



Artillery WA

Official Newsletter of Royal Australian Artillery Association of WA (Inc), 2/3 Fd Regt RAA, 2/7 Fd Regt, 3 Fd Regt Associations and RAA Historical Society of WA (INC).

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February 2006

19th FEBRUARY 1942

Darwin bombing shocks Australians



Australian soldiers standing in a bomb crater in front of the damaged 119th Australian General Hospital after the first Japanese bombing raid on Darwin, 19 February 1942. (AWM PO1791.003)



Notice Board

Mark these dates in your calendars

Sunday 19 March 2006

AGM's at HAP

Refer to Timings on Page 3 or the attached Flyer

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ANZAC DAY

**Dawn Service & Gunfire Breakfast at HAP followed by
Anzac Day March**

RAAHS BUSY BEES 2006

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 28 th Jan | 25 th Feb | 25 th Mar | 29 th Apr |
| 27 th May | 24 th Jun | 29 th Jul | 26 th Aug |
| 30 th Sep | 28 th Oct | 25 th Nov | 30 th Dec |

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

Bombing of Darwin – See article page 7

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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 (Inc) PO Box 881, Claremont WA 6910. Phone: 93836544 Fax: 93836370 or E-mail the Editor at info@artillerywa.org.au

Everywhere Where Right and Glory Lead

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY ASSOCIATION WA (INC)

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held at Hobbs Artillery Park on Sunday 19th March, details are contained elsewhere in the Newsletter.

This is the opportunity for you to take part in the election of Office Bearers for the next twelve months and also to review the accounts for the past year.

An invitation is extended to all members.

On behalf of all Association members I would like to extend our congratulations to Major Andrew Dunjey, Battery Commander 7 Field Battery on the occasion of winning the Mount Schanck Trophy for 2005. Well done!

Ubique

Bruce G. Campbell

President

ASSOCIATION'S AGM

(SEE THE ENCLOSED FLYER)

3 Fd Regt RAAA AGM 0930 (Sgts Mess)

RAAA AGM 0945 (Sgts Mess)

RAAHS 1000 (Drill Hall)

MORNING TEA FOLLOWS

ADVERTISING

ANYBODY INTERESTED IN ADVERTISING THEIR BUSINESS IN **ARTILLERY WA** FOR A DONATION OF \$ 10 (TEN) PER YEAR, (FOUR ISSUES), BOTH IN PRINTED AND WEB SITE EDITIONS, PLEASE MAIL OR EMAIL THE EDITOR AT THE ADDRESSES SHOWN FOR THE ASSOCIATION TO DISCUSS OPTIONS.

News Flash

WELFARE OFFICER

John Walsh has generously donated his services to be the Association's Welfare Officer. Anybody that needs to discuss any Welfare Funding can contact John via email at info@artillerywa.org.au or jfxwalsh@bigpond.com.au or by phone on 93836544, Wednesday mornings.



7TH FIELD BATTERY/3 FIELD REGIMENT



Battery Commander's Routine Orders

As Battery Commander, I am very pleased to advise that 7 Field Battery has won the Mount Schanck Trophy. The Commander Land Command Artillery determined that the winner for 2005 was 7 Field Battery, based on our performance in the Army Training & Evaluation Program (ARTEP) that was conducted in October 05. So 2005 was a good year for the Battery, with the focus being on gunnery and the Reserve Response Force (RRF), culminating in an ARTEP in October. The past few years have seen a changing role for the 2nd Division, with greater demands being placed on all units to provide relevant capability in support of Australian Defence Force operations and activities. The provision of a 9 man section to the RRF continues as our main effort for 2006. Success in this activity is vital to the long term future of 7 Field Battery. 13 Brigade continues to operate in an Army environment of high operational tempo and the Battery will be playing its part in meeting these requirements. We have had minimal staff changes this year which is pleasing and welcome Sgt Ross Haslett as the new BQMS. Battery personnel are looking forward to deploying by air to Cultana, South Australia in September, in order to exercise jointly with 48 Battery and 16 Battery."

Andrew Dunjey
Major
Battery Commander



The Mount Schanck Trophy

Source – Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery – Customs and Traditions by Christopher Jobson

The Mount Schanck Challenge Trophy was presented in June 1912 by Mr. W.J.T. Clarke, Esq (son of Mr. W. Clarke of Rupertswood) from Melbourne. The trophy concept and subsequent request was instigated by Captain W.S Robertson. Mr. Clarke, after discussions with Major General Kirkpatrick, offered the trophy to the Honourable Minister for Defence to the value of £100 (\$200) for a perpetual challenge trophy. The trophy was to be awarded to the field branch battery of the Australian Field Artillery, Commonwealth Militia that was judged to be the most proficient in all branches of its work during that year.

The trophy (large silver cup) was first won by 19th Battery, Melbourne in 1912. The competition lapsed between the years 1915 to 1925 and 1940 to 1957. The trophy is now awarded to the most proficient Reserve field or medium battery.

The trophy is a prize, much coveted by all the competing batteries and therefore the competition engenders friendly but fierce rivalry and promotes a high level of proficiency



TAKE POST

3 Field Regiment RAA Association

President's Message:

Welcome to 2006. We have another busy year ahead of us with Anzac Day in April, the Corp Dinner in July and Gunners day in November. Make this your year to attend all three.

