



# THE AIMING POST

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

Issue 4/2000 & 1 /2001

November 2000/ February 2001

### NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia (Inc) will take place at

**Hobbs Artillery Park  
Irwin Barracks, Karrakatta  
Wednesday 14 March 2001  
19:00 for 19:30 hrs**

Please see the accompanying forms for Membership Renewal, and Committee Nominations. Also accompanying will be explanatory notes regarding proposed changes to the Constitution and the details of Notices of Motion to put these changes into effect.

Your Society depends on membership subscriptions to meet the ongoing needs of our various heritage and conservation programs including your newsletter. You are invited to assist this process by prompt payment of the annual dues either at the Annual General Meeting or by cheque through return post.

## **President's Message – Colonel Ray Bird**

Greetings to you all in this the first edition of 'Aiming Post' for 2001 – the year our Nation celebrates the Centenary of Federation. One of the numerous major highlights of this year will be the Anzac Day Service in Albany and I alert members who maybe contemplating attending, at what promises to be a truly memorable event, to make their accommodation arrangements early. It is anticipated that several thousands will descend on the city during the week long program of events.

Acknowledgement of the importance of Military Heritage has become a significant part of our local community culture as demonstrated by the sustained effort to save Artillery Barracks in Fremantle. As a Society we thank all of those who signed petitions and attended rallies to protest against the proposed attempt to dispose of the property. Certainly the initial battle has been won – congratulations.

Accompanying this edition are documents outlining details of the Management Committee recommendations in respect to the Society Constitution. Whilst the majority of the proposed changes are essentially cosmetic, the thrust of the proposals are to broaden and strengthen the management team structure with the aim of providing an even more efficient and productive organisation. I trust that members will support the changes and, most importantly, attend the Annual General Meeting on 14 March 2001.

In addition to voting on the proposed changes, members will be able to witness the presentation of 10-year membership badges to 21 of our folk. On the subject of election of the Management Committee, as Colonel Commandant RAA Western Region, in accordance with our Constitution, I intend to continue to assume duties of President of the Society for the period 2001 – 2002.

In concluding I wish to thank the many enthusiastic, energetic and committed members of the Society whom give of their time and talent to ensure that Artillery Heritage is maintained. Your efforts are greatly appreciated – many thanks.

**UBIQUE**

## **Father White – Albany's Founder of the Dawn Service to Commemorate Anzac Day**

Arthur Ernest White was born in London and came to Western Australia to serve with the Anglican Bush Brotherhood at Williams. When the First World War broke out, he joined the AIF serving with the 44<sup>th</sup> battalion from 1916 – 1918. After the war he served for 10 years as a Parish priest in Melbourne and in the Riverina Districts.

In 1929, he returned to Western Australia as the rector of Albany. When he was returning from France on 24 February 1919, during a brief stopover in Albany, he conducted a Requiem Eucharist for the fallen at St Johns Church. With some of his friends, he made a climb to the summit of Mount Clarence where another brief service of remembrance was held. He is said to have made the comment, “Albany was the last sight of Australia that many of our troops saw; perhaps we should remember them in this way every Anzac Day.”

So it was when he returned to Albany, that on 25 April 1930 surrounded by a group of returned soldiers, he conducted the first Anzac Dawn Service in Australia. In the early morning calm, a wreath was dropped into the waters of King Georges Sound, while a bugler played the Last Post. He closed the service with the words, “As the sun rises and goeth down, we will remember them.” From this service grew a national tradition.

Father White left Albany in 1938 and moved to Forbes in NSW to serve as rector until his retirement in 1954, when he was appointed Chaplain to St Mary's Girls School in Herberton, Queensland. He was only there a short time when he collapsed and died. The only marker on his grave was a cross with the words “A Priest”. In more recent times another marker has been placed on his grave to commemorate his identity as the clergyman who started the tradition of the Dawn Service on Anzac Day.

An exhibition in the Princess Royal Fortress commemorates Father White and is commended for all visitors to Albany, particularly this Anzac Day.

## **German War Trophies WW I - Part 3 - The Machine Guns**

By: RK Glyde

The Army War Effort Report dated February 1942 listed a deficiency of 2175 medium machine guns to meet immediate requirements plus a reserve. The production was proceeding at 90 per month so there was a lot of catching up to be done to equip the AIF, AMF and VDC units.

Around Australia at that time were some 4000 German machine guns, which had been sent out around the country in the early 1920's. They were trophy guns captured from German and Turkish forces and distributed to various CMF units, RSL organisations and local government groups, as memorial weapons.

Many of these guns were based on the design developed by Maxim in the late 19th Century, as was the standard British Vickers medium machine gun. Experiments had been undertaken in South Australia in 1941 to see whether these weapons could be refurbished and equipped to fire the British .303 in ammunition instead of the .311 in rimless German ammunition.

There were many modifications, which had to be made including the fitting of the guns with a .303 in barrel. Eventually the guns chosen for the conversion were the Model 08 Maxim medium gun and the Model 08/15 Maxim light machine gun. So with the urgency of increasing the availability of machine guns following the commencement of the Pacific War, trophy guns of the above mentioned models were recovered from RSL halls, Road Board halls, and local monuments about the country side. They were consigned to a facility in Broken Hills in NSW for work to be carried out to bring them into service. Some 2000 guns were recovered and from these it is said that some 720 Model 08/15 and 600 Model 05 working guns were built up. There was even a handbook produced "Handbook on the Conversion of German Machine Guns to LMG's (G), .303 in and MMG's (G), .303 in (Australia) 1942". It was issued under the authority of HQ Victoria. L of C, Reg.32, 1/4228. A copy of this pamphlet is held in the Society Library.

Because these guns were virtually hand built there would have been much difficulty had the guns been issued for active service because spare parts would have been almost non-existent. Many retained their original mounting whilst others were fitted with Local Pattern (LP) mounting. As a result the VDC were issued with the weapons for training and operational purposes; the Army obviously hoped that the VDC would never be required to use them in battle conditions.

At least the issuing of these recycled weapons released the Vickers guns to active service units. At the conclusion of the war it would appear there was no attempt to return the guns to the original organisations from whence they had been sent. It can only be assumed they all finished up as scrap iron. It is reported that approximately 50 of these guns were recovered from a dried up salt lake near Merredin many years after the war.

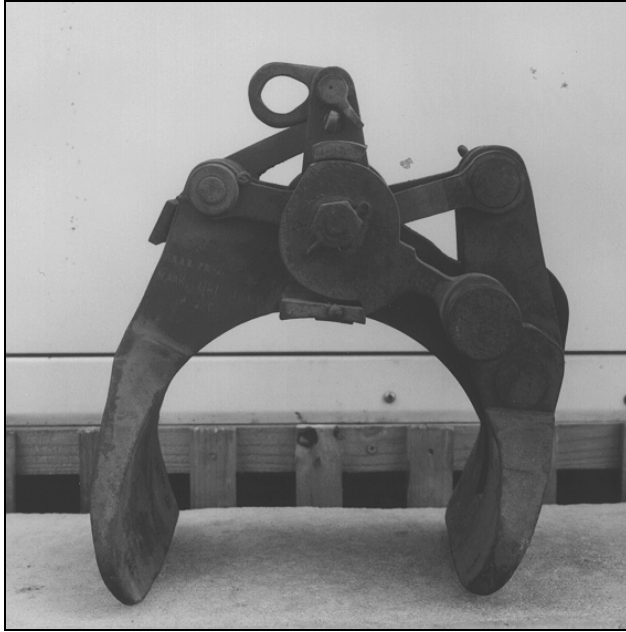
Just imagine the uproar from the anti-gun lobby if these units had still been on display around the countryside today!

## **Saved From the Scrap Heap**

By: RB Mitchell

The Northern Territory has a well-deserved reputation for the interpretation of its wartime heritage. This process of interpretation combines signage, sites, walks, trails and drives, and museum collections. Even in this context however saving heritage is sometimes a near run thing. A letter was recently received from the Royal Australian Artillery Association (N.T.) Incorp describing the rescue of artifacts associated with the East Point 9.2 inch gun Battery in Darwin.

Given that the East Point Battery is a major heritage and tourism destination, one wonders how such items could end up unrecognized and awaiting disposal as scrap metal. Fortunately gunner diligence and inquisitiveness combined with fast action saved an ammo trolley, a No 2 Projectile Lift, two installation trolleys, an original gate to the shell storage facility and a section of submarine cable from the melting pot.



Grab, Projectile No 2 Mk 1/L  
1941 RAA Assn (NT) Photo

Patrick Brown, the Secretary of the Association and the man responsible for saving the artifacts raises a number of questions. His letter has been passed from the National Trust to the Society for a response on the technical matters. Some our readers however might know the purpose of the four bots at the rear of the ammo trolley and how the levers functioned to hold the ammunition components in place. The projectile grab is interesting as it is quite different from the chain hoist mechanism used at the Oliver Hill Battery on Rottnest.



Ammunition trolley (L) and gun installation trolleys (R)  
RAA Assn (NT) Photos

## **1st Aust Naval Bombardment Group, RAA**

By: RK Glyde



Whilst engaged in operations in the Middle East involving cooperation with naval ships providing gunfire support, AIF artillery officers recognised the advantage that could be gained from its use. They also realised the need for liaison teams who could advise the naval gunnery officers so they could meet the needs of the gunners on the ground.

When these officers returned to Australia and identified that there would be numerous amphibious landings required to recover the ground lost to the Japanese, they identified a need to develop and train personnel as members of such teams.

Proposals were submitted to senior army and navy personnel recommending the formation of a specialised unit to cover such activities. The role of the unit was to liaise

with the two services planning naval bombardments prior to a landing and to support the assault troops with fire pending the arrival of the field guns and their coming into action. Even after this the naval guns had a role to play in engaging targets, which could withstand the shelling of the army guns or were perhaps out of range of the field guns.

The nucleus of the unit comprised two officers of either the rank of Major or Captain and two NCO's from each of the AIF Field artillery regiments. It was commanded by an officer with the rank of Lt Colonel and he was known as Chief Bombardment Liaison Officer (CBLO). He was assisted by two Senior Bombardment Liaison Officers SBLO with the rank of Major and ten Bombardment Liaison Officers each of whom was to assist the Gunnery Officer on the ship carrying out the bombardment task. The BLOs' had a technical assistant and two signalers.

The unit was raised initially raised early in 1943. Two-week courses were undertaken at Flinders Naval Depot, not as it might seem to ensure close liaison with the navy but purely because the depot was the most suitable facility at which to bring all the personnel together to form the unit.

A party known as a Shore Fire Control Party (SFCP) landed with the assault troops to handle any support fire requested by them. There were ten such parties in the unit. A party of five made up a Troop commanded by a Major so the parent unit comprised two Troops. Each SFCP comprised an officer holding the rank of Captain, a Signals Sergeant, a Signals Bombardier, a Bombardier Technical Assistant and six Other Ranks comprising four Signalers and two Drivers. The party was issued with two jeeps and a United States TBX2 wireless set as used by their Marine Corps. They were a superior wireless unit to the normal Australian sets.

The organisation of 1st Aust Naval Bombardment Group provided for the support of a two-division assault. The CBLO's party was posted to the HQ Command ship prior to and subsequently to the landing whilst the SBLO's parties were deployed on whatever ship they could be used to the best advantage. The Group took part in the landings of the 7th and 9th Divisions at Balikpapan and Tarakan respectively. The American cruiser USS "Phoenix" had one of the parties on board. This ship was equipped with fifteen 6-in guns in triple turrets. Her firepower was the equivalent of two Australian field regiments or forty-eight 25-pr field guns.

One of the members of the Society, Alf Richards, served in this unique unit after being transferred from the 2/7th Aust Field Regiment, AIF.

Information Source A précis by an officer of the 2/5th Aust Field Regiment, AIF.





## OBITUARY – ROBERT SHURMAN

I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Robert Shurman, one of our foundation members.

Bob Shurman made an enormous contribution in many ways to the establishment and ongoing operation of the RAAHS of WA. His incredible enthusiasm and ongoing commitment to the preservation of Artillery Heritage and that of maintaining a high Gunner profile will long be remembered

Two examples of his strong focus (among the many that I was personally involved) were his contribution to the staging and delivery of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary “Battle of El Alamein” presentation and the sacrifice that he made by attending the official opening of the Leighton Battery Heritage site when he should have been attending his grandsons wedding.

Bob was an exceptional person who preferred to give rather than receive and he demonstrated that aspect on countless occasions with both his time and his creative talents. He not only participated in activities and projects for the Society but also was a driving force and a tireless worker for his ex-service Association and that of the Royal Australian Artillery Association of WA.

Robert Shurman we salute you and thank you for being a wonderful Gunner.

I wish to express my condolences to Mary and members of the Shurman family on behalf of my colleagues on the Management Committee and the whole membership of the RAAHS of WA.

**Lest we forget**

**RAY BIRD**  
President

## **German Trophy Guns 1914-18 - The Feld Kanone/Haubitz**

By: RK Glyde

According to Australian War Memorial records held by the writer, there were 33 Feld Konone (Field Guns) and Feld Haubitz (Field Howitzers) allocated to Western Australia in the post 1914 - 18 period for monument guns. Their calibres varied from 75 mm to 150 mm. Eight of these were 75 mm FK03 Model sold to the Turkish Government and these have been covered in another feature. Today in Western Australia only five 77 mm Feld Kanone M96 or an updated variation of the model remain.

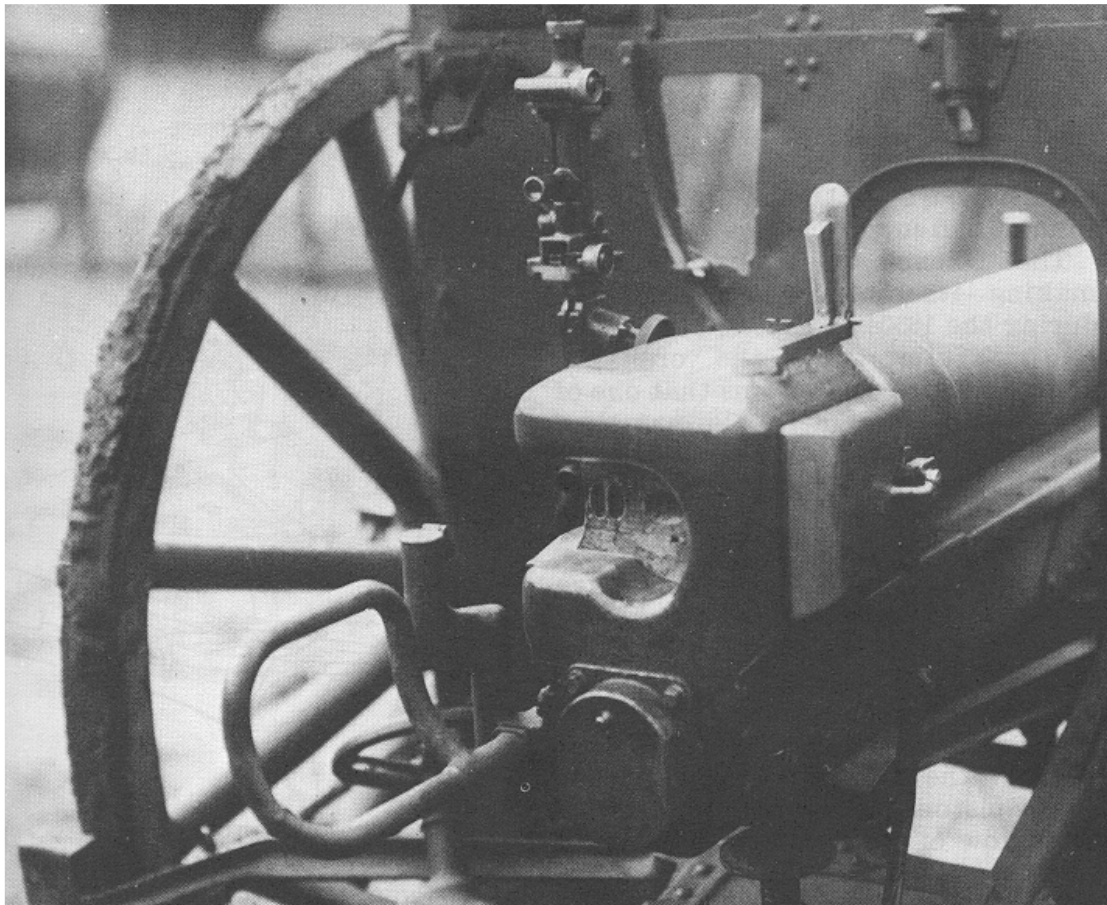
These guns were the principal weapons of the German divisional artillery at the beginning of the Great War and although superseded in 1916, there were still 3744 such guns in service when the Armistice was declared. They were developed by the Krupp armament organisation and were amongst the first field guns fitted with a carriage, which allowed the barrel to recoil independently of the rest of the weapon and to return to the loading and firing position. The French introduced their famous 75 mm gun in 1898 and it was not until 1904 that the British Army accepted the 18 pr with a recoil system. The advantage of the system was the gun remained steady upon firing thus the gun remained aligned with the target requiring only minimum adjustments and it greatly speeded up the number of rounds per minute that it was capable of putting out.

The recoil system on the M96 was of the hydraulic type with the counter recoil system consisting of a spring. All this was mounted in a cradle beneath the gun barrel. The gun was capable of 16° elevation which, using its standard charge and HE projectile of 6.87 kgs (15 lbs). gave a maximum range of 8400 m (9186 yds).

The weapons remaining in Western Australia are:

**No.165** Displayed at the Broome Historical Society Museum, it was manufactured by Fried Krupp of Essen in 1897. At some point in time during World War 2 it was dumped at the local rubbish tip. A local resident recovered the gun and it was refurbished and fitted with

agricultural implement wheels. The information plaque alongside the weapon would indicate that it was captured by the 32 Bn on 29 September 1918 however an examination of AWM File 93, Item 27/1/107 states the gun was taken by the 44 Bn. An examination of the condition of the gun after its receipt in Melbourne found that it was in good order although there was some battle damaged noted to the barrel and it was in German camouflage colours.



**No.4253** This gun is displayed at the Memorial Park at Narrogin. It was manufactured by Fried Krupp of Essen, the date of manufacture is impossible to confirm due to the many coats of paint that have been applied over the last 80 years. AWM records however shows that No.4253 was allotted to Narrogin. The wheels have long since disappeared and the axles rest on two concrete blocks. It was captured by the 11 Bn on 18 September 1918. There are signs of battle damage although this is not mentioned in the Melbourne examination report and examination of the weapon indicates some obvious damage to the recoil system. It was received in camouflaged colours.

**No.7208** Now on display at the recently re-opened Goldfields War Museum at Burt Street Boulder, the AWM File No.93, Item 27/1/107 records that it was allocated to 16 Bn. It was manufactured by Rhenische Metallwaren Fabrik in 1916. How it finished up in the Kalgoorlie Boulder area is not known as the post 1914-18 16 Bn was a Perth metropolitan based unit. A plaque alongside the gun has the following caption "Captured by the 32 Bn AIF 29 September 1918 at a point 1.5 Mk S E of Bellecourt, France. Again the AWM file information differs in that it was captured by the 16 Bn. The document also indicates the gun was in good condition when inspected in Melbourne however it was not in camouflage colours. Although the gun could do with a sand blast and repaint, it is in good condition for its age. The gun wheels are rotten and need replacing. Being displayed partially under cover is a bonus for its preservation.

**No. 5948** This gun is displayed at the York War Memorial Park. It was manufactured by Fried Krupp of Essen in 1916. Documents indicate that the gun was captured by 28 Bn at Villiers Bretonneaux on 12 August 1918. It was allocated to the York Council. The weapon has no wheels, its axles rest on two concrete plinth. It is in poor condition and all movable parts have been removed. Whereas the other four guns are in relatively complete condition with breech blocks, etc, this gun appears to have been stripped of any moveable parts. The Melbourne inspection report indicates there were signs of damage by shell fire to the trail, shield and barrel but in general the gun was in good condition. It was painted in camouflage colours.

At July 2000, the gun was in the hands of the Society workshop personnel who had the task of restoring the gun to display condition and endeavouring to prevent further deterioration.

**No.7698** This gun is a fairly recent addition to the German guns in the State. It was manufactured by Fried Krupp of Essen in 1917 and obviously fitted to an existing carriage, as this is dated 1907. It was believed purchased by Mr Sarich of orbital engine fame at auction in 1988. Recently it was acquired by B Watson of Margaret River who wants to use the gun in displays, films and other activities, in conjunction with a

horse team. At present it is being restored by Dave Cope, a Marine and General Engineer of Geraldton. The gun appears to be almost complete in every respect however extensive restoration work has had to be carried out by Mr Cope.

The gun was captured by the 12th Bn, 1st AIF in France. It was issued as a trophy gun to 5th Bn, 12th Infantry Regiment, a militia battalion at Burnie in Tasmania. AWM records show that at the time of issue, the gun was in good condition, no mention was made of any battle damage and it was in German camouflage colours. In 1984 it was recorded as being in the hands of Mr Chris Clement, who operated a private military museum at 22 Bass Highway, Deloraine, Tasmania.

## **ANZAC DAY    25 APRIL 2001**

As Anzac Day occurs before the next issue of Aiming Post is released, it is appropriate to acknowledge and commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australian servicemen and women at home and abroad. The next two articles, The “Anzac Requiem” by CEW Bean and “Death of a Soldier” by Malcolm Higham are presented with that thought in mind.



## **The Anzac Requiem**

On the morning of 25 April 1915, Australian and New Zealand troops landed under fire at Gallipoli, and it was then and in the battles, which followed that the ANZAC tradition was formed.

On this day, above all days, we remember all those who served our nation in times of war.

We remember with pride their courage, their compassion and their comradeship.

We remember what they accomplished for Australia, and indeed for the freedom of mankind.

We honour those who died or were disabled in the tragedy of war. They adorn our nation's history.

We remember those who fell amidst the valleys and ridges of Gallipoli, on the terraced hills of Palestine, in France and Belgium, on the sands of the North African desert, amidst the mountains and olive groves of Greece, Crete and Syria, in the skies over Europe, in Singapore, in the jungles of Malaysia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Islands, in Korea and Vietnam, in the skies and seas in many parts of the world, and on our own soil and in our sea lanes.

We remember those who suffered as prisoners of war, and those who died in captivity.

We remember staunch friends and allies, especially those who fought alongside us on that first ANZAC Day in 1915.

Our servicemen and women have left us a splendid heritage. May we and our successors prove worthy of their sacrifice.

## **Death Of A Soldier**

Malcolm Phipps Higham was killed in action at Villiers Brettoneux, France , on the morning of the 24th April 1918. He was the third son of Mr and Mrs Harry Higham of Nanuttarra Station, Onslow ,and Barramining, Williams. He was born in January 1887 , and educated at Scotch College, representing his School in the winning Eight at the Head of the River in 1916 . He joined the A.I.F. in 1917 , and sailed with his 51st Battalion Reinforcements, via the Panama Canal and Trinidad to England to complete his training at Codford Camp. He wrote home to his sister, no doubt to his mother as well, and his letters have survived , describing his voyage and his training in England.

Many years later, in 1964 , I was to learn of the circumstances of his death near Villiers Brettoneux I became sick with a kidney infection and was hospitalised in Narrogin Regional Hospital for a few days , and was placed in a six bed ward there. It was then the practice to introduce new patients to the rest of the Ward, and when he heard my name, one old chap sat up as if electrified. “Gawd” he said, “the last time I heard that name was in France in 1918.” On my admitting that that Malcolm Higham was my uncle, he told me the following story.

“I was a transport driver during the war, moving stores and ammunition up to the line, and on the evening of the 23 April, it was getting on towards night fall, so we pulled into an orchard to feed and water the horses and ourselves, before continuing our trip in the morning. We had just settled down for the night and had the billy boiling, when this party of the 51st Battalion arrived to camp over night, and move on into the lines next morning. We shared our fire and billy, and spent the evening yarning.”

“During the course of the evening, I got talking to this young fella, who told me that he was from Williams. I knew Williams well, having spent a few years before I joined up working at clearing contracts and it turned out I had been clearing on his father’s farm Barramining, out west of Williams. When we got talking, we realised we both knew many of the local girls there , and had been to many of the dances around Williams.”

“We were all up and on our way at first light, and just after we left, the Germans opened up with a terrific artillery barrage all along the line in front of Villiers Brettoneux. They had at last woken up to the impending attack, and were shelling all the back areas, as well as the front line. We whipped up our horses, which needed no urging, and got out of the immediate area. The party of the 51st went on into the barrage and eventually went for shelter in a partly completed canal, which had never been filled. Here they had the bad luck of getting a very large howitzer shell on to the top of the bank above them. The resulting explosion buried 28 out of the party of 36.”

“That evening I was returning by the same road and I was stopped by an officer, and told to take some bodies back for burial. To my horror the first body they put on to my wagon was your Uncle Malcolm, This was a real shock to me as we had arranged to meet after he came out of the line in a few days time. I had left him in the morning, fit and well, and to see his lifeless body only a few hours later really affected me, as nothing else had during the years of the war.”

The old chap's name was Bill Astbury I think, and he had been farming out east of Wickepin, and was in hospital with a very bad heart. Early the following morning, Bill had another very bad turn and died. I have always been grateful to him for passing this story on to me before he died, a few more hours and this story would have died with him.



# **Our Disappearing Defence Heritage**

by Lindsay J. Peet

Professional Historian and Heritage Consultant

*Editor's Note: Drill Halls are fast disappearing from our communities as the Department of Defence rationalises its properties. These places have played a significant part in the development of our children through the Cadet programmes and therefore not only have historic value, but also social value.*

On 1st March 1901 the defence of Australia became a Commonwealth responsibility. Over the next few years it took over ownership of most colonial defence facilities. Using selected examples, this article is about the type of defence property very familiar to the community, and indeed often used for local community purposes, namely drill halls.

## **Inventory of Drill Halls**

Western Australian Colonial drill halls taken over by the Commonwealth include the Perth Infantry Drill Hall (Francis Street, completed in 1896, later known as Swan Barracks), the Fremantle Artillery Drill Hall (Holdsworth & Queen Streets, 1896, now the Fly By Night Musicians Club), Geraldton (Cathedral & Lester Avenues, ?1880s/1890s), and apparently one at Albany (Spencer Street, ?1890s).

With the introduction of compulsory universal military training in Australia in 1911, the need for extra drill halls became urgent and in several instances existing buildings or halls were acquired: Bayswater Road Board Hall (Murray & Crowther Streets, 1913), Leederville Mechanics Institute (300 Vincent Street, 1913), and possibly Kalgoorlie (Hannan Street, c1910, also known as the Hippodrome). In other instances a site was acquired and a timber-framed building erected, usually to a standardised design. The latter includes Bunbury (Wittenoom, Symmons & Molloy Streets, ?1910s), Kalgoorlie (Cheetham Street, ?1910s) and Victoria Park (State & Washington Streets, ?1910s). Some premises suitable as drill halls were leased by the Commonwealth during this early

period, one example being Coolgardie where portion of the Post Office was leased in 1907.

Following the outbreak of World War I, drill halls were used for recruiting and some training. Some construction continued after 1914, for example, the Naval Drill Hall at Brunswick and Mount Streets, Albany in 1915, the site having been acquired in 1913. An unusual drill hall was at Harvey where the Army rebuilt the Citrus Society Hall in c1917 and received a 99-year lease allowing it to be used part-time for defence purposes.

In 1919, a comprehensive Army list showed thirteen drill halls (twelve Commonwealth owned) in the Perth Metropolitan Area and seventeen in the country (nine Commonwealth owned), the remainder being 'hired' (leased) properties.

From 1919, the need for drill halls diminished with many halls being leased out by the Army to community bodies. This practice grew to such an extent that in 1927 the Army issued 'Standing Orders for the control and letting of drill halls'. In 1926, the Navy erected a brick drill hall at Croke & Mouat Streets, Fremantle, then known as HMAS Cerberus V. Compulsory military training was suspended in 1929, thus further reducing the need for drill halls.

From 1933, defence spending by the Commonwealth increased and several brick or part-brick drill halls were built in WA: Hobbs Hall (in Hobbs Artillery Park, 1938) and the Anti-Aircraft & Anti-Tank Drill Hall (1941), both at Karrakatta, and one at HMAS Leeuwin, at Riverside Road, East Fremantle (1942). A number of sites for Army drill halls were acquired but were not built upon: for example, Mt Lawley, Pingelly, and Wickepin.

World War II saw the use of drill halls both for recruiting and local defence purposes (Volunteer Defence Corps). Some drill halls were used on a part-time basis by ancillary and/or patriotic organisations; others such as Bayswater were used by 3 Australian Corps, the main Army formation in WA during 1942-44.

The requirements for drill halls diminished after 1946, with some buildings and sites being sold. However this was reversed in 1951 with the introduction of compulsory national service, whereby Army trainees served three years part-time in the Citizen Military Forces after their 98 days of initial training. This meant that a number of extra drill halls were required throughout WA. Construction during this period includes Collie (Throssell Street, 1955), and Katanning (Pemble & Beaufort Streets, 1955), Karrakatta (RAAOC Drill Hall, 1956), Victoria Park (Canning Highway & Washington Street, 1956), all largely in brick. In country centres a number of smallish drill halls/training depots were situated in rented premises or in Army buildings erected in the local showground, for example, Busselton.

### **What is the situation today?**

Over the years the Army has reviewed its property portfolio, making both acquisitions and disposals according to its perceived needs. More recently, it appears that due to the way financing of the Australian Defence Force is organised, plus pressures caused by major expenditures in areas such as the Collins Class submarines, East Timor, and the need for block replacement of obsolete equipment, the Department of Defence is selling many of its assets all over in Australia, especially the ones situated in areas of high land value.

In Western Australia, recent years have seen the sale of suburban drill halls at Victoria Park (Canning Highway & Washington Street, and State & Washington Streets), Subiaco (Nicholson Road), Claremont (Stirling Highway), East Perth (Lord & Wright Streets), their sites being redeveloped. In Perth proper, Mounts Bay Road (formerly Bazaar Terrace) and Francis Street (Swan Barracks) have been sold, the 1896 hall in the latter surviving. In Fremantle, the Artillery Drill Hall (1896) and the Naval Drill Hall (1926) have been sold with both buildings surviving.

In the country, two drill halls in Bunbury (Wittenoom, Symmons & Molloy Streets, and Moore Street) and the one at Collie (Throssell Street) have been sold, although the buildings still stand. Drill halls at Northam and York were demolished after being sold. As this article is written, Leederville (taken over c1979 by the RAAF for use by the Air Training

Corps) is up for public tender. It is understood that the drill hall at Spencer Street, Albany (taken over by the RAAF in the c1950s for the Air Training Corps) has recently been put on the market.

### **What drill halls are left in Commonwealth ownership in WA?**

In the near future there will be nothing in the Perth Metropolitan Area outside two larger defence properties: East Fremantle (Leeuwin Barracks) and the three at Karrakatta (Irwin Barracks). In the country there will be Albany, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, and Katanning. How long will even these survive?

Of the drill halls mentioned in this article and still standing, only Bayswater, Coolgardie (part of the Post Office complex), Harvey (part of the Harvey Council Chambers & Town Hall complex), Karrakatta (part of Hobbs Artillery Park), and Perth (part of Swan Barracks) are on the Trust's List of Classified Places. Several are on Municipal inventories: Albany (both drill halls), Bayswater, Coolgardie (part of a complex), Harvey (part of a complex), Karrakatta (part of Hobbs Artillery Park), and Leederville. The Coolgardie complex is on both the Register of Heritage Places (State) and the Register of the National Estate (Commonwealth).

Perhaps because drill halls are generally unspectacular examples of defence heritage and usually stand alone, they are steadily being sold without much comment from the community, whereas the proposed sale of the Fremantle Artillery Barracks in Burt Street (a much larger property) has attracted considerable community opposition. Apart from the possible loss of heritage values, in selling off its drill halls, the Australian Defence Force is losing a valuable shop-front or window within the community, thereby becoming less visible, which in turn leads to recruiting shortfalls.

