

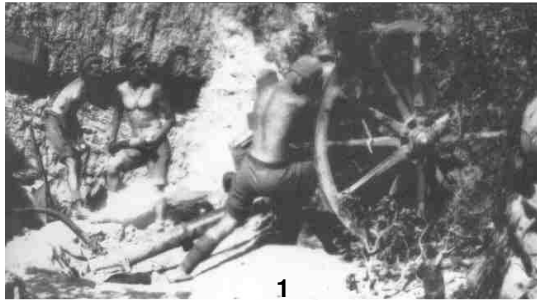


# Artillery WA

Official Newsletter of RAAA (WA), 2/3, 2/7, 3Fd Regt Associations and RAA Historical Society of WA (INC)

Edition 2 – 1/04

April 2004



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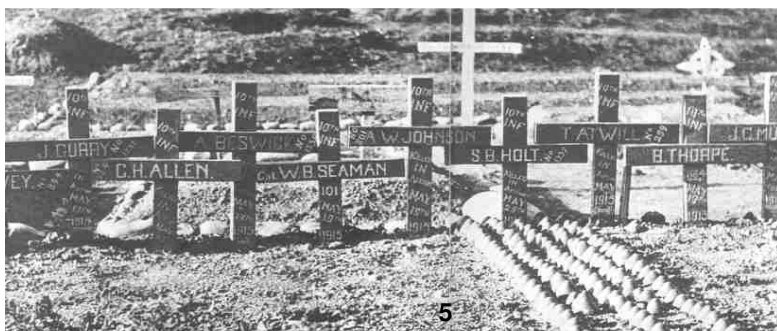


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- LEST  
WE  
FORGET -



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*The Anzac Digger*

Everywhere Where Right and Glory Lead



# Notice Board

## ANZAC DAY

WITH THE DEDICATION OF THE NEW ARTILLERY MEMORIAL WALL  
AT HOBBS ARTILLERY PARK  
APRIL 25 – 5.00 for 5.15 AM  
FOLLOWED BY A GUNFIRE BREAKY

-----  
THEN JOIN THE REST OF THE GUNNERS AT HAP AFTER THE MARCH  
FROM MIDDAY ON

(PLEASE ALLOW ENOUGH TIME TO GET THROUGH THE MAIN GATE SECURITY CHECK) – SEE PAGE 8 FOR FURTHER INFO

### RAAHS BUSY BEES

The next busy bees at Irwin Barracks are scheduled for:

**24 APRIL**      **29 MAY**  
**26 JUNE**      **31 JULY**

### 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.

### COVER

Images of Gallipoli – 25 April 1915 – *See page 15*

### Inside this Issue – Main points

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Subs to your Association or Society are now due – RAAA / 3 FRAAA - \$ 15      RAAHS - \$ 25

The Editor gratefully acknowledges the contributions to the newsletter by the members, whose names appear with the corresponding articles.

Articles, editorial comment or book reviews for publication should be submitted to the editor, Gabriel D'Uva at: Royal Australian Artillery Association of WA, PO Box 881, Claremont WA 6910. Phone: 93836544 Fax: 93836370 or E-mail the Editor at [info@artillerywa.org.au](mailto:info@artillerywa.org.au)

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION (WA)

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the second edition of artillery WA and by the time you receive this the Annual general Meetings of

Royal Australian Historical Society WA (INC)  
And  
3 Field Regiment RAA Association

would have been held.

It is desired to congratulate those who are either joining or continuing on as members of the two Committees of Management.

Since the first issue it is desired to report that under the strong direction of Gabby D'Uva the limestone memorial project is nearing completion and all Gunners attending the Anzac Day Parade at Hobbs Artillery Park will have the opportunity of inspecting the completed work.

It was intended that the cost of the project would be met by the RAAA, however, this has been extended to include both the RAAHS and 3<sup>rd</sup> FRRAA.

Accordingly, a small Brass Plaque for each body is being erected on the limestone face by way of acknowledging interest and financial support.

If other Associations are interested of a similar recognition, please contact the President for information.

Bruce G. Campbell  
**President**

## **The Memorial at HAP**

**Over the last couple of years, the ANZAC DAY Dawn Service has been held by the flagpole in front of HAP, the idea to erect a more significant structure was raised and this year the new Artillery Memorial will be dedicated before the Dawn Service.**

**This project was made possible through the RAA Association of WA, the help of dedicated members, donations from RAAHS of WA (Inc), 3 Fd Regt RAAA, material donations from past members, and support from 7 Fd Bty and the Gunner body.**

**On behalf of the President of the RAA of WA, Mr. Bruce Campbell, I would like to thank all the people and business that were involved in bringing this project to fruition.**

**The Memorial is dedicated to all Gunners, past, present and serving.**

Ubique

Gabby D'Uva  
**Project Coordinator**

**7 Field Battery RAA  
TIE  
\$30 each**



**Berets & Arty Ties**

Over the past two years we have seen greater numbers of Gunners wearing Berets on Anzac Day and Gunners Day. In the past, Secretary Tom has purchased batch of Berets and provided opportunity for members to purchase Beret with complimentary RAA badge. Whilst this method readily assists members, it is difficult to accommodate Berets sizes for all. Accordingly members are urged to directly purchase Beret (Navy Blue) from Army surplus stores. Berets may also be purchased from Karrakatta clothing store subject to providing ID and Army Number. Any queries on this please call Secretary Tom on 041 992 3584. Lets all wear the Berets proudly displaying our RAA badge.

7 Fd Bty have a lovely Gunner Battery Tie with RAA and 7 over 3 for 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Regiment RAA. They will be available at HAP on Anzac Day at a cost of \$ 30 each.

**Available from the Bty NOW!**

Can you help?

We received a letter from Mr. Bob Flett who is looking for past members of Support Company, May intake, 17<sup>th</sup> National Service Battalion (Swanbourne), 1958, in particular Vickers & Mortars personnel, in an effort to hold a reunion.

If you know of anybody that may have been part of that intake could you get in touch with Bob at:

Mr. Bob Flett  
8 Coral St  
Craigie WA 6025  
PH/Fax (08) 9401 142  
[wa\\_lefty@hotmail.com](mailto:wa_lefty@hotmail.com)



**COUNTER RUNNER**

The initial production run has sold out and **new stock** is available!

This versatile Counter or Bar Runner features the Corps Badge on a red & blue background backed with a flexible vinyl mat.

The runner is 900mm long and 200mm wide and is designed for indoor use.

They make an interesting talking point and can be used as:  
bar or table runner at home, in the mess or a club  
unit counter runner in an orderly room or store.

The product is designed for indoor use.

Orders, with payment, can now be lodged.

