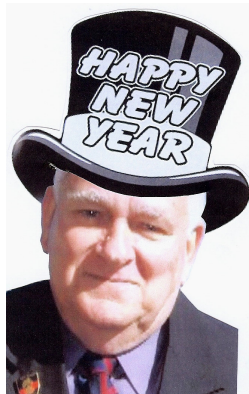


1871

A Field Battery Association, Inc. National Newsletter

January 2010

President Ron Bassan's Report



2010

From the President's Chair.

G'day everyone,
On behalf of the Committee and myself, I would like to wish everyone a very happy New Year and I hope you all stay well and prosper.

The Annual General Meeting was a huge success; we are getting new faces come along and enjoy themselves. We had several people travel long distances to be at the Reunion, Max Ptolomey, John Wilkinson, Rex Martin, Terry Jobson, David Harris, Reg Etienne, Don Green, Tom Caldwell, Mike Pitman and Harry Cook to name a few. At our AGM, one of our long standing Committee Members (Ray Alcorn) stood down and was replaced by one of the national service men who came to Malaysia in 1966 to serve with the Battery. I would like to welcome Greg Kittelty on to the Committee and thank him for filling the vacancy, also I would like to thank Ray for his long association with the Committee, and he is one of the founding fathers.

Next year will be the 40th anniversary of the Bty going to and returning from Vietnam.

The Committee is investigating the possibility of holding a reunion at Coffs Harbour for this special

event. If this goes ahead it will be a function for all 'A' Bty members not just Vietnam Veterans'. I would like some feedback from the members, so please let us know what you think of this proposal? There are still ten stragglers who have not paid their subs for 2009/10, I will not name them as they know who they are, so please hurry up and pay as 2010/11 subs will soon be due.



Joe Rouse relaxing at the Garrison Club

I had a recent email from Lyn Worboys informing us that Joe Rouse has not been very well lately. He has been in and out of hospital with a few very serious problems. He's not on the internet but his phone number is 0244439500. If any of Joe's old army mates are down his way he would be more than happy to see them

I have had a very nice letter from the new Battery Commander of 'A' Field

Battery RRAA, he is; Major Nathan Laughton and the new Battery Sergeant Major is; WO2 Rod Glover. The new Commanding Officer of 1st Field Regiment RRAA is; Lt Col David Kelly

Finally on a sad note two of our members lost their spouses, Noal Rodda lost his wife Elizabeth and Max Vandyke lost his wife Doreen. Our deepest condolences go out to these two stalwarts of the Association.

Till next time,

Semper Paratus Tex

In the above report Tex has asked for opinions on celebrating the 40 years since Vietnam to be held in Coffs Harbour; for all those who have been to this great town no prompting will be necessary.

Bordered by the clear warm waters of the Pacific Ocean and the luxurious rainforests of the Great Dividing Range, Coffs Harbour is noted for banana plantations and fishing, its beautiful beaches and pleasant climate.

Attractions and activities include Coffs Harbour Zoo, Pet Porpoise Pool, Clog Barn and Big Banana, surfing, diving and snorkelling, kayaking, canoeing and jet-skiing, white-water rafting, boating and game fishing,



International Marina, Old Jetty, Mutton Bird Island and whale & dolphin tours. Experience hot-air ballooning, cycle ways and mountain biking, Sunday markets, cartoon gallery and Historical Museum, organic wines, 4WD and galleries. Explore Beacon Hill Lookout, Bruxner Park Floral Reserve, Glenreagh Mountain Railway and George's Gold Mine.

There are plenty of clubs in Coffs including the Coffs Ex Services Club, that has top entertainment and a wide selection of dining venues.

Tex and Bonnie are great at organising these big functions, so act now and contact Tex informing him that you will be delighted to attend the Coffs Harbour

2008

The Difference Between the Infantry, the Artillery and the Armoured Corps

HAPPINESS IS . . .

Infantry: A good rifle

Armoured: A big tank

Artillery: A loud boom

UPON HEARING FIREWORKS

Infantry: Cool, just like a live fire exercise

Armoured: Not loud enough

Artillery: Fireworks? What fireworks?

OTHER TRADES

Infantry: Waste of rations

Armoured: Waste of rations

Artillery: Waste of rations

IDEA OF FUN

Infantry: Not having to "pepper-pot" an entire grid square before the objective

Armoured: Racing across a grid square on "full stab"

Artillery: Levelling a grid square

FAVOURITE SONG

Infantry: "Ballad of the Green Beret"

Armoured: "Purple Haze"

Artillery: Anything, just play it "LOUD!"



A LONG ROUTE MARCH WITH FULL KIT

Infantry: 20 clicks

Armoured: From the hangars to the tank

Artillery: What's a route march?

OFFICERS

Infantry: Are morons and should stay away from the trench lines

Armoured: Are morons and should stay out of the vehicles

Artillery: Are morons and should stay away from the gun lines

FAVORITE MODE OF TRANSPORTATION

Infantry: Anything but walking

Armoured: Tanks. Tanks. Tanks. TankstankstankstanksTANKS!

