

# CASCABEL

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## A LOOK BACK IN TIME



**Looking back:** Former Spr Paddy Cranswick visits the Kapooka Tragedy Memorial 69 years after an explosion killed 26 of his mates. Photo by Sgt Dave Morley

Spr Paddy Cranswick, 88, of Perth, returned to Kapooka for the first time since the accidental explosion killed 26 of his mates, 11 of them just 18 years old, on **May 21, 1945**.

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# CASCABEL



## FORMER PATRONS, PRESIDENTS & HISTORY



### FOUNDED:

First AGM April 1978

First Cascabel July 1983

**COL COMMANDANT:** BRIG Peter Alkemade RFD

### PATRONS and VICE PATRONS:

#### 1978

**Patron:** LT GEN The Hon Sir Edmund Herring  
KCMG, KBE, DSO, MC, ED

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

#### 1982

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

**Vice Patron:** MAJ GEN N. A. Vickery CBE, MC, ED

#### 1999

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

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

#### 2008

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1979 MAJ GEN J. M. McNeill OA, OBE, ED

1981 COL A. (Sandy) Mair ED

1984 MAJ P. S. (Norman) Whitelaw ED

1988 BRIG K. V. Rossi AM, OBE, RFD, ED

1991 MAJ M. Taggart RFD, ED

2004 MAJ N. Hamer RFD

### JOURNAL NAME:

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

**CASCABLE** - English spelling.

### ARTILLERY USE:

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

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

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

### CASCABEL HISTORY:

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

### ASSOC LOGO: LAPEL BADGE:



Our Assoc Logo and Lapel

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

The Badge is a copy of the left arm brass gilded gun once worn by GUN SGTS above the chevrons on each arm. Brassards worn by IGs at North Head were embroidered with this insignia. It differs from the logo in that the badge has been cast with the rammer in a different position and the end of the

## RAA ASSOCIATION (VIC) INC COMMITTEE

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## CONTENTS AND SUBMISSIONS

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

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# The President Writes

## The work on the Model Rules.

The Committee has reviewed the draft and it is hoped that the final draft will be promulgated to all members in the near future. This will be accompanied by the notice for the Special General Meeting. Please read the draft carefully and be sure to attend the EGM to air your points of view.

The Royal Australian Engineers have formed a new association along similar lines to our Association. I have been assisting the new RAE Assoc President, LtCol Colin Bowater, and the Secretary, WO1(?) Jim Davis, where possible.

The senior RAN officer in Victoria is Capt Stephen Bowater and he is the CO of Cerberus. No further comment from me, but we should be able to visit the gun line and museum at Cerberus early next year.

I attended the Commemoration Parade for the First Shot Fired in World War I. The parade was held at Fort Nepean and a commemorative shot was fired from an M2A2 by 2/10 Battery.

The parade was very well attended by members of the public, schools and ADF personnel, both serving and retired. There was also, of course, a more than usual number of government representatives, politicians, councillors and other "important" people who all had to make a speech.

The weather was kind and the day was well presented.

I, of course, must remind you of the most important activity of the year, the Golf Day. This will be held on the 7th Nov after the second most important activity, the Annual General Meeting on the 6th.

Please make every effort to attend the SGM to accept the new Constitution (Model Rules).

Neil Hamer  
MAJ (Retd)

## Membership Report

Current Membership as at	1 Jun 14	2 Sep 14
Life Members	197	192
Annual Members	34	39
Senior Annual Members	14	12
Affiliates	24	24
Others (CO/CI, Messes, etc.)	9	9
Libraries	4	4
RSL's	4	4
Total	<u>286</u>	<u>284</u>

## New Members

We welcome two Annual Members:

Sgt B M (Barbara) Moriss

Gnr P R (Paul) Heron

## Vale

It is with regret that we note the passing of:

Sgt B A (Bruce) Richardson

WO1 F J (Fred) Fahey

Capt A J (Anthony) Ayling

Sgt H A (Harry) Bates

Sgt K (Koenraad) Goederee

Gnr L J (Leonard) Polkinghorne

Maj D C (Bob) Dennis

Gnr N (Neil) MacGlashan



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.

Neil Hamer Contact: Telephone: 9702 2100  
0419 533 067

Membership Co-ord Email: [nhamer@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nhamer@bigpond.net.au)



**A message from the Battery Commander**  
**2/10 Light Battery RAA**  
**5th/6th Battalion**  
**Royal Victoria Regiment**  
**Major Garry Rolfe CSC**



Once again I extend a warm welcome to all members of the Gunner family in providing an update on Light Battery training, activities and achievements to date.

One key aspect of training is to maintain individual readiness for deployment through the Army Individual Readiness Notice (AIRN). The AIRN comprises an annual basic fitness assessment (BFA) although this assessment comprising push-ups, sit up and run/ walk dependent on age is usually conducted two or three times annually. The skills of shooting is also to be maintained and assessed annually through a weapon training test with the personal weapon (F88 Austyer) and confirmation shoot in the Weapons Training Simulation System complex (WTSS). A qualifying score for a Gunner is to achieve a grouping of 20mm at 100metres with twenty rounds. An easy feat to achieve considering we are in the business of employing 'area weapon' systems.

The next components include dental and medical fitness and finally proficiency in Corp trade skill according to worn rank.

The Battalion Signals Platoon is now relocated at Sargood Barracks and further confirms the opportunity to achieve combined arms integration in training. The IFOT is also in great demand with the Battalion Company Commanders, Platoon and Section Commanders.

Our Gunners have been busy passing on instruction in All Arms Call For Fire lessons, which are then confirmed in the IFOT room with the RAINF members calling in fire once the target information is confirmed. The adjustment process is employed and neutralisation of the target achieved. All training is then supported with a rigorous debrief session.

I acknowledge the high levels of training conducted by Gnr Carroll, Gnr McKellar and Gnr Scicluna. The IFOT is a highly effective simulation system (computerized projection facility) where immediate neutralisation missions and a variety of technical missions through to fire plans can be achieved without the need to deploy the Light Battery and use 'live ammunition' to maintain our skill set and achieve capability.

On Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August the Light Battery was called upon to Fire one 16oz blank cartridge from a M2A2 Howitzer as part of the First Shot commemoration, which took place at the parade ground of the old OCS Portsea at Point Nepean, Portsea. The Gun Position Officer was Captain Reed Powney and Detachment Commander Bdr Ian Johnson (a second gun also loaded was positioned in the event of misfire, however this gun was not required to be fired).



This event commemorated the firing of the first shot in the British Empire in WWI which occurred on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1914 when Gun Emplacement No 6 at Fort Nepean fired a shot across

the bows of the German merchant ship SS Pfalz to prevent her from escaping from Port Phillip Bay to the open seas shortly after war was declared. The shot was successful – the Pfalz surrendered. The round fired from Fort Nepean's Gun Emplacement No 6, just three hours and forty five minutes after war was declared in London, was the very first shot fired in the entire British Empire in WWI – the first of all the hundreds of millions of rounds of all calibres that were subsequently fired over the next four years and four months until war ended on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

The commemoration was supported by the Federal Government, the Victorian State Government and the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. The

Commemoration was also supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Parks Victoria, the ADF Federation Guard and the Sorrento-Portsea RSL who all had representatives on the organising committee.

Soon after the Light Battery conducted a 'Dry' Deployments training activity at the Puckapunyal Military Range Area. The focus of training was on refining Bty SOP's while conducting Direct and Deliberate by Night deployments. Each deployment concluded with a CPX activity where the Mortar Line and Command Post responded to the call for fire. The Joint Fire Teams focused on tactical movement by foot to established OP's and conduct silent marking and observation of engagement areas.

Last Sunday I represented the Battalion at the St George's Church Healing the Wounds of War Service adjacent to Sargood Barracks. This will be the last Healing the Wounds of War Service to held at this location as the Church has been sold to a local school. The Service was followed by a fine lunch prepared by Maris Sloan. The descendants of the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion who often use the Barracks then conducted their Annual General Meeting (the Light Battery provides a Catafalque Party to support the Jacka Memorial Service at the St Kilda Cemetery early each new year).

The Light Battery is currently training a 'Mil Skills' team under the leadership of Bdr James Overell which will compete in the Battalion Mil Skills Championship in mid September. We wish the Battery Mil Skills Team every success and look forward to the trophy being proudly displayed at the Monash Barracks.

Later in the year the Light Battery is to support EX Chong Ju with its Mortars. This EX is the Combined Arms Training Centre (CATC) firepower demonstration for the Combat Officers Advanced Course (COAC). I look forward to the Light Battery excelling once again in providing offensive support as part of the combined arms display of ADF weapons systems.

This Saturday evening members of 2/10 Light Battery head off to the Annual 5/6 RVR, Battalion Ball at the Lincoln on Toorak. It is shaping up to be a fantastic night in all respects.

Take care and stay safe

Kind regards

Garry Rolfe CSC

Major

Battery Commander

2/10 Light Battery

Ubique



I would like to ask our Gunner community to support the plight of CAPT Mick Gray, a Gunner officer who served with then 4 Fd Regt some years ago. His family is facing a tremendous challenge with their daughter having an accident a few weeks ago resulting in serious spinal injuries. From CAPT Gray's account the injuries his daughter sustained has now rendered her a quadriplegic. The family has set up a Trust Fund with intent to fund raise and a facebook page for support. CAPT Gray asked us if we could circulate his situation to the Gunner community and to those who he has served with. The facebook page is **"Courage for Cody"** and a website that is now live at [www.courageforcody.com](http://www.courageforcody.com) for information and details.

MAJ John Batayola  
2IC School of Artillery

SO2 Head of Regiment, RAA

# From the Secretary's Table

COL Jason Cooke



The following report is a summary of our committee meetings which hope to be informative giving you an insight into events coming up, motions passed by the committee and or progress made on those more serious matters such as our new constitution.

We are still conducting regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of every month, commencing at 1530 in the Associations JARKS Club room at Sargood barracks. Any member of the association is welcome at these meetings and in fact it would be fantastic if you could attend.

So what has occurred over the past 3 months – a summary of those motions are as below:

1. The Sub committee responsible for drafting our new constitution has just been approved to produce a final version ready to be presented at this year's Annual General Meeting. The committee would like to thank the assistance of LTCOL John Henry and MAJ David Osborne for their professional advice and guidance in this matter. Their years of experience in this field have been of enormous benefit to the committee. So I would encourage ALL members to attend this year's Annual General Meeting so they are informed of the changes plus we need you to vote on adopting it.
2. Financially, the Association is healthy and in a sound position going forward. It is at this time of the year, the committee starts to look at whether or not we should increase our annual fees, weighing up our income with expenses. Our membership is aging and unfortunately reducing which leaves us a little vulnerable as our expenses are always increasing. We don't need to push the panic button just be assured the committee is well aware of our position and is working hard to ensure we are sustainable.

3. I hope everyone is using our website? If not please do so. MAJ Carl Sarelius is doing a great job to assist the committee improving our communications with our membership. It goes without saying that our greatest communication piece is Cascabel and we thank Alan Halbish for his ongoing commitment to a great publication. But we need your support in taking up this new technology. I would love to hear your feedback on whether or not Facebook can be used to assisting us communicating to you.

4. The Association room at Sargood barracks is getting better and better so you should come along and see what has changed since you were there last. Thanks to SSGT Brian Cleeman, SSGT Ernie Paddon and of course SSGT Reg Morrell the place is looking great. But it is also because of the wonderful help we are getting from the Battalion and it would be remiss of me, on behalf of the committee, not to thank the Gunners at Sargood Barracks for their tireless work and growing relationship with the Association. Fantastic to have the help from CAPT David Council, CAPT Erin Steward, GNR King and the rest of the Bty.

6. On the social calendar, thanks to all that have been supporting the Gunner Symposium Nights as they have continued to be well attended. If you haven't come to one – then I'll see you at the next one. If you can not get to that then I expect to see you on our Annual Golf Day the day after our Annual General Meeting.

As you can see, the committee is hard at work in the monthly management of the association but requires your input in many of the decisions we are making on your behalf. Hopefully this report helps in providing more transparency in our decisions and excites you to take an active part in shaping of those decisions. I would be more than happy to receive any form of feedback you wish to give me or see you at the next committee meeting. Until then – stay safe – good shooting.



## Editors Indulgence

I've had an interesting time in the last few months in attempting to ascertain a definitive answer to Q19 in the quiz published in the previous journal (120).

As you will see below from the letters I received, the suggested solutions were quite widespread. However, the answer I believe as being definitive is shown in the answers to all questions on [p16](#).