Cut off and return this slip with payment to:

RAA Association NSW Inc  
Marketing Sub-Committee  
Box 576  
GPO SYDNEY 2001

I wish to participate in the following offer and my cheque/money order in favour of "RAA Association NSW Inc" is enclosed:

**BAR RUNNER OFFER**

	Qty	Cost
Bar Runner: -		
RAA Corps Badge	(\$35 ea) _____	\$ _____
Postage and handling (for 1 up to 4 runners is \$10. Larger orders - \$10 per 4 runners)		\$ _____
<b>Total Bar Runner Offer</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>

Name: .....

Delivery Address:- .....

Phone:- .....

Promo Gunfire 1/2004

Offer taken from the RAA Association (N.S.W) Inc Newsletter, if any members wish to purchase one, cut out or photocopy the above and send to the address shown.

**ADVERTISING**

FOR A DONATION OF \$ 10 (TEN) PER YEAR, (Four Issues), YOU CAN ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS IN ARTILLERY WA, IN BOTH PRINTED AND WEBSITE EDITIONS, PLEASE MAIL OR EMAIL THE EDITOR AT THE ADDRESSES SHOWN FOR THE ASSOCIATION TO DISCUSS OPTIONS.



### THE DREADED "88"



A German "88" at El Alamein  
– Nov '42  
*Photo courtesy of the RAAHS  
WA photo library*

WAS FIRST PRODUCED BY KRUPPS IN 1916. IT WAS CALLED THE BAK OR ANTI-BALLOON GUN. MUZZLE VELOCITY OF THE MARK 37 AND 37 – 840M PER SECOND. THE LATER MARK 41 AND 43 HAD A VELOCITY OF 1020 AND 1200 METRES PER SECOND, ABOUT 4500 FT. THE PROJECTILE WEIGHING 10 KILOGRAMS, ABOUT 23 POUNDS, COULD PENETRATE STEEL ARMOUR PLATING 150MM THICK, ABOUT 6 INCHES, AT A RANGE OF 2 KILOMETRES – ABOUT 1-2 MILES. IN THE BROAD DESERT EXPANSES IT WAS A "WONDER WEAPON" – WELL KNOWN ON BOTH SIDES AS THE "88". THE GERMANS SOLDIERS CALLED IT THE RATSCH-BUM. DOESN'T MEAN WHAT IT LOOS LIKE. IN ENGLISH IT MEANS CRASH-BANG ON ACCOUNT OF IT'S HIGH VELOCITY.

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## **3 Field Regiment Association** **Presidents Report AGM March 2004**

Mr. Bruce Campbell President of the Royal Artillery Association, members and guests good morning and welcome to our AGM.

As you can see from our surrounds and the still present members of the RAA Historical Society we have over the last year grown closer to the two other Artillery organisations in WA.

Your committee has worked very hard over the last year or so to not only provide our members with a good social programmed but also to continue with the plan to have one overall Gunner group in WA. To achieve this we now have our Committee transposed on to the RAA Association, with Bruce Campbell as President. Bruce is also the President of the Historical Society. While this has taken place we are very mindful that our Association remains our primary focus. We have also achieved the first issue of our combined Gunner magazine, Artillery WA, and we hope to have this produced four times a year.

Over the last year we have been involved in Anzac Day, the Battery Birthday and Gunners Day. Attendances at all these functions have been good and with some minor changes we will be involved again this year.

On to this year, with our next major event being Anzac Day. There again will be a dawn service at

HAP followed by a gunfire breakfast. The new memorial that Gabby D'Uva has worked so hard on will be dedicated at the service. This event was well attended last year and I encourage all members to make the effort as it is a good start to the day and you don't have to fight the traffic at Kings Park.

We will be marching in Perth with the other Gunner Associations behind the Royal Australian Artillery Association banner, so I encourage as many as possible join us.

In conjunction with the RAA Association and the Battery we are planning an all ranks Corp dinner in July. This is the first of what I hope will become an annual event, so I trust you will support it.

Our web site ([www.artillerywa.org.au](http://www.artillerywa.org.au)) continues to grow and we be encouraging members to advertise their business on it.

I would like to like to thank the Committee for their hard work and support during the year, and also the BC Major Scott Sullivan and his staff for their unstinting help and cooperation.

Ubique  
Peter Rowles  
President



**SMIG's Review**  
**7 Field Battery 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Regiment**  
**RAA**

The Battery in 2004 has only seen one change to the Battery Hierarchy. Which ensures a smooth transition into the New Year. Warrant Officer Class Two, Dion McRae, now fills the position of SMIG. WO2 McRae started his new role after finishing 2003 at RMC-D and took up the position on promotion. WO2 McRae took over from Warrant Officer Class Two, Matthew Sullivan. WO2 Sullivan enjoyed a very rewarding and challenging 2 years at 7 Fd Bty and is now posted to The School of Artillery in Lark Hill, United Kingdom, for a 2 year exchange posting, initially instructing on AS90 (Det Comd). WO2 Sullivan was awarded the Australia Day Medallion for his service to the Battery in 2002 and 2003. Officers and Gunners of the Bty have been left in good standing due to the exceptional efforts of WO2 Sullivan and wish him well on his postings in the future.

I have been impressed as the SMIG with the efforts and standards of members of the Battery. 2004 has seen a busy start to the training year for 7 Field Battery. The Battery has conducted a DFX, Exercise Tarakan, courses, and

support activities which included the official opening of the Rockingham MUD (Multi User Depot) with the Battery manning one detachment in the MUD. The Battery fully expects to be able to man two detachments by the end of 04.

Exercise Tarakan, an IMT exercise, in which the Battery conducted a Small arms live fire defence of the Gun position, an AIRN practice and a sneaker practice.

The Battery is running a large amount of non continuous courses, which include; ROBC Mod 1, Advanced Gunners, Gunner grade 1 Mod 3, M2A2 conversion, ICT, RAA Safety Officers, and the Supervisor Offensive Support Gen leg courses. This will ensure that, as many members of the Battery are Rank and Trade Qualified.

The Battery continues to provide a large amount of support to 13 Bde in various support tasks. The Battery also provided support to AFG in the form of the BG and four Number Ones for the Australia Day Salute held in Canberra. Well that's all from me, I look forward in keeping you informed on the Battery's past and present activities in the next issue.

'UBIQUE'

**Dion McRae**  
Warrant Officer Class Two

**The Hobbs Memorial Stone**

For those that will attend Anzac Day and the dedication of the new Artillery Memorial, you will notice an engraved inlaid stone bearing the message,

**TO MY COMRADES  
WHO DIED  
1914 – 1918  
THAT I MIGHT LIVE  
IN FREEDOM**

This stone was incorporated into the driveway entrance gates of Lt-Gen Sir J. J. Talbot Hobbs home, "The Bungalow" at Mosman Park. When the property was demolished the gates and the stone were donated by the Hobbs family to the RAAHS, the late John "Tally" Hobbs gave the Society permission for the stone to be included in the Artillery Memorial.

