



ESTABLISHED 1946

June 2011  
Issue No. 462

Journal of the Australian Armoured Corp Association (NSW Branch) Inc  
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# ARMOUR

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## Sheridan Tropical Trials in Australia by Paul D. Handel



Sheridan tank "Scimitar" on the range at Puckapunyal.  
(Photo courtesy Peter Jarratt)

In October 1967 I made my first visit to Puckapunyal. Having started about five years earlier collecting information about Australian AFVs, this was my first chance to see the real things. I was in the company of my uncle who at that time was serving in RAEME and therefore able to get me in to see the Centurions of the Armoured Centre. During one of the tours, I was taken to a workshop building and allowed to look through the gaps between the sliding doors. Not only did I see the prototype of the M113A1 Fire Support Vehicle, but also two US Army Sheridan light tanks, then on trial at Puckapunyal. This article is about the trials of those tanks in Australia.

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### Wanted

Articles, photos personal stories or experiences.  
All submissions will be considered

# Coming Events



22 July 2011	90th Birthday of Horrie Cross MBE, OAM	Victoria Barracks Officers Mess
7 August 2011	RAACA NSW General Meeting	Gallipoli Club, Loftus St, Sydney
4 October 2011	RAACA NSW AGM	Gallipoli Club, Loftus St, Sydney
26 November 2011	Annual Cambrai Day Dinner	Royal Automobile Club Inc

## APOLOGY

We were requested by our WW11 veterans to ensure the Banner would be carried at the head of the RAACA on Anzac Day. The banner used to be borne by Bill Gilbert and his regimental friends but had become "lost" for awhile following Bill's death.

The Banner did go to the Anzac Day March but the Banner carriers did not arrived as planned. In fact the Banner travelled in Major General Latchford's vehicle but not held high.

We apologies for this, we will try harder next year and please rest assured the Banner is in excellent condition.

John Haynes



On behalf of all members I went to Gunnedah recently to launch the Book "To fight and do our best" written by Cate Clark.

It is a great yarn about the 1st Armoured Division which exercised in the area during WW11. Every veteran of the Division should consider buying a copy (advertised on Page 12) as it will bring back fond memories of those times when some 20,000 troops descended on a town of 4 or 5 thousand. It's full of photos of soldiers so many would see themselves or their mates depicted.

Also members should note that the Ironsides Corporation is on the way. This is a RAAC Project initiated by the RAACA which is designed to fight for our causes such as the inequitable decision to ban the wearing of the Black Beret. It will have representatives from the RAACA and Unit etc Associations on the Board of Directors.

Our quest for the grant of the Gold Card to our WW11 1<sup>st</sup> Armoured Division members continues thanks to the efforts of Neville Kidd a 1<sup>st</sup> Division veteran. Following many refusals I have just signed off a letter, drafted by Neville, to the Prime Minister, which hopefully will at last turn the tide. This fight has been raging for about 10 years now thanks also to another 1<sup>st</sup> Division veteran Donald McMillan who still serves on our state committee.

John Haynes, President

## Background to the Trials

In the mid-1960s, a reorganisation of the Australian Army introduced cavalry regiments into the Royal Australian Armoured Corps. One of the equipments required for the new cavalry regiment was an air-portable armoured fighting vehicle (APAFV), and this need was reinforced when Australia committed an armoured personnel carrier (APC) troop to South Vietnam in 1965 as part of an infantry battalion group.

Initial attempts by Australia to participate in the development of a family of light AFVs as part of the ABCA (America, Britain, Canada and Australia Agreement) led to failure, due to conflicting national, political and commercial interests preventing development of a common vehicle from proceeding. The Australian Army then became interested in the newly developed United States M551 General Sheridan Armoured Reconnaissance/ Airborne Assault Vehicle, and arrangements were made to obtain two vehicles under an ABCA Standardization Loan for evaluation purposes.

## Preparation

Several Australian Army personnel were sent to the USA for training on the vehicles, particularly in the gunnery aspects, as the 152 mm Gun-launcher was a completely new system. It was originally hoped to conduct trials during the 1966/67 Wet Season in northern Queensland, but vehicles were not immediately available from the USA. It was not until 28 August 1967 that the two vehicles arrived in Australia. These were new vehicles from the production line.

After landing in Melbourne, the two vehicles were initially taken to the Army Design Establishment (ADE) in Melbourne for checking and fitting of instrumentation for trials purposes. Crew training was conducted at the Armoured Centre at Puckapunyal, and some firing trials of the secondary armaments took place. For ease of identification during the trials, the vehicles were named SCIMITAR (US Registered No 13C642) and SABRE (US Registered No 13 C 643). As a comparator vehicle during the automotive testing phase, an Australian M113A1 vehicle was used.



The XM 551 Sheridan Pilot model No.12 shown in this official US Photograph.

## Tropical Trials

Beginning in January 1968, the main phases of the trials took place. The vehicles had been moved to the Innisfail area of Northern Queensland in December 1967, and were prepared by the specially formed Sheridan Trials Unit for the various trials to be undertaken.

The trials conducted were those which had not already been conducted by US authorities. The environment around Innisfail includes jungle, swamps, beaches and grassy, lightly timbered areas, ideal for the conduct of tropical trials. This area was the location for the Australian Army's Tropical Trials Establishment, and was the scene of trials in 1962/3 of the US M113 and UK FV432 Armoured Personnel Carriers, and later in 1972/3 of the Leopard and M60A1 tank trials.

Automotive trials included all types of performance and swimming trials, and a long distance endurance trial of some 300 miles. One vehicle completed in excess of 4000 miles during trials, the second vehicle just over 3000 miles. It was found that the Sheridan was an easy vehicle to drive and maintain. In the main, its automotive

performance was found to be not as good as the M113A1, although its step and trench ability (due to its longer length) was better. This inferior performance, particularly in jungle conditions, was judged to be due to the vehicle having less aggressive track link design than the M113A1, and a slightly lower power-to-weight ratio which accounted for some of the lessened performance, particularly on first and second class roads.

