

Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

Brigadier Errol John Holmes HOWARD, CBE

(1919-1990)

John Howard was born in London on 11 April 1919 the son of Colonel Charles H. and Muriel Howard, OBE, VD, both Australian. He arrived in Sydney at the end of that year. He was educated at Sydney Grammar School and entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1938, and was awarded the Sword of Honour on graduation in August 1940.

During WWII, he had regimental service with 14th and 16th Field Regiments, was an Instructor at the School of Artillery, and served in the 1st Australian Armoured Division. He was selected to attend the short course of the Royal Military College of Science in Britain in 1944 and later was attached to the Australian Army Staff in London, 21st Army Group in North West Europe, and the Australian Military Mission in Washington, USA, returning to Australia in July 1945. He was then posted to HQ I Australian Corps at Morotai in the Celebes.

As a major and lieutenant colonel he then held staff appointments at Army Headquarters and served as an Exchange Officer in the Directorate of Guided Weapons in the British Ministry of Supply in London 1948-50. On returning to Australia he was appointed Principal Officer, Trials, at the Long Range Weapons Establishment in South Australia and participated in the nuclear weapons tests at Emu Claypan in 1953. In 1954, Howard attended the Australian Staff College and in 1955 was appointed Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General HQ 2nd Division.

He was selected to attend the Joint Services Staff College in the UK at the end of 1956 and on his return to Australia was appointed CO 1st Field Regiment, at Holsworthy. In December 1959, Howard was appointed Director, Royal Australian Artillery at Army Headquarters and promoted colonel. He had the onerous task of moving procurement of military hardware from its traditional British source to those of ABCA/NATO standards. One such was the procurement of US Army AN/KPQ-1 mortar locating radar for locating batteries. In November 1962, he was appointed Australian Army Representative and Military Attaché, Australian Embassy, Washington, and Military Adviser to the Australian High Commissioner in Canada and was promoted brigadier in December 1964.

Howard attended the 1965 Course at the Imperial Defence College in London and on return to Australia in January 1966 became CRA 1st Division before moving to Director of Staff Duties, Army Headquarters, Canberra, in December. In May 1969, he was posted as Chief of Staff, Headquarters Eastern Command and was appointed CBE on 14 June that year. In August 1968, Howard was appointed Aide-de-Camp to Her Majesty the Queen.

He married Sheila Rowe, daughter of T. G. Rowe, on 28 November 1942 and they had a son who graduated a Bachelor of Arts from the Sydney University in 1969, and a daughter who also attended Sydney University. He resided at Clifton Gardens, and was Patron of the NSW Military History Society from 1973 and Trustee of the Army Museum, Victoria Barracks. He was a member of Elanora Golf Club, and the Australasian Pioneers Club. In 1979, he was appointed Private Secretary to the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Roden Cutler, VC, which position he held with distinction.

When it came to protocol, they were very like-minded. Nonetheless, together they managed the heavy demands made on gubernatorial appointments with panache, the governor's 18 years in office being a record for New South Wales. Howard was tall, distinguished looking in a military mien, status conscious, and a stickler for protocol. His subordinates found him easy to work for, but disciplinary action and critical comment concerning their subordinates was delegated to them. John Howard liked to be liked, and 'form' was everything.

He died on 4 March 1990, and was survived by his wife, son and daughter. He was privately cremated at Northern Suburbs Crematorium. A Thanksgiving Service was held in St Andrew's Anglican Cathedral on 9 March.

Sources: Army Lists, *Who's Who in Australia*; Sydney Morning Herald, 4 and 9 March 1990; NSW Military History Society Journal, 1973 issue.