## IT'S OFFICIAL!

Since 1988 the Collection of Memorabilia displayed at the Battery has been part of Army's National Network of Museums and Official Unit Collections. In today's atmosphere of regulation and control Defence considered it appropriate to register Museums and Collections with the Australian Securities and Investments Corporation and the Australian Tax Office allowing them to become companies limited by guarantee and granting a tax deductible status for donations and tax free income.

It is pleasing to announce that the previously known 7 Field Battery Official

Collection is now a Company Limited by Guarantee and has been re-named "The Hobbs Australian Artillery Memorial Foundation", thus reinforcing the strong link with the Battery's proud heritage.

The Company is controlled by a Board of Directors chaired by the Colonel Commandant Western Region, Brigadier Richard A Lawler, AM.

The RAA Historical Society, reporting to the Battery Commander through the Training Officer will exercise Day to day administration and curatorial aspects of the Foundation.

Details of Membership will be announced in a further edition of Artillery WA.

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## **ANZAC DAY**

**Timings:** Dedication of Artillery Memorial and Dawn Service  
**5.00 for 5.15 AM for form up**  
Gunfire Breakfast will follow the Service

March off in Perth – **Form Up 9.15 AM** – Stand # 31 – Next to Trinity Arcade, along St. George's Tce – Please check Western Australian Newspaper. This year the parade will step off to the East towards Victoria Square, for a gathering in Langley Park, due to works in the Esplanade.  
Refer to page 18 for a map of the route march.

Then join the Gunners back at HAP for the afternoon festivities.

## **WARNING ORDER!**

All Ranks Artillery Corps Mixed Dinning -  
in- Night at Hobbs Artillery Park

**Saturday 3 July 2004**

More details in the next Newsletter –  
Mark your calendars **NOW!**

## **Gunner's Day**

**Advance notice is given that this year's Gunner's Day celebrations will be reverting to the afternoon format of previous year's – More details later.**



# JUMP, YOU BASTARDS, JUMP!

On 5 September 1943 a light section of men and 25- Pounder Shorts from the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment AIF parachuted into Nadzab in the Markham Valley of New Guinea. This is the story of that jump into history.....

Gunner Robbie Robertson exited badly and plummeted headfirst downwards. Suddenly, he heard a loud crack and he was wrenched upright and upwards. His chute snapped open and blossomed in the cool air. For only the second time in his life, this young soldier experienced the exhilaration of floating above the earth and for several minutes, it was difficult to believe that he was in the middle of a war. "And this is my first time in action," he mused."

VX 50978 Gunner Ian Robertson had just jumped into history – the history of 31 young Australian Artillerymen who had just parachuted with two guns into New Guinea's Nadzab airstrip in support of the 503<sup>rd</sup> US Parachute Infantry Regiment's securing of a landing ground for the Allied advance east to capture Lae.

But this was not time to be daydreaming! Six hundred feet was not that high and now the ground was rushing up to meet the young paragonner. Stop any oscillation, grab the shrouds and turn into the wind, feet together, knees slightly bent and... 'Oh! What the hell were those other two points?' muttered Ian.

Then he was down, rolling smacking the release buckle...lying still – it was all over! He leapt to his feet and was guided through the head-high kunai grass by Lieutenant Pearson's voice on the megaphone. Johnnie Pearson gathered his flock around the cane pannier from which they drew their weapons then allocated search arcs to find pieces of the guns and other equipment. Only Gunner Lidgerwood had been injured in the drop, unfortunately landing in a tree and hurting his shoulder.



*A 25 Pounder Short.  
Photo courtesy of the  
RAAHS WA photo  
library*

Sixty years ago this was the Markham Valley on Sunday 5 September 1943. At 10.15 am, six squadrons of US Mitchell B-25 strafers led an armada of 302 aircraft. Each aircraft's eight .50-calibre machine guns swept the carpet of kunai grass ahead of their bays disgorging 60 fragmentation bombs. Six A-20s then obscured the scene with smoke and at 2000 feet 96 voices screamed, 'Stand up! Lock up! Check your equipment! Stand in the door....jump!' The C-47 Transports spawned three battalions of US 'Sky Soldiers'. On each side of the columns of C-47s and about 1000 feet above, fighters hugged their protégée whilst brother aircraft at 7000 feet provided an interim umbrella below the top cover boys up in the sun, staggered from fifteen to twenty thousand

feet. The securing force had been launched for the 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Division.

Sergeant Wally Murnane and his detachment were the first to find a complete set of gun parts. Their squat little 'baby' 25 Pounder Short was quickly assembled and brought into action.

"Hit the ground!" somebody screamed as an ammunition box that had broken loose from its parachute load hurtled over the detachment's head and crashed into the grass nearby. It was 3.15 pm and two Fortresses were delivering 192 rounds to fuel the hungry guns.

It was hard to believe that less than a month ago, Lt Pearson had approached Gunner Robertson, his friend from the reinforcement ship that had taken both to join the 2/4 Field regiment AIF in the Middle East in September 1941. 'Robbie, ' he confided, 'There's a delicate mission coming off...I can't tell you about it, but would you like to volunteer?' This duo had arrived in Syria too late to see action. The months of waiting in the Brisbane Line when the unit had been recalled to Australia had whetted their appetites for 'their slice of the war'. Robbie was a good signaller and visions of a submarine drop behind enemy lines began running through his mind. 'OK!' he said, 'Count me in.'

Back at Nadzab strip, a new challenge faced the 2/4<sup>th</sup>'s 'Light Section' – fire. The Americans, desiring to enlarge the airstrip quickly chose to burn the kunai grass rather than cut it by hand. Fanned by the breeze, this was soon out of control and only the bushmanship of some of the Gunners saved their position from being destroyed. In truth, the Gunners were quite disappointed that the landing had been unopposed by the Japanese and their Shorts had not been called out in support.

In response to General Sir Thomas Blamey's 30 July 1943 instruction for the capture of Lae-Nadzab, Lt Gen Edmund Herring commanding New Guinea Force ordered the 9<sup>th</sup> Division to capture Lae from an amphibious landing east of Lae whilst the 7<sup>th</sup> Division was to establish itself in the Markham Valley west of Lae by an overland and airborne operation. The 503<sup>rd</sup> US Parachute Infantry Regiment was to secure Nadzab for the 7 Div's 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade to airland then advance east to Lae. On 8 August 1943, the commanding officer of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, Lt Col Alan Blyth was ordered to support 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade. He approached Maj Gen George Vasey commanding 7 Div and proposed parachuting a two-gun section of the new 25 Pounder Shorts to support the 503<sup>rd</sup> Regiment. Since the Americans did not have any guns suitable for paradrops, Vasey agreed.