At our last AGM in March 05 we decided to place our Association under the Incorporation of the Royal Australian Artillery Association WA Inc., while maintaining our own banking and Committee. As both committees have now become transparent and the aims of the RAA Assoc our the same as ours, I will be proposing at our AGM in March that the 3 Field Regiment RAA Association be disbanded with the membership and bank account transferred to the RAA Assoc. Please attend the AGM to voice your opinion.

Finally on behalf of all members and ex-members of 7 Field Battery/3 Field Regiment I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Major Andrew Dunjey, BC 7 Fd Bty and all members on the occasion of winning the Mount Schanck Trophy for 2005.

Ubique

Peter Rowles

Artillery around the World



BL 155mm C45 SP (GV6) – TRANSVAAL HORSE ARTILLERY –

Advertisements

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| <p>Clean Energy Solutions Pty Ltd Clean Coal & Hydrogen Technologies for A Cleaner Earth 0411955622</p> <p>Proud to be Associated with Artillery W.A. And Gunners— Past—Present and Future</p> |
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Everywhere Where Right and Glory Lead



THE AIMING POST

The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Of Western Australia (Inc) Newsletter

President's Report:

The interest in the Tunnel Open Days on the first Sunday of each month is commendable and the volunteer Guides provide a very professional Service backed up by Audio System.

In the Command Post, a video screen with tape now supplements the static displays available to visitors pending their underground Tour. This is part of the continuing programme to have a change in display to promote visitor interest.

On the Artillery pieces restoration, the volume of work undertaken and in hand has been challenging and the continuing efforts by the Restoration Team are appreciated.

A short while ago we were pleased to receive from the Hobbs Family, additional books and photographs which are currently in the process of being entered into the system.

As you may have read earlier in this newsletter, our AGM is being held on 19th March

Bruce G. Campbell

President

Artillery from around the world



Colonel Talbot Hobbs (right) at Gallipoli with a camouflaged 18-pounder gun, 1915. (AWM G01055)

BEQUEST

The Society is indebted to the Late John "Tally" Hobbs who made provision in his Will bequeathing a collection of books and photographs that have been in the Hobbs Family since the 19th century. The majority of the collection relates to Lieutenant General J. J. Talbot Hobbs, Tally's grandfather, and covers the period when the General was an active Militia Officer in the Perth Volunteer Artillery through to his untimely death at sea in 1938.

Of particular importance, Tally's son Ben has indicated his interest in joining the Society – should he do so, he will be the fourth generation of Hobbs associated with Artillery in Western Australia.

Darwin bombing shocks Australians



A 15-foot crater left after the air raid.

Feb 19. The Australian mainland is under assault. 188 Japanese planes rained death and destruction on Darwin in massive air raids today, and fears are growing that Japan is preparing to invade the country soon. At the very least, the raids were designed to knock out the important Allied post and so ease enemy operations on adjacent islands, particularly Java and Timor.

The bombers, escorted by single-seat Zero fighters launched from four of the aircraft-carriers used in the attack on Pearl Harbour, the *Akagi*, *Kaga*, *Hiryu* and *Soryu*, devastated the crowded harbour, air-field and city area. The death toll among civilians and military personnel was 243. The enemy also

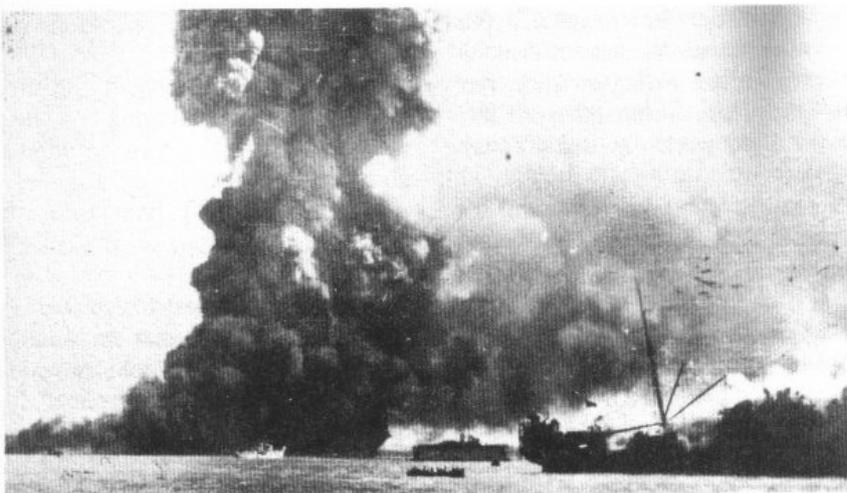
managed to sink eight ships, including the *USS Peary*, destroyed aircraft and wrecked installations.

The town had only one minute's warning when twin-engined bombers flying at 14,000 feet appeared over the harbour in perfect formation and commenced pattern-bombing at 9.58 a.m. They were quickly followed up by dive-bombers and fighters, sweeping low over the harbour and town to deliver their deadly loads.

Four US-built Kittyhawk fighters already in the air challenged the attackers, but had no chance, although the Ministry of the Air claimed late yesterday that six enemy aircraft were shot down. It is a cause of some concern that another four Kittyhawks did not even get off the ground and were destroyed where they stood.