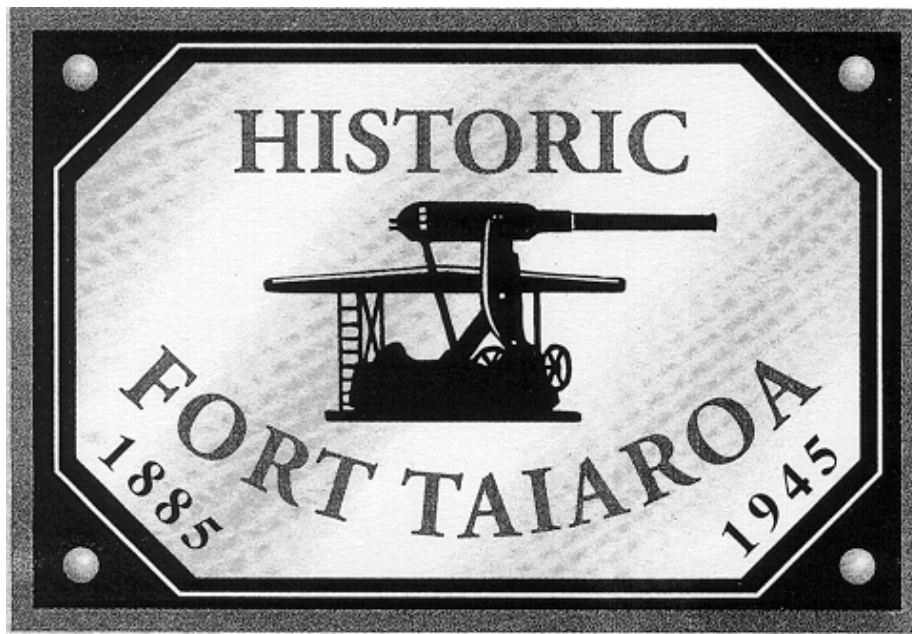
About the author:

Lindsay Peet was an officer in both the RAAF General Reserve and the Air Training Corps. He is member of both the Cultural Environment and Defence Heritage Committees and is a recipient of the National Trust's McLarty Award. He is a candidate for a higher research degree with the Research Institute for Cultural Heritage at Curtin University of Technology.

## Coast Defences of New Zealand : Part 1

Over the last couple of years the Society has acquired a considerable quantity of material covering the coast defences of New Zealand. In the next few editions of "Aiming Post" it is proposed to cover some of the more historical forts, which were developed over the years.

One of our members, who served in the New Zealand coast artillery post war, has virtually prepared a tourist guide for any one interested in spending time looking over some of the forts. The Society has had contacts from NZ Government Departments seeking information on the Rottneast Oliver Hill Battery and in exchange, have sent reports prepared concerning their fortifications. Other private individuals, who have been in contact with the Society from time to time, and with the writer personally, have forwarded news of the actions being taken in an endeavour to restore some of the forts.

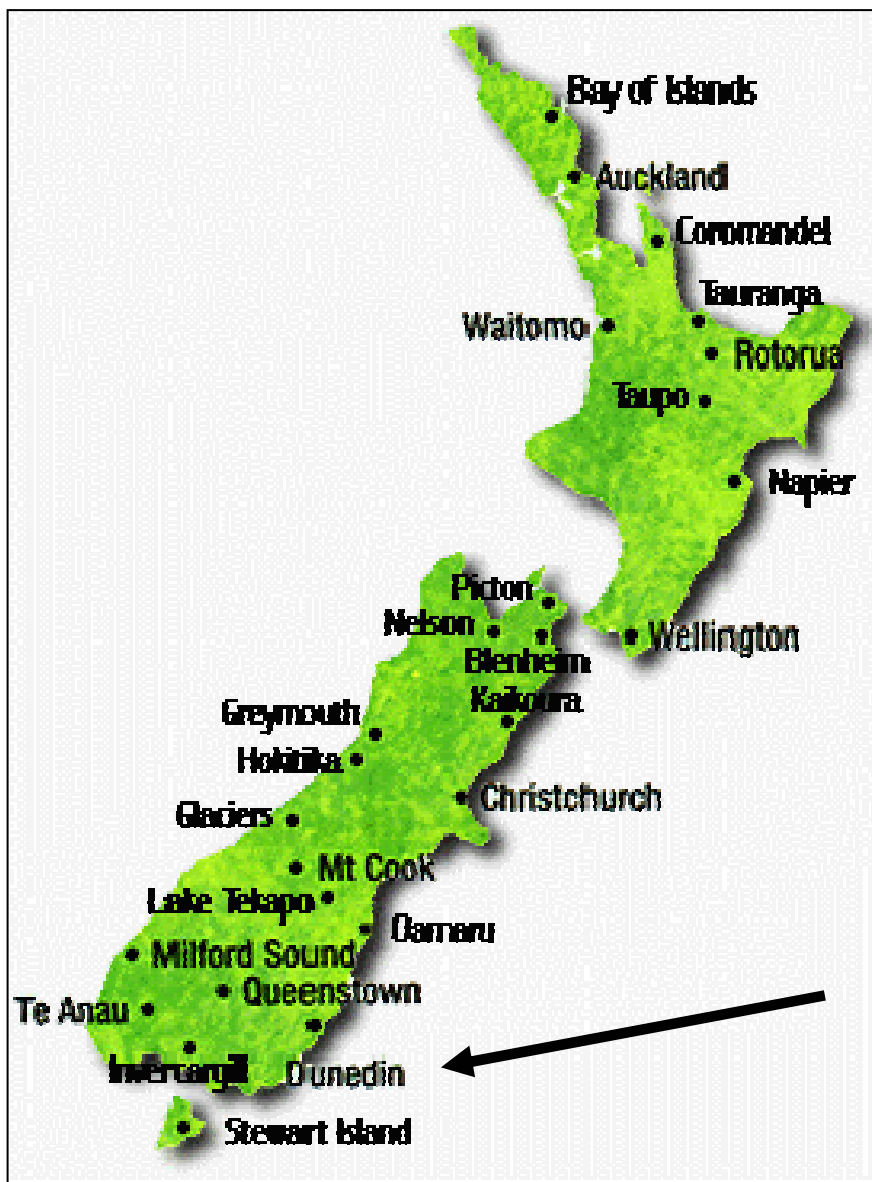


Some of the fortifications date back into the late 19th Century when for reasons similar to our efforts to fortify important ports against raids, possibly by the French and Russian commerce raiders, were undertaken.

