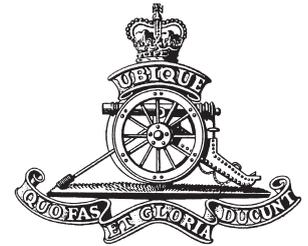


# CANNONBALL



JOURNAL OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL COMPANY

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#### WORK – VOLUNTARY AND PART TIME, PAID.

Officers from 2nd Survey Company, RAA on an annual camp exercise stop for lunch near Queenscliff, Victoria. As was the manner of Militia training in the late 'twenties, private transport made such exercises possible as Regular establishments and resources did not allow for 'one offs'. Left to right are: Lieutenants Stafford, Murray, O'Brien and Deany. The carton contained hop beer, not the real McCoy. The photo is dated 14-21 January, 1929.

#### PLAY – VOLUNTARY UNPAID.

2nd Survey Company drew many recruits from trades and university graduates, or those with a technical bent. In the Third Military District, encompassing Victorian Militia units, there was a healthy rivalry between units in many sports. A competition in the more esoteric sport of rowing was for the Army Challenge Cup rowed on the Yarra. The photo shows personnel from the company in the coxed fours event in June 1928. They are: Stroke, S B Deany, No.3 C T Stafford, No.2 H G Walker and Bow C Simmonds. The battery also crewed an eight.





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As an observer and reader of our Army's progress over the last decade I find there are many differences our Regular Gunners face in the 'teens'. As I have chronicled from time to time battery exercises both in Australia and UK the degree of operational complexity has increased considerably. I don't know how many acronyms are still current from 2000 but my guess is they have kept pace with the passing years. During this time the Gunners have had operational experience in Iraq and now Afghanistan. If they joined for excitement then there is now a statistically greater chance of achieving their personal objective (collecting gongs ??) than there were in the 70s to 90s. The decade has seen the AReserve units reduced to being mortar men – and important ones at that – but a century-long imagery has disappeared. Lets hope we can keep the regimental badge!!

We continue with David Brook's District Officer dissertation with Part 2, which was very well received. Former CMF field regiment commander Con Lucey has produced a very readable reference paper, 'The Battery Clock', that I hope you will enjoy. Con joined the CMF in 1952 and was originally in LAA Branch, then transferred to 25 pounders. From 1972-75 he was CO of 11th Field Regiment, and retired in 1983. A latter day convert to artillery history he is researching the Mount Schanks Trophy. Stay tuned for another article. He is also active in the Queensland Colonial Forces Study Group. I hope his example will stimulate younger officers to experience the satisfaction in researching artillery history.

The history of the Sinai campaign of our Light Horse Brigades in Major General Harry Chauvel's ANZ Mounted Division moves on to the attack on Qatya (or Katia, Katya, Quatiya – take your pick) and Bir el Abd, after Romani. These affrays are often linked with Romani but there were two major differences. One was attack was over desert with little cover, the other on a well developed defence; – both generals failed – von Kressenstein (at Romani) and Chauvel at the others trying to do too much with too little – including artillery. To be fair to Chauvel, he had his orders to withdraw if he had to.

Those familiar with the tribulations of surveying in Papua New Guinea will be interested to compare the differences between it and surveying in the topography of that other famous jungle war, the Burma campaign of General Slim's 14th Army.

Given there were tracks and roads, but there was still much jungle. I met the author in London some years ago, who kindly consented to me using his material.

There are three book reviews, two about Vietnam and the other WWI. The latter is by the former Chief Justice of the High Court of Tasmania, The Hon. W. E. Cox, AO, whose father was a veteran of 9th Australian Field Brigade, comprised principally of Tasmanians. It is illustrative to compare the style of Yandoo in past issues and these letters written about the same sorts of experiences. I will include excerpts from time to time in future editions.

In the 26 November 2009 issue of 'Soldier' newspaper details of the Army's new dress codes were revealed. What we oldies called 'working dress', the awful but now familiar camouflage pattern jacket and trousers – one step above prison farm garb – plus shapeless headcover, will be 'de rigeur'. New recruits will get one issue of basic polyester 'walking out dress', and if it needs replacement from whatever cause, the Dig pays for it. If you belong to Scottish 'regiment' then you pay for the kilt. There is only one style of army button. No more corps/regiment individuality. Annual savings (\$4 million) - for what the Copenhagen bun-fight in November cost. This surely puts our military guardians up there dress-wise with Somalia and Angola mercenaries. Your editor is unimpressed The Federation Guard and Army Bands at least look 'military'; the one saving grace.

Mea Culpa. In Issue 76 I mistakenly identified Lieut Colonel Kirkman as Barrie Willoughby (Anti-Tank Display) for which I apologise. Also, the Gremlins altered 170th Medium Battery, RA to 107th on the front cover caption.

*Alan Smith*

***"Important message from Chairman enclosed."  
"Check your Membership status; see P. 16 in  
bold/prominent type face."***



## THE DISTRICT OFFICER – A FORGOTTEN APPOINTMENT IN THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY PART 2 BY DAVID BROOK

### Later Employment

There were several avenues open to District Officers once coast artillery was disbanded but the question of seniority and wartime promotion and the ever-present restrictions of the Defence Act caused some difficulties to start with. There were several outside factors that complicated the matter. The first of these was the future of the AIC as immediately after World War 2 there was no replacement for the pre-war CMF. The appointment of officers to the Australian Staff Corps and allotment to corps etc was delayed until 1st July 1949 unless the particular officer was a graduate of RMC.

During the course of the Second World War, officers were posted between the separate entities that made up the 'Australian Military Forces'. Some went from PMF to CMF to AIF and then in the case of Gunners, to regimental lists such as RAA (Heavy) or RAA (Coast). It was all very complicated as the Army List of the period clearly shows. As it turned out, there were now several systems whereby officers were commissioned as a result of the division of the Australian Army into distinct groups:

- PMF – Australian Staff Corps
- PMF – Australian Instructional Corps
- PMF – Officers in specialist Corps
- AIF – Until 30th June 1947
- CMF – Pre war

### PART 3 DISTRICT OFFICER

By David Brook

Ultimately the decision was made to disband the Australian Instructional Corps as well as Coast Artillery and these two organizations disappeared in the 1950s. What to do with the AIC and Coast Branch District Officers? How could their specialized training be used? Fortunately there were two avenues open to them:

- Quarter Masters in the newly raised CMF units in 1948
- Transfer to the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps as Inspecting Ordnance Officers (IOO)

Many former District Officers transferred to RAAOC and went into the IOO stream where they served in ammunition depots and subsequently on the staff in various formations and other headquarters. Brigadier Ian Wills writes 'Some Australian Instructional Corps officers were also thought to be regarded as IOOs on qualification at Master Gunner courses in the UK'. Of course those AIC officers who had

qualified at the School of Artillery 'District Officers and Master Gunners Courses' were also in the above category.

In 1946, the terms District Commander, Sub District Commander, Maintenance Officer, District Officer and Sub-District Officer were all used to notify postings in 1, 2, 5 and 7 Military Districts in officer posting orders. By October 1950, there were only two District Officers still serving in such appointments. They were H/Capt K.H.Black in 1st Fixed Defence Brigade and T/Capt E.E.Kay in 3rd Fixed Defence Brigade, both as Quarter Masters AIC – truly the last of the line. It would appear that the posting or title of District Officer disappeared between 30th June 1953 when coast artillery units in 4, 5 and 6 Military Districts were disbanded or reduced to cadres in CMF batteries and 15th September 1953 when the coast artillery organization in 2 Military District started to go the same way. However in 1951 certain instances occurred whereby when a Battery Captain was posted into some coast batteries, he performed the duties of the District Officer in addition.

### A District Establishment

It will have been realised by now that there was a very close relationship between the District Officer, the Master Gunner and the District Gunners in a coast artillery fort. They belonged to the District Establishment and were quite separate from the members of the firing battery whether they were PMF or Militia. As an example, the Fort Record Book for Fort Glanville in South Australia lists the manning detail prior to the First World War. Here the District Establishment is called the 'Permanent Staff' and comprises the following:

- Master Gunner – 1
- Assistant - 1
- Lampmen – 2
- Storeman – 1 (this 'technical' storeman issues gun stores from his store because none are kept on the gun until it is in action)
- District Gunners – 4
- Artificers – 2

On the other hand, the manning for the remainder of the battery was:

- Battery Commander and Staff – 21
- Gun Group Details – 41
- Machine Gun Details – 10
- Ammunition Supply – 25

'Commonwealth Military Regulations – Provisional

1908' do not mention District Officers specifically but Standing Order 26 reads as follows:

'The Officer Commanding the Royal Australian Artillery or Staff Officer of Artillery in each District, is responsible to the District Commandant for the care and preservation in a state of efficiency of the armaments in fortresses, and of all guns, ammunition, and artillery matériel in charge of the officers and men under his orders. He will forward in the prescribed manner requisitions for keeping these armaments and stores up to the regulated proportions.'

An example of the manning for RAGA District Establishments can be found in the 1920 Military Orders where each Military District and its associated units are listed. A Quartermaster located at No 13 Company [Battery] at King George's Sound is the only officer listed but there are 13 Master Gunners of all classes throughout Australia!