To remind you, the question was: 19. **When did RAA change from 4 Gun Troops to 6 Gun Bty?**

I suggest that the wording of the question made an accurate answer almost impossible. Perhaps it could have read: **When did RAA Fd Regt's permanently change from 4 Gun Troops to 6 Gun Bty?**

Having read my preferred solution on [p16](#), I'll leave it up to you to draw your own conclusions.

Meanwhile, I've been having some interesting experiences. Had a partial knee replacement in Feb this year, but it failed. Had a total revision late Jun & the surgery has proven to be successful. However, after a 2 hour operation concluding at 1530 hrs, I wasn't awake till 2330 when I found myself in ICU. Wife and two sons were there and Barbara was told I was very ill and that they were doing everything possible for me. Whatever they did obviously worked as I'm still able to function as your editor, (for a bit longer, anyway).

### Letters to the Editor

These all relate to Q19.

**From Col Graham Farley**—No one knew the exact answer, but the best response was that it was tied up with the Pentropic nonsense and all round defence. In World War II it was presumed that there was a "front" and that positions behind it were "safe." Hence the wagon lines could be back into allied country. But with the jungle business, and Vietnam in particular, the gremlins were everywhere and hence the six guns were the perimeter and all personnel, vehicles and supplies were in the centre -- rather like a laager of wagons crossing the prairies.

**From Brig Doug Perry**—Not sure, I think it was the year Rossi became CO 15 Fd!

**Courtesy of an article by Arthur Burke in the 105 Bty website**—<http://www.105bty.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/RAA-Reorganisation.pdf>, he writes the following: *"Now, don't begin saying, 'But what if they have to fight in a jungle environment in direct support of an infantry battalion?' because the reply is, 'Well, we'll just change the organisation again.' Think back to the late 1950s when the Korea establishments were thrown into Malaya. That's correct, the RAA changed from two troops of four guns to a battery of six guns which had the*

*capability to divide into two x three gun sections. This became known as the Tropical Warfare establishment which has remained until now".*

**WO2 David Troedel** wrote, in part:

101 Battery was an 8 gun Battery in Butterworth in 1959 & 1960 and reverted to a 6 gun Battery when we joined 26 Fd Regt. RA in October 1960 at Malacca.

We converted from 25 Pdr's to L5's in mid 1963 and from what I recall we reverted to 6 gun Batteries.

#### Another reply from Brig Doug Perry

My recollection is 1966. I remember that we had some difficulty determining how the intra Bty check previously made by the CPO of Tp tgts would be done following the demise of the 8 gun Bty with 3 CP. In the end we decided upon an independent Ack using a slide rule. This was soon replaced with the GPO check map.

I also remember that was the year we first fired L5 in support of 7 RAR prior to their first deployment to SVN and how, for the first time the 6 guns allowed a circular deployment which is something we never did with Tps.

*Thankyou all for your thoughts. Now go to [p16](#). ed*

*Another letter on [p32](#).*

**START OF TAPE 2 - SIDE A Identification: This is side three of the interview with Mr Norman Whitelaw.  
End of identification.**

*You were going to ask me a question. Perhaps if we could just finish off that story because we would have missed the end of it on the leader tape there. You mentioned that the officer in charge of that forward battery got an MC, if you could just go through that again for me.*

The two guns that were on the pass at Mount Olympus over the plain of Lamia was John Anderson, who was awarded the MC for that rather wonderful stand that he made to keep the Germans clear of that bridge which was vital to road transport; the river didn't allow an easy crossing.

*Right. And you were saying something earlier about an earlier moment; your experience of first action in Greece?*

Our first action in Greece actually took place at Verrai - V-E-R-R-A-I - [sic. VERIA] which was a pass in the mountains in northern Greece and on the Yugoslav border. And we were absolutely dug in there - we had six gun troops at that point whereas in the desert we had four gun troops - and we had great difficulty in finding areas in the mountains that were flat enough to accommodate six guns with a distance between each which would be suitable for separation in bombing or shelling. But we had a lot of fun there because the hills were so steep. We had to fire at great angles of depression. You can understand that if you fire from surface to surface and that the target is on the same level as yourself that's one thing; if it's ... if a target is much higher than you, you just don't range any further but you lift your gun to what we call an angle of sight. Well, in this various situation we were firing down into valleys that were so deep that villages just looked like postage stamps from the top and I've never fired at great angles of depression before but we ranged over that valley below and we had a few shots at passing armour as the armour - for the Germans - were coming down the pass but they were too fast for us and they were around our left flank and we had to withdraw otherwise we'd be put in the bag there as we stood in our first action in Greece. But we were amongst the snow and the situation regarding food and other supplies was not good.

*Ammunition:*

I don't know where and how our ammunition arrived. It was by some miracle, I think, and very good work by the army service corps because we fired a lot of ammunition in Greece and we really were never out of supply. We might have been out of supply of bully beef but we weren't out of supply of ammunition.

*Right. And could you just describe, say, choose an action and describe in some detail what your respective duties were and how that all worked out?*

Well, throughout all this stage of my army life I was what they called a GPO, a gun position officer, and ... in a situation such as we found in Greece you were in constant action. You were either moving to a deployment position or actually fighting your gun. You couldn't leave the place and you just had to get sleep when you could and ... because during the night you often had what we call harassing fire tasks to perform. (5.00) We chose road junctions or passes where enemy troops would most likely ... they'd use or shelter and we'd try to pick them out and work out our line and our range and other factors that affect shooting and bring down a fire at a certain time during the night - say, eleven o'clock at night or two o'clock in the morning just to keep them on their toes.

*So your work was pretty constant and you got so good at it.*

You could do a lot a guess work. The weather affected the guns a bit but you made allowance for that.

*How did it affect the guns?*

Well, in hot days charges burn quicker. Sometimes that has an effect of throwing them a bit further or even lessening their range. It depends upon how ... we were working in very cold conditions in Greece and we hadn't fought in those conditions before. The weather did affect the guns; they needed a lot of looking after - their recuperation systems. When water froze in a mug overnight, you had to watch

your ... things were happening in the guns or to the guns and especially to ammunition. You didn't want your ammunition to be damp; it had to be protected all the time. We had separated ammunition, that meant that we rammed the shell into a twenty-five pounder then that was followed by a brass cartridge case which had three bags in it, red, white and blue charge - red was the first charge; if you had red and white that was charge two; if you had red, white and blue that was charge three - and they all had their different ranges. I think a twenty-five pounder had a maximum range of about 13,400 yards, which is about six miles or seven miles.

*And what sort of people were you in charge of? You mentioned four gun packs and six ... and packs of six guns, or groups of six guns.*

No, they were troops. We called them troops. There was, in this case, there were two troops to a battery of twelve guns. So each troop had six guns. In the desert we were in a different organisation, we had three troops to a battery, each troop having four guns but the battery still had twelve - twelve guns.

*Right. I mean, when you were in action, where would you stand? What would you be doing?*

I was in my hole behind called a command post and ... each gun had its loud speaker system - I think we called it a tannoy system - and, generally, I liked the command post nearer the right-hand gun because it was usually used as the ranging gun. But we'd deliver all our orders - if the tannoy is working, which it usually did - by microphone and the speaker was just behind the guns. Everybody on the gun heard the orders. The layer knew what to do exactly when ... at different line range, angle of sight came through. And the number one, who was in charge of the gun, really just watched it all and the crew did the work. I mean, they were expert gunners; they were veteran gunners by that stage.

*But, in this particular battle, you were being forced back.*

Yes.

*I mean, when did it begin to seep through as an awareness that you might win the war but you weren't going to win this battle?*

We weren't going to win that battle from the very start. We felt, even on the ships, 'Why are we going?'. The British had quite a few units there. The New Zealanders had two-thirds of their division there and an interesting point did arise at one stage - and I suppose I'm speaking about it out of context but while I'm speaking about the New Zealanders - under Freyberg the ANZAC Corps was reformed for about thirteen days. Mmm. That was the only time and it happened in Greece. Funny [inaudible] at the moment there. Yes. But the ... as we came south, as we kept on dropping south, the battle became more furious for us. (10.00) The infantry were overpowered really by motor cycle battalions of Germans; they had far more mobility than our blokes. They kept on going round our flanks and causing us to have to withdraw. The last real battle that we fought in Greece was down just north of Delphi and I know we opened the day firing at about ten or eleven thousand yards and the infantry were coming back in the afternoon through our gun lines and we had our tractors behind the guns ready to hook in if only somebody would give us the order to go. And we ... well, one gun - down on the left of my troop, maybe two - they were firing over open sights at the Germans at about 500 yards at four o'clock in the afternoon when the order came through to scramble out as best we could. And we hooked in and leaving our camouflage nets and things on the pits, just picking up our own personal gear and throwing it into tractors and trucks and off. And ...

*How long did it take to actually get a gun ... to turn a gun from a firing ... Till it's hooked in? Till it's hooked in and moving?*

Well, if you ... if common sense tells you you are going to move, our blokes wouldn't have had any personal gear that they couldn't grab and throw on a tractor, but in this case I think I remember most of our tractor ... tractors were packed with personal gear and they were just at the rear of the gun and limber. And they had to hook the gun into the limber and the limber onto the tractor and off. In other words, it could happen in a minute? It's not ... Oh well, it would be a bit silly to say it would be a minute, it would be ten minutes, I suppose.

*Yes. I was just wondering whether the gun was anchored in any way for when it was firing or whether it was in a completely mobile condition.*

It was in a completely mobile condition because in those days we used what we called the anti-tank mounting which was a huge wheel around which the other two wheels tracked and when it was on this mounting the trail didn't dig in. So it's relatively easy to run the gun off this mounting, put it under the trail, clamp it, hook in the limber and hook in the tractor.

*What was morale like?*

Great. The morale was absolutely great. We were a bit afeared that we might end up in the bag but ...

*Were you?*

Well, yes. But it was always the other bloke that was going to die; it wasn't going to be you. I think that that is common in all units. I mean, there were dead, unfortunately, but ... however, that last action of ours was the most exciting part of the war that I was involved in. And ... And ... Sorry. And after that we were delivered a pencil map to proceed to Corinth, on the Corinth Canal, where evacuation would be made by - who - we didn't know, but it was the navy. And we didn't make for Corinth, we ended up at a place called Megara, or Megara (different pronunciation) - however you like to pronounce it - hidden ...

*The site of a very famous massacre on the part of the Athenians.*

That's right; that's exactly right. And in the little village of Megara I went up to the nearest house, and because I couldn't take it with me, I gave this blanket that Doctor Rampini gave me in Tobruk to a lady in the house and I hope she's still got it. But we had to - next day - orders came through to destroy our guns and our vehicles ...

*How did you destroy the guns?*

Well, we would destroy vehicles by burning them for preference, but what we did, we couldn't fire them because of the enemy air activity, as soon as they saw us ... We were hiding in olive groves and we had a conference of all concerned, anybody who'd like to add a few ideas of how to get rid of these vehicles so the Germans wouldn't use them, and ultimately we took an anti-tank rifle to every one of our tractors and we put a bullet right through the engine floor from forehead to aft and that made a mess of them. And then we let the air out of all the tyres and then we slashed all the tyres because we knew the Germans wanted tyres and that was really about all we could do. But they were messes, I tell you. (15.00) As far as our guns were concerned, we took all the firing mechanisms off them and the sights and ran the air out of the recuperators; took off the gun nut and let the gun run back out of its recoil positions, or the tracks, and left them like that. And they weren't twenty-five pounders, they were eighteen pounder Mark IVs converted to twenty-five pounders and I'd say a few of those might have seen service in the first world war. But they had the twenty-five pounder calibre barrel fitted.

*What did it feel like to be a gunnery unit without any guns?*

It was no good because we were all equipped with small arms; we had rifles and officers had forty-five pistols of some sort, Colts, I think - I don't know, I can't remember. I also had an Italian revolver ... not revolver, it was an automatic which I'd picked up in the desert campaign, so I had two guns.

*So where did you go from there? I mean, that was ...*

Well, we were ...

*What time of day was this that you finally finished destroying all this equipment?*

We were there for all day; all that day. And that night we were told to proceed to a stone jetty off a beach at Megara and there were landing ships to take off everybody who came down and ships of the navy assembled in the bay waiting to ... We all had to be on board by about half past two, if I remember rightly. But ...

*Morning or afternoon?*



In the night; during the night, in the dark. Because the ships had to be clear of land by dawn because, again, aircraft was the trouble. Some of our troops got on board a ship that was unfortunately sunk next morning - I forget the name of the thing too - but I was sent on a message and got myself lost and ultimately I was wandering along a stony shingled beach with two other fellows and a little skimmer boat came in from a destroyer asking us if we were coming their way. I said, 'Too right we were' and we waded out to her and she happened to be the Havock, the destroyer Havock, of famous Norway fame. And later that day we were landed in Suda Bay in Crete.

