



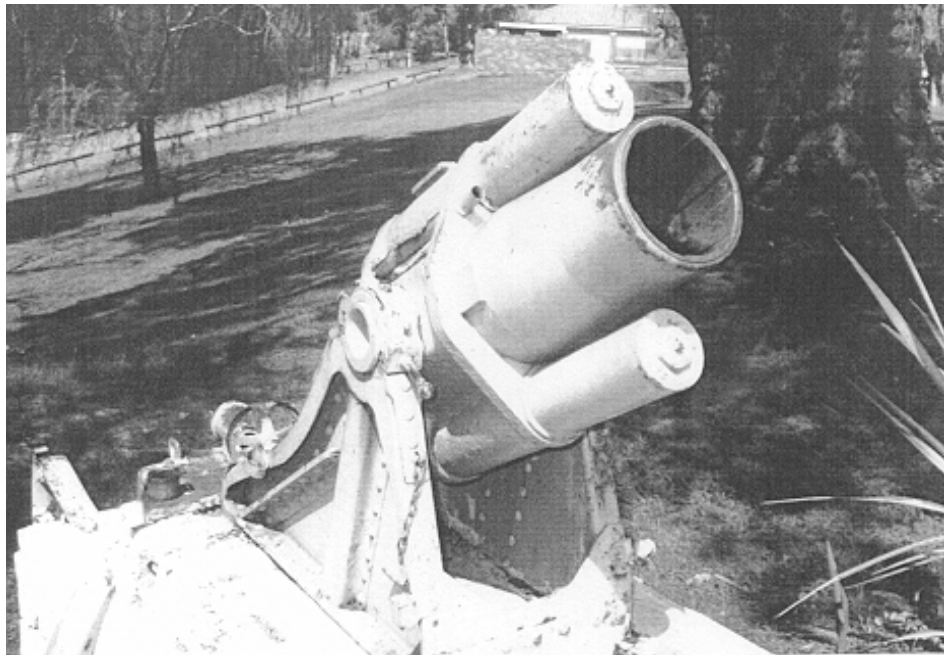
# THE AIMING POST

## The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Of Western Australia Newsletter

Issue 3/2000

September 2000

### GERMAN WW1 TROPHY GUNS - PART 2 - THE MINENWERFERS



When the war on the Western Front settled down to static warfare rather than mobile, the German Army was well prepared. Prior to the war they had experimented with trench mortars, having studied carefully the battles which had taken place in the Far East, particularly the Russo-Japanese clash in 1904. On the other hand the British Army had not shown any interest, probably because all their battles in the latter half of the 19th Century had little requirement for such weapons. When the battles in France settled down to trench warfare, all the British had in their arsenals were Cohorn brass smooth bore mortars, which dated back to the mid 18th Century, followed by makeshift equipment until the Stokes mortar came into production.

The principal equipment which the Germans introduced into service just prior to 1914, were the 250 mm Heavy, the 170 mm Medium and the 77mm Light Trench Mortars. They were known as Minenwerfers and caused havoc in the Allies front line trenches. Most of them appeared to be fitted with stub axles on the base, to which a pair of wheels could be attached for the ease of movement from one position to another. In action, the wheels were removed and the carriage then provided a solid base from which the equipments could be fired. For short movement, a

team of four men could move them but for longer movements they were so fitted that a four horse team could be harnessed to them. All three types had a recoil system and were solidly constructed.

Naturally a number of these weapons were captured by Australian forces during the battles of 1917/18 and were sent back to Australia as trophies. Only two of the 250 mm weapons were allotted to Western Australia; both of these went to Fremantle and as far as can be ascertained, no longer exist. There are two well maintained examples of this type of weapon at Hahndorf in South Australia. Of the six 170 mm minenwerfers known to have been sent to Western Australia, four still exist.

- No. 6180 Can be seen at the Memorial Park at Donnybrook. It is displayed on a concrete block and the base is being gradually eaten away by rust. It was manufactured in 1918 but we have not been able to identify the manufacturing firm in Germany.
- No. 5988 Mounted on the World War I memorial at the corner of Labouchere Road and Angelo Street, South Perth. This equipment has been well maintained over the years, still has its wheels although they may not be original. It is a credit to the City of South Perth. The weapon was manufactured by Rheinische Metalwaren en Maschinen Fabrik in 1917. It was captured by the 16th Battalion 1st AIF in France in 1918. It is the only example of the four such units on display, still fitted with wheels.
- No. 6994 This equipment was originally allotted to the Mundaring Shire but is now displayed at the Army Museum, Burt Street, Fremantle. It was manufactured by ZWC (unidentified) in 1918. The historical background is not known, however an attempt will be made to obtain details of capture from the Australian War Memorial records.
- No. 5086. This unit is also displayed at the Army Museum. It was manufactured in 1918 by a German firm with the Code H2 (unidentified). All we know about the equipment is that it was allotted to the City of Perth. Like all the other units displayed in the State it is fitted with stub axles for the fitment of wheels.

This just leaves the two 170 mm missing units and they would appear to be:

- No. 6390 Allotted to Busselton. A letter from the Busselton Shire would indicate this unit fell into such a state of disrepair in the late 1940's that it was removed and buried.
- No. 3377 Allotted to Fremantle. Possibly the unit dumped by the QMS of 7 Fd Battery in the early 1990's. Earlier it had been recovered from a clay pit and had been stored at Karrakatta.

There were twenty nine 75 mm Light Minenwerfers allocated to Western Australia. Of these only two remain, as far as can be ascertained, today. There may be some still remaining on display in RSL or Shire halls as they are relatively smaller than the other mortars and guns. Although generally recorded as 75 mm by the AWM records, they were of 76.2 mm calibre and the German documents seem to have recorded them as 77 mm.

Initially like their big brothers, they fired in the upper register, ie over 45 degrees. Then in 1917, the Germans decided to fit them with a carriage which enabled them to operate in the lower register as well. Thus they were able to be used by the frontline infantry as a gun with a flat trajectory, if so required. The modification consisted of a trail to achieve the new requirement.

Both of the units remaining in the State have been modified or constructed to the new Flachbahnwerfer design and as such are rather unique. The historical background to these two units is not known but it is hoped that an enquiry to the AWM research section will produce copies of the original correspondence issued when the equipments were allocated.

Details of the two weapons are:

- No.---- Is to be found in the Memorial Park at Narrogin. Many coats of paint cover the equipment number, the date of manufacture and the makers code. The unit is mounted on a concrete block and the base plate is gradually rusting through.
- No. 1196/11704 Displayed at the Goldfields War Museum at Burt Street, Boulder. It was constructed in 1916 and bears the makers code of JK. The AWM records list the number as 11704 and the 1196 may indicate its original number prior to modification. This particular unit has been well cared for over the years and is presently displayed under cover.

If any reader in Western Australia can identify any minenwerfer weapons not recorded as above, please contact Bob Glyde at the Society's postal address or on his home telephone No.9367 5562.

### **HAVE YOUR SAY!**

Our Oral History Wing was reactivated recently when Wendy Mahoney resumed regular attendance at Karrakatta each Wednesday. Wendy has been busily finalising several transcripts of previous interviews but shortly will be anxious to extend our considerable collection of invaluable memoirs.

Those of our Members who are reluctant to participate in a formal Oral History Interview may be willing to provide written responses to a series of Gunner related questions about their Military Service. Any photographs or publications that may be relevant will be welcomed.

These can be photocopied for incorporation with the written response and returned to the donor if required. All submissions will be transcribed to provide a valuable contribution to the RAAHS Memoirs Collection.

Interested members are invited to contact Wendy if they wish to take part in this innovative scheme. Wendy may be contacted by a number of means:

At work: Phone 9220 4446 Fax 9220 4492

Email [w@birmanride.com.au](mailto:w@birmanride.com.au) At home Phone 9390 4939 (Evenings)

**Please support this scheme – your contribution will be appreciated.**

## CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS – MILITARY FUNERALS



The recent publicity surrounding the introduction of a horse-drawn hearse for funeral services by Chippers, the Family Funeral Directors brought to mind the customs associated with military funerals. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that Queen's Regulations and Orders authorized the use of a gun carriage and team, when available, to carry a coffin to a burial ground.

The caveat on this provision was that the burial ground could not be more than one mile (1.6 km) from the church. Modern protocol dictates that a carriage and procession combine for the departure from the church or chapel and again on arrival at either the cemetery or crematorium.

As the accompanying photograph from the collection of the Society shows certain other traditional customs some of which have regrettably lapsed except in exceptional circumstances. At the Funeral of Lt General Sir Talbot Hobbs in 1938 in addition to the gun carriage, there is the charger with boots reversed in the stirrups. Officers are wearing mourning bands and saluting the casket as it passes. An orderly hold the flag which had covered the coffin and the insignia bearer prepares to follow the coffin bearers. Another orderly holds the headgear of the bearer party. The artillery firing party in full dress, ball filials, rest on arms reversed. Artillery lanyards are worn on the right shoulder. Details and variations in service dress both Navy, Australian and Indian army are apparent. A piper is about to commence playing.

The detail available in the photograph is an important reminder of the continuing need to document and record our heritage so that this evidence is not lost to future generations.