Artillery: Don't you have to move around to require transport?

BREAKFAST IN THE FIELD

Infantry: I don't care what it is, just so long as I can sit down to eat it

Armoured: Hot coffee and rum with a beer chaser

Artillery: Eggs over easy, crispy bacon, sausages, toast and Maxwell House coffee

WHAT THEY CALL THEMSELVES

Infantry: Infantryman

Armoured: Cavalry

Artillery: 9 Mile Snipers

WHAT OTHERS CALL THEM

Infantry: Grunts

Armoured: Tankies

Artillery: Drop shorts



Terence Alan Patrick Seán Milligan KBE (16 April 1918 – 27 February 2002), known as Spike Milligan, was an Irish comedian, writer, musician, poet and playwright. Milligan was the co-creator and the principal writer of The Goon Show, in which he also performed.

Aside from his well-known comedy and poetry, Milligan did some painting. His background also included time in the Royal Artillery and civilian jazz/dance bands.

During World War II he served as a signaller in the 56th Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery, D Battery, as Gunner Milligan, 954024 with the First Army in the North African Campaign and then in the succeeding Italian Campaign.

He rose to the rank of Lance Bombardier and was about to be promoted to Bombardier when he was wounded in action in Italy. Subsequently hospitalised for a mortar wound to the right leg and shell shock, he was demoted by an unsympathetic commanding officer (identified in his war diaries as Major Evan 'Jumbo' Jenkins) back to Gunner.

It was Milligan's opinion that Major Jenkins did not like him due to the fact that Milligan constantly kept the morale of his fellow soldiers up, whereas Major Jenkins' approach was to take an attitude towards the troops similar to that of Lord Kitchener.

An incident also mentioned was when Major Jenkins had invited Gunners Milligan and Edgington to his bivouac to play some jazz with him, only to discover that the musicianship of the aforementioned gunners was far superior to his own ability to play the military tune 'Whistling Rufus' (badly).

After his hospitalisation, Milligan drifted through a number of rear-echelon military jobs in Italy, eventually becoming a full-time entertainer.

After their retirement, Milligan's parents and his younger brother Desmond moved to Australia. His mother lived the rest of her long life in the coastal village of Woy Woy on the New South Wales Central Coast, just north of Sydney. As a result, Milligan became a regular visitor to Australia and made a number of radio and TV programmes there, including The Idiot Weekly with Bobby Limb.

In July 2007, it was proposed that the suspension bridge on the cycle path from Woy Woy to Gosford be named after him

THE VICTORIAN HORSE ARTILLERY 1889 - 1897.

In March 1889, the unit became part of the Victorian Horse Artillery, under the command of Captain Frederick Hughes. As Major General Hughes, he commanded troops at the, Gallipoli landings.

The unit was divided into two Half Batteries, the left half battery at Werribee Park and the right half battery at Rupertswood. The Werribee half battery disbanded two years later and The, Rupertswood Battery became the pride of the colony, growing both in stature and experience,

In 1893, Sir William sent a contingent to London to compete at both the Islington and Dublin Military Tournaments, At both of these Tournaments, the Battery was very successful and brought home many trophies. They competed against the cream of the British Artillery Units and in one instance they beat the Royal Horse Artillery at their own game.

While in London the Battery was presented to Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace. They escorted Queen Victoria at her diamond jubilee celebrations and also were an escort at the wedding of the Duke of York to Princess Mary of Teck. The Duke later became King George V. Upon their return to Australia, the Battery was honoured by being the regular escort for the Governor at the opening of



Sergeant, VICTORIAN HORSE ARTILLERY, 1890
The original unit originated from the old "Rupertswood Battery", in 1889 it was designated the Victorian Horse Artillery. The battery was wholly maintained by Mr. Churnside and the Hon. Sir William Clarke, Bt., until it was disbanded. Uniforms were based on those of the Royal Horse Artillery.

Parliament in Melbourne.

The Rupertswood Battery was well known throughout the colony for its expertise in both horsemanship and marksmanship. Its regular training sessions were held on the Rupertswood property, and evidence of these sessions have been found by both photographs of the day and by various relics of that era that are continually found on the property.

1897 saw much political wrangling and disagreement regarding units of this style in the colony, their cost being the major factor for reviewing their existence, and without their founder (Sir William Clarke had died) the Battery was officially disbanded in July 1897.

Their final public appearance was in June 1897, when they escorted the Governor to the opening of State Parliament.

The end of the unit was a blow to the township of Sunbury -who had followed its progress since its inception with great interest and support. Many of its members were transferred to other mounted units of the colony, some joined the Mounted Police and a number saw service in World War 1.

The Battery was now disbanded, with the dubious honour of having never fired a shot in anger.

THE BULLOCK BATTERY

How many people know that there was once a bullock battery in Victoria? On 20 July 1890 the Government of Victoria approved of the formation of a battery of artillery at Hastings, and of its being designated "The Hastings 40 Pounder Battery, Victorian Rangers".