Civilian buildings, including hospitals, were also badly damaged during the raids, and one reporter claimed that Darwin "is now a ghost town from a military point of view". There was some chaos, and many townspeople, fearing an imminent landing, joined a rush to the south in all kinds of vehicles.

The Prime Minister, John Curtin, said that "we must face with fortitude the first onset and remember that ... we are Australians and will fight grimly and victoriously" (→21).



Smoke billows out over Darwin as the ammunition ship "Neptuna" blows up.

THE BOMBING OF DARWIN 19TH FEBRUARY 1942

This year marks the 64th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin. As a young man, Des Lambert was a member of the AMF Anti-Aircraft Batteries that bore the brunt of the Japanese air raids that erupted on the fateful day – 19th February 1942.

As Honorary Historian of The Heavy Anti-Aircraft Association (W.A) Des compiled and presented the following account at a Memorial Service held at Anzac House on 18th February 1998. He has kindly consented to its inclusion in ARTILLERYWA for which we sincerely thank him.

The first enemy attack on Australian soil in the history of the Commonwealth of Australia occurred at 9.58 a.m. on Thursday, 19th February, 1942. The small Northern Territory town of Darwin suffered an air-raid attack by 188 Japanese aircraft. At the time the civilian population numbered less than 2,000.

The attack came from 81 level bombers, 71 dive bombers and 36 fighters launched from four carriers – “Akagi”, “Kaga”, “Soryu” and Hiryu” from a distance of 220 nautical miles north-west of Darwin. These carriers had formed part of a six carrier task force which had devastated Pearl Harbour on 7th December, 1941.

Since the rapid advance of the Japanese war-machine after Pearl Harbour, some efforts had been made to secure the defence of the Darwin area. Darwin was the base of the 7th Military District of Australia and several thousands of Navy, Army and Air Force personnel were stationed there. Anti-Aircraft defences were represented by the guns of two Australian Heavy AA Batteries, the 2nd and the 14th AMF, sited at strategic points around the harbour. The batteries, manned by troops principally from New South Wales and Western Australia, were equipped with sixteen 3.7-inch and two 3-inch guns, backed by ancillary searchlights and some machine-guns. The machine-gun posts were mostly equipped with .303-inch Lewis, Vickers and Bren guns and covered heavy gun emplacements, oil tanks, army camps, and ammunition dumps. The RAAF base defences included machine-guns manned by RAAF personnel. The important RAN base at Darwin included a floating dock, and extensive anti-submarine boom net which protected the entrance to the harbour.

Ironically, a radar station at Dripstone Caves outside Darwin was not yet operational. This newly invented aid, however, was eventually of great help in forestalling subsequent air attacks.

Civil defence left much to be desired. By late December most white and Asian women and children had been evacuated from the town. Little thought seems to have been given to the large Aboriginal population. They were expected to fend for themselves. The 63 white women who stayed were for the most part employed in essential services, such as nursing and telegraphy. Some civilians and organisations had dug slit trenches and there had been several air-raid alarms, but overall defences were inadequate. A tragedy of errors ensued.

By late February Port Darwin had become an important staging point for ship convoys and aircraft on their way to the fighting to the north-west. The port was particularly crowded on the 19th. A convoy of ships carrying Australian and American troops and supplies, escorted by USS “Houston”, USS “Peary”. HMAS “Warrego” and HMAS “Swan”, had returned to port after an attack by Japanese aircraft. They had been heading for Timor where reinforcements were badly needed. The congestion of the port by 47 vessels contributed to the large number of casualties that followed.

Coastwatchers, often civilian and largely unknown and unsung, proved to be a vital part of the Australian war effort. Forty-three minutes before the bombing, John Gribble, a coast watcher on Melville Island, radioed the naval station that a large number of aircraft was flying toward Darwin. A few minutes later, Father John McGrath, of the Catholic mission station on Bathurst Island, radioed Lou Curnock of the Darwin Australian Amalgamated Wireless Station reporting a similar message. Curnock immediately transmitted this to the RAAF. These warnings were not acted upon, thus increasing the number of casualties as ships and planes were not moved. The RAAF Operations centre was not alarmed. Despite the different direction from which the planes were travelling the RAAF officers believed that the aircraft were American P40 Kittyhawks which had been forced by bad weather to return from their

partly completed flight to Timor. The ten P40s had left Darwin at 0915 hours.

When the P40s arrived back over Darwin five were ordered to land, the others were ordered to patrol above the town at 15,000 feet. The time was then 9.50 a.m. Within minutes Japanese Zero fighters arrived on the scene, swooped on the five airborne P40s, and set about destroying the other five as they attempted to take-off from the RAAF 'drome. In the space of a few minutes nine of the ten US planes were destroyed, resulting in the death of four pilots and the wounding of four more. A P40, piloted by Lieut Oestreicher, escaped immediate destruction by entering cloud but was destroyed by bombs at the RAAF 'drome during the following raid that day. Lieut Oestreicher claimed to have shot down a 'Val' dive bomber and to have possibly destroyed a second.

