

COMMANDO

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION

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The Australian Commando Association's membership consists of Servicemen & women who have served with WW2 Independent Companies, Commando Squadrons & Regiments, 'M' and 'Z' Special units, 1st & 2nd Commando Company's, 1st Commando Regiment, 4 RAR Commando & the 2nd Commando Regiment. The Association also consists of Associate Members who have served in units who directly supported Commando units in time of war and peace and Social members who's direct family member was either Killed In Action, Died In Service or Killed in Training or a member of the ACA who has passed.

DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed within this publication are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the Editor, Publisher, Committee Members or Members of our Association. We welcome any input as long as it is not offensive or abusive but if any member has a problem with a printed article we would like to be informed in order that the author may be

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Deadline for next edition (Edition 7, 2021):

SUNDAY, 27 JUNE 2021

All news on members and interesting articles accepted.
 (Subject to editors' approval.)

Nick Hill



FRONT COVER: The Commando Memorial Cairn at Tidal River, Wilsons Promontory Victoria with Mount Oberon looming in the distance. Tidal River is the home and birth place of The Australian Commandos and 2021 marks the 80th Anniversary of the Australian Commando, No1 Independent Company (WW2) was raised at Tidal River in May 1941. Image courtesy: Mr Richard 'Dick' Pelling, ACA-VIC.

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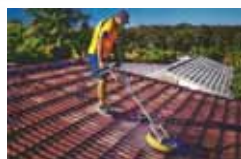
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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Hello all and welcome to Edition #006 April to June 2021 of **COMMANDO** – *The Magazine of the Australian Commando Association*. We hope that you and your families are doing well?

2021 marks the 80th Anniversary of the formation of the Australian Commando, Happy 80th Birthday to all past and present Australian Commandos.

No1 Independent Company was raised at Wilsons Promontory in May 1941. This year also marks the 20th Anniversary of 4 Commando deploying to East Timor with two Commando Companies, Bravo & Charlie Commando Companies, two standard Infantry Companies being Alpha & Delta Companies, 126 Commando Signals Squadron & a Logistics Company. Within both Alpha, Delta & Logistic Companies were Commando qualified operators.

We again have some great articles in this edition including our normal reports from Nationals and the States. We have an article on 80 years of the Australian Commandos and I will say it is not an exhaustive history by any means. The French Commando Marines who are the only French unit that wear their beret badge on the left side in Honour of the UK Army Commandos which is where they began.

It's great to see our Commando Family is growing stronger with the commencement or near commencement of two new Australian Commando Associations, one in the ACT & the other in SA. Below is to notices for ANZAC Day get together for those who may be interested in finding out more in those areas.

Unfortunately, we have lost 8 Commandos during the April to June period, seven Killed In Action in Afghanistan and Colonel Hans 'Ice Man' Fleer, AM. DCM. the Honorary Colonel of 2nd Commando Regiment passed suddenly in 2013 from cancer. In early March we lost one of the last remaining 2/9th Cdo Sqn members & ACA QLD Life Member, William 'Bill' Justo. May you forever Rest In Peace and have fair winds and blue skies. C4L.

Just to clarify some misinformation given out by some ACA State members. **COMMANDO** – *The Magazine of the Australian Commando Association* is free to all members of the ACA. Not one cent from any of the ACA State or National membership goes to



the production of this magazine, nor does the ACA Nationals or any ACA States receive any monies from the advertisements placed in this magazine or the production of the magazine. Please feel free to submit an article for the magazine regardless of how small or big they are as we will always try to fit them in but this does come down to the number of pages allocated per magazine.

For those fighting the good fight, remember to 'Keep Your Powder Dry & Your Sights Straight' and those back home in Australia or around the world, please keep safe & have we hope you all have a great ANZAC Day where ever you are in the world.

Commando 4 Life
Nick Hill

Editor - Commando Magazine

E: editor_commandomag@commando.org.au

W: www.commando.org.au

Letters to the Editor

Attention all former Commando Regt Pers in the South Australia Area. The Australia Commando Assn is in the process of forming a South Australia (SA) and are looking for members living in SA. Our first event will be this ANZAC Day march. For the first time at the Adelaide march, a 'Commando Regiments' group will form up as part of Group 9. We will form up behind the SASR Group before 10am on Pulteney St, between North Tce and Grenfell St. So, come and join us this year if you have been posted on strength (operator, support staff, signallers etc) in 1 or 2 CDO Regt's (4RAR Cdo) or 126 & 301 Sig Sqn etc and live in SA.

For further information, please contact peter.bogatec33@optusnet.com.au or meet up on ANZAC Day. Please distribute widely.

Peter Male – Ex 1 Cdo Regt

(Continued on page 5)



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FROM THE ACA NATIONAL PRESIDENT

ACA Members,

This is a volatile climate for veterans especially Australian Special Forces Veterans. There is a great deal of media and public interest in the progress of what is now known as the Brereton Report and following on from that the debate about the need or not for a Royal Commission into veteran's suicide.

The outcomes of both of these situations are beyond our control however how we keep a look out for our fellow ACA mates and members is well within our capabilities.

All of us have previously acknowledged the need for everyone to be aware of those around us and to ensure that bad memories that may be driven to the surface by the current or upcoming publicity surrounding the above events are not negatively affecting those who we care for or are in touch with from time to time. Can I call on you to re-double your efforts to stay in touch and also to re-establish comms with those who you think may need a call but have dropped off your radar.

I can report to you that the ACA executive at a national level in conjunction with the Commando



Welfare Trust is working with the Australian SAS Association and the SASR Trust to offer assistance where and how we can.

On a different note, I am delighted to advise you that the ACA is proud to announce the birth of the ACT/Canberra Branch of our Association. Please look for contact details for the ACA-ACT Branch elsewhere in this edition of Commando News.

I am equally pleased to announce that in South Australia we are well down the road to having ACA representation in that State as well. Contact details for the SA convenors will follow soon.

In closing I wish to reinforce the concept that our Association and its ability to respond to the needs of our most vulnerable members is being tested now and will be for some time to come.

Commando 4 Life.

MAJGEN Greg Melick, AO, RFD, SC. (Retd)
National President
Australian Commando Association

For further information please contact our National Vice President, Steve Pilmore.

----- COMMANDO FOR LIFE -----

Letters to the Editor

(Continued from page 3)

Attention all former Commandos in the ACT & Southern NSW Area. Below is a list of ANZAC events in the ACT area for all current and former Commando Regiment members.

24 April - Evening of Saturday 24th April - Woden RSL ANZAC eve dinner, CDO Association invited.

25 April - AWM Dawn Service. Meeting point to be determined followed by a CDO/SO breakfast. Venue TBC.

AM TBA - March (unlikely at this time). 1200 Australian Special Operations Associations: ANZAC lunch - Assembly Braddon (SOER, SASR and Commando Associations). 1700 ACA-ACT wreath laying at Australian War Memorial (SASR and SOER Association TBC). Please do not hesitate to contact me at aca.cbr@outlook.com.

Alex Meiliunas
Ex 126 Sig Sqn, 1 Cdo Regt





Australian Commando Association Inc.

UPCOMING ACA EVENTS

APRIL to JULY 2021

ACA National

April 2021

- Edition #006 of **COMMANDO - The Magazine of the Australian Commando Association**, to be released. Any issues with content, please contact the Editor Commando Magazine at editor_commandomag@commando.org.au

Saturday 25 April 2021

- **ANZAC Day**, Dawn Services under own arrangements.

ACA Australian Capital Territory

Saturday 24 April 2021

- **ANZAC Eve Dinner**, Woden RSL ANZAC eve dinner, CDO Association invited. Contact Alex Meiliunas at aca.cbr@outlook.com for further details.

Sunday 25 April 2021

- **ANZAC Day Service**, AWM, Meeting point to be determined followed by a CDO/SO breakfast. Venue TBC.
- **ANZAC Day March**, (TBC).
- **ANZAC Day Luncheon**, Assembly Braddon @ 1200. (SOER, SASR and Commando Associations).
- **ANZAC Day Wreath Laying**, 1700 wreath laying at Australian War Memorial (SASR and SOER Association TBC). Contact Alex Meiliunas at aca.cbr@outlook.com for further details.

ACA New South Wales

Sunday 25 April 2021

- **ANZAC Day Service**, Contact ACA NSW Secretary at secretary_nsw@commando.asn.au for more information.
- **ANZAC Day March**, Contact ACA NSW Secretary at secretary_nsw@commando.asn.au for more information.

ACA Queensland

Sunday 25 April 2021

- **ANZAC Day Service**, Dawn Service under own arrangements.
- **ANZAC Day March**, RV @ Charlotte St, towards Edwards St step off at 1055. Contact ACA Qld Secretary at acaqld_secretary@commando.org.au for more information.
- **ANZAC Day Lunch**, @ Jade Buddha, 14 Eagle St, \$29pp from 1200-1600. Contact ACA Qld Secretary at acaqld_secretary@commando.org.au for more information.

Sunday 4 July 2021

- **76th Commemorative Service of Operation Rimau (Z Special) & Commando Day**, Location and Time TBC. Contact Secretary at acaqld_secretary@commando.org.au

ACA South Australia

Sunday 25 April 2021

- **ANZAC Day Service**, Dawn Service under own arrangements.
- **ANZAC Day March**, FUP @ 1000, Pulteney St, between North Tce and Grenfell St Adelaide. Contact Peter Male at peter.bogatec33@optusnet.com.au for further details.

ACA Victoria

Sunday 25 April 2021

- **ANZAC Day Service**, Dawn Service & Gunfire Breakfast, 0530 @ Waverly RSL, Victoria. Contact Secretary at acavic_secretary@commando.org.au for further details.
- **ANZAC Day March**, TBC. Contact Secretary at acavic_secretary@commando.org.au for further details.

(Continued next page)



Sunday 9 May 2021

- **ACA VIC Annual General Meeting**, Waverly RSL, Victoria from 1030. Contact Secretary at acavic_secretary@commando.org.au for further details.

ACA Western Australia

Saturday 10 April 2021

- **ACA WA AGM**, 1100 @ ASASA House, Swanbourne WA.

Sunday 25 April 2021

- **ANZAC Day Service**, Dawn Service under own arrangements. ANZAC Day March more to follow. Contact Secretary at acawa_secretary@commando.org.au for further details.

Commando Units & Regiments

May 1941

- No1 Independent Company was raised at Wilsons Promontory Victoria. 80th Anniversary of the Australian Commando.

June 1943

- Z Special Unit was raised

25 June 1955

- 1 Company (Sydney) raised at Victoria Barracks NSW, (66th Birthday)

19 June 2009

- 4 RAR Commando renamed 2nd Commando Regiment at Tobruk Lines, Holsworthy Barracks NSW, (12th Birthday)

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello one and all,

It's been a while since I have written a report here in "Commando" and we are excited to continue providing more of an update than a report in the future.

We have been very busy in our own association with the production of our own magazine and other major activities. The Australian Special Forces Magazine (ASFM) is the official production Australian Commando Association NSW. As per our constitution, we the Committee, are required to produce a periodical for or its members, no matter what other associations in this group are producing. Our magazine meets that requirement and we are very proud to serve our members of our association with this periodical.

The exciting and very different NSW publication is free to NSW members and provided at a reasonable cost to others and therefore available to all. We thank the "National" association for allowing us to continue to provide material and president updates via this magazine as we have done in the past. Our own magazine allows us more freedom of contributions and to be more specific to our members as well as meeting constitutional requirements. For more specific and

detailed president reports/updates NSW members will be serviced by the ASFM.

ANZAC day 2021 organisation has been a challenge with RSL changing its commitment program and requirements. Please keep in touch, watch the website, Facebook, Instagram, emails and snail mail for details. We absolutely will have a ceremony at the Commando Memorial Martin Place and a march this year.

Commando Memorial Trust black tie dinner. The NSW Association presented a cheque for \$5000 on behalf of its members an amount made through the hard work of Vice President Tony Marsden and Treasurer Mark Reilly in organizing and conducting the Double Dagger Ride and Rock NSW charity motorcycle ride. See the ASFM for more on the ride we hope to see more attend next year.

Looking forward to the future of this Association with its great committee.

"The Best Way to Get Started Is To Quit Talking And Begin Doing." – Walt Disney

Commando 4 Life
Wayne Havenaar
 President
 ACA NSW

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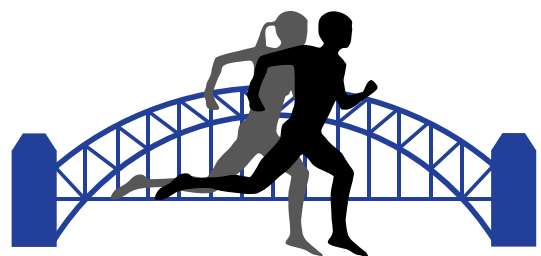
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Contact - acaql_d_secretary@commando.org.au

PRESIDENT'S WORD

April 2021



Hello members and welcome to this edition of "Commando". As always, I hope that you are all keeping well and as healthy as can be.

Vale Bill Justo, 2/9th Commando Squadron, WW2

Time has passed once again between my writing and it is with sadness that I relay that another original Commando has left us. WW2 Signals SGT William "Bill" Justo, formerly of B Troop 2/9th CDO SQN passed quietly at Nudgee QLD on 4th of March shortly after his 98th birthday. John Roxburgh, myself, and my partner Jennifer, were invited by Bill's eldest son (young Bill) to attend the funeral service along with many Bill's extended family. The Australian national flag along with the Slouch hat that the association had presented Bill during one of our visits adorned the coffin, and he was laid to rest beside his beloved wife at Albany Creek cemetery. Both John and I were pleased to be able to give Bill "one last salute" as the procession passed us by on the way to the grave side. The family were very appreciative of our attendance at the service which highlighted one facet of Bill's long and well lived life. I had opportunity to speak with our regular magazine contributor Harry Bell (2/9th CDO SQN) by phone prior to the funeral and relayed a few memories of Bill from the time that John and I have known him. Rest In eternal peace Bill, your duty done, Commando 4 Life!

2021 ACAQ AGM

The AGM was held on Saturday 27th Feb with the results emailed out shortly afterwards. Just to reiterate, thank you to all that attended on the day, the new Vice President Peter Mac for stepping up, the newly voted in ordinary members and the committee for continuing in their roles. I would like to remind you all that the committee membership position is in a caretaker mode with Luke O'B, and if anyone would like to take on that role it would take some pressure of him. Luke has a

recent new addition to his young family and remains the associations Treasurer.

ANZAC Day Sunday 25th of April

This year's ANZAC Day march is going ahead as (almost) normal. We will be marching under the Combined Special Forces banner, with our own banners following; SASR, CDO's, CD's and SOER should make for an impressive bunch as we make our way around the route past the Cenotaph for the eyes left and salute. Minimal restrictions to the format are ever present to protect marchers and the viewing public. Social distancing is the most noticeable and easiest way to help prevent the spread, so practice this where possible during the day.

RV Details

RV at Charlotte St towards Edward St, we are now Position 63 and stepping off at 10.55am. We will be helped once again by Mueller College students carrying our banner. I am hoping we have a great turn out for this ANZAC Day re-start.

After March Event

Once again, we have been invited to join the brothers from ASASRQ for after march festivities at the Jade Buddha restaurant near Eagle St Pier, upstairs until 4pm. Cost is \$29 P/P payable on arrival. This event has proven a great mix from the SF Veterans community.

Veterans care Association TA-15

VCA held another Timor Awakening on the Gold Coast from 27th Feb to 7th March. I was grateful to be invited down by Gary and Michael Stone to observe some of my former serving military friends, along with one of their spouses, mentoring Veterans as graduates of the VCA "Peer to Peer" mentor program which was conducted last year just prior to Covid. Their enthusiasm in helping other veterans become mentally, physically, and holistically self-aware through the activities conducted during the time away was very satisfying to see. The next "TA-16 on the Gold Coast" will be running from 21st – 29th August 2021. Check out the Timor Awakening website www.timorawakening.com for further details and an (EOI) expressions of interest forms if you wish to



attend. I highly recommend any Veteran (not just Timor) attend one of these programs if you can. It may change your life as it did for me.

Social Events

Mark S and Richard J our social member team have been in close talks with ASASR-Q and as always, we have a standing invitation to attend their RED CLAW camping and fishing activities. We are also welcome to their regular monthly get togethers in the city as they arise. A new invitation was received by us through Mick O'Mal (SASR social) to join the "SAMVOA" South African Veterans, for a BBQ down at Beaudesert on Saturday 20th March. Mick and our Jimmy T report a wonderful event, and some very interesting members with many a story passed between the group. The SAMVOA also have their own museum and it is worth a look on the next BBQ I am told. Planning for Operation Rimau and Special Forces day (Sunday July 4th) will ramp up shortly with emails on timings and details to follow directly to members. Once again, I pass on thanks to our affiliated associations for their magazines and news-letters provided throughout the last period.

Items/Products/Plaques/Polo Shirt

A reminder that we are still able to provide individual CDO Assn Polo shirts @ \$40 each plus \$10 postage. I have approx. two of the new Commando plaques still available @ \$55 each plus \$10 postage. Also, one of the CDO Assn Australian Army Stilettos (AAS) @ \$120 plus \$10 postage (price to be confirmed). Contact me directly on emails below IRT any items required. In other news, JR Medals and myself are about to start work on a "one off" Operation Rimau framed memorial piece that will contain an Aust War Memorial commissioned re-produced AAS with timber handle made from the Krait deck planks, along with maps photos and awards. Stay tuned for that to be posted for auction/ sale prior to Op Rimau day in July.

From My Personal Collection

WW1 Lithgow made Enfield No#1 MkIII .303 dated 1918.

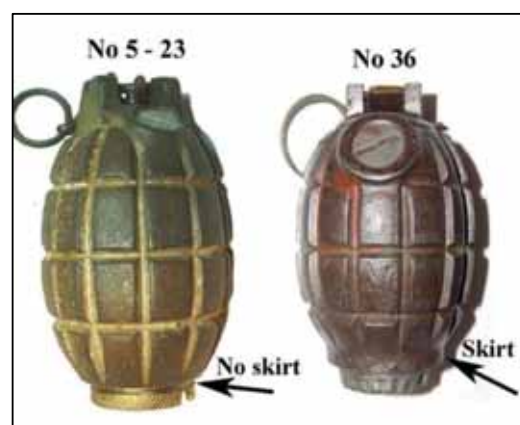
I was lucky enough to be in the right place as a friend of mine was thinning out his collection of military rifles. I had originally advised him during his purchase of this Enfield, and said if it ever came up for sale I'd like first refusal. Sure enough it then came my way a couple of years later and it's a very nice WW1 example. It still has the Martini Henry type early bolt, single shot lock-off slide and extra front sling swivel. Most of these



weapons were re modelled during updates of 1943. This rifle has been re barrelled in July 1944 and has had little use since then. The butt also bears CMF stamps so may have been used during the 50's and 60's as a drill rifle.

Feb 1916 No#5 grenade.

This Deactivated WW1 first patten grenade came to me with a bunch of other interesting pieces such as a 1917 dated British artillery sight, 1916 and 1918 dated German artillery cases made into vases (known as Trench art) by wounded or sick recovering soldiers, a 1916 dated German bayonet and some leather .303 cartridge holders dated 1917 made in Brisbane. The woman selling the items said they were her Grandfathers bring backs from the Great war, that her father had kept until his recent death in his early 90's. Interestingly the ring pins on the early grenades (see comparison to later No#36 Grenade) were smaller to avoid catching other items in them. You can only just get your pointer finger in up to the first knuckle to remove the pin.



Thank you all once again for your continued support of the Australian Commando Association in Queensland and across Australia.

Regards,

Commando 4 Life
Graham Gough
President

E: acaqld_president@commando.org.au
W: www.commando.org.au





AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION VICTORIA INC.

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dougknight88@gmail.com

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acavic_secretary@commando.org.au

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Contact - acavic_secretary@commando.org.au

A 2 COMMANDO COMPANY ORIGINAL TURNS 90

By Richard 'Dick' Pelling – ACA VIC

ACA VIC member Dick Cara, now living in Queensland, was one of the first to enlist when 2 Commando Company (2 Cdo Coy) was raised in Melbourne and 1 Commando Company (1 Cdo Coy) commenced in Sydney in 1955. Sgt Parrish had already transferred in from the 10 Independent Field Squadron on 23 June, followed by T/Sgt Collins and T/Sgt Nelson from the 58/32 Inf Bn on 2 July. Ron Nordhoff, H. Harbison, Graeme Marks and S. Tomlins were allocated the very first 2 Cdo Coy Regimental numbers, 3165601 to 3165604, when they were the first direct enlistments on 2 July. Dick Cara, Roman Stuyczynski and Bruce Wainwright enlisted soon after, on 28 July, with the next sequence of numbers 3165605 - 3165607, and Pte Vance transferred from the Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment.

Dick Cara served in 10 Field Regt in the late 1940s to early 1950s and was a Sergeant, Acting TSM when he transferred to Infantry with 2 Cdo Coy. He agreed to revert to Private but was soon a Corporal as a Section leader. He said they had no Sgts or CMF Officers at that stage. In 1948 Dick played for the Powerhouse Under 18 Australian Rules Club and one occasion the club doctor suggested he should be playing Rugby. Stan Bisset of WW2 Kokoda Track fame was coach when Dick swapped codes and began his Rugby career in 1949. In 1956 he made the Victorian



(L-R) Roman Stuyczynski, MAJ Chris Wallis, Original 2 Cdo Coy OC Peter Seddon and Dick Cara at the 50th anniversary celebrations of 2 Cdo Coy in 2005.

Image Courtesy: Sean Burton.

team as a full back for a tour of NSW. After his Rugby team toured Fiji, Dick initiated a building team to go over and return their hospitality and built a school and a hurricane shelter for the village of Naivivi on the island of Qamea. They also built a small sawmill and planted an acre of saplings. Tragedy struck the village in 1980 when two cyclones hit and demolished the whole village with the exception of the school. The rugby club returned to help them rebuild and also constructed a teachers' residence.

Working in a number of senior management positions, it became the Unit or his job at a stage when his career was necessary for Dick and his family and Dick finally discharged from 2 Cdo Coy in December 1960. Dick has now lived in Queensland for many years, near his family, and keeps in touch with old friends from his Unit days. He sees another early comrade, Bob Payne who lives on the Gold Coast and also keeps in touch with some of his old Rugby mates from Powerhouse. He remains in touch with 'Mac' MacDermott, the former British Royal Marine who was seconded to Australia to help train the fledgling 1 and 2 Commando Companies in their infancy.

All members of the Australian Commando Association offer their congratulations and best wishes to Dick.

-----COMMANDO FOR LIFE-----





Australian Commando Association Western Australia Inc.

PRESIDENT – Mr Paul Shearer **VICE PRESIDENT** – Mr Rob Murray **TREASURER** – Mr Darren Freeman
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Here in the West, we have had a different start to the year. After the chaos of COVID last year we decided to start afresh with a clean canvas for how 2021 would roll. In the lead up to our first meeting the hill suburbs around Perth were hit by bushfires and one of our own was very lucky to get out.

Shayne Hartas and his partner Raquel lost their house in the fires. They managed to get all their pets, barring Messerschmidt the cat, out before the fire hit. The Commando network kicked into gear.

The Commando Welfare Trust, through our National Vice President Steve Pilmore, BRIG Brett Chaloner, Commander of 13 Brigade here in WA (also Shayne's OC at TAG East) and the ACAWA branch here all got behind Shayne to help him and his partner get back on their feet. Clearing and stacking debris, dropping damaged trees and removing damaged fencing took plenty of manpower. A very big thank you to all those that gave up their time to help out including ACA branch members Leigh Harbridge, Anthony Lear, Ian Prothero, Mark Lange, Darren Freeman, David Aiton

and soon to be member Shane Dowsett and his partner Sara. It was a proud moment to see the Commando network at its finest.

