



THE AIMING POST

The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Of Western Australia Newsletter

Issue 2/2000

June 2000

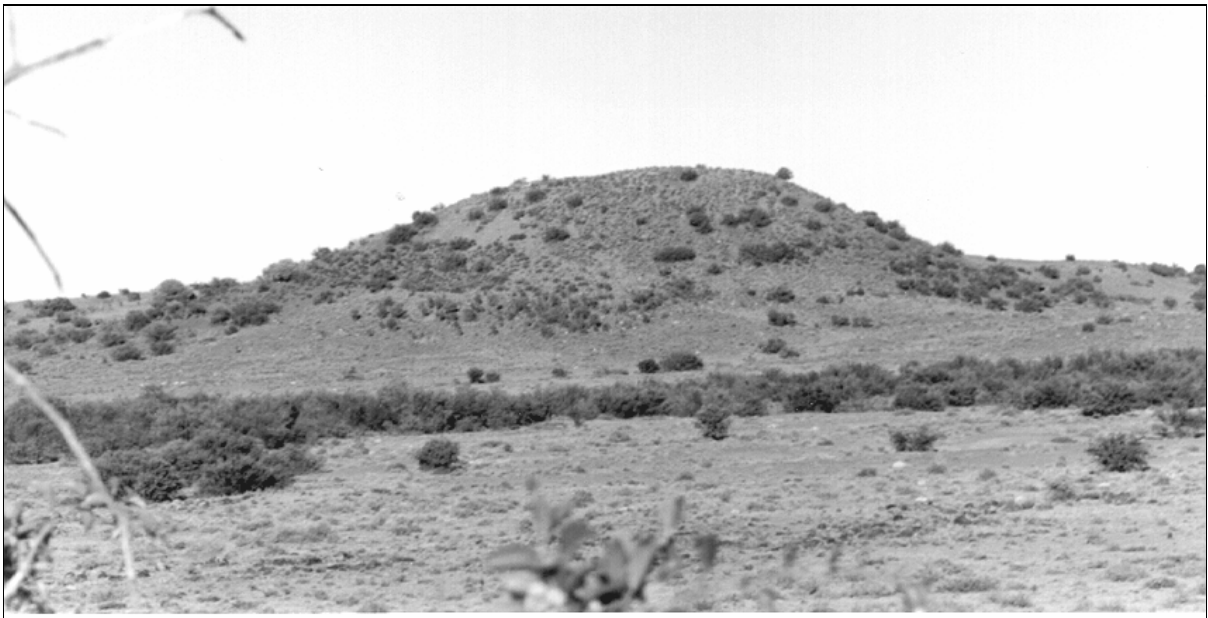


Dedication of a Memorial on West Australian Hill on 9 February 2000,
exactly 100 years after the first action of 1st Contingent of the
West Australian Mounted Infantry in the Boer War
(Private Photo from the collection of Malcolm Higham)

A SOUTH AFRICAN MEMORIAL

In late January 2000, a party of five members of the West Australian Branch of the Military Historical Society of Australia left Perth with the primary purpose to positively identify a hill near Colesburg in South Africa known as West Australia Hill. Malcolm Higham of the RAAHS, accompanied by his wife Pip, was one of the party. Midge Carter and Trish Woodman, both well-known Boer war historians, led the group. Others in the party were Bill Edgar, author of “Warrior of Kakoda”, his wife Jen and John Sweetman, a historical researcher for the Army Museum of Western Australia. All of the party were known for their long-term interest in the Boer war 1899 – 1902.

West Australia Hill lies 25 km east of Colesburg in the Eastern Cape, about 35 km south of the Orange River. It was the first place in which the 1st Contingent of the West Australian Mounted Infantry, under Major Moore saw action on 9 February 1900. In doing so they covered themselves in glory, and set the tradition of courage and service followed by all Western Australian soldiers since then.



A troop of 27 men, under Major Moore with Lieutenants Darling and Hensman were patrolling east of a British military camp and hospital at Slingersfontein Farm, 23 km east of Colesburg when they discovered a Boer force of some 400 men approaching from the east with the intention of a surprise attack on the camp.

Moore sent a messenger back to warn of the approaching force and then took up position on a hill with two small associated knolls with the object of stopping the Boer attack. The Boers had hoped to cross a narrow neck of flat land before first light on 9 February to approach the Slingersfontein camp undetected in the cover of the surrounding hills and valleys.

They were thwarted in this by the West Australians, who occupied the trio of small hills dominating their approach neck through which they had to pass. The action continued all day until the light faded when Major Moore knew that he would be unable to see anyone crossing the neck and he withdrew his force. The delay enforced on the Boers was sufficient for the camp and hospital to be moved further back along the railway out of danger. This battle was referred to as the battle of Slingersfontein but was later given the name of West Australia Hill by the GOC in honour of the defence.

