant, then battery **commander's assistant**. His unit was horsed until 1939 but John **'was not very fond of horses'** and **believed that 'the drivers had it in for the gunners'**.

With the advent of the Second World War, Sergeant Whitelaw was commissioned on 15 March 1940 and his father reluctantly sanctioned his transfer to the AIF soon after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1941. Lieutenant Whitelaw became a 6<sup>th</sup> Division reinforcement for the 2/1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment. Colonel Bill Ford OBE (RL) **remembers John fondly from that time as a 'very keen and bright young officer with a yearning to learn'**.

The Japanese thrust in the Pacific ended any chance of John's going to the Middle East and he was at

Headquarters 2<sup>nd</sup> Division in Western Australia when posted to New Guinea. After a painfully long train trip from Geraldton, WA to Townsville in North Queensland, Captain John Whitelaw joined the last elements of 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment (Jungle Division) AIF as they sailed for Lae, New Guinea. He moved forward to Dumpu in the Ramu Valley and became the battery captain of 12<sup>th</sup> Battery. Amongst the guns his battery took over from the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment AIF were the two 25-Pounder Shorts that had been parachuted into Nadzab at the beginning

of this campaign in September 1943. He recalled the extreme physical effort required to move single guns and ammunition forward across the towering Finisterre Ranges — **'50 men took three days to deliver 50 rounds of ammunition to the left flank gun'**.

In June 1944, John succumbed to dengue fever and hepatitis, was hospitalised and returned to Australia for recuperation leave. On return to his unit then near Lae, he became the commander of E Troop and endured the divisional artillery undergoing **'School of Artillery type'** training



Taken at Mt Pleasant on the occasion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Coral.

**Relief came when Captain Whitelaw's unit was** deployed as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Corps to Bougainville on 1 November 1944 where he observed that Torokina living conditions left by the Americans were luxury.

**John's 11<sup>th</sup> Battery was deployed up the Numa Numa Trail in support of the 31<sup>st</sup>/51<sup>st</sup> Battalion. As a forward observation officer, he was continually involved trudging on patrol support with the occasional 'little bit of a job on a Japanese position'**

to improve his morale.

On 6 June 1944, an amphibious assault onto Porton Plantation by the 31<sup>st</sup>/51<sup>st</sup> Battalion was planned to cut off the withdrawing Japanese. This developed into a disaster and Captain Whitelaw was tasked to navigate the final group of armoured barges with assault boats to collect the survivors. He earned a mention in despatches for his accurate navigation and laying a very effective smoke screen along the beach to cloud the clear moonlight and facilitate a successful withdrawal.

News of peace was received on 11 August and in October Captain Whitelaw was transferred to the 2/14<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment in Rabaul. There he was posted to the Army Movement Control Staff which began returning soldiers to Australia and in September 1946, it was his turn to go home. Captain John Whitelaw was transferred to the Reserve of Officers and returned to his old job back with Spicers in Melbourne. When asked what was the greatest benefit he derived from six years of war service, he **replied, 'Without it you don't know what [soldiering] is all about .. the noise of an angry shot .. focuses your mind!'**

John married Nancy Bogle (the sister of fellow Gunner officer Bruce Bogle) in December 1947. The following year, Spicers transferred him to their Perth, WA office.

When the Citizen Military Force (CMF) was restructured, Captain Whitelaw returned to the Active List with Headquarters Western Command on **4 July 1948. After six years' full-time war service and with a father and brother in the permanent Army, John's ambitions led him to apply for a commission in the Interim Army.** His appointment on 1 July 1949 began a full-time army career which consumed him for the next 29 years during which he rose to become a major general and Deputy Chief of the General Staff.

To discuss the 26 postings John held throughout a most successful military career would take more time than can reasonably be allowed for this tribute. However, the following have been selected to highlight the remarkable career of Major General John Whitelaw.

His first substantial posting back to the Gunners was as adjutant of 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment at Georges Heights **in Sydney under the command of Paddy O'Hare.**

During 1955, now Major Whitelaw, Nancy and their

three daughters enjoyed the delights of the Canadian Staff College at Kingston. The Canadians liked John so much, he was appointed the exchange instructor for the next two years.

His Grade One staff appointments included Headquarters Western then Northern Commands and Headquarters 1<sup>st</sup> (Pentropic) Division, Sydney in 1963. Then came another accompanied overseas posting to Singapore as the Assistant Adjutant and Quarter Master General at Headquarters Australian Army Force, Far East Land Force in 1966. This posting with the British Raj continued as he then **stepped up to the Deputy Commander's** appointment.

The penance for Singapore was returning to Army Office in Canberra in 1968 as the Director Equipment Policy: the salve was being promoted colonel.

In April 1970, Colonel Whitelaw was appointed the Chief of Staff at Headquarters Australian Army Forces Vietnam. For his sterling work in this appointment, John was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) and awarded the United States Bronze Star.

Back at Army Headquarters in March 1971, John was appointed Director Military Operations and Plans and promoted brigadier. He then became the Chief of Operations and rose to major general. The **Chief of Personnel's door opened to John Whitelaw in 1975 and the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 1977** appointed him an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for his distinguished service in this position.

John reached the pinnacle of his army career in 1977 when he was appointed the Deputy Chief of the General Staff. Major General John Whitelaw AO CBE was placed on the Retired List of officers on his 57<sup>th</sup> birthday on 11 June 1978, bringing to a close a total of 41 years of almost continuous service as a soldier.

Retirement from the Army did not mean giving up work and for the next 24 years, John Whitelaw continued to serve — on the Council of the National Heart Foundation, as the founding Executive **Director of the National Farmers' Federation** and finally with Greening Australia for which he was given an Award for Outstanding Achievement in December 1996. In parallel with this work, he had **been very active in veterans' welfare matters as** national president of the Regular Defence Force Welfare Association and vice-president of the Australian Veterans and Defence Services Council.

**Delivering the military eulogy at John's funeral,** Major General Tim Ford AO (Retd) emphasised that, **'the golden thread throughout John Whitelaw's** military and civilian careers was his abiding passion for history and heritage. For over 50 years, John Whitelaw displayed an extraordinary interest in the Australian Army, and particularly its artillery heritage and history. As DCGS he established and was the founding chairman of the Army History Committee that created the first Army Staff Instruction on **Army Heritage and History.'**

John Whitelaw was the driving force behind construction of the RAA National Memorial on Mount Pleasant and its opening by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, our Captain General in 1977, and in the creation of the RAA National Museum at North Fort in Sydney. He was the founding and only patron of the RAA Historical Society which lay the foundations for the outstanding collection and display of artillery equipments and memorabilia now resident at North Fort—the site of the 9.2-inch Coast Artillery Battery over which John had walked frequently when his father was Commander Fixed Defences during the Second World War.

He was the first chairman of the History Sub Committee (HSC) of the RAA Regimental Committee which was formed in 2005. His inspired leadership, dedicated example and continuing as a project team leader on several issues after ill health obliged him to hand over the chair, were inspirational to all other members of the HSC. He impressed the whole Regimental Committee with his dedication and enthusiasm for this task which now has some 20 volunteers undertaking research into 28 artillery related topics.

In addition to these historical services to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, Major General John Whitelaw was the Colonel Commandant of NSW from 1978 to 1984 and Representative Colonel Commandant of the Regiment from 1980 to 1984, a **role in which he sagely guided the RAA's history,** customs, traditions and standing in the community.

John Whitelaw not only came from a military family — he became an integral part of the military family of the Gunners of his Regiment, the soldiers of the Australian Army and was a shining example to all members of the Australian Defence Force. John was also a devoted family man. To his wife, Nancy, his three daughters Angela, Belinda and Virginia and their families, he was the loving patriarch of the family.

Vale Major General John Whitelaw AO CBE — officer, gentleman and military historian—a Gunner of distinction.



THE HON. DR MIKE KELLY AM MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support

Employers take off to see Reservists in action

The Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Support, the Hon. Dr Mike Kelly AM MP announced that 22 employers of Defence Reservists will travel to Solomon Islands today (5 July 2010) as part of Exercise Boss Lift - the Defence program designed to encourage employer support for the Reserves.

Dr Kelly encouraged the Defence Reservists in the Solomon Islands to take advantage of the opportunity to show their bosses the skills they develop while on deployment and how they can be utilised in the civilian workplace.

"This is a unique opportunity for employers and aims to highlight the skills Reservists gain from being in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and how those skills can benefit civilian employers," Dr Kelly said.

"Boss Lift and other employer engagement activities like Exercise Executive Stretch, also help employers understand their Reservist's important contribution to Defence capability."

Employers participating in the four-day Boss Lift program will visit soldiers from the New South Wales-based 5th Brigade, who are currently on a four-month deployment to the Solomon Islands.

While in Honiara and surrounds, the employers will have the opportunity to see their Reservists on Operation ANODE, the Australian Defence Force's contribution to the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands.

For details about the many programs run by CRES D visit

[www.defence.gov.au/reserves](http://www.defence.gov.au/reserves)

# The 2010 Gunner Dinner

After a slow response with only twenty-nine replies by the due date, forty-nine diners sat down to a pleasant evening at the Caulfield RSL. In the initial stages very serious consideration was given to cancelling the dinner, and the parading of the Queen's Banner was cancelled.

The due date for replies is determined by the lead times required by the various organisations which contribute to the running of the dinner. Whilst we have some flexibility, late replies greatly increase the work load.

SSgt's Reg Morrell, Brian Cleeman and the other contributors to the success of the evening did a great job and are to be commended for their efforts. Thanks to them all.

The Dining Mess President was LtCol Jason Cooke, CO 2/10 Fd Regt, and the Vice President was SSgt Ernie Paddon.

The Col Comdt SR, Brig Neil Graham, responded to the Toast to the Regiment. He then introduced MajGen Jim Barry, National President of the Defence Reserves Association, who gave us a very enlightening address on the role and aspirations of the DRA. LtCol Cooke also up-dated the dinner on the "state-of-the-nation" within 2/10 and artillery in general.

The 2/10 Band was up to its usual high standard and entertained us throughout the evening. Our thanks to WO2 Steve Deakes, and of course LtCol Cooke for providing us with this excellent musical evening.

The meal, decorations and service provided by the Caulfield RSL were again appreciated by all who attended.

The attendance of guests and partners adds to the general atmosphere of the evening and is greatly appreciated.

The convening committee is considering changing the date of the dinner to a warmer time later in the year. Your thoughts on this would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your support.