Welcome to new member Leigh Harbridge and also BRIG Chaloner, our past National Vice President, in joining the WA branch of the ACA.

Unfortunately, our lovable rogue Rob (Paddy) Murray, is stepping down from the Vice President position. His contribution over the past three years has been fantastic and on behalf of the WA branch I want to say a big thank you for your efforts and your support as VP Paddy. Job well done!

Our AGM is locked in for 1100hrs, Saturday the 10th of April at the ASASA House.

At this stage Perth has the green light for the Anzac Day march so we plan to see a good turn out this year.

The last couple of months has shown that our ethos, "Commando 4 Life", is alive and well here in WA.

Commando 4 Life

Paul Shearer
President, ACA WA



Commandos 4 Life, helping out a mate in need after he lost everything.



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ACA VETERANS ADVOCACY UPDATE

Mr Paul Copeland, OAM. JP. - ACA Veteran Entitlements Advisor
aca_entitlements@commando.org.au

March 2021

We are now well into 2021 and the Covid-19 pandemic still raising its head in a few states around the country. The calls for a Royal Commission into Veteran Suicide has been heard by the Government and now the Primary ESOs, including the ACA are now calling on the PM to cease debate on the matter and conduct a Royal Commission into Veteran Suicides. The general public and in particular our veterans have endured some tough times in 2020, with these times have come over to 2021. Should you or a mate feel the pinch of the 'Black Dog' or just want to talk to someone, Open Arms runs a 24-hour service to help those who are doing it tough. The 24-hour hotline is: 1800 011 046.

Well-Being

Supporting Health, Fitness and Wellbeing After Transition

DVA funds a 12-month general health and fitness program called 'Heart Health'.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/supporting-health-fitness-and-wellbeing-after-transition>.

Note: Eligible veterans are able to seek referrals from their respective GP or Exercise Physiologists (EP), which provides for access to ongoing rehabilitation and treatment of various conditions. Some providers are at the following links:

Veterans Benefits Australia:

<https://veteranbenefitsaustralia.com/pages/veteran-exercise-programs>

NJF Wellness: <https://njfwellness.com.au/>

Helping Heroes – Rehabilitation, Injury Management and Assessment Services

Helping Heroes is a national organisation, exclusively providing rehabilitation, injury management and assessment services to our veteran community. Our goal is to facilitate a life changing impact, extending beyond the individual. With over 15 years of experience in supporting the needs of injured veterans and their families, our dedicated team of professionals are committed to providing superior quality, client centred services.

Helping Heroes apply a biopsychosocial approach as the forefront of our rehabilitation services considering biomedical, psychological and social factors that influence recovery.

Link: <https://www.helpingheroes.com.au/team-vic>

Open Arms is Open for Business

The Covid-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on all of our lives, and is leaving some people with feelings of anxiety, worry, stress or fear. To support you during this time, Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling is remaining open for business.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/open-arms-open-business>.



Changes to Support Mental and Physical Health of Aged Care Residents

DVA clients are set to benefit from the Australian Government's response to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Safety and Quality's recommendations on the Covid-19 pandemic.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/changes-support-mental-and-physical-health-aged-care-residents>.

Support for Homeless Veterans

DVA is able to provide support to veterans and their families who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/support-homeless-veterans>.

Using Technology to Support Mental Health

Research shows that more veterans are heading online for information and tools to support their mental health, particular during ADF transition.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/using-technology-support-mental-health>.

Research Into Future Capacity of Advocacy Workforce

Ex-service organisations (ESOs) and veterans' advocates were recently invited to complete online surveys, as part of a research project being undertaken by the University of NSW that aims to help both ESOs and DVA understand the future capacity of the advocacy workforce.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/research-future-capacity-advocacy-workforce>.



Support Available Following Release of IGADF Afghanistan Inquiry Findings

Many members of the veteran and Defence community have been understandably concerned by the findings of the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force (IGADF) Afghanistan Inquiry.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/support-available-following-release-igadf-afghanistan-inquiry-findings>.

Compassion, Resilience and Support

The past year has presented many challenges for our veteran community. We encourage you to reach out for support if you need it.

Payments

Coronavirus Supplement Extended to 31 March 2021

The Australian Government has extended the Coronavirus Supplement to 31 March 2021. The current payment rate of \$250 per fortnight will change to \$150 per fortnight from 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/coronavirus-supplement-extended-31-march-2021>.

New System to Streamline Income Support Services

'Process Direct' will become the main system income support staff use to support veterans and their families.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/new-system-streamline-income-support-services>.

Concessions and Benefits

Eligible veterans may not be aware that they may be eligible for various State and Federal Government Concessions and Benefits. Each State and Territory in Australia has differing concessions for veterans, which acknowledges veterans for their service to Australia, particularly toward the more wounded, injured or ill veterans.

When purchasing a new car for example, a TPI veteran can save thousands of dollars. Other concessions and discounts are available for veterans. There are various social media platforms that communicate such concessions and benefits; however, the better ones are the following:

DVA Discounts and Concessions Site:

<https://www.dva.gov.au/financial-support/discounts-and-concessions>

Australian Veterans' Alliance:

<https://www.aussieveterans.com/entitlements-concessions?gsearch=1&moduleId=105&ItemId=173>

The latter has a very good search engine, however caution is provided that when looking at such concessions always consult with the VAN office by visiting:

<https://www.dva.gov.au/dva-location> and/or by visiting the ATO site: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Forms/Exemption-of-GST-on-a-car---disabled-veterans/>

You can reach the Veterans' Access Network between 8am and 5pm (your local time) Monday to Friday on 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372) (International callers: 61 2 6289 1133).

Other News

Joint Transition Authority Established

Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families will be better supported through transition from military to civilian life with the establishment of the Joint Transition Authority (JTA).

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/joint-transition-authority-established>.

Changes to Opioid Prescribing

While opioids play an important role in providing pain relief for many people, the Australian Government, through the Department of Health, has implemented a number of regulatory changes to minimise the harms caused by opioid prescription medicines to Australians each year.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/changes-opioid-prescribing>.

Veteran Advocacy

First Veteran Wellbeing Centre Now Open

Australia's first Veteran Wellbeing Centre has officially opened this week in Perth.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/health-and-treatment/work-and-social-life-programs/work-and-social-support/wellbeing-centres>.

Veterans' Advocacy Research Project

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has commissioned a research project to look at the capacity of the veterans' advocacy workforce.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/veterans-advocacy-research-project>.

Compensation and Well-being Advocacy

Veterans who are considering lodging a claim for compensation as a result of their service-related conditions are encouraged to contact a competent Compensation Advocate to assist you through the process of Initial Primary Claim Lodgement, Review and/or Appeals. Veterans and their families who are seeking assistance with Wellbeing services that are provided by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, State Governments and Local Governments are also encouraged to contact a competent Wellbeing Advocate.

For both Compensation and Wellbeing matters, the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) provides information and access to competent Advocates, via the ATDP website.

Link: <https://web.atdp.org.au/>



ACA members and veterans are reminded that significant support maybe provided through a range of DVA Entitlements, in addition to the support from the Commando Welfare Trust (CWT). It is encouraged that veterans contact me, in order to seek information of these entitlements. Also included are concessions available to veterans, particularly those who have a DVA Gold Card For All Conditions within Australia.

Email: aca_vetentitlements@commando.org.au

Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health

The Prime Ministerial Advisory Council on Veterans' Mental Health advises the Prime Minister on the unique mental health issues affecting veterans and their families.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/prime-ministerial-advisory-council-veterans-mental-health>.

Meet Xena, Our Newest Psychiatric Assistance Dog

Xena is the latest psychiatric assistance dog to be partnered with her veteran handler as part of the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Psychiatric Assistance Dog program.

More: <https://www.dva.gov.au/newsroom/latest-news-veterans/meet-xena-our-newest-psychiatric-assistance-dog>.

Medallic Recognition

On 21 January 2021, Government announced that the Tribunal would inquire into recognition for members and families of members who are injured, wounded or killed in or as a result of service. I am authoring the submission on behalf of the ACA, of which the first draft has been given an extension approval to 30 April 2021. I look forward to hearing from veterans, veteran families and current serving members of their views toward this matter. Essentially the position from ACA is that all ADF members who were killed as a result of their service within and outside of Australia, should have recognition of their sacrifice and their families also recognised for the significant loss of a loved member of the family. This would be in a first tranche or "phase" toward such recognition. The recognition is proposed to be:

1. A Scroll from the GG, acknowledging the sacrifice (similar to the WW2 Scrolls);
2. An "Elizabeth" Cross to be awarded to the NOK of the deceased ADF Member; and
3. An Australian Sacrifice Medal, which is recommended to be placed in the higher precedence of the Australian Active Service Medal (AASM) in the Order of Wear.

There is also the recognition of ADF members who have been wounded, or injured as a result of their service. Briefly, it will be proposed that the conditions of an individual who is wounded/injured as a result of

their service in noble circumstances during the conduct of their duties will be a second tranche or phase. The conditions to be met are suggested to be:

1. Wound/Injury immediately onset whilst serving on a medal earning operation;
2. That the member was medically evacuated to a high-level care facility or Surgical Hospital;
3. That the member was repatriated (MEDEVAC) back to Australia;
4. That the member's career was shortened as a result of the wound/injury (no specific time limit); and
5. That the member was medically discharged as a result of the wound/injury.

The proposition is to recognise the significant sacrifice that an individual has made to his/her health, wellbeing, quality of life and limited career continuance in the ADF (i.e. loss of his/her profession as a result of the wound/injury). That this is also proposed to be an ADF condition of service, not related to veteran entitlement law.

The recognition for wounded/Injured ADF personnel, meeting the criterion above are:

1. A Scroll from the CDF acknowledging their sacrifice to Australia whilst placing themselves in great peril during a given operation; and
2. The proposed Australian Sacrifice Medal.

Link to KIA/WIA Medal is here:

<https://defence-honours-tribunal.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/TOR-Inquiry-29.pdf>

and

DVA Ministers media release is here...

<https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/dche/ster/media-releases/recognition-adf-members-and-families>.

I look forward to communicating with interested stakeholders or members.

-----COMMANDO FOR LIFE-----





COMMANDO WELFARE TRUST

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The Honourable Dr Brendon Nelson, AO. BMBS. FRAC (HON). FAMA.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Members of the ACA,

We seem to live in a reasonably confused environment at the moment – there are so many messages out there currently that I believe it is time to draw a breath and take stock of actually what is important. Accordingly, I am going back to the beginning and reminding you of why the Commando Welfare Trust exists and how you, as members of the ACA can play a most important role in its success.



BACKGROUND TO FORMATION OF THE CWT

- Initially conceived in early 2009 and officially launched in 2010 when it became clear that there were aspects missing in the existing support structures for the families of Army Reserve Commandos deploying to Afghanistan. However, it soon expanded its remit to cover all members of SOCOMD (less SASR) and members of any supporting units.

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES TO DATE

- Since the beginning the progress of the CWT has been solid, supporting Commando families where and as required, yet at the same time remaining financially strong due to a well-managed predominantly conservative asset portfolio.
- The Trustees aim to identify the needs of qualifying personnel and their families where any of these soldiers have been killed in action, in training or have sustained serious wounds or injuries and who then require financial relief in times of hardship where such relief is not available from other sources.
- CWT is not designed to replace existing support structures provided by the Department of Defence,

the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) or organisations like Legacy but seeks to work in tandem with those organisations.

- The primary focus of CWT has been the education, development and wellbeing of the children of personnel affected by such tragedies. The Trust Deed also allows additional support beyond this core purpose such as a new initiative of supporting transitioning members of the Command with civilian oriented courses the CWT will pay for when the Government will not.
- All SOCOMD units (less SASR) are supported as well as supporting units like 6th Aviation Regiment and 4 Sqn RAAF where the members have been on operations or in training with CWT supported units.
- In addition to our initial types of support the Trustees are now, in conjunction with Wandering Warriors, embarking on a support program for Commando and Supporting troops who are transitioning to civilian life and require some civilian content courses to support the extensive range of skill SF soldiers already have.
- Where Dept of Defence related bodies will not pay the fees for such courses the Trust will step up.

FINANCIAL STATUS

- \$8.0 million grant received from the Federal Government in 2010 is not to be spent but invested to provide ongoing funds for support of qualifying members and their families into the future.
- As at the date of this brief the CWT has in excess of \$12.0 million in assets.
- The current climate for donations from both the community and the corporate sector is as poor as has been seen in 10 years of the Trust being in existence.
- Too many charities are allegedly working in the Veterans' support area and it is also possible that the publicity surrounding alleged behaviour in AFG may also be having a negative effect.



SUPPORT DATA

- In excess of 110 individuals / families assisted since the Trust began just over a decade ago.
- 38 families / individuals being currently assisted (as of Mar 21).
- Trust has paid out in excess of \$3.75m since inception in support of our beneficiaries and their families at an average of approximately \$375,000 per annum and this as an annual support program amount is about to significantly increase as new initiatives come on line.

CRITICAL RELATIONSHIPS

- CWT beneficiary families the most important relationship is that between the Trustees and our beneficiaries.
- All serving members of the Command as they represent the conduit between the Trustees and both the majority of potential recipients.
- Other important relationships include those with The Australian Commando Association, Wandering Warriors, Cam's Cause, the SASR Trust and the Australian Special Air Service Association.
- Finally, there are important relationships developing with Defence related industry where financial contributions enhance the Trustees' ability to support members leaving the ADF, become qualified in some civilian skill sets they may not have. If this is matched with meaningful employment that allows them to retain their traditional view of themselves, but in a new employment environment. So, The CWT is embarking on a program where transitioning members seeking civilian jobs are supported in obtaining the appropriate skill sets that accompany the military skills they already have and where the Defence Dept does not pay for these courses of study..... the Trust will. This initiative is a joint venture with Wandering Warriors.
- A Lockheed Martin / CWT Scholarship Program consisting of \$120,000 support over 4 years was announced on 19th March 2021 and similar support initiatives from other Defence related industry will also be announced in the coming months.

As described above the current members of the ACA are both potential beneficiaries of this support but also a reliable and informed source of the identity of potential beneficiaries of this form of CWT support.

Call my Trust Executive Officer should you need clarification on any matter pertaining to the Trust.
Steve Pilmore steve.pilmore@commandotrust.com – Mob 0418 314 940

Commando 4 Life
BRIG Mark Smethurst, DSC. AM. (Retd)
Chairman
Commando Welfare Trust
April 2021



A message from Luke

I'm encouraging as many people as possible across Australia to come up to Darwin and explore the Territory's military history, with up to \$1000 off your travel costs, thanks to the NT Government.

Did you know that Darwin was Australia's battlefield in World War Two? It had more bombs dropped on it over 18 months than Pearl Harbor.

I hope as many Aussies as possible can get up here to find out more, and to join us in commemorating the 79th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin on February 19.

Invite your friends up to the Top End to explore our iconic national parks, swim in fresh, cool waterholes, take an unforgettable outback road trip, discover

our Indigenous heritage and culture, wander through our colourful local markets, and explore the sites that make the Top End such an important part of Australia's Commando and WWII history.

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COMMANDOS FOR LIFE

APRIL to JUNE



05 April 2013
COL Hans Fleer, AM. DCM.
Honorary Colonel
2nd Commando Regiment
Died In Service
Melbourne, Victoria



27 April 2008
LCPL Jason Marks
Delta Commando Company
4 RAR Commando
Died In Service
Urazghan Province, Afghanistan



23 May 2011
SGT Brett Wood MG. DSM.
Charlie Commando Company
2nd Commando Regiment
Killed In Action
Helmand Province, Afghanistan



30 May 1968
WO2 John Durrington
2 Commando Company
(Attached To AATTV)
Killed In Action
Quang Nam, South Vietnam



21 June 2010
PTE's Ben Chuck, Tim Aplin, Scott Palmer
Alpha Commando Company, 2nd Commando Regiment
Killed In Action, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan



22 June 2013
CPL Cameron Baird, VC. MG.
Bravo Commando Company
2nd Commando Regiment
Killed In Action
Urazghan Province, Afghanistan



COMMANDO VALE

VALE – QX48278 William 'Bill' Justo

2nd/9th Commando Squadron (WW2)

26 February 1923 – 04 March 2021

By Hubert "Dinga" Bell (2nd/9th Cdo Sqn)

Vale QX48278 WILLIAM 'BILL' JUSTO 2/9 Cdo Sqn; 2/6 Cavalry (Commando) Regiment. Bill just made it to 98, passing away peacefully in his sleep in Brisbane. He is survived by two sons, two daughters and a number of grandchildren and great grandchildren, including grandson Will, who is a Past President of the Law Society of Tasmania and a notable fighter in defence of the Rule of Law.

Bill enlisted on 15 December 1941, a week after Pearl Harbour, at first in the C.M.F. but soon transferring to the A.I.F. He volunteered for Commando training and was accepted (Commandos were all volunteers and not all were accepted) and posted to 2/9 Squadron soon after its formation.

I first met Bill when he was transferred to B Troop in mid-1945 – I think he had been in HQ Troop – to become our Sig. Sergeant following Pat Keating's repatriation with a lot of other "5 and 2" men (men who had served for at least 5 years, including at least 2 years overseas). I was a Trooper, so he was, at first "Sarge" to me, but we soon struck up a friendship, largely through his irrepressible sense of humour: he could, and did, make a joke out of anything at all. We saw more of one another when we were both posted to New Britain after war's end. By then I was a Sergeant also, by way of the Army Education Service, which I had left but retained my rank (an extra 6/- per day! Big deal.)

On 3 February 1946, in a letter home from Rabaul, where I had become a CSM in 29/46 Bn, I described a formal dinner which we held in the Snake Pit (Sergeants' Mess), partly to celebrate the opening of the Mess and partly to welcome the new 2 I.C. of the Battalion, Freddie Lomas MC, from 2/7 Sqn, part of our Regiment. After describing the dinner (3 courses, Port for the toasts etc) my letter continues: "The best part, I've left out. When I walked into the lobby at the Mess, I struck not only Ossie Pomroy, just in from the Compound (where the P.O.W. were billeted), but Pat Hannan, Bill Justo and Frank Rheinberger, all of 2/9 Sqn and just arrived from Wewak. It was a complete



Bill Justo (C) with ACA Qld President Graham Gough (L) & ACA Web Manager John Roxburgh (R) after presenting Bill with his ACA QLD Life Membership Certificate & Slouch Hat with the Double Diamonds of the 2/9 Cdo Sqn at his home in Brisbane, in 2019.

surprise to me, and a very pleasant one. They haven't been posted to the Bn but are staging. I do hope they get a posting to us". To my delight, both Frank and Bill did so and it was there that our friendship flourished.

However, both Bill and Frank were repatriated before I was - their longer service had given them more points in the order of priority. Bill and I did not meet again until 1982, when I was in Brisbane for a Judicial Conference and happened to see in the paper that the Queensland Commando Association was celebrating Krait and Operation Jaywik. So, I turned up at the dock on a Saturday morning and who should be there but Bill and Bubbles! Along with a lot of others, including Don Warren,

MM. MID. of 2/9 Sqn. Thereafter, we kept in touch, though mostly by phone. I think a Regimental reunion at Dubbo, NSW, was our only subsequent meeting in the flesh. Every phone conversation was fun and sprinkled with witticisms - his physiotherapist was always his "physioterrorist", for example. All went well until Bubbles' death about two years ago and that really knocked him about. His *raison d'être* had gone. He moved into a nursing home where he terrorised his fellow inmates with his speedy driving of his motorised wheelchair! But as his 98th anniversary approached, he realised that he was "ready to go". And he went.

Bill had led a full and fulfilled life. Post-war, he had farmed, sold agricultural machinery and used his mechanical bent to repair and resell it. He was appointed an Honorary Life Member of the Queensland branch of the Aust Commando Association in recognition of his WW2 service as an Australian Commando. President Graham Gough reports continued, frequent contact with Bill at his nursing home.

He was happily married to Bubbles for over 60 years and is fondly remembered by their many friends. We offer our sympathy to his family, while remembering that he was "ready to go."

May you forever have fair winds and clear skies.

Commando 4 Life



SIGNIFICANT COMMANDO DATES

APRIL to JUNE

APRIL

April 1942

Detachment, 1 Independent Company under the command of Captain Roy Howard (later the first Qld Cdo Assoc President), was moved to Kudjeru, in New Guinea, to guard against possible Japanese movement south of Wau along the Bulldog Track. In the process they became the first Australian Army unit to cross the Owen Stanley Range.

17 April 1942

2nd/5th Independent Company arrives in Port Moresby, New Guinea during an air raid.

19/20 April 1942

Members of the 2nd/2nd Independent Company were able to make contact with Darwin from the mountains of Timor for the first time since beginning the guerrilla campaign, using a wireless transmitter nicknamed *Winnie the War Winner*.

06 April 1943

Inter-Allied Services Department (ISD) becomes Special Operations Australia (SOA). In May to avoid confusion in the names between SOA & Special Operations Executive (SOE) the cover name Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD) was used instead. Shortly after this Z Special Unit comes under command SRD.

April 1945

The 2nd/4th Cdo Sqn embarked from Townsville and sailing to Morotai, Dutch East Indies. From here the Squadron took part in the landings at Tarakan Island off Borneo as part of the "Oboe" operations.

30 April 1958

The Chief Of The General Staff made a decision to raise No 1 Independent Signals Squadron to support clandestine operations and this led to the formation of 301 Signal Squadron (Home Defence) in 1960 at Lidcome NSW.

25 April 2001

4 RAR Cdo (4 Commando) officially commences a six month operational deployment to East Timor as part of the United Nations Transitional Administration East Timor (UNTAET). The Bn deploys to SECTOR WEST as the Australian Battalion (AUSBAT) and monitors the Northern region against the West Timor border. 4 Commando deploys with two Commando Coy's (B Cdo Coy & C Cdo Coy) and

two light Infantry Coy's (A Coy & D Coy). This is the first time that Australian Commando Company's have deployed to Timor as a complete unit since the 2nd/2nd & 2nd/4th Ind Coys in WW2. 2021 marks the 20th Anniversary of the units deployment to East Timor.

April 2003

Bravo Commando Company, 4 RAR Commando deploys elements into Baghdad, Iraq to secure the Australian Embassy. These elements of Bravo Commando Company are the first Australian Combat Troops to arrive in Baghdad during the Iraq Invasion in 2003.

April 2007

Alpha Commando Company, 4 RAR Commando returns to Uruzghan Province, Afghanistan as part of the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) Rotation IV. SOTG is also known as Task Force 66 (TF66) to distinguish its self from other Coalition SF units in Afghanistan. This begins the continuous presence of a Commando Company in Afghanistan until 15 December 2013.

MAY

May 1941

No1 Independent Company was raised and trained at Wilsons Promontory Victoria, the home and birthplace of the Australian Commando. 2021 marks the 80th Anniversary of the Australian Commando. Happy birthday to all former and current Australian Commandos.

May 1942

2nd/6th & 2nd/7th Ind Coy's were formed at Wilsons Promontory, Victoria.

17 May 1942

Inter-Allied Services Department (ISD) is formed in Melbourne, Victoria.

May 1943

53 men of 2nd/3rd Cav Commando Squadron conducts an attack on Ambush Knoll in New Guinea against the Japanese Imperial Army (JIA) and takes the position. The JIA attempts several counter attacks over several days, but are repelled each time.

(Continued next page)



Significant Commando Dates

MAY (cont'd)

07 May 1943

M Special Unit is raised and became the Surveillance unit of SRD. As a consequence, all Coastwatcher units eventually came under command M Special Unit. The unit was not officially called M Special until after WW2 as M Special was the administration unit for the Coast Watchers.