## **FROM THE PRODUCTION LINE!**

The Coorow Heritage Committee recently arranged to collect their 25pr Gun Howitzer that had been totally rebuilt by the Workshop Team over a period of six months. When delivered, the gun was minus axle and wheels and the firing platform had rusted away. Following complete stripping, all components were sandblasted and coated with a zinc rich epoxy primer.

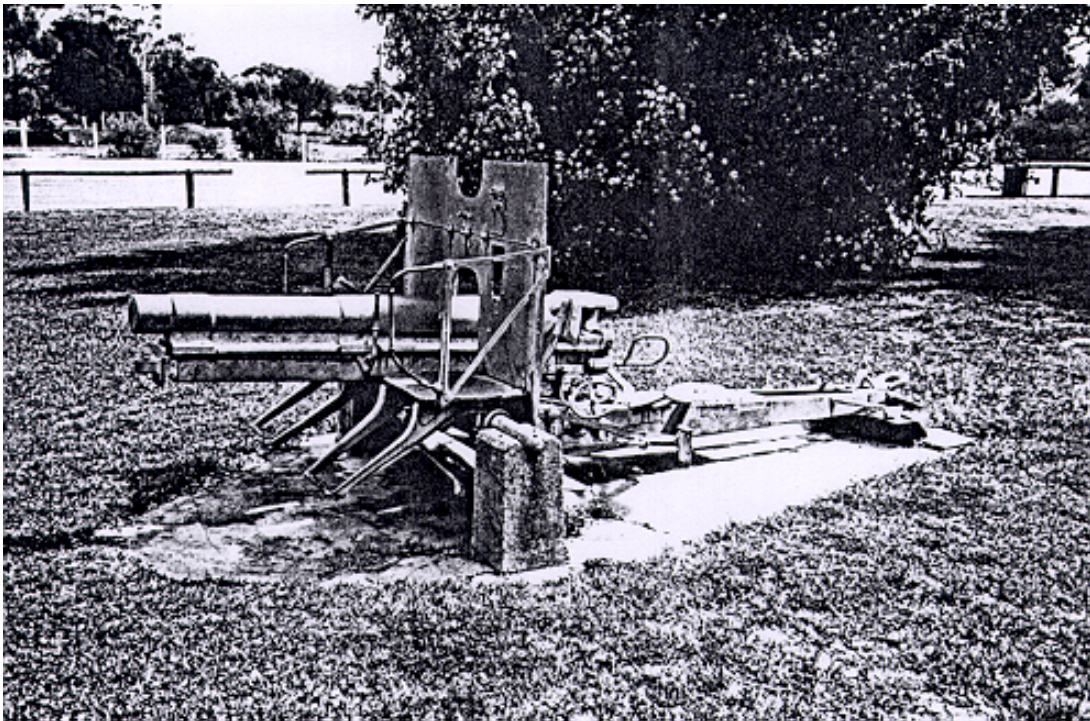
An axle assembly and wheels complete with tyres were acquired and the rebuild commenced. The dedicated efforts and skill of the Restoration Team produced a result short of miraculous and the finished product was handed to the owners with a great sense of pride and satisfaction.

An expression of appreciation for our efforts was conveyed personally by the Heritage Committee Coordinator and the Society may anticipate a generous donation from the Shire of Coorow who authorised our involvement.

Other tasks currently being undertaken by the Workshop Team include restoration of the two 25pr Memorial Guns from Stirling Square Guildford, and the total rebuild of a 77mm Krupp Field Gun from the War Memorial at York.

Members who may be interested in this challenging work are urged to contact Kevin Hamilton, the Workshop Coordinator.

Kevin can be reached on 9446 5148 or Email [hammo@inet.net.au](mailto:hammo@inet.net.au)

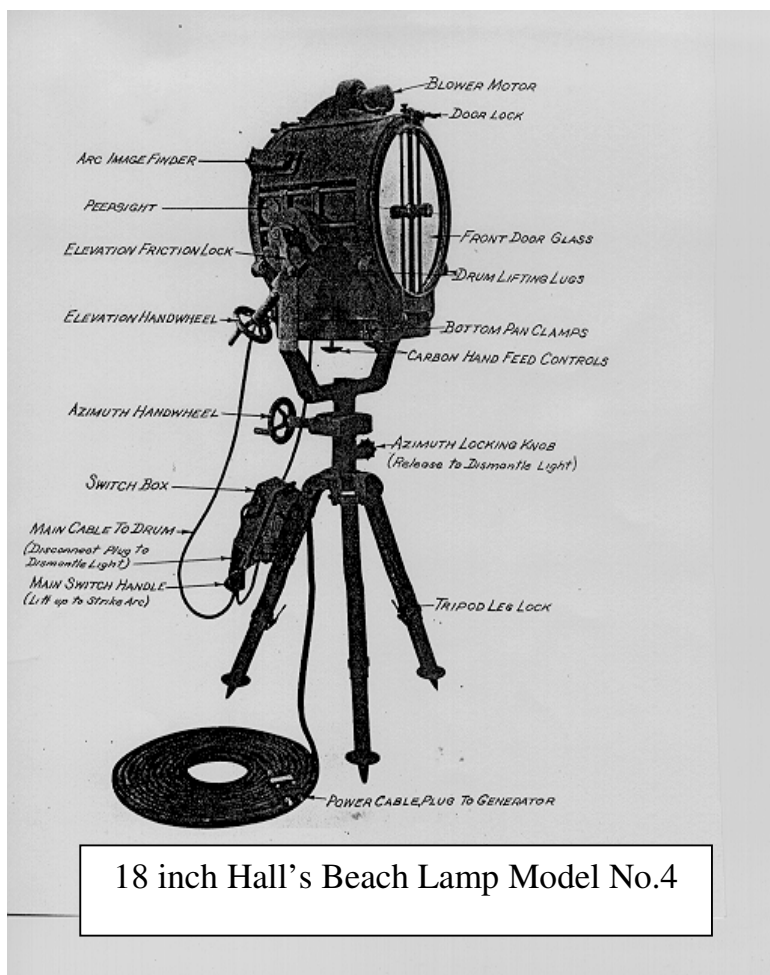


77 mm Krupp Field Gun allocated as a War Trophy to the Town of York showing its condition before removal to the RAAHS of WA Workshop for conservation.

## COAST DEFENCE SEARCHLIGHTS IN FREMANTLE 1911 -1945

It is necessary to point out that what follows is not the result of direct study and research of the Coast Defence Search Lights (CDSLs) in the Fremantle area but rather it is information gathered during extensive research carried out on the coastal batteries in the Fremantle, Cockburn Sound area by the writer. There will be members of the Society "Aiming Post" who have had the practical experience of operating the equipments, which will be mentioned. If anyone can fill in obvious gaps in the story or correct errors then please do not hesitate to do so. No attempt will be made to go into the technicalities of searchlight equipment.

The CDSLs used in the Fremantle area in the period of World War Two were of three types: the 46 cm (18 inch) Halls Beach Light, the 90 cm (36 inch) and 150 cm (60 inch) Lights. The 90 cm lights were the standard issue during the 1920-early 1940 period and were probably converted naval searchlights. The 150 cm lights were of US Army design and became available under the Lend/Lease arrangement. Generally each gun in a battery was allocated a light. Some two gun batteries had three lights due to special requirements.



The searchlights were normally housed in permanent concrete emplacements enclosed at the rear and fitted with shutters on the other three sides to protect them from the elements. Power was supplied to operate the light from individual concrete engine rooms constructed some distance from the light itself.

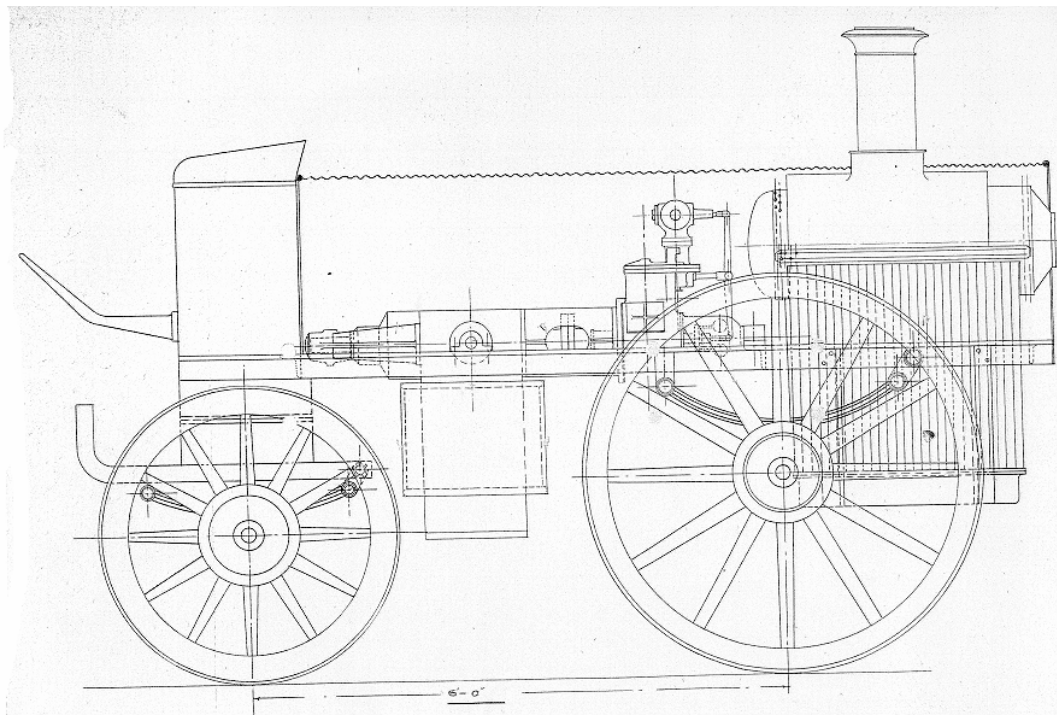
The lights were operated by the Fortress Engineers. The operation of the CDSLs was done by the Searchlight Officer, who was stationed in most cases, in the close proximity of the Gun Position Officer in the Close Defence Battery Observation Post (CDBOP). Usually the Searchlight Director Station (SDS) formed part of the CDBOP; the Leighton 6 in Battery being such a site where the SDS was completely separate.