### Conclusion

It is unfortunate that this paper does not completely provide a definitive history of the now forgotten District Officers in the Royal Australian Artillery. There is no doubt in my mind that the restrictions imposed by the then Defence Act 1903 contributed to the uncertainties that have been exposed. The widely scattered forts, from Thursday Island, around to Albany and then to Fremantle, have also meant that a coastal fortress system with the command structure similar to that, which existed in the British Army, could not be developed in Australia. This meant that the complete system of District Establishments, commanded by a District Officer, did not exist until 1938. It is true that the young Staff Corps officers who had graduated from RMC performed the function of a Sub-District Officer as well as that of Battery Commander but in most cases they had other duties as well. This particularly applied in those isolated forts where these officers were also termed 'Staff Officer for Artillery', and they may have had a training role with the CMF that was not necessarily with Garrison Artillery. There is no doubt that the Master Gunner in such circumstances performed many of the duties of the 'SDO'. It would appear that the installation of the 9.2-in guns caused the appointment of District Officers to be made in 1938. This seems to be confirmed by the CGS reference to an amendment to the RAA Standing Orders. It is significant that the early Officers' Gradation Lists do not show appointments as either a Sub-District Officer or District Officer.

### In Retrospect

It is worth quoting from Major Newton's article to sum up.

'The recruiting requirements of the Permanent Army were very small, so therefore a high standard could

be demanded, and because of the numbers offering, enlistment was most selective. Thus the potential of the PMF was very good and no doubt was a factor which accounted for the large number of soldiers of the permanent arms and the Darwin Mobile Force, plus the direct entries from the Militia, who became warrant officers AIC and later, because of the raising of the Second AIF, officers. The Australian Instructional Corps was a very fine Corps.'

The District Officers and Master Gunners of the RAA were part of that corps and the Australian Army as a whole benefited from their service, high standard, dedication under difficult conditions and professionalism. There were probably no more than a dozen or so of District Officers as distinct from Sub-District Officers throughout the period under discussion.

### Acknowledgements

I am grateful for comments provided by Colonel A.D.Watt, OBE, a former pre-World War 2 PMF coast gunner and later CO/CI of the School of Artillery for providing information on his service during the installation of the 9.2-in guns at Fort Wallace. His experiences are also recorded in *We Stood and Waited*. I am indebted to Mr Keith Glyde for his comments on the NSW colonial system and the short period after World War 2 when coast artillery was still in existence. To the gentleman who raised the query in the first instance, I thank him and respect his wish that his father not be named.

### Author's Note

It has been very difficult trying to unravel the various lists, appointments and types of service of the PMF artillery officers as shown in the 'Army Lists' from 1903 to 1950. Throughout their service these officers serving in Coast (or Heavy Artillery as it was later termed) in postings such as District Officers, Sub-District Officers or Quarter Masters could be transferred back and forth or seconded into the following lists:

- Administrative and Instructional Staff
- RAGA
- RAA (Coast)
- RAA (Heavy)
- PMF
- Staff Corps
- RAAR
- AIC
- AIF
- CMF
- Interim Army

Rarely do the Army Lists show a posting of either a District or Sub-District Officer.

### DISTRICT OFFICERS Part 3

By David Brook

Annex

#### A. SYLLABUS FOR MASTER GUNNERS' COURSE

1. Care and preservation of ordnance and mountings, including range finders and other artillery instruments
2. Breech mechanism, BL and QF guns
3. Charging HP cylinders and testing pressures
4. Packing hydraulic buffers
5. Hydraulic jacks, construction, repair and action of
6. Care and storage of Cordage etc
7. Method of checking recoil of BL and QF guns
8. Automatic sights
9. Laboratory operations
10. Classification and storage of explosives
11. Making up cannon cartridges
12. Sealing lids, stacking cylinders and powder cases
13. Preparing and filling shell
14. Emptying shell
15. Storage of filled shell
16. Destruction of ordnance
17. Ventilation and lighting of magazines
18. Examination of ordnance, taking impressions etc
19. Making up electric cells, and their care and preservation
20. Electric firing circuits and lamps for DRF
21. Holden's firing key and cell tester
22. Electric night sights
23. Exploder, electric, FS
24. Electric dials

25. Instructions in keeping cartridges, fuze, tube, and shell records

26. System of keeping store accounts

27. Examinations

Note-books to be kept, and handed in for examination at end of course

#### B. LIST OF SUB-DISTRICTS

##### 1st Military District

- Brisbane – Lytton, Brisbane Forts
- Townsville – Kissing Point, Magazine Island Forts
- Thursday Island – Milman Hill, Green Hill Forts

##### 2nd Military District

- South Head – South Head, Signal Hill, Bondi, Coogee, Henry Head, Bare Island, Victoria Barracks Forts
- Middle Head – Middle Head, George's Heights, Wollongong Forts
- Newcastle – Wallace, Scratchley Forts

##### 3rd Military District

- Queenscliff – Queenscliff, Crow's Nest, Swan Island Forts
- Nepean – Nepean, Pearce, Eagle's Nest Forts
- Portsea – South Channel, Franklin, Gellibrand, Melbourne Forts

##### 4th Military District

- Adelaide – Largs, Glanville Forts

##### 5th Military District

- Fremantle – Arthur's Head, Forrest Forts
- Albany – Princess Royal, Plantagenet Forts

##### 6th Military District

- Hobart – Mount Nelson, Alexandra, Queen's, Bluff Forts

<sup>1</sup> Australian Military Forces, *The Army List of Officers of the Australian Military Forces, Vol 1, The Active List 1st October 1950*, Canberra 1950

<sup>2</sup> Newton, *Australian Army Journal*

<sup>3</sup> Brigadier Ian Wills, AM, (RL), *A Brief History of the Ammunition Trade*, RAAOC Association website, viewed August 2009

<sup>4</sup> Glyde, August 2009

<sup>5</sup> Australian Military Forces, *The Army List 1950*

<sup>6</sup> Glyde, August 2009

<sup>7</sup> Glyde, August 2009

<sup>8</sup> There were also District Gunnery posted to the School of Gunnery pre-Federation. See Watt, *Australian Army Journal*

<sup>9</sup> Australian Military Forces, *The Defence Acts 1903-1904: Regulations (Provisional) and Standing Orders for the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia 1908*, Government Printer, Melbourne

<sup>10</sup> Australian Military Forces, *Military Orders 1920, No 437, Establishments RAFA, RAGA, and RAE*, Government Printer, Melbourne 16th October 1920

<sup>11</sup> Australian Military Forces, *The Army Staff List of the Australian Military Forces 1st July 1925*, Government Printer, Melbourne et seq.

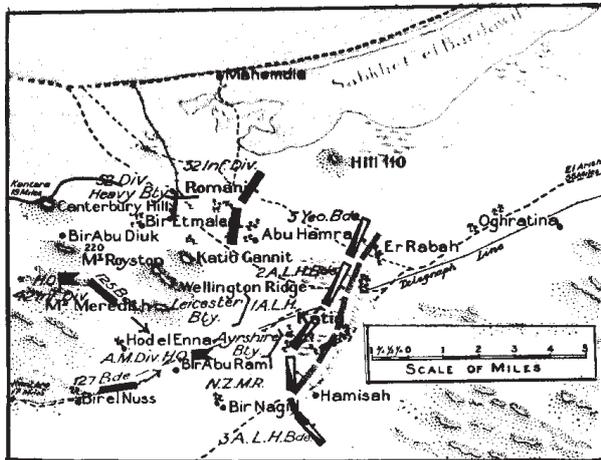
<sup>12</sup> Brig RK Fullford, OBE, *We Stood and Waited, Sydney's Anti-Ship Defences 1939-1945*, Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Inc 1994, pp. 27-30

<sup>13</sup> Australian Military Forces, *Standing Orders 1921*

## THE BATTLE FOR QATYA (AFTER ROMANI) 6 AUGUST 1916 AND BIR EL ABD CHAPTER 5 CONTINUED



### Introduction



### Map of the ROMANI - QATYA Operation.

*This shows the disposition of the units in the attack at 1700 hrs 5 August, showing only two of the four RHA batteries some 2,000 yards behind the Light Horse regiments. Source: Gullett, Sinai and Palestine. AWM. Map No. 7.*

In Issue 76 Chauvel's mounted troops and their Territorial Royal Horse Artillery had driven the Turks back towards Qatya, the southern flank of which had been an action of little consequence involving 3rd Light Horse Brigade.

The more important action was further north, where the cavalry (1st and 2nd LH Brigades, the NZMR Brigade and 5th Yeomanry Brigade) advanced on Qatya. After getting their orders the force with the Ayrshire, Leicestershire, Inverness and Somersetshire batteries, and A Battery 212th RFA Brigade set off in pursuit. In these very trying conditions the two RHA batteries came into action and at once drew fire from the heavier Turkish guns and suffered severely. A Battery with its 18 pounders on pedrails utterly exhausted themselves trying to keep up with the RHA batteries, and took no part in the battle.