29 May 1943

2nd/7th Independent Company conducts combat operations in Bena Bena, New Guinea as part of Bena Force.

3 May 1945

2nd/4th Commando Squadron is involved in one of the last campaigns of WW2 when it landed on Tarakan Island and took part in the Borneo campaign. In the coming days and weeks the 2nd/4th Cdo Sqn saw extensive service during the liberation of Tarakan, suffering heavy casualties with four officers and fifty-two other ranks being killed or wounded in this time.

8 May 1945

The War in Europe ends with the total surrender of Germany and becomes known as Victory in Europe Day (VE Day).

11 May 1945

2nd/9th & 2nd/10th Cav Commando Squadrons land at Dove Bay, Wewak and established the beachhead. The landing was also with the 2/3 Machine Gun Bn, plus a Battery of 75mm, manned by 2/1 Tank Attack Regt

13 - 19 May 1945

2nd/10th Cav Cdo Sqn is surrounded by Japanese troops in the Wewak area and fights off numerous attacks.

6 May 1969

WO2 Ray Simpson, DCM. is awarded the Victoria Cross for Valour in South Vietnam. Ray was attached to AATTV from 1 Commando Company.

25 May 2006

Alpha Commando Company, 4 RAR Commando deploys to Timor Leste to help secure the Country as a result of the unrest in the country. ACC secures the APOD in Dili to enable the remainder of the Force to make entry into the Country.

JUNE

01 June 1942

Z Special Unit (the "combat" unit of SRD) begins training at Foster Guerilla Warfare School, Wilsons Promontory, Victoria.
(The name Z Special Unit until wasn't used 'til the late 1980's).

29 June 1942

2nd/5th Independent Company launched a raid on a Japanese aerodrome at Salamaua, New Guinea, the first Allied attack on Japanese land forces anywhere.

05 June 1945

2nd/10th Cav Commando Squadron in action against Japanese bunker system South of the main Australian position in Mandi during the Aitape - Wewak Campaign.

25 June 1955

1 Commando Company (Sydney) is Raised at Victoria Barracks, NSW.

June - July 2000

Elements of Bravo Commando Company, 4 RAR Commando deploys to the Solomon Islands as part of Operation Plum Bob, to help withdrawal Australian Nationals from the troubled Island.

10 - 14 June 2010

Alpha Commando Company, 2nd Commando Regiment engages heavy insurgent numbers during the Battle of Eastern Shah Wali Kot, Afghanistan. This battle is later awarded the Battle Honour Eastern Shah Wali Kat, which is the first battle honour to be awarded to an Australian Commando unit & Australian Special Forces.

19 June 2009

4 RAR Commando was renamed the 2nd Commando Regiment at Tobruk Lines, Holsworthy Barracks NSW.

22 June 2013

CPL Cameron Stuart Baird, MG. is Killed In Action and subsequently is Posthumously Awarded the Victoria Cross (VC) for Valour whilst serving as a Commando Section Commander with Bravo Commando Company, 2nd Commando Regiment in Afghanistan.



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FROM THE PEN OF HARRY BELL

2nd/9th Commando Squadron, WW2



In the mail recently was a letter from Leon Wright of Yarrowonga, which I quote in full:

"On reading the latest Commando Magazine, I read that you are asking for news of any WW2 Commandos.

At time of writing to you, (17 February 2021) my dad, Leslie Thomas Wright, VX123028, 2/4 Commando Squadron, is still with us. At 97 years of age, he is very frail, but still enjoys a good feed.

Dad joined the militia at 17 years of age, then joined the 2/4 Independent Company after Timor. He went on to serve in New Guinea, then Tarakan, Borneo.

Just recently, I had the pleasure of showing Dad the Jap flag that 2/4 Commandos took during the Tarakan battle. The flag had resurfaced after 75 years and was sent to Dad by Cheryl Hoban, who found it while cleaning out her parents' house. Dad's signature amongst other 2/4 Commandos, appears under 9 Section heading. Seeing the flag really made Dad's day.

Kind regards,

LEON WRIGHT

First of all, thank you, Leon, for writing. This is exactly the sort of news that I have been beseeching for years – and usually in vain. The flag was probably amongst a number that were captured by a number of Sections, but being a large one, was made use of to record the signatures of at least some of the captors. Next, best wishes to your father, Les. The fine unit history, "From Tidal River to Tarakan" contains a number of group photographs in which he appears as well as confirming that he was in both the Milne Bay draft (9 August 1943) and the Tarakan draft (26 April 1945). Good luck to him and may he stay happily with his family until he is "ready to go."

Ted MacMillan (2/9 Sqn) has, as previously reported, come home from hospital in Burra (S.A.) and is looking after himself quite well, with some help from his daughters, two of whom live within an hour so by road. He uses a walking frame now as a precaution against falling over. He has had a number of illnesses and injuries over the years but has always come out on top. He's not very big but is very wiry and very independent.

Rex Davidson (2/9 Sqn) is also coping with living on his own. DVA provides excellent care, with his daughter adding the icing to the cake. He is seldom idle, though when I rang him recently, he was enjoying a siesta. Well, at 97 he is entitled to.

Beryl, widow of H.J.B. (Harry) Dean (2/8 Sqn) is still living at Tenterfield and still tends her beautiful garden. Not only that; she provides a large basket of rosemary sprigs for distribution every Anzac Day and also is active in the restoration and preservation of the Dean home, the historic Tenterfield Station. It is 19 years since Harry's death and Beryl, who was the Tenterfield Citizen of the year some time ago, has scarcely slackened pace, successfully launching her children and presiding over a great lot of grandchildren. I will tell you more next time.

Eric Geldard (RAAF and 2/9 Sqn) still operates his War Museum at Miles (Qld) and looks after his small farm. He no longer runs his cattle himself but maintains the block – yesterday when we spoke, he had just come in from a half day's stint driving a slasher to keep the long grass down. Not bad at 97. And he still drives his car, albeit on a restricted licence.

I am typing this on 16 March 2021, so I have turned up my letter home of that date of 1945. Here are some extracts:

" - - We're on our way "home" (the beach) for a bit of a spell. We heard the news about 5 days ago when we were up on top of that hill we'd occupied [Arohem]. We were off within 2 days and arrived down here the day before yesterday. [NOTE, we couldn't identify localities; the censor would have cut them out - literally, with a razor blade]. It was quite a good trip down, no climbing at all - - Most of the route lay along a big creek and as in all these river roads, you cross and recross it every few 100 yards and, in the process, manage to get a few pints of gravel in your bots, especially if your gaiters are torn, - - There were quicksands in one place and little Titch [O'Brien] sank nearly to his waist. We nearly died laughing, watching 'em pulling him out. He was in trouble again at a rather deep, swift crossing, so he hung onto my bayonet-scabbard and I towed him over.

The last half hour was through knee-deep mud but all of a sudden it stopped and with no warning at all, we were on the beach. We dumped our packs and raced straight in, in our clothes, to wash the mud off same. Then we marched along the beach for an hour or so, with a pause for a cup of tea at a YMCA tent.

We got here for dinner - - - Very nice stew & fresh bread and jam (bread is like plum cake after weeks of Curtin's Crackers) and then pitched camp in a dirty, muddy hole. - - - We shifted a few 100] yards to our present location next morning and we're not too badly off now. We've a bit of sun, grass instead of mud and we're close to the cookhouse. But I hope we don't stay long. This is only a halfway house on our journey back to base and we leave as soon as we can get a barge to take us all - but we don't know when that will be.

" - - I got 2 cakes yesterday; the rest of my parcels should be waiting for me down there ["down there" was Aitape. We were at Wang Creek, a shallow bay between Aitape and Wewak, just behind the advancing 16th Brigade whose right flank we had been watching.] I say "should be" for the wharf mob up here were in the habit of helping themselves – till the infantry caught them. I believe they bashed the living skylight out of them and that things have improved somewhat"

We were there for a couple of weeks, waiting for the sea to calm down after a big storm on the Coral Sea. But enough of my reminiscences. I'll have some more next time.

HARRY BELL
(DING DONG MARK 2, 2/9 SQN)



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ON THE GUN SINCE 1941

80 Years of The Australian Commando, 1941 to 2021

By Mr Nick Hill ACA QLD. *Italic Script* from 'The Development of Australia's Special Forces' by Brigadier W.H. 'Mac' Grant, OAM. RFD. Edited by Colonel Doug Knight – President ACA VIC.

This year, 2021, marks the 80th Birthday of the Australian Commando. The name Commando has been applied to a variety of Australian Special Forces units that have been formed since 1941–42. The first Australian "Commando" units were formed during the Second World War, where they mainly performed reconnaissance and long-range patrol roles during Australia's campaigns in New Guinea and Borneo, although other units such as M and Z Special Units performed more clandestine roles. These units were disbanded following the end of WW2; however, in 1955 it was realised that there was a need for such units again in the Australian Defence Force. Today, the Australian Army possesses a number of units that perform more conventional Direct Action (DA) type Commando roles, as well as Counter-Terrorism (CT) response, long-range patrolling, and clandestine deep-penetration operations. *Italic script* is from the Article 'The Development of Australia's Special Forces'©¹. At no stage is this article a definitive history of Australian Commandos, please refer to the AWM official CO's diaries or the current Commando Regiments.



undying fame as the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) consisted of five infantry divisions serving in France plus Light Horse and other mounted formations in the Middle East. At that time, an Infantry Division consisted of three Brigades, each of four Battalions. It will therefore be obvious that the highest numbered brigade was the 15th and that the battalions were numbered from 1 to 60.

In the years between the wars, this organisation was superimposed on to the Militia (the equivalent of today's Army Reserve) so that the famous battalion numerical titles of World War 1 were proudly borne by Militia units. However, as had been the case before World War 1 members of the Militia were enlisted for home defence only.

The Impact of World War II

With the outbreak of World War II, it was once again necessary for Australia to raise a volunteer expeditionary force, for the same reasons that had prevailed in World War I. During World War II, the 2nd Australian Imperial Force consisted of four Infantry Divisions, an Armoured Division and various army and corps units. The Divisions and Brigades of the 2nd AIF were numbered in sequence as a continuation of World War I formations, so that the first Division formed was the 6th and the first Brigade was the 16th. However, individual units carried the same numerical titles as those which had existed in World War I with the addition of the number " 2 " in front of the unit number to indicate that it was a unit of the 2nd AIF - for example, 2/1 Australian Infantry Battalion AIF.

Units of the 2nd AIF that had no counterpart in World War I simply carried their own numerical designation, for example 1st Anti-Tank Regiment AIF. Similarly, the original Independent Companies were designated 1st Independent Company AIF, 5th Independent Company AIF etc. To jump ahead in time, this system worked well until the entry of Japan into the war resulted in the mobilisation of the entire Australian Army. Confusion arose when former Militia units now on full time duty had the same numerical designations as units of the 2nd AIF, particularly when their members volunteered to join the AIF. It was finally decided that when 80 per cent or more of a militia unit volunteered for the AIF the unit would carry the designation AIF in brackets after its number, for example 24 Australian Infantry Battalion (AIF). At the same time, it was decided that all original AIF units,

WW2 HISTORY

The British Military Mission headed by Lt. Col. Mawhood, that arrived in Australia in 1940, introduced to the Australian Army a concept of operations which was to have profound future implications. With the exception of the then CGS Lt. Gen. Vernon Sturdee it is reasonable to assume that few members of the Australian Army realised just what effect this concept would have. To understand fully why the new concept was to be so important, it is necessary to trace briefly the history of the Australian Army since Federation. Under the Defence Act 1901, all males between the ages of 18 and 60 were liable for compulsory military service for the defence of Australia, that is, for home defence only. Because of this restriction on the deployment of Australian Military Forces when Australia entered World War 1 it was necessary to raise a volunteer expeditionary force to serve overseas. At the end of World War 1 this force which had earned

¹'The Development of Australia's Special Forces' by Brigadier W.H. 'Mac' Grant, OAM. RFD, and edited by Colonel Doug Knight – ACA VIC in 2021, was first presented to 2 Commando Company for their 40th Anniversary in 1995. © 1995, 2 Commando Company Association Inc (ACA VIC Inc).



whether or not they had counterparts in World War I would carry the prefix "2". So, for example, the Independent Companies became 2/2 Independent Company AIF.

World War II - The Situation Within Australia

During 1940/41, with the four AIF Infantry Divisions deployed overseas in the Middle East and what was then Malaya, the main task of the Australian Army within Australia was to provide reinforcements for those Divisions. The 1st Armoured Division AIF was being trained and equipped within Australia for a role that unfortunately never eventuated - it was destined not to serve overseas as a Division. To provide facilities for the training of large numbers of reinforcements, training camps were established adjacent to country towns at numerous locations throughout Australia. At these camps, reinforcements received only rudimentary military training before being sent overseas. At overseas reinforcement training establishments, they were brought up to operational standard before joining their units. It will be obvious that with the exception of 1st Armoured Division AIF, there was no training for war being conducted within Australia. It was in this climate that the Mawhood Mission arrived in Australia and the decision was made to raise Australian Independent Companies.

Why Independent Companies?

When Germany invaded Norway and Denmark in early 1940, the main strength of the British Army was deployed on the Western Front. This was the so-called "phoney war" period, when, except for patrol activity, there was no action on the Western Front. Faced with the prospect of protracted operations in Norway and with only slender resources available, Britain came up with the idea of raising special units to fight the campaign. These units were to be much smaller than an Infantry Battalion and highly trained in raiding techniques, sabotage operations and the conduct of guerrilla warfare in the rugged Norwegian terrain. Above all, they were trained to operate for extended periods in a completely independent role with no dependence on normal lines of communication. Hence the name "Independent Companies". In the event, the Norwegian campaign ended in a quick victory for the Germans and there was no role for the British Independent Companies.

Following the evacuation from Dunkirk and the fall of France, the Germans occupied the whole of Western Europe. While waiting for the invasion which seemed inevitable, the only option for offensive action available to the British was to mount amphibious raids across the English Channel into German occupied Europe. So, the British Army Commandos came into being. Although there was no longer a role for Independent Companies in Europe, the task of the Mawhood Mission was to suggest to the Australian Army that similar units should be raised in Australia. As

indicated earlier, the then CGS appreciated the strategic significance of the concept and it was largely due to his foresight, that the decision was made to form Australian independent companies.

No. 7 Infantry Training Centre

No. 7 Infantry Training Centre was established at Wilsons Promontory in February 1941. The Promontory had been selected by the Mawhood Mission as a training area because of the rugged terrain and its remoteness



No. 7 Infantry Training Centre, Tidal River, Wilsons Promontory Victoria in 1941 with the infamous Mt Oberon in the background.

Image Courtesy of Dick Pelling - ACA VIC

from habitation that met the requirement for secrecy. Volunteers were called for from all members of the AIF in Australia, that is 1st Armoured Division and AIF reinforcements. As the terms "Special Operations" and "Special Forces" were not then in vogue, volunteers were simply told they were required for "Special Duty" in units where a high standard of physical fitness was required and there was a higher element than normal of danger. It should be noted that all members who joined Independent Companies were twice volunteers, once for the AIF and again for special duty.

Training commenced under the auspices of the Mawhood Mission which in addition to Lt. Col. Mawhood included Capt. Mike Calvert, Royal Engineers, Capt Spencer (Freddie) Chapman, Seaforth Highlanders and two Sergeants. Calvert was later to achieve fame as a Brigadier with the Chindits in Burma and Chapman spent some two years with Chinese guerrillas in Malaya behind Japanese lines. Members of the Australian Instructional Corps (AIC), a select group of regular warrant officers, also assisted with training. The title "No 7 Infantry Training Centre" was, of course, a cover name to keep secret the true nature of training and the units to be formed. At that time, the whole Australian Army was organised on a state basis, so another unique feature of the Independent Companies was that their members came from all states.

1, 2 and 3 Independent Companies and two NZ Companies were formed during 1941 and a fourth company was undergoing training when the decision was made that no further units were required and that members of the fourth company should be returned to their previous units. The entry of Japan into the war on 7 December 1941, changed matters with dramatic suddenness. Instructions were issued for 4th Independent Company to be reformed and complete its training and for further units to be raised. The training conducted at Wilsons Promontory established a



pattern that has become the model for all Special Forces training since. The training itself and the terrain were used as part of the selection process. All volunteers had been interviewed



Trainee Commandos geared up for the cold wet weather at the Prom in 1941.
Image Courtesy of Dick Pelling - ACA VIC

personally to establish motivation and aptitude, but it was recognised that such an interview could provide only a very rough guide as to an individual's suitability.

One of the first tests at the Promontory (although it was not announced as such) was for all new arrivals to climb Mt Oberon. Those who fell by the wayside and did not reach the top found transport waiting when they arrived back at camp to return them immediately to their previous units. During all training, great emphasis was placed on physical fitness and endurance. All ranks were trained in demolitions and sabotage, night movement and operations, infantry minor tactics with emphasis on patrolling and the setting of ambushes, as well as scouting, weapon training and the ability to operate as individuals or in small parties. Personal initiative was encouraged.

THE PACIFIC WAR

Independent Company Operations

When the first four independent companies were raised, Japan had not yet entered the war. However, Australian defence planners appreciated that war with Japan was inevitable and during 1941 8th Division, less one brigade, was deployed to Malaya. The third brigade (23rd Brigade) was held in Australia. In all 8 Independent Companies were raised between 1941 & 1942.

In mid-1943, the Australian Army re-organised its three front-line divisions as light infantry Jungle Divisions. As the three Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) divisions' armoured reconnaissance regiments were considered to be unsuited to jungle terrain, having been raised for service originally in the Middle East and North Africa, their Cavalry Squadrons were disbanded. The Regimental Headquarters of the disbanded units were then used to command and administer the independent companies, as they were amalgamated into a regimental structure. Subsequently, the independent companies were re-designated as "Cavalry Commando Squadrons" and later, in 1944, this was simplified to "Commando Squadrons". As part of the initial reorganisation the Commando Squadrons were administered by Cav Commando Regiments which were the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment, 2/7th Cav Commando Regiment & 2/9th Cav Commando Regiment. In 1944 four more Commando Squadrons were raised, 2/9th, 2/10th, 2/11th & 2/12th. The final structure consisted of the following;



The 2/2nd & 2/8th Commando Squadrons remained as independent units and operated in support of Brigades and Divisions. In 1946 all of the Commando Squadrons and Regiments were disbanded. The following is, of necessity, an abbreviated account of the operations conducted by the various Independent Companies/Commando Squadrons during the Pacific War.

THE INDEPENDENT COMPANIES/COMMANDO SQUADRONS

No 1 Independent Company

The 1st Independent Company was formed in May/June 1941 and was trained at the No. 7 Infantry Training Centre at Tidal River on Wilsons Promontory in Victoria. Originally the company was raised to serve in the Middle



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of No 1 Independent Company.
The Double Green.

East, although, at that time there was uncertainty about the role that the company would fill there. Indeed, within the Australian Army there was a section that saw no need for the independent companies, believing that they would prove to be more of a drain on resources than anything else. However, later in 1941, as the threat of war with Imperial Japan loomed, the main body of the company was sent to Kavieng, New Ireland, to protect Kavieng airfield whilst other sections were sent to Namatanai on New Ireland, Vila in the New Hebrides, Tulagi on Guadalcanal, Buka on Bougainville & Lorengau on Manus Island to act as observers and provided medical treatment to the inhabitants.

Commanded by Major James Edmonds-Wilson, in the event of an invasion of New Britain by the Japanese, the 1st Independent Company was under orders to resist long enough to destroy key airfields and other military installations such as fuel dumps, before withdrawing south to wage a guerrilla war. They did not have to wait very long, as on 21 January 1942, a preparatory bombing raid by about sixty Japanese aircraft attacked Kavieng. A number of aircraft were shot down; however, the company's only means of escape, the schooner *Induna Star*, was damaged. Nevertheless, despite the damage the crew managed to sail the vessel to Kaut where they started to repair the damage. As they did so, the commandos withdrew across the island to Sook, having received word that a large Japanese naval force was approaching the island. In the early morning of 22 January 1942, the Japanese landed at Kavieng with between 3,000 and 4,000 troops. As the lead Japanese troops reached Kavieng airfield, fighting broke out as the small force that had



remained at the airfield blew up the supply dump and other facilities. Fighting their way out, the commandos withdrew towards the main force at Sook, although a number of men were captured in the process. Once the company had regrouped at Sook, on 28 January they withdrew further south to Kaut, where they helped with the repair of the *Induna Star*, before setting out along the east coast of the island. They reached Kalili Harbour on 31 January but after learning that the fighting on New Britain was over and that the Japanese had occupied Rabaul, it was decided to sail for Port Moresby.

On 2 February the schooner was sighted by a Japanese plane which subsequently attacked, causing considerable damage to the vessel as well as destroying one of its lifeboats and causing a number of casualties. The *Induna Star* began taking on water and as a result the men

were forced to surrender. Under escort by a Japanese aircraft and then later a destroyer, they were instructed to sail to Rabaul where they became prisoners of war. After a few months at Rabaul, the officers were separated from their

NCOs and men. The officers were transported to Japan where they remained in captivity for the rest of the war, whilst the NCOs and men, along with other members of Lark Force² that had been captured and a number of civilians, were put on to the Japanese passenger ship *Montevideo Maru* for transportation. Travelling unescorted, the *Montevideo Maru* sailed from Rabaul on 22 June. On 1 July the ship was sighted by an American submarine, the USS *Sturgeon*, off the coast of the Luzon, Philippines. The USS *Sturgeon* torpedoed and sunk the *Montevideo Maru*, without realising it was a prisoner of war vessel. Only a handful of the Japanese crew were rescued, with none of the between 1,050 and 1,053 prisoners aboard surviving as they were still locked below deck. All 133 men from the 1st Independent Company who were aboard the *Montevideo Maru* were either killed or drowned.

Meanwhile, the sections of the company that had not been with the main group at Kavieng managed to avoid capture by the Japanese. Working with the Coastwatchers, they reported Japanese movements



Australian prisoners of war at Shikoku, Japan, c. 1942-45.

The prisoners came from a variety of units including the 2/22nd Infantry Battalion, the 1st Independent Company, the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles, and HMAS Perth.

Image Courtesy of the AWM

and carried out demolitions until they were later evacuated or escaped from the islands between April and May 1942. A reinforcement platoon had been trained in Australia while the company was deployed and after completing its training sailed on the *Macdui*, arriving at Port Moresby on 10 March 1942. Following their arrival, the platoon was designated the Independent Platoon Port Moresby and initially used for local defence purposes. It was later re-designated as Detachment 1 Independent Company. In April 1942, under the command of Captain Roy Howard, it was moved to Kudjeru, in New Guinea, to guard against possible Japanese movement south of Wau along the Bulldog Track. In the process they became the first Australian Army unit to cross the Owen Stanley Range. In June, a section fought alongside the 2/5th Independent Company as part of Kanga Force where they participated in a major raid on the Japanese at Salamaua. Eventually, however, as a result of the losses suffered during the 1942 campaigns it was decided that the company would be disbanded and as the survivors were transferred to other commando units – with the majority of those in Port Moresby being transferred to the 2/5th Independent Company. No 1 Independent Company was never raised again with many transferred and became Coastwatchers (later known as M Special Unit) with the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB). Throughout the course of the unit's existence, it suffered 142 men killed in action or died while prisoners of war. One member of the company was awarded the Military Cross.