This battery, sometimes called in error the "bullock battery", was formed through the energies of Colonel Teddy ("Battleaxe") Otter. The personnel of the battery must have been recruited from men with the vocabulary necessary to handle the unemotional animals yoked to the guns.

The unit was, in fact, a position battery for the protection of Western Port, and took the place of earthworks for the defence of that locality. It had an establishment of fifty-four all ranks.

Victorians of their day always referred jokingly to the battery as the "cow battery". It was commanded by Major Ham and from this fact it earned the popular sobriquet of the "Ham and Beef" battery.

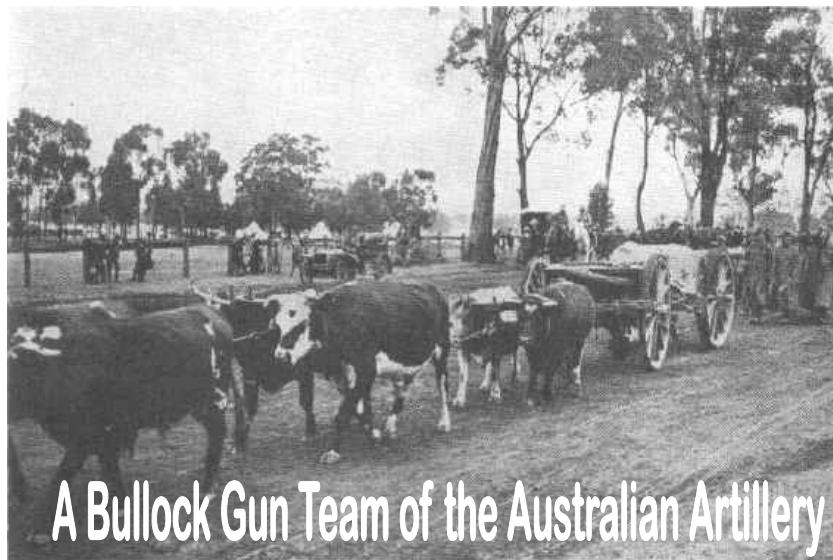
The members of the battery wore uniform similar to the garrison artillery arm, except that the material was of khaki cloth instead of blue; khaki helmets with brass ball and mountings were worn and also the "pillbox" forage cap.

It would be doing the Hastings Battery an in justice if the name of their Sergeant Major

(Jack Creaney) were not mentioned. He knew the men, he knew the guns and one might even say the bullocks. He used to say that there were no words of command laid down for the bovines, that was left to the driver.

Taking into consideration the scanty population of the district at the time this battery was in existence, it is interesting to record that it's strength always exceeded its establishment. Men of the old "Ham and Beef" Battery were a fine lot and were skilful and speedy in their work.

R. K. PEACOCK (V.P.A. and R.A.G.A.)
from *AS YOU WERE!* 1946 by the AWM



A Bullock Gun Team of the Australian Artillery

Ship Wrecked in the Straits of Malacca...by Tom Caldwell

This story of adventure, or should I say misadventure relates to an incident which happened in Malaya during our deployment in 1957-59.

I do not recall the exact date nor all of the people involved however I shall endeavour to tell it as I remember it.

We set sail from our base camp at Butterworth in one of our small boats, (a 15 foot half deck with an outboard motor) a photo of which appears on page 268 of The Malayan Episode book by Don Sinclair.

From memory there were six on board but I can only remember the names of four, Don McLeish, Vodka Smith, Saint Sinclair and myself, Tom Caldwell; if I have left anyone out I apologise.

Our aim was an excursion to Leper Island which was a small island some distance off the coast. After stocking the boat with the normal deep sea rations, (plenty of beer and two bottles of rum.) we set out.

The sea was a bit choppy but I would not say that it was rough, we were about three quarters of the way there and Vodka Smith was riding right up on the bow with his feet over the side, due to the lack of space, then the inevitable happened, he put both feet in the water as we entered a wave.

Everything happened a bit quick after that, the result being that we all finished up in the water with an upturned boat with only a small portion of the bow above the water, due to an air lock, the rest of the boat was held down by the outboard motor.

After the initial shock, it was decided that the boat never had enough buoyancy to support the lot of us, so one of us would dive down and try to drop the motor, this failed, the boat could not be righted, which left us in a predicament, it would only support three people, at the most.

It was then decided that the weakest swimmer would stay with the boat, the rest of us had to tread water and stay close to the boat, while two took turns in resting on the boat.

The situation was not very pleasant with no protection from the sun and the sea lice were giving us a bit of a hurry up, if anyone has stayed too long in the bath they would know all about the wrinkled skin factor; the funny part was we never gave sharks a thought.

The Straits of Malacca are one of the busiest trade routes in the world but as luck would have it we

were out of the shipping lane, we could see ships in the distance so we tried to attract their attention by waving our clothing, to no avail, the result of this exercise at the end of the day was, no one had any clothes.