*A 25 Pounder short and crew.  
Photo courtesy of the RAAHS WA Photo Library*



*Paragunners in Training.  
Photo taken from The Story of 2/4<sup>th</sup> Fd Regt by R. L. Henry*

That first night all the paragunners gathered around Murnane's gun and stores. (The second gun's parts had been scattered about a mile away and it was not until the second day that Sergeant Jimmy Thompson and his crew brought it into action.) Ian Thompson describes the utter exhaustion by nightfall and how they 'slept like the dead in silken parachutes' after enjoying the luxury of American rations that night. Early next morning Robbie and Lt Frank Ross joined a forward US company and they move up into the hills to Gabsonkek as a blocking force against attack from the north. 'We only fired two [gun] rounds at a Japanese pill box,' Ian recalled. Lt Frank Faulkner and a signaller joined the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion protecting the southern flank. When Gunner Robinson reported to his battery headquarters as directed by Lt Pearson, he was part of a group 'coming from all directions...even two of the blokes from my own tent were there, but none of us had disclosed our secret orders,' Robbie remembered. The CO had selected four Lt's (Johnnie Pearson, Frank Ross, Frank Faulkner, 'Puck' Evans) and invited them to chose about ten 'good all round men' from each of their batteries. Then began week of tough physical training, forced marches, running along the beach, climbing ropes, tumbling. Next the men were told to parade with their gear and were spirited off in trucks. Only as they entered the lines of the 503<sup>rd</sup> US Parachuting Infantry Regiment did they begin to realise what might be in store for them. Ross and Robertson's company north of Nadzab began patrolling. Captain Don Moorhouse had arrived overland

with the 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Pioneer Battalion and supply of sig cable. Robbie was flat out laying miles of line back to the guns when a cheerful officer walking by made a remark to him about Short 25 Pounders. Ian looked straight up the eyes of the 7 Div commander. General George Vasey told Ian he was 'doing a good job', encouraged him to 'keep it up', and then wandered off along the track, completely alone.

When Lt Pearson reported to Colonel Kinsella, commander of the 503<sup>rd</sup> Regiment, the latter was amazed that the Gunners did not know their mission. He insisted on addressing them and offered an 'out' for anyone to withdraw. 'Not one man took a pace out of the ranks,' Robbie recalled proudly. Twenty four hours of hard training latter, 33 would-be paragunners made their first jump from 1200 feet at the 30-mile airstrip outside of Port Moresby. 'An horrendous feeling' crept over Gunner Robertson and he 'had to pluck his utmost of courage' as he moved into the doorway in acknowledgment of 'Stand in the door!' yelled by the jumpmaster.

The battery commander and observer parties from the 54<sup>th</sup> Battery and E Troop guns arrived on 8 September and 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade stepped off for Lae. The Light Section of paragunners did not take part in this advance but remained in support of 503<sup>rd</sup> Regiment who continued to maintain a secure perimeter around Nadzab as it built up into a major base. Lae fell to the 7<sup>th</sup> Division on 16 September 1943.

Three men, including Lt Evans were injured in the one and only practice jump at the Port Moresby. Lt Alan Clayton volunteered to replace Evans and jump straight into action with the other 30 'experienced' paragunners. Their journey to the intermediate Tsili Tsili airstrip on 'Z' Day was uneventful. Their frustration mounted with a two hour wait for a call forward which did not eventuate until the 2IC of the 503<sup>rd</sup> landed in his light aircraft and said, 'What are you doing still here - GO!' The Douglas transports roared into life and during the ten-minute hop to Nadzab climbed to 60 feet.

The red light came on above the jumpmaster. 'Stand up! Lock up! Check your equipment! Stand in the door!' The light went green...

**'Jump, you bastards, jump!'**



*Paragunners descending over Nadzab, New Guinea - 5 September 1943. Photo from A Story of 2/4<sup>th</sup> Fd Regt RAA by R. L. Henry*

*This article, written by Col A. Burke was extracted from the 2003 Edition of the RAA Liaison Letter. Col Burke is the Honorary Historian of the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment RAA. To commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this jump, the 4<sup>th</sup> Fd Regt RAA Historical Collection has formally taken charge of a 25-Pounder Short, in the presence of one of the original 2/4<sup>th</sup> Paragunners.*



# **THE AIMING POST**

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

### **President's Report:**

It is pleasant to report that the AudioVisual Work Programme for the Tunnels at Buckland Hill is nearing completion and will present an attractive upgrade to complement the existing displays.

Of particular interest will be the Audio Tapes which involved considerable effort by a team lead by Curator Don Rae and these provide a new dimension to assist the Tunnel Guides in presentation.

On behalf of the Society, it is desired to extend to two retiring management committee persons – Terri Little and Robert Eggleston – our appreciation for their contributions over the years.

Whilst we are losing Terri to Darwin, Robert is continuing his active association and has accepted the new role of Display Management.

Bruce G. Campbell  
**President**

### **In this Issue**

Beware the Ides of March – Fremantle 1944

VIP visits Leighton Tunnels

A link with the Hobbs Heritage

The Leighton Battery heritage Site

A Dutch Submarine Memorial Gun

Villers – Bretonneux – Snapshots of Australian War Memorial

## **Beware The Ides of March – Fremantle 1944.**

### **By Bob Glyde**

After the Battle of Midway in June 1942 the threat of a naval attack on Fremantle appeared to diminish. The US Army 197<sup>th</sup> Coast /AA Regiment was packed up and transferred to Queensland, leaving the Australian anti-aircraft defence of Fremantle woefully under equipped. Only four HAA gun sites were operational by August 1942 in the Vital Area around Fremantle. Two sites, which had been developed by the Americans, were non-operational due to a shortage of fire control instruments for the 3.7 in guns and a further site was under construction. Two LAA Regiments were available to provide some protection against low level attacks. Even so, troops from the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> LAA Regiment provided protection at Pearce AFB, the Catalina base at Crawley Bay and the Elementary Flying Training School, 500 kilometres up the coast at Geraldton.

By January 1944, the Allies were planning their moves through the South West and Central Pacific with the Philippines as their main objective before moving closer to the Japanese mainland. The Japanese navy, although it had taken a severe battering during 1942/43, was still a force to be reckoned with. The Order of Battle of 3<sup>rd</sup> Aust Corps recorded that Fremantle Fortress had under command three HAA batteries manning nine gun sites covering the Fremantle Port area and Cockburn Sound and two LAA batteries. This was a vast difference from the AA protection in August 1942.