*Right. Well, Crete wasn't that great a place to be.*

No. We became infantry. (laughs)

*Right. The 2/2nd Regiment on foot.*

But we were deployed when the parachutes landed later in the month. I might say that we got off on ANZAC Day so we were from 1st April to ANZAC Day in Greece, landing in Suda Bay late on ANZAC Day. We were marched into dispersal areas and then we were sorted out by magnificent people like Vasey and the New Zealander commander ...

*Freyberg; you mentioned Freyberg?*

Freyberg, yes. And we became organised into troops of infantry. We didn't actually fight as such but we were withdrawn when the Germans got command of Maleme aerodrome which they did, firstly, by parachuting and, secondly, by landing troop carrying transport. The New Zealanders nearly budged them off and I think that we would have won ... retained Crete if we'd had - oh, I don't know - six extra pounds to push because the Germans were decimated. They were being shot down as they dangled under their parachutes; planes and gliders were a mess on the ground; planes were ploughing into wrecks of other planes while they tried to land; and they were desperately trying. They were in the process of their last throw I think when we weakened too. I think that we would have retained that aerodrome if we'd had half a battalion. It was amazing.

*Right.*

But we were pretty tired people. We ...

*I mean, are you saying that you just didn't have that little bit that you needed?*

No, we didn't have that extra bit. They were ... (20.00)

*It wasn't bad planning on the part of your officers or anything like that?*

No. No, I think it was a magnificent operation and to march the whole force across the mountains of the spine of Crete, which was snow covered even in May, they ... it was a marvellous operation. But, I didn't go down the road personally, I took a few troops and a certain doctor friend of mine, we went for the hills and we got down at the same time on the other side of Crete. We walked, we didn't march, I think it was sixty-four miles in thirty hours.

*Right. Did you have guides?*

No. But, I mean, everybody knew the road. We'd been there since ... we'd been on the island for nearly a month before the parachuters came in.

*Right. Did you see the parachuters yourself?*

Oh yes. Yes, they were very close. And we were bombed and ... we were very close to them. In fact, we were in talking distance of the Germans. In fact, a certain sergeant of mine had a great conversation with a bloke who was trying to shoot him across a little stream and of course this sergeant was shooting back from behind an olive tree and he could distinctly hear the voice saying, 'Bad luck Aussie; missed that time'. (laughs) I don't know what happened but we got out of it.

*Right. And so you got to the other side and what waited on the other side? Evacuation ships?*

Yes, we waited ... We arrived during the night. We had to hide for another day and that night we scrambled down to this beach at Sfakia and I was taken off by a landing ship - an invasion ship - which rapidly was known as the 'exvasion ship'. (laughs) I forget the name of that too. I've got it in my diary.

*Right. So, what did the 6th Division and the 7th ... What did they do, what were the actions after Crete? I know you came back to Australia in early '42. What happened ...*

Well, there was another ... there was another campaign after that. The 7th Div[ision] had arrived in Palestine and were training and they were pretty damn good.

*A bit younger than your division, weren't they?*

Well, they were in ... in age of men you mean?

*Mmm.*

No, they'd be about the same as us.

*One of the things that's sometimes said about the 6th Division is that a lot of men who - and this is the sort of rumour that hangs over from the war - a lot of unemployed men were very early on joined up, I think they were sometimes disparagingly called 'economic recruits' by the people who were a bit critical of them ...*

Yes, well, I'm blown if I know really how that came about. Certainly ...

*But you did hear that?*

Certainly, we did have people who were unemployed but we didn't hear it during the war. I think it's been a ... it's cropped up since because we were the first division. And, you know, people were streaming into recruiting depots. In fact, recruiting officers were fighting them off. Said, 'Oh, just give us a chance. Let me get your name' or 'Come back tomorrow'. But most of my ... I know all my friends were working people, just left their jobs.

*Mmm. A peculiar allegation, I mean ... It is a peculiar allegation and it's not a fair one. So, the 7th Division, they were involved in the campaign you mentioned just then?*

No, they weren't involved at all. They had arrived - while we were in Egypt - they had arrived in Palestine. They were most likely occupying our camps and the Vichy business was taking place and the French army in Syria was Vichy and decided to fight on the side of the Vichy French rather than the Free French.

*So the 7th Div[ision] was destined for Syria and that's where they first saw action. (25.00)*

Right.

*And that was quite a bloody confrontation.*

Yes. And we went back to Palestine and - from going over to Greece about 900 strong - we arrived back in Palestine about, oh, 350 strong. But our personnel dribbled in from various quarters for days and weeks afterwards. In fact, a sergeant of mine - he's dead now - Laurie Peck, he, with three other blokes, they escaped from the prisoner of war camp in Suda Bay and by some means or the other they got themselves back to Greece. They didn't go across the Med, to where we were, they went back to Greece and they walked by night and holed up by day until they came to the Turkish frontier and swam around that. And they presented themselves at a certain orange grove which I've heard plenty about and the Turk there was a fighter of the first world war and he put them in the car and he put them off at the Syrian frontier and they came home that way.

*Right.*

And they arrived in our mess one lunchtime. Well remember it.

*So things were fairly quiet really until '42?*

Oh, this was '41.

*I know. So, what were you doing in the last six months of '41?*

Ah ... retraining. We had to get reinforcements in and we started our training from basics. Troop training built up to battery training and then regimental training and then eventually cooperation with infantry brigades and things like that. Until we knew we were ... we were ...

*See, Japan came into the war in December. I was just going to ask you how it felt to be in Europe and to hear about ... well, first of all, the Japanese coming into the war and then the extraordinary series of successes that they had as they came south?*

Well, it was very desperate and I think it was a great disappointment to us that our home was exposed because the Japs made such very quick movements once they started the war and they were jungle-wise and we didn't think they were. We were told that the jungles were impenetrable and it worried us a bit. But from that point we knew ... or felt - we didn't know - we felt that we were destined to go home.

*How much were you hearing about that battle between Curtin and Churchill?*

Very little; very little. I think we were so busy ourselves that we ... we got the news but ...

*You were aware that there was a tussle going on?*

Yes. Mmm. But it didn't come forcibly to us. We, as a division, were destined for Chittagong and Burma but the Japs raced us to Chittagong and we were unloaded in Ceylon. We were nearly six months in Ceylon before we ultimately came home. And then, do you know, after being two and a half years in the Middle East, we were given seven days leave. Wouldn't it make you wonder? Seven days leave, never mind. Well, they must have ... perhaps they felt that the situation was rather desperate? The situation was desperate.

Mmm. And ... You got back, what, October ...

I got back in the last week of October ... no, August.

August. '42?

Yes.

Right.

And so that's really ... the Kokoda Trail is just beginning?

No. No, that happened ... September?

Oh, yes, that's right, it was beginning. We went into camp at Greta as a regiment, that's where the 6th Div[ision] concentrated again and I left the regiment at that point. My CO was made commander, Royal Artillery for the 3rd Division and he was allowed to take six officers with him. It was a Militia division become AIF. So we went with him to do what we could to bring this divisional artillery up to scratch and nobody was more surprised than I was to find so good ... they were great.

*Right. Because that's one of the things ... I'll just turn the tape over. END OF TAPE 2 - SIDE A*

To be continued



## Answers to the Gunner Luncheon Quiz 2014. (Q's in journal 120, p27)

Source: BC's Notebook Provisional, North Head, Feb '68  
and other specious references and clouded recollections.

1. A barrage is a moving belt of fire, usually advancing over a rectangular area. Name the two methods used to allow the barrage to change direction? **Wheel Method & Echelon Method**
2. When a Fire Plan is transmitted by radio, it is given the name "Tiddler" in order to differentiate it from a Divisional Task Table which is called a .....? **Monster**
3. Which Bty brought the first Gun into action at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915? **4 Bty of 2 AFA**
4. When using an Artillery Board, what was the process to determine the bearing & range for that alternate position? **Window**
5. Which is the wireless appointment title for CB? **Cracker**
6. When planning an artillery practice, what is the difference between the Restricted Impact Area and the Safe Target Area? **The RIA is an area in which a round may land and the STA is an area into which a round may be aimed.**
7. What are the director skirt colours for P Bty Q Bty & R Bty? **White, Green & Orange**
8. Which corps is represented by the appointment title 'BLUEBELL'? **RAEME**
9. Expand the fire order "TOT"? **Time on Target.**
10. In previous phonetic alphabets, what was the phonetic for "B"? The present one of course is "BRAVO." **Baker, Beer**
11. There is a vehicle coming towards you with the Tac Sign "H1". Whose is it? **GPO**
12. What are/were the number of mils in a hand span at the OP when indicating targets? **350**
13. What do you understand is included in "B echelon" in battery deployment orders? **Vehicles and personnel not immediately required on position**
14. In fire adjustment, what is the distance in the "Long Bracket"? **200 M**
15. What size of Formation, Unit or Sub-Unit would be involved in a UNIFORM Target? **Division**
16. The BP card AFB 250 was two sided. What was on the back when completed?  
**A diagram showing the BP location in relation to local topographical detail**
17. The Yeramba was and remains our only SP Gun. On what variant of tank chassis was it based?  
**General Grant**
18. If your G2 included an R license, what were you authorized to drive?: **Roller Road Powered**
19. When did RAA change from 4 Gun Troops to 6 Gun Bty?..... *Difficult to find an authoritative answer. Ssgt Barry Irons contacted WO1 Chris Jobson (Retd) who kindly responded with the following; I'm sorry to say that there's no laid down SOPs regarding the number of guns in a battery. Yes, the numbers do change for both tactical and logistical reasons; but there are other factors too. One is the size of the equipment; the number of guns in a battery of SPs differs to that of some towed-gun batteries. Also the number of guns in coast artillery batteries and anti-aircraft batteries varied from unit to unit, again based on the size of the relevant guns. And I've recently been informed that 4th Regiment's gun batteries (155 mm howitzers) now only have four guns each, but I don't know the reason why.*  
*I'm sorry to say that I don't recall reading anything precisely on batteries increasing or decreasing their number of guns, and I have no references on this matter. I'm sorry that I can't be of more assistance.*  
*(So there you have it. Your thoughts welcome. Ed)*
20. If in a shoot or quick fire plan, the order 'RESTART AT .....' is given, what is one of the possible fire orders that would have preceded it necessitating, "RESTART AT .... ? **Check Firing, Dwell at**



# A taste of life in the ADF

New Zealand soldiers train at the Schools of Armour and Artillery during the Tasman Scheme, Cpl Nick Wiseman reports.

## **RELATIONSHIPS at the JNCO level were tightened when four NZ soldiers spent time with Australians as part of the Tasman Scheme.**

Aimed to encourage reserve service within the JNCO ranks and to promote links between both countries, the four soldiers spent two weeks in Australia, primarily with 4 Bde at Simpson Barracks.

LCpl Richard Gane, of Wellington Company 5/7 RNZIR, said the visit started with what he could only describe as the most impressive memorial he had ever seen.

"We felt the Anzac spirit in every nook and cranny when we visited the Shrine of Remembrance," he said.

With introductions and a quick tour of the city complete the small team received their issued equipment and set out to liaise with other units from within the brigade.

"It was great to see some of the various support elements that supplement the Australian Army," he said.

"It was also interesting to note that a lot of challenges were universal across the ditch."

Some differences the team noted between the two reserve forces were the opportunity for Australian soldiers to deploy more often on peace-keeping operations as well as attending courses alongside Regular Army members.

Next on the agenda was a stop in at Puckapunyal where they got to spend time at the Schools of Armour and Artillery, which LCpl Gane said was a highlight of the trip.

"We have little or no experience with Abram tanks, the M777 Howitzer and the digitisation of the Army," he said.

"Climbing over the weapons was awesome and rolling and crashing the tank simulator was even better!" After some training to get the soldiers up to spec with Australian F88 standards they headed to the WTTs for some

scenario training before heading off to spend some time with B Coy, 8/7RVR. LCpl Gane said it was great to see the new doctrine being introduced for soldiers to start using bricks instead of groupings.

"We still conform to the rifle group, scout group and so on so it was interesting to see a different approach," he said.

"Especially since it is likely similar methods will be introduced to the NZ reserve battalions."

The team also got the chance to fire the F88 Austeyr as well as the F89 Minimi weapon systems at the HMAS Cerberus Marksmanship Training Range.

LCpl Gane said being on that type the range felt like luxury, given only classification ranges existed back in NZ," he said.

"Although we must admit some of the range rules did feel a little over zealous from our point of view, but safety is the priority," he said.

**"Just remember to not walk on the grass, which is apparently water, which means you have to swim go figure Navy."**



Strengthening ties! New Zealand Army soldiers LCpl Lee Dawson, LCpl Lee Morgan, LCpl Matt Allen and LCpl Richard Gane at Puckapunyal.



It is with deep regret that the Australian Defence Force announces that Lance Corporal Todd John Chidgey died in a non-combat related incident in Afghanistan on 1 July 2014..

Lance Corporal Todd Chidgey was serving with a Protective Security Detachment providing protection for a senior Australian officer at Headquarters International Security Assistance Force Joint Command. Lance Corporal Chidgey died in a non-combat related incident in Afghanistan on 1 July 2014.

Twenty-nine-year-old Lance Corporal Chidgey was born in Gosford, New South Wales, in 1985. He joined the Australian Army in March 2006 under the Special Forces Direct Recruiting Scheme and on completion of his initial employment training, was posted to the then 4th Battalion (Commando), The Royal Australian Regiment, now the 2nd Commando Regiment, in September 2006. Lance Corporal Chidgey deployed on six tours to Afghanistan ranging from two weeks to six months.

Lance Corporal Chidgey's colleagues in the 2nd Commando Regiment have described him as a brilliant bloke to know and work with, who was loyal to the core and would do anything for his

mates. A consummate professional and a dedicated soldier, Lance Corporal Chidgey was one of the hardest working members of the Regiment, who never sought recognition or reward.

Lance Corporal Chidgey has received the following honours and awards:

Australian Active Service Medal with Clasp International Coalition Against Terrorism (ICAT);

Afghanistan Campaign Medal;

Australian Service Medal with Clasp Counter Terrorism / Special Recovery;

Australian Defence Medal;

NATO non article 5 Medal with Clasp ISAF;

Multiple Tour Indicator 3 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF);

Soldiers Medallion;

Infantry Combat Badge; and

Returned from Active Service Badge.

During Lance Corporal Chidgey's service in the Australian Army, he deployed on the following operations:

Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) May - July 2014;

Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) March 2014;

Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) October - November 2013;

Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) July - December 2012;

Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) February - July 2010; and

Operation SLIPPER (Afghanistan) June - November 2008.

Defence requests that media respects the family's request for privacy and compassion. Speculation about the circumstances surrounding Lance Corporal Chidgey's death is a cause of great distress for his family and friends.



# Bringing back memories



**Looking back:** Former Spr Paddy Cranswick visits the Kapooka Tragedy Memorial 69 years after an explosion killed 26 of his mates. Photo by Sgt Dave Morley

A twist of fate meant the difference between life and death for one recruit on Kapooka's darkest day, Sgt Dave Morley reports.

THE worst training accident in Australia's military history was remembered on May 21, when about 150 people turned out to commemorate the 69th anniversary of the Kapooka Tragedy.

For one old digger, though, the incident evoked horrific memories of a tent-full of lost mates.

Spr Paddy Cranswick, 88, of Perth, returned to Kapooka for the first time since the accidental explosion killed 26 of his mates, 11 of them just 18 years old, on May 21, 1945.

He said he was to have joined his mates in the bunker that fateful day, but had gone to request compassion-ate leave from the adjutant to visit his gravely ill sister in Adelaide.

"The adjutant said I could only have leave if one of my parents was sick," he said.

"I told him I was the 13th of 14 children and this older sister was like a second mother to me.

"He said no, but then said he'd think about it, and told me to ask the sergeant-major not to put me on duty that day."

Spr Cranswick said while he waiting to hear front the adjutant, a good mate, Spr Geoffrey Partridge, 18, and a cousin of VC recipient Frank Partridge, returned from the dentist in pain.

"I told him to go and tell the sergeant his mouth was sore but he said he'd be all right," he said.

"He walked out the door to go down to the training and that was the last time I saw him.

"I heard the explosion and saw a big plume go straight up in the air." Spr

Cranswick said he was left to sleep in an empty tent for three nights after the explosion.

"I was a bit dirty on the Army for doing that to me," he said.

"But then my leave was granted and I was off to Kapooka Siding to catch a train."

In his address, Kapooka Commandant Col Stephen Jobson, acknowledged the depth of the tragedy as the ADF's worst domestic incident and made mention of how the community of Wagga Wagga supported the funerals of those killed.

"Although the tragedy had been largely forgotten for many years, the community and servicemen instigated the Memorial service in the 1980s," he said.

"Through RSL and Army support the Memorial area had been developed to keep those that had fallen in our memories.

"They are not forgotten to us, we will remember them always."



# Artillery grads meet regiment's old guard

THE Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery's old guard welcomed 12 Royal Military College graduates who will form part of the regiment's future leadership.

Many of Artillery's most senior gunners assembled with RAA Head of Regiment Brig Peter Gates to pass on their experience and counsel to the new guard, symbolised by the presentation of the striking red and blue gunner tie and the Artillery lanyard.

The ceremony was held on December 4, Saint Barbara's Day, named for the Patron Saint of Gunners.

RAA Association ACT president Lt-Col Nick Floyd said the gunner tie presentation was established as a unique tradition between Duntroon and ACT based gunners.

"Each tie is personally sponsored by a senior gunner, forging a bond of camaraderie across the years," he said.

"While artillery's fundamental nature is unchanging, Australia's gunners are readily evolving their culture and adapting to fulfil their role today with new people, new capabilities and new ideas."

The 12 graduating staff cadets were welcomed into each of the RAA's regiments -1, 4 and 8/12 Regt's, 20 STA Regt and 16 AL Regt, with one graduate, SCdt Brendan Kelleher, proceeding to

complete his honours degree at ADFA. On behalf of their Kiwi comrades-in-arms, the gunners welcomed Lt Joshua Wright, commissioning into the Royal New Zealand Artillery, and also Lt Ben Studd, an Intelligence Corps officer who will gain valuable experience on the gun line at 1 Regt RAA at Enoggera.

Two female graduates, Lt's Isabelle Cowley and Eleanor Tegg, were also welcomed into 8/12 Regt and 20 STA Regt respectively.

Brig Gates said female officers from previous graduations had joined the Air Land and STA regiments, but a female graduate going to a field artillery unit was a first.

"The diversity and depth of talent in this latest batch of gunner officers really embodies the RAA's ever-changing character," he said.

"We are fully focussed on mastery of fires and effects in the digital battlespace, while at the same time holding steadfast to the regiment's vital links to its heritage."

Along with Brig Gates, distinguished gunners also in attendance included Chief of Joint Ops Lt-Gen Ash Power, former commander CJTF 633 Maj-Gen Michael Crane, and Artillery Colonel Commandant Eastern Region Col Ian Ahearn (retd), alongside a dozen other current and former gunner brigadiers and warrant officers.



## Top cover:

Artillery Head of Regiment Brig Peter Gates shares advice with the RAA's newest officers, Lts Eleanor Tegg (left) and Isabelle Cowley.



# A bigger bang

Reserve soldiers provide fire support by forming a battery to protect Battle Group Cannan, **Cpl Max Bree** reports.

A BATTERY of mortars manned by a mix of Queenslanders and Perth-based soldiers provided fire support for Battle Group Cannan on Exercise Hamel 2014.

Reservists from 3 Lt Bty in Perth and of 5/11 Lt Bty in Brisbane formed a battery protecting the battle group.

"This is great training for us and good to get the whole team together from WA as well," said Lt Andy Rojcevic, of 5/11 Lt Bty.

"Because we work as separate teams during the year, it's good to come together and get proper exercise experience."

Bdr Michael Hawkins, of 3 Lt Bty, said because of an earlier exercise the two units had their procedures sorted out before Hamel.

"It's not perfect, but the longer we're out field the more we gel together," he said.

A reservist for 20 years, Bdr Hawkins said coming on Exercise Hamel meant being exposed to the Army's new equipment.

"We get to see a lot of stuff we wouldn't normally see in Perth," he said.

"Things like the new Tiger helicopters, Bushmasters and hearing the UAVs flying around non-stop."

Though the units changed from M2A12 105mm Howitzers to mortars about two years ago, Bdr Hawkins said he was still attached to the old guns.

"I'm an old boy gunner on the 105s," he said.

"I still prefer the guns, they're more fun and they have a bigger bang.

"The M2s have got more weight and that makes it harder, but with the mortars you need to do a lot more running around. They both have their good and bad points."

Bdr Hawkins re qualified on the mortars back to section commander level.

"As a seco, I'm in charge of two mortar teams," he said.



"My job is to make sure the target information supplied to the mortars is right and the ammo is correct.

"Normally I'd also have a position and two tubes under my command, but at the moment we're running four tubes off the one CP."

Bdr Hawkins' section had soldiers between the ages of 20 and 50 ranging from retail workers, a linguist and a police contractor.

"We get on really well and find out different things about each other," he said. "It's good to find out what people do in civilian life."

Though time off regular work can be a problem for reservists, Lt Rojcevic said it wasn't a problem for this exercise.

"There was plenty of warning before Exercise Hamel so reserves were able to schedule that several months in advance," he said.

"Some reserves are on unpaid leave as well, so they're really committed to it"

Gnr Corina Mangini,  
of 3 Lt Bty based in  
Perth, loves her job  
crewing an 81 mm  
mortar.



## **Mortars are a dream come true for this mum**

SHE'S a single mum of two, works different jobs and in her spare time enjoys crewing an 81mm mortar with 3 Lt Bty in Perth.

Gnr Carina Mangini was one of the first women to qualify as a mortarman in Western Australia. She previously drove trucks at the unit before they changed from howitzers to mortars.

"I loved the guns," she said. "They were a lot of hard work, but you'd get into it, drop a few bombs and head off. I wanted to stay with the unit and felt I had something to offer."

After her transfer paperwork was in, Gnr Mangini had 12 months on-the-job training at the unit before going on her mortar course.

"At the end of the course you do a 5km pack march with all the gear and bombs," she said.

"Along the way you'll do crash fire missions where you have to quickly set up the mortar and put bombs down range.

"During the march you rotate through the one,

two and three positions to qualify on each one."

Number one sets the mortar sights, number two drops bombs in the tube and three makes sure all the rounds are ready to go.

Though dropping a bomb in the tube was a bit of a rush, the mother of an 11 year old and 14 year old said she had a favourite place during fire missions.

"I like being on the bottom of the tube - it's loud as buggery and you feel it vibrate through to your feet," she said.

The 39-year-old said she had no issue being one of the few women in the job.

"I think they see me as one of the boys," she said.

"But they've known me for a long time.

"With the younger guys I reckon they just see me get in and do the job so they don't have a problem.

"I'd recommend any female give it a go if they're interested; it's something to train for but it's possible."





Vietnam veteran Bob Elworthy recalls the cold welcome home for soldiers from a war that many Australians protested against.

## As a nation turned its back, 'peace' eluded this generation of diggers

They're the ghosts of an Australian Christmas past - men with memories of a scorching summer homecoming and a cold shoulder of welcome.

It was December 22, 1972 - 41 years ago today - that the last Australian combat troops came home from Vietnam. In recent days, in a coincidence of timing with historical resonance, the last combat troops have been returning from Afghanistan. These wars are bookends of our modern military experience - unpopular, mostly futile but separated by the gulf in how we have chosen to welcome their veterans back into the fold. In December '72, not even the seasonal spirit was enough to open hearts.

"For the Vietnam veterans 1972 was almost like a national washing of your hands of the whole [war]," says Bob Elworthy, president of the Victorian Vietnam Veterans Association who had experienced his own difficult return on Christmas Eve the year before. He remembers what they were told before landing in Melbourne. Any illusions of a hero's welcome akin to that afforded veterans of earlier wars were swiftly dispatched. "Don't ask any questions, get into a vehicle or an Army bus, take my uniform off and go on leave."

The attitude, he says, was: "Let's forget about it. When you had 50,000 veterans here who had served their country really well, who hadn't had a chance to express how they felt about the war and hadn't had a chance to be publicly acknowledged. Vietnam veterans adopted the opinion, 'Well, if that's the way you feel about us, we'll just pull our head in.' A lot of them just went to ground. A lot of them shunned society, a lot of them still do. I think it took a long time for that feeling of being dishonoured to heal."