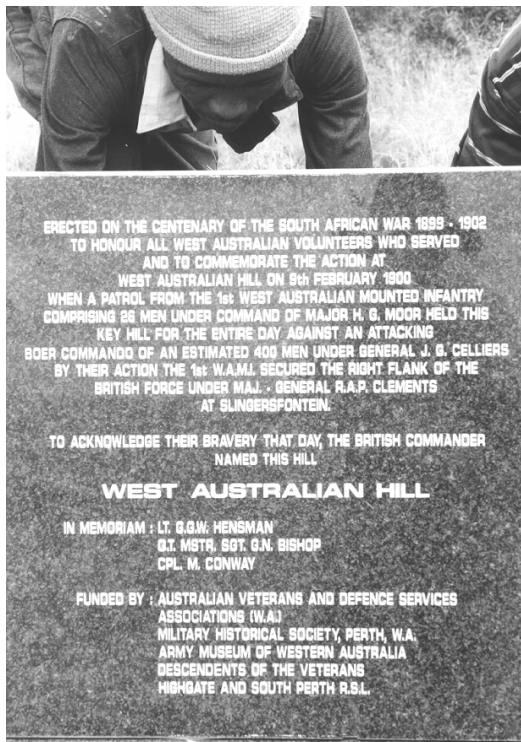


The West Australians lost three men in the battle – one killed in action and two died of wounds later. Lieutenant Hensman was mortally wounded and Privates Conway and Kryger built a stone sanger around him to protect him from further injury. Whilst doing this under heavy and accurate rifle fire, Conway was killed. Kryger was recommended for the Victoria Cross but was eventually awarded a mention in dispatches. Sergeant Bishop died of sunstroke and three others were wounded.

When we visited the area we were able to positively identify the hill from a roughly drawn map made by Major Moore. (The map is held in the Battye Library).

To prove the identification, we searched for evidence. We could see where small rifle positions had been made with stones for the hill is very rocky and by looking slightly to the right of each position, we were soon rewarded by finding .303 Mk II cartridge cases. We found a total of seven .303 cases and a further search of Boer positions 400 metres away yielded four Boer 7mm “droppies”. We later found a bully beef can in the horse holder’s position out of the line of fire, behind the hill.

The Boers held a position a little higher than the West Australian positions and about 400 metres from the main West Australian Hill. The position held by Lt Hensman was about 100 metres closer to the Boer positions and lower still, so that it was a very hazardous place. The little knoll held by Lt Darling was also lower than West Australian Hill. It dominated the neck, which the Boers wished to cross and as well covered all the approaches to the neck. Either side of the neck between the hills was a wide-open plain, devoid of any cover. The British artillery could reach anyone crossing these areas. By holding West Australia Hill, these 27 men stopped the attack of 400 Boers.



It was with pride that we placed a stone memorial on the slope of West Australia Hill on 9 February 2000, exactly 100 years after the event. Our group also succeeded in locating Brakpan Farm, about 150 km east of Pretoria where Lieutenant Fred bell won the first Victoria Cross awarded to a West Australian in an action to prevent bogged wagons from falling into Boer hands. In this same action Lieutenant Anthony Forrest was killed. He was the son of Alexander Forrest. After he was killed it was revealed that he was only 16 ½ years of age, having convinced the recruiting officers he was over 18 and also that he had his father’s permission.

The farm is well known in the area, but since 1902 it had been split up and no one was certain which of the present farms was the area of operations. A map drawn by a transport officer after the action gave us enough information and after a long morning's search with a local farmer we managed to locate the battle site on the Little Oliphant's River

[Article and photographs by Malcolm Higham]



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Presented at the Annual General Meeting, 15 March 2000

Again it gives me great pleasure to report on the happenings of the Society over the past 12 months. As indicated to you this time last year, the Society has developed into a progressive, financial and effective organisation with a strong focus on the preservation of our artillery heritage. Tonight as we celebrate our twelfth birthday, we can reflect on a period of satisfaction, a period of continued achievement.

The specific groupings and identifiable roles and tasks at Leighton Battery Heritage Site and the Workshop Facility and Annexe at Karrakatta are all working effectively. In this regard, we are greatly indebted to our curator, Don Rae, for his tireless efforts in all facets of the Society's activities.

I would like to thank all members of the Society for their interest in the Society work. All are to be congratulated on the achievements and for creating the momentum that has encouraged others to come along and participate and most importantly – to enjoy. One of the nice aspects about visiting Society projects is to see the great pleasure that members gain from being involved. On behalf of the Management Committee, I thank you most sincerely and I encourage you to maintain your level of interest.

As indicated on numerous occasions, my principal regret is that due to the need to be personally involved in my business interests, I am not able to be present as frequently as I would like. However, you can be

assured, that I am kept up to date by the reports and discussion during the monthly meetings of the Management Committee.

Since the opening of the Leighton Battery Heritage Site to the public on the first Sunday of every month (except January) together with the openings for special interest groups on other occasions, we have enjoyed a steady stream of visitors keen to view what is referred to as a very professional exhibition. Congratulations to Vice President David Carter for his management of the visits program and setting up the guide roster. A big thank you to all who give up their time at the regular busy-see sessions to ensure that we have a presentable facility and that the ongoing maintenance aspects receive attention.

With respect to the Workshop Facility, the range and state of equipment is the envy of many who visit the premises. It is a credit to Kevin Hamilton, Harvey Everett and the team who operate from there. Each and every one is to be congratulated on the level of restoration work being achieved. The ongoing requests from local government and ex-service clubs to quote and advise on restoration work is a great compliment to the workshop group for their professional approach and importantly, their quality work. The Workshop is also becoming a viable revenue earner. Again our thanks for your commitment.