What really worried us was with the coming of darkness was that none of us would survive. In the late afternoon, Vodka, who was a strong swimmer volunteered to try and swim out into the shipping lane, which was no mean feat as the tide runs through the Strait at eight knots, the consensus was to stay with the boat, but we let him go on the condition that he take the outboard fuel tank that we had recovered earlier

His method was to push the tank ahead of him and then swim after it, then to use it as a flotation device for rest periods, after a while we lost sight of him.

About an hour later we saw a ship stop and then alter its course towards us, with great relief we were saved by a Singapore bound tramp steamer, just on dark. The Captain was not a very happy chappy because the law of the sea said he had to take us to the nearest port Penang, which as luck happens was good for us but not for him, as it was the port which he had just left.

It was quite embarrassing climbing up the ship's ladder in the raw,

as all of our clothes had been lost while waving them at other ships, our boat was secured alongside the ship but broke away after a short while, there was no way the skipper was going to stop, so it was let drift.

The crew were very good and had a whip around for clothes for us, mainly shorts that we needed to cover our embarrassment.

When we arrived in Penang, we were interrogated, it was felt that that the drifting boat was a danger to shipping so three of us stayed on board the police launch and searched the Straits for the rest of the night, to no avail.

The boat was recovered the next day in almost the same position as it went over by a local fisherman who tried to claim salvage rights; but that is another story.

When I look back, the thing that comes to mind was that there was no panic, all decisions were mutually agreed upon and we all stuck together.

The real hero of the episode was Vodka Smith whose superhuman effort to swim such a distance to attract attention saved our lives.

If he is still around we all owe him a great deal of gratitude



101 Field Battery held their 50th. Anniversary reunion at the Coffs Harbour Services Club

The Friday night BBQ was enjoyed by all and a slide show presentation of the photos from the DVD played through out the night.

Breakfast on Saturday morning was in the club after some members enjoyed a game of golf.

Some of the wives and partners then went shopping with a bit of sight seeing to fill in the day.

At 1730 hrs Saturday a Memorial Service was held at the Cenotaph adjoining the club. Bruce Stark gave an excellent opening address. John Butler read the Honour Roll. A wreath was laid by Polly Norton and Ken Edwards.



Rear from left: David Troedel, Jack Jewell, Alan Jones, Terry Dinneen, Sid Pike, Nev Lemon, John Hughes, Peter Brown, Bob Morgan, Clive Castles, Rex Martin, Ray Heath, Dick Knight, Tom Beynon, Bernard Panton, Col Somerville, Bruce Stark, Jock Jenvey, Mal McLeod/Jackson, John Butler, Dick Wickenden, Kevin Salter, Don McDonald, Wayne Astill, Syd Farrow, Brian Crilley.

Front from left: Col Fogarty, Nev Smith, Arthur Waghorne, Max Coaster-Garton, Ian Taylor, Norm Mills, Bill McMillan, Ken Murphy, Don Baker, Jim King, Len Cooper, Ray Chadburn, Bryan Whiddon, Ken Edwards, John Walker, John Barrett.

Camel artillery ready to fire



Gunners of the Hong Kong and Singapore (Mountain) Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery with their BL 2.75-inch mountain guns dismounted, re-assembled and ready to fire. Despite their unit title, the battery's personnel were in fact drawn from the Indian Army.

To the rest of the Imperial Camel Corps Brigade, the battery and its gunners quickly became better known by their nickname 'The Bing Boys', apparently bestowed in imitation of the toy-like metallic ringing noise their mountain guns made when they were fired.

The BL 2.75-inch (70-mm) calibre mountain gun could fire shrapnel and high explosive (HE) shells out to a range of 5,600 yards (5120 m) and 5800 yards (5300 m) respectively. It was a comparatively modern design having only been accepted into service by the British Army in 1914, when it was chosen as a replacement for the obsolescent 1901 BL 10-pounder mountain gun. Due to its specialised function the need for the BL 2.75-inch mountain gun was very limited and only 183 were built during the entire war (by contrast just over 9000 18-pounder field guns were produced for the British Army during the same period).

INDIANA ARTILLERYMEN TO MARCH; The Crack Battery "A" Will Come to New York on a Special Train.

Special to The New York Times.
September 25, 1899, Wednesday

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind., Sept. 24. -- Battery "A", Indianapolis Light Artillery, which will participate in the Dewey parade, will go to New York on a special

train at an expense of \$5,000. It will follow its uniform custom of parading in fatigue service uniforms. The organization is a famous one, having taken part in every drill contest since 1882.

For 15 years it has been the champion battery of the United States having won first prize every time

This article that appeared in The New York Times in September 1899 illustrates that this American Battery have not only copied our name but have also emulated our expertise



Young Australian of the Year 2010 - National finalist

Trooper Mark Donaldson VC

Mark Donaldson enlisted in the Australian Army in 2002 and displayed an early aptitude for soldiering, winning a number of prizes for his skills.

As part of the Special Service Regiment he was deployed on operations to East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq.

An incident in Afghanistan led to his being awarded the Victoria Cross, Australia's highest military honour for acts of bravery in wartime.

When Mark's unit was hit by an ambush, nine Australians were wounded.

As the battle raged around him, he deliberately drew enemy fire to himself on several occasions so that wounded soldiers could be moved to safety. Then when he saw a coalition force interpreter lying wounded, he

ran 80 metres across exposed ground to rescue him and carry him to safety.

This complete disregard for his own safety displayed exceptional courage. Since being awarded the Victoria Cross, Mark has conducted himself in a way that is impressive and makes him a role model for young and old. His bravery in the face of great danger saved lives and won him the highest respect.

Donaldson was born on 2 April 1979 at Waratah, New South Wales. The younger son of Greg, a Vietnam veteran, and Bernadette Donaldson he grew up in the small northern New South Wales township of Dorrig, attending Dorrig High School, a small state comprehensive co-educational public school until 1996.

In 1995 his father died suddenly of a heart attack and Mark and his brother became wards of Legacy, one of their legacies being a former member of the same Army unit their father had served in.

Mark Donaldson is married to Emma, and has a daughter, Kaylee.

Emma describes him as being "married to the army" Donaldson says of himself: "I don't see myself as a hero, honestly. I still see myself as a soldier first and foremost.

Officers stood down over death of Lieutenant Michael Fussell

By Ian McPhedran From: The Daily Telegraph November 03, 2009

INCOMPETENCE and a disturbing lack of leadership and training have been identified as key factors in the death in action of an Aussie Digger in Afghanistan.

Lieutenant Michael Fussell, 25, from Armidale, died instantly when he stepped on a large improvised explosive device during a night patrol by a Reserve Commando Company in Oruzgan province targeting Taliban leaders in November last year.

A major from the Reserve 1st Commando Battalion, who was in command of the counter-insurgency operation, has been stood down in the wake of the inquiry.

In a scathing report, the inquiry found: "Deficiencies in the prior training, assessment and leadership of the Force Element (Lt Fussell's patrol) materially contributed to his death."

It also found that the dual training and operational role of special forces commanders led to a lack of support and supervision.

"The most serious outcome of these shortcomings was a failure to detect considerable leadership tensions within the Force Element and most importantly the failure to note the inability of the appointed officer in command to exercise effective command," it said.

These shortcomings were not discussed by top brass until a month after Lt Fussell was killed.

The most telling consequence was poor "track discipline" during Lt Fussell's fatal patrol when he wandered off the planned path before he triggered the bomb. The inquiry report said this fatal error was due to undue haste and fatigue as well as poor track discipline.

Lt Fussell, who was not a qualified commando and was posted to the Sydney based 4th Battalion, suffered massive trauma injuries.

An initial report raised concerns about the training and command of Lt Fussell's patrol, part of the Special Operations Task Group based at Camp Holland near Tarin Kowt.

That inquiry, by Lieutenant Colonel Terence McCullagh, uncovered serious concerns about the major's leadership and his "lack of organisational skills" and "a lack of confidence in the OC by the senior members of the Force Element".

That report prompted defence chief Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston to order a high-level inquiry by retired Chief Vice-Admiral Chris Ritchie.

Air Chief Marshal Houston said he accepted the findings and would implement recommendations.



Michael Fussell was killed during action in Afghanistan after he stepped on an improvised explosive device.

Private John Leak. VC**Unit: 9th Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division****Action: 23 July 1916, Pozieres, France**

Pozieres was supposed to be captured on the first day of the battle of the Somme. After three unsuccessful British attacks, a fourth attempt, from the 1st Australian Division that included the 24-year-old Leak, was made.

The citation says: "He was one of a party which finally captured an enemy strong point. At one assault, when the enemy's bombs were outranging ours, Private Leak jumped out of the trench, ran forward under heavy machine-gun fire at close range, and threw three bombs into the enemy's bombing post. He then jumped into the post and bayoneted three unwounded enemy bombers.

"Later, when the enemy in overwhelming numbers was driving his party back, he was always the last to withdraw at each stage, and kept on throwing bombs. His courage and energy had such an effect on the enemy that, on the arrival of reinforcements, the whole trench was recaptured."

: In 1916, Private John Leak, a 24-year-old teamster from Rockhampton, was awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest award for bravery. The following year, he was sentenced to life imprisonment after being convicted of desertion. Had the English-born Leak been serving in the British Army, he would have almost certainly been shot by a firing squad. But Leak's desertion was not the result of a soldier's nerves' breaking, like so many convicted of that military offence.

Leak was a larrikin, with a charge sheet that showed a long list of offences. And the most common of these was absent without leave. His military record shows that Leak's life conviction for desertion was, within weeks, reduced to two year's imprisonment, and that was suspended.

The most likely explanation is that Leak's commanding officers cut him a fair bit of slack because of his VC but their patience had ran out.

What would probably have been another absent without leave charge was upgraded to desertion, probably to teach him a lesson.

Leak was born in Portsmouth, England in 1892 and came to Australia sometime before the war began. His file shows that his parents were dead and his next of kin was listed as a brother living in Canada.

He joined the 9th Battalion on January 28, 1915, and was sent to the Middle East as reinforcement for the unit which recruited almost

**Private John Leak. VC**

exclusively from Queensland.