Neil Hamer RFD

Maj (Retd)

President

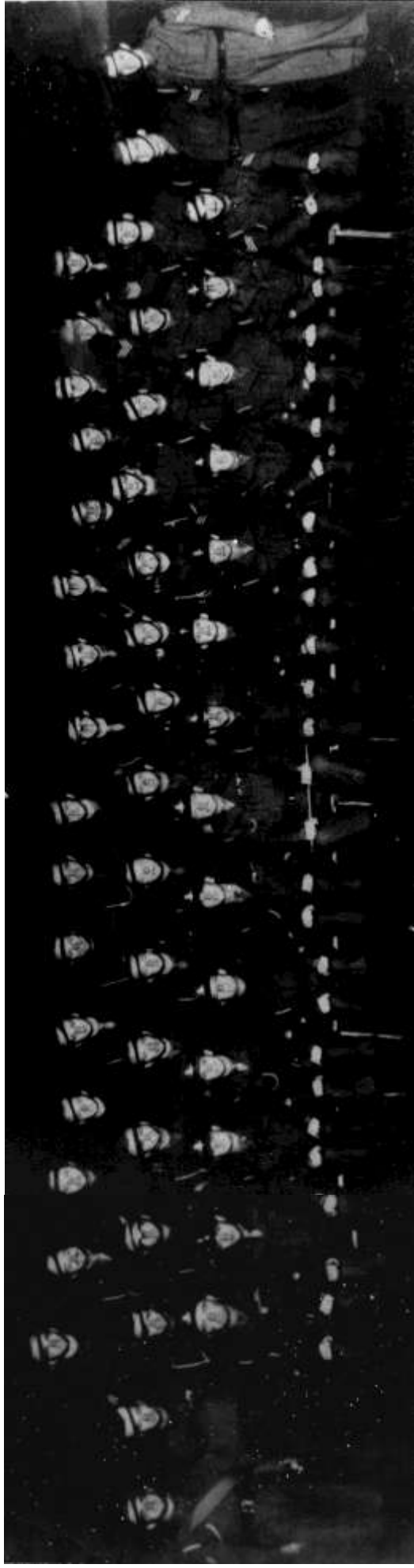


L to R. Brig Standish, MajGen Barry, Brig Graham, Lt Col Cooke, Lt Col Rowley, WO1 O'Toole (partly obscured)



## EDITOR'S INDULGENCE

Identifying the members in this photograph will probably present more of a challenge than those in the previous issue. I have no recollection of how it came into my possession, but I can tell you it was taken at 'S' Block during Camp 1963. It consists of Sgt's Mess Members from the Dandenong, Warragul & Korumburra depots. I would appreciate feedback with names as I can only readily identify WO2 (as he was then) Joe Monahan & Sgt George Beale.



**If you have already perused the index, you may have noticed that Col Farley's Military Reflections are still missing. I regret that due to space considerations, future reflections (yes, there are at least 3 more to come) will not be resumed until the November issue.**

In the previous journal (103) I stated I had received nil information re the CDF saluting a VC recipient. Since that time I have been in communication with WO1 Chris Jobson (Rtd) & he sent me the following. Due to his knowledge & former postings, I consider his comments to be gospel on this subject.

'Evening Alan.

There is no "tradition" of the CDF saluting VC recipients; it's a misunderstanding held by many, including the current CDF. If it were a "tradition" it would be recorded as such. When I was the RSM Ceremonial at Defence Headquarters the then CDF and I talked about this issue and he agreed that VC recipients were NOT saluted. I was, previous to this posting, the Army's RSM Ceremonial & Protocol and the then CGS (now Chief of Army) also agreed. Again, as I said, if it were a "tradition" it would be recorded as such and in fact the Army's Protocol Manual clearly states that VC recipients are NOT saluted (it's a myth, like many other myths; including the one about Harry Morant being an Australian soldier at the time of his actions which resulted in his courts-martial and subsequent execution, or there being 97 Australian VC recipients - the correct number is 92; and even the AWM has this wrong too). If you're ever in Canberra it's a good discussion to have over a few beers.

All the very best, Chris.



## Origins of the 25 Pdr Gun – Part 2

### The End of the Tunnel

#### The 25 Pounder Mark II....

When the decision to go ahead with the humped box trail and firing platform was made in the Spring of 1938, it enabled the designers to once more forge ahead with the final design of what was to become the 25 pdr Mark 2. Much of the carriage was 'lifted' direct from the Vickers 1931 105 mm project, some refinements were added and the wheels were standard designs in place of the pressed steel discs of the 1931 prototype. The new barrel was loose and held in a jacket with a sealing collar and the breech ring was removable. The barrel itself was 92.51 inches (2349.75 mm) long, and had a large rectangular breech with a downwards-sliding vertical breech block.

There was nothing particularly striking about the barrel or the carriage design, but as time was to tell, it was proved to be a sound and sturdy one that was well able to withstand all manner of rough treatment, even considering the stresses that artillery pieces are called upon to withstand in general combat use. Despite the specified range requirement of 13,500 yards (12,344 m) the new gun could reach only 13,400 yards (12,253 m) and that **only by using 'supercharge'**.

The weight was a bit over the top as well. As mentioned before the weight limitation was supposed to be 30 cwt (3360 lb) (1524 kg) but the final design was as heavy as 3908 lb (1773 kg). As it turned out at the time this was not as serious as it once might have been. Mechanical traction was now well established in the Army, and the general balance and handiness of the design meant that it was relatively easy? to move and throw about in action.

The ammunition system chosen for the 25 pdr Mark 2 followed on from that used on the 25 pdr Mark 1. Both were supposed to fall into the general classification of what are now known as gun howitzers and this was reflected in the ammunition system used. The projectile was loaded as a single unit. The propellant charge system was variable and was separately loaded in a brass cartridge case for obturation.

The basic charge system consisted of three components, each enclosed in a linen bag inside the

case. When delivered to the gun all three charges were inside the case and the various increments were removed as required. Supercharge came in its own loaded case, to this was added a further small increment for use with armour-piercing shot. The three charges were Charge 1 (red bag only), Charge 2 (red and white bags only) and Charge 3 (red, white and blue bags, as delivered).

The charge case was loaded only after the projectile had been rammed into the shot seating at the end of the chamber by a hand rammer, and the breech mechanism was so designed that the breech could not be closed (by hand again, via a lever by the breech) until the lips at the base of the case had tripped two levers on the inside of the breech opening - only then could the breech block be raised into position. To complete the operation, the gun was fired by a lever and rod system by the layer.

The rod actuated a trigger mechanism on the breech block outer face and an example of the detail design of the 25 pdr Mark 2 was that this trigger mechanism (in artillery terms the 'lock') could be easily and rapidly removed to render the gun inoperative. The recoil and recuperator mechanisms were in a long enclosed rectangular housing under the barrel.

This, in its turn, was carried in a cradle. Recoil length at high angles of elevation was limited by a cut-off gear, which when first experienced by the gun crew, **could give them a bit of a 'start' of the more violent recoil action.** Also fitted, but seemingly little used **was the foot plate or 'paddle' mechanism, that could be operated by the layer if both hands were busy with the laying operations.** (Perhaps safety was an operational issue)

The gun saddle carried the cradle and from the saddle the elevation and traverse gears could be used to move the gun barrel into the firing position. All the gun control gears were operated by the layer alone, and for the period this in itself was something of an innovation. The saddle also carried the shield which at one time was designed to be a complex array of angled plates, but in the production version emerged as a simple large flat plate of bullet-proof steel.

Apart from the protection function the shield was also used to carry all manner of equipment from drag-ropes (which were used for manual traction over short distances and were attached to the gun



mainly via towing eyes on the wheel hubs) to sighting equipment such as sights (carried in leather or metal boxes) and aiming posts. The top of the shield could be hinged forwards and down over the barrel to provide the vehicle driver with supposed increased vision to the rear. (Any one who has ever **tried to 'back up' a 25 pdr will know only too well what is meant, particularly with the Inter or "ACCO" series vehicles**)

There was also a sliding vision port through which the layer could use the direct-fire telescope. The trail was of the box variety with a definite outwards splay of the two side members. The previously-mentioned hump was quite prominent and the end of the trail angled downwards to a trail spade that was normally encased in a steel box (the 'banana') for transport and off-duty handling. The usual trail construction was plates and rivets (the No.1 Trail). (A later version was made as a fully welded construction, but appeared in limited numbers)

Mounted on the top of the trail just to the rear of the layers seat, was a strange circular raised bracket. Few know that this was fitted in the original design **for the benefit of both the gun crew and the "Tiffies"** who in their servicing of the gun, could fit a specially designed air pump hand/lever activated. If in the event there was no compressed air available to recharge the recuperator system in the heat of battle, the Tiffies could and did use this pump system to at least get the gun operational. (Although it was a bummer of a thing to use, and was dropped off the equipment schedule post war)

A towing eye was provided at the end of the structure above and around which were the locating eyes for the handspikes. One of these pointed to the rear and was used for making large changes of traverse on the firing platform. One man could lift the trail and move it round to its new angle in a few seconds. Two further sockets were parallel with the axle and were used to take a handspike each for manual traction over short distances, sometimes in conjunction with the drag-ropes on rough or uneven ground.

Located under the trail was the firing platform, a circular steel assembly held in place on the move by a system of brackets and clips. In action the platform was dropped to the ground and connected to the gun, which was lifted onto it, (most times out of the watchful eyes of the BG, GPO, and possibly the RSM

by an experienced driver under careful scrutiny of the No 1) by two swivelling tie-bars. Another trail component was the barrel clamp, a bar that was hinged from one trail member and swung across to the other member when the gun was to be moved over any distance.

The clamp had at its centre a spring clip into which a lug under the breech was clipped to lock and hold the barrel steady for travelling. The saddle also carried the sighting equipment and on the 25 pdr this was known as the dial sight carrier.

Again, for the time, the sighting system used was quite advanced. It was a compact and easy-to-use system that required only a minimum of training to become familiar with, and in action it was reliable and very amenable to being used by a set and quickly learned drill. For elevation there was a range scale cone that carried etched lines set diagonally across the cone.

Turning a sight handle lined the required range against one of three charge-indicating fixed points each positioned in place on a fixed bar, at a point determined by the individual muzzle velocity<sup>1</sup> of the gun at each of the three main charges. This then placed the sight carrier at an angle which was then placed back to the correct vertical by turning the barrel elevating handle and measuring the correct level by a bubble in a form of spirit level known as a clinometer.

This elevation was carried out in two stages, one coarse, then fine. Traverse for indirect fire used the dial sight proper which was pointed at a known distant point (or aiming post) which was known to be at a certain angle from the required line of fire. This was observed through a dial sight, usually the No.9 although the WWI No.7 was often used and the American Telescope, Panoramic M6 was sometimes used as a war-time expedient.

For direct fire the sight carrier could mount the No.41 Sighting Telescope. War-time telescopes were the No.29 and the No.22C as alternatives. To round off this description of the 25 pdr it would be as well to mention the Trailer, Artillery, or limber as it was more generally known. This was a standard item for both the 18/25 pdr and the war-time 25 pdr. For use with the 18/25 pdr the limber used was the No.24 or the No.27. For the 25 pdr it was the No. 27 only. These limbers were simple ammunition chests on a single two-wheeled axle and connected to the

tractor by a pole trail. (They were little used, I think in post war Australia, or at least by 1958 when I first enlisted) The gun was attached to the limber by a towing hook.

On the No.27 the ammunition box was enclosed behind two outward opening doors and had 16 ammunition trays carrying 32 rounds. Each tray contained two projectiles and two cartridges. There was also a small locker for stores and a spares tray. The limber could also be used to transport a spare firing platform over the top, which I think was rarely done. In action the limber was positioned with the pole trail angled towards the expected direction of enemy fire so that the ammunition box could provide (hopefully) a small measure of cover to the gun detachment.<sup>2</sup>

In action the full gun detachment was six men, although less were often employed once firing was under way. The No.1 was situated (kneeling, as were all the detachment according to the drill book) on the right-hand side of the trail end, next to the fitted handspike. He was in charge of the gun and the detachment, gave the fire orders and made the necessary large alterations of traverse by swinging the trail with the handspike.