2/2nd Independent Company/Commando Squadron

Initially formed as the "2nd Independent Company", the unit was raised in 1941. With an authorised strength of 17 officers, 256 other ranks. After training the company was transported north to Kathrine, in the NT where they were stationed until Japan entered the war following the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Malaya. Amid fears of a Japanese advance towards mainland Australia, the 2nd Independent Company was sent to Timor, as part of Sparrow Force³, along with the 2/40th Battalion and a small force of artillery. Upon arriving at Dili on 17 December 1941, most of the 2nd Independent Company moved to protect Dili airfield in east Timor, whilst other elements took up positions in the nearby



*The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/2nd Independent Company/Commando Squadron.
The Double Reds*

²Lark Force was an Australian Army formation established in March 1941 during World War II for service in New Britain and New Ireland. Under the command of Lieutenant Colonel John Scanlan,^[1] it was raised in Australia and deployed to Rabaul and Kavieng, aboard SS *Katoomba*, MV *Neptuna* and HMAS *Zealandia*, to defend their strategically important harbours and airfields.

³Sparrow Force was a detachment based on the 2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion and other Dutch, British, US and Australian 8th Division units during World War II. The force was formed to defend the island of Timor from invasion by the Empire of Japan. It formed the main part of the Allied units in the Battle of Timor.



mountains. The Japanese invaded Timor on 19/20 February 1942, attacking both east and west Timor at the same time, quickly overwhelming the small force of Australian and Dutch defenders. Hopelessly outnumbered the 2nd Independent Company was unable to hold the airfield and was forced to retreat into the mountains, from where they would wage a guerrilla campaign against the Japanese for over a year.

After the fall of the island, it was believed that the 2/2nd Independent Company had been captured along with the 2/40th Battalion, and for almost three months the unit was officially listed as missing by the Australian Army. On 19/20 April 1942, however, members of the unit were able to make contact with Darwin, using a wireless transmitter nicknamed *Winnie the War Winner*. "Winnie", reputedly named after Winston Churchill was cobbled together by Signaller Max (Joe) Loveless, a Tasmanian member of the unit who had a background as an amateur radio station operator. The set was built on the back of a four-gallon kerosene tin, using parts from several failed radio sets. Some parts were obtained via night raids into occupied enemy territory. After this, the Royal Australian Navy was able to bring in supplies for the company on the south coast of east Timor in late May, allowing the guerrilla campaign to continue. During August, the Japanese launched a major offensive against the guerrillas and carried out a series of reprisals against the civilian population of east Timor in order to reduce their support for the Australians. This campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, although the local Timorese paid a high price for the assistance, they provided the Australians: it is estimated that between 40,000 and 60,000 Timorese perished during the Japanese occupation. In September, in an effort to maintain the pressure on the Japanese, the 2nd Independent Company was reinforced with the landing of the 2/4th Australian Independent Company. By late-November 1942, however, it was clear that the Australians could not sustain their campaign due to extreme ill-health amongst all the men, and the ever-increasing number of Japanese reinforcements as well as reduced food supplies. Furthermore, the Japanese used increasing numbers of Dutch Timorese to wreak havoc among the Portuguese Timorese, who then found it impossible to keep helping the Australians. As a result, both the 2/2 and 2/4 were withdrawn from Timor between mid-December 1942 and January 1943, along with Portuguese civilians, some Dutch troops and Timorese who would later serve with Z Special Unit.

Upon return to Australia, the company, now renamed the "2/2nd Independent Company", reformed at the training centre at the Jungle Warfare School at Canungra, Queensland, where it was reinforced and re-equipped. The 2/2nd was relocated to the Atherton Tableland Camp, Atherton Tableland, where it briefly became part of the 2/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment, although this was short lived as it became an independent unit once again not long afterwards.

As a part of this re-organisation, the company would eventually be renamed the "2/2nd Cav Commando Squadron" and later was simply shortened to Commando Squadron. In June 1943, the



Seven members of the 2/2nd Commando Squadron in New Guinea, July 1944.

2/2nd sailed from Townsville to Port Moresby and was subsequently flown to Bena Bena, in the Bismarck Ranges in New Guinea. Here, the 2/2nd supported the 2/7th Independent Company in patrolling the Ramu River area. In mid-July, the 2/2nd moved into position in Bena Bena and by the end of the month their patrols were skirmishing with the Japanese. They continued to conduct operations in New Guinea until October 1944 when, after being away from Australia for more than a year, the 2/2nd were withdrawn from the fighting for a period of leave in Australia. After three months leave, the 2/2nd Commando Squadron reformed at Strathpine in Northern Queensland and began a period of training and re-organisation in preparation for their next campaign. In April 1945, the unit embarked for New Britain, where they landed at Jacquinot Bay on 17 April and subsequently moved to Wide Bay, in order to support the 13th Brigade, attached to the 5th Division that was based at Lamarien.

Following the end of hostilities in the Pacific in August 1945, the 2/2nd Commando Squadron was deemed to be surplus to the post-war requirements of the Australian Army and as such it was steadily reduced in strength as men were discharged or transferred to other units. The remainder returned to Australia and in early 1946 the 2/2nd Commando Squadron was disbanded. During its service during the war, the 2/2nd lost 22 men killed in following decorations: two Distinguished Service Orders, three Military Crosses, one Distinguished Conduct Medal, one Military Medal, 35 Mentions in Despatches and two foreign awards.

2/3rd Independent Company/Commando Squadron

Formed in October 1941 as the 2/3rd Independent Company and after completing training, the 2/3rd was transported north to Katherine, Northern Territory, where it carried out various garrison duties. During this time



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/3rd Independent Company/Commando Squadron

there was considerable debate within the high command of the Australian Army about the role that the 2/3rd and the other independent companies would fill. However, following Japan's entry into World War II after the attack on Pearl Harbor and British forces in



Malaya, it was decided to use the independent companies in the islands to the north of Australia, where it was necessary to establish outposts that could warn of the approach of the Japanese. With this in mind, the 2/3rd Independent Company was sent to New Caledonia in December 1941 as a gesture of goodwill to the Free French and in order to defend against a possible Japanese attack. The deployment to New Caledonia was only a temporary measure, however, until the US Army sent Taskforce 6814 to reinforce the island, arriving in March 1942. Impressed with the 2/3rd and the training methods that they utilised; permission was sought by the American Commander to retain the 2/3rd on the island in order to retrain his Division. However, due to the requirements of the defence of Australia at the time, the Company was withdrawn in early August 1942, although their Commanding Officer, Major George Matheson, stayed on to provide assistance and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.

After its return to Australia, the Company spent the next six months training and undertaking garrison duties before sailing for New Guinea in mid-February 1943. Under the command of Major George Warfe, the 2/3rd arrived in Port Moresby, although they did not stay there very long as they were quickly flown to Wau. From there they were used to harass and pursue the Japanese towards Mubo. Following this, the 2/3rd moved to Missim, from where they began a guerilla campaign along the Komiatum Track, in support of the 3rd Division's campaign around Salamaua. As a part of this campaign, the 2/3rd patrolled deep into Japanese held territory, setting ambushes and gathering intelligence. They also made a number of attacks against Japanese positions, in order to harass them to keep them off balance and as such defend the 3rd Division's flanks. The most notable of these attacks came in May 1943 when a strengthened platoon launched an attack against Ambush Knoll, a feature which controlled Bobdubi Ridge, and captured it. By capturing the knoll, the 2/3rd threatened the Japanese supply lines to Mubo and Salamaua and because of this it forced them to launch a number of fierce counterattacks in an attempt to retake it. These counterattacks occurred over the course of the following three days and four nights, however, the platoon from the 2/3rd, consisting of only fifty-two men, managed to hold the knoll. During its time in New Guinea, the 2/3rd suffered heavy casualties and as a result after the fall of Salamaua in September, they were withdrawn and brought back to Australia. They had performed quite well in the circumstances, however, and were credited with having killed 969 Japanese. Against this, the 2/3rd had suffered 65 killed, 119 wounded, and 226 men evacuated for medical reasons.

Upon its return to Australia, the 2/3rd was reformed on the Atherton Tablelands, Queensland. During this time and as a part of Army reorganisation the 2/3rd was integrated into the 2/7th Cavalry Commando Regiment,

along with the 2/5th and the 2/6th Independent Companies. In October, the 2/3rd Independent Company was renamed the 2/3rd Cavalry Commando Squadron, although later this name was simplified to just 2/3rd

Commando Squadron. To a large extent, however, despite being placed under a regimental structure, the squadron continued to remain largely independent in terms of tactics and training. For the remainder of 1943 until early 1945 there was a lull in Australia's involvement in the war in the Pacific, and the 2/3rd remained on the Atherton Tablelands, where it trained and conducted exercises with the 7th Division.

The squadron's final campaign of the war came in 1945, when attached to the 7th Division, the 2/3rd participated in the landing at Balikpapan. Landing on Green Beach on 1 July 1945 along with the rest of 2/7th Cav Commando Regiment, the Squadron moved off along Vasey Highway with the objective of capturing Seppinggang airfield, acting in support of the 2/5th Commando Squadron. The following day, however, they came under heavy mortar fire from the Japanese on Lady Schofield Knoll which prevented them from capturing the airfield until 3 July. After that, on 4 July, a number of troops were transferred to the 2/9th Infantry Battalion in order to patrol the area around Penadjam, with the rest of the 2/3rd continuing on to Seppinggang. Offensive operations ceased on 27 July, and with Japan's surrender in August, the war came to a close.

Following the end of hostilities in the Pacific, the 2/3rd was slowly reduced in strength as members were posted out to other units for occupation duties, before the remainder of the unit returned to Australia at the end of December. In early 1946, at Chermside camp, in Brisbane, Queensland, the 2/3rd Commando Squadron was finally disbanded. A total of 69 members of the squadron were killed or died on active service during the war, and its members received the following decorations: four Military Crosses, four Distinguished Conduct Medals, six Military Medals, one British Empire Medal and four Mentions in Despatches.

2/4th Independent Company/Commando Squadron

The unit was initially formed as "No. 4 Independent Company" in August 1941, but it was disbanded in October due to conceptual problems within the



Members of the 2/3rd Independent Company during an attack on Ambush Knoll, New Guinea in July 1943.



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/4th Independent Company/Commando Squadron



Australian Army surrounding the role that the 4th and other such companies could fill in the strategic situation at that time. The Company was reformed in late December 1941 following the outbreak of the Pacific War. This time it was known as "2/4th Independent Company". After completing its training at Wilsons Promontory, Victoria, the 2/4th was posted to the Katherine, Northern Territory, in March 1942 where it undertook garrison duties. Following the bombing of Darwin this became an operation role and during this time the 2/4th deployed a number of small groups between the McArthur and the Ord Rivers, where they were to harass any Japanese forces which might have landed there. This never eventuated, though, and in August the 2/4th moved to the town of Adelaide River in the Northern Territory. In September the 2/4th Independent Company returned to Darwin and from there they were deployed to Portuguese Timor (now Timor Leste) on HMAS *Voyager* to reinforce the 2/2nd Independent Company. Over the course of four months, the company carried out a number of successful operations on Timor, including many successful ambushes, dynamiting of bridges and roads, as well as manning two observation posts in the mountains outside Dili where they reported the movements of Japanese ships and aircraft. This lasted until January 1943 when, due to the deteriorating situation, the decision was made to withdraw the force from the island and bring them back to Australia. The success of the 2/2nd & 2/4th demonstrated what could be achieved by such a force behind enemy lines.

The company returned to Australia and was reformed at the Jungle Warfare School at Canungra in South East Queensland in April 1943 where it received reinforcements and new equipment. From there, they were moved to Wongabel on the Atherton Tablelands. In August 1943, the 2/4th was deployed to New Guinea, arriving at Milne Bay where they were placed under the command of the 9th Division, attached to the 26th Brigade. On 4 September, the 2/4th participated in Australia's first amphibious land-



Members of the 2/4th Commando Squadron on Tarakan Island, June 1945

ing since Gallipoli when they landed at Laeduring the Salamaua-Lae campaign. The 2/4th came ashore in the second wave of the landing, suffering heavy losses with thirty-four men being killed or missing when their Landing Ship Tank was attacked by Japanese dive and torpedo bombers. After the landing, the 2/4th began reconnaissance and flank protection operations for the 26th Brigade until 30 October, when Lae finally fell and they were sent by barge to reinforce the 20th Brigade at Finschhafen in the clearing of the Huon Peninsula. During this time the 2/4th conducted numerous long-

range patrols, often being sent ahead of the main advance, before finally being removed from the line at the end of February 1944 and being sent back to Australia for leave. Whilst deployed in October 1943, the 2/4th Independent Company was redesignated the "2/4th Cav Commando Squadron" as it became a part of the 2/7th Cavalry Commando Regiment, attached to the 7th Division. This name would later be shortened simply to "2/4th Commando Squadron" in 1944.

Upon its return to Australia, the 2/4th regrouped at Ravenshoe, Queensland, where in March 1944 it became part of the 2/9th Cavalry Commando Regiment and was officially attached to the 9th Division with whom it had served during the recently concluded operations in New Guinea. The squadron then experienced a hiatus from operations for over a year, during which time it conducted numerous training exercises in northern Queensland, before embarking from Townsville and sailing to Morotai in April 1945. From here the squadron took part in the landings at Tarakan Island off Borneo as part of "Operation Oboe"⁴. Throughout May and June, the 2/4th played an important role in the campaign. The landing on Sadau Island was unopposed and a few days later on 3 May at Tarakan it was once again tasked to act in support of the 26th Brigade. In the coming days and weeks, the 2/4th saw extensive service during the liberation of Tarakan, suffering heavy casualties with four officers and fifty-two other ranks being killed or wounded in this time. This was the squadron's last operation and following its return to Australia it was disbanded at Ingleburn, New South Wales, on 8 January 1946. During its service the 2/4th lost 68 men killed in action or died on active service. Five members were awarded the Military Medal, while 15 were Mentioned in Despatches.

2/5th Independent Company/Commando Squadron

In March 1942, once sufficient numbers had completed the Commando training course at Wilsons Promontory, the "2/5th Independent Company" later to be also known as the "Double Blacks" due to the colour of their distinctive Colour Patch



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/5th Independent Company/Commando Squadron, The Double Blacks.

was formed. The posted strength and makeup of the Company was the same as the previous four Companies. On 13 April 1942 the company departed Townsville, Queensland, on the SS *Tarooma*, com-

⁴The Borneo campaign of 1945 was the last major Allied campaign in the South West Pacific Area during World War II to liberate Japanese-held British Borneo and Dutch Borneo. Designated collectively as Operation Oboe, a series of amphibious assaults between 1 May and 21 July were conducted by the Australian I Corps, under Lieutenant-General Leslie Morshead, against Imperial Japanese forces who had been occupying the island since late 1941 – early 1942.



manded by Major Thomas Kneen and was "very heavily armed". They arrived in Port Moresby, New Guinea on the 17th, during an air raid and the Company then deployed on 24 May to Wau, in a valley high inland from Lae and Salamaua. They were part of Kanga Force⁵ commanded by the controversial Colonel Norman Fleay, that consisted of the 2/5th, the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR) and a platoon from No 1 Independent Company and were to observe the Japanese at Lae and Salamaua. They were the first Allied force in World War II to be flown into action as a complete unit. Despite appalling conditions, enduring soaking rain, pests, diseases, and a lack of supplies such as food and medication, they harassed the Japanese in the area from the Markham to the Bitol Rivers for one year. On 29 June 1942, the company launched a raid on a Japanese aerodrome at Salamaua, the first Allied attack on Japanese land forces anywhere. The raid was commanded by Captain Norman Winning, after initial careful reconnaissance by Sergeant Jim McAdam's NGVR scouts. Winning planned the assault with Captain Douglas Umphelby of the NGVR. The raiders, formed into several parties, with mortar support, set out from Butu in the early afternoon of 28 June. Heavy rain fell throughout the march, but it later cleared and early the following morning, the Australians attacked various areas between the Francisco River and Kela Point, destroying buildings, vehicles and a bridge, and killing about 100 Japanese before returning to Butu for the loss of only three Australians wounded. During the raid, a Japanese pilot, attempting to reach his aircraft, ran into the commandos and was killed. Important documents were found in a satchel carried by the pilot and these were sent to Kanga Force headquarters for analysis. An attack on Heath's Plantation, the following night was not as successful as the element of surprise had been lost, and Kneen was killed in action. Following the raids, the Japanese heavily shelled Kela Point and attacked the tracks leading away from Salamaua by air in an effort to cut off the raiders' withdrawal routes. The Australians withdrew from Butu to their main camp, as the Japanese sent patrols of up to 90 men into the foothills; they subsequently found the camp at Butu and destroyed it. They also sent reinforcements from their garrison at Lae to Kela village.

In the months following the raid on Salamaua, the 2/5th continued patrol operations around the Huon Gulf. When it became apparent that the Japanese were concentrating their forces at Mubu with the intention of launching an attack against Wau, the 2/5th launched

another raid on 1 October 1942, consisting of a party of 60 men, again under Winning's command. During the approach march, Lieutenant Bill Drysdale was wounded by a booby trap, which alerted the nearby Japanese. The Japanese defenders came out to meet the raid, driving the outnumbered Australians back. Heavy fighting followed, and while attempting to cover the withdrawal, one of the raiders, Sergeant William O'Neill, killed up to 16 Japanese with sub-machine-gun fire. The Japanese were later estimated to have lost 50 KIA, including the company commander; nevertheless, the raid was broken up and the Australians spent several days regrouping. Soon after the Mubo raid, the unit moved to the nearby Markham valley on long range patrols. In January 1943, the 2/5th with the 2/7th flew to Wau airfield which was under Japanese attack. They went straight into action leaving the aircraft under fire, and repelled the Japanese invasion. Finally, in February 1943, exhausted from starvation, illness and injury, and beset by atrocious weather, they were withdrawn for rest, with the majority of the sick congregating at Wau, before being transported to Edie Creek at Kaindi to recuperate. On 20 March 1943, the 2/5th was ordered to return to the Markham area to conduct patrols around the Snake River and to prepare defensive positions. Throughout April they undertook active patrols with the 2/6th Battalion and established observation posts. By 21 April the lead elements of the 24th Battalion began arriving at Bulolo as the 3rd Division moved forward and prepared to relieve the forward Australian troops, including the 2/5th, which was subsequently withdrawn to Port Moresby after almost a year of continuous operations.

The 2/5th departed New Guinea for Australia on the troopship *Duntroon* on 13 May 1943. It was sent to the Jungle Warfare Centre at Canungra, Queensland to refit and regroup. In August it moved to Wongabel on the Atherton Tablelands where it was reformed as the

"2/5th Cav Commando Squadron". Following a reorganisation of the Australian Army's independent companies, the 2/5th was incorporated with the 2/3rd and 2/6th Independent Companies into

the 2/7th Cav Commando Regiment, which was attached to the 7th Division and was to act as the administrative headquarters to the squadron during the next phase of the conflict. Throughout the remainder of 1943 and all of 1944 the 2/5th trained with the rest of the 7th Division, conducting a number of complex brigade and divisional level exercises, but it did not go into action again until almost the end of the war.



A section of 'C' platoon, 2/5th Independent Company, on an exercise walk along a jungle track, west of Bulwa in the Bulolo Valley.

⁵Kanga Force was the name given to a composite ad hoc formation of the Australian Army that served in New Guinea during World War II. Commanded by Major Norman Fleay, it was formed on 23 April 1942. Made up of elements from the 1st and 2/5th Independent Companies and the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (NGVR), Kanga Force conducted a number of small scale raids and reconnaissance operations around Lae and Salamaua before it was disbanded and the individual units became part of the Australian 3rd Division in 1943.



The final campaign that the 2/5th Commando Squadron took part in came in mid-1945, when as a part of the 2/7th Cav Commando Regiment, attached to the Australian 7th Division, when it participated in the Borneo campaign as part of the "Oboe" operations. The squadron landed on Green Beach on Balikpapan on the first day of the battle and moved up the Vasey highway into the nearby hills, occupying first Lady Shofield's and then Jade and Jelly hills. By 7 July, it had occupied the Sepinggang airfield. It then moved into the hills between the airfield and Batakan Besar. On 25 July, the squadron was transferred to support the 25th Brigade in its advance along Milford Highway. Patrols continued up until the end of the war, when it was then used to conduct mopping up operations around the island. At the end of December, the 2/5th left Borneo for Australia, and in early 1946, in Chermside camp, Brisbane, the squadron was disbanded.

During the course of the war, the 2/5th lost 24 men killed. For their actions during the New Guinea and Borneo campaigns, Sergeants Malcolm Bishop (later colonel) and Bill O'Neill were awarded Military Medals for rescuing the badly injured Drysdale under heavy fire during the raid on Mubu. Other Military Medal recipients were Sergeant Walter Hulcup, and Privates Charles Beitz and Thomas Robertson, while Lieutenant (later Captain) William Chaffey received the American Bronze Star Medal and Sergeants Richard Osborne McLaughlin and William O'Neill the Distinguished Conduct Medal. The Squadron's Medical Officer, Captain Raymond Allsopp, was awarded a Mention in Despatches for providing lifesaving medical attention during an ambush at Balikpapan in July 1945. This award was upgraded to a Star of Gallantry in 2017, following a review by the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal.

2/6th Independent Company/Commando Squadron

The 2/6th Independent Company was formed in May 1942 same as her sister Companies at Wilsons Promontory, Victoria and would become known as the Purple Devils due to the distinct colour of the Company's Double Diamond Colour Patch being purple. The company had a strength of



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/6th Independent Company/Commando Squadron. The Purple Devils.

20 officers and 275 men and was divided into a headquarters and three platoons, with each platoon consisting of 75 men, commanded by a captain, with three sections below that, each commanded by a lieutenant. As firepower was deemed to be an essential element of the company's ability to conduct successful operations within the context as a raiding force, there was an abundance of automatic and section support weapons, including 0.303 Lee-Enfield sniper rifles

(SMLEs), Bren light machine guns (LMGs), 2-inch mortars and Thompson and Owen submachine guns, to the extent that in battle each platoon could provide a level of firepower equivalent to that of an infantry company. On 6 June 1942, Major Harry Harcourt assumed command of the company. An Englishman by birth, but a naturalised Australian, he had had considerable experience serving with the British Army in the First World War, in the Russian Civil War and in India before he had settled in Tasmania. Although 47 years old, he was also an accomplished boxer, having been a champion in the Services competition while serving in the British Army, and was, according to author Syd Trigellis-Smith, renowned for his "...physical fitness, boundless energy and love of front-line service". Harcourt set upon the task of preparing the company, although initially he too was frustrated in his efforts by the problem with insufficient training supplies and equipment. Nevertheless, through the rest of June and into July, the training was intensified and all ranks received basic infantry training (as some were not yet infantry trained), and they became proficient in fieldcraft, signalling and demolitions and a number of field exercises were carried out to test their skills. In July 1942, the Company moved north by train to Townsville in Far North Queensland under tight security, bringing all their stores and equipment with them. During this time the company was camped at the Cluden Racecourse. Finally, the order for the company to deploy to New Guinea was received, and despite a refusal by dock workers to load their stores, by 10:30 hours on 2 August 1942, they had embarked on the MS *Tasman* after the Company's engineer section took over the operation of the ship's loading equipment.

In early August 1942, the 2/6th arrived in Port Moresby to take part in the New Guinea campaign. Originally it was intended that they would be flown from there to Wau, to reinforce the 2/5th Independent Company; however, due to the deteriorating situation in the Owen Stanley Ranges, they were sent to the Kokoda Track instead. Placed under the command of the 7th Division's headquarters, on 28 August 1942, the Company moved up to Mount Eirama where they were employed as the Divisional Reserve. As the situation along the track continued to worsen for the Australians, the 2/6th moved to cover the Goldie River Valley in order to block any Japanese outflanking manoeuvres. Long distance patrols were undertaken between 6 September and 12 October 1942 to cover wider lines of possible Japanese approach through the Yodda Valley, the jungle tracks around Esau Creek and the Brown River, and along Engineer Road in support of Honner Force⁶. The

⁶Honner Force was the name given to an ad hoc composite Australian Army force of approximately 500 men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Honner,^[1] which served in the New Guinea campaign in 1942 in World War II.



purpose of these patrols was to obtain topographical information regarding the tracks in the area which might be used by Australian forces to outflank Japanese positions, as well as to provide early warning of any infiltration attempts. To this end, the patrols varied in size and duration, ranging from four or five men to 150 and from five to six days up to months. In some cases, they acted as independent, long-range patrols, while others were in close contact with regular formations.