Leak's service record shows that his VC was gazetted on September 9, 1916. The next entry gives a glimpse of the kind of soldier he was: "CRIME", it read in capitals: "1. Entering sergeants mess & demanding drink. 2. Neglecting to obey RSM in that he refused to leave Sergeant's Mess when ordered to by the RSM." For that, Leak copped 14 days detention as punishment.

Throughout 1917, Leak was charged with being absent without leave on at least six occasions.

The punishments varied: forfeited pay on three occasions, detention on three more. Then, in November 1917, Leak was absent from November 1 to

November 6. This time, he did face his commanding officer who had handed out the earlier punishments. He went before a Field General Court Martial. Penal Servitude for Life was the punishment.

Leak served less than a month. In December the sentence was commuted to two years, and suspended. If the intention was to encourage Leak to mend his ways, it failed. On April 25, 1918, he went absent without leave again, turning up back in his unit four days later. He copped 11 days forfeiture of pay. In June, Leak was in strife again, getting seven days field punishment for "insolence to an NCO".

Leak was wounded three times and gassed once. He returned to Australia in January 1919, leaving Britain just days after marrying a Beatrice May Chapman, with whom he had been living -- when on leave -- in Cardiff, Wales. There is no record that she ever travelled to Australia. He married again in 1927, and fathered seven children. He returned to Rockhampton to find the locals had put on a welcome home party for him at the railway station. In an interview in 1971, he said he took one look at the party, jumped on a train travelling south, and never returned. He never joined the RSL, or marched on Anzac Day. "I don't believe in war," he said, in the 1971 interview.

After the war, he drifted around Australia, working in Victoria, Western Australia before settling in South Australia, where he died in 1972.

In 1951, he wrote to the army seeking payment of a war gratuity which he had not claimed in 1919. The old soldier included his service number, and his decoration, but not his address, so his application was marked "no address supplied". No effort was made to track him down and pay the gratuity.

Sad, considering the pay he had lost as punishment during the war.

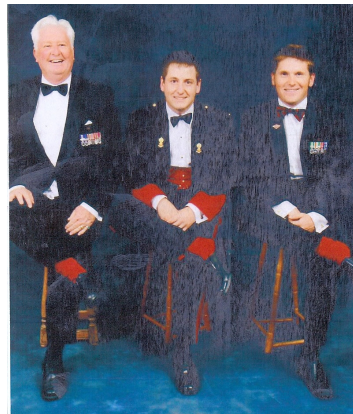
From the editor. Thanks to Tom Caldwell, Tex Bassan, Ray Alcorn and Lofty Castles for their contribution to this newsletter. Without some diverse input from our members this newsletter can become unbalanced. The editor welcomes any participation, be it articles, photographs, criticism or requests

A Letter from Ray Alcorn

Dear Editor, I attended the Graduation Ceremony at the Royal Military College, Duntroon on the 8th. December 2009.

The young man seated in the centre of the photograph is Nick Barletta and next to him is his older brother, Captain Matt Barletta of the 8/12 Medium Regiment based in Darwin.

Nick was also commissioned into the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery and



this photograph was taken at the ball that night. Nick will now go to 8/12 Medium Regiment in late January 2010.

The two boys are the sons of great friends of mine and I was mighty proud when they chose Artillery.

Note the socks we are wearing; red on the right foot and blue on the left, the colours of Artillery. The socks appear to be a modern quirk. **Regards from Ray**

Salute to Kate Nesbitt – first Royal Navy female Military Cross.

In the proudest day of her life, Kate Nesbitt was awarded the Military Cross for bravery in the field. The Royal Navy Medical Assistant had braved Taliban fire to assist a comrade who was wounded in the neck during a firefight in Afghanistan last March. Kate remained with the wounded soldier, dressed the wound and prevented further haemorrhaging whilst the fight continued around her.



Petite, but more than Able – AB Kate Nesbitt of the Royal Navy saw a British soldier fall during a fire fight in Marjah District in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Without a second's delay she sprinted 70 yards under enemy fire, got to his side, began opening a new air way so that he could breathe.

The enemy continued firing, bullets snapping past her.

The soldier, a private from the First Rifles, of Number 3 Commando

Brigade, had been hit in the flak jacket by a rifle bullet. It ricocheted, entered his throat and exited through his jaw.

Without Kate's intervention he would have choked to death, or eventually bled to death. She stayed with him under fire, working on his wound for 45 minutes while her comrades fought with the enemy shooters and finally flushed them out.

Of it all she said later, "I was really overwhelmed that they trusted me to do the job and never doubted me at all, that's what was important. I just did what I'm sure everyone else would have done for me."

AB Kate Nesbitt was very proud last week when HRH Prince Charles presented her with the Military Cross for bravery in an investiture service in Buckingham Palace ..

She is the first woman in the Royal Navy and



the second woman ever to receive the decoration.

Standing just five feet tall it was necessary for Prince Charles to bend deeply to present and discuss the decoration and her exploits under fire in Afghanistan ..