No.2 was to the right of the breech (looking forward towards the muzzle), operating the breech mechanism and ramming home the projectiles with a hand rammer. No.3 sat to the left of the breech on a small circular wooden seat and was the gun layer operating the sights. No.4 kneeled just behind him and was the loader. Behind him was the No.5 who passed him the ammunition ready for loading. He had the extra task of checking that the rounds were set as required and that the No.6, who removed the ammunition from the limber and prepared it for firing, had set the correct propellant charge in the cartridge case.

To complete the detachment there was the gun tractor driver who usually remained with his tractor once the gun was brought into action. For prolonged firing periods No.5 was often given other duties. The tractors used during the war years in the UK and the European theater were more often than not the Quads. There were several types of these including the Guy Quad Ant, the Morris Commercial C8 Marks 1 to 3, the Karrier KT4, the Canadian Ford and GMC Quads and some others. They were all the same in base design in that they were 4 x 4 compact tractors that could carry a complete gun detachment with

their entire bits and pieces, pots and pans, and some extra rounds.

They were reliable and handy but they were generally slow and made even slower by the speed limitations of the ammunition limbers. Once in action they proved prone to brewing up<sup>3</sup> under even light incoming fire and thus had to be concealed some way from the firing lines, a factor that often proved a serious disadvantage in battle.

### **Now the Test...**

The 25 pdr Mark 2 was approved for production on December 7th 1937 but due to the delays inherent upon the choice of carriage mentioned above, it was not until late 1938 that the final form of carriage was approved. This led to inevitable delays in production schedules so that by the time WW2 commenced, there were 78 guns completed but no carriages on which to place them. At the time the 18/25 pdr was in service so the delays were not too serious.

Some of the first full equipments were prepared for use during the brief and abortive Norwegian campaign but there is yet to find any evidence of their use in action there, and Dunkirk came and went before the 25 pdr was ready for action in France. After Dunkirk the 25 pdr suddenly became the only viable artillery piece for field use that was to hand, and there were precious few of them. For a long period, production could not keep up with the demands made by an Army that was almost completely devoid of any sort of equipment.

New gunners had to train with whatever was at hand, and all the new 25 pdrs were issued to what were to become the front-line divisions. Even then, the issue was often sparse and erratic. Overseas demands arose from everywhere that British troops were stationed. North Africa was one destination for the new guns and more will be said of them later, but others went to meet the demands of the Far East garrisons, especially Singapore.

This fortress was seen as a vitally important base for Far East operations against the increasingly aggressive Japanese and despite demands from elsewhere, during 1941 no fewer than 150 were sent to guard the naval base. With the fall of Singapore all were lost with no fewer than 36 being taken over by the victorious Japanese for their own local use. At the time the loss of those precious guns was a drain on resources that was hard to bear, but help was at hand. The production lines in the United Kingdom

were considerably assisted by new lines that were established in Canada and Australia.

**The Canadian source was centered at Sorel<sup>4</sup>, Quebec** while the main Australian production centers were **in Victoria and New South Wales<sup>5</sup> (a recorded total of 1,527 were produced here in Australia)**. Both lines came on stream during 1941 which was just as well, for more 25 pdrs had been lost in Greece and North Africa. The new 25 pdrs did not only go to the British Army, for they also went to Commonwealth armies (the first fully-equipped field regiment was the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Field Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery and that was in April 1940). The 25 pdr Mark 2 became the standard field piece of all the Commonwealth armies during WW2 and was used wherever Commonwealth troops found themselves in action.

By 1945 the 25 pdr had been in action in environments as diverse as the sand of North Africa and the moist and dank jungles of the Far East and Burma. North Africa was where the 25 pdr made its first mark and its reputation. The first arrived during late 1940 and were spread out along the gun lines of the desert armies. When the Afrika Korps arrived on the scene the difficult times began, for the artillery organisation of the British Army was in a state of flux and relative upset.

Old-established battery organisation lines were re-arranged to form a new 12-gun battery establishment which sounds straightforward enough, but it made an immense difference to communications and other working systems.

To make matters worse the fluid conditions of the desert battles often meant that batteries or regiments were split up and dispersed to operate in isolation. Then at a time when disruption and disorganization was the order of the day, the 25 pdr had to assume an extra role. In early 1941 the only anti-tank weapon that the Army had was the little 2 pdr which soon showed itself to be virtually useless against the Afrika Korps tanks. The 25 pdr had to assume its tactical role and to its credit, and the eternal credit to its gun detachments, it assumed it well.

The 25 pdr had to rely only on its HE shell for its anti-armour effect. Even using supercharge the 25 pdr had a maximum muzzle velocity of 1700 feet per second (518 m/s) which was well below the equivalent of a specialised anti-tank gun. The

gunners had to stand their ground until their targets were well within effective range which was usually less than 1000 yards (914 m).

This usually meant that the 25 pdr detachments not only had to endure hostile tank gun fire and machine gun fire but they had to stand their ground until their target was in range. If they made a hit their target was often destroyed or disabled, for even a 25 pdr HE shell could wreak havoc on any tank of the day or at least render it useless for further possible combat.

If they missed, the tank often had the advantage and many batteries literally fought their armoured enemy to the muzzles. Whole batteries were often wiped out to a man in this fashion. It was in these conditions that the choice of the rapid-traverse fire platform often proved its worth. For targets appearing from all points of the compass could be rapidly engaged, and fire then altered just as rapidly to another point.

This martyrdom of the 25 pdr detachments lasted until July 1942 when revised tactics and the arrival of the first 6 pdr anti-tank guns came upon the scene. Up until then 25 pdrs were sent off into the blue in ones and twos, batteries were forced to remain static when they should have been mobile, others were ordered to fire dispersed fire plans when concentration was necessary, and so on.

It was a time of travail for the Commonwealth artillery and not until the First Battle of Alamein did tactical revision become effective. During that battle concentrated artillery fire stopped the attacking armour in its tracks, and the Second Battle of Alamein turned the tide. El Alamein has now passed into British legend.

During that battle an opening barrage was delivered from no less than 834 25 pdrs and 48 heavier guns, more likely the 5.5 in guns. By Great War standards it was in relatively small numbers, but at the time it once more placed the artillery under a centralized command, and greatly increased their firepower by concentration and revised communications and organization. From then onwards the 25 pdr never really lost its ascendancy over the opposition, despite local set-backs, and the Allied armies advanced through North Africa, slogged their way through Sicily and Italy and after June 6th 1944 swept doggedly on across North-West Europe.

In the Far East the 25 pdr worked valiantly all through the Burma campaigns in both British and Indian Army hands, and later struggled through the desperate New Guinea slogs. The 25 pdr was fired from river lighters and was dragged to the summits of mountains. It was dragged through rivers and snows but it was always there when wanted and it always delivered the goods. They seldom seem to have gone wrong, other than under the influence of enemy-imposed damage.

Some modifications and changes were made as a result of experience, but the only major ones were changes to the breech seating to reduce possible cracking under prolonged periods of firing, and the only outward change in appearance was the addition of a muzzle brake when an armour-piercing shot was introduced into service after experiments in late 1942. To provide this shot with the maximum punch an increment was added to the supercharge and this increment took the gun over its carriage safety limit.

The addition of a four-port Solothurn muzzle brake threaded onto the muzzle reduced the firing stresses to a manageable level. Adding the muzzle brake upset the balance of the barrel in the cradle so a weight was added to the barrel just forward of the breech block to compensate. The muzzle brake was added only to the guns likely to encounter armour, so many guns in the Far East were never so fitted. The carriage did undergo some changes though, not for any failing but to meet new tactical demands.

In Burma the 25 pdr was often a difficult load to manage on the almost non-existent jungle tracks and one battery attempted to remedy this by fitting a Jeep axle in place of the normal carriage axle. The resultant load could then be towed by a Jeep along even the most difficult tracks, and the fact was quickly acknowledged by the production of a new carriage, the Mark 2 which had a formalised narrow axle and a correspondingly smaller firing platform, the No.22. This smaller carriage could also be easily stowed inside a C-47 Dakota fuselage which appreciably increased the 25 pdrs tactical usefulness.

While the Mark 2 carriage was distinctly useful in the Far East, the limited elevation (+ 40 degrees) of the barrel was often a disadvantage in the hilly confines of Burma and elsewhere. Gun detachments often overcame this difficulty in clearing hill crests by digging pits to bury the trail, thus increasing

elevation. While this expedient worked it was a laborious and time-consuming process, so a Canadian design was introduced which had the trail hinged at the centre to provide elevation up to + 70 degrees. This hinged trail was combined with the narrow axle of the Mark 2 carriage to produce the Mark 3 carriage, and this version remained the standard equipment of the Airborne artillery batteries long after the war ended.

Before leaving, the war-time use of the 25 pdr by the German Army must be acknowledged. They greatly prized the 25 pdr to the extent that in North Africa and elsewhere whole artillery regiments were equipped with nothing else. They formalised their acceptance of captured examples with the designation of *8.76 em Feldkanone 280(e)* (*8.76 em FK 280(e)*) and used them until the end of the war. Although I question their full use, as ammunition and parts must have been in short supply.

#### **After the Ball is Over ...**

After 1945 the 25 pdr remained the standard field piece of the Royal Artillery until it was replaced by the Italian OTO-Melara Model 56 Pack Howitzer in the 1960s. It saw service again in Korea and was used during many of the other small-scale actions attendant on the withdrawal from Empire, and it had a brief re-appearance on the world scene during the Suez campaign of 1956.

Even today it remains in service with the British Army, although these days its main use is for reserve training and for saluting purposes. Most are retained as 'gate guardians' while many others are still used in experimental and proofing establishments for a variety of trials and experiments. After 1945 many Commonwealth armies took their 25 pdrs home with them (as did we) and retained them for many years. Some still use them as front-line equipments, notably Zimbabwe and Pakistan. Others were passed on to European armies, such as France and Italy.

The French 25 pdrs had their part to play in the 'last battle of the Wehrmacht' at Dien Bien Phu. The Italians retained their equipments long into the 1950s and the 25 pdr was one of the first equipments used by the Israeli Army after its formation during the late 1940s. Some may be still on hand there today and the carriage has been used as a proof mounting for the new IMI 60 mm HVAP anti-tank weapon.

Nearer to home in the UK the 25 pdr was used by the Irish Army while far to the south the South African artillery used the 25 Pdr (designated the G1) as one of its main equipments, until the Angolan campaigns rammed home the fact that modern Soviet artillery has a considerable range advantage over the 25 pdr and the South Africans re-equipped with the 155 mm G5 howitzer. The same lesson was learned by the Pakistanis and Indians during their recurrent conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s, but both still had the 25 pdr in limited service and the Indian defence industry was one of the main sources of modern 25 pdr ammunition.

So the story of the 25 pdr is still not quite over. The 25 pdr often features in advertisements for weapon brokers and they were still being purchased by many Third World governments all over the world. It is still a good gun. The last round believed fired by a regular army unit was by the 19<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment (UK) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1975.

Praise the Lord - **pass the Ammunition...**

If anything, the ammunition side of the 25 pdr is even more complicated than that of the gun itself. Just about every type of ammunition that can be imagined has been fired from the 25 pdr at one time or another, and it would be best to confine this mention to the types in use at the end of WW2.

The examples below are taken from the UK 1944 service manual. Post-war changes were still being introduced. There were four marks of cartridge containing no less than a possible 15 types of Cordite propellant. There were at least 24 types of projectile listed in the UK 1944 manual, and six basic types of fuze. This listing can mention only a few of the more important types of all these variations.