On 14 October 1942, elements of the 2/6th were flown from 14-Mile Drome across the mountains to Wanigela Airfield, Wangiela. From Wanigela the company moved to Pongani. With the offensive started in the Battle of Buna–Gona, the 2/6th patrolled in front of the United States Army's 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry Regiment, along the coast from Pongani to Buna. Arriving at the front line at Buna on 20 November 1942, the 2/6th was engaged in the heavy fighting around the New Strip airfield until the early December 1942 during which time they were employed mainly in a traditional infantry role. In mid-December, the 2/6th was withdrawn to Soputa and then Port Moresby, where they spent Christmas prior to returning to Australia for re-organisation and refurbishment.

The 2/6th returned to Australia in March 1943 and after some leave, re-assembled at the Army's Jungle Warfare Centre at Canungra, Queensland. As part of a re-organisation that was being undertaken to refocus the Army on jungle warfare, the independent companies were amalgamated together to place them into a regimental structure. In line with this, the 2/6th, along with the 2/3rd and 2/5th Independent Companies, were brought together to form the 2/7th Cav Commando Regiment which had been formed from the 7th Divisional Cavalry Regiment that had served in the Middle East and New Guinea in 1941 and 1942. This was an administrative re-organisation only, as the Regiment itself had no operational role; however, following this the 2/6th Independent Company became known as the "2/6th Cav Commando Squadron", later 2/6th Commando Squadron. One of the main changes that occurred as a result of this re-organisation was that the engineer section was deleted from the establishment of the Commando Squadrons, having previously been an important part of the Independent company structure. During this time, while the majority of the squadron was training in Australia, a small group of 2/6th men were sent to Bena Bena plateau in New Guinea in January 1943 to watch for enemy activity in the Ramu Valley and to secure Lutheran missionaries who were believed to have been providing information to the Japanese. This group operated in one or two man teams and were deployed for almost six months.

The 2/6th sailed from Townsville for Port Moresby in August 1943, and then, in the middle of September it was flown to an area just west of the Leron River, in the Markham Valley for the upcoming Markham–Ramu campaign. Attached to the 7th Division, the Squadron

provided flank protection during the campaign, mainly carrying out reconnaissance and long range patrols, although they were also used to capture and hold ground in advance of the main formation at times. Now made up of a cadre of experienced and fully trained soldiers, the squadron performed with considerable distinction in this campaign, and was involved in arguably one of the most significant small unit actions of the campaign at the Battle of Kaiapit where, on 19–20 September 1943, it captured the village and then repelled a determined enemy counterattack by a force much larger than its own, until relieved. After the action, 214 Japanese bodies were counted, and it was estimated that another 50 or more lay dead in the tall grass. Abandoned equipment that was recovered included 19 machine guns, 150 rifles, six grenade throwers and 12 Japanese swords. Against this, the Australians lost 11 killed and 23 wounded. For his leadership during this action, Gordon King was later awarded the Distinguished Service Order. After almost seven months of service in New Guinea, the 2/6th returned to Australia in April 1944, disembarking in Sydney on 12 May 1944.

From then until late in the war there was a lull in Australian offensive operations in the Pacific and during this time, the company was based in the Mapee–Kairi area on the Atherton Tablelands, in Queensland, where it trained and conducted exercises with the rest of the 7th Division in preparation for renewed hostilities in 1945. This was a period of considerable boredom for many members of the Squadron, and there was a rise in disciplinary problems during this time as the only outlet for the men's physical energy was sport, training and mounting ceremonial duties. Finally, in May 1945, after almost a year sitting on the sidelines, the 2/6th received orders for overseas service. On 25 May, they travelled to Redlynch staging camp outside Cairns and embarked five days later on 30 May, on a 14-day voyage to Morotai Island, from where they embarked on Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) for their final campaign of the war on late in June 1945. One of the final Australian operations of the war occurred on the island of Borneo in mid-1945, just weeks before the Japanese capitulation. Although the necessity of the campaign has since been called into question, at the time it was felt that Borneo was strategically important due to its vast oil deposits, and numerous airfields and harbours which made it ideal as a springboard for operations in Malaya and Java which were planned for 1946 but which did not in the end eventuate. With that goal, between May and July, the 7th and 9th Divisions made a series of landings on the island. These operations came to be known by the codename "Oboe". The first landing was made at Tarakan on 1 May by a single brigade, the 26th, from the 9th Division with the task of securing the airfield, while the rest of the division landed at Brunei Bay and Labuan Island later in June. The 7th Division landed at Balikpapan on 1 July 1945, having been given the tasks



of securing the port, oil installations and airfields, and then destroying the Japanese forces there. At Balikpapan, the 2/6th Commando Squadron played its final part in the conflict. For the landing, it was attached to the 25th Brigade and went ashore on the second day of the battle. Over the course of the following three weeks the Squadron supported the 25th Brigade in its advance along the Milford Highway. Among its other tasks, which included its normal role of conducting reconnaissance patrols, it also conducted a number of aggressive fighting patrols and successful ambushes along Pope's Track and provided humanitarian assistance to the local inhabitants.

Following the end of hostilities in the Pacific against the Japanese, there was to be no triumphant return to Australia for the 2/6th as a formed unit. Once the fighting on Borneo had stopped, the company was moved to a camp at Manggar Beach. Here they carried out various garrison duties and settled down to await further orders. On 6 October 1945 the unit was declared surplus to the Army's requirements and slowly its numbers began to dwindle as members marched out. Some 2/6th men were destined for service with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan or garrison duties elsewhere as there were still many Japanese troops at large, while others, who had earned enough points to do so were to be demobilised and returned to Australia. General (later Field Marshal, Sir) Thomas Blamey, the Commander-in-Chief of Australian Military Forces, inspected the 25th Brigade on 17 October, and then two days later they paraded before the Commander-in-Chief of South East Asia Command (SEAC), Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten who praised them for their turn out and thanked them for their service. On 20 November, the "low priority" men (those who had served the least amount of time) marched out of the 2/6th to join the 2/27th Battalion, while the higher priority men (those who were eligible for discharge before the others) were sent to the 2/12th Battalion two days later. This left the squadron with just two officers and 19 men. Together they returned to Australia, arriving in Brisbane on 31 December 1945, and marching to Chermside camp where they conducted the final formalities of disbandment. The unit's last day of service on the Australian order of battle was 15



Members of the 2/6th Commando Squadron with captured Japanese flags after the Battle of Kaiapit, 20 September 1943.

January 1946, when the final three members, including the acting CO, Captain Gordon Blainey, were dispersed and returned to their states of enlistment for demobilisation. Throughout the course of the war, the 2/6th lost 58 men killed in action or died of wounds,

while a further 80 were wounded in action. Members of the squadron received the following decorations: one Distinguished Service Order, two Military Crosses, one Distinguished Conduct Medal, two Military Medals, 23 Mentions in Despatches and one US Silver Star. No battle honours were awarded to the squadron, as these were awarded to its parent formation, the 2/7th Cavalry Commando Regiment.

2/7th Independent Company/Commando Squadron

The 2/7th Independent Company was formed in May 1942, following the completion of its training, the Company was deployed to New Guinea in late 1942, landing in Port Moresby. From there they were flown to Wau in



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/7th Independent Company/Commando Squadron.

January 1943, where they were used to reinforce elements of the 6th Division and units Kanga Force² during the Salamaua–Lae campaign. Between January and April, the company operated in conjunction with the 2/3rd & 2/5th Independent Companies, performing mainly a traditional Infantry role. During this time, they conducted a number of patrols and were involved in a very successful ambush on a large force of Japanese, resulting in a high number of enemy casualties. Later, they were directly involved with the defence of Wau, before helping to push the Japanese back to Mubo, where they conducted small scale harassment raids. The 2/7th's Commanding officer, Major Thomas MacAdie, was awarded a Distinguished Service Order for his gallantry and leadership during this phase of the campaign. In April, they were relieved by the 2/7th Battalion. They had served in the Wau area for seven months and were in need of rest, however, as there were no other troops available, on 29 May 1943 the 2/7th Independent Company was flown to Bena Bena where they became part of Bena Force⁷.

Bena Force had originally been dispatched to the isolated airfield in January consisting of only a handful of men from the 2/7th Battalion, with the task of defending it against the advancing Japanese, harassing the enemy in the area and denying them freedom of movement, however, in May as Japanese air attacks on Bena increased it became necessary to reinforce the small garrison. As such the depleted 2/7th Independent Company was sent to Bena, under the command of Major MacAdie, bringing the garrison up to roughly

⁷Bena Force was an ad hoc Australian Army formation that existed during World War II. Established in early 1943 to defend the Bena Bena–Mount Hagen plateau south of the Ramu River in New Guinea and to prevent it from being occupied by the Imperial Japanese. The force undertook defensive tasks and maintenance of the airfields, tracks and roads in the area, and undertook reconnaissance and long-range patrols.



four hundred men. During June and July, observation posts were established in the region, patrols were sent out and infrastructure was built with the help of labour supplied by the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU). Later, during August and September, as attacks increased on the garrison and the 2/2nd Independent Company arrived to reinforce Bena Force, patrols were sent out through the Ramu Valley in order to observe the main approaches to Bena Bena. In October 1943, following a re-organisation of Australian forces in New Guinea in preparation for the coming offensive around Lae, the 2/7th was temporarily placed under the command of the 7th Division. Following this, the Company began patrolling operations along the Faria, logi and Evapia rivers, until they were finally relieved by the 2/6th Commando Squadron in the second week of November. The 2/7th then returned to Dumpu, before embarking at Port Moresby for the return to Australia, having been deployed on active service for the best part of a year.

Like all the other Independent Companies, the 2/7th Independent Company was renamed the 2/7th Cavalry Commando Squadron (later just Commando Squadron) and was administered into the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment, along with the newly formed 2/9th and 2/10th Commando Squadrons. Together, these units were attached to the 6th Division, to conduct long range patrol and reconnaissance operations. The newly formed 2/7th Commando Squadron concentrated on the Atherton Tablelands, Queensland, with the rest of the 2/6th Cav Commando regiment. Throughout the rest of 1943 and most of 1944, the 2/7th carried out garrison duties and participated in exercises and training with the rest of the 6th Division. The Squadron's last contribution to the Second World War came during the Aitape–Wewak campaign.

Early in 1945, the 6th Division relieved the American garrison at Aitape, with a view to renewing offensive operations in the area. The 2/6th Cavalry Commando Regiment was the first Australian fighting unit to arrive at Aitape, and as it waited for the rest of the division to arrive, having left Brisbane on 22 October 1944, the regiment relieved the American outpost at Babiang and began to assist the ANGAU patrols in the area. Once they had concentrated fully by November, the 6th Division began its advance eastwards towards the Japanese base at Wewak, in order to destroy the remnants of the Japanese 18th Army. Prior to this, however, the 2/7th Commando Squadron conducted preliminary patrols in order to gather information on topography and enemy dispositions in the region. The Australian advance began in December and by this time, the 2/7th had been moved to Tong, where it had been given the tasks of maintaining a base, control the surrounding area and conduct patrols to the south. Now under the command of Major Goode, the squadron operated in support of the 17th Brigade, and had men stationed at Yourang and Kumbun. During this time there were a number of clashes with the

enemy, most notably on 11th and 13th December, as the squadron established its control over the area, resulting in a number of Japanese killed in action. Once it had been relieved by 17th Brigade, the squadron conducted a number of reconnaissance patrols south of the Torricelli Ranges, around the Dandriwad and Danmap Rivers, and then later once it had moved to the Yasuar Mission, patrolling along the Muam River. Throughout February the 2/7th began to push into enemy territory, moving along the Atop River and establishing bases at Kaumala, and at House Copper. Finally, at the end of March, the 2/7th was relieved and returned to Aitape.

The following month, the 2/7th was transported by landing craft to But, where they were to act as reserve for the 16th Brigade's advance to the Hawain River. While here, they were based at Banak and conducted a number of patrols in the surrounding area. As the campaign progressed into May, the 2/7th was transferred to the command of the 19th Brigade, which at the time was advancing on Wewak, with its limit of exploitation being the Brandi River. As it became clear that the Japanese were attempting to abandon their positions, the 2/7th were ordered to advance in a wide circle and capture the Sauri villages, where it was believed that the Japanese had established a strong rear guard to act as a blocking force. The 2/7th advanced up the Waringe River with a strength of 156 men, supported by mortar and artillery, and over the course of two days proceeded to clear the enemy from the high ground along which they would launch their assault on the villages. On 11 May, two Troops (Platoons) from the 2/7th launched their assault, advancing along a spur that led to Walanter where they encountered a well-established enemy position. This position was assaulted and the objective taken over the course of two and a half hours, with the assistance of close support from artillery and flamethrowers to overcome the enemy resistance.

The 2/7th were then relieved by elements of the 2/8th Battalion at Sauri, before receiving orders to concentrate with the rest of the 2/6th Commando Regiment in the area around Brandi Plantation. By the start of June, they began "mopping up" operations, firstly at Dove Bay and then at Karawop, before they were sent to Boiken in July, where they relieved the 2/10th Commando Squadron, which had been patrolling the area around the Dagua and Hawain Rivers in an attempt to deal with the Japanese raiding parties that were still operating in the area. The 2/7th were still in Boiken when Japan surrendered on 15 August 1945. They were disbanded approximately six months later, early in 1946, after the last members were returned to Australia and demobilised. During the course of its service, the squadron lost 30 men killed in action or died on active service.

2/8th Independent Company/Commando Squadron

The 2/8th Independent Company, the last of the



Independent Companies was formed at the Prom, Victoria in July 1942. At the completion of training the Company was sent to Yandina, Queensland and then later at the Adelaide River, in the Northern Territory. In 1943, as part of a re-organisation of the independent company concept, the 2/8th was renamed the 2/8th Cav Commando Squadron, which was later shortened to the 2/8th Commando Squadron. Despite this re-organisation, however, while other Commando Squadrons were amalgamated together into a regimental structure, the 2/8th remained independent and when they finally deployed overseas in mid-1944 to New Guinea, they were sent as an independent unit attached to the Australian II Corps.



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/8th Independent Company/Commando Squadron. 'Double White'.

The Squadron embarked from Townsville, Queensland, on 22 July 1944 and sailed to Lae, via Milne Bay, on board the SS *Ormiston*. While they were there, they received an intake of 70 experienced men from some of the other commando squadrons as reinforcements. Following this, the squadron undertook a period of jungle warfare training. After a few months, in mid-September, a small detachment of the 2/8th participated in a small-scale reconnaissance operation at Jacquinot Bay on the island of New Britain, to collect intelligence in preparation for an assault by the 5th Division. As part of this operation, elements from 'C' Troop and a small detachment from 'B' Troop, from the 2/8th Commando Squadron, provided the protection force for the reconnaissance party that was put ashore from the corvette HMAS *Kiama*, setting up a position on the beach and conducting a number of patrols further inland. This operation was a success and later, in November, the 5th Division conducted an amphibious landing in the area unopposed.

In October 1944, the 2/8th was transported on the troopship *Aconagua* to Torokina, which was the main Australian base on Bougainville, where it joined the rest of II Corps, who were concentrating in the area for the upcoming Bougainville campaign. As the campaign progressed the squadron conducted patrols from Torokina to Kuraio Mission and Amun in the northern sector on a weekly basis throughout November and into December, before handing over responsibility



A member of the 2/8th Commando Squadron armed with a Bren light machine gun photographed after returning from a patrol in June 1945.

of the area to the 11th Brigade and being transferred to the Southern sector. This was where the main battle for Bougainville was being fought, and as the 3rd Division advanced along the coast towards the Japanese base at Buin, the 2/8th was tasked to provide flank protection for the division. As a part of this, they conducted a number of reconnaissance patrols, often moving part of the way by barge, as well as conducting ambushes in order to keep the enemy off balance. This lasted for almost nine months from December 1944 right up to the end of the war in August 1945, during which time the 2/8th was in action almost continuously. It was a long and hard campaign, and to a large extent this made up for the long periods of inactivity that the Squadron had suffered while it had been garrisoned in Australia. Certainly, the Squadron was in the thick of it, with many of its members distinguishing themselves during this time, as evidenced by the rather large number of decorations 2/8th members earned in such a short space of time. The patrols during this time were conducted in small groups, usually no larger than two sections roughly 18–20 men, and they would last for between four and six days, although some lasted up to nine. Sometimes they would employ barges to move along the coast. Having secured the coastal regions around the Jaba River, the squadron slowly began to move inland in order to strike into the enemy's rear, securing the many villages along the way. First they cleared too Sovele Mission, then the villages of Opai, Nihero and Morokaimoro, reaching Kilipajino by the end of hostilities. As they went, each village taken became a patrol base and from there the Squadron would gather topographical information such as track and terrain reports, and locate the enemy. Once sufficient information had been gathered and passed on to II Corps, the patrols would then attempt to ambush the enemy or try to take a prisoner. These raids were very effective in tying down the enemy and keeping them away from the 3rd Division's flanks, as they forced the Japanese to deploy troops to their rear areas, removing men from the front against which the larger infantry forces were then be able to engage.

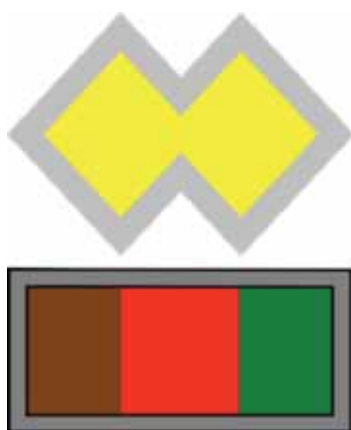
With the end of the war, as part of the large-scale demobilisation of Australian forces, the Commando Squadrons along with most of the other Special Forces units formed by the Australian Army were deemed surplus to requirements and the ranks of the squadron were slowly reduced as men who had earned enough points to do so were discharged, while others who did not were transferred to other units for further duties as part of the occupation forces that were being sent to Japan. By the December 1945 the number of members of the 2/8th Commando Squadron was small. Finally, on 10 January 1946, while at Liverpool, New South Wales, the 2/8th Commando Squadron was disbanded and removed from the Australian Order of Battle. During its service, the 2/8th lost seven men killed in action and 16 men wounded. Members of the Squadron received the following decorations: one Officer of the Order of the



British Empire, two Distinguished Conduct Medals, four Military Medals and 12 Mentions in Despatches.

2/9th Commando Squadron

The 2/9th Commando Squadron was raised in January 1944 the unit began training in the Atherton Tablelands, in Northern Queensland, as part of the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment, attached to the 6th Division. Like the other Australian Commando Squadrons, it had a strength of 17 officers and 253 other ranks. Originally the Squadrons Double Diamond Colour Patch was



The Double Diamond Colour Patch of the 2/9th Commando Squadron (top) and the Colour Patch of the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment (bottom).

Yellow, however due to the significance of the colour Yellow, the Squadron members reverted to the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment Colour Patch, of Brown, Red & Green. Often known as, 'Through the Mud & Blood to The Green Fields Beyond' (Same colours as the 1st Armoured Regiment of today). After training in the Atherton Tablelands, the Squadron embarked for New Guinea in late 1944.

In October 1944, the Squadron was one of the first Australian combat units to relieve the American forces at Aitape. From there, it took part in the Aitape–Wewak campaign which saw the Squadron undertake numerous long-range patrols across the Torricelli Range, as well as being utilised as normal line infantry when required. In this role they were utilised in May 1945 in an amphibious landing at Dove Bay, east of Wewak, as part of Farida Force⁹. During this landing, the Squadron came ashore in the first wave of the assault force and was instrumental in establishing the beach head. Once the rest of Farida Force had landed, the squadron began patrolling operations along the coast to the west towards the town of Mandi. The patrol was carried out without contacting the Japanese, however, later, as they moved further west past Mandi, they came upon two stragglers. The next day, 'B' Troop's positions west of Mandi were mortared by the Japanese, and after a brief period of suppression fire from the beachhead, the troop attacked, taking the track junction and

exploiting further westwards. Later in May and into June 1945, the 2/9th were attached to the 19th Brigade and were given responsibility for defending the Bandi Plantation and the vital crossroads at Mandi. In late June, the infiltration of Japanese troops around Boiken threatened the security of the Australian positions and 2/9th along with the rest of the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment were engaged in operations to deal with these threats. These raids continued through July and into August, before hostilities finally came to an end on 15 August 1945.

After the cessation of hostilities, the unit was slowly reduced as personnel were marched out for demobilisation or for service with the occupation forces in Japan. The remaining members of the squadron returned to Australia in December 1945, and in early 1946 the 2/9th was finally disbanded. During the Squadron's service during the war, it lost 12 men killed in action. Members of the 2/9th received the following decorations: one Military Cross, one Military Medal and five Mentions in Despatches.

2/10th Commando Squadron

The 2/10th Commando Squadron was raised in January 1944, as part of the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment, along with the 2/7th & 2/9th Commando Squadrons and attached to the 6th Division. Follow-



The Colour Patch of the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment worn by the 2/10th Commando Squadron.

ing the unit's formation, the squadron began training on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland before embarking for New Guinea in late 1944 with the remainder of the 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment.

In October 1944 the Squadron was one of the first Australian combat units to relieve the American forces at Aitape along with the other 2/6th Cav Commando Regiment Squadrons. Throughout November the 2/10th undertook patrol operations in the Suain–Luain area, carrying out reconnaissance in search of Japanese forces between the Dandriwad and Danmap Rivers. Later, in December, the squadron was attached to the 17th Brigade and took up defensive positions around Vokau. They remained in this role until February 1945 when the Squadron returned to conducting offensive operations, relieving the 2/7th Commando Squadron at Walum and Nilu. The 2/6th CavCommando Regiment had been given the task of clearing the Maprik area and in order to carry out these orders, the 2/10th crossed the Torricelli Range and established a base in the foothills at Ami. From there, the Squadron continued to move in a southerly direction towards Maprik, protecting the flanks of the 2/5th and 2/7th Infantry Battalions that were operating further inland. As well as keeping the enemy from the flanks of the two infantry battalions, the 2/10th was tasked to clear the populous areas to the north-east of the Ami

⁹Farida Force was the name given to an ad hoc composite Australian Army unit formed during World War II. Largely consisting of Australian commandos, the force was established for the purpose for conducting an amphibious landing at Dove Bay, east of Wewak during the Aitape–Wewak campaign. Coming ashore in mid-May 1945, the force quickly established a beachhead and pushed inland, cutting the Wewak road. Afterwards, the commandos conducted patrolling operations before Farida Force was dissolved and its constituent units placed under the command of the 19th Brigade for further operations around Wewak.



villages. Initially the Australians were very successful, managing to use surprise to their advantage in dealing with the pockets of Japanese resistance that they encountered, however, as the fighting continued, they began to suffer for lack of fire support. In an effort to overcome this problem air support from Aitape was called in, and each of the squadron's three troops were given a 2-inch mortar, while a 3-inch mortar section was attached to the Squadron. Throughout February a number of ambushes and attacks were undertaken by the squadron, before on 20 February 1945, 'C' Troop carried out an attack on Kualigem which failed to remove the Japanese from the village and resulted in the loss of two officers killed and five troopers wounded. In March 1945 the squadron carried out further patrols, this time in the Milak, Maurak and Aupik areas. The Japanese presence in this area was considerable and they became more aggressive, carrying out regular patrols, setting ambushes and re-occupying the villages that the Australians had taken the previous month.