She was surrounded while waiting with other Military Cross by other recipients, all men and some among them tough, agile commandos who had been cited for the decoration for hand to hand combat under fire. Several were commissioned officers.

Kate's mother and father were in the audience and she told reporters later, "When it all happened (rescuing the soldier under fire) we were in the middle of an operation but I wouldn't in a million years have thought anyone would follow it up. It was the biggest shock when I got the news (about being recommended for the Military Cross)."

"It made it all seem real being here today. It has been so special. When I looked over and saw my mum and dad in the audience, it was the proudest day of my life."

The citation for her decoration reads, "Under fire and under pressure her commitment and courage were inspirational and made the difference between life and death.

She performed in the highest traditions of her service."

So who says the front lines are no place for a woman, if that's where she chooses to be?

This award should show everyone that our armed forces, male and female of any service are ready to step up to the mark to be counted and do their job.



From Lofty and Marilyn Castles

Hello every one' this is a quick message from the stateroom E717 reporting.

We had a good flight to Singapore and then on to Bangkok, the hotel was super very upmarket for us oldies with a multi story building that sold everything attached. that was the first day and on the Saturday Ray and myself took a tour to the River Kwai and down to Hell Fire pass plus a hour and a half train ride from the bridge further up the track.

This was a great day we had a driver and guide for the day we sat

up in the back of a new merc like important people.

Today we are in Cambodia not a very nice place, we went ashore and went to the beach for awhile and got a tuk tuk back to the ship. a very different mode of transport especially when travelling on the wrong side of the road with traffic coming towards you.

Back onboard snails & frogs legs for tea and an early night.

**Cheers form,
CC & Marilyn**



**Yes, you're right... This dinner invitation
from the French Embassy is highly suspicious !**

Australia to Buy M777 Artillery System

The Minister for Defence, Senator John Faulkner, on Oct 21st. 2009 announced that the Government has given Second Pass Approval for a A\$493 million project to provide the next generation artillery system for the Australian Army.

Senator Faulkner said the first phase of Land 17 (the Artillery Replacement Project) will provide the Army with four batteries of 35 M777A2 155mm Lightweight Towed Howitzers.

"The Lightweight Towed Howitzer is the most advanced towed artillery system available in the world. It is air-portable under CH-47 Chinook helicopters and can provide a weight of fire not previously available to rapidly deployed forces," Senator Faulkner said.

"The second phase of the artillery enhancement will include the procurement of a self



propelled artillery system, which will be capable of providing fire support to highly mobile mechanised forces.

The artillery system will be further enhanced through the future acquisition of a digital terminal control system for the tactical control of artillery, naval and close air support fires by forward observers and joint terminal attack controllers.

This element of the project will be considered by Government in the second half of 2010," said Senator Faulkner.

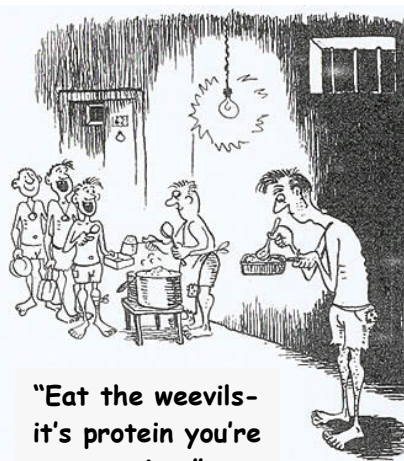
Senator Faulkner said these are high priority acquisitions which will provide improved protection and precision firepower to Australian soldiers, allowing missions to be carried out more efficiently, safely and effectively.

Changi Cartoonist George Sprod

George Sprod was 20 when he signed up, still under the legal age of 21. He had come to Sydney from Adelaide, but hadn't had much luck finding steady work.



**"Can I scrape out the
porridge bins Cookie - it's me
birthday today."**



**"Eat the weevils-
it's protein you're
getting."**

The army meant a change of scene and a chance to do something for King and Country. He was assigned to the Artillery and became Gunner Sprod.

George didn't have a background in drawing when he became a POW in Changi. But he needed something to fill in the hours and managed to find some paper on which to doodle. He was trying to capture what he saw as 'the lighter side' of Changi.

He began publishing a journal of his cartoons called "Smoke-Oh", which was distributed to men in sick bays.

George admits that Changi changed his life. When he returned to Australia he got a job as a cartoonist on the Daily Telegraph and Sydney Morning

Herald before a 20 year stint on Punch. He has written a number of books about his experience in Changi.
George Napier Sprod (1919—2003) died in Sydney.

The Hunt For The Montevideo Maru By Max Uechtritz, Editor in Chief Ninemsm.

Australia's most enduring wartime mystery — and our greatest maritime disaster — may be a step closer to being solved with help from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

A total of 1053 Australian soldiers and civilians disappeared without trace when the Japanese transport ship *Montevideo Maru* was torpedoed by an American submarine off the Philippines coast in 1942.