The Turks made good use of the oasis palms and the good defensive 'ground' to their front. It was swamp and salt pan, mistakenly inducing the troopers to charge with bayonets attached to rifles. The force got bogged, came under fire from Er Rabah by machine guns, and despite resolute minor tactics the nearest the troopers got to the hod was 600 yards, and then withdrew, badly bruised. Meanwhile, the RHA

batteries being in the open undertook an unequal duel with the Turks. Qatya was a different story to Hamisah. Unfortunately Chauvel's force nearly succeeded after strenuous hand-to-hand fighting after charging the defenders in the oasis palms. The Turks had well sited defensive positions among the palms and the tired cavalry by nightfall could not overcome a solid Turkish defence. The horse artillerymen advanced close behind their regiments, but as Gullett noted, 'they sustained an unequal duel against the heavier and more numerous guns of the enemy. Whereas the former were in the open, the Austrian and German gunners were well concealed, and the British shot without serious effect.'<sup>(12)</sup>

By the end of 5 August Chauvel was confronted with having to take the battle to the Turks with a force physically spent from their manifest exertions and numerous casualties in furnace-like heat, no rest and mounted and relying on horses that had been without water for 60 hours. Chauvel reluctantly ordered them back to Romani. This was now garrisoned by the six infantry brigades of both divisions, 42nd having moved into the line during the day.

Next day (6 August) a pursuit of the retreating Turks was ordered and three brigades of mounted troops (NZMR Brigade, 5th Yeomanry and 3rd LH Brigades) invested Oghratina and Badich, some 6 mile (9 Km) from Romani. Both of these were strongly held but were discovered to be evacuated on 8 August and the enemy had moved further back on his interior lines by evacuating Qatya. He did so with all of his artillery in tact, still able to cause Chauvel more grief.

### Bir el Abd to 9 August 1916

Major General Chauvel moved his HQ to Oghratina and contemplated his next advance to Bir el Abd, an oasis on the telegraph and railway route. 4,000 yards (3.6 Km) to its north lay a swamp El Ruag and south about the same distance was Bada. The Turkish defences were set in dunes and scattered palm trees dotted the landscape. Intelligence estimated his force numbered 6,000 rifles. Their line of defence ran north to south and then curved eastwards, a front of 12,000 yards (10.6 Km). The mounted attacking force of 3,000 rifles was widely stretched, the distance between the New Zealanders and 3rd LH Brigade was about a mile. The following were the artillery affiliations (north to south):

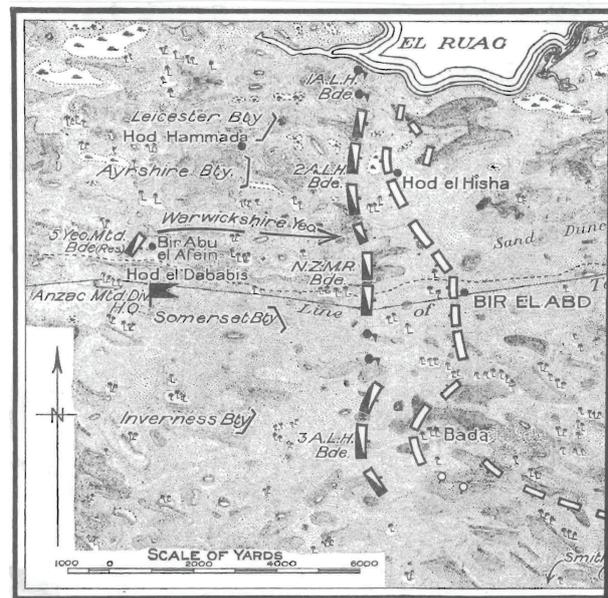
1st LH Brigade	Leicester Battery
2nd LH Brigade	Ayr Battery
NZMR Brigade	Somerset Battery
3rd LH Brigade	Inverness Battery <sup>(13)</sup>

The gunners were about 1,500 to 2,000 yards behind the troopers. Resistance was expected to be slight, as Turkish troops were seen going to the rear. H Hour was 0400 9 August, and the first artillery of the action was when 'Five Nines' shells fell just clear of Royston's advancing 2nd LH Brigade approaching column. The New Zealanders made early headway, at one stage looking down on Bir el Abd and being counter-attacked for their trouble. This was broken up by supporting fire from the Somerset battery. Royston's brigade was then engulfed by heavy artillery fire from 'Five Nines', AA guns and 'sustained shafts of machine gun fire'.<sup>(14)</sup> The 3rd LH Brigade had come to a halt from similar Turkish attention. At 1030 enemy artillery fire increased menacingly, its accuracy being a product of their observer's intimate knowledge of the ground. Little could be done to counter it because the RHA OPs could not locate their adversaries. Chauvel asked for RFC observation so serious did he regard the fire. The gunners brought their guns forward and 'pushing up behind their cavalry, waged an unequal contest with admirable courage and reckless tenacity'.<sup>(15)</sup> The four batteries were able to contribute some help by engaging the enemy rear, but everywhere the Turk held firm as the Allied line was still two and half miles from the wells.

At midday, the enemy rose from their trenches and counter attacked, by which time Chauvel's reserve, the Warwickshire Yeomanry, was bolstering the Kiwis in the centre, where the Turks threatened. Then the Turkish heavy guns found the range of the Ayrshire battery, one salvo killing four men and 37 horses, and wounding several others. This event, and the relentless Turkish pressure caused the battery commander to use trooper's horses to rescue his guns from being overrun. All along the front the Turks pressed forward confidently, and all along the front the troops and squadrons retired in copybook fashion, not one troop being 'broken'. At 1730 Chauvel ordered a withdrawal, as his orders stated he should if he had not secured water.<sup>(16)</sup>

After Romani he moved his HQ to Oghratina with his now depleted regiments and his wounded. He sent the Yeomanry, New Zealanders and 3rd LH Brigade to continue to harass the enemy. On 12 August Bir el Abd was found unoccupied by the New Zealanders who then began to harry the Turk's rearguard, supported by the 3rd LH Brigade and Yeomanry with their artillery as they withdrew to Salmana, 5 miles east (8 Km). Here they made a token stand, being engaged at maximum range by

the horse gunners but no attack was launched. The Turks withdrew on 13 August to make their next stand at El Arish on the coast.



**Map of attack on BIR EL ABD by the 1st, 2nd and 3rd LH Brigades, NZMR Brigade and Warwickshire Yeomanry, with their supporting RHA batteries on 9 August 1916.**

*Source: Gullett. Sinai and Palestine. AWM. Map 8.*

So ended the battle of Romani. Casualties for the five day battle were:

Of this total, the Ayrshires had seven officers wounded and one OR KIA and 13 wounded. The Leicesters had one officer and four gunners wounded. (17) At Romani, the 42nd and 52nd divisions had 195 casualties from Turkish guns. 5th Yeomanry Brigade losses were light. 42nd Division saw little action. Gullett opined that the mounted men of Australian and New Zealand squadrons had suffered unequally. His analysis was that "Throughout the operation there was evidence that, although much plain warning had been given of the Turkish intention the blow had come before British arrangements were complete. The 42nd Division was late at every stage, not because its leader failed, but because of the miscalculations of the High Command, namely lack of coordination regarding the 3rd LH Brigade at Mount Royston, Colonel Smith's cameleer column on the right flank, and between the two divisions [at Romani]." (18)

The Anzac casualty lists were inflated by the scandalous lack of medical arrangements and serious uncoordinated staff work made to move wounded at Romani to the hospitals at Kantara. Chauvel was incensed that the number of his recommendations for bravery that were awarded was minuscule compared to those given to members of British units who had seen very little action. He was offered an award and rejected it as an insult to his Antipodean troopers' achievements. (19)

There is no doubt that Chauvel's attack on Bir el Abd was unduly optimistic. To commit 3,000 tired troopers against an invigorated enemy of 6,000 with an artillery advantage went against the conventional wisdom of a ratio of attackers to defenders of three to one in manpower, and an advantage in the lethality of shell and if possible, numbers available. As we will see, the absence of heavier artillery and its fire power remained an underlying cause of heavier casualties

to mounted troops. Nonetheless, the spoils from the battle were considerable. As well as 4,000 POWs, 2,300 rifles and one million rounds of SA ammunition were captured, and 100 horses and mules and 500 camels bolstered the Allies' stocks. Two complete field hospitals helped ease the condition of the Turkish wounded in their captivity. (20)

Between Romani and Maghaba in December there was a reorganization of commands and the divisional artilleries. Lieut. General Sir Charles Dobell assumed command of the Canal and Eastern Frontier Force (EFF) HQ at Ismalia. and in 42nd and 52nd Division's artilleries the 18 pounder batteries were made up to six guns and a number of batteries were re-numerated, split or broken up, mainly to accommodate the howitzer elements. There was also a minor operation by a mixed Australian and British cavalry group with the Hong Kong-Singapore Mountain Battery and Imperial Camel Corps to capture Bir el Maghara, 50 miles (78Km) east of Romani. On 13 October the force had minor success in capturing 18 prisoners, but as at Qatya and Bir el Abd, did not succeed in beating the Turk.

There was a positive in that after Romani, the Turk lost the offensive, never to regain it, even though they were withdrawing along interior lines and would remain a tough, capable adversary if well supplied. (21)

*References:*

12. *ibid.*, p.173.
13. *ibid.*, p.175. *The 42nd Division, ordered to attack, never made it to the start line in time to be useful.*
14. *Farndale*, p.75.
15. *Gullett*, p.179. *This was noted by 10th LH Regiment.*
16. *ibid.*, p.183; *B Woerlee, Maghaba and Kress. Sabretache. Vol. XLIX, No.4. p.11.*
17. *MacMunn et al*, p.377; *AWM 13/17/5.*
18. *Gullett*, p.186.
19. *ibid.*, p.192.
20. *ibid.*, p.189.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 186,190.