The cartridge case was brass although many experiments including steel, light alloy and wound **steel tape were attempted at one time or another**<sup>6</sup>. In the end only the brass type proved completely satisfactory. The charges were contained in linen bags and a fibre cup was pressed into the case before loading.

The usual type of projectile was the high explosive (HE) shell, and the most common type was the Mark 1D with a No.117 percussion fuze with the No.119 or No.222 not far behind in numerical employment. The HE shell content was TNT and the body was high-grade steel that produced a variable but effective number of fragments, 60/40 amatol with a TNT

increment was another possible filling.

Smoke shells used the No.221 time fuze and were produced in a number of marks with a variable number of internal containers for the smoke mixture which was usually white phosphorous (WP). The armour-piercing shot was all-steel with an optional tracer in the base. It weighed 20 pounds (9 kg) and could penetrate up to 50 mm of armour at 800 yards (730 meters.)

Paper shot was widely used to proof the guns and for functional trials on small ranges at base workshops, mainly in the UK, and was only a war time practice. We had and used Proof & Experimental Engineering at Greytown, Victoria. The mass of the paper was used for the 'projectile' enabled the full force of the recoil to be produced by the paper wad, which was then dispersed over a short range. There were also inert projectiles for practice and special proof projectiles.

Weighted wooden shells were used for drill and training. Added to these must be the various experimental ammunition that was constantly produced throughout the service life of the gun. These included streamlined long-range shells, special capped armour-piercing shells, incendiary shells, various coloured smoke shells for all manner of purposes and although not strictly speaking, experimental projectiles.

Next the **Design, Redesign & more Design ...**

More to follow;

Over.

Barry Irons

Armament Artificer (R)

1. **It was the "Tiffies" task to accurately measure the bore of each gun, so from the ballistic charts the units had; the correct muzzle velocity could be ascertained for the "calibration" This is how all the Tiffies had the calibres of the various guns "engraved" across their brain.**
2. I cannot for the life of me, accept that you would place a container of high explosive between you and on coming enemy fire.
3. A quaint slang term for a lethal situation. The equipment catching fire under attack.
4. This is where the majority of the American/

Canadian M2A2,s were made. The recuperators from the Rock Island Arsenal.

5. In Victoria it was (surprise) Newport Railway Workshops, and in NSW the GM-H Pagewood plant. Both **received sections and assembly's supplied by endorsed contractors. In the "Ripley Believe it or Not" mode**, the Pagewood plant received some items from the NSW Tramways Workshops.
6. This was again and again tried post war, but it always invariably came back to the brass casing.

References;

As per part 1

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Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

"Cascabel" arrived yesterday and I promptly turned to SSgt Barry Irons' fine article on the 25 Pdr Gun.

Having been greeted as his trusty and well beloved by His Majesty King George V in August 1935, I took my one pip to 18 Fd. Bde RA at Preston Barracks Brighton. There daily life was devoted to horses - little or nothing to gunnery. Next year, as probably the worst horseman in the whole Royal Regiment, my new unit - 38 Army Fd Bde - was being equipped with 18/25 Pdr Guns., and mechanised.

Over the years, my memory of the gun is very dim except that it was still mounted on the old wooden 18 Pdr wheels, with a box trail. I never saw the gun fired as my period with the unit centred on Army Manoeuvres. But I feel there must be a fascinating story about the various devices used to tow the guns.

Our unit had some peculiar tractors called "Dragons." They had caterpillar - type tracks and were steered by two joy sticks acting as brakes on the tracks. Steering was further complicated by the gear box. When the Dragon was pulling the load, all was moderately well, but on a slope if the load took over and pushed the tractor, the steering was reversed, with devastating damage to tramway stanchions in Lewes Road outside the Barracks. Pity the GPO on a gun position!

Two years before the war, Carter, Paterson vans were command vehicles. Private groups organised Baby Austins to anticipate the Jeeps. Italy's activities in Africa caused cancellation of all manoeuvres. Gunless Gunners were shipped to Gibraltar. My British Army service ended and I came to Aus. Congratulations on a fine publication!



D. C. (Bob) Dennis

#### Editor's Note!!

Bob was commissioned RA 1935. Reserve of Officers 1938-40. Aust Militia Adjut 1940. FTD 1941-42. AIF 1942-46. CMF May 1948-April 56. Ended service as a Major, 2 I/C 22 FD REGT (SP).

Thanks for your letter, Bob. SSgt Barry Irons intends to research and publish an article on gun tractors in due course.



# Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery



1. How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the tomb of the Unknowns and why?  
21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honour given any military or foreign dignitary.



2. How long does he hesitate after his about face to begin his turn walk and why?  
21 seconds for the same reason as answer number 1



3. Why are his gloves wet?  
His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.

4. Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time and if not, why not?  
He carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb. After his march across the path, he executes an about face and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.



5. How often are the guards changed?  
Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.



6. What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?

For a person to apply for guard duty at the tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed 30."

Other requirements of the Guard:

They must commit 2 years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives. They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform {fighting} or the tomb in any way. After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb. There are only 400 presently worn. The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.



The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt.

There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform. Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror. The first six months of duty a guard cannot talk to anyone, nor watch TV. All off duty time is spent studying the 175 notable people laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery . A guard must memorize who they are and where they are interred. Among the notables are: President Taft, Joe E. Lewis {the boxer} and Medal of Honour winner Audie Murphy, {the most decorated soldier of WWII} of Hollywood fame.

Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.

## ETERNAL REST GRANT THEM O LORD, AND LET PERPETUAL LIGHT SHINE UPON THEM.

In 2003 as Hurricane Isabelle was approaching Washington , DC , our US Senate/House took 2 days off with anticipation of the storm.

On the ABC evening news, it was reported that because of the dangers from the hurricane, the military members assigned the duty of guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier were given permission to suspend the assignment.

They respectfully declined the offer, "No way, Sir!"

Soaked to the skin, marching in the pelting rain of a tropical storm, they said that guarding the Tomb was not just an assignment, it was the highest honour that can be afforded to a serviceperson.

The tomb has been patrolled continuously, 24/7, since 1930.



God Bless and keep them.



## Medic becomes first woman in Royal Navy to be awarded the Military Cross after tending to soldier under Taliban fire

She stands precisely 5ft tall in her everyday shoes and her smile is disarmingly sweet.

Kate Nesbitt doesn't immediately fit the image of fearless military hero, not off the battlefield at least.

But there are probably few people a critically injured soldier would rather meet in the chaos of a desert gunfight than this 21-yearold blonde in full flight.

*Brave: Medical Assistant Kate Nesbitt receives the Military Cross from the Prince of Wales during investitures at Buckingham Palace in London.*



And the sight of her sprinting through an Afghan war zone under heavy machine gun fire is almost certainly one that Lance Corporal John List will remember for the rest of a life he now owes to her astonishing display of courage.

Kate, a medical assistant serving as an Able Seaman with the Royal Navy, raced 70 yards to the stricken soldier's side as he nearly choked to death from a gunshot wound to the mouth. She cut open a temporary airway and treated him for 45 minutes as rockets whizzed overhead and bullets thudded into the ground nearby.

Yesterday her 'inspirational' bravery was rewarded at Buckingham Palace when she became the Navy's first woman to be invested with the Military Cross.

Then, with a few modest words, she underlined the remarkable spirit of loyalty that bonds Britain's servicemen and women on the front line. 'I promised my friends and comrades I'd be their medic,' she said. 'I promised I'd be there if they ever needed me. They needed me that day - so when the call came, that's just what I did.'

Kate, from Whiteleigh, Plymouth, stepped into the history books as only the second woman to be awarded the MC, one of Britain's highest gallantry awards, as well as becoming the only female MC Wren. Presenting her award, the Prince of Wales bowed to what he called her 'extraordinary' heroism.

Her citation read: 'Under fire and under pressure her commitment and courage were inspirational and made the difference between life and death.'

*All in a day's work: Just after the incident, with blood still on her face and still wearing surgical gloves*

Kate Nesbitt becomes the first woman in the Royal Navy to be awarded the Military Cross.

Kate, who works at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, was attached as a medic to 1st Battalion The Rifles on duty in the Marjah district of Helmand when her unit came under fire from a Taliban ambush.



'I heard "man down, man down" on the radio and I knew I was needed,' she said. 'I got the location details and just sprinted.

'When I first saw him, I didn't think he was going to make it. A round had gone through his top lip, ruptured his jaw and come out of his neck. He was struggling to breathe and choking on his own blood.

'Bullets were whizzing around my head and shoulders and hitting the ground all around us. The Taliban knew they'd got someone and they were targeting us.'

Lance Corporal List, who is also 21 and from Devon, was airlifted to hospital. Back in the battle zone, Kate still had his blood on her face in a photograph taken before she moved on to her next casualty.

Back in the UK and having made a good recovery, Lance Corporal List said of the incident: 'I felt the impact go through my jaw, and the next thing I knew I was on my back. I thought that was it. Then Kate appeared from nowhere, reassuring me everything would be OK. Kate says to be called a hero is too much. I say it could never be enough.'



Kate comes from a Naval family - her father Clive Nesbitt served in the Royal Marines for 22 years, her brother Dan is on HMS Ocean, and her other brother Lee is undergoing medical training with the Royal Marines.

Her father revealed she had not told him exactly what she did - to stop him worrying. Mr. Nesbitt said: 'I was totally surprised when I found out about it from the authorities. She'd completely played it down and only mentioned it in passing.'

Yesterday at the palace she held her medal for the cameras and declared: 'It was the biggest shock when I got the news. But being here today made it all seem real. It has been so special. When I looked over and saw my mum and dad in the audience, it was the proudest day of my life.'



Saved: L/Cpl John List's neck wound was dressed by MA Nesbitt under heavy fire from the Taliban. He now has the date of the incident tattooed on his arm.

Also honoured for his bravery was Lance Corporal Colin Spooner, who carried on giving orders after receiving 48 shrapnel wounds when a mortar round landed behind him in Afghanistan. The 22-year-old from Selby, North Yorkshire, refused to be carried back to his transport, fearing that the burden would put his men at risk, and instead insisted on walking. Yesterday he said he would do the same again, and despite constant pain and difficulty standing for long periods, he hopes to return to Afghanistan.



## Britain's Behemoth Submarine

Britain launches massive sub that can hear a ship from across the Atlantic.

June 08, 2007.

She is four years late and a massive 900 million over budget. But when the Royal Navy's super-sub HMS Astute finally arrived, she made for an awesome sight.

More complex than the space shuttle, and able to circumnavigate the globe without surfacing, the



7,400-ton monster is the largest and deadliest hunter-killer submarine ever built.

The Duchess of Cornwall cracked a bottle of beer brewed by the sub's crew on her prow to officially name the "boat", in Navy jargon, before she was gingerly wheeled out of her shed at the stately speed of one metre per minute.

The specifications for Britain's biggest submarine make for mind-boggling reading, but it was the sheer size of the black behemoth which made its mark on the 10,000 dockyard workers, schoolchildren, VIPs and Navy personnel invited to the ceremony in Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria.

As long as a football pitch, at 318ft, and as wide as four double-Decker buses, HMS Astute is a third longer than any sub which has gone before.

Her nuclear-powered engine will propel her through the water at more than 20 knots, yet the UK's first stealth sub makes less noise than a baby dolphin, making her as good as undetectable by enemy ships. Astute's sonar is so advanced that if she was lying in

the English Channel she would be able to detect ships leaving New York harbour 3,000 nautical miles away (although the details of how she can do this are classified).