That summer is rarely remembered for the homecoming, and it's little wonder. In the national mind, December 1972 summons one thing: the election of Gough Whitlam and the "It's Time" verdict on 23 years of conservative government. The mood is recalled as optimistic, hopeful, for many celebratory. The veterans of a massively unpopular war had no place on the fresh national canvas being painted, but they already knew that. Years of anti-war protests had made it clear.

"There were protests that you just couldn't ignore," Elworthy recalls. "Soldiers were serving when they were marching through Melbourne, holding placards. We certainly didn't like [it] but it was something we just accepted was there and we put it to the back of our mind. We were sent letters and we were sent newspapers. We were quite angry about it, but we just had to get on with the job."

That job - ill-defined to many, criminal to some - was never finished. "It became clear to everyone that we couldn't, in the traditional term, win - that it was going to be a political agreement in the end and I think that left a sour taste in everybody's mouth, including the soldiers."

The sour taste was the least of it. The scars of war and of the shunning at home shattered many young lives permanently. There was no moving forward in the spirit of that summer; for years, no moving forward at all. An official homecoming parade was not held until 1985.

By then, the ranks had thinned. Young they still were, but curses other than time can wear you out. "I have some very close Vietnam veteran friends who have passed away," Elworthy says. "Some have taken their own life. Some have not been able to cope. Some have been stricken with nasty injuries and illnesses from the war that have claimed their lives and some even today still have

some ghosts that are going to take a long time to get over."

At this distance in time, that may never happen. The veterans who haunted a nation's sense of self - emblems of a terrible mistake - themselves are haunted by what the experience took from them.

Blessedly, we do it differently now - the ghosts of that distant summer are a permanent reminder of the toll taken by a war and a raw, bitter return. Elworthy says a crucial lesson was learnt.

"The younger servicemen of today are regarded highly because the country now makes a distinction between government policy and what the soldiers actually do. I'd like to think that as a result of the way Vietnam veterans were treated that our younger veterans are treated much better."

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## Boosted by Bardia

RMC exercise brings out the 1 Bde big shots to support staff cadets in career journey

Capt Kris Gardiner

THE Mount Bunday Training Area was a hive of activity when 1 Bde and RMC staff cadets came together for Exercise Bardia.

The exercise, held south-west of Darwin from May 27-29, provided a hands-on demonstration of the Army's capabilities with a combat brigade and their employment.

Commander 1 Bde Brig John Frewen said supporting Exercise Bardia was crucial in the development of Army's future leaders.

"For the staff cadets this is a rare opportunity to see a combat brigade with its full complement of combined-arms capabilities," Brig Frewen said.

"Exercise Bardia offers a valuable chance to develop their knowledge by speaking to the soldiers and junior officers who operate these capabilities, and seeing the effects they provide."

From live-fire demonstrations through to static displays, the staff cadets got up close to a wide range of equipment and gained valuable knowledge about the functions of a combat brigade in the field, such as combat support and combat service support elements.

The 158 staff cadets were able to speak to members from a range of corps, shaping their selection of preferred corps and eventually their career paths.



Supervising officer and senior instructor for II Class Maj Paul Young said the representation of corps provided clarity to the staff cadets, which he said was one of the best forms of career guidance available to them.

"Staff cadets have a chance to interact with soldiers and junior officers," Maj Young said. "This furthers their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of platoon commanders and they gain a better understanding of the corps they wish to join."



# Australia's D-Day effort

AUSTRALIAN airmen made a significant contribution to the Allied invasion of northern France on June 6, 1944. which returned ground forces to European soil from where they had been ejected in 1940.

Codenamed Operation Overlord and two years in the planning, it involved the landing of five infantry divisions on the first day at Normandy beaches codenamed Utah. Omaha. Gold, Juno and Sword.

To ensure that the lodgement of these forces would not be seriously impaired by enemy reinforcements, a combined air campaign was launched to isolate the battlefield.

Although no RAN ships or formed units of the Australian Army took part, the story was very different in the air.

During the early morning of June 6, seven Australian squadrons contributed to the Bomber and Fighter Command attacks on various targets on the Normandy beaches and nearby.

Two formations of 13 Lancaster aircraft from No. 460 Squadron each attacked Fontenay-Crisbecq and St Martin de Varreville, while Nos 463 and 467 Squadrons struck at gun emplacements at St Pierre du Mont.

Thirteen Halifax bombers from No. 466 Squadron bombed a German battery at Maisy.

The Spitfire-equipped No. 453 Squadron undertook 43 sorties in support of the landing forces

on the first day.

The Mosquito night fighters of No. 456 Squadron flew 18 sorties on the nights of June 5-6 and 6-7, and shot down four German He-177s.

The other Mosquito squadron, No. 464 mounted 20 sorties on the night of June 5-6 against enemy rail and road communication, bridges and enemy troop convoys.

Other Australian airmen serving in RAF squadrons are known to have played a part in the various operations that supported the landing.



Above, a 453SQN Spitfire being readied before a sortie over the D-Day beachheads. Left, FLGOFFs W. Kellett and F. Stevens, of 456SQN, after shooting down two enemy aircraft on the night of D-Day.

Images: Office of Air Force History

Some were involved in deceptions undertaken as part of the aerial 'cover' plan, while others jammed enemy early-warning radar.

Many more transport crews with Nos. 38 and 46 Groups, RAF, took part in the large-scale air-drops that also occurred on June 5-6.

Still others were in RAF squadrons of Bomber Command flying alongside the Australian units in the attack on Maisy and against similar targets at I.a Pernelle, Longues and Mont Fleury.

*Courtesy Air Force News 5 Jun '14*

*Despite having included other articles re Cpl Cameron Baird in previous journals, I felt it was important to relate to our readers the esteem in which he is held by not only 2 Commando, but all members of the Army (ed)*

## Reflections of CPL Baird from family and colleagues

18 February 2014 | Transcript

### LTGEN DAVID MORRISON:

[Indistinct] the Army and I represent the Army family. I would just like to take this opportunity of saying that I feel deeply privileged to be in the company of Cameron Baird's mother, father, and brother. This is a remarkable day in Australia's history. I'm going to say no more other than to say how proud I am of what Cameron did and the family from which he came.

Brendan, his brother, would now like to make a statement and then the Baird family are available for questions.

### BRENDAN BAIRD:

Thank you all for being here.

I would like to offer the following statement on behalf of my brother Cameron, our father Doug, and our mother Kaye.

Today Cameron has been awarded the highest accolade possible, a Victoria Cross for Australia. This award recognises Cameron's valour, extreme devotion to duty, and the ultimate self-sacrifice. For us, the Baird family, this is a very special day that brings with it mixed emotions. We are tremendously proud of Cameron.

We are honoured to accept this award on his behalf and we are grateful to the Governor-General and the Australian Defence Force for bestowing this honour upon Cameron. But in accepting this honour, we are also deeply saddened that Cameron could not be here, not that he would like the attention.

Cameron was a career soldier. He lived for the Army, his mates, and to serve his country. He was an easy-going bloke whose leadership and relaxed nature instilled confidence in all those who knew him. He was a typical, down to earth Aussie larrikin with a great sense of humour and loved a

practical joke.

As a family, we have spent many hours since last week's announcement thinking about what Cameron would do or say about this award. We firmly believe he would be more than a bit embarrassed and probably a bit shocked by all the attention. We also know that Cameron would be the first to tell you this is not just about me, it's about my Army family, my brothers in arms, the 2nd Commando Regiment.

While today is about Cameron, it is also about the mateship he shared with these blokes with whom he trained, lived, and fought alongside. Cameron would often say about his job this is not Hollywood, we're just everyday people who go home to our families when the job is done. Cameron is the 40th Australian soldier who did not come home from Afghanistan when the job was done.

This award, while an extremely special and humbling recognition of Cameron, also places him in history as the 100th Australian recipient of the Victoria Cross and the first member of the Second Commando Regiment to receive this award. This recognition honours Cameron and his brothers in arms in a way that we, who knew and loved him, will cherish.

Lest we forget.

Without warning.

### QUESTION:

It's obviously – how did it feel to you, sir, to have the Chief of Defence Force salute you?

### DOUG BAIRD:

I guess probably it was an unreal feeling. It was something that we certainly didn't expect. I guess this is just typical of what the Defence Force is – it's about respect. And probably from our perspective, since we were given the shocking news, we've had nothing but total support from the Chief right down to the newest recruit in 2nd Commando. It's been absolutely fantastic. It was a shock, but it was a great honour, and we accept it for what it was. We'll never forget that.

**QUESTION:**

And what about you, ma'am? How did you feel?

**KAYE BAIRD:**

[Indistinct] I don't know what Cameron would be thinking now, but I guess he would say go for it [indistinct].

**QUESTION:**

[Indistinct] What are your plans for the medal? I understand you've worked something out.

**BRENDAN BAIRD:**

As a family, we have decided that this medal, the history behind the medal, the valour deserves to be in one place and one place only, and that is somewhere where future generations can be educated on the meaning behind the medal, the actions behind them, what is preserved for the medal, and that is in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, alongside with Cameron's service medals and also his Medal for Gallantry.

So as a family, we would like to think that future generations will take a step back when they go into the memorial and, in fact, remember those of all the families in every war that has fallen, the significance and sacrifice they have done for this wonderful country.

**QUESTION:**

Mr Baird, when you received the medal, you and your wife were very keen to recognise Cameron's mates [indistinct], can you talk us through the significance of that in your mind?

**DOUG BAIRD:**

Look, I can actually remember a story in the very early days in regard to Cameron when he first came into the unit, simply because of his size people sort of looked up to him in a lot of ways and people sort of gravitated to him. And there was things like that which actually took part within the unit which we believe was the formation of Corporal Cameron Baird, VC MG.

So yes, we do hold a very special place in our heart for that particular, not just the actual regiment itself, which we admire and love dearly, we also recognise the individuals that made up the team, which made up Bravo Company, and we also recognise every other member that's in the company as well. So yes, there is an obligation we

feel to those particular guys. They did a lot of heavy lifting and we are so grateful that their parents aren't standing here today. We would wish this on nobody else.

**QUESTION:**

The Governor-General asked you to pass on a message to your son when you next talked to him, to take a message. What will you say to Cameron when you, in your own – what will you say about today when you, in your own way, talk to your son?

**DOUG BAIRD:**

That's a great question and I think maybe as a mother, maybe Kaye would like to answer that one. I'm a bit blokey on that one, whereas maybe a different version would be "Cameron would you like a Bundy and Coke?" and I'm sure he'd probably turn around and he'd say, well, he couldn't understand what the fuss was about.

He just probably would rather be sitting back, even to the point of – on ANZAC Day marches, quite often he wouldn't march. He would support the brothers from the other side of the fence and give them a little bit of stick from time to time in a jovial sort of way which they – that was him. That was the larrikin part of him coming out.

But look, do you wish to add any more to that?

**KAYE BAIRD:**

No. You've said it all.

**BRENDAN BAIRD:**

Yeah.

**QUESTION:**

It's a bit unusual that he went straight from his basic training into a Special Forces regiment. Was he surprised at making that leap so quickly or were you surprised?

**BRENDAN BAIRD:**

It started basically from right from Kapooka, and Cameron was awarded an award there, and for physical –

**KAYE BAIRD:**

Most outstanding?

**BRENDAN BAIRD:**

Yeah, most outstanding soldier. And in fact, it

doesn't surprise us because he was a natural person doing – inspired to be the best in whatever he could find. At the particular time, the changes within the Defence Force, the opportunity was there for Cameron to excel at what he loved doing, and yes, at times was quite surprised that he was put straight into the Special Forces, but in saying this, it was recognised by his peers at the time. And Cameron was right at home as soon as he was posted at 2 Commando Regiment.

**KAYE BAIRD:**

He also felt very humbled to join such an elite company, as he said – as he once said to me, some soldiers wait for years to be asked to join the Special Forces, and he just felt so privileged that he was able to come straight in and be a part of that.

**QUESTION:**

So you were saying before how close you feel to the [indistinct] made in the regiment. You know, you lost your son but you seem to have made quite a few others. Would you agree with that?

**DOUG BAIRD:**

Oh, there's no question about that one. We've had – and I guess probably if I could just go back a little bit, and pull me up if I go too far. You know, I can remember in the very early days when Cameron lived on the lines when soldiers lived on base that I was in Sydney at this particular time, I actually spent that particular night in the particular room and that particular group of guys and they were all very fresh, all very young, and, you know, we see a lot of those guys at the back of the room today. So, yeah, look, it was just started all then, and I was part of it – I was privileged to be part of it, and I just think probably just that in a way was just acknowledgement to them, and I've received that back as well.

**QUESTION:**

The news broke about a week ago about this honour. How does it feel with all the attention?