At the Annexe, the development work continues with the assistance of many willing workers – male and female; the young and the very young. I would especially like to record thanks to Terri Little and Dudley Mackie with the artifacts and photo archives and to Bob Glyde for his dedication as Society historian and librarian and to everyone associated with the Annexe activities – thank you. It is a team effort and the level of achievement has been as a result of working together.

In an administrative sense, the Society can hold its head high. Due to the systematic and thorough approach by our Treasurer, Tom Arnautovic, we are in a sound financial position and with the dedication of our Secretary Helen Glyde, our records and correspondence are of the highest order. My personal thanks to you both for your ongoing interest and commitment.

It is also most appropriate at this time to acknowledge to other members of the Management Committee for their contribution to that body: David Carter, Vice President; Bob Eggleston and Terri Little,

Committee members; and Ex-officio members Don Rae, Curator and Robert Mitchell, Editor of our widely read and highly praised newsletter “Aiming Post” plus preparer of grant applications to various authorities for which we have achieved a great deal of success. My personal thanks to all members of the management team.

Earlier, I referred to our strong focus on the preservation of our artillery heritage. Whilst we can be justifiably very proud of our achievements over the past twelve years, much of what we gunners (or gunners mates) regard as being untouchable in respect to change is in fact undergoing change. With economic reality driving much of what happens in societies and communities today, we are presented with challenges of fighting for what artillery presence we wish to retain and preserve for the future.

As reality meets us head-on in respect to physical abilities, the last twelve years has seen significant changes in our individual capacities to continue to give the effort we used to. We must endeavor to “recruit” the next generation of RAAHS of WA “true believers”. It is therefore encouraging to see, with the recent formation of the 3 Field Regiment members Association, with membership close to 90, that by working closely with this group, perhaps with joint functions and activities, we can influence some members of the group to become involved with us.

The formation of the 3 Field Regiment Members Association was very important to ensure the continuity of artillery focus as is of great credit to John “Tally” Hobbs for the initiative and to inaugural President, Peter Rowles, for the progress and level of interest being generated.

For your information, two of our stalwarts, Max Davey and Ron Jager are Association Vice Presidents and Tom Arnautovic is Secretary. I am delighted also to serve on the Executive Committee. The Association will be an important link to this Society as together we strive to retain our artillery heritage.

Finally some special thanks to Major Peter Mahoney, Battery Commander of 7 Field Battery, 3 Field Regiment RAA for his ongoing support and to the Regular staff here at Hobbs Artillery Park for their interest advice and assistance. The new millennium presents us with new challenges and importantly new and wonderful opportunities. I look forward to working with all of you to enable the Society to achieve great things and I present this report for your acceptance.

The Target Towing Launches. A Follow Up

Several issues ago the story was told of the target towing launch “Wadjemip” AMC 543. Not long after this article appeared, the Society received a letter from an ex AWAS lady who had served on the “Wadjemup” during a number of trips, as a signaler.

She had not been aware of the article in the “Aiming Post” but was seeking information enabling her to prove such a vessel existed. The authority with whom she was dealing had no such vessel on their files. We were able to send her a copy of our article. Further investigations showed that there were a number of files held in the National Archives covering this launch, and her sister ship, which operated out of Sydney. There was further icing on the cake when it was revealed there was actually a photograph of one of the units on the files.

The lady concerned was most grateful for the information. She has promised to send the Society some notes on her experiences, and those of her fellow AWAS friends, whilst serving on this vessel. We look forward to being able to share them with you. at some later date.

In the meantime we have acquired a photograph of one of the two vessels undertaking trials about March/April 1941. Unfortunately it is not possible from the photograph or the information accompanying it to assess whether it is of the “Wadjemup” or that of her sister ship, “Koree”. The photograph is taken about 45 degrees off the starboard bow, which does not provide a silhouette of the vessel. Has any one amongst our readers a beam shot. Even one as she was fitted post war for whale hunting, would be of interest historically.

It is noted from comments made in the publication “We Stood and Waited, Sydney’s Anti-ship Defences 1939-45” by Brig. R K Fullford, that the Thornycroft engines, of the “Koree” at least, were very temperamental and many a shoot was abandoned because of this problem. It is also said that the “Koree’s sea keeping capability was not good, as many a landlubber performing duties on the vessel during shoots found to their discomfort. Whether the same problems were experienced with the “Wadjemup” is not known.

There must be Coast Artillery and Engineering personnel who served from time to time on the “Wadjemup” who would be prepared to comment on their experiences. Our Editor would be pleased to hear from them.