The nuclear reactor will never need refuelling, and with an ability to make oxygen and drinking water out of sea water, the sub could stay underwater for its entire 25-year lifespan were it not for the needs of the crew.

Once she goes into operation in 2009, Astute will carry a 98-man crew and stay at sea for 12 weeks on a routine patrol.

She will carry 38 Tomahawk cruise missiles, with a range of 1,240 miles, meaning Astute could attack targets in North Africa with pinpoint accuracy while sitting off the coast of Plymouth.

Spearfish torpedoes will also be on board for attacking ships and other subs.

But Astute will not carry nuclear weapons; the UK's Trident missiles are launched from the Vanguard class of submarines.

The Navy's submarine chief Captain Mike Davis-Marks said: "The Astute class of submarines will quite simply be unbeatable worldwide for many years to come.



The massive submarine is slowly moved into position

"Astute will have a capability that will keep us right at the top of the premiership of the world's navies, the Manchester United of submarine nations. With



The Astute submarine under construction at Barrow.

our proud heritage, Britain deserves nothing less."

Astute is the first of four vessels to be built by BAE Systems at a total cost of 3.85 billion, or 960 million each.

She will be joined by HMS Ambush, HMS Artful and HMS Audacious, with an option for a further three subs to come.

As the Duchess of Cornwall named the sub, the first such ceremony she has carried out, she said: "As an admiral's wife myself, I am delighted to be in Barrow

-in-Furness today for the naming and launching of Astute. I shall follow her progress with particular interest and hope to see her in the near future."

She was presented with a retriever puppy, similar to one which appears on the Astute's crest, which will be donated to Guide Dogs for the Blind.

The boat, which will replace the Swiftsure and Trafalgar classes, will be gently lowered into the water. It will eventually be based in Faslane on the Clyde in Scotland.



Camilla officially launched the submarine at the ceremony

*The front cover picture was submitted by Maj Neil Hamer and was taken at Rutherglen Memorial Park. Neil was unable to identify it, so I sought information from our weapon 'Guru', SSgt Barry Irons. His response follows. Thanks Barry. Ed.*

The following will give you an overall picture that I trust will answer your query for the good Major. It is, as you will see, a trench mortar. From all accounts quite effective and maybe a bit unique in that I have not seen one here before that I can remember. Took me quite a while to track down.

One giveaway is the wide spacing of the shallow lands shown just at the top of the muzzle in the photo. The other was there was no obvious breech block to be seen in the photo, along the lower angle of the barrel. If it was some sort of gun, the rifling of the lands would be more defined, much closer together and more uniform around the area of the muzzle in the photo.

Also the size, but what had me a little confused was the attached "tube" mounted along the barrel on the side, which could only be a type of recuperator system, albeit a fairly primitive one, but it must have done the job. Another clue is the round tube like container mounted on the barrel near the top. This was a standard practice of the time, (and indeed later) to mount an oil reservoir to replenish the basic recoil system as it was used up or leaked, (more likely the case).

There you have it, an interesting piece, and looks like it had been repainted recently. If you look closely, you can see small areas of the darker green showing through underneath where some damage has occurred. But, for me that it has had some attention is most reassuring. The handle type structure shown in the photo, I think is a local "mod" for some reason at the time. Also I think it has been twisted out of place, it may have laid flatter to the side for a ready action ammo rack. ???



*This article submitted by the 2/2 Field Regiment Association and special mention is made of Brig Keith Rossi. Ed*

ANZAC day for 2010 has again passed successfully for the 2/2 Field Regiment Association. About thirty members of the association marched behind the 2/2 banner through Melbourne to the Shrine of Remembrance, proudly led by veteran Frank Williams.

The sad part of ANZAC day is the diminishing number of WW2 veterans able to participate. This unavoidable situation is balanced somewhat by the growing number of descendants of the Regiment who march in place of the veterans and who are determined to keep the history of the 2/2 Field Regiment alive as part of Australian heritage.

Of special pride to the association was the appointment this year of our president Brigadier Keith Rossi (Rtd) AM OBE RFD ED (Victoria) to lead the ANZAC day march in Melbourne. Keith is also a member of the RSL State Executive, is the RSL historian and is well known for his valuable work over many years in these and other positions. Keith was a sergeant in the Regiment at the end of WW2 but stayed in the Army and rose to the rank of Brigadier, which speaks volumes about his ability. Keith also saw service in Vietnam.

Keith has been prominent in the 2/2 Field Regiment Association for as long as anyone can remember and it has prospered under his guidance as president. Apart from Keith, the 2/2 Field Regiment Association committee is now composed of descendants of the Regiment, but despite this the Association's activities and some recent achievements that are led and encouraged by Keith are worth mentioning.

The annual luncheon for veterans and descendants of the Regiment is always well attended. These luncheons display a large photographic and memorabilia collection to the keen interest of attendees.

Continued publication of the association newsletter, Action Front, first published in 1939. The current editor is Lachlan McPherson who carries on the tradition with pride. The last veteran editor was the late Phil Wortham whose editorials and comments on WW2 history were outstanding. This newsletter has been continuously published for 71 years.

The excellent financial position of the association is well managed by Treasurer Kim Taunt.

The purchase from the AWM of a full copy of the war diary of the 2/2 Field Regiment 1939-1945. This diary is not available online and the association has purchased a copy for study and reference by veterans and descendants. It has been well worth it.

The republication in 2006, of the Official History of the 2/2 Field Regiment, 6<sup>th</sup> Division, 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF, 1939-1945. This is in Compact Disc format and is available to the public.

The establishment of an Association website, [2nd2ndfieldregiment.org.au](http://2nd2ndfieldregiment.org.au).

This website receives many favourable comments and was established and is maintained by Grant Bedson.

Investigations in 2008 led to verification of the location of the two gun stand by the Regiment on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1941 high on the forward slopes of the Brallos Pass, central Greece, part of the famous Thermopylae line. This stand by two 18/25 pdr guns of A Troop, 3<sup>rd</sup> battery, delayed the advance of German troops into Greece by a vital 24 hours and enabled defensive positions to be established further into the pass which further delayed the enemy at their considerable cost. A Spirit of Anzac study tour to Greece in 2008 was disappointed

when they failed to find this site. This occurred because the road system has changed dramatically since 1941. Subsequent reference to the War Diary of the Regiment found an original report by the officer in charge of the 2 guns, VX521 LT Jack Anderson MC which gave a map reference of the position. Using this information and original maps supplied by the AWM the position has now been



This marvellous photo of Keith was taken after the conclusion of the march, Apr. '10

established on Google Earth. This information will enable future generations to locate this proud battle site which sadly saw the loss of seven 2/2 gunners. The position is very close to 38deg 46min 59.55seconds N, 22deg 27min 05.20seconds E. Jack Anderson sadly passed away in 2009.

There is planning for an official tour of Greece in 2011 by 6<sup>th</sup> Div veterans to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the defence of Greece. Keith is an adviser to the Minister for Veterans affairs about this tour. It may be possible for the Regimental Association to erect a commemorative plaque at the Brallos Pass battle site during this tour.

Thank you and well done Keith for ANZAC Day and your many years of work on behalf of the 2/2 Field Regiment Association.



THE HON. GREG COMBET AM MP  
Minister for Defence Materiel and Science

Government surrenders guns to Townsville

The Federal Government will surrender two, one hundred year old naval guns to Townsville City Council, the Minister for Defence Materiel and Science Greg Combet announced on a visit to Townsville today.

The move follows the Federal Government's decision last year to put Jezzine Barracks into community hands by transferring the ownership to the Council.

Mr Combet said that the two historical guns, which are located at Townsville's Kissing Point Fort, would now be owned by the Council and hence the local community.

"Since the turn of the twentieth century these guns have stood guard over Townsville," Mr Combet said.

"Now the community of Townsville will stand guard over the heritage and preservation of these guns for future generations."

Mr Combet said that Jezzine Barracks and two naval guns at Kissing Point Fort were an important part of Townsville's long and enduring military history.

"The Federal Government recognises Townsville's long and lasting military history and the important role that places like Jezzine Barracks and Kissing Point Fort have played in that history," Mr Combet said.

"We are also committed to ensuring a long and lasting role for Townsville in future of the Australian Defence Force."

The Federal Government has also made significant investment in the expansion of Lavarack Barracks, making way for an additional 730 troops who will soon call Townsville home.

Bob Howard (Robert L. Howard) a Medal of Honor winner and one of the most highly decorated soldiers from the Vietnam War died today (December 23, 2009) at age 70 in Waco, Texas.

Retired Army Col. Robert Howard was a constant presence on the US military scene even after he retired and he always took part in many patriotic events and helped honor the wounded soldiers at Purple Heart Ceremonies.



Signature banner courtesy of Military Signatures.

This article is dedicated to Robert L. Howard, one of America's most decorated soldiers. He served five tours in Vietnam and is the only soldier in our nation's history to be nominated for the Congressional Medal of Honor three times for three separate actions within a thirteen month period. The first nomination was downgraded to Distinguished Service Cross and the third to Silver Star. He received a direct appointment from Master Sergeant to 1st Lieutenant in 1969, and was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Richard M. Nixon at the White House in 1971. His other awards for valor include the Distinguished Service Cross - our nation's second highest award, the Silver Star - the third highest award, and numerous lesser decorations including eight Purple Hearts. He received his decorations for valor for actions while serving as an NCO (Sergeant First Class).

Robert L. Howard grew up in Opelika, Alabama and enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1956 at age seventeen. He retired as a full Colonel in 1992 after 36 years service. During Vietnam, he served in the U.S. Army Special Forces (Green Berets) and spent most of his five tours in the super-secret MACV-SOG (Military Assistance Command Vietnam Studies and Observations Group) also known as Special Operations Group, which ran classified cross-border operations into Laos, Cambodia, and North Vietnam. These men carried out some of the most daring and dangerous missions ever conducted by the U.S. military. The under strength sixty-man recon company at Kontum in which he served was the Vietnam War's most highly decorated unit of its size with five Medals of Honor. It was for his actions while serving on a mission to rescue a fellow soldier

in Cambodia, that he was submitted for the Medal of Honor the third time for his extraordinary heroism.

Robert L. Howard is said to be our nation's most decorated soldier from the Vietnam War. He was the last Vietnam Special Forces Medal of Honor recipient still on active duty when he retired on Sept. 29, 1992. His story is told in John Plaster's excellent book, SOG The Secret Wars of America's Commandos in Vietnam.

It is important for future generations that we remember our military heroes and the great sacrifices they have made for us in the name of Freedom.

*Excerpt from John Plaster's recent book SECRET COMMANDOS Behind Enemy Lines with the Elite Warriors of SOG - pg. 303:*

"The day that President Nixon draped the Medal of Honor's pale blue ribbon around Howard's neck, I sat before the TV in my parents' living room watching the evening news. Coming on top of his previous decorations - the Distinguished Service Cross and multiple Silver and Bronze Stars, plus eight Purple Hearts - Howard's combat awards exceeded those of Audie Murphy, America's legendary World War II hero, until then our most highly decorated serviceman. At last, Howard would get his due. I flipped station to station, but not one of the networks - not CBS or NBC or ABC - could find ten seconds to mention Captain Robert Howard or his indomitable courage. I found nothing about him in the newspapers. Twisted by the antiwar politics of that era, many in the media believed that to recognize a heroic act was to glorify war. They simply chose not to cover the ceremony. It might as well not have happened."