Force	Officers				ORs			Total
	KIA	WIA	Missing		KIA	Wounded	Missing	
Turkish	(not enumerated)				1250	4000	3900(POW)	9150
British	22	81	1		180	801	45	1203
Chauvel's	8	33	6		65	210	6	328
	30	114	7		245	1011	51	1531



## YANDOO 104

### THE CHEVALS' CHATEAU. 30th June 1918

Here we are again: This time my letter is being written far from the scenes of last year's strenuous doings. We are now on the famous River Somme and this is how we got there. You will probably remember that our Christmas was spent strafing the Hun on the Armentieres Sectors. On 6th the 7th January we pulled out and took up lines in the Merris-Staenje area. Here we had rotten weather (snow, blizzards and floods), and it WAS cold. The Brigade remained here until 30th January and then went back to the line at Plogsteert and La Bizet. We took part in a number of raids, and generally harassed and sniped old Fritz until 11th March. The weather during this period was very tricky - snow, frosts, rain, fog and mud all doing their best to keep up Flanders' winter reputation. Ask our Drivers how they enjoyed packing Ammo to the guns three nights "in concussion" per week! She was "No bon, believe moi!" Our next move was to Vieux Berquin via Bailleul. We just got nicely settled there with good weather and the prospect of some sports when the Brigade came a sudden "crash". On the afternoon of 23rd March an order came through for us to pack up "at the toot"\* and get on the road. Two hours was the time allowed and we did it, but gee the troops had to get a wriggle on! Owing to lack of transport a few tons of surplus gear had to be left to the "tender mercies" of the villagers. That night we camped near Morbecque. Hun planes stirred up the locality somewhat with their bombs, but none fell dangerously close to our lines.\* toute suite, Fr = very quickly.

The following morning after saying goodbye to our spare blanket and kitbags we started on the march South. Our destination we did not know but guessed our objective would be the advancing Huns. For five days we journeyed on, each night picqueting the horses and finding shelter for ourselves in barns and outhouses. On the morning of the second day our scurrilous rag the "Yandoo" came a "gutzer". The printing outfit had to be dumped and also the Battery Canteens. All "buckshee" carts, spare harness and other equipment had to be left behind. Never before had the 7th Brigade travelled so light. The further South we went, the more congested became the roads with traffic and troops. Fortunately the weather held fine. Space does not allow for a detailed account of the long march, but the chief towns and villages through

which we passed were Morbecque, Alre, Lambres, Artois, Valhoun, St. Pol, Doullens, Pas en Artois, Puchvillers and Behencourt. As the column neared Doullens strange sights met our eyes. Remnants of Regiments, all toil-worn and dishevelled, batteries, gunless and practically horseless, straggled by. Often we heard this warning from the retreating troops, "Look out Gunner, Jerry's coming'." But it was not until another 24 hours marching had been done that we actually did meet Jerry. That was on the night of 27th March. As we neared the village, streams of refugees kept passing, all laden with household goods or driving great farm carts stacked high with furniture, fodder and the family, and with the farm-yard roped to the tail-board.

Our guns went into action near the village of Heilly near the junction of the Somme and Ancre Rivers. It was there that we found Fritz. The days following found the Brigade "bogging in" for all it was worth. Of course there were casualties and we found the style of warfare vastly different to that we had been accustomed to in Flanders. For instance, there were no gunpits, dugouts, or trenches, and the guns stood out in the open and were camouflaged when not in action. At times the layers used open sights. Soon the troops discovered that the hassles were not the healthiest places to linger at after a shoot. Fritz had the "mad woman" habit with his artillery, so it was necessary for the crews to scuttle for cover immediately a shoot was finished. Still, there were some compensations. The country instead of being flat and desolated and churned up by the continuous shell-fire, as was Flanders, was beautifully fresh and green, and mostly under cultivation. The gently rolling landscape was dotted with thick woods, and in the valleys nestled villages of red-tiled and thatched-roofed cottages. (To Be Continued)

## MERAUKE , OR “THEY ALSO SERVE WHO .....” BY Dick McNeill, ex 2/9th Army Field Regiment



*Merauke in then Dutch East Indies lies at Latitude 8 degrees South Longitude 140 degrees East. Up until 1942 it was the most easterly settlement in the Dutch colony. It was akin to the French Devil's Island for Dutch dissidents and recalcitrant officials. When the Japanese occupied the west of the island the Allies in WWII took steps to retain the area. No official history seems to exist except some in the book by Reg Ball, "Torres Strait Force – Cape York, Thursday and Merauke". Recently it was newsworthy as some natives came to Australia seeking refuge and a plane from Thursday Island landed and the people were held as entering illegally.*

*The US Army built an aerodrome and provided initially some AA guns. The RAAF had radar and fighter planes and the Army had infantry, artillery (field and anti-aircraft), plus the usual engineers, supply and transport, ordnance (ammunition), camouflage and water transport. The RAAF had a hospital. The RAN had a shore station and a Fairmile launch.*

*Three 18 pounders were initially installed as beach defence guns but they did not appear to be any gunners to man them. In 1943 59th Battery, 2/9th Field Regiment took eight 25 pounders and in 1944 17th Battery joined them with RHQ, Corps Sigs and an LAD (2/68). These were towed by Jeeps, without limbers. 17th Battery and B Troop went to the*

*western side of the Merauke River. Climate was a problem to maintain the guns and survey equipment. 360 degree gun emplacements were constructed. Tank shooting using a Bren gun mounted on the barrel was practiced and 16 gun calibration was conducted. Patrols with the infantry also occupied the troops and there was small boat training with the RAN. Initial survey by 59th Battery to establish a Datum Point was accepted as correct by later survey. They used wireless for Greenwich Mean Time (GMT), Nautical Almanac and Army directors. 59th Battery during 'course' shooting had a shell explode near the end of the barrel, splitting it like a peeled banana. Some ammunition was damaged but no one was killed or seriously hurt. 59th Battery Commander was one Angus Blair, a civil engineer by profession with a strong focus on 'process and results'. He appreciated, nonetheless, that the troops should be kept busy or unrest would surely follow. So the gunners took to shovels and drained the swampy ground during which a reinforcement officer, Lieut. Derek Edols, flew in. The battery sergeant clerk took him to Blair's tent to introduce him. This he did. Blair looked at Edols from behind his desk and asked the clerk, 'Has Mr Edols been issued with his shovel yet?'*

*18 Battery was sent to Jacky Jacky, near Cape York.*

**Note: The author was No.2 on No.4 gun, B Troop.**

## SOZZLED AND SOZZOLLED



We all know what 'sozzled' means, that is 'very drunk'. However, what about 'sozzolled'? The 'Handbook for the Ordnance BL 5.5-inch Mark 3 gun on Carriage 5.5-inch Mark 1 and 2' dated 1941 as amended by amendment 3 of June 1943, page 160, when dealing with methods for preparing the equipment for shipment, has this to say about the subject, among other things:-

- (c) Bore and exterior bright parts should be sozzolled and greased with mineral jelly and beeswax.'
- (g) Breech end and muzzle to be bound with hessian and sozzolled.'

All readers should now know what the difference between 'sozzled' and 'sozzolled' now means.



## THE LADETTE AT THE BATTLE OF CORAL

By Ian Taylor

A recent visit to the Army Museum at Bandiana, Victoria turned up a surprising 'Honorary Gunner', Vietnam Vet and a lady (well at least a ladette) to boot. Whilst meandering in the museum, trying to take in all there was to see, I stumbled into a large and familiar vehicle with the name "TUNZA GUTS" emblazoned across the front. I recognised it as a Recovery Vehicle, commonly called a Wrecker. Although Wreckers are not specifically artillery vehicles, this vehicle in particular holds a special place in gunner history. This Vietnam Vet with a 6 year continuous tour of duty bears a brass plaque with a citation, reproduced below. The Citation reads So we salute a true Veteran, Honorary Gunner and special 'Ladette'.

### "TUNZA GUTZ"

Tunza Gutz served with the Australian Army in South Vietnam (SVN) from 1966 until 1972. It was the first recovery vehicle deployed with an Australian Unit (Det 1 Div S&TWksp) in SVN. Tunza participated in the majority of landborne 1st Australian Task Force operations against the Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA). During the Second Tet Offensive in 1968 Tunza was at Fire Support Base Coral when it was attacked by the NVA. Fifteen mortar rounds landed within 50 yards of the vehicle causing extensive damage which included 27 holes through her radiator and others through her sump, batteries, tyres, air and hydraulic lines. All of her glass was broken. She was patched up by her crew, Cpl D.A. McCallum and Cfn I.W. Rowe and carried out her duties at Coral before limping back to Vung Tau for extensive repair. This vehicle served with honour and distinction in SVN where it became familiar and well known to many Australian soldiers.



*"TUNZA GUTZ" was at the Battle of Coral*

## THE RIFLE AS A HOWITZER – NOW THAT’S A NEW IDEA!



In 1900 the British army was gradually getting the better of the Boers commandos and losing many soldiers to battle and disease in the process. This exercised the fertile mind of Dr. Arthur Conan-Doyle wrote to the Board of Ordnance with his idea. After they replied he then wrote to *The Times*. He explained his idea of dropping a bullet from a high angle onto an enemy trench line. To his readers he explained how difficult it was during the Boer War to ‘hit an opponent which only shows the edge of his face and his two hands. When he is concealed it appears to be a waste of ammunition to fire at all. An opponent was vulnerable vertically over his head. There was no escape from high angle fire. Human life can be made impossible within a given area.’ Doyle went on to say that existing musketry practice was useless. He approached the Director General of Ordnance, War Office, having spoken to veterans who agreed that it was ‘entirely sound and practical’.