The first bombing attack came from 45 of the 81 'Kate' level bombers which crossed the Australian coast east of Darwin, then turned near Noonamah, to approach Darwin from the south-east. This caused confusion to some defenders who were not expecting an attack from that direction and presumed that the aircraft were American. As they passed over Berrimah A/A Gun Station at about 15,000 feet they were identified as Japanese and engaged. Shortly afterwards all A/A guns in the Darwin area were in action and kept up continuous fire throughout the raid.

The air raid sirens around the town only sounded as the first bombs began to fall on the town, harbour installations and the shipping within the harbour. Then, as the level bombers completed their runs, formations of 'Val' dive bombers, soon to number 71 aircraft of this type, arrived on the scene to bomb and strafe the ships and other targets. Some of the ships desperately tried to raise their anchors to get moving. Among them was the US Destroyer "Peary" which got under weigh and put up a gallant fight as it headed towards the harbour entrance. It was hit by five bombs and sank with the loss of 80 lives, including its Captain, Lieut-Commander Bermingham. The Australian merchant ship "Neptuna", moored at the main jetty, was unloading heavy explosives at the time. After being hit by two bombs it caught fire and later exploded. 45 members of its crew, including the Master, Captain Michie, were killed. The terrible explosion shook the entire town and will never be forgotten by those who heard and saw it.

Six ships – the USS "Peary", the "Neptuna", "Meigs", "Mauna Loa", "Zealandia" and the oil tanker "British Motorist" – were sunk within the harbour, as were the RAN Lugger "Mavie", and the coal hulk "Kelat". Among the ships badly damaged were the "Barossa" and the "Port Mar",

both later to be salvaged. A number of other ships were less damaged but remained afloat. Two ships, the "Don Isidro" and the "Florence D" were destroyed off Bathurst Island.

The Australian Hospital Ship "Manunda", well marked with red crosses was badly damaged by one bomb and suffered a near miss by a second. Twelve of the medical staff and crew were killed, seven were seriously injured, and 51 had minor injuries. The near miss put 76 holes in the ship's plates and sprayed its decks with shrapnel. Despite the damage the ship remained seaworthy and was able to sail for Fremantle the following night bearing hundreds of injured and sick servicemen, seamen and civilians. A number died on the voyage.

The Australian Corvette HMAS "Katoomba" was caught undergoing repairs in the floating dock but a spirited defence by its crew saved both the ship and the dock from destruction.

Some of the first bombs to fall hit the pier where 70 waterside workers were unloading the "Neptuna" and the "Barossa" on the right-angled extension. Many of the men were blown into the water and forced to swim through burning oil. 22 men are known to have died. There were many heroic acts as the dead and dying and survivors were plucked from the water by men in small boats.

A tragedy took place in the town when the Post Office was hit and nine people killed. The Postmaster, Mr Hurtle Bald, his wife Alice and their daughter Iris were among the dead as were four female telephonists who operated the manual exchange, and two male staff members. The nine were crouched in the postmaster's garden in a shelter when a bomb landed almost on top of them and completely demolished the shelter. They died instantly. Another male staff member was fatally injured nearby.

The Post Office was badly damaged, also the postmaster's residence, the Telegraph Office, the Cable Office, the Police Barracks, the Administrator's Office and the newly-opened Civil Hospital. Some business houses and private residences were destroyed or damaged. The Berrimah Military Hospital was machine-gunned and a patient killed and another wounded.

The RAAF base suffered a vicious bombing and strafing attack by the dive bombers and fighters but only seven RAAF personnel were killed, including Wing-Commander Archibald Tindal, who was hit by a Japanese cannon shell while firing a Vickers gun against the raiders. The RAAF officers and men put up a gallant defence of the base by means of machine-guns and rifles.

At many camp sites around Darwin troops from various units fired machine-guns and rifles at low-flying dive bombers and fighters. Some units later claimed to have brought down enemy aircraft or damaged a number of them.

The Zero fighters had a field day by chasing cars, trucks and even motorcycles along the roads. The Zeros also attacked anti-aircraft gun sites and wounded two gunners at Berrimah.

The first raid lasted thirty minutes. During the subsequent lull while shocked survivors were trying to assess the situation, the attack resumed. It was a few minutes after midday. This time it came from 54 twin-engine bombers based in the Celebes and Ambon. The target was the RAAF base and, in the few minutes that followed, the base was subjected to pattern bombing that was terrifying in its intensity and efficiency. The RAAF hospital, recreation huts, messes, two hangars, equipment stores, four airmen's dormitories and several houses were wrecked. It was a miracle that no one had been killed in this attack by over 200 bombs that fell on the station. Seven RAAF men had died in the first raid.

The ARP "All-clear" sounded at 1240 hours and stunned and shocked RAAF personnel who had sought shelter in the scrub began straggling back to base.

A tally of aircraft losses from the two raids showed that seven RAAF aircraft and 19 USAAF aircraft were destroyed.

The Federal Government imposed strict censorship concerning the raids and very few people who were not in Darwin on that tragic day were to learn the full extent of the loss of lives and the destruction and damage to our ships, aircraft and property until the war ended in 1945.

It is a sad reflection on those who write our history books that few of the younger generation of Australians have ever heard of the Japanese attacks on the Australian mainland or how close we came to invasion in the dark days of 1942.

