

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Major Alan Hall Smith, ED

1930 – 2018

By Tim Ford



Major Alan Hall Smith ED was born in Newcastle, New South Wales in 1930. He was educated at The Armidale School and Newcastle Boy's High School. He gained an Associate Diploma in Industrial Chemistry in 1952 and in 1982 he completed a Master's Degree from the University of Newcastle in Commerce and Economics.

Alan joined the Australian Citizen Military Forces in 1951 as a Recruit Gunner in R Battery, 21st Field Regiment Royal Australian Artillery located in Newcastle. He was commissioned in June 1954 as a lieutenant. He had overseas regimental service with the Royal

Artillery based in Bloomsbury, London and the Royal Canadian Artillery in Toronto, Ontario 1954 – 1955.

Alan was promoted to the rank of major with the Royal Australian Artillery Regiment but continued his military service with the 2nd Battalion Royal New South Wales Regiment as Support Company Commander.

After further military training Alan's military education led him into logistics staff appointments in the Headquarters of Communication Zone and Eighth Task Force.

For his military service as an efficient and thoroughly capable officer Alan was awarded the Efficiency Decoration in 1966. In 1969 he retired from the Citizen Military Forces.

Alan's civilian professional career was with The Broken Hill Propriety Company Limited from 1960 when he was appointed to the Executive Staff and occupied Personnel/Human Resource positions in Corporate Steel and Wire Divisions in his thirty six year service to 1992.

His third career was in writing artillery military history, in particular, history of the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. Early in this career he wrote articles for the Journal of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company, 'Cannonball'. This led to his appointment as Assistant Editor and then Editor of 'Cannonball' covering a period of twenty years from 1993 to 2013. In 2014 Alan wrote, "Taking over the editorship of Cannonball all those years ago while a member of the Historical Company Board was a 'life changing' decision from my point of view". The editorship stimulated Alan to venture into researching and writing on Australian military history, not only articles for

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Cannonball, but in producing major texts on histories of the Royal Australian Artillery at war in operations during the twentieth century that hitherto had been given only scant attention by civilian or military historians. Since 2008 four of Alan's texts have been published in book form and sold through bookstores and the Australian War Memorial.

Alan's first book was titled 'Gunners in Borneo', a story about the war in Borneo – Confrontation in the 1960s. Major General Sandy Pearson AO, DSO, OBE, MC in reviewing the book wrote, "This is a well researched book. It is a 'must' for any military person who could be faced with a small but elusive war in the future, or a reader interested in studying a 'war with a difference'".

The second book titled 'Do Unto Others' - Counter Bombardment in Australia's Military Campaigns was published in 2011. In its preface Alan states; 'My decision to embark upon a study of counter bombardment arose from two passions. One was my life long interest in our military history. The other was as a Gunner officer educated in the sciences and how it was applied to gunnery. This led me to focus on that branch of the Royal Australian Artillery that in my sixteen years of CMF service I had little exposure to. I resolved to study it in depth. When the first opportunity came to write about it I did it in a relatively superficial way. The more I researched the more fascinated I became.'

Three years later Alan's third book was published – 'Battle Winners' a detailed history of the Australian Artillery in the Western Desert from 1940 to 1942. In the book's Foreword, Major General Steve Gower AO, AO (Mil), past Director of the Australian War Memorial, recorded, "In many respects this is a specialist book, but it is not only for Gunners. Anyone interested in the application of combat power on a high intensity, conventional battlefield will profit from reading it. Alan Smith is to be congratulated on producing this record of our Australian artillery at its peak".

General Gower also wrote the Forward of the fourth book published in 2016, 'Allenby's Gunners' – Artillery in the Sinai and Palestine Campaigns 1916 to 1918. He states "This book is the latest in a series by a prolific military historian Alan Smith dealing with artillery support for campaigns in which Australian forces have participated. I congratulate Alan Smith for producing a very valuable record of what has been to date a neglected aspect of Australian military history of operations against the Ottoman forces in the Middle East".

At the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company's 2014th Annual General Meeting Alan was granted Honorary Life Membership of the Company for his service to the Company as a Board member, as a member of its History Committee, as Editor of 'Cannonball, and for his generous donations of proceeds derived from the sale of his books.

Alan died on 19th May 2018 in Christchurch, New Zealand while touring with his wife Jenny. A Service of Thanksgiving for his life was held at the St Ives Uniting Church in Sydney on 1st June 2018.