The War Office replied over the (unintelligible signature of the officer) on 16 February 1900 as follows:

*“Sir, With reference to your letter.. .. concerning an application for adapting rifles to high angle fire, I am directed by the Secretary of State for War to inform you that he will not trouble you in this matter.*

*I am Sir, your obedient servant,  
Director General of Ordnance.”*

Doyle concluded, “No wonder we find the latest inventions in the hands of our enemies rather than ourselves if those who try to improve our weapons meet with such encouragement as I have.”

*Source: The First Cuckoo. Letters to The Times since 1900, pp-33-4. Dr. Conan-Doyle was a medico and created Sherlock Holmes, the famous fictional detective.*

## 2/1ST GUNNER GRAVE LOCATED IN PNG



The discovery of a number of sets of remains of Australian soldiers in Papua New Guinea were interred on 1 December 2009 at Bomana War Cemetery near Port Moresby. The two soldiers whose remains have been recovered and identified are Lieutenant Talbot Logan, 29 years of age at the time of his death, and Lance Sergeant James Wheeler, 23 years old.

In January 1943, Lance Sergeant James Garrard Wheeler, 2/1st Field Regiment, who was 23 years of age, was with Lieut Daniels, FO of OP Party in support of I Company, 126th Infantry Regiment, US Army operating near Huggins Road Block. While attempting to retrieve the body of Lieutenant Daniels, who had been killed by a Japanese sniper, Wheeler was also killed. Lance Sergeant Wheeler was born on 29 August 1919 at Narrabri, New South Wales, and he enlisted in the AIF on 29 October 1939.

Lieutenant Talbot Logan, 29 years of age, was shot by a Japanese sniper just short of the beach at Buna between the mouth of the Simemi Creek and Giropa Point on 1 January 1943. Lieutenant Logan was in command of 9 Platoon, 2/12th Battalion during the attack to capture Buna Mission. Lieutenant Logan was born 10 February 1913 in Kenya, and he enlisted in the AIF on 20 October 1939 at Hughenden, Queensland.

Two other sets of remains, thought to be those of Australian soldiers also, have been recovered but identification of which has not been possible, were interred at Bomana with a headstone ‘Known Unto God’.

Source: Press Release, Mr G Combet,



## GREAT MOMENTS IN GUNNERY NO 34

Scene: Sematan, Sarawak, 1964. Members of BHQ, 176 (Abu Klea) Battery, RA are brought together to take over from a Royal Marine Special Boat Squadron a coastal patrolling task to deter Indonesian infiltrators from landing in Sarawak and taking a short cut to Kuching. Lieut. Tony Choat, RA is in charge of their OP and Special Boat Party, and Sergeant Frank Buxton, RAA is his SNCO. Choat writes to his BC, Major G D S Truell, RA:

“Everyone has settled down and is getting into the routine of SBS (Special Boat Section) work. Most of the Marines left the other day so our chaps are now working on their own; they still have a lot to learn, of course, but they are learning fast. Bdr Lindop and Jones Fat were on night patrol last week with a sergeant from the Marines when their outboard motor broke down in the area off the point. Their radio unfortunately broke down just about the same time (0440hrs). The prevalent current carried them due north away into the middle of nowhere. They paddled for hours and hours just to prevent themselves drifting into someone else’s territory – successfully.

The arrangement here is that if a night patrol has not

returned by 0900 search parties are sent out. The fact that communications have been lost is so normal as to cause no alarm. So, when they had not appeared by 0900 one of the Navy’s ‘Bravo’ boats and the Auster and Gemini went to look for them. They were spotted by the Gemini some 5 miles north of the point. When the rescue Gemini reached them their motor started immediately – having been trying for some six hours to get the thing to function. They eventually arrived back here at 1400 hours none the worse for their trip, apart from a little sunburn. The rest of the week has been mainly routine apart from the fact that the transom fell off the night patrol Gemini and Gnr Atkinson lost two rifle magazines while attempting to prevent the motor falling into the sea. Bdr Thorpe fell into the sea last night while trying to land at one of the OPs but apart from getting a drenching he suffers no ill effects. Sgt Buxton is a godsend and is being a tremendous help both from the administration viewpoint and from the discipline side. He works like mad late into the evening – I hope his health will not be impaired.”

Source: Letter, undated, by author.



## GREAT MOMENTS IN GUNNERY NO 36

### MERCER’S TROOP AT WATERLOO

Scene 1: Waterloo, 18 August 1815. Napoleon begins his attack at 1300 with an eighty gun bombardment. 24 of the guns were Napoleon’s great 12 pounders, with 2,000 yard range. It took the breath away of Wellington’s younger recruits and militia men, and even surprised Peninsula veterans by its intensity.

1. Captain Mercer, commanding his reserve battery of horse artillery in a hollow several hundred yards in rear of the British right flank, found, even in that sheltered position, the shot and shell continually plunging around him. Fortunately the ground was still wet and many shells burst where they fell, while the round-shot, instead of hopping and ricocheting for

half a mile or more, frequently became embedded in the mud.

Scene 2: At 1500 hrs 5000 of Marshal Ney’s cavalry are about to attack the British squares on the high ground on the Brussels road. Wellington moved some of his guns forward of his squares, bringing up his last two reserve batteries of Horse Artillery to inflict the utmost damage on the advancing cavalry.

2. “As Mercer’s men, on the order, “Left Limber up, and as fast as you can!” galloped into the inferno of smoke and heat on the plateau, they heard a humming like sound . . . .so thick was the hail of balls and bullets. “Ah!”, said the Duke as he watched them, “that’s the way I like to see horse artillery move”. Their orders,

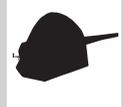
in the event of the enemy charging home, were to run for shelter to the nearest square, taking the rear wheel of each gun with them. Mercer disregarded this order – one that could only be given to gun detachments of the highest discipline and training – not because he doubted his battery's morale, but because he believed the young Brunswickers in square on either side of him, who were falling fast, would take to their heels if they saw his men run. As soon as the French appeared out of the smoke a hundred yards away – a long line of cuirasses and helmets glittering like a gigantic wave on the crest of the rye – he ordered his six 9 pounders, double loaded with round-shot and case, to open fire. As the case poured into them, the leading ranks went down like grass before a skilled mower...

Five times in two hours the French horsemen were driven from the plateau; five times, after rallying in the plain they returned. Whenever they disappeared the British gunners ran out of the squares and re-opened fire, while Napoleon's guns resumed their cannonade."

At dusk the French cannonade ceased and the setting sun cast a ray of light along the glinting British line, now motionless no more, and on the accoutrements of the defeated columns in the plain. Brussels was saved.

Source: A Bryant, 'The Age of Elegance', pp.238-9; p.250

## SIX POUNDERS AT GEORGE'S HEIGHTS



**By Athol Moffitt, formerly Coast Artillery WW2.**

*After service in coast artillery (see Cannonball Nos.61 and 62) Athol Moffitt was appointed to the School of Coast Artillery, first located at South Head, then Middle Head. With his mathematical background, he became an 'experimenter'.*

"As an instructor, I visited the twin 6 pounder artillery battery installed at George's Heights after the Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney. The battery consisted of two 6 pounder guns with a commanding (control) officer stationed a short distance behind and above the gun. The guns were hand loaded, each

having three gunners engaged on loading duties – one to pick up the shell, the next to put it under his arm and the third to insert it into the breech. Each gun would fire independently on insertion of the shell. This would depend on the officer sitting behind pressing the 'FIRE' lever. Once activated, the guns would continue to fire as soon as it was loaded. He could also elevate the gun (for range) or direction by his controls. His decisions could be made by an observation of the stream of shells in reference to the target. The principal target of the twin guns was the motor torpedo boat or similarly fast enemy craft entering Sydney Harbour. An occasion for these guns to go into action never arose. "

## VALE LAUDENBECK



George Laudenbeck died on 4 APRIL 2010 at the age of 76. He served in three branches of the Regiment – Coast, Anti Aircraft and Field- during his CMF career, which terminated with the rank of WO1. He was a member of the RAA Association from 1977 and was a Volunteer Guide at North Fort. He was remembered as a man who always gave of his best in whatever he was doing. His cremation was at Castlebrook on 13

April. He was survived by three children, Karen, Kim and Stephen.



## RESETTING THE 'BATTERY CLOCK' By Con Lucey

*Since the establishment of the Australian Army, the designation of Field Artillery batteries has been numeric other than a period post World War II when the CMF sub-units adopted the PQR style. Decisions made in 1955 and 1965 to reset the battery clocks may have far-reaching historical significance.*

Perhaps the most significant decision concerning the designation of Artillery batteries was taken in 1955 when it was decided to wipe that slate clean and “to number the regular and independent batteries sequentially from 100”. [emphasis added.] Even the celebrated ‘A Battery’ was numbered the somewhat more pedestrian “100th (A) Fd Bty”. It could be argued that this action has severed any historical continuity with past batteries that may have carried the same designation. Prior to the renumbering of the batteries, the numbering of RAA [Royal Australian Artillery] units had been changed “with regiments numbered sequentially irrespective of whether they were field, medium, HAA [Heavy Anti-Aircraft] or LAA [Light Anti-Aircraft]”. This was the time of the Malayan Emergency and the Army had been forced to raise new field batteries. Operationally, the field battery had now become a tactical unit that helped to foster its individualism and frame its identity.