The historic Fort Taiaroa, developed in 1885 to protect Dunedin, is possibly one of the best-known tourist attractions in the South Island of New Zealand. Originally it consisted of five batteries covering various approaches supported by a controlled minefield. Saddle battery was equipped with one 7-in 7 ton RML with a range of 4000 yards. This gun would have been very similar to the 7-in 6.5 ton guns displayed in Kings

Park. The heavier gun was originally built for land service whereas the 6.5 ton gun was shortened for naval service and had a barrel 12 inches shorter making it easier to load on the restricted gun decks. Channel Battery was equipped with two 64-pr RMLs with a range of 3500 yards. A single 64-pr RML was installed in the Howlett Point Battery.

In 1888 a Nordenfeldt 6-pr gun was installed in Summit Battery. This quick firing gun (20 rpm) had a range of 4000 yards. Finally in 1889 the very latest in coastal guns, an Armstrong 6-in Mk V gun on a disappearing mounting was installed at Lighthouse Battery.



The disappearing mounting enabled the gun to recoil into its emplacement using the action of the gun recoil. It was held in this position whilst it was loaded and then using the water and air ram system the gun was raised again into the firing position. The gun fired a 100-pound projectile to a range of 8000 yards, firing at the rate of one round per minute and requiring a nine-man detachment.

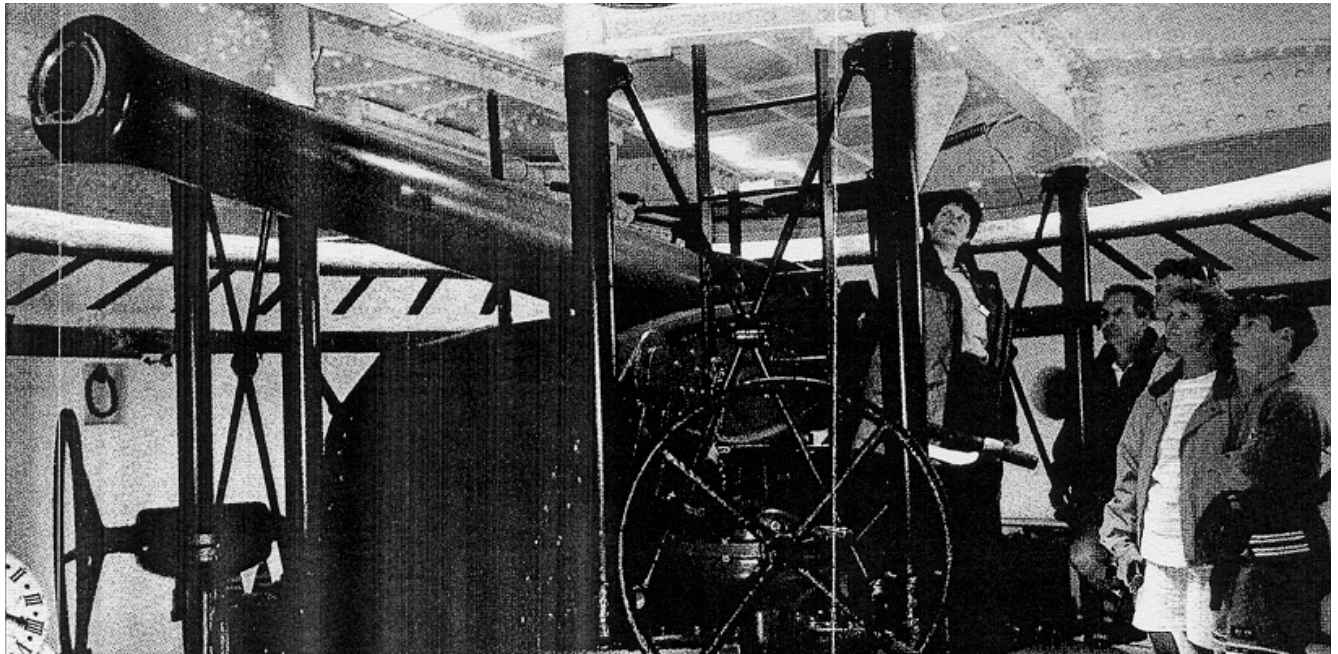
The gun fired its first round in June 1889.

Some time later this was supplemented with a BL 6-in Mk VII, thus rendering the older RML guns obsolete. They were withdrawn in 1911. Some one had the foresight to preserve the guns, which eventually were placed in the Kurihiku Museum.

. The BL 6-in Mk VII guns on a Central Pivot Mounting became the standard coast defence gun of that calibre throughout the British Empire following a decision made in 1910. For some reason the older Mk V gun at Lighthouse Battery remained in service and its 450th and last round was fired in 1943. The gun is complete and kept in “new condition”.

It now forms a tourist attraction being situated in the Royal Albatross Centre bird sanctuary. The gun position is only accessible under controlled conditions and is approached through tunnels, which pass under the bird sanctuary.

It is the only Armstrong Disappearing Gun of its type in the world, still in working condition, in its original gun pit. The fort is also fortunate in that some of the original fire control equipment in the battery observation post is still to be found.





## NOTICE BOARD

### **BUSY BEES**

The next busy bees at Buckland Hill are scheduled for:

**24 FEBRUARY    31 MARCH    28 APRIL    26 MAY**

### **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 tunnels every half hour.

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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.**

**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](mailto:rbmitch@iinet.net.au)**