DOUBLE AWARDS: The act of July 9, 1918 was further clarified in September, then again in February 1919, to stipulate that no person could receive more than ONE Medal of Honor. Previously there had been 19 DOUBLE AWARDS of the Medal, but hereafter, while there were provisions for second and consecutive awards of lesser medals to be made and noted with appropriate ribbon devices, no more than ONE Medal of Honor could be awarded.



## Medal of Honor citation

The President of the United States in the name of The Congress takes pride in presenting the MEDAL OF HONOR to

Wounded 14 times in 54 months of combat duty in Vietnam, Robert Howard was awarded 8 Purple Hearts and was believed to be the most decorated living American.

FIRST LIEUTENANT  
ROBERT L. HOWARD  
UNITED STATES ARMY

for service as set forth in the following CITATION:

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. 1st Lt. Howard (then Sfc.), distinguished himself while serving as platoon sergeant of an American-Vietnamese platoon which was on a mission to rescue a missing American soldier in enemy controlled territory in the Republic of Vietnam. The platoon had left its helicopter landing zone and was moving out on its mission when it was attacked by an estimated 2-company force. During the initial engagement, 1st Lt. Howard was wounded and his weapon destroyed by a grenade explosion. 1st Lt. Howard saw his platoon leader had been wounded seriously and was exposed to fire. Although unable to walk, and weaponless, 1st Lt. Howard unhesitatingly crawled through a hail of fire to retrieve his wounded leader. As 1st Lt. Howard was administering first aid and removing the officer's equipment, an enemy bullet struck 1 of the ammunition pouches on the lieutenant's belt, detonating several magazines of ammunition. 1st Lt. Howard momentarily sought cover and then realizing that he must rejoin the platoon, which had been disorganized by the enemy attack, he again began dragging the seriously wounded officer toward the platoon area. Through his outstanding example of indomitable courage and bravery, 1st Lt. Howard was able to rally the platoon into an organized defense force. With complete disregard for his safety, 1st Lt. Howard crawled from position to position, administering first aid to the wounded, giving encouragement to the defenders and directing their fire on the encircling enemy. For 3 1/2 hours 1st Lt. Howard's small force and supporting aircraft successfully repulsed enemy attacks and finally were in sufficient control to permit the landing of rescue helicopters. 1st Lt. Howard personally supervised the loading of his men and did not leave the bullet-swept landing zone until all were aboard safely. 1st Lt. Howard's gallantry in action, his complete devotion to the welfare of his men at the risk of his life were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army.



*A fitting tribute to one of the most beautiful things  
you will ever see fly and to a proud history!!*

## SR-71 Blackbird



In April 1986, following an attack on American soldiers in a Berlin disco, President Reagan ordered the bombing of Muammar Qaddafi's terrorist camps in Libya. My duty was to fly over Libya and take photos recording the damage our F-111's had inflicted. Qaddafi had established a 'line of death,' a territorial marking across the Gulf of Sidra, swearing to shoot down any intruder that crossed the boundary. On the morning of April 15, I rocketed past the line at 2,125 mph.



I was piloting the SR-71 spy plane, the world's fastest jet, accompanied by a Marine Major (Walt), the aircraft's reconnaissance systems officer (RSO).

We had crossed into Libya and were approaching our final turn over the bleak desert landscape

when Walt informed me that he was receiving missile launch signals. I quickly increased our speed, calculating the time it would take for the weapons most likely - SA-2 and SA-4 surface-to-air missiles capable of Mach 5 - to reach our altitude.



I estimated that we could beat the rocket-powered missiles to the turn and stayed our course, betting our lives on the plane's performance.

After several agonizingly long seconds, we made the turn and blasted toward the Mediterranean.

'You might want to pull it back,' Walt suggested.

It was then that I noticed I still had the throttles full forward. The plane was flying a mile every 1.6 seconds, well above our Mach 3.2 limit. It was the fastest we would ever fly.

I pulled the throttles to idle just south of Sicily, but we still overran the refuelling tanker awaiting us over Gibraltar.

Scores of significant aircraft have been produced in the 100 years of flight, following the achievements of the Wright brothers, which we celebrate in December. Aircraft such as the Boeing 707, the F-86 Sabre Jet, and the P-51



Mustang are among the important machines that have flown our skies. But the SR-71, also known as the Blackbird, stands alone as a significant contributor to Cold War victory and as the fastest plane ever - and only 93 Air Force pilots ever steered the 'sled,' as we called our aircraft.

The SR-71 was the brainchild of Kelly Johnson, the famed Lockheed designer who created the P-38, the F-104 Starfighter, and the U-2. After the Soviets shot down Gary Powers' U-2 in 1960, Johnson began to develop an aircraft that would fly three miles higher and five times faster than the spy plane-and still be capable of photographing your license plate. However, flying at 2,000 mph would create intense heat on the aircraft's skin.



Lockheed engineers used a titanium alloy to construct more than 90 percent of the SR-71, creating special tools and manufacturing procedures to hand-build each of the 40 planes.

Special heat-resistant fuel, oil, and hydraulic fluids that would function at 85,000 feet and higher also had to be developed.

In 1962, the first Blackbird successfully flew, and In 1966, the same year I graduated from high school, the Air Force began flying operational SR-71 missions.

I came to the program in 1983 with a sterling record and a recommendation from my commander, completing the weeklong interview and meeting Walt, my partner for the next four years. He would ride four feet behind me,

working all the cameras, radios, and electronic jamming equipment. I joked that if we were ever captured, he was the spy and I was just the driver. He told me to keep the pointy end forward.

One day, high above Arizona, we were monitoring the radio traffic of all the mortal airplanes below us.

First, a Cessna pilot asked the air traffic controllers to check his ground speed. 'Ninety knots,' ATC replied.

A Bonanza soon made the same request. 'One-twenty on the ground,' was the reply.

To our surprise, a navy F-18 came over the radio with a ground speed check. I knew exactly what he was doing. Of course, he had a ground speed indicator in his cockpit, but he wanted to let all the bug-smashers in the valley know what real speed was. 'Dusty 52, we show you at 620 on the ground' ATC responded.

The situation was too ripe. I heard the click of Walt's mike button in the rear seat.

In his most innocent voice, Walt startled the controller by asking for a ground speed check from 81,000 feet, clearly above controlled airspace.

In a cool, professional voice, the controller replied, 'Aspen 20, I show you at 1,982 knots on the ground.'

We did not hear another transmission on that frequency all the way to the coast.

The Blackbird always showed us something new, each aircraft possessing its own unique personality.

In time, we realized we were flying a national treasure. When we taxied out of our revetments for takeoff, people took notice. Traffic congregated near the airfield fences, because everyone wanted to see and hear the mighty SR-71. You could not be a part of this program and

not come to love the airplane. Slowly, she revealed her secrets to us as we earned her trust.

One moonless night, while flying a routine training mission over the Pacific, I wondered what the sky would look like from 84,000 feet if the cockpit lighting were dark. While heading home on a straight course, I slowly turned down all of the lighting, reducing the glare and revealing the night sky.

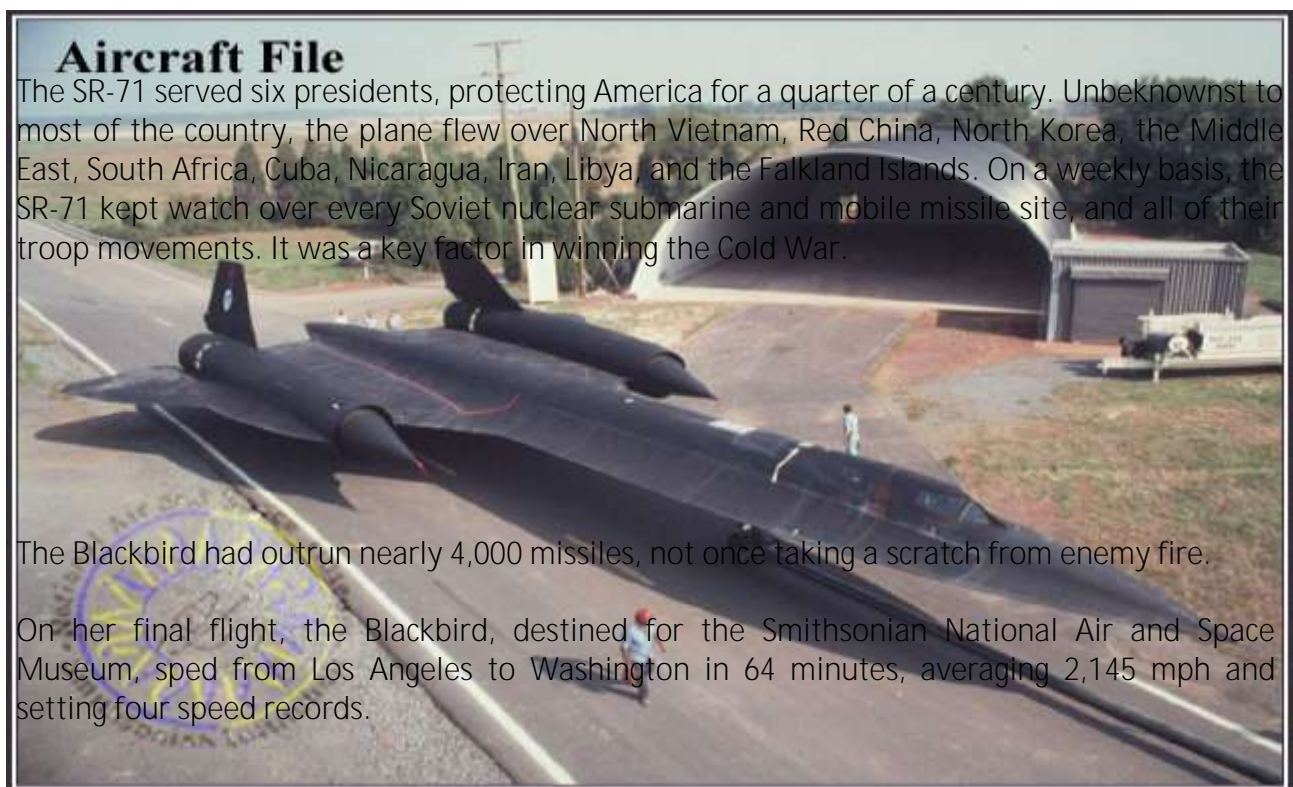
Within seconds, I turned the lights back up, fearful that the jet would know and somehow punish me. But my desire to see the sky overruled my caution, I dimmed the lighting again. To my amazement, I saw a bright light outside my window. As my eyes adjusted to the view, I realized that the brilliance was the broad expanse of the Milky Way, now a gleaming stripe across the sky.

Where dark spaces in the sky had usually existed, there were now dense clusters of sparkling stars. Shooting stars flashed across the canvas every few seconds. It was like a fireworks display with no sound.

I knew I had to get my eyes back on the instruments, and reluctantly I brought my attention back inside. To my surprise, with the cockpit lighting still off, I could see every gauge, lit by starlight. In the plane's mirrors, I could see the eerie shine of my gold spacesuit incandescently illuminated in a celestial glow. I stole one last glance out the window.

Despite our speed, we seemed still before the heavens, humbled in the radiance of a much greater power. For those few moments, I felt a part of something far more significant than anything we were doing in the plane. The sharp sound of Walt's voice on the radio brought me back to the tasks at hand as I prepared for our descent.