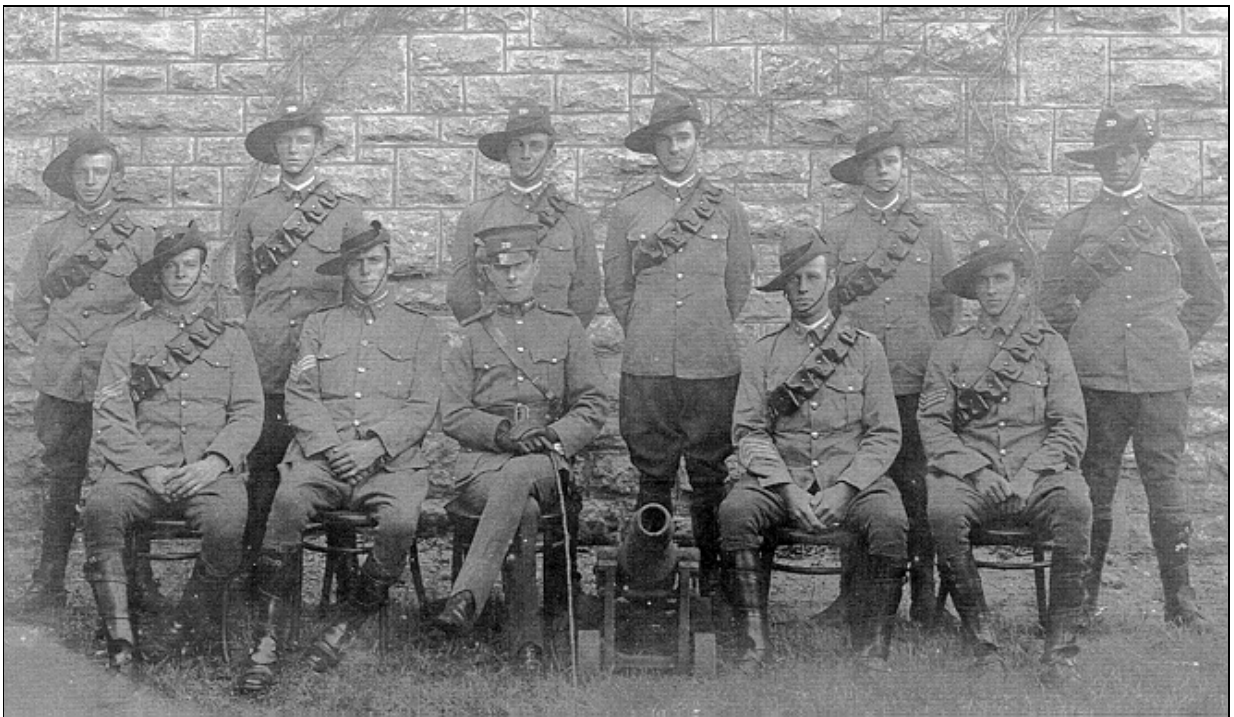
. Also quite a volume of correspondence exists concerning the fitting out of the “Wadjemup” with anti-submarine equipment. It would be interesting to find out if this was ever finally authorised and fitted.



The President, Executive and members of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of WA (Inc) extend their condolences to member Kevin Hamilton on the loss of his wife Mae.

Every Picture Tells a Story

Well, every picture tells a story but often only the person, who took the picture, can tell of its significance. In the Society's photographic library, there are dozens of photographs, which could be of historical or research value. Unfortunately there is nothing on them or accompanying them, to say how, why, where or when they were taken. As a result the otherwise valuable photos become worthless pieces of photographic paper. Sometimes, when examined by a person who has a particular interest, a photograph can come to life. Take the accompanying group photo for instance.



A photocopy was sent to Keith Glyde, an honorary member of the Society who lives in Tasmania. He has made a study of uniforms and embellishments over the years and he was good enough to send the Society the following assessment.

- The personnel are of 20th Battery AFA as confirmed by the brass numeral displayed on the front of their hats and caps.
- The period depicted is between 1 July 1912 and 1 July 1913. The former is the date on which the battery was raised from personnel of the 14th Battery AFA, the latter on which it became 38th Battery, Field Artillery.

- The uniforms are the Commonwealth khaki standard pattern, which by then had replaced the uniforms of the pre-Federation colonial units.
- The brass numeral was approved in 1912 as was the scarlet hat and cap band. The former replacing the 7-fold puggaree with the red centre fold worn before 1912 by the artillery.
- The cap and collar badges date back to 1903. When new standing orders for dress were promulgated in 1912, the only insignia provided at public expense was the coloured hat or cap band indicating the arm of service and the numeral indicating the unit.
- All units within each corps were numbered consecutively, regardless of the role, thus there was no confusion - except for artillery, which numbered 1 to 13 for garrison companies and 1 to 52 for field and howitzer batteries.
- Titles, cap, hat and collar badges could be purchased at regimental expense, provided the whole unit dressed alike.
- Because these troops are officers and NCO's their service would have carried over from the old 14th Battery and they would have already been issued with these badges when transferred to 20th Battery.
- Whether new recruits, who joined the unit would have been issued with them even after they became 38th Battery is not known. A number of artillery units continued to wear the old field and garrison artillery hat and collar badges until 1921.
- The personnel in the photo appear to be wearing the hat badges on a backing of scarlet cloth, which was a handover from the pre 1912 period.
- The officer is still wearing his gorget patches of the pre 1912 period. These were similar to the gorget patches worn by modern staff officers but they were larger.
- Artillery gorget patches were dark blue with a scarlet stripe running horizontally through them. Field artillery collar badges were worn horizontally, garrison artillery, vertically.
- The officer depicted is possibly Captain J.B. Mills, the Battery Commander, who was promoted to Major 01 September 1913.
- Seated second from the left is the Battery Sergeant Major. His rank is indicated by a crown and gun over three chevrons.

- He appears to be wearing crown and gun of gold wire embroidery on a dark blue background, which was being phased out in the CMF because they no longer wore full dress.
- Seated second from the right is the Battery Quartermaster Sergeant. He is distinguished by four inverted chevrons on the right forearm, surmounted by a gun, which appears to of gold wire embroidery on khaki cloth, which were then being introduced.
- This style of badge for the BQMS superseded the pre Federation style of an eight-pointed star over three chevrons.
- A regimental (brigade) quartermaster sergeant wore an eight-pointed star over four chevrons. until 1917.
- The remaining individuals are the normal sergeants, corporals and bombardiers although it is noted that the sergeant on the left is not wearing a gun over his chevrons. The sergeant on the right has a gold embroidered on khaki gun badge above his chevrons.
- The buttons should be of the Commonwealth Military Forces ‘map of Australia’ type but the older NCOs may simply wear a gun on theirs.
- The men wear mounted service dress, standard for horsed units such as artillery, cavalry, etc, and is indicated by the leather leggings and bandoliers”.

So now the photograph has life and is of some value to historians and researchers. It has a date, the unit involved, the possible identity of one of the group and valuable information concerning the dress...

ARMY MUSEUM OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
ARTILLERY BARRACKS FREMANTLE

Thanks are extended from the Army Museum of Western Australia for the support from the Society in their campaign to retain the Artillery Barracks in Fremantle as the home of the Army Museum either by marching and participating in the Rally or by signing the petition

Research - The Thrill of the Chase.

One cannot but feel good when researching an article and things just come together to help complete a story, or particularly in genealogy, when that final name clicks into place to finish the family tree.

Back in the 1980s, when researching the Harbour Battery, I was intrigued to note that a Nordenfeldt 14-pr mounting was received to be installed in the Battery. In the correspondence that followed, when horrified officers asked where ammunition would be obtained for a gun of this type, it was disclosed they were to take one of the 6-pr guns held for sub-calibre shoots with the 9.2-in guns and fit that to the mounting.

None of my records could tell me anything about a Nordenfeldt 14-pr although it was recorded that Fort Queenscliff had four of these guns mounted as part of its armament between 1890 and 1908. That still left me wondering what a Nordenfeldt 14-pr gun looked like, what was its calibre, etc. The guns were obviously very old as they were not listed in Ian Hogg's book "British Artillery Weapons and Ammunition 1914-18", nor were they in the "Treatise of Service Ordnance, 1885".

Time went by and no further progress was made until July 1999 when through the generosity of North Fort Museum, the Society was sent a copy of the "Treatise of Service Ordnance, 1908". Lo and behold in one short paragraph it told of a special batch of 14-pr guns being manufactured for the British battleships "Swiftsure" and "Triumph". These ships were of a class of ships which commenced coming into commission in 1870. They were fitted out with steam and sail propulsion. Their sister ships, of which there were four, were each equipped with six 20-pr guns, said to have been a saluting battery.

The "Swiftsure" was scrapped in 1908 and the "Triumph" in 1921. They would have been decommissioned and disarmed long before these dates and used as accommodation or depot ships. So it seemed that the Colony of Victoria might have purchased at least five of these guns in the mid 1890s for coast defence purposes.

Then new information came to light, which showed that the Victorian Colonial ship “Cerebus” was equipped with this type guns as part of her secondary armament, probably when her secondary armament was upgraded in the 1890’s. Perhaps two such guns were dismantled and fitted with field carriages, which the naval contingent from Victoria took with them when they sailed for China to take part in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion. They were replaced in Hong Kong with 9-pr guns from British stocks. Whether they were recovered later is not known. It is likely they were not, because there is no listing of 14-pr field guns in Victoria in the Court of Inquiry Report 1901 when all ordnance was listed State by State for transfer to the Commonwealth. Only the five under the garrison artillery listing, one of which was not mounted, were recorded.

This still left me with the query what calibre were they and what did they look like? The latter was cleared up when browsing through the AWM photo date base on the Internet, a photo taken about 1896 came to light with the detachment in their positions for a shoot. Then it was suggested that I look up the “Gun Drills, Garrison and Heavy Artillery, 1910” manual. Sure enough all the rest of the information I could ask for was listed therein.

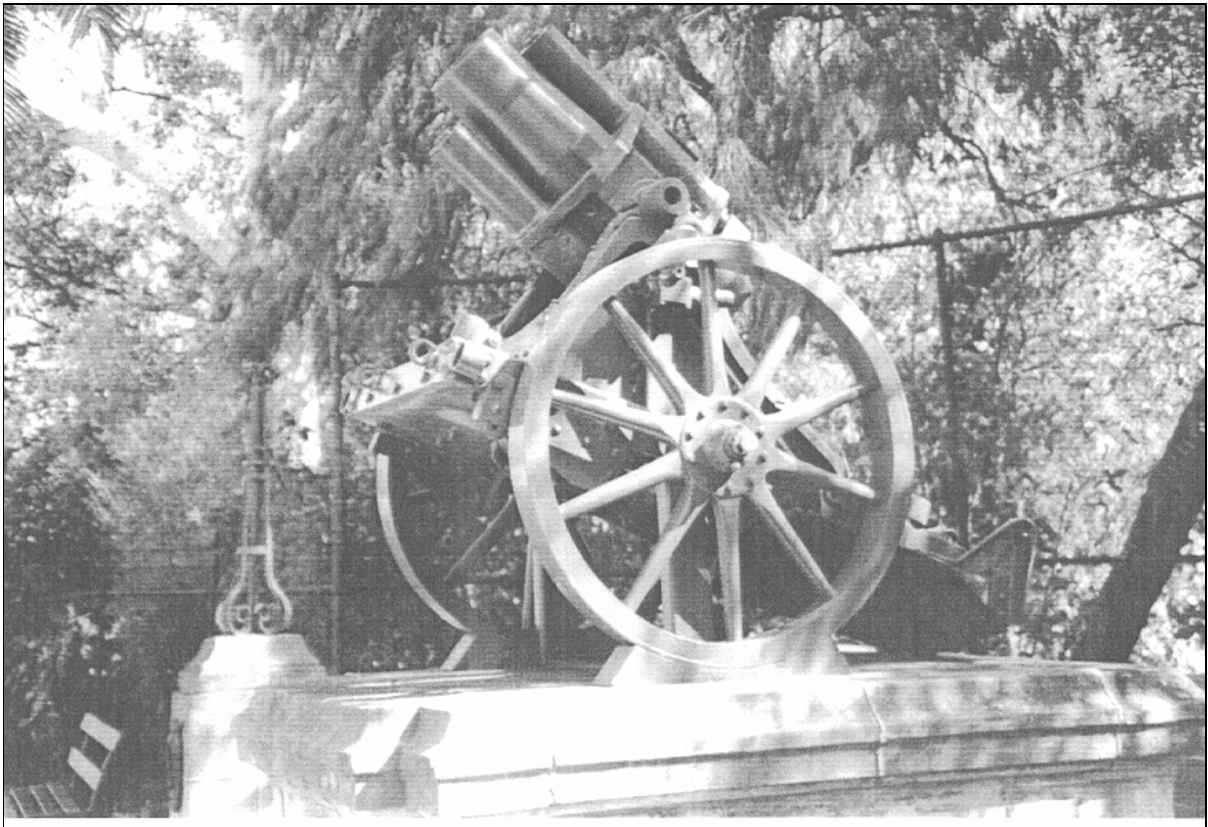
It told me the guns had a 3-in calibre, they were quick firing, used fixed ammunition which gave a muzzle velocity of 2100 feet per second and all the detail necessary about the mounting of the gun.

I then was faced with the query about the usefulness of the Nordenfeldt 14-pr which was emplaced at Crows Nest Battery, Port Phillip Bay, during 1944-45. Surely it must have been for appearances only! The ammunition would have been close on 70 years old! There on the AWM Photograph Database was a photograph, said to have been taken during WW2, which showed a magazine well stocked with 14-pr ammunition. It appeared to be of a very modern profile, in fact a smaller version of the 25-pr shell.

It had taken probably fifteen years to acquire all the data but now I am happy with this particular subject. Perhaps there is someone who reads “Aiming Post” who can provide further information?

German WW1 Trophy Guns in Western Australia

Following World War 1 a vast array of German guns, mortars, howitzers and machine guns were collected from the battlefields and sent to Australia. Here, under the control of the Australian War Memorial, they were distributed to militia units affiliated with units of the 1st AIF, a few private individuals and to local government organisations who requested them. A gun captured by the Western Australian 11th Battalion AIF would be allocated to the 11th Infantry Regiment or it may have been allocated to, say the Kalgoorlie Council, from which area a large number of members of the AIF were recruited. Equipments captured in Palestine were made available to country town from whence came many Australian Light Horse personnel.



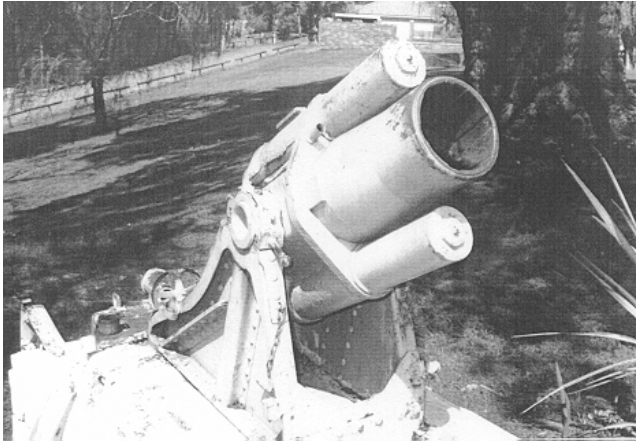
In Western Australia alone the records available to the writer indicate some 72 guns, howitzers and mortars, were distributed. The list may not be complete as there is at least one equipment, ie the mountain gun at the Corrigin Memorial Park, which is unlisted, The number of machine guns forwarded is not known, but no doubt this information could be ascertained from the files held at the Australian War Memorial.