Communication was by voice pipe or in the case of the Leighton Battery, instructions would have been passed by telephone. The individual lights were remotely controlled by the Searchlight Officer from the SDS, operating switches which elevated and traversed the CDSLs. After May 1943 searchlight operation and the personnel became the responsibility of the artillery.

The CDSLs were required to fulfill three principal functions:

- Observation Lights - to detect the approach of hostile vessels. These could either be fixed beams known as sentry beams or moving beams called search beams. They were a concentrated beam which gave a dispersion of three degrees.
- Fighting Lights - to illuminate individual targets for the particular battery to which they were allocated. These beams were also concentrated. Where they were associated with the Examination Battery, lights with a dual observation and fighting role were known as Examination Lights.
- Illuminated Area Lights - to illuminate areas of water on which hostile vessels could be expected to come under fire of AMTB guns and other close defence batteries. These lights were of fixed beam capable of a dispersion of 16, 30 or 45 degree so as to cover the width of the water- way.

The first Defence Electric Light (DEL) as they were then known was installed in 1911 on the North Mole in the vicinity of Rous Head. It consisted of a projector, engine and generator. It was operated by No.4 Electric Light Company, Corps of Australian Engineers. It was a militia unit formed to work with Fort Forrest and Fort Arthur Head, both batteries sited to cover the entrance to Fremantle Harbour. The unit of one officer and twenty nine other ranks was under the command of Captain Dowson.



Blueprint of a Siemens Portable Electric Light Plant for Beach Lights as proposed to the Government of Western Australia for purchase in October 1898.

RAAHS of WA File JH D3 #6

We know nothing of the DEL unit during World War 1 other than it was probably absorbed by 35 Fortress Company RAE when it was formed in 1914. This unit continued to be associated with the coast artillery batteries right through World War 2. As mentioned above the searchlight operation became the responsibility of the Royal Australian Artillery in May 1943.

During the intervening years between 1920 and 1939, battle exercises were conducted at Fort Arthur Head and Fort Forrest. During this period a second DEL must have been installed. Just where has not been recorded in the correspondence examined however some of our older members may be able to enlighten us. What we do know that following a DEL exercise undertaken by 35 Fortress Company over the period 12/13 May 1934, it was reported the positioning of the lights was unsatisfactory preventing the use of a fixed beam to illuminate the harbour entrance. Besides the DELs were not of the correct type.

The SDS or Electric Light Director Station (ELDS) as it was then known, was quite inadequate from which to control the DELs in the positions at that time. The report which followed recommended that each DEL had its own SDS. It concluded that with only two lights each covering the duties of observation and fighting lights it was unlikely that the resiting of the light could improve the situation. It was found that the communication facilities between Fort Forrest and the SDS was unsuitable and the engineers had to rely on the battery to supply telephone head and breast sets.

It was even suggested that to provide the two SDS they could consist of a tent and scaffolding. Such was the standard of the Fremantle Harbour DEL facilities in 1934.

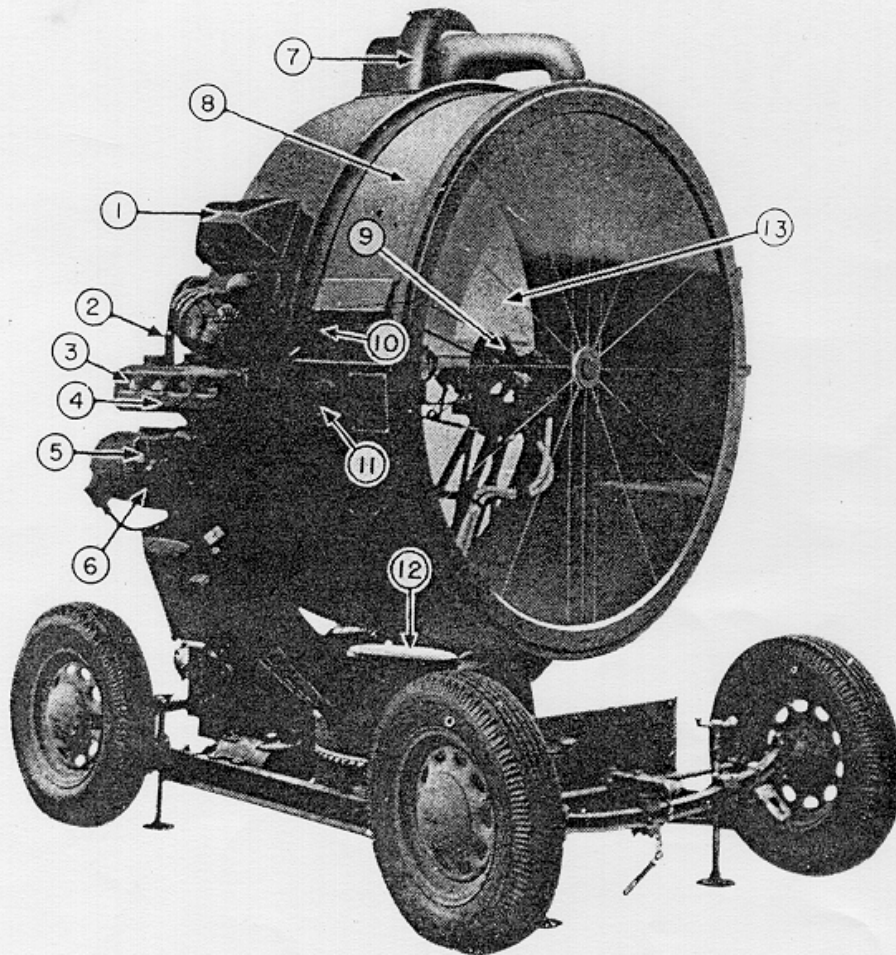
In 1936, Fort Forrest was dismantled, the guns and equipment eventually being installed at Fort Swanbourne. Uncertainty as to where to place the DELs was brilliantly solved by the building of two mobile DEL units. These consisted of fitting out two Leyland lorries each with a 90 cm HCD light Mk III, a 90 cm Fortress Projector, generator, cabling, etc. The purpose of the units was to select the ideal positions for the permanent emplacement down in the beach area. The two units eventually arrived in February 1937 after many delays, only for the local engineers to find that a vital piece of equipment for the lights had not been forwarded. It took a further six months before the items arrived and the engineers were able to conduct their first test of the equipments. The tests were recorded as successful although from comments 'the signaller on the target boat must have been very pleased when his feet touched dry land again.

As a point of interest the two lorries would have been amongst the first mechanised Army units in the State. Their ultimate fate is not known.

Eventually Fort Swanbourne was equipped with three 150 cm CDSLs. The 148th CASL Section was responsible for operating these lights. So at the beginning of World War 2, CDSLs on the mainland comprised the two 90 cm units at Swanbourne and the two at Fremantle on the North Mole. When the boom defence facility was commissioned five 46 cm Halls Beach lights were installed to provide illumination on the water along the inner section of the moles. In the meantime at Rottnest, provision was made during the 1937/39 construction stage for three 90 cm LCD CDSLs to be placed at Bickley Point, Thompson Bay and inshore from Philip Rock. During the war two additional lights were installed at Cape Vlaming and North Point. When the CDSLs became operational it was found that Philip Rock feature obstructed the Bickley Point light. The engineers then proceeded to lower the height of the rock by explosives.

As the war proceeded the emplacement of the 155 mm battery at Cape Peron and Challenger Battery at the north end of Garden Island together with the 4-in battery at Beacon Point saw 6 - 150 cm CDSLs in operation to service these batteries. The 155 mm gun batteries had 2 - 150 cm mobile lights as part of their standard. They had been acquired from the US Army in 1942. The Beacon Battery covered the boom gates at the entrance to Cockburn Sound.

Further 150 cm lights were acquired from the US enabling the replacement of four 90 cm CDSLs at Rottnest, the re-equipping of Fort Swanbourne and the replacement of the beachlights in the moles area with 3 - 90 cm lights. Some of the beachlights went to Collie Point at the southern tip of Garden Island to support the 12-pr battery there.



