

# *Gunner of Renown*



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

## **Colonel Charles Fyshe ROBERTS, CMG**

**(1837-1914)**

After attending Carshalton House School, Charles became a Gentleman Cadet at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, on 23 August 1852. On 28 February 1855, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery.

Promoted lieutenant in April 1855, Roberts was posted to the Crimea where he served at the siege of Sebastopol. In June, he was personally commended by Lord Raglan for his services and on 15 November he was severely wounded. For his service he was Mentioned in Dispatches and was appointed to the Sardinian Order of Military Valour.

In 1858, he was posted to India and served at Fort William, Calcutta and Dacca. From January to April 1861, he commanded the Artillery in the Sikkim Field Force under Colonel Gawler. In September 1862, he was promoted second captain and in January 1863 was promoted major.

In 1865-68, Roberts served with the Royal Artillery in Sydney and was acting Aide-de-camp to the Governor Sir John Young. On 15 December 1866, he married Alice Caroline Bradley of Goulburn.

In July 1869, Roberts went on half pay and in January 1873 became Secretary to the New South Wales Agent General in London. However, he resigned the appointment and in 1874 and returned to NSW where, on 28 August 1876, he was appointed Commander of the New South Wales Artillery Forces. That year, he was also appointed to a Commission to examine the colony's capacity to withstand foreign aggression and to a Board which dealt with the supply and maintenance of warlike stores.

In 1881, Roberts was one of a number of Royal Commissioners who inquired into the defence of the colony. He favoured a permanent artillery force supported by a small nucleus of infantry supported by unpaid volunteers. He also recommended the establishment of an Australian regiment of artillery for the defence of the colonies. From 26 January until 23 March (year?) in the absence of Richardson he acted as Commandant of the NSW Military Forces.

On 12 February 1885, the acting Premier of New South Wales, William Bede Dalley, discussed the Sudan war with Colonel Richardson, Commandant of the New South Wales Military Forces, and Colonel Roberts as a consequence of which the NSW government offered to dispatch a combined volunteer infantry and artillery force to assist the British forces engaged there. Roberts acted as Commandant of the NSW Military Forces during Richardson's absence in the Sudan.

In 1887-88, Roberts quarreled with Richardson over his treatment when the artillery was placed under the general staff and general defence arrangements. In November 1888, he sought the approval of Sir Henry Parkes to his appointment to the new office of Secretary of Defence. He did not receive the appointment but in April 1892 he was appointed Military Secretary in the newly established Defence Department.

In June-July 1892, Roberts appeared before a Royal Commission which ultimately found the NSW defence arrangements to be unsatisfactory. On 6 March 1896, following the departure of Major General E.T.H. Hutton, Roberts was appointed Commandant of the NSW Military Forces until replaced by Major General G.A. French on 3 April 1896. He continued in his appointment of Military Secretary through the period of the South African war and retired in 1902.

In 1905, a Royal Commission examining the claims of troops serving at the South African war found that Roberts had fought with French and had neglected to resolve the problems and confusion relating to the rates of pay of the troops. Being absent from the state, Roberts did not appear before Royal Commission.

He died on 9 September 1914.

His portrait, uniforms and medals can be found in the Colonial Gallery of the NSW Museum.

Source: Australian Dictionary of Biography.

For more information follow this link: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/roberts-charles-fyshe-4486>