On 3rd March, 1942, A Royal Commissioner, Mr Justice Lowe of the Supreme Court of Victoria was appointed:

"To inquire into and report on all the circumstances connected with the attacks made by enemy aircraft on Darwin on 19th February 1942, including the preparedness of the Naval, Military, Air and Civil Authorities" etcetera.

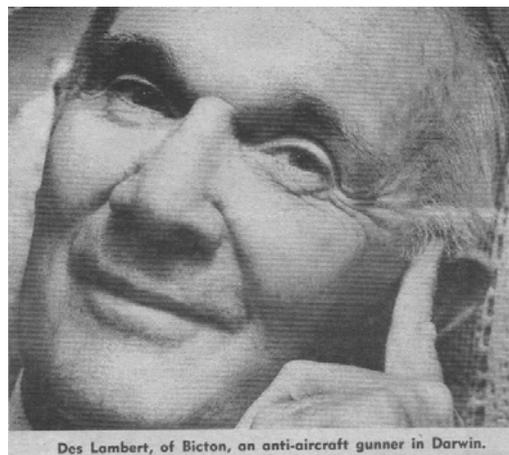
Among the findings of the Lowe Report, released in 1945, was that 243 people had been killed and between 300 and 400 injured.

Regarding the anti-aircraft defence Justice Lowe reported:

"The only defence to the enemy raid over the harbour and over the town was by means of anti-aircraft guns and such defence as the ships in the harbour possessed. There was no defence by air. The evidence before me was all to the effect that the anti-aircraft batteries operated efficiently and that the personnel of the AMF performed very creditably in their baptism of fire. Their earlier shooting seemed somewhat short of the planes at which they were firing, but later their range was better and the defence became effective."

During the two raids the sixteen 3.7-inch A/A guns fired 722 rounds and the two 3-inch 144 rounds. Lewis machine-guns manned by A/A gunners fired 10,481 rounds of .303-inch ammunition. The A/A batteries claimed two aircraft destroyed and eleven probably destroyed. Two Military Medals were awarded to gunners who had manned machine-guns during the first raid.

The Japanese continued their attacks on the Darwin area a further 62 times; the last raid was on the 12th November 1943.



Des Lambert

(Picture taken in 1988, courtesy of West Australian Newspapers)

LONG SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS AGM 19 MARCH 2006

The following people are to be congratulated on achieving a very significant milestone as Members of the RAA Historical Society.

10 YEAR

Mrs. Betty Collins

Mrs. Judith Hollier

James Clements

Les Hollier

Alf Richards

15 YEAR

Tom Arnautovic

Mrs Alma Buckingham

David Carter

John Fitzhardinge

Mike Hall

Kevin Hamilton

Ron Jager

Reg Kidd

Eric McDonald

15 YEAR

Robert Mitchell

Phil Pognault

Mrs. Veronica Rae

Ian Rae

Miss Jan Rae

Mrs. Ronnie Roach

Peter Rowles

Barry Steer

Miles Whittam-Seth

The Ordnance QF 4.5 inch Field Howitzer

Article researched by R K Glyde

This weapon came into service in the British Army in 1909 to replace the 5 inch BL field howitzer, which had been developed in the 1890s. The 5 inch howitzer was used in the British Army campaigns on the Nile in 1897-98 and again in the Chinese Boxer Rebellion. Although it had a reputation for accuracy and shell power, it was developed just before the modern recoil systems were developed. With its limited range, having to use drag shoes to absorb most of the recoil and the inability to modify the design, it was decided to call for the gun manufacturers to submit designs for a new howitzer to meet the criteria set down by the War Office..

This was done and eventually the design submitted by the Coventry Ordnance Works (COW) was accepted and manufacture began. At the outbreak of WW1 182 units had been constructed, some of which had been made available to Australia.

In the trench warfare, which developed in France in WW1, it was essential to have a weapon with which to seek out targets behind crests and to be able to engage troops sheltering in trenches, which the flat trajectory of the 18-pr field gun could not satisfactorily engage. The standard projectile for its application in World War 1 was the 35 lb shrapnel shell however HE shells were also provided. It achieved a range of 7300 yards (6700 metres) with five separate charges being available to suit the tasks on which it was employed.

When firing shrapnel it was possible to burst the projectile above the trenches for instance and the shrapnel pellets projected downwards into the trench instead of across it. The Carriage Limber, which was towed with the howitzer, by 1915 carried 110 rounds of HE and 12 rounds of shrapnel. The Wagon Limber, which carried the balance of the detachment, as well as extra ammunition, held 14 rounds of shrapnel and 112 rounds of HE. By 1939, it was recorded the

ammunition consisted of HE, Smoke and Star Shell.

The weapon was first introduced into the Australian Army front line units in 1916 when the 1st AIF Australian Field Brigades were so equipped. The brigades consisted of two batteries with 18 pr guns and one battery of 4.5 inch howitzers.

Two marques were constructed as eventually a fault developed within the breech block in the Mk I and the Mk II howitzer was fitted with a strengthened breech block. As with most of the field artillery of that era they were designed to be drawn by a team of horses.

Presumably after WW1 when the British Government made available a number of field guns with which to equip Australian field brigades it would have included 4.5 inch howitzers. They certainly formed the equipment of the 3rd Field Brigade in Western Australia.