Its swimming ability, using the inbuilt flotation screen, was slightly superior to that of the M113A1. It should be noted that the M113A1 has never been a star performer in the water, so the statement is relative. The Sheridan was a more stable vehicle during amphibious operation, but required the vehicle commander to guide the driver as the clear panels in the bow plane were usually under water or so damaged the driver could not see safely.

During the wettest part of the trials, in March 1968, a series of "battlefield days" were conducted, which required the crew to operate the vehicle for 24 hours under simulated combat conditions. It is believed that these activities proved the vehicle to be relatively satisfactory in automotive terms.



**Comparison of the track types of the Sheridan, left, and the M113A1, right.**



Scimitar with its flotation screen erected crossing a river during swimming trials. As well as the crew commander and gunner standing to provide guidance to the driver, a number of additional trials personnel have hitched a ride on the vehicle.

Engine cooling was the major automotive problem. This was caused, in jungle conditions, by the tracks throwing debris causing blockage of the engine radiator. A local solution, using a wire mesh screen, was applied for the duration of the trials to each vehicle.

The gunnery aspects of the Sheridan were another matter. The M81 152 mm Gun/Launcher, capable of firing missiles as well as conventional ammunition, was not a success. Both conventional ammunition and missiles were fired during trials, the most serious defect being in the combustible case of the conventional round. Although the case was supposed to be completely combustible, the breech scavenging system did not completely remove debris, which often fell into the turret upon breech opening. Personnel involved in the trials indicated that this was a major problem. Because of the possibility of these hot debris falling into the turret where large calibre rounds with combustible cases were stored, only one live round at a time was allowed in the vehicle. In addition the obscuration produced when such a large calibre round was fired, and the lack of a range finder, limited the effective range to somewhere around 600 metres.

## Trials Aftermath

The tropical trials were completed in June 1968, and the vehicles were returned to the Army Design Establishment in Victoria, where additional trials were conducted. Several demonstrations and firings took place on the AFV ranges at Puckapunyal over the next months, and final examinations of the vehicles were undertaken.

Sometime in early 1969, the vehicles were returned to the US workshops in Japan for rebuild. Quite why the vehicles went there and not to the USA is uncertain, but by that time Sheridans were deployed to South Vietnam and perhaps these trial vehicles were rebuilt and sent to that theatre.



The Sheridan named Scimitar being carried on board an Australian Army 15 ton Tilt Bed Recovery trailer, and being towed by an M543 Wrecker. The Sheridan overhangs the deck of the trailer about half a track width on each side, making transport by that means very problematical.

A government statement, issued by the Minister for the Army in January of 1969, said that the Sheridan would not be introduced into service with the Australian Army, as it did not meet Australian Army requirements. Although no technical reasons were given in the statement, it is believed that the deficiency of the 152 mm gun and ammunition system was the main factor in the decision not to adopt the Sheridan. The decision not to adopt the Sheridan accelerated another project which did come to fruition, the mating of a Saladin Armoured Car turret to an M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carrier to produce an M113A1 Fire Support Vehicle.

The Tropical Trials of the Sheridan were the most complex and exhaustive military vehicle trials conducted in Australia up to that time, and were important in developing the system for trials of military equipment, particularly armoured vehicles, to assess their suitability for the Australian Army.

### Acknowledgements

Little in the way of unclassified Australian documentation is presently available, and much of the information contained in this article is a result of snippets of information gleaned from personnel associated with the trials, or from brochures and contemporary news articles. Some of the photos are from the collection of the RAAC Memorial and Army Tank Museum, others from private individuals.



Crew in front of tank back row is Lindsay ??? ( RAEME )  
 Left of the gun ??????  
 Right of the gun..L to R Bob Mc Millen, ???Ritchie,  
 "Blue Swan  
 Standing L to R Ted Beasley and John Keys

If anyone can identify the unknown troopers in the adjacent photograph please let us know.

## Technical Notes & News

### Force Protection delivers Ocelots

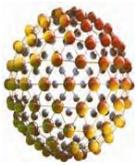


Force Protection has delivered two variants of its Ocelot Protected light mobility vehicle (PMV-L) to Commonwealth Government for the next phase of evaluation as part of the Land 121 Phase 4 program. The company has handed over one each of its utility and Command variants at the Monegeetta Proving Grounds in Victoria. Force Protection Inc. CEO, Michael Moody, says the delivery of the first vehicles to the Commonwealth for verification and

validation is a significant step in the bidding process.

“We’re very confident our design and manufacturing team have produced the most highly protected and agile vehicle of its size and weight available on today’s market,” Moody said.

Moody says Force Protection is also exhibiting a third Ocelot vehicle at next week’s Avalon 2011 Australian International Air Show, as part of the Landef exhibition. *Defence Week Premium* also understands that the Thales Australia Hawkei



### Nanotechnology cuts weight in Deisenroth vehicle armour

New details have been released concerning the nanomaterials that IBD Deisenroth Engineering exploits in the AMAP passive-armour fits it currently delivers for a range of armoured fighting vehicle (AFV) and protected vehicle applications.

According to IBD president Ulf Deisenroth,

who spoke at the Defence IQ International Armoured Vehicles conference in London in February, the company has succeeded in doubling the mechanical properties of its steel, ceramic and composite armour materials.

It does this by using improved microstructures embodying “superfine particles”, enabling the construction of thinner plates with greater ductility and hardness and giving an “unparalleled multi-hit capability.”