- |                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Lamp control mechanism box. | 7. Ventilating fan motor.          |
| 2. Elevation gear sector.      | 8. Front drum.                     |
| 3. Elevation zero reader.      | 9. Lamp unit.                      |
| 4. Azimuth zero reader.        | 10. Arc view peep sight.           |
| 5. Hand controller socket.     | 11. Ground-glass finder.           |
| 6. Elevation control motor.    | 12. Azimuth data receiver housing. |
|                                | 13. Mirror.                        |

Figure 172. Sperry searchlight M1941, front quarter view.

Thus at the time of the production of the Army War Effort Report in August 1944 there were nineteen operational CDSLs namely:

- |                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 3 - 150 cm Fort Swanbourne.   | 2 - 90 cm Leighton 6-in Battery.. |
| 3 - 90 cm Harbour Battery.    | 2 - 150 cm Peron Battery.         |
| 2 - 150 cm Challenger Battery | 2 - 150 cm Beacon Battery.        |
| 4 - 150 cm Rottnest Island    | 1 - 90 cm Rottnest Island.        |

Princess Royal Battery at Albany and Geraldton 4-in Battery were each equipped with 2 - 90 cm CDSLs.

There must be some interesting stories waiting to be told; please pass them on to the Editor so they can be shared with all readers of this newsletter.

## **THE FREMANTLE SILOS & THE PORT WAR SIGNAL STATION**

### **1943-45**

The aim of this article is to provide additional information about the successive Signal Stations in Fremantle and is based on Society records. The original signal station was at Arthur Head and was operated by the Fremantle Harbour Trust (FHT). It did not form part of the coast defences during WW1 and it is understood a naval signal station known as the Port War Signal Station (PWSS) was established at Buckland Hill during this period.

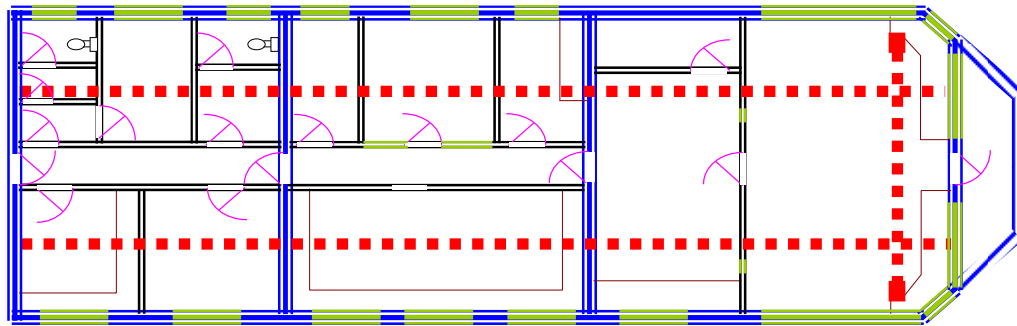
The PWSS was a naval signaling station manned by naval personnel and was established in time of war to control the movement of shipping in and around a port area. It was part of the Examination Service. It had communication with the Examination Officer, who embarked in the Examination Vessel with an armed party, to board vessels entering the port area. These vessels were not permitted to proceed beyond a designated area known as the Examination Anchorage until they had been cleared by the Examination Officer. Failure to heave to in the anchorage meant the vessel could possibly be hostile and the designated Examination Battery of the forts fired a warning round across the bow of the vessel. In the case of Fremantle in WW1 this was Fort Forrest or Fort Arthur Head. During WW2 it was Fort Arthur Head or Swanbourne and later Leighton 6-in Battery. If the vessel failed to stop after the "heave to" round was fired, it was engaged as a hostile ship.

The purpose of the Examination Service was to ensure no warlike vessels, disguised as merchantmen, entered the port or ships carrying explosives or toxic weapons, entered the port to damage port facilities. The vessel may well be a blockship intent on scuttling itself in the entrance channel to deny access to shipping. Upon the Examination Officer signaling the PWSS clearing the vessel, the coast defence forts were advised so the vessel could enter the port. The Examination Anchorage at Fremantle was an designated area off Leighton.

It appears that in 1928 a FHT signal station was established at the Cantonment Hill site to replace the Arthur Head facility. Whether it was intended to be used as a PWSS in the event of hostilities, being on Commonwealth land, is not known but it provided the Harbour Trust with a perfect view down the harbour to enable it to control movements within and outside the port entrance. It was a small building (a rather more accurate description than wooden tower) which possibly accommodated three or more personnel together with radio, signalling lamps, telephones, as well as storage for the visual signal symbols and flags which were displayed from the signalling mast as required. It provided a means by which the FHT could communicate with an incoming vessel, the tug masters and the Harbour Trust pilots bringing the vessel into the harbour. In earlier times before all ships were equipped with wireless, the signal station was able to advise them of changes in the weather which could affect safety, movements in the inner harbour, etc.

It would appear that the Navy moved in to the building when hostilities commenced in 1939 and it was used as the PWSS as well as still undertaking the FHT activities. In 1943 it was apparent to the authorities that the facility was inadequate for naval purposes. There were a number of reasons for this. Cockburn Sound was to be developed as a base for the British Fleet following the loss of Singapore. This would increase the already heavy naval traffic in and out of the port. More personnel were required to carry out the additional duties. With the members of the WRANS taking over many of the duties previously undertaken by males, the existing building had no provision for female personnel. Of considerable importance was the naval area of responsibility being extended from Swanbourne south to Rockingham. The Cantonment site restricted the view of the port area south of Fremantle. As well the grain silos, which had only recently been constructed, blocked out a substantial area of water in Gage Roads.

In June/July 1943, it was decided to construct a signal station on the top of these silos. File No.N43/44-7, Australian Archives PP102, Dept of Housing and Construction, WA Region, Job Files and Building Projects, refers. The scene from the silos provided a perfect panoramic view of the naval area of responsibility.



Layout of the Port War Signal Station as constructed on the top of the Hospital Silos

**Not to Scale**

The building was constructed to provide a large enclosed lookout room giving a 180 degree plus view which adequately covered the naval area of responsibility. There were wireless, telephone, teleprinter, coding rooms and an office for the senior officer controlling the various activities carried out in the facility. In addition male and female rest rooms were provided as well as a small galley (kitchen) and storeroom. On the deck outside the lookout room was a 30 foot (9.14 metre) signalling mast. Access to the facility was by lift and care had to be taken, when the grain was being fumigated, for the safety of the personnel working in the building. It was not a secret communication building as is sometimes portrayed by the media.

The masonry building presently on Cantonment Hill would have been constructed in 1955 for use by the FHT (later to become the Fremantle Port Authority (FPA) in 1964). A radar unit giving a range of 40 miles (64 kms) was mounted on top of the building. The FHT endeavoured to obtain permission to use the decommissioned naval radar facility at Arthur Head. Permission was refused because the building was in a very poor state of repair. If the new building at Cantonment Hill had any military use it was not noted in correspondence seen by the author of this article. The building of the additional silos in 1962 would have eliminated a further arc of view of the FHT signal station and presumably the inconvenience was accepted with the knowledge that with completion of the new FPA building in 1965 the problem would be solved. Anyone who has had the opportunity to visit the signal station on the top of the FPA building, will appreciate the wonderful panorama and facilities available. At no time was the FHT/FPA known to have used the PWSS facility on the hospital silos and the facility has lain idle since the Examination Service disbanded in 1945.

At the time of going to press, the last vestiges of the hospital silos and the Port War Signal Station have been demolished to make way for the further development of modern container handling facilities by the Fremantle Port Authority. Fortunately documentation exists in the form of plans, oral histories and photographs for future reference by researchers.

## **HARBOUR DEFENCES - FREMANTLE AND GERALDTON -1942-45**

When one thinks of naval depth charges (DC's), the mind conjures up submariners being tossed about in their boat hiding deep under the waves. So when one reads about Fremantle and Geraldton with an entrance channel depth of about 11 metres and 10 metres respectively, being equipped with depth charge throwers (DCT's) along their respective breakwaters, it does raise questions.

It all came about in 1942, because a group of Italian frogmen on their "chariots" attempted to penetrate Alexandria Harbour in Egypt to attack British shipping. This must have been after their first attack when they immobilised several battleships. Anyway this particular attack failed because depth charges were exploded in the harbour. As most people would be aware, underwater explosions in the vicinity of swimmers, does not do much for the good health of the internal organs.

It was found that using the MkVIII naval depth charge, which is filled with 165 lb of HE, can be lethal out to 300 metres from the centre of the explosion. There were a number of ports in the Middle East which were suitable for setting up this type of defence. The main requirement was a narrow entrance with a water depth of more than 8 metres. The British Admiralty asked the various areas of naval command around the world, to look at the possibility of fitting out those important ports with the right criteria, with this form of defence.

Australian naval authorities chose Fremantle, Geraldton, Adelaide and Townsville, as the ports to be so fitted. Adelaide was soon removed from the list, Townsville was never fitted up because the local naval authorities felt it was a waste of resources, so this left Fremantle and Geraldton. At both ports it involved setting up two DCT's on the breakwaters, in the case of Fremantle, on the North Mole and at Geraldton, on the western breakwater. Each thrower had a stock of 10 DC's.