By February 1942 a total of 77 such unit were listed as being available together with 200,300 rounds of ammunition, the latter representing approximately half of the stock the Army wished to have on hand. As these figures represented the stocks of howitzers and ammunition available in Australia. It would not have included those equipments in the hands of AIF units overseas. Although the intention was to replace the 4.5 inch howitzers with the new 25 pr gun/howitzers it was well into the campaigns in the Western Desert before the 4.5 in howitzers were withdrawn from service in that theatre.

In the intervening years between 1909 when the howitzer was first accepted until 1939 apart from

the redesign of the breech block to produce the Mark II, the next major development was the commencement in Australia in about 1938, of the fitting of pneumatic tyres to enable the howitzer to be safely towed by the gun tractors, which were gradually being introduced.

References indicate the weapons were withdrawn from Australian service in 1945 after having seen service in Australian units in France in WW1, the Middle East, New Guinea and Malaya in WW2. They were possibly only used in a training role and equipping VDC units after about 1943. 3rd Aust Field Regiment AIF was re-equipped in March 1943, the unit war diary recording the exchange of their 18 pr and 4.5 inch howitzers for the 25 pr spending the next month on the Rockingham artillery range becoming familiar with the new equipment.

The RAAHSWA has an example in the collection of one of these weapons, which is on loan from the National Artillery Museum of Sydney.

Information Sources

"Guns of the Regiment" by SN Gower. Published by the Australian War Memorial.
"British Artillery Weapons and Ammunition 1914 – 1918" by Hogg and Thurston. Published by Ian Allan Press, London.
"British and American Artillery of WW2" by Hogg. Published by Arms and Armour Press, London.
"Army War Effort and Supplement, February 1942", Army HQ, Melbourne. National Archives.
"Early British Quick Firing Artillery" by L Trawin. Published by Nexis Special Interest Press.
3rd Aust Field Regiment war Diaries AWM 4/2/18.



QF 4.5 in Howitzer

9.2 in Gun Battery – East Point – Darwin

The following article was kindly supplied by B. Glyde.

Extracts from “Darwin and Northern Territory Force”

By Robert J Rayner

1942

03 October

Defence Committee, Interservice Sub-Committee on Coast and AA Defence submitted a report on future equipment requirements for bases and advanced bases. Recommended that a pair of 9.2 in guns for protection against sea bombardment be ordered from the UK. The two 9.2 in guns originally intended for Darwin were diverted and installed at Fort Drummond to cover the Port Kembla Steel Works. It was apparent at the time that there was no air superiority in the Darwin area. As it was uncertain whether the guns to be ordered should be installed in Darwin (East Point), Fremantle, Port Moresby (Kila), emplacements nevertheless were to be completed or commenced.

19 November

Capt, Cooke of the Chief Engineers Office interviewed Lt Col Ordnance on the matter of the 9.2 in gun emplacements at East Point Battery. Ordnance was also questioned on the requirements to complete the works.

21 November

The Army and the Dept of Interior were again investigating the installation of the 9.2 in guns at East Point. It was expected that Darwin again become an important Naval Base for future offensive operations and the added protection was justified. The Chief Engineer advised the Director of Engineer Services at Allied Land Force HQ that the plans for the installation of the 9.2 in equipment was moved to Alice Springs with other records of the Department of Interior. They had been requested and would shortly be on hand. To finish the job, a survey was required to determine the material, plant and handling equipment required. Mr White of the Department Interior had been questioned on the progress of the sites on 25 May 1942 while on leave in Sydney. He confirmed that work had ceased at the 9.2 in gun positions about the middle of March 1942, with the cranes pulled down and the cement mixers removed. The steel rods and “forms” were still on the job as was 400 tons of cement left in a shed. All other machinery had been shipped away to Port Kembla.

Information checked with Mr Potter who stated the intention had been to move the 2x6in guns from East Point when the 9.2 in guns were completed.

25 November

The BRA, Brig. Strutt, with the CCD Lt Col Ord. Advice received on the proposed 9.2 in installation at East Point.

12 December

Progress on the action to be taken with the 9.2 in installation had come to hand at Victoria Barracks – Melbourne. It was

recommended by the Director of Works, Dept Interior, that the layout of the No.1 gun emplacement to be modified to allow installation of mechanical equipment through a wall later to be bricked up. As well a re-alignment of several recesses in the main passage was advisable. The alterations had to be carried out before any other construction could take place and the plans were modified. In regards to the No.2 emplacement and Plotting Room, it was intended to alter these considerably and existing drawings were to be disregarded.

1943

02 January

In Darwin, steps were taken to again raise the issue of 9.2 in equipment with HQ Allied Land Forces. It had been deemed desirable that the one constructing authority carry the work through to completion and the PWD had been instructed to make immediate commencement of the work. The labour force then in Darwin could only be provided if other work was discontinued.

A complete new group of up to 200 men was considered necessary to complete the No. 1 gun on schedule in 1943. In Darwin the Civil Construction Corps party was 220 strong and they were fully engaged in naval works but they were the only group from which a nucleus of an organisation could be drawn to work on the emplacements. The diversion of any of the group, however, did not appear practical. Army was again requested to approach the Department of Interior on the matter. Requests were also made as to when the integral parts of the No. 1 emplacement would be available and when the plans for No. 2 emplacement might be to hand. It was also stated that given the 6 inch guns were to be relocated that it might be expedient to carry out those emplacements works concurrently with the 9.2 in.