### Canada plans Swiss Leopard conversion



Canada is acquiring up to 12 surplus Leopard 2A4 (Pz 87 Leo) tanks from the Swiss Armed Forces for conversion to armoured engineering vehicles (AEVs) and armoured recovery vehicles (ARVs). Under the Tank Replacement Program (TRP), Canada is replacing its Leopard 1s with Leopard 2A4 and A6 variants

## IN THE NEWS ....

Want to hone your crewman drills or improve your troop leader skills. This software is the ideal tool to try out what is available in personal computer software.



**Makers of *Steel Beasts*:**  
**More than just a tank simulation.**

eSim Games develops software to simulate tactical-level armoured combat on the PC. We provide affordable solutions for both military training and consumer entertainment in the form of off-the-shelf as well as customized software.

### **Steel Beasts Pro Personal Edition**

Target audience: Military professionals and hard-core simulation fans.

Intended use: Training on the soldier's PC, using exercises that don't require an operator / controller.

### **Steel Beasts Professional**

Is available. Interested customers should [contact us](#). (Defense agencies only, please.)

Target audience: Military professionals.

Intended use: Training in a (networked) simulation lab under the direction of an operator / controller.

<http://esimgames.com/>

## Photo of the month



## Oshkosh plans JLTV grab

Oshkosh Defense, the makers of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected All-Terrain Vehicle, have made plans to enter the next Engineering and Manufacturing Development (EMD) phase of the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle competition, according to a company executive.

“Oshkosh fully intends to pursue the JLTV program when the government opens it up for competition during the engineering and manufacturing development phase,” Ken Jurgens, vice president and general manager of joint programs for Oshkosh, told Inside the Army in a March 25 e-mail.

“We’ve been following the JLTV program closely and our engineers have been developing technologies that we believe represent the future of light tactical vehicles,” he continued.

“Our research and development efforts include advances in armour solutions, drive trains, power trains, crew capsule configuration and suspensions.” Australia has indicated that it would continue with the JLTV program’s EMD phase.



## NZ Armour to Afghanistan

The New Zealand (NZ) Defence Force has deployed light armoured vehicles (LAVs) to Bamyan Province in Afghanistan to support the provincial reconstruction team.

The NZLAV is a highly mobile LAV that is equipped with a lethal arsenal of weapons and systems for combat, peace and peace support operations.

New Zealand Joint Forces commander air vice marshal Peter Stockwell said the vehicles will

safeguard the soldiers and allow them to operate more effectively, providing security for the civilian population. The upgraded NZLAVs provide the optimum mix of protected mobility, firepower and surveillance to meet mission requirements.

The LAVs are also fielded with the Canadian Army, US Army, US Marines and the Australian Defence Force.



# ADF's Landrover Replacement Program



Hawkei is a lightweight protected vehicle designed and developed to meet the requirements of the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The vehicle is manufactured by Thales Australia for the Department of Defence's Land 121 phase 4 programme that aims to replace the Australian Army's Land Rovers. The vehicle is named after a stealthy species of death adder *Acanthophis Hawkei*, a native of Australia. The Hawkei is a prototype vehicle and can accommodate six soldiers. It is designed to be protected from blasting and ballistic missiles.

The vehicle weighs approximately 7,000kg and is developed as a next-generation light mobility vehicle. It was officially launched on 29 September 2009 and will replace unarmoured Land Rovers. The Hawkei can be airlifted by a C-130 Hercules transport or other standard cargo aircraft. It can travel at a maximum speed of 100km/h over a range of more than 1,000km.

Hawkei has been tested against improvised explosive devices (IED) to ensure that its design allows maximum protection. Tests were conducted to gather the data and modernise the blast management system equipped in the vehicle. The first series of mine blast test on the Hawkei vehicle's passenger compartment were completed on 26 November 2009.

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$1bn. The Hawkei was showcased at the Armoured Vehicles Australia event held at the Hyatt Hotel, Canberra, on 4 November 2009.

The forecast report of the ADF stated that orders for the Hawkei would not exceed more than 1,300 vehicles.

The first prototype of the vehicle was delivered to ADF at the end of 2010 with trials scheduled for 2011. The contract will be awarded in 2012, followed by production.

## **Hawkei design**

The Hawkei design encompasses high levels of blast and ballistic protection. The vehicle is designed to incorporate the future system requirements of adaptive campaigning with C4I (command, control, communications, computers and intelligence) capabilities. It can be upgraded for specific missions. The integral V-shaped monocoque hull and blast absorption system provide objective level blast protection.

Hawkei's hull is designed to protect the vehicle from blasts while incorporating high levels of tactical and operational mobility, and allow easy conversion between variants. The vehicle's adaptable ballistic protection technology is designed for air transportation, and is reconfigurable by a two-person crew in under half an hour without using specialised devices or equipment.

## Message Board

The Chief of the Army has decided that the Black Beret (together with all other Berets except for Special Forces) is not to be worn except by permission on certain ceremonial occasions. As you know, the Black Beret is an important facet of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps's history and tradition, and as such this decision has been met with much indignation and disgust by many current and ex members of the RAAC.

If you are a member of the social networking website Facebook, you may wish to join your mates and join the "Save the Black Berets" page. This page was created to show public support for the Black Beret and it's importance to the RAAC.

Show your support today by joining us at:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Save-the-Black-Beret/149306918422343>

We want to get over 5000 members!

## Letters Received



### B Sqn 2 Cav Wacol 1966-67

Thank you for your post, a great time had by all at Wacol and Enoggera . I was a RAEME vehicle mechanic and you always had problems with Ferrets and other british armoured vehicles, changing fan belts and other equipment, I still have the burn marks on the arms.

The vehicles at Tin Can Bay was fun on the wet ground and we had to pull them out of the bog. When we got the M113 we went down to Rainbow Beach for a run, put the rope on the back and with a car bonnet, you went for a water ski in the water. Another great time was at Somerset Dam where we swam the carries, people pay a lot of money to have a holiday,we had fun.

I got out in 1984 in Brisbane and now do RSL welfare and conduct Poppy Services at veterans funerals. Before I got out of the army, I put in the suggestion concerning the fitment of the Leopard tank road wheels to the front of the tank and this was adopted.

In November 2006,I wrote to the Chief of Army to suggest that the spare road wheels for the Abrams Tanks be fitted to the rear of the tank. This was then forwarded to the School of Armour and 1st Armoured Regiment for their consideration.

We kept them on track.

Des Kearton.



B Sqn, 2 Cav Regiment, Wacol , Troop Lines— circa 1966

## FIGHTING NINETEENTH

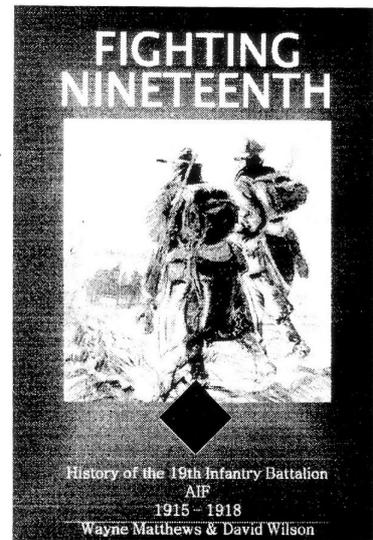
HISTORY OF THE 19th INFANTRY BATTALION, AIF  
WAYNE MATTHEWS AND DAVID WILSON

Formed in Sydney in March 1915, 19th Battalion AIF, had many recruits who had already served with the Australian force that captured German New Guinea.

This history covers training in Egypt, four months on Gallipoli, then defending the Suez Canal. The men then moved to the Western Front in France in early 1916 where they participated in all the major campaigns in France and Flanders.

A Victoria Cross was awarded, when Lieutenant Percy Storkey demonstrated his bravery at Hangard Wood in 1918 – and many other awards were made to battalion men.

The authors had access to private photographs, letters, diaries, the official history and war diaries. This also has a nominal roll and much biographical information on a CD that comes free with each book.



## Pre-Order

*To Fight and Do Our Best*

Cate Clark is now accepting pre-orders for her publication *To Fight and Do Our Best: The 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Armoured Division In Gunnedah 1942-1943*.

Go to [www.writerightmedia.com.au](http://www.writerightmedia.com.au) to download an order form or contact Cate on 0408 425564 to have one sent to you.

Cost is \$55 for each book plus \$12 postage to anywhere in Australia. Book was launched by your President at Gunnedah.



## NATIONAL BOER WAR MEMORIAL PROGRESS



### “QUO VADIS”

This project was accepted as the responsibility of the NSW Branch of the RAACA in about 2006.

In 2007 we put a design proposal to the National Capital Authority.

Would you believe after years of frustrating work of unpaid volunteers representing you, the National Capital Authority have at last agreed to submit our design of the memorial for the approval of Canberra National Memorials

Committee which is chaired by the Prime Minister. We need that approval soon because the sculptor we have decided to engage will need to start work on a two

year long task before the end of this year if we are to have the memorial completed before the Anzac Centenary commemorations in 2015.

Of course the stumbling block is the need to raise the \$3 to \$4 million. If any member has personal contact with any entrepreneur who has deep pockets, please make an approach and suggest that giving financial support for the National Boer War Memorial to be constructed in Anzac Parade would be worthy of their consideration.



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## HISTORIC FEATURE.....THE ASSASSIN OF GALLIPOLI

The following article appeared in the ‘Weekend’ section of ‘The Courier Mail’ (the Brisbane based daily newspaper) on Saturday 23 April 1993. The author was Brian Tate.



*Billy Sing shot 150 Turkish soldiers at Gallipoli. At least that was the official tally. Only killings witnessed by his superiors were recorded. Unofficially, it was more like 200. Sing was a deadly marksman. As a child near Clermont (south-west of Proserpine), he shot the tails off piglets at 25 paces. As a soldier in the trenches, he demoralised the enemy. He was a cold-blooded killer. Once, another rifleman wounded a Turk. As the victim lay kicking and yelling, Sing said. “I’ll put the poor cuss out of his agony”. He put a bullet through the man’s brains. In desperation, the Turks sent for their own deadly weapon- ace rifleman decorated by the sultan for his proficiency. The Australians nicknamed him ‘Abdul the Terrible’. The duel-at Chatham’s Post, high on Harris Ridge, giving the Australians commanding views of the Turkish positions – became a legend. Fellow Queensland recruit Ion “Jack” Idriess described him as a “little chap, very dark, with a jet-black moustache and a goatee beard – a picturesque-looking man-killer. He is the crack sniper of the Anzacs.” But it was*

*among his superiors that he gained hero status. General Birdwood, British commander of the Anzac forces, referred to Sing as his ‘pet sniper’. And he told Lord Kitchener, his supreme commander, that Allied forces would already be in Constantinople (now Istanbul) if his troops had been able to emulate Sing. Historian BRIAN TATE came across the amazing tale of Billy Sing – awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal – while researching the Gallipoli campaign - It is the story of The Assassin of Gallipoli.*

As the Northern summer intensified in June 1915, the Australian Fifth Light Horse Regiment was allocated as its area of responsibility, the ground around what was soon to be called Chatham’s Post. It was a Queensland unit and its officers and men were primarily from the country areas. Private William Edward SING, like most of his fellow members of the regiment, had grown up and worked with horses in the Australian bush. Part of their cumulative stock-in-trade was an ability to ride well, estimate distance accurately, track strayed stock and animal pests, and to fire (with accuracy) both rifles and shotguns. Sing’s considerable skills with a rifle were well-known in his central Queensland home district, even before the outbreak of World War 1. He was a member of the Proserpine Rifle Club and a leading kangaroo shooter around his home town of Clermont (about 250 km S-W of Proserpine). Sing signed his enlistment papers at Proserpine on October 24, 1914, two months after the outbreak of WW1. He became a member of the First AIF.

Another recruit from north Queensland was Jack Idriess, who later became his spotter in the Gallipoli trenches. Billy Sing travelled by ship to

Brisbane. After a brief period of training, during which he was allocated to A Squadron of the regiment, the ship set sail for Egypt. It was five days before Christmas 1914. The men of the Fifth Light Horse chaffed at the bit during April 1915. They cooled their spurred heels on the Egyptian desert, while a few hundred kilometres away their infantry colleagues were creating Australian history at Gallipoli. Finally, the rising casualty toll on the peninsula saw Sing and

For the first month, the light horsemen were scattered through the infantry battalions to gain some experience. But, by mid-June, the men from the Fifth Light Horse had farewelled their foot-slogger comrades and rejoined their regiment, when it moved to the seaward side of Bolton's Ridge. In honour of a young English-born light horse officer, the new position was called Chatham's Post. It was here that Billy Sing began in earnest his lethal occupation. The sniper's daily *modus operandi* began with his taking up his 'possie' in the predawn darkness. This, and the fact that he rarely left the area until well after dusk, ensured that usually there was no tell-tale movement near him during daylight hours.



Once Billy and his spotter were in position and had settled in, the true discipline of rigidly maintaining a quiet and motionless patience began. This was not a job for fidgeters. It demanded infinite resolution, an almost unconscious yet alert tranquility.

And the steady pursuit of professional perfection – snipers rarely get a second shot at a specific target. The equipment available to the Australian snipers at Gallipoli was basic and, in most cases, nothing more than the standard-issue Short Magazine Lee Enfield (SMLE) No 1 Mark III .303 calibre rifle. However, there is evidence that some former rifle club members were allowed to take their own privately-purchased weapons with them when they left Australia. Similarly, some of these same sporting shooters used

rifles which had been fitted with various target and peep sights, primarily the Lattey optical sight. But, in the end, the fundamental qualifications were, and still are, an above average eyesight and a cold-blooded resolve. Billy Sing, a methodical man, encompassed, exemplified and expanded upon all of these characteristics. Major (later Lt-Col) S. Midgley of the Fifth Light Horse, once candidly asked Billy how he really felt about killing men in cold blood. Sing replied that shooting "the illegitimates" had not caused him to lose any sleep.

It was steely comments like these – and prominent personalities such as Billy Sing – that gave Australian commanders on Gallipoli opportunities to boost the morale of battle weary troops. It was probably with official blessing that word of Billy's steadily mounting macabre tally was passed mouth-to-mouth like a cricket score, along the Allied Trench-lines. It was careless soldiers, as well as raw Turkish reinforcements, who presented easy targets of opportunity for the Anzac snipers. The nervous curiosity of these newcomers compelled them to snatch quick and often fatal glances over the parapet toward the Australian trenches. The actual area presented by their momentarily exposed bodies was minimal from the front. But it was the view from the flanks of the zigzagging trenches that gave a chance to the waiting Allied marksmen. The world of the sniper of Gallipoli was appropriately described by Idriess as being like a cat watching a wall with many mouse holes. Behind the holes worked the cautious mice, with ever-watchful felines waiting for just one mistake. As the campaign moved on and Sing's persistence and accuracy took their toll, it was inevitable that a response would come from the Turks. At first, orthodox military methodology was applied to put an end to the Australian who had taken out as many as nine of the enemy in a single day. One such Turkish reaction saw Sing's growing confidence shaken by a very near miss, one quiet morning in late August at Chatham's. Billy and his observer on this occasion, Trooper Tom Sheehan, sat silently surveying the enemy trenches, waiting for an unthinking mouse to appear. Their eyes and telescope swept the ground to the front, seeking the almost imperceptible giveaway signs – a quick hazy puff of vapour from a weapon discharge, the unguarded tell-tale movement of an arm or a body. A Turkish marksman with a similar intent seized upon a sudden and inadvertent movement in the Australian sniping team and fired on them. His shot passed through Sheehan's telescope, end to end, wounding the Australian in both hands, before entering his mouth and coming out through the left cheek.

The almost-spent bullet travelled on, completing its pernicious run by striking Sing in the right shoulder. Begrudgingly, the famed sniper would have been impressed by the Turk's skill or freakish luck. Tom Sheehan was evacuated to Australia to reflect on his own mortality. It was another week before Billy Sing was physically and psychologically able to climb back up to his elevated possie – and face (with renewed respect) Turkish snipers again. The next attempt by the Turks to clear their left flank of the unrelenting Australian sniper was more formidable. Reports of these efforts came to light later, from accounts by Turkish prisoners, as well as translated extracts from diaries removed from the bodies of their dead. The Turks sent for their own champion. Already decorated by the sultan for his proficiency, the Turkish sniper – whom the Australians called Abdul the Terrible – probably relished the challenge. Abdul brought with him a determination which matched Billy Sing's. The Turk's hunt to locate his Anzac counterpart's position took on the professional vigour of a forensic scientist. Each fresh description of yet another sniping victim would see Abdul quickly sent to the spot. Here he would thoughtfully examine the crime scene. There was an inexplicable ability by the Turks to separate the indiscriminate good fortune of some of the Anzac shooters from the true craftsmanship of the sniper Sing.

Accordingly, the only reports passed on to Abdul were those confidently assessed as having been the work of the deadly and unseen Australian rifleman. Reconstructing each fatal shot, the Turk determined the bullet's angle of trajectory from the entry and exit wounds. And he studied the exact position and stance of the latest victim at the moment of impact, as recounted by those who stood nearby. With each calculation the Turkish sniper drew with his eye a line which ended at an area of the Australian trenches on Harris Ridge. Eventually a pattern began to emerge. His gaze consistently returned to fix on one specific location, a small rise on the heights at Chatham's Post. At last he had found the lair of the too-efficient Australian killer. Mirroring Billy Sing's pre-sniping preparations, the Turk selected suitable site. In the darkness each night, he built his own position.

Many days were spent simply watching and waiting. Despite tempting targets which appeared from time to time, the Turkish sniper held his fire. He knew that his quarry would not be among these unwise Australians. An opportunist shot might give him away.

Eventually, however, his persistence paid off. He returned to the Turkish trenches late one evening, certain that he had found his rival and that the new day would see him finally end Sing's winning streak. The next morning Billy and his spotter took up their position. As Sing settled himself in, the observer began his day's first semi-alert yawning frontal sweep with the telescope. Almost immediately the man's movement abruptly ceased and he whispered to his sniper that he already had a target. Sing took the telescope and, glancing towards a point indicated by his spotter, he stared ahead –



into the face and rifle-muzzle of Abdul the Terrible. Carefully taking up his rifle, Sing made a final check that nothing would betray their position; then gently eased the loophole cover back and cautiously pushed the weapon forward. The Turk also saw Sing and began his own firing sequence. As he settled the rifle into his shoulder, Abdul drew in a breath and steadily sighted in on Sing. At that moment, a bullet struck the Turk between the eyes. After this it would seem that the Turks were not prepared to waste their own men and instead opted for impersonal, but effective heavy artillery. The first round was ranged with almost pinpoint accuracy. It landed close to Billy's position. Sing and his colleague took their leave. Seconds later another shell landed on the emplacement, completely destroying it.

Along with occasional mercilessness shown by Sing, there was often a macabre sense of dry humour surrounding his daily pursuit. This surfaced on one occasion when the Australian had as his observer General Birdwood. It was a windy day, not one conducive to long-range rifle accuracy. As Sing fired on a recklessly exposed Turkish head, his first shot missed, its path deflected by a fleeting gust. Billy waited for the wind to drop before sighting once more. The second bullet spun a Turkish soldier out of the trench; a satisfactory effort given the blustery conditions. With a hint of virtue, mixed perhaps with unintentional irony, the poker-faced sniper told the general that he would not add the latest kill to his score – he had been aiming at another Turk. Billy's comment underlined the latent and seemingly ambiguous integrity that was part of his professional make up.

The way his Turkish casualties were recorded bears this out. It has been suggested that the official tally was only updated if a Turk was seen to drop by either a sergeant or an officer. If the umpire raised his finger to signal the fall of another Turkish wicket, the scorekeeper-clerk back at Fifth Light Horse headquarters adjusted the authorised score-sheet accordingly. However, this seems to have been impractical, given the requirement that there be little movement as possible near Sing's sniping post. In addition, neither Billy nor his observer were in a position to call for a suitably ranked member of the regiment every time they were ready to fire on another target. It was more reasonable that someone apart from Sing himself actually confirmed the hit. In most cases, this would have been the man working with Billy at the time.

Eventually, official recognition of Billy's exceptional sniping skills began to appear. On October 23, 1915, General Birdwood issued an order announcing his compliments on Billy's performance in accounting for 201 Turks. The general was obviously happier in accepting the higher, but less official score.

But what compulsion drove Billy Sing on, as he recorded more and yet more kills at Anzac, during the summer and autumn of 1915? Certainly the support of the Australian high command placed no official obstruction in Billy's way. Sing's accuracy received almost exalted sanctioning. This was, of course, at a time when young Australia sought its own heroes as it came to world attention. Billy Sing slid comfortably into the national role his rifle had created for him. There is clear evidence that the international press knew of the Queensland marksman. Reports of his Gallipoli successes appeared in London and American newspapers.

By the time 1916 arrived, the last of the Anzac troops were regrouping on the sands of Egypt, following the evacuation of Gallipoli. In February, Sing was also mentioned in the despatches of the commander of the Allied forces, Sir Ian Hamilton. On March 10, Sing was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for conspicuous gallantry as a sniper at Anzac. By June, the AIF, apart from the bulk of light horse regiments, had either gone from Egypt, or were in the process of leaving, bound for the big league on the distant battlefields of France and Belgium. Sing joined the 31<sup>st</sup> Infantry Battalion and in August, sailed for England. After further training, he was sent to France. Over the next 19 months, wounds caused Sing to be frequently in and out of the line. He also suffered the recurring effects of old illnesses and injuries from Gallipoli. During his recuperation, he travelled to Scotland where he met waitress Elizabeth Stewart, 21-year-old daughter of a naval cook. They married in Edinburgh on June 29, 1917. It is not clear if Sing continued to carry out sniping duties with the battalion in France. Snipers did operate there – but the heavy use of artillery meant snipers were used only on a limited scale. But Sing's army file provides occasional hints that whatever he was doing, he was often involved in hazardous activities against the Germans. In October 1917, the Army Corps commander expressed his appreciation for Sing's "gallant service during recent operations".

This may have taken place at Polygon Wood in late September 1917, when Billy led a fighting patrol which succeeded in eliminating German snipers who were causing casualties among the Australians.

Sing was recommended for the Military Medal for his work in identifying and dealing with German marksmen. But this was never approved. However, early in 1918, he was awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre, which may have been the result of the Polygon Wood action.

In July, Sing was posted to a submarine guard on an Australia-bound troopship. It had been almost four years since he had left Clermont for his grand adventure. When Billy and Elizabeth Sing arrived in Proserpine in late 1918 or early 1919, the town's residents turned out in force. A large procession, led by a local band, accompanied the couple from the railway station to the town hall, and local dignitaries made welcoming speeches. The transition from the green hills and ancient culture of Edinburgh to the dust and rough life of the mining district around Clermont must have been traumatic for Elizabeth Sing.