Under the terms by which the trophy weapons were released, the receiving authority had to sign a receipt indicating the equipment would be maintained in good condition and agreeing to return it to the War Memorial if at some later date it was decided the equipment was no longer required.

Today only 16 equipments remain in this State as far as can be ascertained. A small number of these have been well cared for over the 80 years since they were issued, the remainder are mostly in a sorry state of disrepair. Since the weapons were in the main distributed for mounting at the various memorials which were constructed after World War I to commemorate the personnel who had enlisted in the districts and to pay homage to those personnel who had lost their lives, the condition of the equipments remaining, reflects poorly on the heritage and commemorative priorities of communities today.

The question might well be asked, "What happened to the other 56 pieces of equipment?" There appears to be a number of explanations! Possibly the largest loss was due to the scrap metal drives during World War II. A previous member of the Society, the late Fred Ingram, mentioned that guns were recovered from parks and built into dummy gun emplacements along the coast. This could well be so, as the two guns, which had been in the Claremont Park prior to 1941, were still lying at the rear of the Leighton Battery site in the 1970's. Anti war groups are said to have forced the Collie Council to dispose of their gun for scrap between the wars and the Busselton Council is said to have dumped their gun at the local tip after it had been allowed to fall into disrepair.

Not all was lost however. At Broome, over patriotic citizens decided that anything German had to be consigned to the local dump when World War II was declared. A zealous citizen recovered the 7.7 cm gun, which had been captured by the 11th Battalion in France, and held onto it until after the war. It was sandblasted, restored and is now displayed at the local museum. Unfortunately the 75 mm mortar which also formed part of the Broome trophy guns was not saved.



As late as the early 1990's, under the noses of this Society, the QM at 7 Fd Battery displaying a complete lack of historical appreciation, consigned a 170 mm minenwerfer to the Subiaco dump because it marred the landscape for some inspecting senior officer. .

Of the weapons known to exist today there are: 2- 76.2 mm Minenwerfers (mortars); 4 - 170 mm Minenwerfers. 1 - 7.5 cm Mountain Gun; 4 - 7.7 cm Model M96 Field Guns; 4 - 7.5 cm Model M03 Field Guns. (Turkish guns of German origin); and 1 - 105 mm FH 16 Field Gun

Over the next few "Aiming Posts" we will endeavor to fill in what we know of the characteristics, the location and what is known of the history of the equipments.

Australian Made - The Sentinel Cruiser Tank

Few Australians would realise that we produced our own cruiser tank in a program, which commenced with the design process in about November 1940 and finished in 1943, during which time 69 units, including prototypes, had been built.

The Australian tank force in 1939 consisted of eleven Vickers Mk VIA light tanks and four obsolete (and immobile) 1926 model Mk II medium tanks. Australia wanted to form the 1st Australian Armoured Division and the availability of tanks from British sources was not good. Every available tank from that source and US manufacture were being pressed into service in the Middle East. The Australian Army had a need for some 860 tanks and the only way they were to be able to acquire that number at the time, was to build locally.

Revolutionary production methods were evolved by BHP, which saw the casting of the hull and turret as single components; the first production tanks in the world to make use of this method and later adopted by the Americans. Plant had to be developed to roll the extremely tough and hard steel required for the armour plating

Engines proved a problem initially as the Australian industry did not produce automotive engines of the type required. A large stock of Cadillac V8 petrol engines of the necessary horsepower were found in a dealers store and were requisitioned. By linking three of these engines, they were able to provide the motive power. Later, more efficient single engines were made available from the US, which reduced the need to couple engines to provide the power.



The pilot model of the Sentinel was completed in March 1942 and by August 1942, the first production tank was completed in the NSW Railway Workshops. The first Sentinel Mk I weighed 26 tons, mounted a 2-pr (40 mm) gun and two Vickers machine guns. The frontal armour was 65 mm and the vehicle achieved a top speed of 48 km/h.

Even as the first units were being completed advanced prototypes were being designed and tested. The Mk III & IV versions were built with considerably upgraded armour protection and enlarged turrets mounting a 25-pr and 17-pr gun respectively.

The advantages that the Sentinel possessed over foreign tanks were that they were of a lower silhouette than the American Sherman tank, they were more heavily armoured than the highly regarded Russian T34 and with the 17-pr gun they were capable of piercing the frontal armour of much feared German King Tiger tank.

Following the defeat of the Axis armies in Africa, many units of the M3 Lee/Grant American and the British Matilda models became surplus as they were replaced by more modern tanks capable of fighting the German tanks. The Grant and Matilda tanks were thought to be adequate to meet any Japanese tank threat at the time. Australia was therefore allotted a large number of the surplus tanks.

The receipt of these units enabled the Army to cancel production of the Sentinel. This enabled the manufacturing and material resources to be utilised to upgrade the rail system which by then was rapidly deteriorating through lack of maintenance.

Four examples of the Sentinel tank remain today. Three are in Australia at the Australian War Memorial and the Armoured Corps Museum and the fourth forms part of the collection of the Bovington Tank Museum in England.