07 January

A heading “Counter-bombardment Artillery”

It was originally intended to install 2 - 9.2 in guns at East Point and on completion transfer two 6 in guns from East to West Point. Full details were arranged with HQ 7 MD in April 1941. This project was held in abeyance but two additional 6 in guns were installed at East Point. A recent discussion involved the re-commencement of work on the 9.2 in emplacement to enable guns to be mounted there when available. The earliest date at which the first guns ordered from overseas will be available is July 1943 and firm advice as to whether they are to be mounted at Darwin or elsewhere will be given in March 1943. No other action other than completion of emplacements is therefore involved at present.

09 January

At HQ of Northern Territory Force the GOC, Maj. Gen. Stevens, met with representatives of the AWC to discuss the shortfall in CCC Personnel required to complete existing tasks being undertaken by civilian labour. Some 220 additional men were required for the emplacement works for the 9.2 in counter bombardment gun at East Point.

11 January

A War Cabinet Agendum was prepared the same day for approval to again fund the 9.2 in CB guns for Darwin. The original 9.2 in guns intended for Darwin were approved for installation at Fort Drummond on 9/4/42 but now the selection in Darwin was stable and the work could begin again.

19 January

The DES was able to record that the Department of Interior had allotted an A1 Priority to the 9.2 in emplacement at Darwin.

20 January

Colonel Nurse, who had been BRA at LHQ, had now taken over the role as Fortress Commander inside the Fortress Sector. He must have been a great addition to the staff at Darwin as Maj. Gen. Stevens could consult an expert on the matter of 6 in. guns. Colonel Nurse would also be aware of just how far work should proceed on the 9.2 emplacement prior to the guns themselves being mounted.

20 February

Capt, Cooke of C E Branch arrived to carry out an inspection of progress made on the 9.2 in emplacements.

18 April

Blamey visited the Vestey area and checked on the work on the 9.2 in emplacements.

18 May

The MGRA John Whitelaw arrived with Dr Marlyn of the Operations Research Group and both men stayed with Col. Nurse at Fortress Command. The main concern was still the 9.2 in battery which had first been mooted two years before. In anticipation of Darwin again becoming a Fleet Base work was still continuing with their installation.

06 June

General Whitelaw made observations regarding planning for the Darwin Fixed Defences and consequent on the completion of the 9.2 in battery at East Point the 4x6 in MkXI were to become redundant. 2x6 in MkXI guns were to be mounted at Waugite and in position November covering the channel before the arrival of the 9.2 in guns.

06 July

Engineer in Chief General Steele replied to the CE NT on the matter of the MGRA visit to Darwin and his report 01 July. Proposals relating to the 9.2 in installation:

1. A 100 ft tower for BOP at East Point. Material already on site and fabricated.
2. An 80 ft tower for FOP at Nightcliff. Material believed to be available is portion of a tower previously fabricated for Singapore but not delivered.

01 August

Director of ES informed AWC that the following works at Darwin were approved to proceed at th9.2 in Bty at East Point:

1. The erection of the lower portion of an RDF tower previously forwarded to Darwin was to be used as the BOP and a 30ft Bar and Stroud range finder taken from Fort Largs, South Australia, was to be installed.
2. The construction of a Plotting Room – plan supplied by Mr Quiggin. The structure was to be erected by the AWC.
3. At Nightcliff, the AWC would supply and erect an upper portion of the RDF tower for use as a FOP.

20 August

The major concrete work at the No. 1 9.2in emplacement was now complete.

19 September

No specifications yet to hand for works to be carried out by the AWC regarding painting, light, power and these were requested.

21 September

Engineers of 3 Aust CE (Works) were busy planning the installation of special electrical equipment in connection with the 9.2 in Bty. It was planned to establish an interchange between the town electricity mains and the gun battery engine room thereby obviating the running of the battery generating sets except when the guns were being operated.

22 September

The Director ES advised that RAE personnel (9 AA & Fortress Company) would carry out all electrical wiring and cabling. Exceptions included the supplying of light and domestic power to the Plotting Room and other domestic power which would be provided by the AWC.

27 September

Major A D Watt marched in from Fort Drummond to take command of the 9.2 in Bty.

Decisions made in connection with the installation of the 9.2 in Bty equipment:

A/A steel tower already in Darwin to be used for the 9.2 in East Point BOP. The AWC was to erect the structure and mount the 30 ft B&S rangefinder which was to be delivered by the 3 Aust CE (Works) from the Mataranka Ordnance Depot. In the tower already the AWC was to make provision for the installation of a No.17 Director at Nightcliff

the AWC was to erect a FOP already fabricated in Melbourne in accordance with the Army plan. A CASL station was to be provided at the top of the tower with suitable bases for equipment. One 12 ft B&S Rangefinder was to be mounted below the OP. A No.17 and No.10 Director was also to be mounted below the CASL Station.

08 November

The GOC NT Force Gen Allen with a visiting British Parliamentary Delegation visited the 9.2 in No1 gun emplacement.