This might account for her disappearance from the scene only a few years after she and Billy had arrived in the area. As the post-war exuberance waned, Billy returned to Clermont. He moved on to a mining claim on the Miclere goldfield. In 1942, he left the district for Brisbane. He told his sister Beatrice that it might be cheaper to live in the city. In December, Sing was living in Brisbane and took on a labouring job. It did little help his poor health. A workmate, Joe Taylor, who had also mined with him on the Miclere goldfield, later recalled that Sing was stubborn and would never see a doctor. Billy's Gallipoli reputation faded from memory with the increasing number of Anzacs who passed away each year.

On Wednesday, May 19, 1943, William Edward Sing's aorta ruptured and he died alone in his room at the house where he boarded in 304 Montague Rd, West End (Brisbane). He was 57. Apart from five shillings, which were found in his room, and six pounds ten shillings and eight pence, owed to him in wages, the only thing of value left by Billy was a hut, probably on the Miclere claim, worth twenty pounds.

It was a pathetic postscript to the life of a man whose name was once known to an army and a nation.

## New Book Released.

**Campbell, Colin:** - *More Bang for No Bucks – self-propelled artillery used by Australian cavalry in Vietnam 1967-68.*

This book describes the unique story of armoured, artillery and infantry soldiers drawn together in Vietnam in 1967-68 to form 6 Troop, A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment. This mixture of Army corps in a small combat unit is very rare. Because of casualties and unit rotations, 35 men served in the Troop. The Troop served in six M108 self-propelled howitzers, loaned at no cost from the US Army. It is believed that it is the only time Australia has used self-propelled guns on active service. The book records why the Troop was formed. It describes how it was raised and trained in-country, deployed under tight restrictions and overcame many obstacles to achieve the success that it did. The soldiers learnt a greater variety of skills and displayed a level of responsibility and initiative not normally required of their peers. 6 Troop demonstrated an ability to adapt which, history shows, occurs time and again with Australian soldiers at war.

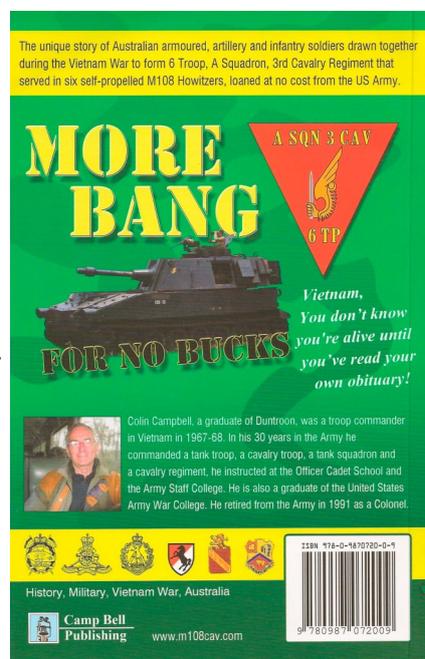
Paperback, 120 pages, including 24 pages of colour photographs.

ISBN: 978-0-9870720-0-9

\$31 including postage to anywhere in Australia.

Contact Colin Campbell, PO Box 701, Mawson, ACT 2607.

[colinrcampbell@bigpond.com](mailto:colinrcampbell@bigpond.com), Mobile: 0408 442 186.



**Lest we Forget**  
**We regret to advise the passing of the following**

Poile, A  
 Gordon, WIS  
 Stalling, WK  
 Dent, CAPT Graham(Joe)  
 Allard, J  
 Brown, David John  
 Linnert, Keith Charles  
 Harris, RG

Loughery, JV  
 Cudars, J  
 Janssan, EL(Eric)  
 Pentland, Norman  
 Pengilley, C  
 Rasmussen, J  
 Bower, Stanely George  
 Currie, EK

**HEARTY WELCOME TO THESE NEW MEMBERS**  
**SINCE OUR LAST ISSUE**

C.A Tilston  
 C. Terry WW11 vet  
 G (Geoff) Smith 3/9 SAMR, 1AR

**We are extremely grateful for the following individuals and associations for their donations to the National Boer War Memorial project between March to June**

Haynes, J COL	Smith, M	MacLachlan, H	Johns, L
Bondi Junction RSL	Tobin, JO Mrs	Vernon, B	Andrijczak, E
Cornell, CJ	Harris, B Mrs	Browning, M	Wishart, BJ
Crick, RG	Lovegrove, P Mrs	Jones, N	Aust Int Assoc
Farrington, F	Perrett, D Mrs	Hamilton, W	Looney, JN
Harrison-Williams, FG	O'Sullivan, M	Lochnaber P/L	Purvis, G
Horgan, J	Filmer, M	Wicks, S	Cerda-Pavia, P
Hudson, R	Body, DJ	Hamilton, M	Crotty, D
Johnstone, BJ Mrs	Barnett, C	Hales, B	Ohisson & Johnston
Kirwin, J	Bradley, A	Tyson, G	Bennett, J Mrs
Lush, A	Broken Hill RSL	Swan, K	Moir, G
Maroondah Lodge	Burrows, RI	Cullinan, C	Rankin, D
Openshaw, B	Booth, T	Collins, S Mrs	Wolfe, B
Pugsley, WN	Greenway JF	Cullen, P&E	Cook, B
Sharp, RJ	Bolton, J Mrs	Burlison, J	Rankin, E
Shaw, R	Castellari, BF	King, J	Collier, M
Timmins, JH	Mills, MG	Harrison, B	Gibson, K Ms
Vincent, D Mrs	Hopkinson, HR	Ross, B	Langdon, DE
Watts, M	Bail, T	Pakes, D	Forbes, P

## Cockatoo Rise War Veterans Retreat

Greg and Anne Carter invite you to stay at our War Veterans Retreat, eligible people are Returned Service personal, their partners and War Widows (no children or pets). There is no charge but a donation is welcome to assist with the up keep.