The Royal Australian Artillery Barracks **Cantonment Hill, Fremantle**

Sites of commemoration include not only monuments, but also sites where young men and women worked and trained to protect their loved ones. One such site is the Royal Australian Artillery Barracks at Fremantle, known familiarly as Victoria Barracks or the Artillery Barracks, and home of the Western Australian Army Museum.

Located on Cantonment Hill, the Barracks were constructed in two phases between 1910 and 1913 for the Commonwealth, to a design by Hillson Beasley of the Western Australian Public Works Department. Built of red brick and "Cottesloe Stone" (quarried from the area bounded by Eric, Marmion, Broome and Napier Streets) in Federation Free Classical Style, they were designed to house some 120 men and officers of the Artillery Corps.

Two artillery forts had been constructed in Fremantle in the decade after Federation. One was located at Arthur Head (Arthur Fort, constructed 1907) as an examination battery with the task of interdicting shipping attempting to enter the harbour without proper authorisation, while the other at North Fremantle (Forrest Fort, constructed 1908) was a training centre for the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery. Neither fort had any associated land suitable for building barracks and a site between the two was required.

Cantonment Hill, with its elevated location near the river and partially owned by the Commonwealth already, became the proposed site although the choice was not approved of by all. The land on the top of the hill, known then as Hospital Hill Reserve, was a popular picnic spot with Fremantle residents. Several objectors noted that Fremantle had a lack of public reserves for quiet recreation, and doubted the utility of Barracks so distant from either of the forts they would serve. Even the Commandant, Commonwealth Military Forces, WA had doubts about the location, which he addressed in a letter to the Secretary of Defence in 1907!

Despite these concerns the acquisition of the land went ahead, and the first contract to build was let in 1910. In this first phase a Barracks for 40 men, Orderly Room, Guard Room, Quarter Store, separate Kitchen block and Gymnasium was built, facing on to the parade ground. While waiting for their splendid new quarters they camped in tents at the bottom of the street. Three years later a second Barracks block, Married Quarters, Officers Quarters and a Hospital, all in complementary style, had also been completed.

Fremantle Artillery Barracks circa 1936. Recruits of 3 Heavy Brigade AMF mounting and moving ordnance as a training exercise. (Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Photo No 3120C)



Between the Wars a number of working structures, such as sheds and garages were built, and in 1928 a wooden signal tower was constructed to take over from the signal station at Arthur Head. Men from the Barracks were involved in the construction of the fort at Rottnest in 1936, during which time communication was maintained by heliograph between Cantonment Hill and the Rottnest site. The Barracks also trained the regular contingent which supported the CMF manning the Albany Fort.

In 1946 Major General Whitelaw took up residence in the Commanding Officer's Quarters " Gun House", built in the 1913 construction phase. This resulted in a tradition in which the Senior Serving Officer in

Western Australia lives at "Gun House", although it has not been always been seen as suitable for the purpose by its occupants. "Gun House" was renovated to create more modern living conditions in 1994.

The wooden signal tower was replaced with a masonry building in 1956, leased to the Fremantle Harbour Trust. The construction of the large silos at the Port of Fremantle eight years later obstructed the view and led to the construction of an observation site on top of one of the silos by the Harbour Authority.

The gradual sell off of property by the Commonwealth saw the potential for the site to be sold for development in 1987, but concerns about relocating several Units based at the Barracks meant this did not continue at that time. In 1993 the Australian Property Group prepared a development concept plan, rumours of possible sell offs or long term leases of the property continue to abound.

The Barracks are now the home of the Western Australian Army Museum, which moved from "Dilhorn" in 1995, and have continued their association with the Reserve Army through the Western Australian University Regiment, which is based on the site.

The Barracks and associated buildings have been on the Register of the National Estate since 1982. They were classified by the National Trust in 1980. The Artillery Barracks can be visited when the Army Museum is open, between 1 and 4.30 Saturday and Sunday and 11 to 3 on Wednesday.

The information in this article was taken from the National Trust Assessment File, which includes a Conservation Report, by Considine and Griffiths (March 1996), a Heritage Council Assessment Report and a report by the Commonwealth Department of Works (1972)

Lise Summers

Lise is a member of the Defence Heritage Committee of the National Trust of Australia (WA) who served as Army Reservist between 1980 and 1985. An archivist at the State Records Office of Western Australia, Lise is currently studying for a PhD at Edith Cowan University.



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**Understanding your requirements*

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Travel is one of those intangible purchases which, until you are on your holiday (long after parting with hard earned savings) it is sometimes difficult to appreciate these finer points about truly caring about making your holiday dream become a reality.

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The Editor gratefully acknowledges the support of RK Glyde, the Society's Librarian and research Officer who has authored the historical articles appearing in this issue. Comments on the articles or additional material relating to the topics covered are always welcome. This issue of Aiming Post was limited in size to permit the mailing of renewal notices and AGM materials.

The Aiming Post is published by the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of WA (Inc) as a service to its members. It has an additional role of making information and material relating to Australia's artillery and defence heritage available to individuals and groups who share the Society's objectives. Articles, editorial comment or book reviews for publication should be submitted to the Editor, Robert Mitchell at: Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of WA, PO Box 335, Leederville WA 6903 Phone: 93809388 Fax: 9380 9399 or E-Mail the Editor at rbmitch@iinet.net.au