On 13 March, as the Japanese began to gain the initiative in the area, they began to concentrate their efforts on one of the 2/10th's troops, based at Milak and about two days away from the nearest support. Early in the evening the J a p a n e s e launched the first



Members of the 2/10th Commando Squadron sharing beers together with their Squadron flag, New Guinea, September 1945.

attack, and although this was beaten off, they continued to maintain harassing fire throughout the night and into the following day. The following night, 14/15 March, having completely surrounded the troop, the Japanese attacked again but were again repulsed. By 15 March, supplies of food and ammunition were short and an aerial resupply was used to relieve the situation, although the supplies fell outside of the Australian position and patrols had to be sent out to retrieve them; in the end of the eight cylinders the Australians got five and the Japanese retrieved three. Later in the day, as the Japanese took up positions less than 50 yards (46 m) from the Australian perimeter, air attacks were called in, before the Japanese launched fresh attacks that night. The situation began to get desperate before finally, on 19 March, after a five-day siege the lines of communication were re-established and the enemy pressure eased. At the end of the fighting, it was estimated that 45 Japanese had been killed. The Troop at Maurak had also come under attack at this time, while the troop patrolling Aupik also had a number of clashes. By the end of March,

however, it became clear that the squadron was in need of relief. They had suffered three killed and eight wounded, and had counted at least 91 enemy dead during the contacts they had undertaken that month. Finally, they were withdrawn back Vokau, for a period of rest and re-organisation. This would not last for very long, however. On 11 May 1945, the 2/6th Cavalry Commando Regiment, as part of Farida Force took part in an amphibious landing at Dove Bay, east of Wewak. Along with the 2/9th Commando Squadron, the 2/10th formed the initial assault force. Coming ashore ahead of the main landing force, the assault squadrons came up against only very sporadic Japanese resistance and as the rest of the force moved inland, the 2/10th secured the beachhead with the 2/9th Commando Squadron. Later they were moved to the west to Mandi, where the squadron headquarters set up in the Mandi garden and they began patrolling operations along the Wewak-Forok road.

In the first half of June, the squadron moved into a position about 2 miles (3.2 km) west of the Brandi Plantation and here they came into close contact with a force of Japanese that had been forced out from Wewak and were attempting to raid Australian positions in the hope of gathering supplies. Casualties and losses from illness had been heavy and the squadron had been reduced to roughly half its effective strength, regardless, the squadron maintained the pressure on the Japanese in the hills to the south through a program of aggressive patrolling. On 5 June 1945, a full squadron attack was launched upon a complex of Japanese bunkers that was discovered about 1,000 yards (910 m) south of the Australian perimeter. Only 70 men could be mustered for the attack and when they encountered heavy machine gun fire from the bunkers, they were forced to withdraw and call for fire support from the artillery of the 2/2nd Field Regiment at Boram. In less than 10 minutes, over 800 shells were fired by the 16 guns of the 2/2nd Field Regiment and the result was devastating, as 17 of the 25 Japanese bunkers were totally destroyed. Japanese casualties were estimated at being at least 32 dead. On 14 June the Squadron was relieved by a company from the 2/3rd Machine Gun Battalion, however, in the third week of June they were back in action as the Regiment was given the task of dealing with the a daring infiltration of Japanese forces to the west of Boiken. On 24 June five Japanese raided the ANGAU camp at Wisling, capturing a number of weapons. The following day, a party of about 10 Japanese ambushed a patrol from the 2/10th south of the plantation, killing one officer and wounding four troopers. These raids continued throughout the rest of June and into July before the 2/10th was relieved by the 2/7th Commando Squadron on 5 July and they moved to Cape Karawop, where the Regimental Headquarters had been situated. The 2/10th remained at Karawop until the end of the war, however, they continued to see action right up until the Japanese surrendered. On 23 July 1945, a patrol from



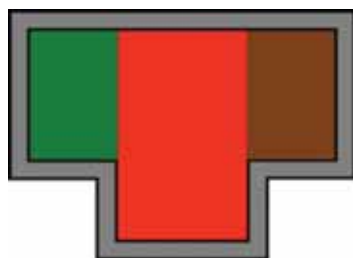
the 2/10th clashed with a force of about 40 Japanese in the hills south of Wanpea; eight Japanese were killed, while the Australians lost four men, including one officer.

Following the end of hostilities, the Squadron remained at Karawop, having to wait until November 1945 before they were moved back to Wewak. Slowly the squadron's strength was reduced as individuals who had enough points to do so were returned to Australia for demobilisation, while others were transferred to other units for occupation duties. Finally, however, in late 1945 the remaining members of the 2/10th was returned to Australia and the unit was finally disbanded. During the course of its service during the war the 2/10th lost 23 men killed in action or died on active service, and 45 men wounded. Members of the Squadron received the following decorations: one Military Cross, two Military Medals, and three Mentions in Despatches.

2/11th Commando Squadron

The 2/11th Commando Squadron was formed in January 1944 as part of this re-organisation of the Australian Army as it began to restructure itself for the campaigns in the Pacific. The unit was formed from volunteers from the 9th Divisional Cavalry Regiment which had largely been disbanded when it had been converted into the 2/9th Cav Commando Regiment, as well as from men from the defunct 1st Armoured Division and other men who had volunteered for Commando training. Along with the 2/4th and 2/12th Commando Squadrons, they formed the 2/9th Cav Commando Regiment, which was attached to the 9th Division. Following the unit's formation, the Squadron began training on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland where they were based throughout 1944 and into 1945 until they finally received orders to embark for overseas.

The 2/11th Commando Squadron embarked from Townsville, Queensland, in April 1945 bound for Morotai as part of the buildup of Australian forces in preparation for operations in the Netherlands East Indies and Borneo, known collectively as "Operation Oboe"². While the 26th Brigade and the 2/4th Commando Squadron were in the mopping up stages of the fighting on Tarakan, the rest of the 9th Division and the 2/9th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment carrying out an assault landing on Labuan Island and at Brunei Bay on the north-west coast of Borneo. The plan was to secure the island's oil and rubber resources and to establish an advanced fleet base. Attached to the 24th Brigade, the majority of the 2/11th Commando Squadron landed at



*The Colour Patch of the
2/9th Cav Commando Regiment
worn by the 2/11th Commando
Squadron.*

Labuan Island on 10 June 1945, while a troop was detached to clear Hamilton Point, crossing Victoria Harbour and landing at Hardy's Beach in LVTs. Originally it had been intended to send the entire Squadron to clear the peninsula, however, intelligence gathered from locals earlier indicated that there were no Japanese there and as such the decision was made only to send one troop from the squadron to make the landing across the harbour. After landing, the troop met no opposition and began to move north along the Charlie Track towards the main arterial that ran east-west across the island known as Hamilton Road, where at the track junction, on 12 June they linked up with the 2/43rd Battalion. The resistance that the Australians met early in the campaign was light, as the Japanese had chosen to concentrate their forces further inland in the mountain ridges off what was named MacArthur Ridge. On 15 June, fighting began to clear the Japanese out of the area that had become known as the Pocket. The 2/28th Battalion was given the task of carrying out the main assault and the 2/11th Commando Squadron were placed in support. Within the area that the Japanese were defending there were several areas of high ground from which the Japanese could observe the Australian advance. As such there were only two avenues of approach for an attacking force. The first of these approaches was a heavily mined track along Lyon Ridge, while the second was a track that ran through a swamp. The 2/11th were given the task of patrolling along Lyon Ridge and report back regarding whether it was passable with tanks. Having completed the patrol, the Squadron reported back that the track along Lyon Ridge was suitable for tanks and so the following day, 16 June 1945, a company from the 2/28th Battalion with a number of tanks from the 2/9th Armoured Regiment launched an attack on the Japanese positions in the Pocket. A section from the 2/11th was attached to the 2/28th Battalion to provide protection to its tactical headquarters and during the attack, after the assaulting company had become pinned down, it was sent forward and deployed in support of the company that had become pinned down. Almost immediately it came under effective fire and two men were killed, while another was wounded. As the attack progressed and as Australian casualties began to mount, the 2/11th's chaplain organised a team of stretcher bearers from the 2/11th and went forward under fire to carry out the task of rescuing the wounded.

The Pocket was not cleared until 21 June 1945, however, as the rest of Labuan had been cleared, it was decided to gain control of the high ground on the eastern side of the mainland of Borneo in order to gain control of the beaches so that they could be used later to land supplies for use during the subsequent advance to the north. On 17 June, the 2/32nd Battalion crossed Brunei Bay on board a number of landing craft and landed at Weston. They were followed shortly afterward by the rest of the 24th Brigade, which began moving inland towards Beaufort. The 2/11th Com-



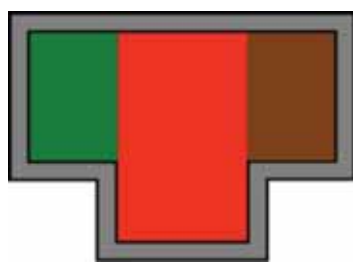
mando Squadron followed a little later on 19 June, landing at Mempakul. Tasked with clearing the Klias Peninsula, the 2/11th began moving north along the coast Kuala Penyu near Cape Nosong, clearing the area west of the Klias river. Moving through difficult terrain, the going was slow. Enemy resistance was isolated; however, the squadron was involved in a number of contacts. At Malikai a native approached a patrol from the 2/11th and led them to a house where a number of Japanese were in occupation. In the ensuing firefight, eight Japanese were killed. The following day, on 23 June, they took Karukan and Sabang, before finally arriving at Kuala Penyu four days later. They would remain there until the end of the war.

Following the end of hostilities in the Pacific, the size of the Squadron was slowly reduced as men who had enough points to do so were returned to Australia for demobilisation, while others were transferred to other units of occupation duties. As they waited for transportation back to Australia, the squadron undertook further reconnaissance of the area around Kuala Penyu, improving the accuracy of maps of the Klias Peninsula. In September they were moved to Mepakula and then to Beaufort, before returning to Labuan in December 1945. Finally, however, the men that remained in the squadron were returned to Australia and in January 1946, at Chermside camp in Brisbane, the 2/11th Commando Squadron was officially removed from the Australian Army's order of battle. During the course of its service during the war, the 2/11th lost nine men killed in action or died on active service, and six men wounded. Three members of the Squadron were decorated with the Military Medal.

2/12th Commando Squadron

Formed in January 1944, the last of the Commando Squadrons, the unit was raised along with the 2/9th, 2/10th, 2/11th Commando Squadrons. Along with the 2/4th & 2/11th Squadrons the 2/12th formed the 2/9th Cav Commando Regiment, which was attached to the 9th Division. Following the unit's formation, the Squadron began training on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland where they were based throughout 1944 and into 1945, along with the rest of the 9th Division until they finally received orders to embark for overseas.

The 2/12th Commando Squadron embarked from Townsville, Queensland in April 1945 bound for Morotai as part of the buildup of Australian forces in preparation for operations in the Netherlands East Indies and Borneo. These operations were known collectively as "Operation Oboe", whilst the landings



The Colour Patch of the 2/9th Cav Commando Regiment and worn by the 2/12th Commando Squadron.

on Borneo were known as Operation Oboe Six. Whilst the 26th Brigade and the 2/4th Commando Squadron were in the mopping up stages of the fighting on Tarakan, the rest of the 9th Division and the 2/9th Cav Commando Regiment carried out an assault landing on Labuan Island and at Brunei Bay on the north-west coast of Borneo. The plan was to secure the island's oil and rubber resources and to establish an advanced fleet base. During the early phase of the campaign the 2/12th Commando Squadron was held back as the Divisional Reserve and as such did not take part in the main fighting on Labuan Island. As the Japanese resistance on the island was coming to an end and the focus of Australian operations moved towards the mainland of Borneo, the squadron was finally committed to operations when it was given the task of carrying out mopping up operations on the island. Placed under the command of the 2/32nd Battalion the squadron landed on 12 June and began patrol operations nine days later. In the following eleven days the Squadron was involved in a number of contacts, suffering one man killed and two wounded, while capturing one Japanese soldier and killing 27 others. The most notable incident occurred on 26 June 1945, when, following a Japanese raid on the British Borneo Civil Affairs Unit (BBCAU) area two days earlier, a section from the 2/12th contacted the group that had been responsible for the raid and in a quick engagement 14 Japanese were killed and two Australians wounded. The fighting on Labuan Island came to an end by the middle of July and while the rest of the 9th Division was committed to action on the mainland, the 2/12th remained there and were used to carry out survey work, helping to improve the accuracy of the maps of Labuan Island.

Following the end of hostilities in the Pacific, the size of the squadron was slowly reduced as men who had enough points to do so were returned to Australia for demobilisation, whilst others were transferred to other units for occupation duties. In this time the squadron was transferred to Kuching in Sarawak, where they joined Kuching Force and carried out ceremonial duties. In January 1946, the squadron finally returned to Australia and the following month, while at Puckapunyal, Victoria it was disbanded. During the course of its service during the war, the 2/12th lost one man killed in action and two men wounded. One member of the Squadron received a Mention in Despatches.

Throughout WW2, 465 Australian Commandos made the supreme sacrifice in the defence of this great nation.

M & Z Special Units

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, in anticipation of a future war with Japan, arrangements had been made by Australian Intelligence and the Royal Australian Navy for



The post WW2 Z Special Unit Emblem.



selected individuals to operate in a "stay behind" role in what was to become the South West Pacific Area. The forecast scenario proved remarkably accurate, and the selected individuals become known as the "Coast Watchers". They performed invaluable service during the first year of the Pacific War by reporting on Japanese naval and air movements and providing early warning to allied installations of impending attack. With most of Asia occupied by the Japanese, as the war progressed there developed an ever-increasing need for accurate intelligence, both about the enemy and also geography, on which to plan future operations.

As it became obvious that despite the Japanese "Greater Asia Co-prosperity Scheme", there was strong residual support for the allies in most occupied countries, the possibility of active resistance by the local population was considered. Such thinking was, of course, influenced by events in Europe where the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) and later the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) were concerned with organising resistance in occupied countries by introducing specifically trained allied operatives to co-ordinate operations and conduct sabotage and other activities.

In the Pacific theatre, approval was given in early 1942 for the creation of an offshoot of SOE to be known as SOA (Special Operations Australia) with the cover title of Inter Allied Services Department (IASD) usually abbreviated to ISD. In March 1943, ISD was reformed as the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD). A holding unit specifically created in June 1942, called "Z Special Unit" administered all Australian personnel in SRD. The Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) was also formed in June 1942 by GHQ South West Pacific Area (SWPA) to control and co-ordinate the activities of the various "cloak and dagger" organisations that mushroomed during that period.

From all this developed "M Special Unit" and "Z Special Unit". In very broad terms, "M" was the administrative unit for training personnel tasked with the collection of intelligence by introducing small parties behind enemy lines using whatever means were available, such as submarines, aircraft and surface craft. For "Z" on the other hand, was the administrative unit for training personnel tasked the collection of intelligence was an incidental by-product (albeit an important one) derived from their operations. Personnel trained and administered from these units were then allocated to operations which were conducted by AIB. The main aim of AIB was to employ specifically trained parties behind enemy lines to either conduct actual operations themselves, or to organise and lead the local inhabitants in active resistance to the Japanese.

The two seaborne raids on Singapore in 1943 and 1944 known as Operation JAYWICK and RIMAU are the best-known examples of the former while SRD activities in the interior of Borneo before and during

the Australian landings provide ample evidence of the efficiency of the second. Between 1942 and the end of hostilities in August 1945, ISD/SRD sent 81 parties to Japanese occupied territories. Their casualties were 69 dead and missing. The almost classic special operations conducted in Borneo undoubtedly killed more Japanese than did the conventional operations of 7th and 9th Australian Divisions. In addition, the Japanese were so discomfited by the threat to their rear that the expected counter attacks against 7th and 9th divisions never materialised.

Throughout WW2, 17 M Special Unit & 57 Z Special Unit members made the supreme sacrifice in the defence of this great nation.

Attitudes within the Australian Army

By October 1943 when, coincidentally, the Commando Squadrons assumed their new titles, the international reputation of the Australian Army was as high as it has probably ever been. Australian forces had inflicted the first defeat on land of a Japanese invading force at Milne Bay. Mainly Australian forces had defeated the Japanese in the Kokoda Buna campaign in Papua New Guinea. Australians had won the Battle of Wau and with some US assistance had captured Salamau. The 7th and 9th Divisions were in the process of eliminating the Japanese in the Lae and Finschafen area and the 9th Division had played a key role in the Battle of El Alamein the previous year. Despite all this, or perhaps because of its success, the Australian Army had become a very conservative organisation, although few would have acknowledged this at the time. Nowhere was this conservatism more apparent than in the attitude towards Independent Companies by the AIF Divisions. The general attitude by commanders at all levels was "if they move on foot, they're infantry and they should behave as such."

It was unfortunate that quite often the first meeting with Infantry Battalions came in circumstances when the Independent Companies had been operating in a guerrilla role for long periods with no supply lines. As a result, their members wore beards (they had no razors or razor blades), their clothing was often ragged and untidy (replacements were a rarity) and they gave a general impression of scruffiness. Subsequent written comments about the Independent Companies were often highly critical of their appearance. The authors appeared to have no inkling of the difficulties involved in operating in a guerrilla role with no lines of communication. Frequently, the question was asked, "What does an Independent Company do that an Infantry Battalion can't do?" Perhaps the answers lay in Timor where after four days of fighting, an Infantry Battalion (2/40th) surrendered, whereas the Independent Company withdrew into the hills and carried on the war. Perhaps it is all in the state of the mind.

The above comments should not be interpreted as a criticism of Infantry for whom the author has the greatest admiration, having subsequently served in a



variety of infantry command appointments. Rather, it is a criticism of how, unwittingly, people can become unreceptive to new ideas.

Post WW2 Commando's

Worldwide hopes for a new era of peace following the defeat of Germany and Japan were soon dashed by the advent of militant communism. The occupation of Eastern European countries by the Soviet Union in 1945 and the imposition of the so called "iron curtain", the Berlin air lift, the victory of the Chinese Communists in 1949, the Korean War between 1950 and 1953, the Malaysian Emergency and various other incidents forced the Western World to recognise that the Cold War was a reality. There would be no easy transition to a peaceful existence. An immediate solution to the problem of containing communism was for the Western powers to rapidly rebuild the conventional forces which they had demobilised so quickly at the end of the war and to form collective security organisations such as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). The problem in Asia was of a different nature. The Chinese communists were committed to a policy of "revolutionary warfare" by which they planned to take over selected countries by actively sponsoring internal subversion backed by clandestine military activity.

In both Europe and Asia, it was recognised by Western planners that as in World War II, assistance may have to be provided to the people of occupied countries by introducing highly trained operative groups to organise and coordinate assistance activities. However, at the end of World War II all the specially raised organisations such as SOE and OSS, together with M and Z Special Units, had been disbanded. It therefore became necessary to create new organisations. Inevitably, because of the close relationship that had existed between Western intelligence organisations and the forces raised to conduct special operations during the war, the post war intelligence bodies had a large input into the creation and organisation of the new "special forces". In Australia in the early 1950's defence planning staff convinced the government that this country also should raise "special forces" with the role of conducting clandestine operations similar to those mounted by Z Special Unit, and also those of the Independent Companies and the Commando Squadrons, during the war.

It was envisaged that by raising units capable of performing such a dual role, a pool of trained manpower would be available to be "farmed off" as necessary to an equivalent Z Special Unit while the remainder would be used in more conventional commando operations. Accordingly, in November 1954, Army Headquarters issued instructions for the raising of 1 Commando Company in Sydney and 2 Commando Company in Melbourne. The establishment and equipment table for both units were

identical to those of the war time Commando Squadrons. For manpower reasons and also because it was recognised in some circles that regular soldiers are not necessarily best suited to the conduct of unconventional operations, it was decided that the new units should be part of the Citizen Military Forces, the equivalent of today's Army Reserve. However, it was considered that because of the scope and nature of the training involved the time factor alone could make it impossible for a CMF officer to command such a unit, so regular OCs were appointed. With the passage of time the size of the regular cadre has been considerably increased.

Fortunately, the British retained the Royal Marine Commando Brigade and the Special Air Service Regiment, which had both a regular and territorial (equivalent to Army Reserve) component. Both the Royal Marines and the SAS possessed a degree of expertise in the conduct of special operations which was vastly superior to anything available in Australia, so once again it was necessary for Australia to approach Britain for assistance in the training of special units. The OC and training warrant officers of both 1 and 2 Commando Companies were accordingly attached to the Royal Marines in the United Kingdom for six months specialist training. This arrangement continued for several years. In those early days, there was no clear-cut operational role for the two companies. This did not cause undue concern as the same could be said for the Australian armed forces in general. The term "Australian Defence Force" as an all-embracing title did not then exist and members of the armed forces were content to accept the rather vague concept that they were responsible for the defence of Australia and would fight in any wars that may eventuate. Things have changed greatly since then.

1 & 2 Commando Companies

The established strength for the companies was to be 265 all ranks, consisting of one major, five captains (three of them platoon commanders), six sergeants and 241 other ranks. This establishment was very similar to the Independent Companies/Commando Squadrons of World War II, which had had an establishment of 17 officers and 256 other ranks.

1 Commando Company was raised in Sydney New South Wales on 24 February 1955; however, the Officer Commanding, Major William Harold (Mac) Grant decided that the official birthday would be their first parade on Friday 15 July 1955 at "Q" Block, Victoria Barracks. Major Grant was a World War II Commando veteran having served in the 2/5 Independent Company and 2/12th Commando Squadron. 2



The hat badge of
1 & 2 Commando
Companies and the
1st Commando Regiment
prior to 2010.



Commando Company was raised in Victoria on 24 February 1955 under the command of Major Peter Seddon and first paraded on 7 July 1955. Seddon was appointed for only 12 months with his successor to be Major Jack Anderson. In October 1955, MAJ's Grant and Anderson, along with two Warrant Officers Ernie Tarr and Ron Smith, travelled to the United Kingdom to train with the Royal Marine Commandos. Tarr and Smith undertook 12 months of training, including with the Special Boat Service, to become training instructors. MAJ Anderson was killed in training during the last week of the Basic Commando course on 14 December 1955 and was replaced by Major John Hutcheson. Also, In October 1955, two Royal Marine Commando Sergeants Mac MacDermott and Len Holmes, both former Special Boat Service, travelled to Australia each appointed to a Commando Company. In May 1956, Grant and Hutcheson returned to Australia after six months of training having been awarded the green beret by 42 Commando. MAJ Grant has stated that defence planning staff convinced the government to form the Commando Companies with the role "...of conducting clandestine operations similar to those mounted by Special Operations also those of the Independent Companies/Commando Squadrons. It was envisaged that by raising units capable of performing such a dual role, a pool of trained manpower would be available to be "farmed off" as necessary to a Special Operations unit while the remainder would be used in more conventional Commando Operations. *"The Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) had earlier been formed in 1952 within the Department of Defence whose role included ". plan for and conduct Special Operations..."*.