When a heavy cruiser task force comprising the "Aoba", "Tone" and "Chikuma", plus support vessels, were identified at Singapore, by code breakers and submarines of Task Force 71 operating from Fremantle, there was concern by Allied authorities that an attack on Fremantle could be imminent. These cruisers represented a formidable force, each vessel was equipped with 203mm guns as the main armament. They therefore totalled 26-203 mm guns and were capable of flying off 12 floatplanes between them.

The first warning was issued to 3 Aust Corps on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1944 arising from information received from the Comd USN Task Force 71. Verbal instructions were issued to place Fremantle Fortress on minimum readiness and to concentrate maximum HAA defence over the Fremantle Docks area. Confirmation of the verbal order was issued at a conference held at HQ 3 Aust Corps on 3<sup>rd</sup> March. At this period in the war the Volunteer Defence Corps personnel were responsible for the manning of some gun sites and a warning order was issued on 4<sup>th</sup> March reducing their time from 24 hours to 6 hours readiness.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Aust Garrison Battalions had the role of close protection for the CA and AA



*Leighton Battery – Photo courtesy of the RAAHS Photo Library*

equipment with particular emphasis on the batteries at Swanbourne, Leighton and Cape Peron. LHQ amended their mapping programme in order to produce the new HAA 2 in 1 map for troops under command of the Fortress and to produce the CA grid chart to cover radar seaward range. 10<sup>th</sup> Aust Garrison Battalion was responsible for the close defence of the batteries on Rottnest Island.

The opportunity was taken to carry out sub-calibre shoots with the 152 mm batteries and a proposed practice shoot with the 234 mm guns on Rottnest Island had to be deferred due to the poor visibility as the tropical cyclone moved further down the coast.

On 7<sup>th</sup> March information was received from the Commander TF 71 that a Japanese task force of two or more large ships had moved through the Lombok Straits into the Indian Ocean. The submarine tracking the force then lost touch with it. It is interesting to note that there is a discrepancy between the war diaries and Gill in his AWM publication "Royal Australian Navy 1942-45", which stated the force, had exited through the Sunda Strait. Reconnaissance was made difficult by the formation of a tropical cyclone off the northwest coast and moving about 160 kms off the coast in a southerly direction.

Based on the normal economical cruising speed of the ships comprising the task force, the authorities estimated they should reach the Fremantle area about 12<sup>th</sup> March. It was thought that the raiders would attempt to attack shipping in

the Fremantle Harbour area and they may even attempt to land marines to destroy harbour facilities. With the 12 aircraft they were capable of flying off, they could present a formidable attacking force. Fremantle would have to rely on its coast and anti-aircraft defences to defend the vital areas. The only naval ship of any consequence in the area was HMS "Sussex" (8-203mm guns). HMAS "Adelaide" (7-102mm guns) a light cruiser of World War 1 design, would have been of little value against the modern Japanese heavy cruisers and the ship's AA defences were limited. The RAAF had arranged additional aircraft in the form of Beaufort bombers and the US Air Wing Ten at Crawley was directed to increase surveillance to the west of Fremantle to ensure the maximum possible warning time was available to the land defences.

On 8<sup>th</sup> March all training courses were closed down and personnel returned to their units that were then placed on 6 hours notice. A recommendation was made for the port to be closed to movement of shipping during the hours of darkness and for a suspension of the time check system controlling the entry of USN submarines. The NOIC and USN then promulgated instructions to their units. Coast watch posts were established north of the Perth/Fremantle area.

A radar plot on 10<sup>th</sup> March caused concern and a full-scale air raid alert was sounded. A short time later the RAAF advised the plot was believed due to an atmospheric phenomenon. The situation was difficult as the weather north of the Tropic of Capricorn was interfering with air reconnaissance to seaward of Fremantle. As a further precaution personnel from 107 Aust Tank Attack Regiment with heavy machine guns were seconded to 660 LAA Battery at Crawley Bay to bolster AA defences. Late on 10<sup>th</sup> March instructions were issued to Coast and AA defences that special alertness was to be exercised during the period 0430 and 0700 hours daily.

At 1300 hours on 11<sup>th</sup> March, HMAS "Adelaide" escorted the eight merchant vessels, then in Fremantle, as far as Albany and the cruiser remained there to protect the USN submarine tenders "Orion" and "Pelius" which had been sent south several days earlier. The USN and Dutch

submarines in harbour had been deployed west of Fremantle and Geraldton to give early warning of any approach of the task force.

A radar report at 1342 hours about 3600 metres west of Rottnest Island caused some concern until identified as an USN submarine of the covering force. This was possibly the "Bonefish" which US Admiral Christie had sent to sea to stand watch as zero hour approached only for the vessel and its

crew to be mercilessly battered for three days, by weather whipped up by the tropical cyclone.

A RAAF Fighter Wing arrived in the Perth area over the period 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> March to reinforce the existing air force units. Their arrival had been delayed for two days due to weather conditions. As well a squadron, each of Beaufighters, Mitchells and Kittyhawks had transferred to the operational base unit at Exmouth Gulf. Three of the air force units were Dutch squadrons, which operated under Australian control and identified by RAAF squadron numbers. 18 Squadron equipped with Mitchell B-25 bombers deployed from Batchelor in the Northern Territory arriving in Exmouth at the same time as the cyclone moved through the area. Although this made conditions very difficult all aircraft landed safely. 120 Squadron, equipped with Kittyhawk fighters, deployed from Canberra refuelling at Ceduna, Forrest and Kalgoorlie. This was far cry from present day operations, which provide for in flight refuelling. The third squadron flying Beaufighters also deployed from Darwin. In the main such squadrons were made up of Dutch aircrew and Australian ground staff.

By 1000 hours on 12<sup>th</sup> March 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps instructed all units with the exception of Fremantle Fortress to resume normal routine and training. There was however to be no withdrawal of personnel on AA duties from airstrips or Crawley Flying Boat Base.

At 0510 13<sup>th</sup> March a radar plot on the coast defence placed an unidentified vessel at 57.6 kms approaching Rottnest at 20 knots. Oliver Hill Battery was placed on standby; at 1740 metres the vessel was challenged and identified as the USS "Childs" one of the local submarine support ships. The vessel had been placed at serious risk approaching a closed port 70 minutes ahead of schedule and at greater speed than the regulatory 15 knots. Visibility was poor and at 1400 hours was restricted to 13 kms.

At 1030 hours 14<sup>th</sup> March Fremantle Fortress was ordered to resume normal manning and training and personnel from 104 Aust Tank Attack Regiment, on special AA duty at the Crawley Catalina Base, were instructed to return to their parent unit.

Lt Gordon Bennett expressed his thanks to all personnel of the Command and explained the reason for the activities for the past fortnight.