Defence Improvisation in Fremantle. American made World War 1 vintage 75mm M1895 on the South Mole. Construction of the twin 6 pounder mounting underway in the background under the scaffolding.  
RAAHS of WA Photo 2036

Fremantle undertook tests with their equipment and found that with the increased firing charge recommended, presumably by the Admiralty, they were able to achieve a range of 110 metres approximately. The tests were satisfactorily conducted on 6 October 1943. It was noted that the DC from one thrower passed perilously close to one of the night navigation beacons. If this beacon should be accidentally struck, it was possible the DC could explode prematurely killing or injuring personnel nearby. The beacon had to be moved or the DCT repositioned; the correspondence does not tell what final action was taken but notes indicate that the Harbour Trust was to be told to reposition the beacon.

Six months after the decision on the installation at Geraldton no progress had been made. The local NOIC was resisting the work being done, arguing that a submarine carrying the chariots would have to surface well off the coast to drop off the swimmers and their vehicle beyond the battery endurance of the chariots to reach their objective. He was eventually told to get on with the job, because the British Far Eastern Fleet was looking at Geraldton as a secondary port in case of overcrowding in Fremantle. The facility was commissioned and test fired on 15 October 1943.

Authority to remove the Geraldton facility was ordered in February 1945 following a request for money to repair an eroded area around the DC throwers. Winter storms had caused damage to the breakwater and it was reported that the firing of the DCTs could cause the whole structure to collapse. It was considered at the time that the strategic situation was such that the expenditure proposed was not justified. These two facilities were expensive to maintain in the terms of manpower, each one having six AB seamen allocated to them. Everywhere at the time the authorities were endeavoring to overcome a chronic shortage of personnel and this also would have been considered in the decision to close down the Geraldton unit. The 4-in gun battery had been dismantled in December 1944.

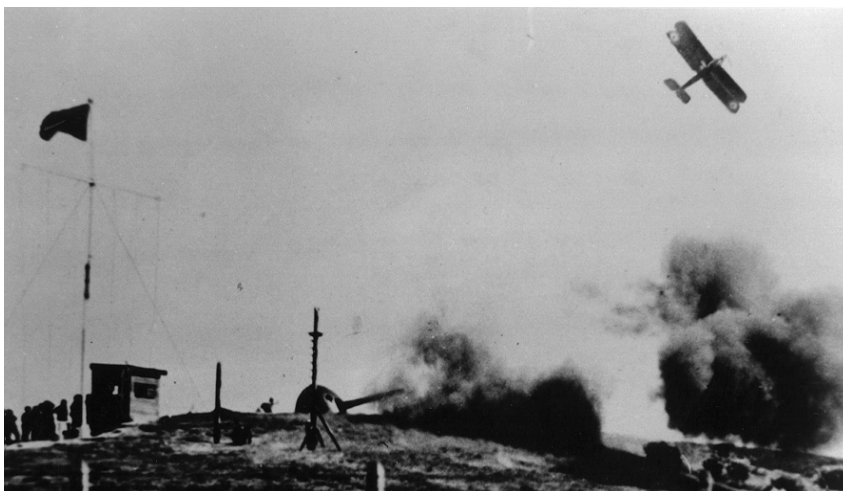
In hindsight the provision of these facilities was not unrealistic when, after the war, hundreds of human torpedo vehicles were recovered from around the main naval bases in Japan. The submarines of that nation were well equipped to have transported such vehicles to both Fremantle and Geraldton.

#### Information Source

National Archives of Australia, Series MP1049/5, Item 1872/2/215.

Series MP 1049/5, Item 1855/2/486.

The above material loaned by Society member E. Smith.



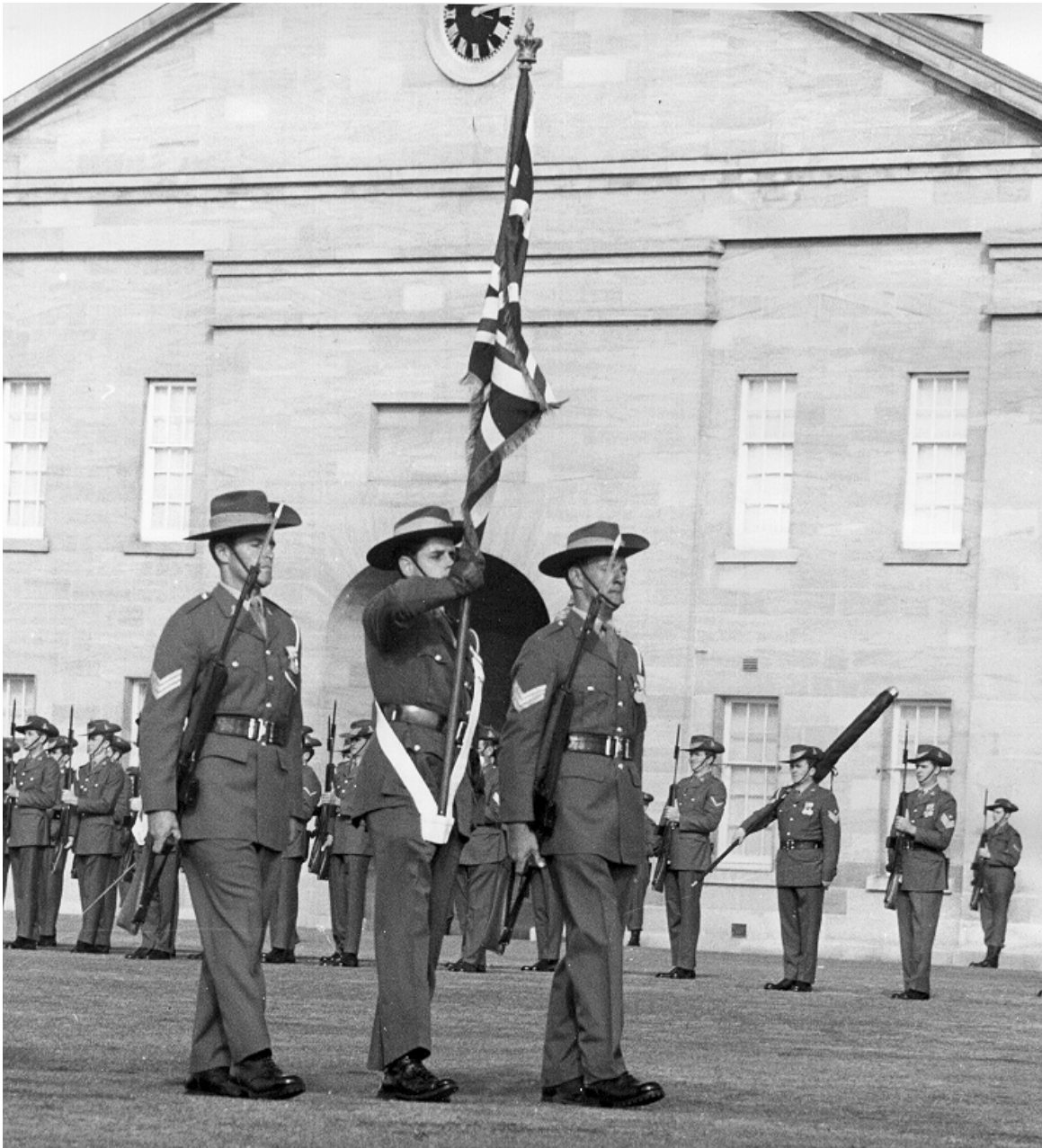
RAAF DH9 spotter aircraft spotting fall of shot from Fort Forrest 6 inch Mk 7 guns circa 1930.

Fort Forrest was on the North Mole in the vicinity of the current BP tank farm.