According to historian Arthur Burke, the DRA [Director Royal Artillery] Liaison Letter of February 1955 “shows the complete renumbering of RAA ARA [Australian Regular Army] and CMF [Citizen Military Forces] units and independent batteries in that year”. From the reintroduction of the CMF in 1948 until the demise of the Pentropic structure in 1965, the CMF Artillery used common PQR designators. How this came about remains a puzzle. Burke makes an observation, perhaps somewhat lightly, that this alpha sequence may have followed “that of the British Honourable Batteries and the RHA [Royal Horse Artillery] Batteries that had letters rather than numbers” and that ‘P’ may have been “the next cab off the rank”. Perhaps the answer is somewhat more abstruse.

When the CMF was reorganised mid-1965, “CMF sensitivities” were, according to Albert Palazzo, “acknowledged” and their infantry battalions were again designated “with traditional numbers”. At the

same time, the CMF Artillery batteries regained their traditional number designation based on Regiment. (For example; 11 Fd Regt with 41, 42 and 43 Btys.) It was as if cherished lost property had been returned to its owner. The Mount Schanck Trophy winners list verifies that the last non-numeric winner was for the 1965-1966 CMF training year. From 1912 until 1939, the battery designator had been numeric and during World War II, all regiments and batteries continued to use numerals as designators. The CMF Regiments proudly carried their traditional battery numbering into mobilisation.

The establishment of a 2nd AIF field regiment provided initially for two batteries, each of three troops (24 guns in total)). Horner notes, “by the end of 1940 the 2nd AIF had raised fifteen field regiments” a number that remained constant during the War. Field commanders in France and the Middle East soon found the tactical arithmetic of allocating direct fire support to the three battalions in the infantry brigades from two batteries a constant challenge. In response, the British War Office, in 1941, rearranged the establishment of the field regiments to “three batteries” each of two troops while retaining the same number of guns (24).

Australia followed suit and “in September and October 1941 each Australian field regiment [AIF] formed an additional battery”. The initial numbering of the two-battery, 2nd AIF regiments had been a simple process of allocating the designators 1 and 2 to the 2/1 Fd Regt batteries and then down the list until you reached the 29th Bty and 30th Bty of the 2/15 Fd Regt. Even at this stage, it would have been obvious there was duplication in battery designation between the existing CMF and the new 2nd AIF sub-units. To solve the problem of finding a convenient designator for the newly created third battery of an AIF regiment, it was decided, rather ingeniously, to add “50 to the number of the regiment”. Ipso facto, 51st Bty emerged as the third battery designator within 2/1 Fd Regt. Burke notes a later complication as there existed a “53rd Fd Bty that was in direct support of the School of Arty [Artillery] at Pucka [Puckapunyal] and went on to serve in New Guinea”, as well as the third battery of the 2/3 Fd Regt.

Artillery had not entirely abandoned the alphabet as the Heavy Batteries became 'Letter' Batteries in 1942, eventually occupying the bracket from A to U. Inevitably there were exceptions to the general numeric rule, as applied to field artillery, for in late 1942 an X Bty and a Y Bty were raised from within 2/4 Fd Regt. Burke, in drawing on Russell Henry, notes that X Bty (nominally 8x25-Pdrs) formed "part of Lilliput Force assigned to Port Moresby in October 1942. The gunners arrived but not their guns. They were issued with 18-Pdrs instead". Apparently little happened for "the unit returned to Townsville in January 1943." Y Bty was formed late in November 1942 and "attached to 1 Tk Atk [Tank Attack] Regt at Milne Bay. They were issued with 18-Pdrs on arrival, used for beach defence and returned to Sydney in February 1943".

In 1944, there appears an X Bty "(eight 18 pounders)" in 2/1 Fd Regt which was deployed in the defence of Oro Bay. This exercise proved to be a local ad hoc and short-term tactical arrangement. Horner also records an X Bty of "two 155-mm guns...manned by a troop of the 2/3 Field Regiment" being involved in the 'forgotten' Aitape-Wewak campaign in January 1945. The earliest formation of an 'X' battery was at Redbank, Queensland in January 1941. The 2/10 Fd Regt had been raised there in July 1940 with the standard two batteries but later it was found necessary to form the third; designated X Bty. The sub-unit retained that interim designation until December when it became 60th Bty. In the 1950s, the prenatal version of 105 Fd Bty had a brief life as "M [for Malaya] Bty".

It is interesting to note that the revered letter battery, A Fd Bty, despite its long and distinguished history, did not directly participate in WWII operations. The colonial battery morphed into the 1st AFA Bty in 1911 when the Commonwealth Defence Act was amended to allow for the formation of permanent field artillery units. The Battery would not regain its original descriptor until 1946 when it was reformed as A Fd Bty and joined the occupying forces serving

in Japan.

In 1937, according to Horner, "the field regiment, which replaced the field brigade, was finally recognised as the main administrative and tactical unit for the application of fire" and within twelve months the establishment of a field regiment comprised "two twelve-gun batteries, each of three four-gun troops". A decision seemingly based on a desire to blend concentration of force with affiliation at brigade level. This parallels the then Royal Artillery field regiment establishment. However, by mid-1939, the militia regiments had regained their third field battery that had been pruned from their establishment in 1922. At the outbreak of hostilities in the Pacific, the militia artillery was partially mobilised and because of the equipment shortages, each field regiment was at that time restricted to "only sixteen rather than 24 guns". A complexity, given there was a war establishment of three batteries and a conscripted supply of gunners.

A case can be pleaded that the military ghosts and glories of the First AIF field artillery subsist in the CMF units of the post 1965 era. Historically, the restoration of the latent traditional numbering to CMF sub-units in 1965 was a significant decision as was the decision ten years earlier to reset the ARA battery clock.

January 2010.

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## NUMBERS GAME NO.10

### ARTILLERY 1831 STYLE.

Russian General Okouneff's campaign against the Poles at Warsaw in 1831 drew these observations on the use of artillery.

- 80 to 100 guns, if the total includes a number of 12 pounders, can destroy an enemy division in the open in an hour,
- The guns, to maximize effect, should be placed at 10 pace intervals rather than the usual 15 paces,
- Firing should be by alternate half batteries, from

under 400 yards range,

- The range should be closed by 100 yards for 'the final crescendo',
- This massive battery, when concentrated, will require 150% of its own strength to subdue it, since one-third of the enemy's guns, when brought up, will be destroyed or dismounted before they can be used effectively.

Source: The Gunner, June 2008, p.31.

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## BOOK REVIEW



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by David McDowell

*Available from author \$40 and O/S \$55 both incl post; at 69 Bambil Road, BEROWRA. NSW. 2081 Ph 02 9456 2991*

Gunner David McDowell's marble for the National Service lottery took him through the whole gamut of training from Singleton in January 1969 to the boredom of Enoggera towards the end of 1970 at the end of his two year commitment. His experiences, replicated in the broad by many other signallers with 1, 4 and 12 Field Regiments and their batteries is a remarkable document in that in his 12 months Vietnam service there are very few negative reference to his NCOs and officers during training and active service. He served in 101 Battery, Major John Bertram, BC, at FSBs, including one your reviewer had never read about, 'Diggers Rest'. Here he describes in his humorous way FSB life in a down to earth manner, how to make yourself comfortable no matter what, all enlivened by a keen eye for caricaturing – nicknames only Australians would use without blushing - those with rank. His service covers more than I imagined in its scope as a signaller, for example shooting VC with his M16 during his traipsing around Vietnam with the Kiwi Whiskey Company, 6 RAR/NZ (ANZAC). He also luckily escapes oblivion by a whisker when a simple 'error' brings down a Chinook with an underslung ammunition load. On leave in Vung Tau he is up to all the tricks with his mates defying Provost authority without penalty and learns the power of the currency of VB. By contrast, his leave in Hong Kong would have been a singular experience for any Australian soldier by its rectitude, being far removed from I and I.

With Major Torrance's FO Party he is inducted into patrolling and what comes through quite powerfully is the reliability, speed and accuracy of his battery's guns on registered targets. McDowell's incredulity is heightened when after an ammunition accident, the battery is to receive a visit from a politician, and extra water for 'sprucing up' is made available. The worthy duly arrives at the FSB, where a brass band (NZ) plays chamber music in a rubber plantation. I'll bet McDowell is still wondering. The book is also a very good reference source of documentation, glossary, appendices, memorabilia, captured Vietnamese propaganda leaflets and the

like. A nominal roll for 101 Battery is augmented by a list of Old Boys from McDowell's school (SHORE SCEGS) and a Roll of Honour for all Australian dead. In summary, this is a very readable account of Viet Nam operations generally and signallers in particular. As my Qantas pilot friend of that era told me, "We took boys up and brought men home." McDowell would fit that description to a Tee.