Post war examination of Japanese records dismissed the idea that the vessels intended to attack Fremantle. Gill reports that the task force had been issued with instructions to "disrupt Allied communications in the Indian Ocean". The task force commander had been instructed to kill the crews of any ships intercepted, saving only specialised personnel such as radio operators for interrogation.

This was carried out ruthlessly. The only vessel intercepted during the raid was the British India liner "Behar" (6100 tons). Of the 108 survivors picked up by the HMIJS "Tone", when the vessel arrived at Tanjong Priok Roads on 16th March only the "Behar's" Chief Officer and fourteen others including two women were alive, after reportedly rough handling.



Capt McCallum observes the fall of shot. During the shoot the flag indicates that the gun is within its arc of fire. The 5.25 guns were made as secondary armaments for the Prince of Wales class of battleships.

Photo courtesy of the RAAHS Photo library

It is believed that the raid was called off after the "Behar" incident because the radio officer on the vessel had managed to transmit a message advising the ship was under attack and the Japanese commander considered it too risky to remain in the Indian Ocean when his presence there was known. The ships reported on 7<sup>th</sup>

March by a submarine of TF 71 were not the three vessels of the main task force but were two light cruisers of the support group moving from the Lombok Straits to Sunda Straits to await the return of the main force, to provide additional protection on their re-entry

It has been said that the alarm served a purpose in that both the service and civilian population had become complacent following two years of comparative lack of military activity. It did provide a means of testing the ability of the RAAF to reinforce the western area at short notice, to test the defences of Fremantle so deficiencies could be overcome and reactivate the Civil Defence requirements of a nation at war.

Information Sources:

*Fremantle Fortress War Diaries, AWM 52, 1/6, 63, March 1944.*

*3<sup>d</sup> Aust Corps War Diaries, AWM 52, 1/4/12, March 1944.*

*Operations of the Fremantle Submarine Base 1942-1945. David Creed, The Naval Historical Soc. of Australia.*

*HMAS "Adelaide 1922-1946. Lt G Swinden RAN. The Naval Historical Soc. of Australia.*

*Australia in the War of 1939-45, Royal Australian Navy 1942-45, Vol 2, G H Gill. Australian War Memorial. Pages 388-391.*

*Fremantle's Secret Fleets. Lynne Cairns. West Australian Maritime Museum.*

*The Fourth Ally, The Dutch Forces in Australia in WWII. Doug Huttrst.*

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## VIP VISITS LEIGHTON TUNNELS



of Malcolm Higham on the day.

Bill Young, who had driven himself to Perth from Sydney, had donated some of the paintings he had done to be exhibited in the Sandakan display that was being held at the State Library, Alexander Building from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> August. The display was organised and set up by the Borneo POW Relatives Group WA which was an education campaign preceding Sandakan Day, which was held on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 2003.

On Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August, Bill Young a survivor of the Borneo POW Camp at Sandakan was given a private tour of the Leighton Tunnels and surrounding displays. The tour was organised by Ken Thurston (who is also a member of the Borneo POW Relatives Group WA) with the assistance



Ken (left) shows Bill Young around the Leighton Site

Bill Young enjoyed having the opportunity to be shown the Leighton Tunnels, with the tour taking two hours to complete instead of the usual one hour. Bill was surprised to see how much history was retained in the area and will no doubt pass the word on when he returns home of what he saw.

**By Ken Thurston**



## A LINK WITH THE HOBBS HERITAGE

Many may be unaware that General Hobbs and his extended family were great yachtsmen and that the General was a Foundation Member of the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club at Peppermint Grove adjacent to his home, "The Bungalow".

The Memorial Gates at the Entrance to the Club are named after the General as is the Drive leading to the Club and within the buildings is a Function Room named after Colonel Athol Hobbs, one of the General's sons and father of the Society's late Member John "Tally" Hobbs.

A proposal to establish a Gunner link with the Club met with favourable response from the Hobbs Artillery Park Officers' Mess who generously donated on Permanent Loan one of the two 25pr Gun Howitzers owned by the Mess.

The Gun was professionally restored by the RAAHS Restoration Team and delivered to site on Wednesday 3 March 2004 where it will command a prominent position in front of the Club House.

Society President Bruce Campbell, a Past Commodore of the Club, has arranged suitably inscribed plaques to record this historic event.

Don Rae



## THE LEIGHTON BATTERY HERITAGE SITE

Over the past twelve months a sub-committee has developed the concept of introducing professionally produced Audio presentations in selected areas of the Tunnels Complex. Now nearing completion, four "state of the art" digitalised audio descriptions of the locations will introduce visitors to descriptions of what went on in those dark days of WW2. Some introduce realistic sounds of activities including a Fire Mission with supporting gunfire and the sounds of pneumatic drilling during the construction phase of development.

Whilst an expensive project, the Society was fortunate to receive two very generous sponsorships that allowed the project to proceed without seriously affecting Society funds.

Once the system is "up and running" Members will be invited to what is hoped will be an exciting preview of what the visiting public can look forward to on our Open Days.

As an aside, the Society is actively recruiting for Tour Guides and Members who may be so inclined should contact the Tour Coordinator David Carter at his home on 9367 3539. Training and uniforms are provided by the Society.

Don Rae



The newly restored gun at the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club – *Photos courtesy of Malcom Higham*

### **Images from Gallipoli – (From front cover)**

1. Gunners serving a well camouflaged British 18- pounder field gun.
2. A fatigue party carries 18-pounder shells to a gun position.
3. Turkish artillerymen prepare to fire on Allied positions on Gallipoli.
4. A team of soldiers strain forward to manhandle a heavy field gun up a truck and into position.
5. Simple wooden crosses mark the graves of some of the men killed during the fighting at Gallipoli.
6. The Anzac Digger.

## A Dutch Submarine Memorial Gun

**By Bob Glyde**

There are a number of Dutch cannon on display or held in storage at Western Australian Museums. Most of these salvaged from ships of the Dutch East India Company, which were wrecked in early times off our coast. Few people would be aware there is a more modern Dutch memorial gun over looking Freshwater Bay from the grounds of the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club. The pedestal mounting would quickly identify the weapon as a naval gun; in this case, the deck gun of a submarine. Details stamped on the breech identify it as an 8.8 cm Dutch Naval Bofor NO.2 Mk 7.proofed for service in 1923.

This gun serves to remind us of a time sixty one years ago when it was not unusual to pass young men in the street wearing a German style naval uniform. Their cap tally band read *Koninklijk Marine (Royal Navy)*. They were not members of the "Kormoran" on work release from their POW camp but were ratings from a small Dutch naval contingent based at Fremantle after the fall of the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia today) to Japanese forces.