The Commando courses included basic parachutist, diving, small scale raids, demolitions, climbing and roping and unarmed combat. 1 Commando Company held the first diving course in 1957 using a pure oxygen re-breather named the Clearance Divers Breathing Apparatus CDBA borrowed from the Navy Clearance Diving Branch based on training received from the Special Boat Service. In 1957, as the unit already had the designation "1st" within its title, the Army thought it would be a convenient framework on which to reform the Australian Imperial Force's 1st Battalion. So, on 1 December 1957 the unit was re-designated the 1st Infantry Battalion (Commando), keeping this title until 22 August 1966 when the unit was renamed the 1st Battalion, The Royal New South Wales Regiment (Commando), City of Sydney's Own Regiment. Finally, in May 1973 the unit's name at last changed back to the former designation of the 1 Commando Company. In 1958, the 1 Commando Company provided the initial training for the recently formed 1st Special Air Service Company, the Royal Australian Regiment. On the evening of 17 February 1960, 74 Commandos from 2 Commando Company set off in kayaks, amphibious DUKW (ducks) and zodiacs on a training exercise from Point Lonsdale to Point Nepean in Victoria simulating a

raid on the officer cadet school which involved them crossing the infamous Rip at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay. The weather changed without warning and the watercraft were swept out to sea through the Port Phillip Heads encountering massive seas that capsized most watercraft. Nearly all Commandos were rescued except two and one PTE from 42 Amphibious Platoon, RAASC who drowned. 2 Commando Company developed a Mountain Leader's Course in ski patrolling, as well as rock, ice and snow climbing.

Prior to formation as a Regiment, the sub units deployed individuals and small teams to the Borneo Confrontation and the Vietnam War. During the Borneo confrontation, Sergeant Ted Blacker of 126th Signal Squadron (Special Forces) was awarded the British Empire Medal. From 1965 the Commando Companies contributed numerous instructors, including from their reserve part-time component, to the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV). In the late 1960s, 2 Commando Company relocated from Ripponlea to Fort Gellibrand at Williamstown Victoria. WO2 Ray Simpson, DCM whilst attached to the AATTV was awarded the Victoria Cross 08 May 1969.

301st & 126th Signals Squadrons

The requirement for long-range communications can be traced back to WWII and units such as Coast-watchers, New Guinea Air Warning Wireless Company, the Independent Companies, and Z Special Unit. On 30 April 1958, a decision was made to raise No 1 Independent Signals Squadron to support clandestine operations and this led to the formation of 301st Signal Squadron (Home Defence) in 1960 at Lidcombe, New South Wales. This new squadron was to meet the requirement for 'special communications' and was charged with the responsibility of providing long-range communications for commando-type operations and was augmented with regular army members in 1963. In December 1964, 301st Signal Squadron was re-designated 126th Signal Squadron, later to 126th Signal Squadron (Special Forces) in January 1966 and subsequently relocated to Albert Park, Victoria and in 1972 to Simpson Barracks in Watsonia, Victoria. The squadron had recruited female signallers since 1964. In 1979 the right to wear the Green Beret (with RASIGS badge) was awarded to 126 Signal Squadron (Special Forces). This was the culmination of many submissions to the dress committees by various OC's. The high standard of professionalism displayed by both ARA and ARES at home and overseas contributed to this award. A Squadron parade was held on the School of Signals parade ground with the Berets being handed out by BRIG Jim Barry (later to be the Manager of the Australian Olympic Team).

1st Commando Regiment

The formation of 1st Commando Regiment in 1981 comprising 1 Commando Company, 2 Commando Company and 126 Signals Squadron gave a new status



to Commandos in the Australian Army. Similarly, the creation of the Special Forces Directorate followed by the appointments of a Commander Special Forces indicated clearly that the role of special forces in war was very much an accepted part of Australian Army doctrine. Since the beginning, the sheer quality and enthusiasm of the part time soldiers who have filled the ranks of the units comprising 1st Commando Regiment have given new meaning to the concept of the citizen soldier. The allocation of a clear and operational role to 1st Commando Regiment and the reputation the Regiment has earned for skill and efficiency are proof that selected citizen soldiers can reach standards which few people would have thought possible 40 years ago. It is safe to say that Lieutenant General Sturdee, if he were alive today, would consider the members of 1st Commando Regiment worthy successors to the Independent Companies he was instrumental in forming.

All sub-units (1, 2 Commando Company & 126 Signals Squadron) operated independently, training Army Reserve Commandos and Special Forces signalers until 1981 when it was determined a Regimental headquarters was required. This headquarters would coordinate the efforts of the previously independent units and provide the east coast command element for the newly established counter-terrorist capability within the Special Air Service Regiment. The headquarters was established on 1 February 1981 at Randwick Barracks in Randwick, New South Wales. Sometime after the formation of the 1st Commando Regiment, 1 & 2 Commando Companies become known as 1 & 2 Companies, dropping Commando from the name. Commencing in February 1997, 1 Cdo Regt provided the initial training for the re-role of the 4th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (4RAR) from a light infantry battalion into a Commando Battalion, known as 4 RAR Commando (4 Cdo). The 126th Signal Squadron (Special Forces) was incorporated into 4 RAR Commando and relocated to Holsworthy. In 1998, the Army dropped plans to raise a third reserve company in Queensland for the Regiment due to a lack of resources. In June 2002, 301st Signal Squadron was re-raised at Randwick Barracks to provide communications and information systems and electronic warfare to facilitate the command and control of special operations conducted by the Regiment. In 2006, 1 Company relocated from Georges Heights in Mosman to HMAS Penguin in Balmoral. In 2018, 1st Commando regiment, 1 Company & 301 Signals Squadron relocated to Holsworthy Barracks in South West Sydney as part of the Special Forces Precinct where the 2nd Commando Regiment is located today.



The hat badge of the 1st Commando Regiment post 2010.

Operational Deployments

In recent years, the Regiment has frequently deployed on operations, providing small detachments and individuals to peacekeeping missions in the region and deployed operationally up to company sized combat elements to Afghanistan. Deployments in the region, include Bougainville as unarmed monitors as part of Operation BEL ISI, Timor Leste (East Timor) as peacekeepers in 2001 as part of UNTAET providing a substantial reinforcement to 4RAR(Cdo) and Solomon Islands in 2003 as part of RAMSI providing peace-keeping teams to support operations.

In May 2006, SOCOMD deployed to Timor Leste as peacekeepers in Operation Astute with a Special Operations Task Group to conduct special recovery and evacuation operations. Post the extraction of the initial Task Group, the special operations component in Timor Leste was reduced – often commanded by a member of the 1 Cdo Regt and the force element supplemented by 1 Cdo Regt teams. In March 2007, the Task Group was bolstered to form an Apprehension Task Force with the purpose of apprehending ex-Timorese Army Major and rebel leader, Alfredo Reinado, at the request of the President of Timor Leste. Reinado was eventually located in the village of Same. Following negotiations between the Timor Leste government and the rebels, the decision was made to detain Reinado by force. Reinado evaded capture but five of his men were killed in the battle. For the members of the 1 Cdo Regt who participated in this Special Operations Task Group mission the battle was the first combat seen by the unit (at greater than individual level).

In 2008, the Regiment's operational commitment took a step further with the deployment of an entire Commando Company Group to the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) in Afghanistan as part of Operation Slipper. This constituted the first deployment of an Army Reserve force element on combat operations since World War II and the Regiment continued to support this operational commitment with similar deployments the following year. The role of the commando company in Afghanistan was to conduct offensive operations deep within enemy safe havens to provide security to both coalition forces and the people of Afghanistan. This was achieved through intelligence-led direct-action (DA) missions to disrupt and destroy enemy forces within known insurgent strong holds known as "kill or capture" missions.

The first deployment was composed of 1 Cdo Coy personnel supplemented by 2 Cdo Coy personnel. It was commanded by the Major OC 1 Cdo Coy and arrived in November 2008 for a four-month tour of duty until February 2009. The Regiment served in SOTG Rotations: - Eight (VIII), Eleven (IX) & Fourteen (XIV). A Rotation ranged from about four to six, seven, and eight months. The Regiment was the sole SOCOMD combat unit in Rotation Eleven with no elements from the SASR or 2 Cdo Regt and were assigned Population



Centric Operations. In the 2015 Australia Day Honours, the Regiment was awarded the Meritorious Unit Citation (MUC) with 4 Commando & 2nd Commando Regiment for SOTG Rotations IV – XX.

Since 1955 1 & 2 Cdo Coy & 1st Cdo Regt have lost 13 members Killed In Action, Killed In Training or Died In Service.

4 RAR Commando

In 1995, as part of an expansion of the number of Australian Army infantry Battalions, the 2nd/4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, (2/4 RAR) then operating as a standard light infantry battalion was delinked into separate battalions which resumed their original identities



*The unit emblem of
4 Commando, 1998-2009.*

as the 2nd and 4th Battalions The Royal Australian Regiment, (2 RAR & 4 RAR). In 1996 the Defence White Paper identified that the Army needed a full time Commando Capability to help support the growing need with the Australian Strategic Policy as the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) could not do all the tasks that it was allocated and 1st Commando Regiment was not in a position to do this role. So, in 1997 the decision was then taken that 4 RAR would become the first Regular Army Commando unit since the Independent Company's/Commando Squadrons of WW2 and on the 1st of February 1997 the unit was renamed to 4th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (Commando) (4 RAR (Cdo)) and would be commonly known by its members as 4 Commando (4 Cdo) or '4'.

The unit would be structured for Commando Operations with an initial establishment of a Battalion Headquarters (BHQ), two Commando Company's, a Logistic Support Company a Operational Support Company and a Signals Squadron. It was also planned that the unit would eventually take over the SASR Domestic Counter Terrorism (DCT) responsibility. In 1997 Commando Training Wing (CTW), 1st Commando Regiment headed up by the late MAJ Hans Fleer, AM. DCM. and CAPT Graham Brammer, OAM. (both of SASR fame) was sent with a few other Cadre staff and 1 Cdo Regt Reservists to Conduct the initial Commando training. All Regular Army members serving in the unit were given the opportunity to undertake Commando training. Those that did not wish to conduct the training elected to be posted to a conventional force's unit or discharge from the Army. No General Reserve positions existed in the new structure, and reserve members (mainly Alpha Company) discharged or posted to reserve units.

In February 1998, the first Commando Selection Course (CSC) for all Army personnel (non 4 RAR) was conducted. The initial years were busy with the unit creating a structure and recruiting members suitable

for commando training, while conducting sub-unit and unit training activities. Bravo Commando Company (BCC) was raised in 1997-98, followed by Charlie Commando Company (CCC) in 1998-99, both of which took approx. 24 months to reach full maturity. Later in 2000, 4 Cdo assisted with DCT tasks during Sydney Olympic Games as part of Joint Task Force 114, with CCC on standby as a response force providing a cordon around an incident site in support of the 2 SAS Squadron (Sqn). In 2000, it was decided that the Counter Terrorist role should remain with the SASR. A period of rapid capability development, equipment acquisition and training subsequently followed. The unit that was developed as a result is highly regarded by coalition Special Operation forces abroad. Alpha Commando Company (ACC) was raised in 2004 and Delta Commando Company (DCC) was raised in 2005.

Operations

A small 5-man team was sent to support 3 SAS Sqn during Operation SPITFIRE (prelude to Operation WARDEN) in August 1999. Several members deployed to East Timor as linguists and PSD support to INTERFET. BCC, 4 Cdo first deployment as a subunit was on Operation BLUMBOB in May/June of 2000 when the political situation became very unsteady in the Solomon Islands.

4 Cdo then deployed to East Timor as part of UNTAET from April to October 2001. This was the first time an entire Commando unit deployed to Timor since the 2/2nd & 2/4th Independent Companies during WW2. 4 Commando deployed with a Battalion HQ (BHQ), two Commando Companies - BCC & CCC, two light Infantry Companies – A Coy & D Coy, 126 Sig Sqn & a Logistics Company.

BCC then deployed to Iraq in 2003 during Operation FALCONER as part of the Australian SF Contingent. 2004 - 2009 saw members of the unit deploy as part of the Australian Army Training Team Iraq (AATTI).

2005-2006 saw Alpha Commando Company (ACC), BCC & Delta Commando Company (DCC) deploy to Afghanistan as part of Special Operations Task Group (Force) I-III.

In 2006 ACC deployed to Timor Leste (East Timor) as part of the Special Forces Group (SFG) as part of OP ASTUTE. Late that year ACC deployed on OP QUICK STEP (FIJI 2006) and then redeployed to Afghanistan in 2007 as part of the SOTG Rotation IV.

In 2007 the unit became responsible for the Personal Security Detachments (PSD) or ARPT (Armed Response Protection Team) for high ranking ADF & Government Of Australia (GOA) Personnel into high-risk locations around the world.

In 2006, 4 Commando was awarded the Unit Citation for Gallantry (UCG) and the Meritorious Unit Citation (MUC) for SOTG Rotations I-III. The first ever awarded Star of Gallantry (SG) was presented to SGT R from DCC in 2006.



In the 12 years of the Units existence, three members of the unit were Killed In Action (KIA), and one Died In Service (DIS).

Tactical Assault Group – East (TAG-E)

After 9/11 attacks in the USA, the Australian Government decided that a second Tactical Assault Group (TAG) would be raised and located on the Eastern Seaboard of Australia. 4 Cdo was earmarked to commence the build-up of a second TAG to become known as TAG-East (TAG-E). In January 2002, 30 members of the unit and 10 RAN Clearance Divers (CD) were sent to SASR in Perth to begin the first round of courses to raise the second TAG Capability. At the completion of that first Advanced Close Quarter Battle (ACQB) Course, nine (9) Commandos and six (6) Clearance Diver (CDs) passed the course. 27 July 2002 saw TAG-E become Operational and responsible for Domestic Counter Terrorism on the East Coast of Australia and eventually the entire of Australia and its Territories. From 2002 to 2008 TAG-E which was CCC, maintained a trickle system of unit members and CD's rotating in and out of the TAG. DCC in 2009 became the first Cdo Coy to take the responsibility for TAG as a separate company and the unit has maintained a Commando Company rotation ever since.

Since TAG-E became Operational the more notable deployments have been;

OP SCRUMMAGE (2003 Rugby World Cup), OP POTUS (US President Visit 2003), OP TARTAN (MS Pong Sue 2003), OP ACOLITE (2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne), OP DELUGE (2007 APEC Summit in Sydney), OP TESTIMENT (World Youth Day 2008, Sydney), OP POTUS 1 & 2 (US President Visit 2010) OP PARAPET (2014 G20 Summit Brisbane), OP ATLAS (2018 Commonwealth Games, Gold Coast).

2nd Commando Regiment

On 19 June 2009, 4 RAR Commando was renamed the 2nd Commando Regiment at Tobruk Lines, Holsworthy Barracks NSW. In all the unit never changed just its name did. Since Changing its name, 2nd Commando Regiment continued with OP SLIPPER in Afghanistan as part of the SOTG till December 2013 when Rotation XX (20) ended. In September 2014 the Regiment deployed to Iraq again as part of OP OKRA (Iraq/Syria). Since 2009, 2nd Commando Regiment has lost 16 members, KIA, KIT or KIS.

In 2013, the Regiment was awarded the Battle Honour 'Easter Sha Wali Kot' for the actions of ACC of



The emblem of TAG-E.



June 2010 in Afghanistan. In 2014 CPL Cameron Baird, MG. (BCC) was awarded the VC (Posthumously) after his actions on 22 June 2013 in Afghanistan, becoming the second Commando to be awarded the Victoria Cross. In 2015 the Regiment was awarded the MUC for SOTG Rotations IV – XX.

The Commando Sherwood Green Beret & The Unit Hat Badges

In 1955 a letter from Army HQ to the Royal Marines, was sent seeking approval for Australian Commandos to be allowed to wear the Sherwood Green Beret. The Commandant Royal Marines grants approval for all qualified Australian commandos to wear the Sherwood Green Beret once they were deemed Commando Qualified on 27 July 1955. Captain George Cardy of 1 Commando Company is awarded the first Sherwood Green Beret in Australia on 14 July 1956. From August 1998, Commando Qualified Operators in 4 Commando were authorised to wear the Sherwood Green Beret and the 'Squashed Moth' Parachute wings, although the unit remained wearing the RAR Shoulder titles. Later on, the RAR shoulder titles were replaced for the CDO shoulder titles and remained so when the unit was renamed 2nd Commando Regiment on 19 June 2009.



Commando Berets with (Top) 1st Commando Regiment hat badge 1956-2010 (Middle) 2nd Commando Regiment hat badge 2009-Present (Bottom) 4 Commando hat badge 1997-2009.

The story explaining the origin of the current 1st Commando Regiment badge has been told often, usually with only minor variations. But one main point of difference remains. Who, if any one person, should be credited with the design of the badge that is worn so proudly on the Sherwood Green Beret of the 1st Commando Regiment.? In a letter of 3 August 1955, the Military Board requested a suggested design for badges, both head dress and collar be forwarded for its consideration. A number of other letters were also written. According to Peter Collins' book, Strike Swiftly - the Australian Commando Story (page 88) Mac Grant and Peter Seddon discussed this after May 1956. In an excellent article in the 1 Commando Association magazine, Brian Murphy reports that toward the end of 1956 a competition was announced for the design of a new beret badge, open to all members of 1 and 2 Commando Companies. Until this time all Commandos wore the traditional 'Rising Sun' hat badge. Brian believes that if his memory was correct, the winning design was submitted by WO2 Ron Smith from 2 Commando Company. Ron Smith, at that time a



Parachute Jump Instructor (PJI), was one of the Warrant Officers selected by Major 'Mac' Grant to train in Britain with the Royal Marines. Ron was posted to Melbourne on his return, and acted as CSM. Colonel Peter Seddon has recently written that he asked for suggestions for a unit badge. The design that appealed most to Major Seddon at the time was submitted by Ronald Nordhoff, a CMF (Citizens Military Force) Warrant Officer, as Seddon recalls. Peter Seddon has no reason to doubt that the present badge is based on Ronald Nordhoff's design, which was approved by Seddon. Brigadier Grant, at that time Major Grant, OC of 1 Commando Company, confirms that when Peter Seddon sent Nordhoff's design to Sydney for comment, after discussion with his own staff and possibly some minor changes, he and Major Seddon agreed on the final design. It is this design - with the Commando Dagger, Australian Boomerang and the Commando's creed, "Strike Swiftly" - that Major Seddon forwarded to Southern Command for approval.

In 1992, 126th Signal Squadron (Special Forces) qualified Commandos were given approval to wear the 1st Commando Regiment Badge. In 2010 the 1st Commando Regiment Hat Badge with approval of Army HQ for the Commando Dagger to be changed to the AAS in line with the AAS on 2nd Commando Regiment's Hat Badge. A Black Felt Shield was added as a backing to the Regimental Badge same as 2nd Commando Regiment for Qualified Operators.

In 1998 4 Commando was granted approval to wear the Sherrowd Green Commando Beret with the RAR hat badge (The Skippy Badge). All support staff operators who were Commando Qualified would continue to wear their CORPS badge on the Commando Beret. In 2009 4 RAR Commando was granted its name change to 2nd Commando Regiment and with that came the design of a new hat badge for the new Regiment. The idea was to keep the traditions of the WW2 Commandos alive and so the Double Diamonds of the WW2 Independent Companies/Commando Squadrons was maintained and the Australian Army Stilletto (AAS) Dagger was utilised. A motto was also suggested by the then CO 4 Commando, LTCOL Paul 'PK' Kenny which finally became 'Fors Admonitio (Without Warning)' which is synonymous with Commando Operations. A black shield would be located at the back of the badge (same as SASR) to represent Special Operations. On 19 June 2009 the new badge became public. In 2010, 1st Commando Regiment changed the dagger on their hat badge to the same AAS style as 2 Cdo Regt and added a black shield behind the badge for "Commando Qualified" operators.

Editor's Notes:

There is still uncertainty of when the 1st Cdo Regt badge was first worn and those that have made comment have always given a year but no official date

has been supplied. Somewhere in a 10-month period between 16 August 1957-21 June 1958 which included the 10/57 Basic Parachute Course & the 13/58 Basic Parachute Course, the 'Rising Sun' hat badge had been changed to the 'Strike Swiftly' Badge. If you have any information into the date of authorisation of the Strike Swiftly hat badge, please contact Mr Barry Grant, Immediate Past President ACA NSW:

barrygrant1958@hotmail.com

and or Doug Knight, ACA VIC President:

acavic_president@commando.org.au

Brigadier W.H. 'Mac' Grant, OAM. RFD.



Brigadier WH 'Mac' Grant enlisted in the Permanent Military Forces in 1940. Policy at that time did not permit members of the PMF to transfer to the Imperial Force. After several requests for transfer had been rejected, Brigadier Grant enlisted in the AIF in October 1941 under his mother's maiden name "McArthur". He has been known as "Mac" ever since. Mac Grant served in New Guinea in 1942-43 in 2/5 Independent Company, then with 2/12 Commando Squadron in the North Borneo campaign and the liberation of Sarawak.

In the post war years Grant served with the occupation forces in Japan. He graduated from Staff College in 1952 and was posted to Korea where he served with 3 RAR and HQ 1st Commonwealth Division. He was then posted to Japan as 2IC Commonwealth Division Battle School. In early 1955, as Major Grant, he was appointed to raise and command 1 Commando Company in Sydney. He remained in command of that unit until 1959, during which time he did specialist commando training with the Royal Marines in the UK and was attached to 22 SAS Regt in what is now West Malaysia.

Brigadier Grant served in a number of positions with the Department of Defence/Foreign Affairs here and overseas. Brig Grant resigned from the ARA in 1961. He joined the CMF, now the Army Reserve, after leaving the ARA. Appointed to command the 3rd Division in 1976, he was made aide-de-camp to her Majesty the Queen in 1975 and retired from the army in 1977. Brigadier Grant was Honorary Colonel of the Royal Victoria Regiment from 1980-84, was Honorary Colonel of the 1st Commando Regiment for a number of years and was the patron of 1 Commando Association.

Brigadier W.H. 'Mac' Grant, OAM. RFD. Passed away on the 10th of June, 2013 aged 90.



FROM THE ACA NSW ARCHIVES

The 1995 Journal of 1st Commando Regiment

Supplied by Tony Marsden – Vice President ACA NSW

CO's Report

Lieutenant Colonel J.F.B. Mansell

It is a great honour to be writing a short message for the 1st Commando Regiment journal documenting the many achievements of individuals and groups within the unit. When briefing some association members, I was advised that the idea had been tried before. I hope this time it will become a lasting part of the unit to recognise the many fine efforts achieved each year. To all those highlighted and to those whose efforts have gone unmentioned, but not unnoticed, congratulations and thanks for your fine efforts during 1995.

In 1995 the Regiment set out to achieve some very significant objectives. These were all the more achievable as the Regiment had laid a solid foundation to build upon in recent years. Kangaroo 95 saw the Regiment on Blue Force for the first time. In past years, as long as anyone can remember, the unit has been part of Orange Force. Working as part of the SF Force Element, the Regiment was very quickly tasked with a number of relevant and challenging missions. The tasks required the unique capabilities the Commando Regiment provides the ADF. Both companies, supported by the signallers and elements of RHQ, performed admirably in particularly arduous



"All members and sub elements of the Regiment worked very hard in preparing for K95..and we were not found wanting in any respect"

circumstances, the details of which are evident in the body of this journal. In doing so, they proved the Commando Regiments Light Amphibious capability. Clearly before coming on K95 all members and sub elements of the Regiment worked very hard in preparing for K95. As a result, although a lot of lessons were learnt, we were not found wanting in any respect.

During the year, in addition to all the standard day to day tasks, the Regiment has been challenged by the need to change its structure and the way it does things to remain capable of achieving missions in the future. All members of the unit have responded well, but we need to keep up the effort to ensure we are well positioned to grasp opportunities and respond to future challenges. In this regard we need to maintain the initiative to dictate the terms rather than responding to issues as they arise.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank the many organisations and individuals who have supported the unit over the past year. In particular, 1 and 2 Commando Associations supported the Companies and the Regiment. All the staff at HQSF provided top cover to allow the unit to concentrate on training. Our new Honorary Colonel Peter Collins, NSW Leader of the Opposition, immediately drew to the attention of the NSW community the capabilities of the unit. The support received from all contributed to a fine year for the unit.