*ISBN: 978 0 646 52525 9, A5 size, colour, index, glossary, honours and awards. 166pp. My copy from Cliff Dodds.*

### **MOVING THE ARTILLERY TO VIETNAM**

**Just when you thought all that could be written** about the Vietnam War has been, Michael K. Cecil has written 'Mud and Dust – Australian Army Vehicles and Artillery in Vietnam'. It covers the 'logistics' of getting them there – and back. This is available from the Australian War Memorial on their website, eSales Unit, AWM, Box 345 GPO Canberra 2600 – but only if you've already bought 'Gunners in Borneo'. It comes first. Ed.

### **FROM WESTERN FRONT TO CHANGI GAOL –The Wars of Two Friends**

By William Cox

The Cox family and Tasmanian artillery have been closely aligned since the early 1900s. This book, by The Hon William Cox, former Governor of Tasmania and Chief Justice of Tasmanian High Court and CMF/ARes regimental commander, is a collection of letters from the front by his father, Ellis Cox, of Launceston, and forms the first part of the book. Ellis Cox enlists in 1915, sits law exams and in November 1915 crosses the equator on his 21st birthday. His letters are chronologically arranged, covering embarkation, training in Egypt where 'change' is the order of the day. His battery, allotted to the newly formed 4th Division, supports his division through thick and thin in Flanders, his 3rd AFA Brigade then commanded by Lieut. Colonel Burgess. Ellis was wounded in July 1916 and survived Fromelles. His legal training necessitated frequent Courts Martial attendance, usually as 'prisoner's friend'. For Ellis, he is a major at Hamel in July 1918 and awarded the MC. His account, invariably cheerful and fascinating, has a wide ambit covering the squalor of Passchendaele to being in reserve and on leave in Paris and London. As he speaks fluent French he

does rather better than his colleagues at enjoying more restful times away from front or in training.

On returning to civil life as a solicitor in Hobart Ellis Cox meets a Dr E A (Bon) Rogers, a Sydney born medico who before matriculating into medicine was a jackaroo in Queensland. Rogers graduated from Sydney University in 1918, joined the army and was allotted to 12th AGH at Launceston. He later practiced in Hobart and at age 50 joined the Second AIF and was allotted to 8th Division. Rogers was 2i/c 2/4th CCS when it reached Malaya. As a POW in the Thai and Malayan hell-holes he sustained

his POW charges at great personal risk – “one of the unsung heroes of that distressing time”, as Cox describes, by teaching them malingering! In captivity he endured the Burma-Thai railway and other camp sites. Rogers was reunited with his family in October 1945. He was fondly remembered by POWs who survived similar ordeals. This four chapter and epilogue addition is the Ellis Cox’s family’s tribute and valediction.

*ISBN: 978 0 646 52294 4, A5 size, paperback, illustrated, 168 pp. My and Library copy \$25 + \$7 postage (ea).*



### **TERRY THOMAS - ARMCO TEAM NO.3**

Very few former apprentices conclude their careers as a tradesman/journeyman as a Master of Apprentices. This quaint position title stems from the 17th Century, and as the title suggests, is responsible for the efficient training of young men usually aged between 14-18. Terry’s early life (he was born in 1942) was spent in Sydney’s eastern suburbs, his alma mater being Bondi Technical School. He gained an apprenticeship with Telecom as a Toolmaker, at the completion of which he worked on maintenance and other interesting jobs. His supervisors recognized his gift of getting the best out of young apprentices. A big, gregarious man with a ready wit and laugh Terry ascended Telecom’s ladder to be Apprentice Master at their St. Peters Training Centre in the 1975.

In November 1980 he was appointed to the NSW Government Apprenticeship Board until he retired in 2001. His nearest army association was his father-in-law’s service in the Regiment as an LAA gunner at Horn Island, Torres Strait. His father served in the 9th Division in New Guinea and Borneo. Terry’s other ‘engineering’ interest was at the Tram Museum at Loftus. Given his background, since he joined the Team in 2004 Terry is known amongst his ARMCO Team colleagues as ‘a man of inventive mind’ with a high profile, good-humoured manner. All teams need at least one to work well. His jobs at ARMCO include the 18 pounder wheel and shield for the 2 pounder anti-tank and Japanese mountain gun.



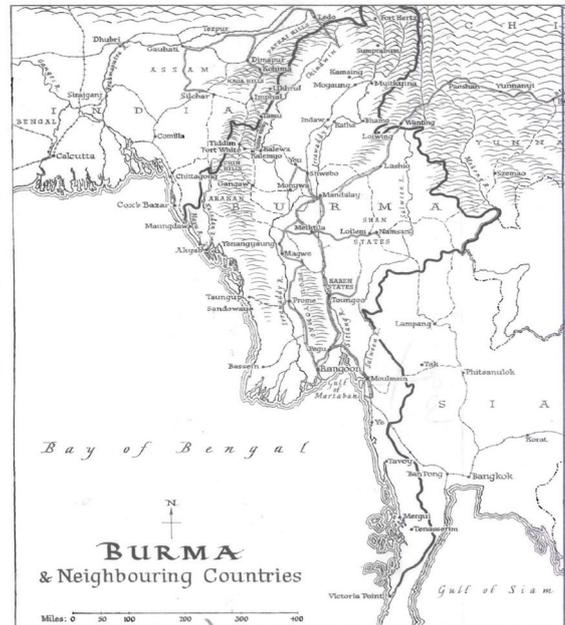
**CRISS-CROSSING CENTRAL BURMA:  
TRAVERSING AND TRIANGULATION OF 1ST SURVEY REGT,RA  
BY MAX MANGILLI-CLIMPSON**



Gunner survey first developed in the First World War out of patrons and scientists in R.E.units.1 In 1921 the first regular RA unit, a Survey Company, was formed, and on the outbreak of a Second World conflict five more had been added, with two regular and four territorial regiments. In the Burma campaign (1943-45) three Survey units:1st and 2nd Survey, R.A. and 1st Indian Survey, I.A., each organized into two composite batteries, were used as Corps or Divisional troops to locate and observe the enemy through sound ranging (S.R.) and flash spotting (F.S.), and survey. The aim of this paper is to describe exclusively the survey operations produced by 1st Survey between February and August 1945, and in particular the contribution of C Troop (41 Bty) under O.C. Capt. Roman Berrigan; F Troop (42 Bty) under Capt. Harold Nelson; and R Troop (the equivalent Z Troop of other Survey Regts) under Capt. B.M. "Dick" Marston.

Six weeks after the unit's long voyage from the Middle East in Paiforce, first C Troop, and, not long after, the other two Troops, were immediately called into action and remained active until the Japanese surrender. In the plan for the general liberation of the Central part of the country C Troop operated with 7th Ind. Div., crossing the Irrawaddy at Myitche, where a section under Lt. T.G. Reeves carried the existing divisional grid across the bridgehead to the eastern bank and forward by triangulation before being relieved by F Troop in early March; while from Feb. 17th the rest of C Troop joined 17th Ind. Div., and headed swiftly along the "miserable" Nyaung-Taungtha track Rd towards Meiktila, with the guns being moved two or three times a day and the survey thus constantly requiring development. In the three day attack on Meiktila, until its fall on March 3rd, the divisional artillery was concentrated five miles north-west at Anthu, and the necessary survey was completed and issued in a record two hours.

Due to the importance of the town, self-contained brigade and gunner defensive boxes were dug, with the gun survey completed on the first day. The local setting ensured triangulation, with the grid originated from a single trig point, together with sun



shot readings, and day by day the existing survey was extended. For virtually two weeks, beginning from March 13th, the enemy mounted repeatedly harassing and costly night and day attacks which were well documented by the Flash spotters, until they chose to withdraw in the latter part of the month, so ending the siege of Meiktila.

The Troop was subsequently engaged in the next stage in the drive on Rangoon, with both 5th and 17th Ind Divs, capturing Pyawbwe, but unfortunately were held up at Milestone (M.S.) 36 by blown bridges. Whilst waiting for the repairs news filtered through to the unit that the capital had been taken in combined air-sea landings, and it naturally felt cheated of the honour denied for what it thought was theirs. Throughout April R Troop detachment under Lt Edward Trollope was attached to 5 Ind. Div.in the same southward drive, and succeeded in producing four divisional grid surveys in ten days between the 13-23th for 4th, 18th and 28th Field, 8th Medium Regts. and 155th and 271st H.A.A. Btys of 52nd H.A.A. Regt. at Yamethin, Tatkan, the Sinthe railway station, and the airstrip, north of Toungoo.

Following the capture of Meiktila, large numbers of enemy forces had been trapped in the rear in the Pegu



Yomas for which they had two possibilities open: to dig in and succumb to disease and starvation, or attempt a break out eastwards towards Siam. Consequently, to prevent this occurring 17th Ind. Div. was ordered along the Rangoon-Mandalay Rd. As part of this encircling tactic both C and R Troops were employed over seven days, between 13th-20th May 1945, in a memorable feat of survey operations to traverse a distance of 86 miles, so that the gun regiments could hurry at a moments notice to widely dispersed points within the divisional grid. C Troop X section under Lt. Reeves worked north from a grid point at M.S. 130 up to M.S. 145 and then to cover the east-west roads, while Y section, under Lt Douglas Lumsden, worked from M.S. 130 and in four days linked up with R Troop at Nyaunglebin, at M.S. 96, starting out at Paundawthi at M.S. 79. Since traversing appeared an impossible option in the southward stretch, it was decided to adjust the bearing at every tenth leg and check the fixation by map detail.