At the commencement of the war with Japan, the Netherlands had a sizeable fleet operating from the naval base of Sourabaya on Java Island. After several of their larger vessels had been lost in the Battle of the Java Sea and it was obvious that the Japanese would shortly control the island, all the Dutch naval units sailed for either Trincomalee, a British naval base in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) or for Fremantle, in Western Australia.

Three of their submarines reached Fremantle followed by a minesweeper. Initially the Dutch had fifteen submarines based in the Netherlands East Indies. These vessels had been specifically designed for operations in the shallow waters around the islands. They were of a coastal type displacing about 500 tons on the surface and 600 tons submerged. Some were quite modern for the time they were constructed in some cases employing the schnorkel apparatus, which was further developed by the Germans at a later date. The plans for this apparatus, which enabled the boats to operate submerged using their main diesel engines, had been captured by the Germans when they had overrun Holland in 1940.

The Dutch submarines were identified by numbers rather than names. Up until 1939 the Eastern Fleet units bore the prefix "K" "Kolonien" whereas the vessels in European water bore the prefix "O", "Onderseeboot". After 1939 all vessel constructed bore the prefix "O". Thus the most modern units

in Indonesian waters were O16, O19 and O20 built during the 1938/39 period, the remaining units dated back as far as 1921/22 construction.

The submarine units were quickly engaged in offensive actions against Japanese units sinking four merchantmen and a destroyer in December 1941.. Just as quickly losses occurred with O16 being destroyed in an Allied minefield and Japanese forces sinking K.XVI, X.VII, and O20.

K VIII, KIX and KXII arrived in Fremantle, K.XIV, K X1, O19 and K XVI reached Ceylon. The rapid advance of the Japanese forced the Dutch to abandon four vessels in the hands of the repair shops. These had to be scuttled to prevent them being captured. .

Fremantle at that time had no facilities for servicing submarines, a situation soon to change when units of the American Asiatic Fleet together with two depot ships arrived after having been first driven from their Subic Bay base in the Philippines and like the Dutch, from their temporary base in the East Indies. The Dutch vessels, which arrived in Fremantle, were obsolete and of little value operationally. The US submarine commander Admiral Lockwood immediately condemned KVIII, which was commissioned in 1922. The vessel was later scuttled in Cockburn Sound to provide a breakwater, whilst its engines were removed to provide power for a new slipway being constructed in the port. KIX commissioned in 1923, was refitted in Fremantle, It was considered not suitable for operational service and was sent to Sydney where it was commissioned into the RAN and used for training anti-submarine units of the RAN. KXII sent to Sydney for a refit before returning to Fremantle. The vessel was serviced by the Americans and took part in operational patrols as well as being used in covert operations against Japanese forces in the East Indies.

One of the major problems in maintaining these old units in service was the lack of spare parts and specialised equipment of Dutch manufacture. Replacement equipment had to be hand manufactured. Even the guns were of Dutch manufacture and required ammunition, which was not used by the RAN or USN.

This problem with replacement parts was highlighted in late May 1942 when Sydney was attacked by the Japanese midget submarines. KIX was moored close to HMAS Kuttabul, when that unit was torpedoed. The resultant underwater blast damaged the batteries and it was found to be impossible to repair or replace them. The use of the unit for training purposes became impractical and the vessel was paid off



from RAN service in 1944. It reverted to Dutch control and was converted to an oil lighter but whilst being towed off the NSW coast near Seal Rocks it broke lose from the towing vessel and ran aground and was abandoned. The rusted remains can still be seen in the area.

KXII survived operational service for two more years until servicing difficulties forced her to be withdrawn and utilised in a training role until the war's end when she was scrapped.

The Swaardvisch, a former British modern "T" class vessel, arrived with the British 8<sup>th</sup> Submarine Flotilla together with the O19, one of the original units, which escaped to Ceylon, during September 1944. A further two modern units later joined the flotilla at Fremantle. The "Swaardvisch" achieved several notable successes whilst operating from Fremantle.

One of the boats, which had escaped to Ceylon, KXI was used as an asdic training ship for most of the war period out of the naval base of Trincomalee. In March 1945 it arrived in Fremantle. Due to its age,(commissioned in 1925), it was decided to scrap the vessel. It was sold for scrap, towed to the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club, at the time being used as a temporary naval facility, and partially stripped. The deck

gun now displayed at RFBYC was presented to the club. The vessel was then towed into the Fremantle Harbour. Whilst further work was being undertaken on the hulk, a valve was left open and the boat sank in the harbour. After being raised from the harbour floor, it was towed to the "ships graveyard" off Rottnest where it was scuttled in 100 fathoms of water.

In addition to the submarine presence, the Netherlands navy was also represented by the light cruisers "Tromp" and "Jacob van Heemskerck" and two destroyers all of whom formed a flotilla of four operating out of Fremantle from 1942 until 1944, working closely with HMAS "Adelaide".

Information Sources.

*Fremantle's Secret Fleets.* Lynne Cairns. Published by the WA Maritime Museum.

*Jane's Fighting Ships of World War II.* Forward by Anthony Preston. Published by Bracken Book – London.

*Allies in a Bind.* Jack M Ford. Published by Netherland's Ex-Servicemen and Women's Association. Queensland Australia.

*The Fourth Ally.* Doug Hurst. Published by the author.

*Operations of the Fremantle Submarine Base 1942 – 1945.* David Creed. Published by The Naval Historical Society of Australia.