27 hole golf course, FREE to play for those who are guests and ALSO any eligible people who are just visiting the area. Clubs, balls, buggies all available.

Also available is Croquet, Bocce, Fishing in the Gippsland Lakes and Sea, Veggie garden, playing with the horses, flower farm, bush walking and general relaxing.



Available are 2 caravan sites also camp sites.

Warm friendly, safe and secure place to share some time.



5 minutes from BAIRNSDALE on the Great Alpine Rd

Bookings essential tel Greg or Anne 0409418332



## 6<sup>th</sup> LIGHT HORSE – TRUNDLE TROOP

In association with  
**RESERVE FORCES DAY PARKES DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**Cordially Invites you to  
'Return of the Last "Original" Light Horsemen' Reunion  
95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Romani**

**2-3 JULY 2011  
Parkes NSW**

If you have any Light Horse memorabilia such as photo's, trophies, diaries etc please bring them along for people to see.

Contact: Tom Lees

Ph: (02) 6861 1728 Email: Tom.Lees@csiro.au

MEMORABILIA	Cost
AFV CREWMAN'S BADGE	\$20
TIE	\$35
DECALS	\$3
POCKET	\$15
LAPEL BADGE	\$15
STUBBY HOLDER	\$7
ARMOURED ANTICS BOOKLET	\$10
TIE CLIPS	\$20
CUFF LINKS	\$30
VIETNAM VIDEO—FRAGMENTS OF WAR	\$20
ARMY COMBAT BADGE SILVER LARGE	\$20
ARMY COMBAT BADGE SILVER SMALL	\$20
ARMY COMBAT BADGE S AS A PAIR	\$30
MORE BANG FOR NO BUCKS	\$30
Book "To Fight and do our best" 1st Armd Div WWII	\$30
HISTORY OF THE RAAC GENERAL HOPKINS	\$100
BOER WAR MEMORIAL TEE SHIRT	\$50
BOER WAR MEMORIAL LAPEL BADGE	\$15

# Lost Souls

**If anyone knows the whereabouts of the following members would they contact the RAACA Office**

NAME	LAST ADDRESS
Baker. Mr Peter	49 Scott St, Bendigo, Vic
Baker. P.	1a Atkinson St, Bendigo, Vic 3550
Beasley. R.R.	4 Grande Terrace, Monterey Keys, Qld 4212
Bowman. G.J.	18 Dalwood Street, Carseldine, Qld 4034
Brown. Mr. A.J. (Anthony)	86 Griffin Ave, Tamworth, NSW, 2340
Buckingham. Rev A.G.	2/16 Illuka Street, Currajong, Qld 4812
Currie. E.K.	125 Dunoon Road, Modanville, Lismore, NSW 2480
Danger. Lt Col F.	School of Armour, Puckapunyal, Vic 3662.
Della Costa. Maj M.G.	1 Hayden Close, Watanobbi, NSW 2259,
Ellis . L?	23 North Street, Red Hill, Qld 4039
Ellis. E. J.	PO Box 66, Bungendore, NSW 2621
Ford. B.	PO Box 166, Northmead, NSW2152
Harris. Capt D.W. (Donald)	4/25 Alfred St, Ramsgate, NSW, 2217
Kennedy. Mr. J. (John)	30 Osbourne St, Umina, NSW, 2257
Martlew. MR. R.	PO Box 265, Millicent, SA 5240
Martlew. R	PO Box 265 Millicent SA
McRoberts. D.	PO Box 421, Croydon Hills, Vic. 3136
Palmer. Maj. J.	26 Dryandra St, O'Connor, ACT, 2600
Paton. G.M.	9 Violet Ave. Forrestville, NSW 2087
Peatling. K.	PO Box 1152, Mooloolaba, Qld 4557
Pengilley. Mr C.M.	POBox 842, Orange, NSW, 2800
Pentland. Mr. N.	6/3 Redcliffe Street, Palmenston, ACT, 2913
Ramsden. K.R.	17 Lynelle Street, Sunnybank, Qld 4109
Roach. R.	1039 Birthamba Road, Bucca, Qld 4670
Robertson OAM. Mrs R.	9 Mabel Street, Kingsgrove NSW 2208
Rodd. M.H.	27/17 Oaks Village, Tarraganda In, Bega, NSW 2550
Roughton. Mr. D.R.	12 Burrawong Pde, Urunga, NSW, 2455
Sheppard. G.	9 Furphy Close, Romsey, Vic 3434
Souter. Capt. P.A. (Peter)	2 Cav, Darwin NT 0820
Storer. W.J.	PO Box 798, Charlestown, NSW 2290.
Waterworth. J	29 Como Road, Oyster Bay, NSW 2225
Weekes. P.F.	PO Box 1605, Sunnybank, Qld 4109
Yabsley. G.M.	18 Shirley Street, Epping, NSW 2121

Members are thanked for their response to the request to receive Armour by email.

Due to that response with this issue we have sent Armour by email to all email addresses we hold.

If this doesn't suit any one please contact the office and we will cross you off the email list and send a paper copy.



Eleven of the 19 members of 6 Troop A Sqn 3 Cav still in contact held a reunion in Canberra over the ANZAC Day weekend. Events included a meet and greet Bar-B-Q, a lunch, a tour of the War Memorial and the Vietnam Memorial, a dinner at the Hyatt Hotel as well as the Dawn service and the march itself. All together 29 troop members with their families attended.



**6 Troop A Sqn 3 Cav Regt members at reunion, 23rd/25th April 2011, Canberra**

**Rear: Brett Spencer, Barry Schwind, Bob Brady, Bill Fietz, Brian Keevers, Alan McPherson  
Front: David Nean, Colin Campbell, Kevin McAndrew, Tony Benham, Noel Bell**

*6 Troop made up about 50% of the 24 black hat members for the march in Canberra.*

Regards  
Colin R Campbell