The most significant cost was tanker support, and in 1990, confronted with budget cutbacks, the Air Force retired the SR-71.



### Aircraft File

The SR-71 served six presidents, protecting America for a quarter of a century. Unbeknownst to most of the country, the plane flew over North Vietnam, Red China, North Korea, the Middle East, South Africa, Cuba, Nicaragua, Iran, Libya, and the Falkland Islands. On a weekly basis, the SR-71 kept watch over every Soviet nuclear submarine and mobile missile site, and all of their troop movements. It was a key factor in winning the Cold War.

The Blackbird had outrun nearly 4,000 missiles, not once taking a scratch from enemy fire.

On her final flight, the Blackbird, destined for the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, sped from Los Angeles to Washington in 64 minutes, averaging 2,145 mph and setting four speed records.



# Aboriginal Soldier & Elder

Gunner Lavanda (Ben) Blakeney OAM

*Colonel Bruce Stark (Retd)*

Lavanda Blakeney, or Ben the name he used and was most widely known by, was born at Dulwich Hill, Sydney on 9th March 1937, the seventh child of Aborigines John and Ethel and one of twelve children. His service in the Australian Regular Army commenced in April 1958 and was preceded by two years both as a national serviceman and a member of the Citizen Military Forces. After initial recruit training at Kapooka and Corps training at the School of Artillery, he was posted as a Gunner/Driver to 101st Field Battery then preparing to replace A Field Battery in Malaya. He quickly made his mark and endeared himself to many with his somewhat direct and forthright manner but, it should be added, not always to the liking of those of more senior rank. Good fortune smiled however and he left with the Battery for Malaya in September 1959.

His popularity amongst his fellow Gunners can best be illustrated by an incident involving his attendance at a picture theatre in Butterworth, Malaya. He was denied entry to the dress circle of the theatre because he was not 'white'. The manager wanted him to sit downstairs with the locals. Members of the Battery accompanying him were having none of this **saying, 'He's one of us'**, and threatening blue murder to the theatre staff. Thankfully peace was restored by the intervention of the Battery Orderly Sergeant and Ben sat with his mates in the dress circle.

*He was denied entry to the dress circle of the theatre because he was not white.*

Ben was a member of the line laying party for the Battery. He was a good driver, physically strong, hard working and a valued member of the team. Towards the end of the first year he, together with other members of the Battery, were temporarily employed as infantry both in patrolling and ambushing. This occurred at a time when the Emergency in Malaya was coming to an end and the requirement for artillery in its traditional fire support role was greatly reduced. It was on one such patrol that Ben provided a demonstration of his Aboriginal heritage.

He was a member of a patrol led by Lieutenant Graeme Burgess that had harboured for the night near a jungle track south east of Kuala Kangsar. Intelligence had been received that up to four Communist terrorists (CTS) had been seen in the area. On the following morning footprints made by hockey boots, a form of footwear favoured by the CT, were noted on the track. The tracker team from 1st Battalion Royal Australian Regiment were called in to follow up the sightings which they proceeded to do with alacrity. Sometime later the tracker team returned having followed the footprints back to where the patrol had harboured for the night. It soon became obvious that these had been made by a member of the patrol. Further investigation found that Ben, who was unable to sleep, had gone on a walkabout in the dark wearing his hockey boots which were only allowed when in harbour for the night. Ben completed his two years of service in Malaya and returned with the Battery to join 4th Field Regiment at Wacol in October 1961. He continued to serve with the Regiment until discharged at the completion of his engagement in April 1964.

*.. one such patrol that Ben provided a demonstration of his Aboriginal heritage.*

His acting career began soon after in 1966, as an extra drinking at the bar in the film 'They're a Weird Mob'. His brother recalls him appearing in the television series 'Homicide' and 'Skippy' and also as a tracker in the 1970 film 'Ned Kelly' with Mick Jagger. The highlight of this phase of his life was undoubtedly the portrayal of the spirit of the famous Aborigine Bennelong on top of the Sydney Opera House at its opening in 1973. He was asked to perform this role by Sir Asher Joel who was chairman of the committee to organise the official opening of the Opera House by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. On his web site Ben later wrote about the day the nation looked up to me when I said 'I am Bennelong' and afterwards meeting the Queen and being 'invited for cups of tea and cucumber sandwiches or whatever'.

In 1977 he joined the Commonwealth Police, the first Aborigine to do so. Later in 1979, the year the Australian Federal Police was formed he was selected for the United Nations peacekeeping force in Cyprus. He performed this role for twelve months and is remembered as a dedicated and effective officer, being awarded the UN Medal and the Overseas Service Police Medal. His police career ended in 1984 when he joined the Australian

Protective Service in which he served until retirement in 1992.

Ben was very proud of his indigenous Australian heritage and he loved and respected his culture and ancestors. Through arrangements with the ACT Schools Authority he visited many schools to give talks to children on Aboriginal culture and to teach them to throw boomerangs which he made himself. His pupils were not restricted to children and on one occasion included a Governor General.

He was an active member of the Canberra and Queanbeyan community and was generous in support of many organizations including the TPI Association and the RSL. His work in support of the community was recognised in 1994 with the award of a Medal of the Order of Australia. Ben Blakeney never forgot his Gunner beginnings and was a regular participant in RAA Association functions in the ACT including Anzac Day marches. He died at his Queanbeyan home on 28th December 2003. He was farewelled by a packed and overflowing chapel at the Norwood Park Crematorium in Canberra on 2nd January 2004. Those in attendance included local politicians, the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police, serving and retired Army and Police colleagues as well as representatives from the many organizations that were part of Ben's life. He never married and is survived by five of his twelve siblings.

Sources: Arthur Burke, Editor Tiger Rag; Canberra Times 1,3 and 6 January 2004; Daily Telegraph 1 January 2004;



Missing In action: Two Yeoman Warders of the Tower of London, Jimmy James and Crawford Butler, return the Anglesea Barracks cannon, presenting it to RSM 12/4DRTR WO1 John Stonebridge in front of assembled mess members.

## Blowing lid on cannon

BRITISH Beefeaters who kept an Australian trophy for **"safekeeping"** in the Tower of London have returned the object to its rightful home.

The trophy, a small wooden replica of a Napoleonic-era naval muzzle-loading cannon, was donated to the Anglesea Barracks Sergeants Mess in 1956 by HMAS Wagga. It has since travelled the world after being regularly liberated from the mess by members of ships, squadrons and units from Australia and other nations.

Yeoman Warder Jimmy James spied the trophy during a visit on board HMAS Sydney in 2009 and relocated the cannon to the **Yeoman's Warder's mess in the Tower of London.**

He and fellow Yeoman Warder Crawford Butler marched the cannon into Anglesea Barracks on February 26 and presented it to

WO1 John Stonebridge, RSM 12/40 Royal Tasmanian Regt. In keeping with tradition, the Yeoman Warders also paid a fee of \$400 to Legacy.

WO1 Stonebridge said the cannon had been missing for almost a decade so "it was nice to see it had .made its way home".

In the past 54 years, the cannon has travelled on the USS Missouri and USS Carl Vinson, been on operations in the Middle East and East Timor, been passed between US nuclear submarines under the Arctic ice and been on many Australian, UK, US, Canadian and NZ ships.

The cannon and its base are covered with small plaques detailing its travels. *Courtesy Army News Apr 1, '10*



# How to build an army

*This article courtesy of ARMY  
The Soldiers' Newspaper*

**It's no easy task to create a military force from scratch in a country where recruits will go straight from training into action. Cpl Damian Shovell sits down with Australian trainers in Iraq.**

**If there's one lesson the trainers in the Australian Army Training Team Iraq (AATTI) helped instil in almost 3000 trainees in the first Iraqi brigade to complete their first phase of training, it's to adapt and overcome.**

Charged with mentoring and advising the training of a new Iraqi brigade, and faced with the constant challenges of isolation, language barriers, enemy threat and occasional equipment and food shortages, the members of the first AATTI rotation took a "lead by example" approach that ensured their success.

Talking with trainers as they neared the end of their six-month tour, they listed some of the vagaries of training a battalion that will soon be lining-up to fight insurgents alongside the Coalition and agreed it had been a life lesson – for all concerned.

**WO2 Peter McNeil surmised, "You couldn't take anything for granted, from personal security to .. the translator turning up, because he or his family could have been threatened," he said.**

The instructors said some of the Iraqi recruits **didn't even have boots until the last five weeks of training**, because the supply trucks were ambushed, which also at times affected food supplies.

These problems seem trivial compared to the Vehicle Bourne Improvised Explosive Device attack on August 7, that killed 10 recruits and injured more than 40 (some of whom had only been in the Army for two days), and the earlier mortar attack that wounded several trainees.

And these were just some of the physical challenges. WO2 Malcolm Cockburn said there was also a need to remove some pre-existing attitudes between officers and soldiers, still

lingering from the old Iraqi Army, as the AATTI moved to shift the training responsibility of soldiers from officers to NCOs – a practice that **was initially resisted, as "knowledge is power",** and those who had it opposed relinquishing it.

**"I think one of the biggest things that we've achieved over here is the amount of work the NCOs – the squad leaders and the sergeants – are actually doing. They're actually running the platoon and running all the training," he said.**

**"The seed is planted right at the base of their training, we've shown them how much information a soldier should know, why he should know it, who should be teaching it, and how the rank structure works."**



WO2 Tony White teaches Iraqis building clearance techniques.

The Australian trainers were involved in three levels of training, beginning with integrating the officers, who had been trained in Jordan (using what WO2 McNeil described as old Arabic methodologies), with the NCOs trained by the Coalition, before introducing them to the recruits.

Initially the trainers said they detected a minor power struggle between the two, as in the old Iraqi army, officers conducted all training and the new officers felt the need to stamp their authority on the NCOs.

**".. We then ran a four-week 'Kapooka' and then we conducted a four-week infantry IET course, which combined individual soldier skills up to squad level," WO2 Cockburn said.**

The trainers were with the trainees almost the

full day, beginning with PT in the morning before joining them for breakfast in the mess.

Throughout their interaction, lessons were being learnt on both sides, as trainers learnt to understand the cultural differences that exist within the many different tribal groups and religious denominations that comprise the new army, which had, they said, resulted in very few



Sgt McLachlan and Sgt Paul Clemence supervise Iraqis during a range shoot.

fights and certainly no deaths between the groups and laughed that the same differences in religious adherence exists with the Iraqi Army as does in the Australian.

Religious and cultural considerations were also taken into account in the training program, with three of the five daily prayer times coinciding with trainee meal times.

Another difference trainers became accustomed to was trainees conducting most physical activity late at night.

**“For example, in the morning they’ll do their drill when it’s cool, because in the summertime it gets to over 50 degrees,” they said.**

A lengthy lunch and prayer break then follows, and afterward the trainees conduct lessons within classrooms to escape the afternoon heat.

**“We found they wouldn’t do much of an afternoon, then they’d go away and have dinner, and we’d quite often find that if we’d advised them on something, such as building up their defences, we’d find that they’d do it very late at night, and we’d come back in the morning and**

**everything was done.”**

The Australians said one of the keys to their success and the acceptance of their advice hinged on their good rapport with trainees, and more especially company commanders, which was built as the Iraqis witnessed the Australians living in exactly the same conditions as they did – sharing the same accommodation standard, the same water and facility restrictions, and even eating the same food at the same mess.