**DOUG BAIRD:**

Well, look, yeah, it's an extreme honour, which we understand that what we're doing today goes with it, and we are an extension of Cameron, and we will make sure that probably this particular medal, whether it be as it is now or in the format of replicas, will go to his primary school in Victoria, it

will go to his secondary college at [indistinct], in acknowledgement that one of the things that Cameron wanted to do prior – and he probably would have done it had he not met his fortune on 22 June, was that he wanted to get a message out to all the young people that education was an extremely powerful tool, and that probably in his early days, he probably cruised more than what he should. Is that true? But at that stage he was thinking football, but as he matured as a person I think he understood that probably education was the backbone for whatever you wanted to do. So that was going to be his message to them. Study hard, get the best education you can, and become the best possible person you can in life, and to go by the old golden rule, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

**LTGEN MORRISON:**

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sure you understand that the Governor-General and the Prime Minister are waiting to spend some time with the Baird family, so if there are any other questions, could you just – maybe one or two [indistinct]...

**BRENDAN BAIRD:**

I'd just like to say again right now to everybody that this medal here is not just solely [indistinct] for Cameron, nor would Cameron want – as of my statement. This is a reflection on the hard work that is done by the Special Forces soldiers, by the 2nd Commando Regiment, and these are the soldiers who defend our shorelines. So we are very proud, and we accept this [indistinct]... Very proud.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:**

Thanks very much. Thank you.

**DOUG BAIRD:**

[Indistinct] anyway, guys. Look, thank you very much from the family. We appreciate the fact that you were kind enough to be able to bear with us under the circumstances, and the respect you've shown us today and hope [indistinct] and just from the family, thank you very much.

**UNKNOWN SPEAKER:**

Thank you.

**WARRANT OFFICER DAVE ASHLEY:**

...not recall any time during my long career any time where an individual was held in such profes-

sional regard and with such deep affection and by the people and soldiers that count the most, those mates who went into battle with him. And I know both in my head and my heart that Cameron Baird is one of Australia's greatest ever soldiers.

**QUESTION:**

Why? What were the reasons for the esteem that you felt [indistinct]?

**WO ASHLEY:**

He was a great mate. Everyone could rely on him. He epitomised Australian Army values of courage, initiative, respect, and teamwork. He always led from the front. So he was just a dynamo [indistinct].

**QUESTION:**

It's pretty striking to those of us who have read the citation and discovered that his weapon actually jammed for a while and he had to go away and clear it and reload and he went straight back in there again. What does that say about him?

**WO ASHLEY:**

Determination. He was focused on doing the job at hand. So even though his weapon failed, he fixed a weapon [indistinct], got back into the battle. And it's that kind of momentum that needs to be continued to win the fight and he did that.

**QUESTION:**

How would it feel when you've got this citation being [indistinct] today, but for his mates here today at Government House? They'd be bringing back some pretty vivid memories, I imagine.

**WO ASHLEY:**

I actually think that this Victoria Cross not just represents Cameron Baird, but all the soldiers of his unit and all the soldiers of the Australian Army. There is an immense pride in the Army now because of this award.

**QUESTION:**

You described him earlier, sir, [indistinct] what you had to say about Cameron, your description of him as a dynamo. Could you again tell us how you view him now?

**WO ASHLEY:**

Cameron leaves behind a particular spirit that will remain in the 2nd Commando Regiment and the

Army and it's because of just who he was. Everyone looked up to Cameron Baird. I don't know – you may have missed my first answer, but my job is to travel the Army and speak to soldiers, and I've been doing that for many, many years. I don't recall a single unit that I've ever visited where an individual was held in such high professional regard and with such deep affection.

**QUESTION:**

Because of what? What qualities?

**WO ASHLEY:**

Army stated values are courage, initiative, respect, and team work, and these aren't just throwaway words. We actually live them. He lived all of those values. And because of this, he was a dynamo. People looked to Cameron Baird as the example. That's why he is so sorely missed.

**QUESTION:**

And your correct title?

**WO ASHLEY:**

I'm the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army, which means I'm the senior soldier in the Army.

**QUESTION:**

How are the guys in 2 Commando today? They seem to be – we could hear some emotion being expressed, I suppose, a bit behind us. How are they?

**WO ASHLEY:**

That is just an indication of the esteem that Cameron Baird was held in. I met all the soldiers in 2 Commando Regiment today and, like me, they're incredibly proud.

**QUESTION:**

And a bit emotional?

**WO ASHLEY:**

Yes, without a doubt. You can be a tough soldier and still be emotional.





# Gunners reach out to Litchfield

## 8/12 Regt soldiers connect with local community

Capt Kris Gardiner

GUNNERS from the Darwin based 8/12 Regt have reached out to the people of Litchfield and helped to restore two significant sites in the community.

Around the small town of Humpty Doo, about 40km south of Darwin, 40 gunners from 103 Bty worked hard to restore the local war memorial and Strauss Airfield.

The community has a long association with the military, with the RAAF and the US Army and Air Force stationed in the area during WWII.

Capt Michael York, of 103 Bty, said the restoration projects were an opportunity for the regiment to help Litchfield City Council and to introduce the gunners to the military history of the region.

"The restoration projects have given us a chance to foster relationships with the community," Capt York said. "Equally important was the hands-on experience it gave to the gunners. "They were able to physically connect with the tangible relics of the war that still exist today, like the Strauss Airfield."

The gunners cleaned, tidied and improved the sites where possible, and helped protect them from the harsh Northern Territory weather. The results of their efforts not only improved the condition of the sites, but also gave the locals an opportunity to meet the soldiers and ask questions about the battery, 8/12 Regt and the ADF.

"The people of Humpty Doo and the greater Litchfield community now have a better idea about who we are and what we do," Capt York said.



Short video introducing the new UK aircraft carrier, Queen Elizabeth

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEIH\\_2IEHCQ&feature=em-subsubs\\_digest-vrecs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEIH_2IEHCQ&feature=em-subsubs_digest-vrecs)

*Courtesy WO2 David Troedel*

# CUSTOM & TRADITIONS

## Fire Support Bases

*By Christopher Jobson Former RSM  
Ceremonial & Protocol Army Author of RAA  
Customs and Traditions & 'Looking  
Forward, Looking Back' & Customs &  
Traditions of the Australia Army*

In counter revolutionary warfare (CRW) it is necessary for the infantry to carry-out constant offensive patrolling within the enemy-dominated territory. To successfully achieve this a secure base is required within the area of operations (AO) and such a base performs two roles; the first being it gives the infantry a firm base from which to patrol, and secondly, it provides a platform from which artillery and mortar fire support can be employed to support the infantry. These bases are known as fire support bases (FSB).

There are three types of fire support bases; the first is a *Forward Operational Base* (FOB). This is a firm 'home base' from which aggressive action into enemy-dominated territory can be developed. An FOB is made-up of a number of combat units, along with the necessary support units and sub-units, will normally contain an airfield capable of taking medium-lift transport aircraft (eg, C130 Hercules). It will also house the headquarters administration and maintenance areas. An example of an FOB was the 1st Australian Task Force (1 ATF) base at Nui Dat in South Vietnam.

The second type of base is a *'Fire Support Base'* (FSB). This is a secure area from which guns and/or mortars can operate in support of operations and this, like an FOB, can be a reasonably 'permanent' base. A good example of an FSB was the 'Horseshoe' in South Vietnam. The 'Horseshoe' was constructed by the Australians in 1967 and was only 'abandoned' when the Task Force withdrew from South Vietnam in late 1971. The Base contained some pre-fabricated buildings within the perimeter for accommodation, messing and administration (the base was so-named because it sat inside a horseshoe-shaped ridge).

The third type of base is a *'Fire Support Patrol Base'* (FSPB). These are bases containing guns and/or mortars that are established and occupied for a limited period of time in support of a particular operation, as distinct from the more perma-

nent FSB. FSPBs are commonly, but incorrectly, referred to as fire support bases.

A number of headquarters, combat units and/or sub-units can occupy an FSPB, for these bases have no laid-down sizes, nor compositions; however, they are all deployed together within a roughly circular, wire erected perimeter. The make-up of an FSPB is dictated by the type of operation the brigade, or task force, is conducting and the factors that must be taken into account, with regard to the size of the base, are the number of artillery batteries and other units required to support the particular operation, the type of protection the base requires and the amount of ammunition to be dumped. The type of air-support required will also need to be taken into account when planning an FSPB. For example, a landing zone (LZ) for a medium lift helicopter (MLH) is somewhat larger than that for a light observation helicopter (LOH). FSPBs can be both deployed and re-supplied by air and/or ground. An example of an FSPB established by 1 ATF in South Vietnam was FSPB 'Thrust'. 'Thrust' was made-up of one field artillery battery (six 105 mm howitzers), an infantry battalion headquarters (HQ), an infantry support company-minus (consisting of a company HQ, two mortar sections (four 81 mm mortars), an anti-armour platoon (eight 106 mm recoilless rifles) and an assault pioneer platoon), along with a signals platoon-minus.

The Base also housed elements of an infantry administrative company, which included the Regimental Aid Post, and an infantry rifle platoon. For added protection the Base also had two troops of armoured personnel carriers (APC), with each troop consisting of 12 carriers armed with .50 calibre machine guns. The perimeter also housed two LZs, one for a MLH (50 metres in diameter) and the other for an LOH (37 metres). The total area occupied by 'Thrust' was approximately 800 x 700 metres.

The area selected for an FSPB must give the base approaches that can be covered by observed fire and afford a good field of observation. If possible, it should be on high dominating ground and make the most of existing obstacles and cover (as was the case with the 'Horseshoe'). Of course, this is

not always possible, and should the piece of real estate selected for an FSPB be in a valley, or a depression, then the base must constantly employ both mobile and standing patrols in the surrounding high ground. An example of a fire support base that was deployed in a valley and did not patrol the high ground, was the doomed French 'Aero-Terrestrial' base at Dien Bien Phu.

The perimeter of an FSPB is made-up of two barbed-wire 'fences' which are spaced approximately 15 to 20 metres apart. The types of 'fences' employed are generally either 'Catwire' Type 1 (two rows of concertina barbed-wire, one row on top of the other), or 'Triple Concertina' (two rows of barbed-wire - one in front of the other, with a third row placed centrally on top). Between the two 'fences' there are positioned a large number of Claymore anti-personnel mines and, spaced around the inside of the perimeter, there are a number of machine gun-manned 'strong points'. Support-in-depth is provided by more machine guns and Claymore mines.

Each artillery piece within a base is protected by being either dug-down into a gun pit, or by having an earth and sandbag bund built-up around it. All command posts and ammunition bays are dug-in with overhead protection, and the ammunition dumps, and any armoured vehicles within the base, are also bundled.

An FSPB is more than just a fire support platform for the patrolling infantry. They also serve as an advance base from which the infantry patrols can be re-supplied, as well as providing a secure area into which they can withdraw for short periods of rest and also, perhaps, enjoy some 'luxuries' such

as a shower, without having to be withdrawn from the relevant area of operation (AO).

The Australian Army's employment of fire support bases in South Vietnam was very successful and all attacks by the enemy on 1 ATF's bases were repelled and defeated, with the most famous attack being that on FSPB 'Coral' in May 1968. However,



A US Army CH-47 Chinook at FSB Coral, 12 May 1968

it must be emphasized that these bases are not fortresses from which to fight; the battle must still be taken to the enemy. These bases are merely employed as their names suggest, to provide support for the aggressive offensive patrolling, and once an operation is complete, or a base is no longer required, it is completely dismantled and all pits are filled-in, so as not to give the enemy a position from which to fight.

*Courtesy of Cannonball, the journal of the  
RAA Historical Company*

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## Letters to the Editor, cont.

Alan:

I was reading the recent issue and Major Norman Whitelaw's interview when I saw that he recalls the first Australian officer killed. I immediately thought it might have been an old boy of the school I attended – Malvern Grammar School. I wrote up a 450 page history of the school and had studied the magazines fairly closely. I recalled that Lt. C. R. Nethercote was killed very early in Australian encounters with the Italians in Libya.

Sure enough, Norman goes on to name Nethercote even to giving his army number – VX94.

Such a number – Victoria – Volunteer – was very low and hence Nethercote must have offered for service right at the start.

Graham (Col Graham Farley OAM RFD ED)



# 8/12 Regt RAA continues its journey into the digital realm with a live-fire exercise at the Mt Bundy Training Area,

Lt Jackson Proud and Lt Kyle Handreck report.

Gunners from 101 and 103 Btys pose for a group photo.



Gun numbers prepare to fire the M777A2.