The secretary of the Navy Dept advised the Dept of Army that the present trends of events indicated that Darwin would still be necessary to the Allied Fleet as an operational base and that the completion of the proposed defences should not be delayed. It was therefore recommended that 1x9.2 in gun be moved from Sydney and the second gun from Fort Drummond to move to Darwin. Lt Garling who had served with the Engineers in Darwin, later assisted in the installation of a replacement gun at Fort Drummond.

23 November

It was advised that a 9.2 in gun could be available at Darwin some three months earlier than anticipated. The original plan had been to move two guns from Fort Drummond but now it was decided to move one gun from that location as a matter of urgency. Therefore the recommendation was made that one of the guns currently at Fort Drummond be moved to Darwin. Also the first 9.2 in gun was to be received from England about January 1944 and it would be installed at Darwin. When the second gun was received for Darwin the gun from Fort Drummond would be replaced at Darwin and reinstalled at Fort Drummond. At this stage it does not appear that the writer knew what he was talking about and the result is confusion with on one hand he is talking about Woolongong on one hand and Fort Drummond which was at Newcastle, on the other. Given this recommendation the CEME NT Force requested details of the generating sets, pumps etc required for the emplacement at Darwin.

04 December

A conference was held to discuss the plan to move one of the guns, associated stores and fire control instruments from 2 Army at Woolongong to NT Force. The plan was still subject to Defence Committee approval but if given it was expected that the work would be concluded by about 01 April 1944. The actual gun was to be transported by sea with the fire control equipment going overland. AEME in conjunction with RAA repository personnel were to dismantle the ordnance and manning at Fort Drummond for installation at Darwin. AEME was to see to the movement of 1 officer and 2 ORs to Darwin to supervise the installation of the equipment.

08 December

Lt Col Baglin and Capt Dengate from RHQ inspected the Plotting Room and gun sites.

09 December

MGRA was arranging a further conference with all branches of the services to coordinate the transfer of the 9.2 in gun from Fort Drummond.

18 December

The recommendation made in November regarding the installation of 9.2 in equipment at Darwin was confirmed.

One gun was to be moved from Fort Drummond and installed in Darwin. It was expected now that the first gun would be installed by 01 April 1944. The second gun for Darwin was not to be moved from Fort Drummond until a replacement 9.2 in gun was installed at Drummond.

1944

19 February

SS "Allara" arrived with a 9.2 in gun for East Point Battery.

20 February

The unloading operation of the 9.2 in gun commenced and the gun was delivered to East Point.

21 February

Completion of the unloading of the 9.2 in gun. A tank transporter was used to transport the piece with six trailers for the remainder of the equipment.

22 February

A portion of the equipment was unloaded at the No.1 emplacement at East Point, using the 20 ton gantry crane. One lister engine from North Head was unpacked and shifted to the engine room.

23 February

At East Point a Reaval air compressor was moved to the pump chamber and two Lister engines from Fort Drummond were unpacked and shifted to the engine room.

24 February

Maj A D Watt marched out from Emery Point Battery to the 9.2 in Bty as sufficient progress had by now been made by the contractors and the 9.2 in pedestal had been mounted at the No. 1 emplacement.

01 March

The installation of the 9.2 in equipment was now complete.

02 March

The cradle of the 9.2 in gun was mounted and other equipment installed.

04 March

The 9.2 in piece was moved from the transporter to the skidding.

17 March

Progress was being made on the 9.2 in gun with the installation of the breech mechanism, converter mechanism and sub calibre gear.

25 March

The electrical system for the 9.2in No.1 gun was now complete.

20 April

The 9.2 in Plotting Room switchboard was installed.

23 July

Work commenced on the construction of the FCP/BOP radar tower.

15 November

Manning of the 9.2 I Bty ceased. Reduced to Care and Maintenance.

28 November

A "lean to" was being constructed for the AEME personnel at the rear of the No.2 9.2 in emplacement.

08-09 December

The second 9.2 in gun and equipment for No.2 emplacement arrived on the SS "Allara".

31 December

The installation of the second 9.2 in gun was proceeding at last after most of the emplacement works had been completed for some time.

1945

02 January

The installation of the 9.2 in gun had reached the stage where the pumps and gun cradle were in place.

29 January

Work on the 9.2 in No.2 emplacement was suspended awaiting the arrival of equipment. It had been found that the various steel works in association with the gun platform had not arrived. Since the end of 1944 it was apparent to the Dept of Works that there would be considerable cost overruns on the construction of the battery and the CRE NT Force was notified of this.

11 February

Work recommenced on the Artillery Store and Plotting Room but no individual items were complete.

23 March

No.2 gun proofed.

25 July

The three cylinder 15 Kw Lister engine was removed from the tower engine room at Waugite and sent to East Point.

August

The long awaited parts for the gun platforms arrived. Many of the components did not fit and the steel works had to be modified, cut and refitted to conform to the work already carried out.

September and thereafter

The CRE NT Force was again approached by the Dept of Works to request additional funding for the 9.2 inch Bty. There was an expected over run of at least 20,000 pounds. In 1947 the Dept of Works was still requesting payment of 26,368 pounds, being the final over expenditure for the project

******Membership Fees are due Now to your Association******

Note from the Editor:

If any member from any of the Associations or Society would like to contribute any comments, war stories or book reviews, please send them in to the Editor at the address shown in Page 2.
All contributions will be greatly appreciated!