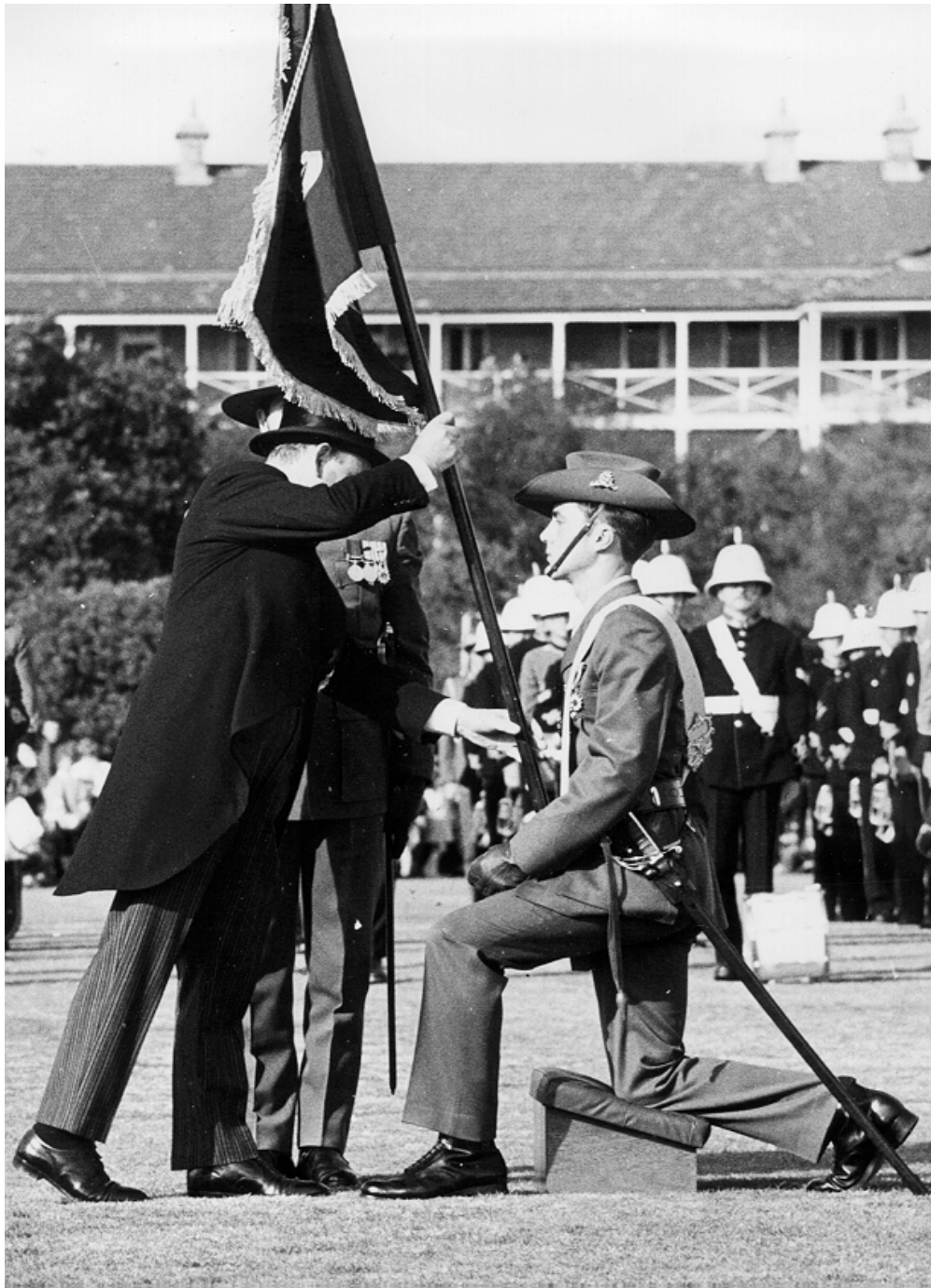
RAAHS of WA Photo 3124C

## **THE KING'S BANNER and THE BANNER OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

In November 1904, the Governor General, Lord Northcote, presented on behalf of His Majesty King Edward VII, twenty banners to Australian units which had seen active service in the Boer war (1899 – 1902) "... in recognition of their valuable service to the Empire." One of these banners was presented to the Royal Australian Artillery in recognition of the service rendered by A Battery, New South Wales Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery.



These banners, originally referred to as "King's Colours" were presented by the Imperial Government to each overseas contingent of the Empire. In 1908 a military order clarified the status of the banners by designating them "... Honourable Insignia presented by the King as a special mark of favour in recognition of valuable services rendered in South Africa in 1899 to 1902 ... ". In 1953, the banner became officially known as the "Royal Australian Artillery King's Banner."



As a campaign honour, the King's Banner could not be replaced in the same manner as colours and guidons. The original banner had over time become very fragile and as part of the centennial celebrations of A Field Battery, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was approached with a request to replace the banner. The request was graciously acceded to and a Queen's Banner was presented to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery in August 1971.

The King's Banner was paraded for the last time at Victoria Barracks on 1 August 1971. The Escort for the King's banner was provided by 12th Field Regiment and the ensign and escorts by members of A Field Battery who traveled from South Vietnam for the parade and then returned to active duty. The Banner of Queen Elizabeth II was presented to 8<sup>th</sup> Medium Regiment acting on behalf of the Royal Australian Artillery by the Governor General, His Excellency Sir Paul Hasluck. Thus this unique occasion saw both the King's and Queen's Banners on parade. The King's Banner was laid up in the Australian War Memorial after the Anzac Day parade in 1972.

The Banner of Queen Elizabeth II is accorded the honour and dignity of Colours when it is displayed in public and on ceremonial parades. On the occasion of the Centenary of Federation, it might be appropriate to give consideration for the Banner of Queen Elizabeth II to be paraded in each state on an suitable ceremonial occasion.



#### **Editorial Note**

The claim in “Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery Customs and Traditions” edited by Christopher Jobson that the King’s Banner was a distinction unique to the Royal Australian Artillery is in error as both the Canadian Field Artillery and the Royal Canadian Horse Artillery received King’s Banners. The Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery does however retain the unique distinction of receiving a replacement banner in the form of the Banner of Queen Elizabeth II.



#### **ERIC HEPPLER LEIGHTON**

Eric Leighton, a Foundation Member, passed away on Friday, 25 August 2000 after a long illness. He will be remembered by many who served with him in 3 Field Regiment RAA during the post war Citizen Military Forces.

In the early days of the Society Eric actively supported our endeavours but in recent years his failing health prevented his participation.

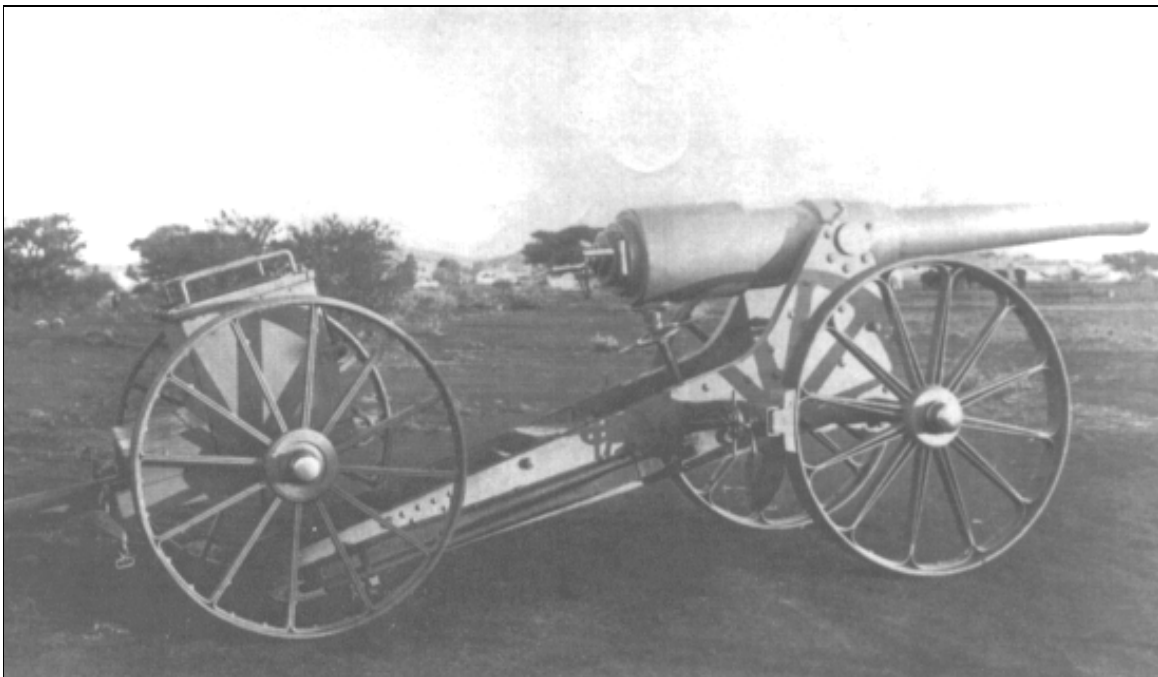
A memorial Service was held at the Anglican Church of Saint Cuthbert in Darlington on Wednesday, 30 August 2000. A private cremation was arranged for a later date.

## **LONG CECIL: THE STORY OF THE HOME MADE GUN OF KIMBERLEY IN THE BOER WAR**

Very shortly after the outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899, the town of Kimberley was surrounded by Boer Forces. The defences of the town were quite insignificant, consisting of a company of the Lancashire Fusiliers under Lt Col Kekwich, a battalion of local volunteers – the Kimberley Regiment, a company of Royal Engineers and a few Royal Artillery personnel, who with the remnants of a Volunteer Artillery Company manned eight small 7 pounder muzzle loading guns. Kimberley is surrounded by a level plain for about 14 kilometres from the outskirts of town and so even with this small force, it was comparatively easy to defend. Outlying hills were well out of the range of rifle fire which meant that men approaching the town could easily be engaged by the small guns or rifles of the garrison. The standoff situation developed into the siege of Kimberley.

The Boers were unable to get near enough to break the town's defences, and the defenders were unable to make any significant attacks on the encircling Boers. This situation was soon to alter, for the Boers brought up two of their French built Creusot 155mm guns which had a range of 6,000 yards. This enabled them to sit well out of range of the obsolete British guns and to shell the town with impunity. Fortunately the workshops of De Beers Mines had a brilliant engineer on staff, an American called George Labram. Backing him were a highly qualified drawing office and workshop. The workshop was already making ammunition for the 7 pounder guns.