**VILLERS – BRETONNEUX - Snapshots**

Courtesy of Capt. Stewart O'Brien – FO at 7 Fd Bty



AUSTRALIAN MEMORIAL



GRAVE OF UNKNOWN GUNNER

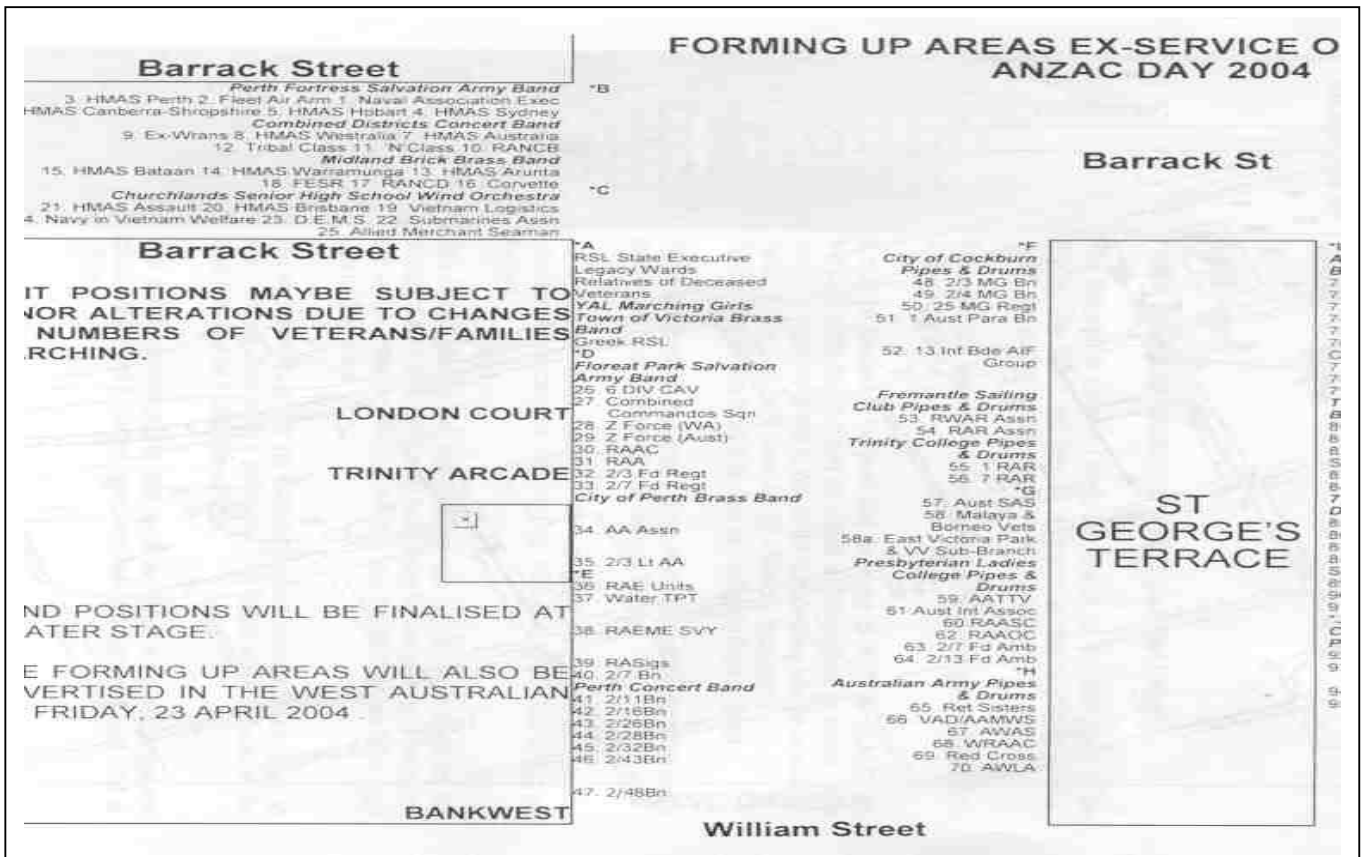
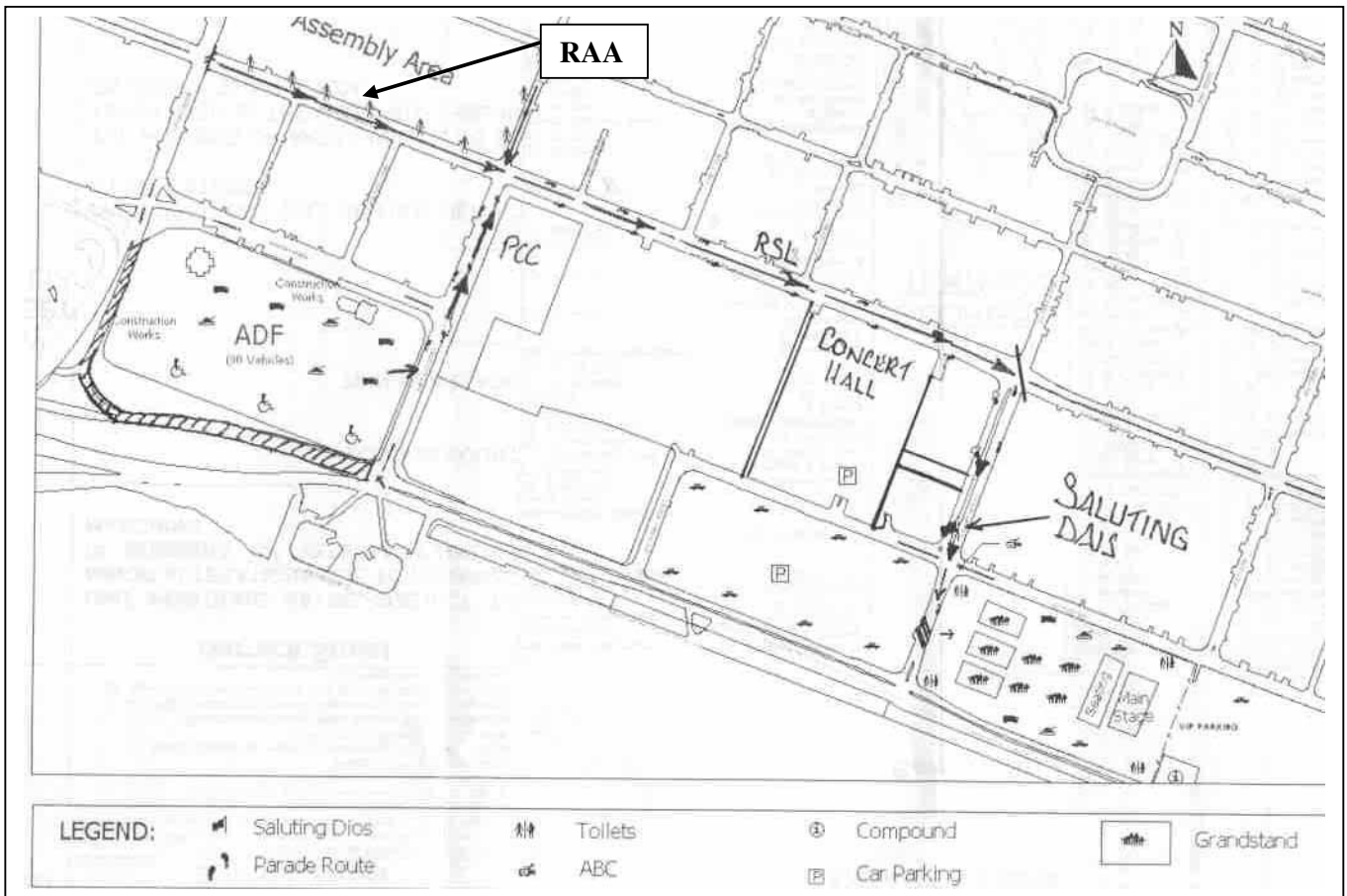


BACK WALL OF MEMORIAL – LISTS 11,000 NAMES OF AUSTRALIANS WITH NO KNOWN GRAVE IN FRANCE.



MEMORIAL LAWNS

ANZAC DAY 2004 MAP



Everywhere Where Right and Glory Lead