1995 was an outstanding year with many wins; let's make 1996 even better.



RSM's Report

Warrant Officer First Class M.D. Dunn

The year proved to be yet another busy year for the 1st Commando Regiment and one which has witnessed several changes - hopefully for the better. As always, through dedication and hard work, you have proved yourselves more than capable of carrying out all tasks to a high standard and have enhanced the good name of the Regiment.

The unit has come of age over the past few years and now has a Regimental identity, one with clear cut and realistic roles and tasks. At last it's good to see the whole unit working as a cohesive group and while maintaining a healthy sub-unit rivalry. This has not always been the case. Times ahead will prove to be even more interesting. One thing is certain, the 1st Commando Regiment will survive and, as there is a real need, there will be GRES Commandos in the future. Changes in training methods, tactics and equipment, are all things we will have to live with. We can either grasp the bull by the horns and make change work for us, or we can fight change and fall by the wayside.

I am being posted at the start of 1996 to 3 RAR

"I leave the 1st Commando Regiment with a sense of pride knowing that I have been a part of such a professional and hard working unit."



and leave the 1st Commando Regiment with a sense of pride knowing that I have been a part of a professional and hard working unit. It never ceases to amaze me, the dedication and commitment shown by members of the reserve, even more so by members of this unit. I have great respect for those who hold down a civilian job and commit so much of their leisure time and holidays to the Army. I have just as much respect for the ARA members who put in many hours during the week and at weekends in comparison to their counterparts in other units. This extra time and effort often appears to be expected and unrewarded but I assure you does not go unnoticed.

In closing, let me say that I have enjoyed my postings within 'The Regiment' and wish all ranks all the best in the future. Good soldiering and 'Strike Swiftly'.





2 Company

Exercise Night Tiger Contingent

During November 1995, a contingent of soldiers from 2 Company 1 Commando Regiment were deployed to Malaysia for an Ex with II MSSR. After a week's Martec training, which involved language, culture behaviour and a brief history, we started a long 18 hour haul to Malaysia

Within minutes of landing we were all drenched in sweat. The heat really hit us. Driving to the camp was a new experience in how to drive a truck ratty-style, and upon reaching our accommodation we were confronted with the view of an Iranian Embassy after the siege. We then devoured our first meal of fish heads, and rice which was washed down with steaming hot tea. After acclimatising, we headed bush on another terrifying truck ride to our survival / nav / live fire phase. The survival techniques taught to us were well received by the guys, and you will be sure to see a few man traps used on future exercises.

Do you remember the movie Predator? Well that was our live fire. One of the most valuable lessons learned was to navigate the jungle accurately. Another truck ride from hell had us back for more fish heads and rice. The time off was spent doing the 'tourist thing', seeing the sights, going to the Chadstone style shopping centre and getting 'pissed' during the darker hours.

The time came for our real task - The Raid. Our expectations were high; the reality was

otherwise. Aborting the para jump, we drove again to our LZ/DZ 13 hrs. The raid involved eating, sleeping, rides in vehicles pre dating WW2 and some walking (and a raid). A highlight of the raid was when we were extracted by zodiac in a little more than a terrifying experience. Back at the base the Malay's put on a huge BBQ for us and a good time was had by all

After all the experiences we had in Malaysia, we were sad to leave, but happy to be back home. A special thanks to our contingent medic LCPL Dermot - "No I can't get it now, its in the bottom of my pack, take a Panadol and see me later" Oakley.

**WARRANT OFFICER
MOFFAT**



THE 2021 RIP MEMORIAL

Sixty-One Years On

By Mr Dick Pelling – ACA VIC

On the 30th January 2000, at the inaugural dedication of the Rip Memorial Cairn at Shortlands Bluff, Queenscliff, General Sir Phillip Bennett, AC. KBE. DSO. outlined the tragedy that cost the lives of three brave men, two of them members of 2 Commando Company and the other a member of 41 Amphibious Platoon. The incident was reported in national newspapers and media, and was also recorded in Hansard in the House of Representatives, 16th August 1960, 23rd Parliament, and 2nd Session.



Some of the surviving members of the RIP Tragedy, 2021.
Image courtesy of Mr Ian Toohill.

Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes (the Member for Chisholm) stated, "It is a miracle that more lives were not lost in this incident. Sixty-eight¹ men (sic) were involved, and if it had not been for the presence of the vessels *Toscana*, *Age*, *Sinkiang* and the pilot steamer *Akuna* we would be mourning the loss of 68 (sic) lives instead of three". "Every member of this Parliament feels the deepest sympathy with the relatives of the men who lost their lives. All of us have the highest respect for the courage shown by the Commandos on this occasion. As far as I can ascertain not one of them panicked or weakened. They bore themselves in the highest tradition of the AIF", Kent Hughes said.

Each year since that time, serving and many ACA former serving members of 2 Commando Company have returned to Queenscliff to attend the Memorial service to remember their lost comrades. February 2021 was no different. Over 65 members, and the families of lost members, including our beloved member Rita Drakopoulos, and her family, members of friends of the Commando Association, including members of RACT Association who attended to pay

tribute to Pte Eddie Meyer 41 Amphibious Platoon, RAASC, one of the three members who died. The gathering stood overlooking the RIP at Shortlands Bluff to be reminded of the tragedy.

ACA Victoria President Doug Knight recalled the words of Private 3165748 Ernest Conyers, and the writer summarises Doug's address describing Ernie's experience.

"In that February of 1960, 2 Commando Company held its annual camp at Point Lonsdale. I was fortunate to be asked to sail from Williamstown to Point Lonsdale in a 27 foot surf whaler. I suppose on that first day I had some exposure of what the notorious Rip was like, because it was difficult to bring the boat around. My training on this annual camp was signals, so I had the opportunity to travel across the Rip in a 3-man Zodiac with Captain John Fletcher. Of course, this was when the raid was still in its planning stages. On each occasion the crossings were made on perfectly flat water on very pleasant days", Ernie said.

For the exercise Ernie was allocated to a 2-man kayak with Pte Herbie Ross, and the plan was to leave Point Lonsdale, paddle into the Bay and head for Point Nepean, paddling in slack water, in mind that the tide would turn and start to ebb and assist in reaching Point Nepean. Ernie continues, *"Unfortunately we did not leave the beach at Point Lonsdale until approximately 18.40 Hrs, which means we were paddling in slack water for a very short time, resulting in us being caught in the ebb tide before reaching our first leg."*

From a calm sea Ernie and Herbie noticed the appearance of a clean swell, which developed into increased swells with crests, then, gradually swells developed into waves with a wind indicating a change. It became dark and they realised they were in for a storm. Ernie said, *"As the storm intensified, flares were being fired and, as we rose to the tops of the waves the red flares illuminated the area - it looked like Hell."*



Rita Drakopoulos, Taffy's wife and son David at the Memorial Rock.
Image courtesy of Mr Ian Toohill.

¹The correct number of men was in fact 74.



We could see upturned craft and people in the water, for all we knew some could have been drowning. We could do nothing but try to stay afloat ourselves as the waves menaced our canoe. Herbie and I agreed to jettison all our equipment and paddle with the tide through the Heads. The idea being if we were not picked up, we would stay with the tide and return on it in 6 hours' time. We were both aware that when we sighted the red beacon at Point Lonsdale, we were right in the centre of the Rip".

"By this time the night was quite terrifying, the waves mountainous, and as we settled in a trough of water, we could see the lights of the flares and the spotlights of the rescue boats shining behind the wall of the waves. Then we would be pushed up as the huge wave carried us up to yet another huge crest, then leave us after enveloping the canoe and then down into another trough at which time the flares in the sky would expose the churning water beneath us, which gave the impression of being in a giant washing machine. Soon we could see the red beacons of Point Lonsdale and Point Nepean and we realised that we would soon be outside the Heads. It was not long after that, a workboat spotlight managed to catch us when we were on the crest of a wave. Our hopes soared when we came up the next wave and realised, we had been spotted. A workboat with a 10 man Zodiac in tow took us in tow behind the 10Z, but this turned out to be a problem. When the workboat went down a trough the 10Z would collide with its stern and we either crashed into the stern of the 10Z, damaging it, or we rushed past until the slack of the tow rope was taken up. The 10Z was then brought alongside the workboat and its crew taken aboard. Our task was to come alongside the 10Z, jump into it from the canoe and then board the workboat",

Ernie continued to explain, "Due to the angry seas this was easier said than done. But we were lucky and soon we were aboard the workboat where we were



Rita, Dennis, David, and the Drakopoulos family lay a wreath at the memorial Rock.

Image courtesy of Mr Ian Toohill.

handed blankets, and a very welcome swig of rum. The workboat then proceeded to the jetty at Queenscliff. By this time, it was probably between 10.00pm or 11.00pm. The media had heard what was happening and they were waiting on the jetty. We were advised to say that we were on manoeuvres and nothing more. We returned to our barracks at Point Lonsdale where we spent a sleepless night hoping our comrades were all safe. In the early hours of that morning, we were told the sad news, WO2 George Drakopolous and Pte Eddie Myer had both drowned while Pte Roger Wood was missing. A further two days were spent searching the beaches without success. It should be noted that the morning after the incident a leading newspaper ran a full front-page headline, '78 Commandos lost in Rip'. Despite the fact that none of us had communicated with our loved ones this headline was inaccurate. In conclusion, we were training to be professional soldiers in a peacetime environment so that we would be ready if faced with adversity. I believe this exercise placed us in a position of adversity and all of us responded in a manner to which we were trained", Ernie said.

The 2021 Memorial continued with ACA VIC member Peter Tierney who recited the Prayer – 'Commando Collect', and Winston Trood of 41 Amphibious Platoon recited the Ode. Wreaths and poppies were laid to the strains of the Pipers Lament played by visiting Piper John Cutler.

President Doug Knight thanked all for attending and we adjourned to the Queenscliff Bowling Club for lunch.

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RECOLLECTIONS OF 2 COMMANDO COMPANY

By Mr John Ashworth – ACA WA

I responded to an ad which appeared early in May 1969 which stated "Commando's Wanted".... recruiting being conducted at Fort Gellibrand, Williamstown this coming Saturday at 0900.

Well, I was at a loose end, having just come home after more than 2 years on a working holiday in the UK, and after returning, went back to my trade of Screen Printing & Commercial Art. At the time I lived in Macleod and worked at a company in West Melbourne. Come Saturday, I dragged a childhood mate of mine with me down to Fort Gellibrand which displayed the sign at the entrance '2

Commando Company – Citizens Military Forces – Royal Australian Infantry', and gathered with about 8 other prospective recruits just inside the main gates (no sentries or security in those days) to wait for what was to transpire, which we knew was some form physical assessment. I remember the day well, sunny but cool.

A Sergeant appeared and instructed us to change into PT gear after which we commenced a 2 mile run down the Esplanade, and then after a small break/smoko, loaded into the back of a truck and taken down to a Williamstown jetty, and given greens to change into, a metal pick handle and a pair of boots around our necks, and told jumped into the water and complete a 50 meter swim after which we treaded water for 10 minutes. I remember the water was absolutely freezing and caused some of the boys after getting out of the water, to spew on the jetty. One of the groups, after jumping in, dropped to the sea bed like a rock, who was quickly retrieved by a rescue swimmer. It was confirmed later that this bloke couldn't swim a stroke.

The following Tuesday evening, I fronted up to Southern Command in St Kilda Road, to undergo a Psychiatric assessment, a medical, and a written examination, which seem to go pretty well, and thinking I would be signing enlistment papers that night...no such luck, there was more. We were informed by the Southern Command recruiting officer that, as this was a specialised unit, the CO of 2 Commando Company (who was at the time Maj. E.H. Stevenson) would require me to be at the depot at 0900 next Saturday for the interview.

Having been shown into the CO's office by a Sergeant, I took a seat facing the CO. He was seated with the Adjutant standing beside him. The questions



Author at home in WA.

were interesting..."What were my thoughts about the Vietnam War?" What newspapers did I read? ... political issues that were front page news, including Federal Parliament and the protests in Melbourne, and "What were my views of the conduct of the Pacific Inland Regiment?", who were based in Papua & New Guinea. Must have pleased him somewhat, as on 24th May, I signed up. My mate chickened out before the COs interview.

The 2 week recruiting camp followed about 2 weeks later, and was held at Swan Island at Queenscliff (South Western Shores of Port Phillip Bay, near Geelong). After receiving our

kit issue from the Q Store in Bomb Shed (haven't a clue why they called it that) the previous weekend, we boarded trucks for Swan Island, arriving at 1000 and waited around on the edge of the Parade Ground for further orders. I can remember one funny incident that occurred while we waited. A Lance Corporal was undergoing assessment for promotion to corporal by the CSM for his power of command and parade drill by marching a squad of 30 men around the parade ground. It was noticeable that he was very weak on power of command, and not giving orders on the correct foot. Eventually, the squad was heading for the perimeter of the parade ground, and continued on through the trees and scrub, heading for the beach and ocean. As they disappeared amongst the scrub, the CSM shouted to the Lance Corporal..."say something Lance Corporal xxxxxx...even if it's goodbye." The Lance Jack immediately raced across the parade ground towards the disappearing squad, and creamed out... "Stoooooop." With that, we lost it, and burst out laughing. The CSM turned and told us to piss off you lot, with the warning, "Your turn will come." Well believe me, it did that first week, and it wasn't nice.

The first week was all Swan Island based with navigation, bush craft, minor infantry tactics, night chart work in the work boat, and a 5 mile run for good measure, with an evening exercise where we practiced concealment along a track, and how to put out a brush fire, yes we set fire to the island after a green para flare landed and started the blaze...we took hours to put out it out. Some of the boys who were there that week will remember it. During that week the "Your turn will come" came, during a period of unarmed drill, where we were put through all sorts of maneuvers by a Sergeant, ending badly after we were marched towards



the end of the boat jetty and straight into the ocean. After dragging ourselves out of the water, we were fallen in dripping wet and told that if anyone had balked at the end of the jetty, they would have been charged for disobeying a lawful command, besides, we were reminded, it was good training for when we do our para course. The second week we put into practice all that we learnt in theory in the bush.

Back at Fort Gellibrand the following Tuesday night as new recruits, we were allocated our Sections and Platoons and started our training. At that time Williamstown was not the sort of place you would wander around the neighbourhood in uniform in the 1960s/70s as it was a working man's area, with anti-military sentiment that was very evident, most notably when we did our 5 mile run down the Esplanade. On one occasion, while working with a Corporal at the rear of the ORs mess on building a new bar, (which was named the Spiritualistic Bar) we were fired, on and heard 3 shots hitting the corner of the Mess. I ducked for cover, while the Corporal ran to the Drill Hall to inform the Duty Sergeant. The culprit was never found. With the anti-Vietnam War sentiment so strong in that area, the CO made sure that when we collected for Red Cross, we were transported to a friendlier neighbourhood.

The main goal for all us was to qualify for the Green Beret which wasn't easy. The big test was the 20 miler which was conducted initially along the Geelong Highway, but in following years across country in the Werribee area. If I remember correctly, it had to be completed in 4hrs30min. The entire Company fell in wearing the old 37 pattern basic pouches, back pack and webbing and the short back commando boots which had a steel cap, and rubber soles which were screwed onto the outer sole. The GPs were not on issue at that stage. A Sergeant checked our basic pouches to see if they were carrying empty SLR magazines, mine weren't, so he put a brick in each pouch... 'Not happy Jan' so, with an SLR, back pack, basic pouches and 2 bricks, of I went.

NIGHT PARADES						
Serial	Duration	Dates	Location	Activity	Type	Remarks
1.	Each 2 hrs	Jul 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Home Trg	Obligatory	
2.	Each 2 hrs	Jul 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Para-Gnd Trg	1 of 4 sl obligatory	Para qualified personnel only
3.	Each 2 hrs	Oct 5, 7, 9, 10	Depot	Para-Gnd Trg	2 of 4 sl obligatory	Para qualified personnel
4.	Each 2 hrs	Oct 12, 14, 15, 17	Depot	Para-Gnd Trg	3 of 4 sl obligatory	Para qualified personnel
5.	Each 2 hrs	Nov 1, 3, 5	Depot	Para-Gnd Trg	4 of 4 sl obligatory	Only if serial 4 completed
WEEKEND PARADES						
Serial	Duration	Dates	Location	Activity	Type	Remarks
6.	2 days	Jul 2-3	LANGWARRIE LANDWARRIE	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
7.	2 days	Aug 14-15	MOOROODUC PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
8.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
9.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
10.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
11.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
12.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
13.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
14.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
15.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
16.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
17.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
18.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
19.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
20.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
21.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
22.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
23.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
24.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
25.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
26.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
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53.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
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64.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
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80.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
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86.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
87.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
88.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
89.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
90.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
91.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
92.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
93.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
94.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
95.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
96.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
97.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
98.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
99.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
100.	2 days	Aug 2-3	PORT PHILLIP BAY	Navigation	Obligatory	2 Pl
PART-TIME COURSES						
Serial	Duration	Dates	Location	Activity	Type	Remarks
1.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
2.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
3.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
4.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
5.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
6.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
7.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
8.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
9.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
10.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
11.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
12.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
13.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
14.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
15.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
16.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
17.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
18.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
19.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
20.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
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23.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
24.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
25.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
26.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
27.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
28.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
29.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
30.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
31.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
32.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
33.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
34.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
35.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
36.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
37.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
38.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
39.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
40.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
41.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
42.	1 day	Jul 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31	Depot	Subject A and B	Voluntary	
43.	1 day					

On returning back to the depot after completing the run, I noticed that my feet felt wet. I removed the boots and my socks were soaked in blood. The run had caused the points of the screws to pierce the soles of my feet...passed though, that's all that mattered. Following Green Beret qualification and presentation parade, we were obliged to undergo an initiation in the ORs Mess which consisted of sculling a jug of beer, or scull the Green Beret drink, which I chose, and found afterwards, was the worst choice...it was mind blowing. After I knocked it down, I staggered over to a corner and sat there thinking that I may die very shortly. How I got home that night was a miracle. I stayed Green Beret qualified for the entire time I serve with 2 Commando.

I still remember several of the boys I served with back then, including John Addison, Adrian Cookson, Mike Reville, (who is also a member of the ACA WA branch), Ian Storey, (A Rip survivor) Ugs Hughes, and a corporal they called Gramps who happen to be the eldest member of the ORs Mess. I was the second eldest at 26. We mostly held our Annual Camps at Eildon Weir, with our camps generally being located on the Weir edge and the furthest they could get from the town of Eildon. During these camps, we did all the good stuff, including water operations, night navigation, harbour up drills, Minor Infantry Tactics, Scuba diving etc.

On one annual camp, we were all involved in an Escape & Evasion (E&E) exercise which lasted over a period of 3 days and involved the Military and Civilian Police. We were split into groups of 3, and were stripped of everything, with just the greens we were wearing, one ration pack, a map of Eildon Weir, and a location marked on the map for a midnight pick up by boat on the third day. We were loaded in trucks, which had all their tarps down so we had no idea where we were being dropped off. For the entire period of this exercise, there were mobile patrols by both military and civilian police with orders to detain us if found, so we moved mostly at dusk, and early morning to avoid being captured. We eventually got to our pickup location at midday on the last day. While relaxing on the edge of the weir, we noticed a house boat about 100 meters offshore with 3 lovely young ladies reclining in deck chairs. We managed to get their attention, and they in turn, called us to come aboard. We swam over and made our introductions, and they very kindly suggested we take off our wet greens and place them on a clothes line they had rigged up. Of course, to keep things respectable, they gave us each a dressing gown. We never thought that an E&E exercise could be so enjoyable.

For the next 3 hours we wine and dined with these girls who seem to be well stocked with food and alcohol until they hinted that they were heading on up the weir and that our greens were now dry. They offered to row us back to shore, but before leaving, one of us made a joke to the effect that "wouldn't be

great if we had bottles of beer in our possession when we were picked up by boat...it would really have them wondering. We explained to the girls that we had no money to purchase the beer and nothing to give them in return, after which the girls went into a huddle, after which one of the girls piped up with "yes there is..." We look at each other with a collective thought in our minds that maybe they want our bodies...no such luck, the same girl then said, "we want your wings", so out came the un-picker, and each girl removed wings from our greens, and in return, we received a dozen bottles of beer. Kmart don't offer deals like this.

Back on shore, we fell into the Gemini on its arrival with about 8 bottles of beer, and on getting back to camp at 0030, we were required to report to the Platoon Commander to explain our condition (inebriated) and how come we have 8 bottles of beer in our possession. Our story was never believed for one minute...by anyone. The Platoon Commander explained that as this exercise was an assimilated wartime condition, the beer was 'spoils of war, therefore was to be distributed evenly within the Platoon, so the spoils were distributed amongst the Sergeants and the Platoon Commander. Well, as they say, 'easy come, easy go.' That was the best camp we ever attended.

There are many stories I can tell about my time with 2 Commando Company, suffice to say, I enjoyed every minute of it. I went on to serve another 4 years in 40th Battalion – Infantry after moving to Hobart to take up a government job, married my late wife there, and in 1976, moved to WA and married another great woman.

For the interest of the readers, I have attached my Parade Card for 2 Commando.



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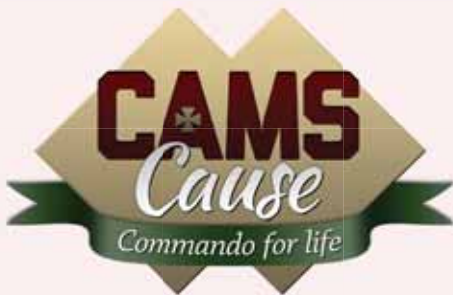
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COOGEE DIGGERS



17 April, 2021

Cams Cause has partnered with Coogee Diggers to hold the first *Konnect* event on Saturday the 17th April.

Cams Cause Konnect will strengthen the commando network by leveraging the diversity within the Cams Cause contact list and provide opportunity to *Konnect* in a relaxed social setting periodically throughout the year.

'Commando for Life' requires investment from all generations of operators to ensure our network is active, accessible and responsive.

Through *Konnect*, Cams Cause will ensure this occurs.

To secure your spot for *Konnect*, please email **steve@camscause.org** NLT 1st April, 2021.

Who: All former and current serving 079s and stakeholders. Partners accepted on individual case basis.

Time: 1800-2300 Saturday 17th April, 2021.

Dress: IAW Coogee Diggers dress code. Causal dress. See website for details.

Food: Canapés will be provided. Meals available to purchase from the bistro.

Drinks: Bar tab provided.

Cost: Funded by Cams Cause. However, if possible, members attending are encouraged to put money behind the bar on arrival, or alternatively make a donation to Cams Cause via the website.

Confirmation of attendance will be emailed to you NLT 10th April, 2021.

The Cams Cause Team

PO Box 56, Pascoe Vale, South Victoria, 3044



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A fantastic opportunity for ADF members to race 2 horses with Australian Bloodstock for a discount price!

EZEIKEL is a soon-to-race, city class horse who we have purchased to target Brisbane metro races. Our results with tried horses are unparalleled and he heads to the best young trainer in Australia, Cody Morgan. Races in 4 weeks!

IMPENDING x CIRCUS OLAY is an impeccably bred filly trained by Kris Lees. She is by Group 1 superstar and son of LONHRO, IMPENDING. We own her half-sister EXOLAY, who is showing above average ability! This filly will be at the races later this year and we couldn't be more excited!

ADF MEMBERS: MENTION THIS AD FOR AN ADF ONLY DISCOUNT!

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