The trainers said that using this rapport, they were able to attend the lessons being delivered by the Iraqi NCOs and step in or advise when they needed to, being conscious of not offending or making any Iraqi NCO lose face.

**“If they lose face in front of their men, or especially their officers, it’s very hard for them to come back from that,” WO2 McNeil said.**

WO2 McNeil said that the best way to correct lessons was tactfully and privately after a lesson was delivered.

**“Obviously a fair bit of diplomacy comes into it, and it’s all about not breaking them down and having them lose face.”**

Although the first AATTI rotation has now completed its phase of training with the first Iraqi brigade, and a second AATTI rotation has now started with a new brigade, WO2 Cockburn said their trainees will continue under the advice and mentoring of US personnel, as they develop collective training at platoon and company level, and the new brigade will benefit from the new Australian trainers.

**“The soldiers themselves trust and understand how good the Australian soldier is – if you say or do one thing they’ll mimic you in every way,” he said.**

**“They’re out there watching, their NCO’s now have the ability to teach. The NCO’s and soldiers never had this power before, we’ve shown them that and the officers can now see what the NCO’s are capable of.”**

## THE AUSSIE GUNNERS IN AFGHANISTAN

The Aussie Gunners of 'Brumby Troop' serving with the British Army are a long way from home and it has been a long time since they have seen family and friends.

The 4th Royal Australian Artillery Brumby Troop, from the 8/12th Medium Regiment in Darwin, has spent the past four months combating dusty days and plenty of sunshine deployed on Operation Herrick in the Helmand Province. The Aussies Gunners are deployed to Afghanistan under a bilateral arrangement with the UK Army and are serving with the British Army's 1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Armadillo. The environment and conditions are harsh, but without fail these boys are upbeat about what they are achieving and how they are fairing. Despite a harsh working environment and ever



present enemy threat, the Aussie Gunners maintain their professionalism and dedication to their job, making the best of their situation. The Gunners themselves have very little in the way of creature comforts and in true Aussie style have fashioned their own 'home made' wire furniture and often enjoy a match of table tennis. Although their location is desolate, the surroundings are simple and basic requirements are met, the Gunners themselves are with high spirits and good humour. Their job is seven days a week and 24 hours a day. As well as their main task of firing the guns, they also provide local defence of the FOB by manning defensive positions on their outer perimeter. In a desolate location within the Helmand province the Gunners have had their fair share of Royalty with a visit from Princess Mary of Denmark. The Gunners have also been visited by Commander of Australia's Joint Task Force 633, Major General John Cantwell and Deputy Commander Joint Task Force 633 Brigadier Wayne Budd.

The Aussie gunners arrived in Helmand Province in late September, having left Australia in early March to complete six months of pre-deployment training in the United Kingdom with their British host unit. The Australian Gunners are deployed as part of the UK-led Task Force Helmand and form part of the gun-line supporting operations in the province.

As they near the end of their deployment in southern Afghanistan, the Aussie Gunners are looking forward to spending time with family and friends.

## Digger hails wife as real hero

Article from: Sunday Mail by Elissa Doherty  
December 27, 2009

DIGGER SCOTT CALVERT IS RISKING HIS LIFE IN AFGHANISTAN - BUT HE SAYS HIS WIFE HAS MADE THE REAL SACRIFICE.

Capt Calvert, 35, has been serving in one of the most dangerous places on earth, a Taliban stronghold in strife-torn Afghanistan.

And back home in Netherby, his wife Megan is battling the gut-wrenching fear of service wives left behind - he may never return; he may never kiss their family goodnight again; never take his son to his first day at school.

The father of two - home for a fleeting visit for Christmas - wants war wives to be publicly acknowledged. He wrote a touching email to the Sunday Mail from his frontline base in Afghanistan's Helmand Province, paying tribute to the families back home, without whom he says he and his colleagues could not do their difficult jobs.

Sent regular copies of the Sunday Mail by his mother-in-law Jan Raison, Capt Calvert was spurred to write after reading an email column by Miranda Starke Young about a wife who rued her husband's frequent interstate business trips.

'My reason for writing is not to highlight the commitment and dedication to duty of my soldiers but to highlight the total selflessness of our families,' wrote an emotional Capt Calvert at 3am from his

*(Continued on page 41)*

camp stretcher earlier this month.

'Megan has kept house, had the courage to leave full-time employment, pursue further study and raise two young children as a single mother. She has had her battles, tears, moments of doubt in her ability as a parent . . . being (both) Mum and Dad. Without her total support, I could not have concentrated on my own preparations and getting my men ready for the complexities of fighting a counter-insurgency in the most dangerous province in the most dangerous country in the world.'

Capt Calvert gave his family the best Christmas present they could have hoped for by coming home for the holidays - and bringing four of his men with him. Calvert children Amelia, 5, and William, 3, tore down the passenger ramp to engulf their father in a hug when he arrived at Adelaide Airport on Christmas Eve, and have barely left his side since.

'The kids were jumping up and down when they found out I was coming home for Christmas,' he said yesterday. 'We have all left families behind, missed births, birthdays, anniversaries, first days of school, plays, concerts, sports days, Christmas .. all of those things that many take for granted. It is our wives and partners that have to work extra hard to make up for our absence.'

Capt Calvert, Australian Contingent Commander in the Royal Australian Artillery (Brumby) Troop, co-ordinates offensive support (mortars, artillery, rockets, attack helicopters and aircraft) from brigade headquarters. The troop, from the 8th/12th Medium Regiment, is the only Australian artillery firing guns in Afghanistan and provides fire support to front-line British and Danish soldiers.

Capt Calvert will return in two weeks to begin another three months of duty.

Mrs. Calvert broke down yesterday when contemplating the dangers of a war zone, where as many as two British soldiers are killed every week. **'I think about the fact the children wouldn't have a father, and they are so little..'** she said, **wiping tears from her eyes.** **'I am realistic . . but I try not to think about it or I get like this. I try to cope by keeping really busy and I don't watch the**

**news.'**

She said she was touched by the loving email from her husband, saying **'that's just what he's like - he's a romantic'.**

**'I was having a particularly bad day and he sent me 12 red roses and a bottle of champagne from Kandahar,' she said. 'You have your moments, when you have another lonely family occasion, had a bad day with the kids. It's everyday stuff which makes me miss him'.**

**Amelia said she missed her dad 'lots and lots' while he was in Afghanistan doing a job she described as 'helping children', but enjoyed having him home: 'We get to go to the aquatic centre, to see the pandas and go to the beach with Dad,' she said.**

Time together is precious, with little internet access in Afghanistan and phone calls limited to 30 minutes a week. Family photos by Scott's bedside at his austere base, and pictures drawn by his children, provide some comfort.

But one of the hardest parts was missing out on his **children growing up.** **'William is now speaking in full sentences and he wasn't doing that when I left,' he said.**

**'I said to Amelia: Where are all your teddy bears? when I went into her room. 'She said she doesn't have them on her bed anymore.'**

**'But I think we are making a difference (in Afghanistan).** Children are going back to school, people are returning to market bazaars, there is increased civilian traffic. What we do is worthwhile enough to leave these guys **for a year.'**

# Regiment's rich history

The lineage of 4 Fd Regt can be traced back to the creation in January 1856 of the St Kilda Rifles, which in turn became part of the Victorian Volunteer Artillery Regiment.

The regiment underwent significant name changes over the years. These include 4 Field Artillery Brigade, 4 Australian Field Artillery Brigade, IV Australian Field Artillery Brigade, IV Brigade Australian Field Artillery, 4 Field Brigade, 4 Field Brigade Royal Artillery Regiment (Militia), 2/4 Field Regiment RAA and 4 Field Regiment RAA (JD) AIF.

4 Fd Regt was raised on May 4, 1960, and comprised 103, 105 and HQ Batteries.

In 1962 the regiment was issued the 105mm L5 Pack Howitzer and on November 19, 1962, Queen Elizabeth II granted the title Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

In April 1965, then prime minister Sir Robert Menzies announced the mobilisation of a battalion group for deployment to Vietnam

Tasked to send a battery with 1RAR, 4 Fd Regt selected 105 Fd Bty, which departed in September 1965.

On the stroke of mid-day on May 1, 4 Fd Regt marched through the city of Townsville. Locals, families and former gunners lined the streets to witness Mayor Les Tyrell grant 4 Fd Regt freedom of entry for only the second time in the regiment's history.

Lt-Co Charles Weller, CO 4 Fd Regt. said the parade to mark the unit's 50th anniversary was "a rare privilege bestowed upon the regiment and the support was humbling".

"It's been a very big week of celebrations but I really

The regiment completed tours of Vietnam in 1968 69 and 1970-71, providing direct support, maintaining fire-support bases and harassment and interdiction missions.

Because of overuse and their inability to maintain high rates of fire, the L5 Pack Howitzer was replaced in some operations by the more robust US 105mm M2A2.

In June 1968, Maj D.J. Gilroy led a road party of 40-50 soldiers to move the regiment from their barracks in Wacol, Brisbane to Lavarack Barracks, Townsville

The barracks was named Chau Pha Lines to recognise the Battle of Chau Pha Valley in Vietnam for which forward observer Lt N.J. 'Nobby' Clark was awarded the Military Cross.

On Christmas Eve 1971, Cyclone Althea struck Townsville and 102 members of the regiment helped with relief operations.

On November 28, 1987, 4 Fd Regt, under the command of Col Arthur Burke, was granted freedom of entry to the city of Thuringowa.

4 Fd Regt has provided support to operations in Singapore (1974), Cambodia (1992), Somalia (1993), Rwanda, East Timor, Solomon Islands, Iraq and most recently, Afghanistan.



Past celebrated: Gnr Andrew Robertson and Gnr Sukmo Dipuspo help make up the crew of a 105mm L5 Pack Howitzer during the freedom of the city parade in Townsville to mark 4 Fd Regt's 50th anniversary.

Photos by LCpl Mark Doran



Proud: CO Lt-Col Charles Weller leads his soldiers in the Townsville parade.

don't think you can top the freedom of entry from a ceremonial perspective." Lt-Col Welter said. Regiment members paid homage to those who had served before them as legacy howitzers were driven on to the parade ground to "hold ground" before the march. The gunners marched with the Queen's Banner - which normally resides at the School of Artillery in Puckapunyal - to the beat of the

drums of the combined bands of 1 Fd Regt and 1RAR.



Parade Card  
(as at 14 July 2010)

Nov 2009	Mar 2010	Jul 2010
05 AGM	25 Committee	22 Committee
06 Golf ay	??? Visit HMAS Cerebus	
26 Committee		
	Apr 2010	Aug 2010
Dec 2009	22 Committee	15 Aug Issue Cascabel Posted
<b>04 St Barbara's Day</b>	25 Anzac Day	26 Committee
10 Committee		
	May 2010	Sep 2010
Jan 2010	27 Committee	23 Committee
	31 Jun Issue Cascabel Posted	
Feb 2010		Oct 2010
14 Church Parade	Jun 2010	31 Nov Issue Cascabel Posted
25 Committee	24 Committee	
28 Mar Issue Cascabel Posted	25 Gunner Dinner	

CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND DETAILS UP-DATE

<p><i>Please forward to:</i>  RAA Association (Vic) Inc.  8 Alfada Street  Caulfield South Vic. 3167</p>		
Rank _____	First Names _____	DOB _____
Surname and Post Nominals _____		
Address _____		
_____		Postcode _____
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*

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