

Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

Major General Albert Harold HELLSTROM, CBE

(1899- 1979)

Harold Hellstrom was born in Sydney on 20 September 1899, one of four children to Oscar Bernhardt Hellstrom and Ailsa, nee Levy. He was educated at the Sydney Boys High School and the Royal Military College, Duntroon, graduating on 15 December 1921.

From 1922 to 1923, he was attached to the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery 2nd Military District in Sydney prior to training in India with the Royal Artillery in 1924. He returned to Sydney for duty with the field artillery from 1925 to 1927 and with 1st Heavy Brigade during 1927 and 1928. From 1928 to 1936, he was Adjutant and Quarter Master of the 14th Field Brigade (2nd Division) at Marrickville and, in 1937, he moved to 13th Field Brigade at Keswick, SA, where he occupied a similar posting.

In 1938, Major Hellstrom was posted to the then Military College of Science in England where he attended the Ordnance course. He and his family returned to Australia in October 1939 just after the outbreak of WWII. Early in 1940, with many other staff corps officers, Hellstrom was seconded to the AIF and joined HQ 7th Division bound for the Middle East. He travelled on the *Nieuw Zeeland* and was appointed CO Troops.

Here, as a result of his training in Britain, he started on a pattern of postings that took him away from the Gunners for all time and into a series of Ordnance postings. He served in Egypt as Assistant Director of Ordnance Services (ADOS) and raised and commanded the AIF Ordnance Provision Section, and was mentioned in dispatches. He continued as ADOS (Plans) AIF, HQ ME, until 1942 and then returned to Australia as DDOS (Provisions) Land Headquarters, was promoted colonel, and later became Chief Provisioning officer Master General of Ordnance Branch. In 1944, Hellstrom served for a period of six months on special duties connected with Army Supplies in India, Britain, and the United States.

Early in 1946, he was appointed Director of Ordnance Services with the rank of brigadier and was awarded the CBE. In 1954, he was promoted major general and posted as Controller of Army Design and Inspection. During this period he again visited the UK and US on Army Supply duties. In 1956, he retired from the Army having served a continuous period of thirty five years since graduation. From 1961–1966 he was Honorary Colonel of the RAAOC.

Hellstrom also launched himself into business and community affairs at a remarkable pace. He joined the insurance broking company of CT Bowring (A/asia) Pty Ltd as public relations officer and a director for a period of ten years and then became Consultant to the Board of Directors. He became a Director and Chairman of ML Harlock and Associates Pty Ltd and

from October 1968 to 1974 he was Chairman of the State Government Consumer Affairs Council of Victoria, which he worked at with great tenacity.

On top of these activities he was a student of landscape paintings, especially by Australian artists. He was a prolific reader on many subjects and the width and variety of his knowledge and interests were by-words among his close associates. He had a passion for detective stories and it was almost impossible to win a friendly argument with him on the writings of Agatha Christie or John Creasy.

The moral he drew from his own career was that, provided a young man had a modicum of ability and sufficient pertinacity and drive, there was scarcely any position in his chosen field that he may not reach.

He married Beatrice Marie Pike, the daughter of Mr Justice Pike, in 1926 whilst serving in Sydney. He died at North Baldwyn in 1979 and was survived by his wife, two daughters and a son. He was a devoted family man and held the welfare of his family very much at heart.

Hellstrom was a staunch, able and ever helpful colleague who always tried to set an example which few attain and none excel. His years were long and his contributions to the army, his country and the community, immense and varied.

Source: G. L. Walker, *Australian Gunner*, March, 1980, p.22-23; *Who's Who in Australia 1975*; Warren Perry, *The Naval and Military Club Melbourne* pp. 240, 352; Army Lists; New South Wales Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths.