



# COMMANDO

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION



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**EDITOR:** Mr Doug Knight

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, 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Company's, 1<sup>st</sup> Commando Regiment, 4 RAR Commando & the 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 contacted. We do encourage your opinion.

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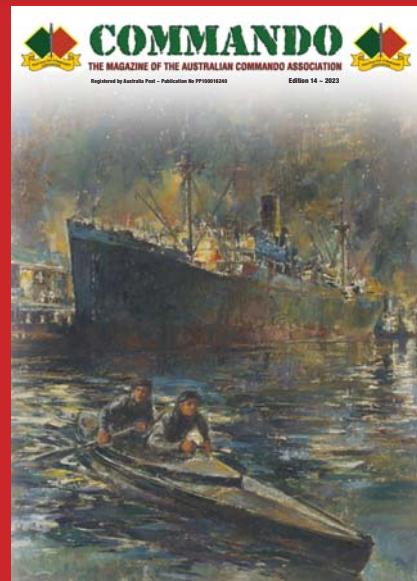
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# CONTENTS

Editor's Word.....	3
ACA VIC Report .....	7
ACA QLD Report .....	9
ACA NSW Report.....	11
ACA ACT Report.....	12
Wanted: 4 WW2 Military Enthusiasts for East Timor Tour .....	13
Significant Commando Dates .....	14
Background to Operation Jaywick (Part 1) .....	15
Commandos for Life .....	23
Z Special Unit .....	24
Commando Vale Section.....	35
Double Diamonds.....	38
RSL Media Release .....	40
The Lesson of the Darwin Bombing .....	44
Special Warfare in the Grey Zone.....	49
Commando & Special Operations Memorial.....	45
Book Reviews .....	46
PTSD article .....	48
Franchising Agreements .....	51
Leaving the ADF .....	53



**Deadline for next edition (Edition 15, 2023):**  
**WEDNESDAY, 29<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023**  
 All news on members and interesting articles accepted.  
 (Subject to editor's approval.)  
 Doug Knight



Cover is painting by Dennis Adams of two operatives from Special Operations Australia unit in a Folboat canoe in Singapore Harbour September 1943. They were able to place delayed action limpet mines on the hulls of Japanese ships.

Maker: Adams, Dennis • Item Copyright: AWM

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## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to Edition #14 Jan-Apr 2023 of **COMMANDO** – *The Magazine of the Australian Commando Association.*



### New Editor

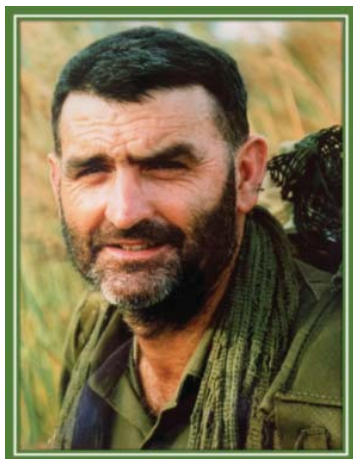
This is my first edition as the new Editor of 'Commando' and I wish to pass on my very sincere thanks to both Stephen Carter and Nick Hill for their sterling efforts in keeping our magazine relevant and interesting over the past few years

Nick has decided to commence another phase of his interesting life and has again embarked into married life and has very recently relocated to the United States to join his wife who is still serving in the United States Army. Nick has assured me he will continue to be a strong advocate for the Association and contributor to the magazine. He also indicated that there are numerous Australian ex-commandos now residing in the US and there may be a possibility in the future of raising an international branch of the Association.

Unfortunately, Stephen Carter has decided to vacate the editor's chair due to significant family and commercial competing interests but has committed to ongoing support and assistance with the production of articles for the magazine.

### Passing of Barry Grant

It was with profound sadness that I recently learned of the passing of Barry Grant on 23 January 2023, a former Sergeant in 1 Commando Company and a stalwart of the ACA NSW and was a long-time President there. He was also instrumental in moving from company associations into what is now the Australian Commando Association



Barry in the field  
Source Ivan Kelly

tion and was the first editor of this magazine lengthy period. Following his Army service, he continued with passion to assist veterans through a variety of ex-service organisations. It was an avid historian and a great mate and friend to all who knew him. His passing was the result of a long-term illness when although in great pain still continued with his commando related activities. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him. More information on Barry's life and service will be published very soon.

### Some Important facts

The current distribution of the magazine to members of the Association, ADF units and selected other philanthropic organisations is over 650 per edition and the cost of production is covered by advertisers. There is no cost to the Association or the production of the magazine however there are significant opportunities to improve the distribution and quantity and relevance of advertisers and this will be addressed by the Editorial Committee in forthcoming months.

### The theme for 2023-Operation JAYWICK

2023 promises to be a big year as it is the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation JAYWICK, the first Allied raid into Singapore Harbour in September 1943 conducted by an Allied force and planned and conducted by the Inter-Allied Service Department (IASD/ISD) which was later renamed Special Operations Australia (SOA) under its wartime cover name of the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD).

There have been many books and innumerable articles written and much website and social media coverage of this operation and most of them are factually incorrect. These books, articles, websites and social media have also been the source of much controversy between successive authors, family members and participants on this operation. Unfortu-



Mostyn 'Moss' Berryman, MID  
in his later years.  
Source. The Australian War Memorial.



nately, now there are no longer any participants alive to correct the misinformation with the passing of the last JAYWICK operative, former Able Seaman Mostyn 'Moss Berryman' MID on 6 August 2020 in Adelaide.

It is not intended to publish a comprehensive paper on Operation JAYWICK as this has been adequately covered in the many commercial publications available. However, a number of personal papers and articles produced by participants covering the preparation and conduct of the operation, as well as some postwar comments on the various publications, will be included within the first three editions of 2023 leading up to the 80th anniversary of the operations on 26 September 1943. There will also be details of a number of commemorative activities planned for this event.



*The crew of Krait and operatives of Operation JAYWICK. Left to right (Front): LEUT Ted Carse, LEUT Donald Davidson, MAJ Ivan Lyon, MAJ Jock Campbell (did not accompany the expedition), LT Robert Page; (Middle): CPL Andrew Crilly, LS Kevin Cain, LS James McDowell, L.TEL Horrie Young, AB Walter Falls, CPL Ron Morris; (Back): ABs Moss Berryman, Frederic Marsh, Arthur Jones and Andrew Huston.*

Source <https://www.navy.gov.au/biography/able-seaman-mostyn-%E2%80%98moss-berryman>

Although Operation JAYWICK will have significant coverage there will also be a variety of interesting articles both historical and current to ensure that readers have not only an interesting but an informative read.

### Future magazine content

Recently while digitising the 250+ 'Double Diamond' magazine of the Victorian Branch of the M & Z Commando Association, I came across many interesting articles provided by the members, particularly post 1975, when the 30-year secrecy provisions on WW2 Special Operations ended. Following the release of the 5 volumes of the Official History of Special Operations Australia (SOA) by the National Australian Archives, a few operatives who participated in SOA operations were finally able to tell their unique stories. Many of these stories remain unpublished in mainstream media except for their inclusion in 'Double Diamond'. It is intended to include some of these interesting articles in each of the future

editions of 'Commando' in a new section titled 'Learning from the past - Double Diamonds'.

A New section for 'Letters to the Editor' will also be included to encourage feedback and comment from readers and the inclusion of details of any new books published which meet our Editorial Guidelines and reviews of these.

### Editorial policy

The evolution of the 'Commando' magazine from the initial post World War II Commando Associations newsletters "Double Diamonds" and the newsletters of the Independent Units and Commando Squadron newsletters is a lengthy story in itself. In 2021 it was identified that there was a need for a clear editorial policy for the magazine website into the future.

One of the catalysts for this was that a kindred Association was subjected to a significant financial loss as a result of court action following negative personal comments posted on their association social media site. Following this incident an initial ACA Editorial Committee was established comprising a representative from the National Association, the magazine Editor and a representative from a state branch. This Committee has formally met once and conducted numerous online interactions to formulate the editorial policy and guidance for all aspects of Association media presence. So that Association members and potential magazine contributors are aware of and comply with the Editorial Guidance a précis is following.

**It will meet again in the first quarter of 2023 and any financial member of the ACA is welcome to nominate to be a member of this Committee and if interested please contact the Editor.**

### PURPOSE OF THE MAGAZINE AND WEBSITE

To foster and perpetuate ties of comradeship between former Commandos of World War 2 Independent Companies/Commando Squadrons, former members of post-World War 2 Australian Commando and Special Forces Units and serving members who have been/or are on the posted strength of a current, or former, unit which has been, or is now part of Australian Special Operations Command (SOCOMD).

To provide accurate historical material that reflects the heritage of Australian and Allied Independent Companies and Commando Squadrons and Regiments and other Special Operations units operating in the South-West Pacific theatre. Also, to provide similar material on post-war Australian Commando and Special Operations units and their training and deployment on both domestic and overseas operations.

To promote activities of a ceremonial commemorative, memorial, sporting, or social character for the benefit of members and families, including close collaboration with, and full support of, SOCOMD.

To foster and develop the Association's support for the Commando Welfare Trust and Patriotic Funds in support of its eligible members and to ensure that



veterans and families are made aware of changes regarding veteran entitlements and opportunities.

### FREQUENCY OF PUBLICATION

At this time there will be FOUR editions per year published at the end of:

- February
- May
- August
- November.

### MAGAZINE CONTENT "TEMPLATE"

To ensure that the magazine content continues to be relevant to readers the general template for each edition will contain the following:

- a. ACA NX President's Report
- b. Editor's Report
- c. State Association Presidents' Report and Vales
- d. Feature articles on the following:
  - I. The development of Commandos and Special Operations in Australia and New Zealand in WW2.
  - II. WW2 Special Operations and support activities conducted by the enemy against Australia and areas within the Southwest Pacific theatre.
  - III. The development of Commandos and Special Operations capabilities in Australia post WW2.
  - IV. Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam (stories of individual Commandos who served in these

- I. operations as there was no unit participation).
  - V. Operations in Solomon Islands/Timor/Afghanistan including individuals and force elements i.e. SOER, SOLS, ADFSSO etc.
  - VI. Current activities and operations as well as future "roles & tasks" of Commandos and Australian Special Operations units.
- e. 'Commando and Special Operations' memorials around Australia and the South West Pacific area.
  - f. Learning from the past. Republication of significant material from post-World War II Association magazines including Double Diamonds.
  - g. Letters to the editor. To seek input and feedback on the magazine and its content
  - h. Update on any relevant welfare and DVA issues and any items of current interest relevant to ACA readers.

I trust that the above will be informative for readers. When finished with your copy of the magazine please pass it on to someone else who may find it of interest.

I am looking forward to the challenges of 2023 and promise to keep my Words from the Editor's much briefer.

**Doug Knight**  
**Commando 4 Life**

Editor - Commando Magazine

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## AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION



**Australian Commando Association Inc**

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

## Letter to the EDITOR



Monday, 23 January 2023

Dear Stephen,

I have just received hardcopy of Commando, Editon 13, 2022. Thank you for approving the article on Dad, Captain Roy Howard, for inclusion. It was with great pride that I turned to page 33. I feel content now that I have done all that is possible to give him the recognition he deserves, though I know it would not be what he would seek for himself.

I wish you all the best for this new year. I will as always read every edition of Commando with great interest.

Regards,

**Kate (Howard)**



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## AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION VICTORIA

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

25 January 2023

## RECENT ACTIVITIES

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2022 2 Coy End of Year Function.** I along with a small number of ACA Vic members attended this function conducted at Fort Gellibrand by the unit combined mess. It was a great opportunity catch up with old friends, meet new members of the unit and to participate in the farewells for numerous unit personnel leaving on posting, promotion or on discharge. Sadly, the Company Sergeant Major (CSM) WO2 Michael 'Hutch' Hutchings was unable to be present due to interstate family commitments.

I took the opportunity to make a long-awaited presentation to the Officer Commanding, MAJ L, of a framed wartime photo of 2/4<sup>th</sup> Independent Company with a small presentation inscription.



*The Officer Commanding 2 Company, Major L. holding the presented ACA Vic photo of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Australian Independent Company.*

*Source: Author*

Unfortunately, as previously indicated the outgoing CSM, Warrant Officer Class II Michael 'Hutch' Hutchings, Ret'd was unable to attend the end of year function and several days later whilst he was visiting the unit to return equipment, this opportunity was taken to make an informal presentation in the Q store with several unit members looking on. Throughout the difficult Covid time Hutch was instrumental in maintaining a high level of liaison with the Association and where possible providing support to those few

commemorative and social activities that were able to be undertaken. He was also instrumental in the reintroduction of the Silver Badge Award and made a number of suggestions for better engagement with the Association and the unit as well as advice on historical display items. His efforts during this difficult time were greatly appreciated and it was with great pleasure that the Association presented Hutch with an engraved Australian Army Stiletto (AAS). Hutch had qualified as a Commando in the early days of 4 RAR (Cdo) in 2005 before the current AAS had been produced and subsequently he was not issued with one upon the awarding of his Green Beret. It was a fitting gift for a great Commando.



*Engraved AAS and leather scabbard.*

*Source: Author*



*Inscription on awarded AAS.*

*Source: Author*



*Details of Hutch's Commando service on AAS No. 556.*

*Source: Author*



In 2020 on arrival at Fort Gellibrand in an initial meeting with the new OC and CSM it was identified by them that there was an Honour Board for former Officer Commanding (OC) but not for Companies Sergeant Majors (CSM's). The matter was raised with the ACA Vic committee and the design and construction of a suitable Honour Board was undertaken and was subsequently handed over to the unit in September 2021. However due to Covid restrictions there was no formal handover and attendance at the Christmas function was the first opportunity for many Association members to view the Honour Board.



The new Company Sergeant Major Honour Board  
Source: ACA Vic collection.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### 2023 RIP Memorial

The annual RIP Memorial service at Shortland's Bluff on Sunday, 19 February will commence at 11.00 a.m. followed by a lunch at 1200 p.m. to be conducted at the nearby Queenscliff Bowling Club. Personnel interested in attending the lunch need to book through the Secretary, Glenn MacDonald, on 03 9885 9924 or 0414 311 093 or [acavic.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:acavic.secretary@gmail.com).

### Wilson's Prom Family 3-night camping adventure

During the period 3 to 6 March 2023 members of the Association and families are invited to participate in a camping adventure at Wilson's Promontory National Park, the home of the National Commando Memorial. Those interested in participating should contact Marc Preston at [mpreston@mpalaw.com.au](mailto:mpreston@mpalaw.com.au) or 0418 348 077. Alternatively contact Richard Pelling 03 9587 1761 or 0477 312 263 or [dickandsandy@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dickandsandy@optusnet.com.au) or Glenn MacDonald.

### Anzac Day activities

**Dawn service.** Unfortunately, due to new building activities at Fort Gellibrand the Anzac Day Dawn service will not be conducted there this year and is expected that the Anzac Day - Dawn Service & Gunfire Breakfast will be similar to the previous 2 years, however final arrangements have not been confirmed and details, when known, will be forwarded through our email network.

**Anzac Day March.** Final details of the march are still being worked out by RSL Victoria and when known will be forwarded through our email network.

**Anzac Day Luncheon.** Following the cessation of Covid restrictions in Melbourne we are returning to Bayview Eden, 6 Queens Road, Melbourne Victoria 3004 for our annual luncheon. The location is a short walk from the Shrine and there is on-site parking available. Personnel interested in attending should contact the Secretary Glenn MacDonald on 03 9885 9924 or 0414 311 093 or [acavic.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:acavic.secretary@gmail.com) as soon as possible as there is limited seating at the venue and bookings will close seven days prior to the event.

**Annual General Meeting.** Will be conducted at Waverley RSL, Coleman Parade Glen Waverley commencing at 10:30 am, Sat 6 May 2023. Personnel attending should contact the Secretary Glenn MacDonald on 03 9885 9924 or 0414 311 093 or [acavic.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:acavic.secretary@gmail.com). The meeting will be followed by lunch in the RSL bistro and anyone wishing to attend should advise the Secretary so that a group booking can be made.

### Tidal River Walking Track Open Space Development - Update

The administrative processes regarding the creation of the walking track are continuing with Parks Victoria and contractors and it is expected that works will commence in early 2023 when the cultural heritage aspects have been finalised. I will be attending a meeting on 2 February with the new project management team for the construction of the track, and continuing endeavours to ensure that the World War II commando heritage is considered in future naming and signposting within the park.

### WELFARE

ACA Victoria continues to liaise and attend regular meetings with the Victorian Veterans Council, Legacy, RSL and DVA network to promote ACA Vic's objectives/expectations and support requirements in the very crowded Welfare & Advocacy arena. There have been few requests for support from former members for acceptance of liability for injuries sustained whilst in service over the past quarter. A number of previous DVA claims have been successful for former CMF/ARes members who are receiving surgical interventions and ongoing medical support for their injuries.

**Doug Knight**

President

ACA Vic

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# AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION QUEENSLAND INC.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome members and friends to the first edition of the Commando Magazine for 2023.

We've had a fair bit going on with the end of the year and into 2023. Approximately 18 members, family and friends attended the Commando shooting match held at SSAA Ripley (Ipswich) range on Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup> of November. We had agreed to "fit in" with the standard SSAA competitions running on that day which reduced our usual match of pistol, military long rifle and shotgun down to long rifle only. Our members enjoyed firing vintage WW1 and WW2 .303 rifles, one of mine dating back to 1917, and more modern No5 Jungle Carbines dated 1944 belonging to our treasurer Luke O'Brien. We also kept in the spirit of historical accuracy with some of the ammunition being new in the box from 1943!

The range officer conducted military type instinctive and timed shoots, in supported and unsupported positions and at varying distances of 25m to 150m. The 50m targets were taken for scoring. Due to time constraints, not all participants got to fire the vintage .303's at 150m but overall everyone attending left with a smile on their face (and some with sore shoulders!).

Results were yours truly with 67/100, Luke with 65/100 and Jeff Hicks with 49/100.

Thanks go out to Mark and Jeff for their tireless efforts to get this year's shoot off the ground.



*The President with some brand new 1943 ammo!*



*Mark Stanieg rests between serials*

### ASASR-Q Christmas party

In the last edition I mentioned running a free raffle of tickets to the ASASR-Q Christmas party held at the Ship Inn, in Brisbane's South Bank. This idea was well received and helped support their association in getting the numbers required for catering the event. From all reports our attending members said it was a great and inclusive function, and many dollars were raised during the auctions on the night. We thank the Special Air Service committee for their continued invitation and interactions between our two associations.



Speeches - (L to R). Alan Hypo' Bowen OAM and ASASA-Q Pres, gives a wrap-up SITREP for 2022, plus an indication of what is on the table for 2023, and; ACAQ Secretary John Davidson extends an expression of 'thanks' for the invitation given to the ACAQ Members and their Wives present, and is confident for a continued strong interaction when like-minded Associations work together.

ASASA-Q Christmas Party the Ship Inn South Bank Brisbane City Saturday 10 December 2022.



ASASA-Q Christmas Party the Ship Inn South Bank Brisbane City Saturday 10 December 2022.



## T20 Warrior Cup cricket

Another invited interaction came with the T20 Warrior Cup cricket match held in Brisbane on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January. Predominantly organised by the Wandering Warriors, with plenty of local corporate sponsorship including our own John Roxburgh of JR Medals.

A generous private donation came via Mr Steve Wicks of Currumbin Valley Qld, a former 1<sup>st</sup> Commando Regiment member. The committee wish to thank Steve for his contribution, and we will be providing a letter and plaque in appreciation.

## Welfare Trust donation

At our November meeting it was decided to support the Special Forces community with a \$2500 donation to the Commando Welfare Trust.

## Keith Buck turns 100!

Our long serving member Mr Keith Buck celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January.

Keith was a member of the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Commando Company during World War two serving in the South- West Pacific. He was an original member of the Qld Commando Association. He regularly attended committee meetings and Op Rimau days until very recently, and often beat us younger fellows up the stairs at the Lord Alfred Hotel!

Please join us in wishing Keith all the best for this momentous occasion as he really has lived up to the "Commando for Life" motto.



Current ACAQ President congratulates Keith Buck at a previous Rimau Day commemoration

## Upcoming AGM.

The Queensland association will be conducting its AGM on Feb 25<sup>th</sup> at Kedron Wavell RSL.

I thank the committee and especially the secretary John Davidson for his current workload in preparation for the event. As always, we will have a normal meeting

to discuss any relevant business and then run the AGM directly after this. Members and families are as usual invited to participate and have lunch at the conclusion of the AGM.

I have decided not to seek re-election as President in 2023 but rather nominate Mark Stanieg into the role. I ask that if he is successful that you support him into the future as you have me in the past.

It has been my absolute pleasure to serve the membership over the last few years in the roles of Secretary and then President. My best wishes to you all in 2023.

Regards,

**Graham Gough**  
ACAQ President  
acaqld.president@gmail.com

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Photos from Chainsaw Operations and Maintenance training on 03-03-23





## AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION NEW SOUTH WALES

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

22 JANUARY 2023

### RECENT ACTIVITIES

#### Re establishment of the Simpson Club at 1<sup>st</sup> Commando Regiment

**A**CA NSW has recently regained access to the Simpson Club within the Randwick Base. The intent will be to fully refurbish the Club and use it for committee meeting in 2023.

### FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

**19<sup>th</sup> Feb Davistown RSL** visit and social event by members of ACA NSW.

**Feb 23 date TBC SOCOMD demonstration** for Commando Welfare Trust CEO level supporters. The may be seats available to attend for ACA members. POC Paul Dunbavin

**25<sup>th</sup> April 23 ANZAC Day service** Commando Memorial chair Martin Place march commences 0930 followed by drinks and food Nth Bondi RSL post march in Sydney.

**May date TBC Carnarvon Golf Club** Nottingham Rd Lidcombe Families lunch with update briefing on Australian Special Operation Command.

**1-8<sup>th</sup> Sept 23 80th Anniversary Jaywick raid** Singapore 1943 (week long celebration of the raid in Sydney including capability demonstrations in and around Sydney)

**8<sup>th</sup> Sept 23 Commando Welfare Trust** Black Tie event in celebration of Operation Jaywick. Maritime Museum Sydney Harbour

**11<sup>th</sup> Nov 23 ASX Remembrance Day Regatta** considerable opportunity to spread the work the great work been undertaken by Cams Cause, ACA and principally the Commando Welfare Trust.

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 23 ACA NSW / 1 Cdo Regt** Regimental dining in night Randwick Barracks. Opportunity for serving and ex serving members to reconnect in a formal setting.

### OTHER NEWS

ACA NSW committee members have now regained access to Holsworthy and Randwick military barracks. This will greatly help re-establish connections with the current serving community. It is planned that future

committee meeting will occur at Randwick and Holsworthy. The ACA NSW Q store is now located in Randwick Barracks in a dedicated area in the 1 Cdo Q Store.

**Paul Dunbavin OAM**

President

ACA NSW

Mobile: 0477 308 443

Email: paul.dunbavin@defence.gov.au

trustxo@commandotrust.gov.au



### Make our mission your mission

Australian Border Force (ABF) is Australia's frontline border law enforcement agency and customs service. Our mission is to protect Australia's border and enable legitimate travel and trade. ABF works closely with the Australian Defence Force and other agencies to detect, deter, and prosecute those who attempt to do us harm at the border

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Contact Robert Magee: [ADFtransition@abf.gov.au](mailto:ADFtransition@abf.gov.au)





## AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Alex Mellienus  
President

Pat Bigland  
Vice President

Clint Wong  
Treasurer

Brandan Paterson  
Secretary

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

25 JANUARY 2023

### 2022 Annual General Meeting

The annual general meeting was conducted on 21 October 2022 at the Kurrajong Hotel, Barton ACT. There were 15 members present and apologies from 8 others. There has been significant growth of the branch over the last few years as in Oct 2021 there were less than 10 members with 21 people attending the AGM. The Treasurer's report stated that we had \$397.84 in available funds, and we had to get a corporate sponsor for the AGM for booking and catering. As of this report we have 39 members with \$39,343.19 available in funds. This marks some considerable growth and progress for our very young association.

Over the last year we have realised that in the ACT we have a high number of former Commando Regiment staff posted to other units across the ACT and a significantly high number of ex Commando personnel working across Defence industry in the ACT. This last year we have supported members in crisis, and we have learned that engaging the CWT takes time to engage and disperse funds.

We see our role as the immediate triage capability to support our people. We have also learnt that if anyone is sent to a crisis mental health unit at either Woden or Bruce Hospital they are discharged within 24hrs. We see the need for an immediate capability to step in and through pre-arranged means, provide the ability for that person to be placed into a private clinic for possibly up to 7 days.

We also see that other associations are already doing well with established educational avenues post transition; however we feel that as was demonstrated by one of our members during the year with their Cyber Academy SANS courses, the ACT Branch can focus on Cyber related training where contracted employment back into Defence or the AIC is in high demand for technical capability.

The CWT representative stated that the trust was conscious of market saturation for funds and as such will hold the CWT Black tie in Sydney every two years and suggested that the ACT CDO Black-tie could offset this also to be held every two years. This is a welcomed as it also reduces the fatigue across the Committee in arranging a Black Tie function annually. ACT Branch can that run a smaller event for current and ex serving members such as the Double Dagger Ride in the alternate year as our feasibility study found that

the ACT has brilliant venue and routes proposed which will allow the community to gather and be cost recoverable to a point of being revenue positive.

Proposed forming a steering committee to establish a framework down to protocols on how we would use the funds raised. This subcommittee will seek to avoid duplication of other available initiatives. The subcommittee is seeking members to form it and then report back to the Exec Committee a plan to present to our members in early 2023.

Brendan reported that a national website and membership database initiative required funding to remain viable. The ACT is in a position to support this if we deemed it viable and supported by the members. The database would support national membership management by the committee with which someone resides in by state. It also supports eliminating duplication of membership. It was suggested that there were avenues to access government support to fund this instead of using our ACT member funds. The collective agreed that this should be explored further.



### Errata on the last Edition

Unfortunately, in the last edition, the article on 'Captain Norman Roy Howard 2/1<sup>st</sup> Independent Company, AIF, Reinforcements, was incorrect. There never was a 2/1<sup>st</sup> Independent Company and it was named when established as No. 1 Independent Company and unlike the other Independent Companies who received the 2/ prefix to denote their membership of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF, No. 1 Independent Company had already deployed to New Britain and was decimated with more than half the unit captured and subsequently drowned on the *Montevideo Maru*. The Unit was subsequently disbanded, in the early 1943 and remaining Company personnel were distributed to other independent units and many joined the Coastwatcher organisation. The nomenclature 2/1<sup>st</sup> belongs to 2/1<sup>st</sup> North Australia Observer Unit which incidentally also wore a Double Diamond colour patch and this colour patch is still worn by NORFORCE.

Editor



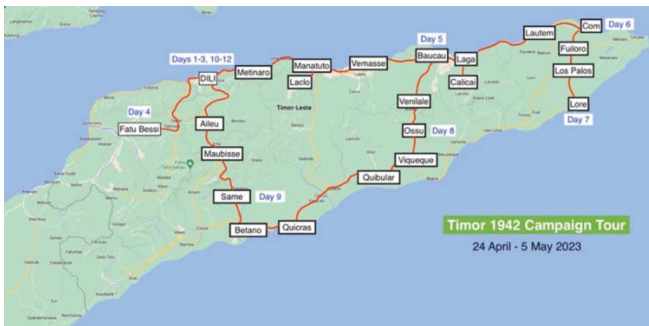
# WANTED

## FOUR WW2 MILITARY ENTHUSIASTS FOR EAST TIMOR BATTLEFIELD TOUR 24 APRIL – 5 MAY 2023

Ed Willis (past President, 2/2 Commando Association of Australia)<sup>1</sup> is working with Alex Johnson of Timor Unearthed (<https://www.timorunearthed.com>) to organise and operate a 12-day tailored tour of the World War II battlefields in East Timor. The itinerary shown below.

WWII IN EAST TIMOR TOUR			
ITINERARY			
DAY	DATE	ACTIVITY	ACCOMMODATION
1	24 April	Arrive Dili	Hotel Timor
2	25 April	Anzac Day	Hotel Timor
3	26 April	Dili sites	Hotel Timor
4	27 April	Dili – Railaco – Ermera – Fatu Bessi - Dili	Hotel Timor
5	28 April	Dili – Meti Naro – Manatuto – Laclo – Laleia – Vemasse – Baucau	Baucau Pousada
6	29 April	Baucau – Laga – Calicai – Lautem - Com	Sina Guest House
7	30 April	Com – Fuiloro – Los Palos – Loré - Com	Sina Guest House
8	1 May	Com – Baucau – Venilale - Ossu	Hotel Comunitaria Wailakurini
9	2 May	Ossu – Viqueque – Quibular – Betano - Same	Hotel Umaliurai
10	3 May	Same – Maubisse – Aileu - Dili	Hotel Timor
11	4 May	Dili	Hotel Timor
12	5 May	Depart Dili	Home

The cost will be US\$2,800 covering all in-Timor costs including accommodation and meals but not including air fares. Participants are responsible to arrange their own flights to accord with the itinerary above. A maximum of 12 people will be touring and currently there are 8 committed to the tour.



An early highlight of the tour will be attending the ANZAC Day ceremony at Cristo Rei in Dili<sup>2</sup> – this is a large event with many Timorese Independence War veterans participating. You will have an opportunity to

lay a wreath at the ceremony if you wish. We'll visit sites around Dili and at the eastern end of the island that relate to Timor's WWII history (including those relevant to the No 2 and No 4 Independent Companies<sup>3</sup> and several covert operations conducted by Special Operations Australia) and you will also have plenty of opportunities to learn about Timorese culture, crafts and other aspects of their history.

A tour portal on the Timor Unearthed website in early February that will provide detailed information including the day-by-day itinerary and allow personnel to sign up for the tour.

In the interim if there are any queries, please contact Ed Willis at [ew988662@bigpond.net.au](mailto:ew988662@bigpond.net.au) or mobile: 0438907480.

**Note.** Many readers may be unaware that Major Jim Truscott (Ex SASR, 1<sup>st</sup> Cdo Regt and NORFORCE), who unfortunately passed away unexpectedly in April 2021, was a successful co-applicant with Ed Willis for an Australian Army History Unit grant to prepare 'WWII in East Timor: an Australian Army site and travel guide'. Ed is in process of completing the guide for publication later this year.

<sup>3</sup>Later renamed 2/2<sup>nd</sup> and 2/4<sup>th</sup> Independent Companies and later in October 1943 were renamed as Cavalry (Commando) Squadrons and in February 1944 the term Cavalry was deleted.

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<sup>1</sup><https://doublereds.org.au/history/story/>

<sup>2</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cristo\\_Rei\\_of\\_Dili](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cristo_Rei_of_Dili)





# SIGNIFICANT COMMANDO DATES

## JANUARY to MARCH

### JANUARY

#### Late January 1941

No.7 Infantry Training Centre was established at Wilsons Promontory Victoria, the home and birth-place of the Australian Commando. The first Australian and New Zealand instructional staff arrive to commence their cadre training.

2023 marks the 82<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of the Australian Commando.

#### 22 January 1942

No 1 Independent Company began its fighting withdrawal from Kavieng New Ireland, New Guinea.

#### January 1943

2/5<sup>th</sup> & 2/7<sup>th</sup> Independent Company's fly into Wau Airfield to repel the Japanese invasion.

#### 18 January 1943

The MV *Krait* left Camp Z at Refuge Bay, NSW headed for Cairns QLD. On board were: - Bill Reynolds, LUET D. Davidson, CPL. R.G. Morris, Acting AB W.G. Falls, Acting AB A.W. Huston, Acting AB F.W. Marsh, Acting AB M.M. Berryman and Acting AB A.M.W. Jones.

#### January 1944

2/9<sup>th</sup> & 2/10<sup>th</sup> Cav Commando Squadrons were raised as part of the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Cav Commando Regiment and 2/11<sup>th</sup> & 2/12<sup>th</sup> Cav Commando Squadrons were raised as part of the 2/9<sup>th</sup> Cav Commando Regiment.

#### February 1945

2/10<sup>th</sup> Commando Squadron begins combat operations protecting the flanks of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> & 2/7<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalions 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF, pushing south towards Maprik, New Guinea.

#### 1 February 1981

1 & 2 Commando Company's come under direct command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Commando Regiment when it was formed at Randwick Barracks in NSW. The Commando Company's would become known as 1 & 2 Company dropping the name Commando.

#### 1 February 1997

4 RAR was re-rolled into a Commando Battalion at Jordan Lines, Holsworthy Barracks, NSW signifying the first full time Commando Capability since WW2. 4 RAR (Commando) would be commonly known as 4 Commando until it was renamed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiment on 19 June 2009.

#### 1 February 2002

Nine Commandos from 4 RAR Commando and six RAN Clearance Diver's successfully completed the first Advanced Close Quarters Battle (ACQB) Course conducted at Swanbourne Barracks in WA. These 15 'Originals' were to become the 'Plank Holders' for the raising of Tactical Assault Group-East (TAG-E), 4 RAR (Commando).

#### February 2003

Bravo Commando Company, 4 RAR (Commando) deploys to a Forward Operating Base (FOB) near Iraq as part of the Australian Special Forces Task Group, during Operation Bastille/Falconer in support of the US lead invasion of Iraq.

### FEBRUARY

#### 19/20 February 1942

Japanese troops land in Dutch & Portuguese Timor, beginning the guerrilla campaign by the No. 2. It was later renamed 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Company upon return to Australia in January 1943.

#### February 1943

2/2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Company arrives in Port Moresby after refit and retraining from her Timor Campaign.

### MARCH

#### March 1943

After returning from New Guinea, the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Independent Company (Ind Coy) reforms as the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Cav Commando Squadron and later renamed Commando Squadron (Cdo Sqn) of the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Cav Commando Regiment at the 1 Australian Commando Training Battalion Jungle Warfare School at Canungra, South East Queensland.





# BACKGROUND TO OPERATION JAYWICK

## Operation SCORPION ~ Proof of Concept and Capability

### Background

The original intent of Headquarters, Special Operations Australia planning staff was that Operation SCORPION led by Captain Sam Carey was a proposed raid on shipping in Rabaul Harbour using Folboat canoes. This operation was to coincide with Operation JAYWICK led by Major Ivan Lyons (British Army) in a duty similar raid on shipping by Folboat in Singapore Harbour on a new moon night.

However, Captain Carey was advised by Lieutenant Colonel Mott, Director of Special Operations Australia (SOA) that "the damned fools up at GHQ say our limpet operations would not penetrate the defences".

Following this Sam Carey returned to Cairns and his party at ZES Experimental Station and an alternative plan. The full details of his participation in this exercise raid are contained within 'Commando' Edition 9 of 2022 page 23. In this article Carey also makes critical comments of some previous published works which are worth reading.

### Contents

In this edition a collection of documents will provide some background and personal experiences of some personnel involved with the training and exercises prior to the conduct of Operation JAYWICK and will consist of the following.

- Extract from the Official History of Special Operations Australia
- Personal memories of operative Corporal Gilbert Mackenzie.
- Personal memories of Corporal Norma Freeman
- Memorial to Operation SCORPION

### Official History Records

The following is an extract from the official records regarding Operation Scorpion in Special Operations Australia Volume 2 Part 2 Operations in New Guinea<sup>1</sup>.

#### SCORPION, RABAUL HARBOUR (CANCELLED)

Prior to leaving New Guinea on 18 Dec 42, Captain SW Carey had discussed with the Commander-in-Chief (CinC), Australian Military Forces (General Blamey) a projected raid on Rabaul Harbour, New Britain, where it was proposed to sink fifteen enemy vessels. At that time the harbour was accommodating up to 90 large

vessels. The C in C had approved the project and Capt Carey was given instructions to proceed with planning and preliminary training. Personnel for the project were gathered without delay.

The code-name SCORPION was allocated, and selected members of the party were:

Capt SW Carey, AIF (Leader)

Capt AL Gluth, AIF

Capt RDC Cardew

Capt DM McNamara

Lt RC Page

Lt W Ferguson

Lt J Grimson

Lt JA Downie

WOII TJ Barnes

Cpl GK Mackenzie

Cpl RB Ford

After consideration by ISD<sup>2</sup> planning staff, in collaboration with naval experts, it became obvious that the only suitable method of inserting the party was by submarine. This meant that transport from US sources would be required, and it was obvious that difficulties would be encountered as US submarines were few and far between in the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA) at that time.

During March and April 1943, the party trained intensively at ZES Cairns.

During the training period a successful training attack was carried out on Townsville Harbour, with 15 vessels being notionally "sunk".

SCORPION, however, was cancelled by AIB GHQ in May 43 due to the lack of submarine transport.

### Personal memories of operative Corporal Gilbert Mackenzie

An insight into the training the operatives of Operation SCORPION undertaken through the eyes of Gilbert Mackenzie (deceased) who trained for SCORPION. This operation in turn convinced GHQ that Operation JAYWICK should proceed.

*(Adapted from the Memories of Gilbert Kerr Mackenzie by his daughter Judith Mackenzie Jesser)*

In January 1943 Gilbert Mackenzie reported to 260 Domain Road, South Yarra. The house was the Head Quarters of a clandestine organization known as Inter-Allied Services Department IAD/IASD. He was greeted by Australian Army Lieutenant Roy Pegler.

<sup>1</sup>NAA available for download at <https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=235327&isAv=N>

<sup>2</sup>The Allied Services Department and later renamed Special Operations Australia.



"I remember him telling me that he would hold my pay book (a soldier always carried his pay book with him) and that I would have to open a bank account. All mail addressed to me had to be addressed to Box No. 2141 T, GPO Melbourne. No unit name was allowed".

In February 1943, I reported to Z Experimental Station (ZES) Cairns. The ZES Headquarters was at "Fairview" (later known as House of the Hill). ZES was established to cater for all AIB<sup>3</sup> operatives, however, the Coast Watchers later set up their own training station in the Islands whilst SRD moved to Fraser Island sometime in October 1943.



Sergeant Gilbert Mackenzie at home in late 1944.

Source: Mackenzie collection

Besides Major Trappes-Lomax<sup>4</sup>, ZES was administered by Captain Ross, Adjutant, Captain M.R.O.B. Noone<sup>5</sup>, Intelligence Officer, Captain Philip Money-penny (SOE Officer)<sup>6</sup> responsible for explosives training. Lieutenant Ted Carse, RANR, was responsible for training in Folboats and the naval whaler- a cumbersome type life boat, Ted left ZES to captain the MV "Krait" when it carried the JAYWICK Party to Singapore in September 1943 to attack Japanese shipping.

### The SCORPION Exercise Raid

SCORPION Party comprised.

1. VX80562 Captain S.W. (Sam) Carey Party Leader, Geologist who had worked with the Australian Petroleum Company in New Guinea.
2. NGX38 Captain R.H.C. (Dick) Cardew. Ex 218<sup>th</sup> Bn. Had lived in Rabaul and was second in command of the party.
3. VX4802 Captain A.L. (Tony) Gluth nicknamed 'Tiny' as he was 6'6" tall. Ex 218<sup>th</sup> Bn.
4. VX6464 Lieutenant J.A. (Jim) Downie Ex 218<sup>th</sup> Bn.
5. VX6078 Warrant Officer Class 2 T.J. (Torn) Barnes nicknamed 'Basher'. Ex 2/8<sup>th</sup> Bn.
6. NX19158 Lieutenant R.B.H. (Bob) Page, Ex 2/4<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Bn who had lived in Rabaul where his father Harold Hillis Page had been Head of the Treasury in New Guinea. His father was taken prisoner by the Japanese and was lost at sea en-route to Japan when the transport was sunk by an American submarine.

<sup>3</sup>Allied Intelligence Bureau

<sup>4</sup>British Army-Border Regiment allocated to Special Operations Australia for operations.

<sup>5</sup>British Army-Intelligence Corps

<sup>6</sup>British Army-Royal Engineers

7. NGXIO Lieutenant J.E. (Jack) Grimson, had lived in Rabaul.
8. VX80879 Captain D.W.(Des) McNamara nicknamed 'Big Mac'ex Artillery.
9. NX97361 Sergeant R.B.(Bob) Ford nicknamed 'Henry', Signaller.
10. NX132907 Corporal G.K.(Gilbert) Mackenzie nicknamed Wee Mac'.

All members of the party were fit, however training for the SCORPION operation was hard and tough. In order to darken our skin, we only wore shorts, no singlets or shirts. Similarly, to toughen our feet we trained in bare feet thus ensuring the Japanese would think any feet marks on a track would have been made by local natives. The wearing of boots or sandals was taboo during training. We also trained in the heavy whaleboat off Machim, San Remo and other beaches north of Cairns. It involved trying to sail the whaleboat under the direction of Ted Carse (Navigator of the JAYWICK party) and rowing the whaleboat.

Every day we did small arms training with pistols, Sten guns (British machine guns fitted with silencers), Garand rifles (USA), Welrods (an SOE weapon fitted with a silencer, it had a removable stock and could be used either as a rifle or pistol, fitted with a luminous sight for night use). We also had lectures and discussions covering survival in the jungle and living off the land, Sam Carey was an expert on these matters.

As each day went by, we developed a team mateship, despite the differences in our ranks, Sam insisted we refer to each other by our Christian or nickname whilst training, at other times we observed normal Army courtesy. This attitude fostered a really good relationship and differed from the JAYWICK and RIMAU parties where the barrier between officers and men was firmly maintained. SCORPION party was all Australian personnel whilst the other parties JAYWICK and RIMAU comprised English and mainly Australian personnel and were commanded by a British Officer, Major Ivan Lyons.

Two kinds of explosives were handled and used, the principal one was the lovely plastic high explosive RDX that was just like plasticine to handle, we also had to continually handle gelignite to provide continuous absorption of nitro-glycerine to develop an immunity from nitro-glycerine headaches, boy did they make the old head throb and ache, took ages for the head to clear. In conjunction with the explosives we also used primers, detonators, time delay fuses and instant detonating fuse such as cordex filled with PETN (penta-



SOE Time pencils.

Source: ACAVic Historical Collection.



erythritol tetranitrate), pressure switches, delaying charges with Time Pencils (when bent, a solution is released and starts to eat away copper wire holding back a striker), a more reliable AC delay switch in which a turning screw breaks a glass ampoule to release acetone in graded levels of dilution. The released acetone dissolves a cellulose plug and releases a striker, the colour code being red for half an hour, orange for one hour, yellow for two hours, green for four hours, blue for eight hours and purple for sixteen hours.

At one instructional session, Tom Muirson our Explosive Instructor, dropped a half hour ampoule with a detonator attached in front of me as I was squatting.