In a later stage of the campaign at the end of May 1945 the entire 41 Bty, including C Troop, came under the command of 19th Ind. Div. in the Toungoo-Mawchi Rd, and the majority of the Troop joined up with Y section deploying both in support of the divisional artillery and B - S.R. Troop under Capt. Henry Armstrong-James, where it operated until the cessation of hostilities. It was on the Mawchi Rd that the Survey Troop encountered real jungle conditions: survey required a simple traverse along a road beginning from a mapspot and sun bearing, whereas supplying the needs of Sound Rangers proved an arduous proposition in appalling survey conditions -a path six feet wide in visibility down to 10-40 yards. To allow accurate pin point observations metal cones were constructed and fitted to the tops of theodolite stands, and despite the extreme difficulties the results were satisfactorily gratifying. In contrast, until August members of R Troop spent their time surveying a town plan of Yamethin for 4 Corps during early June, while a party under Capt. Gordon Burroughs carried out a range survey and a calibration for 5th Ind. Div. artillery at Mingaladon and north-east of Taukkyan in July. F Troop's March operations at the Nyaungu crossing formed a preparatory stage for an attack on Chauk. On making their way in the Ma-U-Bin area they were pleasantly surprised to discover undulating terrain suitable for triangulation , as well as earlier

multi-legged traverses prepared by 1st Indian Survey. The Troop attempted observations between Kinka and Ma-U-Bin so as to carry the divisional grid across the Irrawaddy, with the support of 139th Field Regt. Unfortunately the suspension of active operations along the Kyaukpadaung Rd curtailed the progress of the survey for a further two weeks. In the meantime, F Troop was used to survey in Observation Posts (O.P.s) and four S.R. bases for E Troop under Capt. R.J. Minchin, around Singu, before the fall of Chauk. The capture of the location was a memorable occasion for the Troop, as two days previously the enemy had kept alive its presence by scoring a direct hit on the cookhouse with a 150 mm while tiffin was being served. Fortunately, Capt. Nelson reported no casualties -apart from the burning of the kitchens and the regular ration of toast on the menu, and joking aside the damage proved no joy at the time for tired, unwashed and hungry soldiers.

At the end of April 42 Bty came under command of 33 Corps, and with enemy shelling starting from Mambu on the west bank of the Irrawaddy the battery moved towards Magwe, where E Troop was deployed while F Troop established a Corps Grid with Bearing Pickets (B.P.s) placed for 134th Medium and 101th H.A.A. Regts. Without any trig. data available, the grid required both by map spot and sun bearings with the Tavistock theodolite being used for the first time, and in flat close country allowed work by traverse.

Throughout June and July 1945 42 Bty was involved in the Shan States operations first under 19th Ind., and towards the end of June under 17th Ind. Div. At the outset of this stage of the campaign the Bty came in support of 64 Brigade which advanced east from Thazi to capture Kalaw, and on that journey had already encountered heavy enemy shelling on the staircase feature. Once the advance party, including F Troop, had reached the area the staircase had been captured. Shelling on June 4th precipitated the swift deployment of a S.R. base which was surveyed in by F Troop in sympathy with the guns of 5th Ind. Field and 8th Medium Regts. By noon, after 30 legs of the traverse had already completed, the operation was suspended. After Kalaw had been taken in the afternoon of the 7th the Troop was engaged for ten days on two brigade grids: the first at Kalaw and two S.R. bases over 20 days; the second east of the town, around Aungban (though never employed in operations), since local detachments had driven the

enemy south and eastwards from the locality

At the end of June both E and F Troop joined in the chase led by 99 Brigade, in 17th Ind. Div., deploying around Ingaung against the Japanese stronghold in the centre and in the hills surrounding Heho. In the marshy plain between Ingaung and Heho F Troop produced its third brigade grid in June. The high level accuracy ensured the capture of Heho, and the decision to press on to Taunggyi, capital of the S. Shan States. Left section of F Troop joined the Sound rangers and 4th Field Regt, with the guns deployed in Taunglebon supplied with fixes and bearings. For the plan of the eventual attack on the capital a brigade grid was started, though progress proved to be slow due to the marshy paddy fields and the dense 10 foot high elephant grass obstructing observations. Taunggyi was occupied on July 24th after a night operation when the guns were moved on to Sinhe, with the grid and S.R. bases established at Shwenyaung.

In the final week of July 1945 the Bty less the above section at Taunggyi returned to RHQ at Pegu under 4 Corps immediately to help relieve 41 Bty at Toungoo, which was cut off when the enemy retook control of the Toungoo-Pegu Rd between the 21st-28th, and subsequently was ordered to support 7th Ind. Div. to contain hostile forces in the bridgehead dug in on the west bank of the Sittang river. Due to heavy monsoon rains the flat country was flooded and cut off, and contact with forward units required a boat trip to Abya Bode with the only possibility of jeeps running from Waw to Payabyo. When F Troop commenced its divisional grid at Waw railway station, for the first time trig data was available for it, so guaranteeing it greater chance for accuracy for the three F.S. O.P.s and five mic. S.R. bases and for the gun regiments at Abya Bode, Abya Thaikugon, Payabyo and Waw. However, all troops still had to wade through water four foot deep carrying their alligator equipment, shadowed by snipers, and irritated by constant leech bites, to reach their objectives, before fixing lines on guyed bamboo poles above the water level to ensure any acceptable working results. All the Bty stayed at that site until the last week of August, when with confused stories of a big bomb having hit Japan and possible tales of surrender terms floating around, from August 23rd and for the next four days, first isolated Japanese stragglers and gradually day by day larger groups

appeared out of their dug outs, advancing slowly along the railway line with white flags. Among these included a Japanese Colonel of the Burma Area Army H.Q., who demanded to speak to the O.C. By the end of the week on August 28th the bases were abandoned, and this stage of the conflict had finally come to an end.

During the six months in the field C and F Survey Troops fixed nearly 1300 points, of these over 200 were B.P.s for gun regiments in 5th, 7th, 17th and 19th Ind. Divs. The significance of these statistics, as is the work of gunner surveyors in the Survey Troops, and indeed of all the members of Survey Regts may sound bizarre, as each gunner survey is trained for specific technical occupations and their merits in the final outcome is often overlooked. It is only when the guns are so off target that the surveyors come in for such criticism, and that is the usual moment when outsiders really realise the worth of these individuals and their skills. Indeed, the final word should be handed to Brig. J.H. Beattie, C.R.A. of 19th Ind. Div. who on June 10th 1945 thanked the all the Troops of the Survey Regt for their sterling work in speeding up the advance, in reducing possible casualties in the Div., and looked forward to their knocking out the remaining guns as quickly as possible.<sup>2</sup> Beattie's utterances were not empty, simply to comfort or give these specialists their moment of fame and glory; they were sincere, for he knew himself the value of the work of a gunner surveyor and of the preparatory tasks required in the eventual lasting results for a division, since he had previously served in another Survey Regiment, R.A. for several years and commanded the Survey Bty of 3rd Survey in B.E.F.

#### Footnotes

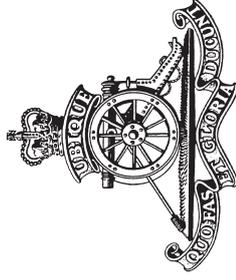
1 Chasseaud, Peter *Artillery Astrologers: A History of British Survey & Mapping on the Western Front* London, 1999; Bragg, L., Dowson, A.H. & Hemming, H.H. *Artillery Survey in the First World War* London, 1971

2 1st Survey Regt, R.A. War Diary, Jan-Dec 1945 Public Record Office WO 172 / 7492

Troop Reports in Burma 41 Bty War Diary Jan-Aug 1945 WO 172/ 7494 42 Bty War Diary Jan-Aug 1945 WO 172 / 7495

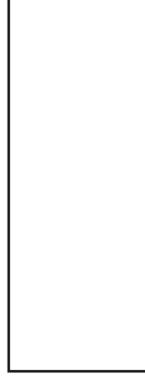
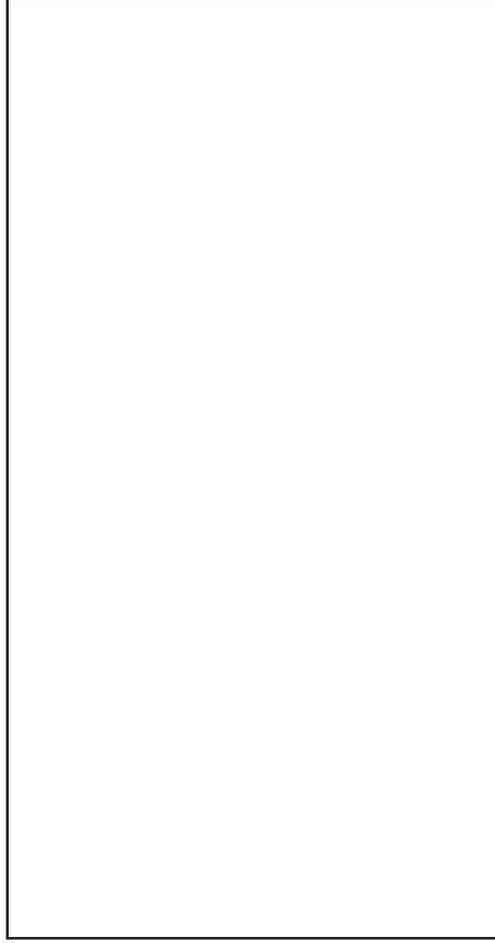
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