EXERCISE Thunder Run One was the culmination of several months of individual and small team training, which saw the execution of fully digital fires.

Six M777A2s from 101 and 103 Bty's, several joint fires teams (JFTs), three battle group joint fires and effects coordination cells (JFECCs), and a brigade JFECC from the regimental headquarters deployed to the Mt Bundy Training area to participate in the exercise.

CO 8/12 Regt RAA Lt-Col Julian West said the aim of the exercise was to build upon soldiers' understanding of digital communications and its impact on the provision of offensive support to 1 Bde units.

"Long hours were spent in barracks rehearsing the digital transmission of technical information from JFTs to the gun lines," Lt-Col West said.

"Exercise Thunder Run One was about testing the digital fires capability of 8/12 Regt RAA and

refining individual and collective soldier skills. The exercise focused on a series of command post exercises rehearsing the digital fires process, through to the rapid digital prosecution of targets during the live-fire phase.

The exercises then culminated with a hasty deployment and several successful direct-fire serials, with the gun line receiving fire missions, coming into action and engaging the target in less than four minutes.

# READY FOR ROLL-OUT

**Southern-based diggers to receive General Purpose Jacket**

**Sgt Dave Morley**



New piece of kit: Instructors from the Motorised Combat Wing at the School of Artillery, Sgt Peter Rabula (right) and LBdr Nicholas Male, carry out weapon and safety supervisor lessons at Puckapunyal wearing Army's new General Purpose Jacket. Photo by W02 Greg Frankel

DIGGERS in Australia's southern states can expect to be issued a new General Purpose (GP) Jacket before the end of winter this year.

Head Land Systems Maj-Gen Paul McLachlan said the requirement for a new cold weather utility jacket to be used in a broad range of environments was identified in February 2012.

"Prior to this we did not have an effective cold weather jacket option that could be worn both in barracks and the field," he said.

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## GENERAL PURPOSE JACKET AT A GLANCE

THE General Purpose (GP) Jacket, primarily for use in barracks and non-operational environments, was developed to provide warmth and protection against the cold and wind chill in damp, windy and light rain conditions.

The new GP Jacket is available in both male and female sizing and features an outer fabric with water repellent and wind-resistant qualities.

The configuration also has a stowable hood and a removable fleece liner to enable the wearer to adapt the jacket's use in a wide range of climatic conditions.

The jacket is designed as part of a layered system to be worn as a lightweight garment over the uniform, and is manufactured using the new Australian Multicam pattern.

The roll-out plan for the new GP Jacket will see the progressive introduction into service throughout 2014. The priority of issue is for training establishments and units based in the southern states to cater for the coming winter.

By July 2014, the Defence Materiel Organisation will have delivered about 10,500 GP Jackets to regional clothing stores.



## C-17A in US first 36SQN put to the test in Arizona desert

THE United States' best combat airlift instructors have put a No. 36 Squadron C-17A crew to the test over the Arizona desert. In June, the RAAF became the first non-American C-17A operator to attend the Advanced Airlift Tactics and Training Centre (AATTC).

Established in 1983, the AATTC has the mission of increasing warfighting effectiveness and survivability of mobility forces. In simple terms, AATTC teaches American airlift crews – and crews from 16 allied nations – how to fly into a warzone and successfully deliver a payload.

FLTLT Ben Ness captained the 36SQN C-17A crew that participated in AATTC from June 9-20. "AATTC is focused on mission success in a low-level combat environment," FLTLT Ness said. "Before departing for AATTC, the crew conducted regular low-level operations and airdrop training sorties in the aircraft. "Weapon System Trainer (the C-17A cockpit simulator) time was also allocated to practise operations to the deployed airfields, and reflect the tactical airdrop scenarios that would be flown during the course." The first half of AATTC takes place in Missouri, with classroom lessons and lectures that draw on the collective breadth of America's combat airlift experience.

But while the C-17A is considered a strategic airlifter, it also brings considerable value to the tactical airlift spectrum. "Although we were able to implement a lot of the C-130 tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), there were several techniques that are vastly different for the C-17A," FLTLT Ness said. "AATTC has a highly experienced C-17A instructor who was able to focus on adopting specific C-17A TTPs while achieving the same mission profiles as the C-130 participants." American C-17A crews have built experience flying airdrop and airland missions to the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and Africa, capitalising on the C-17A's mix of range, speed and self-protection equipment.

The second half of AATTC was a live-flying phase, with crews operating to Fort Huachuca in Arizona, a US Army installation near the border with Mexico. The tactical missions included low-level flying to evade simulated ground borne threats and fighter evasion. The targets for 36SQN were a number of drop zones and small airfields spread around Fort Huachuca.



"Employing the aircraft tactically and managing workload on the flight deck was an enormous challenge," FLTLT Ness said. "The conditions in Arizona were hot and windy, which made combat manoeuvring and airdrop difficult through the high terrain. "The US Air National Guard aircrew and USAF intelligence officers are very professional, focused teams.

Working closely with them during the rapid planning and execution of these missions was certainly a rewarding aspect." The experiences gained by the Australian C-17A crew at AATTC will be shared with their fellow 36SQN members.

"With a continuing relationship with the AATTC, we are able to adopt, teach and practise these techniques to other 36SQN members," FLTLT Ness said.

*Courtesy AIR FORCE 31 July '14*

# End of an era for stewards

## Trade taken off Army's Order of Battle

AFTER almost 50 years of service, the Army steward trade ceased on June 30.

Its functions are now taken up by contracted staff in barracks and other Australian Army Catering Corps (AACC) personnel in the field environment.

Deputy head of AACC Lt-Col Geoff Young said Army had to decide if there was a deployable operational role for stewards when considering their future.

"Unfortunately for us [it was determined] their jobs could be done by others within our corps," he said.

"We tried to find a distinct corps role for them, which we unfortunately couldn't do."

About 80 operator catering (steward) positions were taken off Army's Order of Battle. Some soldiers took redundancy payouts, while others opted to corps or service transfer, according to Lt-Col Young.

"A number of soldiers are taking the opportunity to reinvest their time in Defence and finding another trade to work within," he said.

"Some of those soldiers are going to more technical trades in RAEME, while some are transfer-ring to become stewards in the Navy.

But not all will be leaving AACC.

"One or two have decided to take the step and become a chef, so they'll require a bit of training but we'll accept them with open arms," Lt-Col Young said.

Army chefs will take over the stewards' field responsibilities, Lt-Col Young said.

"Under their duty statements they do everything that a steward does in the field," he said.

"The capability brick we had in catering was four cooks and one steward. It will now be five cooks doing the same jobs. So the tasks of preparing hot-boxes and sandwiches for morning teas in the field will fall to the chefs.

AS THE soldiers' representative, I would like to acknowledge the thousands of very fine soldiers who have served as stewards for nearly half a century.

We thank you all - from a sergeant who right royally kicked my backside for sitting on a dining table in an ORs mess when I was a young digger, to those who ran our messes at home and abroad giving our spirits a boost with the provision of welcome amenities, and to all those who have provided such loyal and dedicated service to us all.

Change is often necessary and the cessation of the steward trade is one of those changes required to set us up for the future through Plan Beersheba.

But we know this - our stewards have served with pride and honour, and we are all honoured and proud to have served with our stewards.



If you are a steward, or a former steward, please look me up or grab my attention if you see me. I will always have time for you - and I will shake your hand from us all for a job well done.

**WO Dave Ashley,  
RSM-A**

"It's a sad occasion for our corps. It has been a very valuable 49 years working for CAs and CDFs at all types of functions." Army catering is to be stream-lined into a new catering company as part of Plan Beersheba.

This means all AACC assets will be in a single company dispersed to cover all of Army's key brigade areas, with the exception of Socomd, reserves and non- Army group positions.

The catering company will have a HQ, ops and Q troop raised at 10FSB, with north Queensland, south-east Queensland, central corridor and enabler platoons raised.

Establishment started in January, with all platoons expected to be operational by 2017.

*Courtesy Army News 17 July, 14*

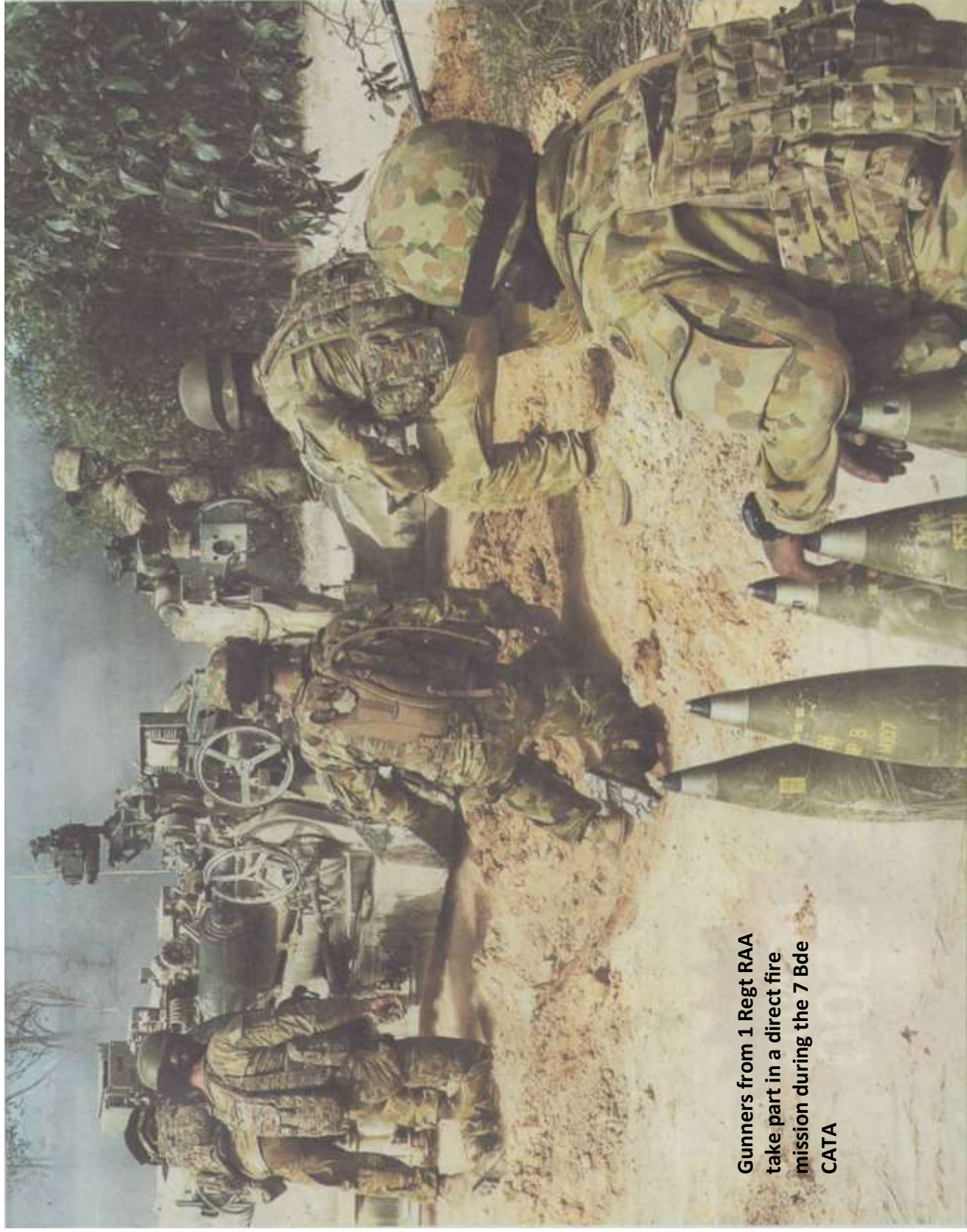


## EXPLOSIVE EXERCISE

We've used everything from 155mm artillery down to small arms, as well as 25mm from ASLAVs, 81mm mortars, Javelins, 40mm, 64 and the 84s.

... a series of unit level activities [were conducted] with COs leading their units through the training steps appropriate to achieve the lessons and competencies important to them.

Bde Maj Simon Hompas



**Gunners from 1 Regt RAA  
take part in a direct fire  
mission during the 7 Bde  
CATA**

# Maze tribute to Great War dead

By Marti Reynolds

ONE of Britain's biggest mazes has re-opened with a poignant reminder of the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War.

Made from corn, the Wistow Maze in Leicestershire has been designed in the shape of a field cannon, a reminder of the 16 million people who lost their lives in the conflict.

Every year, the extraordinary laby-rinth of pathways is planted with corn in the first week of May, then the design is cultivated until the maze opens in July. It closes after harvest in October.