Since there was no hope of getting the required range from the guns available, it was decided to build a gun that could. In the workshop was a 10 foot length of 12 inch diameter shafting which Labram considered could be drilled out, rifled and reinforced to make a workable gun. Without a such a gun with which to retaliate, the Boers could continue to shell the town at their leisure. Just after Christmas 1899, work began on the gun, tapering the shaft for about half of the 10 foot length and boring it out to a 3 inch bore. The breech end of the gun was turned down to provide a stop for the gun trunnions, which were then forged, machined and shrunk on to the barrel. For further reinforcement of the breech end of the barrel, rings were forged and turned to fit the barrel then shrunk into place behind the trunnions. A further set of forged rings was then shrunk over the outside of the first set of rings. The barrel was then turned, rifled and a screw type breech block made up and fitted.



Two large traction engine wheels were used for the gun carriage which was made up from steel plate. On 18 January 1900, only 24 days after work commenced, the gun was ready for its test firing towards the enemy. The gun was named “Long Cecil” in honour of Cecil Rhodes. The first shell landed in a Boer laager causing instant panic. After firing some 30 rounds, Long Cecil’s vent blew out. The old radial vent was blocked up and a new vent tube drilled into the breech block. From then on, the gun fired over 2500 rounds into Boer ranks.

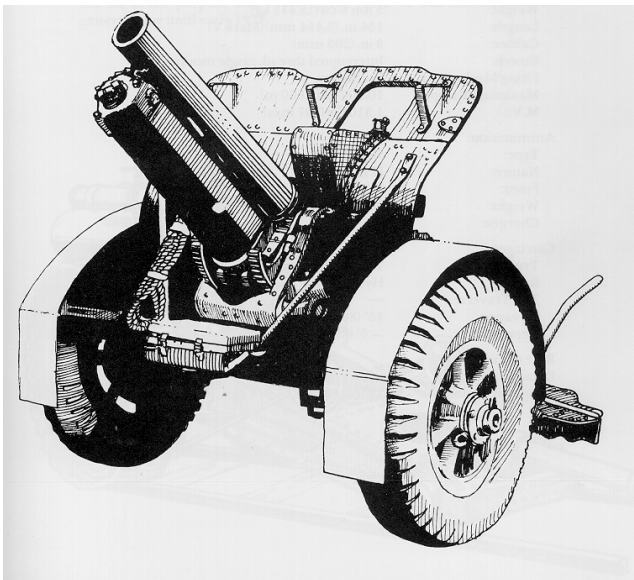
The shells manufactured for “Long Cecil” were 28 pounds (~ 12.7 kg) weight with a diameter of 4 inches (~ 100 mm) and just over 12 inches (~300 mm) long. A bagged charge of 6 pounds (~2.7 kg) of powder enabled the gun to slightly outperform the Creusot guns. In the first few days, one of these guns was put out of action by a direct hit; the other one was damaged in a night sortie by the defenders, which damaged the end of the barrel. The Boers were later to saw off the damaged section and bring the gun back into action later in the war. Ever afterwards the Boers called this gun the “Jew” because they considered it to be circumcised.

Unfortunately George Labram did not survive the siege, for one of the last shots fired by the Creusot guns hit the hotel where he was living , killing him instantly. His memorial is really Long Cecil which now sits at the Kimberley Siege Memorial, from which position were fired the last shots of the defence of Kimberley before the Boers withdrew from their positions

Article by Malcolm Higham

## **NEW ACQUISITIONS – JO CLOUGH ORDNANCE COLLECTION**

It has been announced that the JO Clough ordnance collection will receive a 4.5 inch howitzer of pneumatic wheels as a transfer from the National Artillery Museum at the North Fort. Delivery is expected within the next six weeks. This transfer marks a continuation of the program of cooperation between custodians of the distributed national artillery collection. The ongoing program ensures wider gunner, community and scholarly access to exhibits, reference materials and conservation advice.



The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of WA (Inc) appreciates the efforts of the Army History Unit, the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company , North Fort and the many other artillery collections across Australia for this ongoing spirit of cooperative engagement.

The 4.5 inch howitzer saw extended service from early in WW I to the end of WW II in France, the Middle East and New Guinea.

Another recent addition to the Collection is a 15 pounder B.L. gun which is being transferred from display at Defence Centre Perth.

When conservation is completed, both guns will be displayed under cover at Hobbs Artillery Park, adding significantly to the comprehensive nature of the Collection.

## **GERMAN WAR TROPHY GUNS 1914-18 - THE DESERT GUNS**

Although the Turkish Army had a sizeable artillery arsenal consisting mainly of German plus a few French guns, during the First World War it was apparently necessary to supplement the artillery component with more German guns manned by German and Austrian personnel.

As a result of this, not only were weapons with Arabic marking captured, but also German owned and operated guns. The 10th Australian Light Horse Regiment operated at both Gallipoli and in Palestine and with the other Light Horse Regiments captured complete batteries of guns towards the end of the campaign. There appears to have been 14 guns allocated to the Regiment and appropriate towns in the 1920-21 distribution of weapons, to serve as memorial guns.

Thirteen of these can be traced in the records and a further gun which is not shown or cannot be recognised is at Corrigin. Of the fourteen guns only five appear to be in existence today comprising one 75 mm Mountain Gun, one 105 mm Howitzer and three 75 mm M 03 field guns which were part of a special Turkish Army purchased before 1914. Details of the weapons in existence are:

**No. 93** This is a 75 mm Mountain gun manufactured by Fried. Krupp of Essen in 1917. It is displayed at the Corrigin War Memorial. It is a most unusual weapon and is probably a Model L4. Originally a batch of these guns was built for Chile but they were taken over by the German Army at the outbreak of World War 1 and it is reported that further examples were built later. The Corrigin gun could be one of the later batches.

It fired a 5.3 kg projectile to a range of 5,400 metres. It could be horse drawn or broken down into six sections for pack movement by horse or mule. A plaque with the gun states that it was captured by the 10th ALH Regiment at Duma on 1 October 1918 from Turkish forces.

The gun is not listed in any documentation received from the AWM, but Gun No.94 was sent to the Cottesloe Town Council. It was said to have been captured at Amman on the same day as No.93 by the 10 ALH Regiment. It is possible that at some stage the numbers may have become confused.

The weapon is in quite good condition and is very complete, including the wheels. It is displayed under cover.

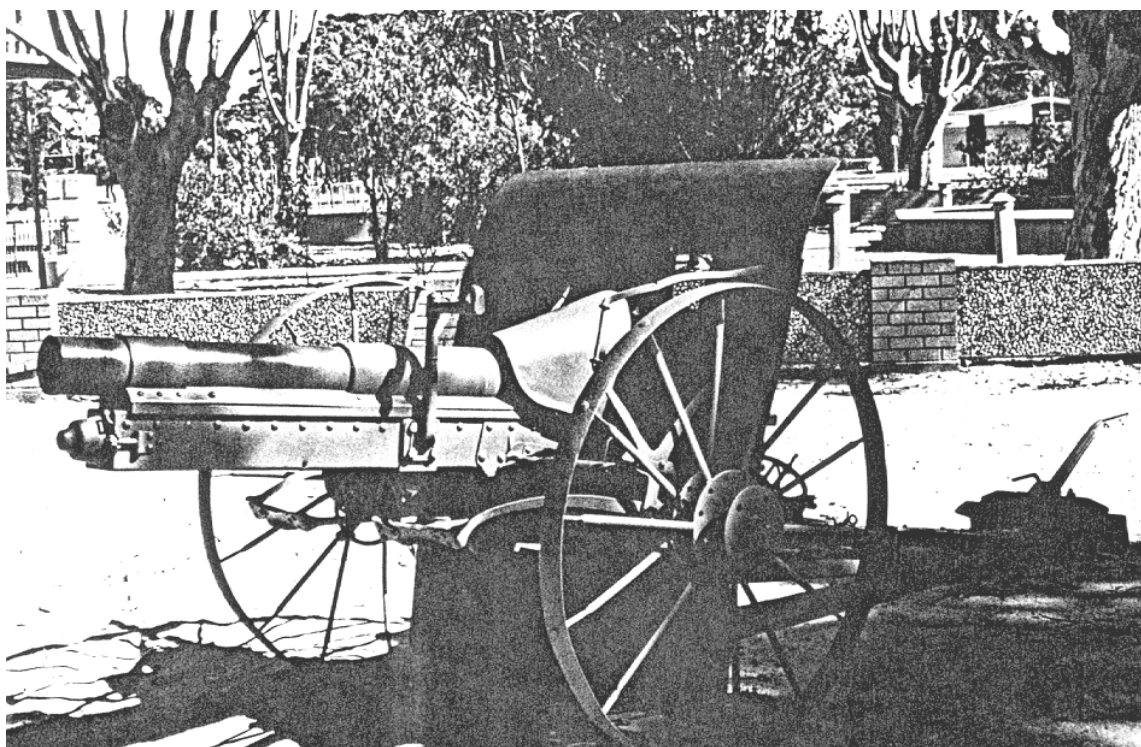
**No. 3120 K26** This weapon is an example of the 10.5 cm light field howitzer le FH M16. This particular gun was manufactured by Fried. Krupp of Essen although they were also manufactured by Rheinmetall. The elevation / depression range was Plus 43 ° to Minus 4° . It fired a projectile with a weight of 15.7 kgs to a maximum range of 10.2 kms. At the end of the World War I, 13,004 of these guns were still in use as the standard equipment for German divisional artillery units.