Mr Rudd says he will consider an appeal to launch a search for the wreck - similar to the hunt for the *HMAS Sydney* - to bring closure for generations of descendents and throw light on one of the darkest chapters in Australian history

Twice as many Australians died in this single incident than the entire Vietnam War. Just over 400 more perished on the *Montevideo Maru* than on the *HMAS Sydney* after it was sunk by the German raider *Kormoran* in 1941

"The sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* was the greatest disaster at sea ever suffered by Australians," said prominent historian Hank Nelson, who has spent decades researching the loss of 845 prisoners of war and 208 civilians

Only one eyewitness account has ever emerged and then only after 60 years when the sole

surviving Japanese sailor revealed heart-wrenching details of the "death cries" of trapped Australians going down with the ship while others sung 'Auld Lang Syne'

Among the missing were the uncle of former opposition leader Kim Beazley and the grandfather of current Rudd government minister Peter Garrett. Mr Beazley last night backed calls for a search of the *Montevideo Maru*.



Sydney Beazley

The Australians had been taken aboard the *Montevideo Maru* on June 22, 1942 at Rabaul where they'd been interned after the Japanese invasion and occupation of the former capital of Australian-mandated New Guinea. It was bound for Hainan

However, it was intercepted and sunk by the *USS Sturgeon* about 60 miles west of Cape Luzon in the Philippines in the early hours on July 1.

The submarine commander, Lieutenant William "Bull" Wright had no way of knowing the ship was carrying allied troops and civilians.

Some descendents of the Australians still fiercely resist this official version and believe their men were executed in New Guinea. They believe the ship's passenger list was "padded" by the Japanese to try to cover up war crimes.

There is enormous confusion over the nominal roll, which was apparently lost from the national



archives after being brought back from Japan by post-war investigators.

A spokeswoman for the Prime Minister said last night the government would consider an appeal to provide funds to find the ship after receiving a letter from Sydney historian and *Montevideo Maru* campaigner Albert Speer.

Mr Speer wrote "The continuing existence of doubts still obscuring truth and causing anguish to all families of Australians who lost their lives in the Pacific War should be of concern to all Australians. It is surely the duty of the Australian government to do all in its power to remove those doubts, just as it has done in other cases no more or less deserving."

Ninemsm has launched a petition to fund the search for the *Montevideo Maru*.



Tex Bassan has sent a couple of photos of our members. On the left is Bob McNeish. "I hadn't seen Bob for 51 years," Tex said, "he dropped in at my daughter's place in Townsville with his son on the way back home to Ravenshoe, last Friday and we talked of old times." On the right is Ray and Lorraine Alcorn, taken at Lorraine's 60th Birthday party Last Saturday week. **Happy Birthday Lorraine.**





*They shall not grow old,
As we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun,
And in the morning,
We will remember them.*

KEN. AGNEW
TOM. BANFIELD
TREVOR. BEER
S.J. BLANCH (OAS. Malaya)
GORDON CARMICHAEL
TOM. CARRUTHERS
KEITH. CHRISTENSEN
RICHARD. DUGGAN
R.M. DUCAT (OAS. Malaya)
PAT. DALY
TOM. DAWSON
JOHN. DOWNES
GEORGE. FORSYTHE
M.K. FUSSELL (KIA, Afghanistan)
ROBERT J. (BOB) GRAY
NEIL HARDEN
MICK. HARKEN
B.D. HENDERSON (OAS. Malaya)
KEN. KENNEDY
BOBBY. LEWIS
JOHN. MACDONALD
L.G. MATHERS (KIA. Vietnam)
E.J. (LOFTY) MOORE
R.J. PARKER (OAS. Vietnam)
R.J. (JIM) PONTING
DAVE. QUIRK
PETER. RAINSBURY
CLIVE. RALFE
BRIAN. SCOTT
PETER. SEDDON
R. F. SMITH
BRIAN. WHISKER
BERNARD. (PLONKY) WINE
JOHN. WORBOYS



We shall take pleasure in recalling the enjoyable times we have spent with all our departed friends over past Christmas and New Year celebrations.

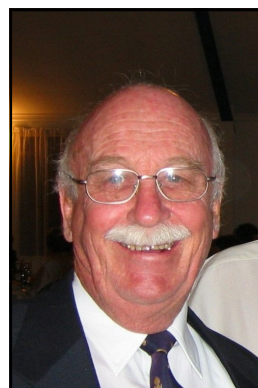
Here is a selection of some of the faces that we shall remember. The photo below of Lt. Michael Fussell demonstrating sighting equipment was taken as we visited A Field Battery at Holsworthy in September 2007



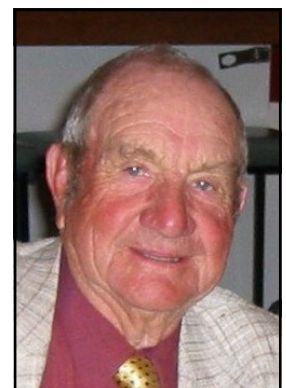
1931 - 2009



1927 - 2008



1932 - 2008



1928 - 2008

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