AIRIAL VIEW:

Huge First World War centenary field gun design carved out in crops at the Wistow Maze.

Courtesy: Ssgt Ernie Paddon and the

INTERNATIONAL EXPRESS  
Wednesday July 30, 2014



**I found the following two links to be excellent viewing.**

Was Saving Pte Ryan accurately portraying a real families tragedy? You may be surprised by the facts.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L29Wuo7NNoQ&feature=em-subscriptions>

What is the history behind the formation of the LRRP - Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol units and how did they operate?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0tiql6Z3OE&feature=em-subscriptions>

*Both links courtesy of You Tube*



## **SOCIAL GOLF DAY**

To Be Held at the Berwick Montuna Golf Club

Beaconsfield-Emerald Road, Guy's Hill

(Melways 212 C4)

On Friday 7th November 2014

Tee Time 0830 Hrs



This is the Lucky Thirteenth Annual Golf Day and we look forward to an even bigger and better field to compete for the coveted RAA Association Perpetual Trophy.

The cost for golfers is \$30.00 which covers green fees for 18 holes and prizes.

Caddies and spectators are most welcome at no charge.

The Competition of the Day will be a Stableford Medley Competition.

(This means that Ladies and Men can play together in the same competition.)

Minor Prizes include: Nearest the Pin (3 Ladies and 3 Men), Straightest Drive (not the longest. Ladies and Men) and Balls Down the Line.

Golfers at ALL levels of expertise are invited to attend.

If you do not have a golf handicap a handicap will be issued at the end of the round using a one-round handicap system.

Hire clubs, buggies and motorised carts are available from the Golf-Shop. These items should be booked directly with the Golf shop on 9707 5226 at least ten days prior.

Lunch will be available in the Clubhouse at very reasonable prices.

Trophies will be awarded in the Clubhouse during lunch.

So that tee times and a number for lunch can be booked, please indicate if you will be attending whether either as either a player or a non-player to:

**Maj Neil Hamer, 12 Marida Court, Berwick 3806;**

**Telephone: 9702 2100;**

**Mobile: 0419 533 067**

**E-mail, [nhamer@bigpond.net.au](mailto:nhamer@bigpond.net.au)**

**Not later than 20th October 2012.**

**Please include: Your name and handicap, (if you have one) and the name and handicap of your playing guests.**



# A different take on WWI diggers

Book tells of criminals in First Australian Imperial Force

**KHAKI CRIMS AND DESPERADOES**

*Courtesy Army News*

**Author:** Russell Robinson

**Publisher:** Pan MacMillan

**Australia 2014 Price:** \$33

THERE are dozens of books telling of the courage and chivalry of our WWI diggers, but this book goes in the opposite direction.

As the name suggests, not all our diggers were heroes.

Russell Robinson has done an exceptional job researching the backgrounds of the criminals who chose to hide in the Army and those whose Army service taught them the skills needed for a life of crime.

He said his research was exhaustive, using military records and cross-referencing everything with newspaper accounts, police records and court documents.

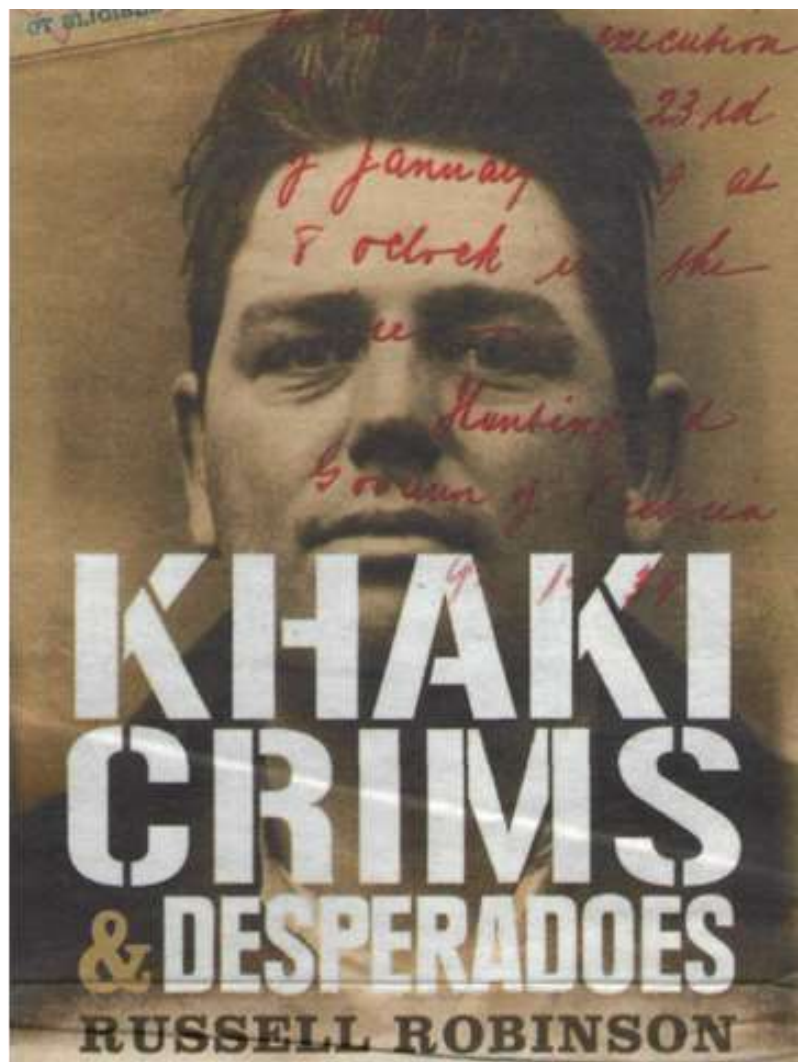
"As well, many of the battlefield accounts had to be researched, including the official versions and first-hand accounts," he said.

Mr Robinson focused his book on WWI partly because of the centenary of that war.

"But there is also a fascination with Australian crime of the 1920s-30s," he said.

"Many of the major players were returned soldiers, although the majority failed as soldiers, spending much of their time in khaki going AWOL, in custody, or in jail with venereal disease."

Even our VC winners were not unblemished, with two of them spending time in venereal disease hospitals.



The book also tells of a criminal who had spent 16 of his 34 years in jail, but the NSW Attorney-General saw good in him and reduced his sentence. The man joined up and became the perfect digger, before being killed in action a few months before the end of the war

For those who want to read WWI history from a different perspective, this book is well worth a read.

## WW II - Little Known History

You might enjoy this from Col D. G. Swinford, USMC, Ret and history buff. You would really have to dig deep to get this kind of ringside seat to history:

**1.** The first German serviceman killed in WW II was killed by the Japanese ( China , 1937), the first American serviceman killed was killed by the Russians (Finland 1940); highest ranking American killed was Lt Gen Lesley McNair, killed by the US Army Air Corps. So much for friendly fire.

**2.** The youngest US serviceman was 12 year old Calvin Graham , USN. He was wounded and given a Dishonourable Discharge for lying about his age. His benefits were later restored by act of Congress.

**3.** At the time of Pearl Harbor , the top US Navy command was called CINCUS (pronounced 'sink us'), the shoulder patch of the US Army's 45th Infantry division was the Swastika, and Hitler's private train car was named 'Amerika.' All three were soon changed for PR purposes.

**4.** More US servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps. While completing the required 30 missions, your chance of being killed was 71%.

**5.** Generally speaking, there was no such thing as an average fighter pilot . You were either an ace or a target. For instance, Japanese Ace Hiroyoshi Nishizawa shot down over 80 planes. He died while a passenger on a cargo plane.

**6.** It was a common practice on fighter planes to load every 5th round with a tracer round to aid in aiming. This was a mistake. Tracers had different ballistics at long range so if your tracers were hitting the target 80% of your rounds were missing. Worse yet tracers instantly told your enemy he was under fire and from which direction. Worst of all was the practice of loading a string of tracers at the end of the belt to tell you that you were out of ammo. This was definitely not something you wanted to tell the enemy. Units that stopped using tracers saw their success rate nearly double and their loss rate go down.

**7.** When allied armies reached the Rhine, the

first thing men did was pee in it. This was pretty universal from the lowest private to Winston Churchill (who made a big show of it) and Gen. Patton (who had himself photographed in the act).

**8.** German Me-264 bombers were capable of bombing New York City, but Hitler decided it wasn't worth the effort.

**9.** German submarine U-120 was sunk by a malfunctioning toilet.

**10.** Among the first 'Germans' captured at Normandy were several Koreans. They had been forced to fight for the Japanese Army until they were captured by the Russians and forced to fight for the Russian Army until they were captured by the Germans and forced to fight for the German Army until they were captured by the US Army.

### AND LAST

**11.** Following a massive naval bombardment, 35,000 United States and Canadian troops stormed ashore at Kiska, in the Aleutian Islands. 21 troops were killed in the assault on the island. It could have been worse if there had been any Japanese on the island!!

*Submitted by WO2 Max Murray*

<http://www.crikey.com.au/2011/07/22/video-30-years-space-travel/>

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Watch this short but intense battle between a US Naval vessel & a host of Japanese Kamikaze pilots...

Actual footage from 1945

These attacks had to be terrifying to every man doing his job.... This clip gives you a feel for what it was like in the gun turret.... This is outstanding video footage....

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4zkp7hvrghcd7gd/D-qPNsG9ym#lh:null-Laffey%20Enhanced%20vo%203.wmv>

Courtesy WO2 David Troedel

CPL Heath Webber with  
EDD Esky before a live-  
fire exercise as part of  
Exercise Hellfire.  
Photo: LS Jayson Tutley



# Skills not to be sniffed at

THERE is a special bond that forms between a handler and an explosive detection dog (EDD) - one which is based on the mutual trust that a dog expects from its handler, and the confidence in the dog to find its quarry.

The role of an EDD is to indicate the presence of explosives, both conventional and homemade, firearms and ammunition.

Unlike military working dogs, whose role is security deterrence and man trailing, EDDs have an off-lead capability that, combined with their good nature, allows them to work freely among crowds while fulfilling their role requirements.

## Forces one year on and going strong

IN THE 12 months since the establishment of the new combined Security Forces (SECFOR), great strides have been made in refining its capability. The SECFOR capability has been successfully employed operationally in the Middle East and in a domestic capacity. No. 2 Security Forces Squadron Base Security Officer SQNLDR Craig Scott, said the squadron had made significant inroads in harnessing its security functions into a packaged force.

"We now can deliver an expandable and broad security effect both domestically and expeditionary," he said.

"SECFOR can enable the safe and secure operation of Air Force flying assets."

SQNLDR Scott said emerging aircraft, changing threat sources, establishment of super bases and unconventional expeditionary tasks were dictating that security was more important than ever to Air Force.

Most recently, the new collective SECFOR capability requirements were evaluated during Exercise Hellfire.



600g of plastic explosive is detonated  
simulating an improvised explosive  
device detonation during a live-fire  
exercise during Exercise Hellfire.  
Photo: LS Jayson Tutley



**PARADE CARD**  
**As At 2 September 2014**  
**April 2014 to March 2015**

<b>January 2015</b>	<b>May 2014</b>	<b>October 2014</b>
5. Cascabel Issue 122 posted	20. Committee Meeting	6. Cascabel Issue 121 Posted
26. Australia day Salute	30. Gunner Symposium	21. Committee Meeting
		24. Gunner Symposium
<b>February 2015</b>	<b>June 2014</b>	
17. Committee Meeting	4. Reservist Luncheon	<b>November 2014</b>
21. Gunner Symposium (Fri)	17. Committee Meeting	6. Annual General Meeting
		7. Golf Day
<b>March 2015</b>	<b>July 2014</b>	18. Committee Meeting
4. RAA Luncheon	7. Cascabel Issue 120 posted	
17. Committee Meeting	15. Committee Meeting	
	21. Gunner Symposium	<b>December 2014</b>
<b>April 2014</b>		?? St Barbara's Day
9. Cascabel Issue 115 posted	<b>August 2014</b>	?? 2/10 Bty Family Day
15. Committee Meeting	19. Committee Meeting	7. Annual Church Parade
25. Anzac day	?? RAA Gunner Dinner (TBA)	16. C'ttee Xmas Breakup
	<b>September 2014</b>	
	16. Committee Meeting	
<b>Note: This Parade Card is subject to additions, alterations and deletions.</b>		

**Change of Personal Details**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Surname and Post Nominals</b>	<b>DoB</b>
<b>Address</b>		
<b>Telephone Mobile Email</b>		
<b>Additional Information</b>		



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