There is a Gun No.459 of the same type transferred to the Regiment in Perth and there may be some confusion in the numbers however 3120 K26 are those recorded on the gun in the possession of the Society. K 26 as it is recorded in AWM records, was stated to have received battle damage to the trail, shield and barrel although the general condition was good. Half the shield was missing and a photograph of the weapon in Kings Park shows the remainder of the shield had been removed at some stage.

This particular gun was captured by "C" Troop, "C" Squadron, 10 ALH Regiment at Huj in Palestine 09.11.1917. The troop was commanded by Lt F.J. MacGregor, MC. The incident relating to its capture is written up in the publication "Westralian Cavalry in the War", Chapter XXVII, Pages 166 - 172.

Older members of the Society will remember that this majestic weapon was displayed for many years at the 10<sup>th</sup> ALH Regiment Memorial in Kings Park. Its condition was allowed to gradually deteriorate and it was eventually removed to Karrakatta where it deteriorated further, to a stage where the trail has virtually collapsed. Following an approach by the Society it was agreed to place the gun in the care of the Society in the hope that it could be refurbished. In an unofficial discussion by the writer with the armament officer at the AWM, he asked that although the trail is not repairable, it should be kept in the hope that at some future date, if the Society were able to interest a sponsor to build a replica trail, at least the original could be used as a pattern. This gun is of considerable historical value to Western Australia.

The three remaining guns covered in this article are Field Gun 75 mm M03 Model or an updated version of the model. They were a special purchase by the Turkish Army, who between 1903 and 1907 received 558 units. The weapon fired a projectile of 6.36 kgs to a range of 5.9 kms and the improved model produced in 1910 had a range of 8.0 kms. Although they were similar in appearance to the 77 mm M 96 model described in a previous article, the Turkish guns had a cover that fitted between the top of the barrel and the slot in the shield. This can be clearly seen in the accompanying photograph. It would have provided some protection from rifle fire and small shell splinters for the crew at the rear of the gun.



75 mm M03 Krupp gun as supplied to the Turkish Army between 1903 and 1907 as currently displayed in Moora at the War Memorial and Pioneer Park

Each of the three guns covered below has an inscription in Arabic which took some time to arrive at an interpretation. The Turkish community in Perth was unable to assist because Arabic script fell into disuse after 1923 when the Latin alphabet was adopted under the reform programs of Ataturk. We then wrote to the Turkish Embassy in Canberra who then were good enough to forward our enquiry to the Saudi Embassy who advised that the inscription gave the name of the gun maker ie Fr. Krupp of Essen, Gun No. and the date of manufacture.

**No. 393** This gun is displayed at the War Memorial and Pioneer Park, Dargai St, Moora. The weapon was manufactured by Fr. Krupp of Essen in 1905. It is known that it was captured by the Australian Light Horse, however any records that may have been held in the Shire office concerning the unit would have been lost in a fire in the 1920's. Correspondence is held in the AWM between it and the Shire concerning the distribution and this may throw some more light on the gun's history. The local RSL Secretary advised that work had been carried out on the unit which involved the cutting out of areas of rust and the original wheels have been replaced by agricultural implement steel wheels. The gun gives the impression of being well maintained and cared for.

**No.615** The War Memorial Park at Katanning is the site at which this weapon is displayed. It too was manufactured by Fr. Krupp of Essen. Unfortunately the date could not be ascertained due to the heavy coats of paint applied over the years. Nor could the gun number be confirmed but it is recorded in AWM records that 615 was the number of the unit sent to Katanning.

Unfortunately the condition of the memorial park and the gun can only be described as derelict. The trail is badly rusted and the wood in the wheels rotten. The gun itself is fairly complete with its horizontal breech block, traversing and elevating gear complete with hand wheels. With a sandblasting and some attention paid to preservation, this gun could be brought up to good display condition. Perhaps if the unit is a burden to the Shire, they may be interested in handing it over to the Society for conservation before it is only fit for the scrap heap.

The Shire does not retain historical records concerning the gun, however it is noted that copies of correspondence at the time of issue of the unit, are held in the AWM archives.

**No-----** This weapon is said to be at Whiteman Park. We have no details other than it is of Krupp manufacture and has an Arabic inscription on the breech. Should any reader go to the Park it would be appreciated if the Gun No. and date could be ascertained. The details should be stamped on the face of the breech and should read something like Fried Krupp AG Essen, 1906, Nr 5718. There may also be historical data on a nearby display stand. It would be appreciated if a comment could be made as to the general condition of the weapon. A phone call to Bob Glyde, 9367 5562 or a note addressed to the Society's address at Leederville would greatly assist and be greatly appreciated.

Information Sources for the German War Trophy Series was as follows:

"War Trophies from the First World War 1914 - 18". Maj. R S Billett. Published by Kangaroo Press, 1999.

"German Trench Mortars and Infantry Mortars, 1914 - 45". Wolfgang Fleischer. Published by Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 1996.

"A Pocket History of Artillery, Light Field Guns". Franz Kosar. English Edition published by Ian Allan Ltd, Surrey, UK, 1974.

Australian War Memorial Files: File 93 Items 27/1/156, 27/1/162, 27/1/107, 27/1/146, File 25 Item 981/2.

With the exception the Whiteman Park gun and No.165 at Broome, all have been physically inspected by the author. Dudley Mackie inspected No.165 and recorded the information.

## **WEAPONS PUT FIRE INTO OUR VOCABULARY**

The importance of firearms in the history of civilization is reflected in a number of metaphors that have to do with gunpowder, cannon and small arms. Since language is but the chronicle of daily life, English has for many centuries recorded the sayings to do with weapons of war. It is interesting that many phrases have remained firmly fixed in our daily vocabulary.

**To hang fire:** As a metaphor this means to go slow in action, to be tardy in accepting something, to fail to produce results when expected, also to wait, as in "just hang fire for a minute while I go in". The sense of slowness, or of waiting for something to happen, derives from the early days when gunpowder could not always be relied upon to ignite at the proper moment. Whatever the reason, the charge did not ignite: there was no flame and no explosion - everything seemed to be "hanging in the air" was a hang fire.

**A flash in the pan :** This refers to a failure after a showy beginning, a brief display that produces no useful result. The "pan" of a firearm was the hollow area immediately beneath the fall of the flint. This pan contained a small amount of powder that, when set on fire by the flint-spark, caused the powder in the barrel to explode. If the powder in the pan is set alight by the striking flint but the powder charge in the barrel fails to explode, the gun itself is said to hang fire and all that has happened has been, literally, a flash in the pan.

**Lock, stock and barrel:** this refers to something in its totality; all of it, utterly, as in "I've sold up the business lock, stock and barrel". A firearm consisted of three principal parts; the lock, which comprised the trigger and the whole firing mechanism; the stock, which was the wooden portion of the weapon on to which the metal pieces were fixed; and the barrel, the tube down which the projectile was fired. The lock, stock and barrel made up the complete unit.

**Get your finger out:** This is a time-honoured colloquialism much used in Australia and British slang (usually more in the form of "Pull your finger out"). It means to hurry up, get on with it, look alive. The expression looks as though it is one of those comments derived from our fascination with anatomical vulgarities; but in fact it has a perfectly innocent background dating from the days of muzzle-loading cannon. When the powder and shot were being wadded down the barrel, one of the gunners would hold his thumb over the vent hole (the hole through which the powder charge was ignited) so that oxygen from the outside air could not enter the hot chamber and ignite the gases that remained from the previous firing. When everything was ready the gun-captain would order the gunner to "get his finger out" and the slow-match would immediately be applied to the venthole.

**Blowing great guns:** When a seaman says it is "blowing great guns" he means that the weather is very rough and boisterous and that the wind is making as much noise as a ship's cannon. In the old days of sailing ships, cannon were always referred to as "the great guns", never as "cannon" or just "guns". When something is performing well it is said to be "going great guns" because of the fancied similarity between the vigour of the enterprise and the noise and tumult of firing the great guns at sea.

**To spike one's guns:** To spike a gun is to drive a big nail heavily into the touch-hole thus rendering the gun able to fire. A gun detachment would spike its gun if it were evident that the enemy was going to capture it. To spike someone's guns is thus to render his plans useless and abortive; to frustrate the scheme that he has been preparing.

From "My Word" by Peter Jeans, West Australian



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## NOTICE BOARD

### **BUSY BEES**

The next busy bees at Buckland Hill are scheduled for:

**30 September      28 October      25 November**

### **LEIGHTON BATTERY OPEN DAYS**

The Leighton Battery Heritage Site is open on a regular basis on the first Sunday of every month from 10 AM to 3:30 PM with tours of the tunnel every half hour.

**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.**

The Aiming Post is published by the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of WA (Inc) as a service to its members. The publication 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:

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