### LIMPET and FOLBOAT Training

The first Limpet I trained with was a round metal dome shaped Limpet that was attached by magnets to a thin steel plate strapped to my chest. To attack a ship involved swimming breaststroke with the plate and Limpet attached, a very cumbersome and tiring hence the necessity to be able to swim long distances.



British scientist wearing an early version of the Limpet mine on a keeper plate in the position used by a swimmer.  
Source: UK National Archives.

Fortunately, this type of Limpet was replaced by a 3-inch square steel Limpet about 11 inches long with two rubber mounted magnets on each end and filled with plastic high explosive. A hole was at one end into which an AC delay switch could be screwed and another hole at the other end for Cordtex to be connected to another Limpet. We learned the theory and practised Limpeting, preparation of charges, Cordtex and delay switches, use of magnetic holdfasts to work along the side of the target ship, the holding extension rod to place the Limpets six feet below the water line (gently lest a clang would alert the crew inside the ship), the first Limpet is placed opposite the funnel in order to flood the engine room, the second 60 feet aft so as to pass at least one bulkhead and then the third a further 60 foot aft. With the sea water tamping outside and air inside, each Limpet can blow a 5-foot hole and with three holes beyond the bulkheads the simultaneous explosion was more lethal than a torpedo.



Mark IV Limpet Mine  
Source: Australian War Memorial

Theory and practice with Wreath charges - a small metal square with each side of the square bent like an M, with explosive filling between the legs of the M and held by magnets against a steel tank, such as an oil tank. The hollow in the wreath charge directs the detonation wave onto the tank so it cuts neatly through the steel like an oxy-acetylene torch.

We also trained in the use of cyanide suicide ampoules. They were long shaped glass ampoules about 2 inches in diameter and 5 inches thick filled with sodium cyanide and covered with latex. One of the ampoules can be kept safely in the mouth all day, or swallowed, when it passes through the intestines without harm to be excreted, if crushed by the teeth death follows in seconds. Fortunately, we did not have to try swallowing an ampoule as part of our training, but we were all required to give an undertaking not to be captured alive. I believe two of the operatives on the ill-fated RIMAU Operation took their ampoules rather than be captured.



SOE cyanide pill.  
Source: Wikipedia.

Overshadowing all this "basic" training was mastering the use of the Folboat. A Folboat is a folding kayak-style two-man canoe about 16 feet long and less than 3 feet wide amidships. The one-piece skin consists of seven ply Indian cotton and rubber. The frame has a bow part and a stem part covered with, 3/4 inch diameter wooden dowels. The bow and stem frames are pushed hard into their respective ends, then a centre hinge section is pushed down and locked, tensioning the whole skin. Sliding brass tubes then slide over the matching dowel pairs, and the Folboat is



assembled and ready for use. When taken apart and folded, the Folboat fits into two canvas bags, eight feet long and somewhat less than two feet in diameter. We practised assembling, breaking down and repacking Folboats until each pair could complete the cycle in sixty seconds in the dark.



*Folboats packed for portage.  
Source. Authors collection*

A Folboat can carry an all-up load of nearly 600lbs. The two operatives sit in the Folboat and fasten flaps around their waists so that the Folboat becomes virtually watertight. The person in the rear of the Folboat was in charge, I was always in the front except when I was paddling with Bob Ford. SCORPION Party had been divided into training pairs, Sam and I, Bob Page and Tony Gluth, Jim Downie and Jack Grimson, Dick Cardew and Tom Barnes, Des McNamara and Bob Ford.



*SOA Operatives paddling in early model Folboat.  
Source. AWM*

On the first day on the water in Folboats, we simply paddled around to get the feel of them and learn the basic skills of paddling using single and double-bladed paddles. The next day each pair paddled a mile and found muscles we did not know existed even in the buttocks, because you cannot stand in the Folboat, and the thin seat-pad gets harder by the hour. With each day we doubled the distance paddled without rest as we hardened and trained our muscles. We practised stalking a target Folboat as soundlessly as possible on moonless nights. The first thing we saw was a "dark" shape, from which we realized that the

reflectivity of the water surface in the dim light was better than the reflectivity of the Folboat.

We tried painting a Folboat ivory white, and sure enough it was able to drift closer to the target without being spotted. Some nights we paddled to Green Island off the coast and practised night landings on the beach, this was fun as there was no one on the island and for a short time before paddling back to Cairns we would look for turtles and do some fishing using a grenade or gelignite to stun the fish. On two occasions, as we paddled across Cairns' Harbour in the early hours of morning, we were nearly run down by a Catalina<sup>7</sup>, the pilot couldn't see us as we were so low in the water, but we sure could see the plane hurtling towards us skimming the water as it took off.

We also practised going out and coming back through the surf. On the way out, we would paddle hard into the wave cleave it and the wave would go over the Folboat as green water and we would emerge safely and then tackle the next wave. When coming back into the beach the wave drives the stern around so that the wave hits the Folboat on the beam and you roll over and over in the surf. Not the best of sensations. A sea anchor was tied to the stern (a trailing canvas drogue) without too much success so we tried turning the Folboat to face out to sea paddling hard to cleave the waves then paddling backwards as fast as we could between waves. Although this was much slower, and you couldn't see where you were going, we were able to get back through the surf to the beach without capsizing. The Folboat always handled well in rough seas.

We were ready for the paddle up the Barron River and back to Cairns, with portage around the falls on hard rations and little sleep. There was no dam across the river upstream from the falls as there is to-day, so there was always a good flow of water particularly after heavy rain got very little sleep that night. The water in the Barron River had risen sharply overnight owing to the heavy rain and on our way back down the river we were constantly shooting the rapids. Big Mac partnered by Bob Ford lost control of their Folboat in fast water and slammed abeam into a concrete pier of a sugar cane tram bridge and the bow jack-knifed to kiss its stem. Sam was not at all impressed as we lost the Folboat and all the equipment including a wireless set. By the time we got to the mouth of the Barron the force of the water swept us out to sea and we had to paddle around a sand bar to get back to the beach. A lot of rubbish was being washed out to sea, including dead animals and there were numerous sharks swimming around the river entrance. We all wore Mae Wests (life jackets).

Our final paddling test was 128 miles at sea, out of sight of land and accompanied by a Fairmile (a small

<sup>7</sup>Catalina Flying boat.



Naval motor boat). We would paddle for one hour and rest on the Fairmile for 30 minutes then resume paddling, every time it was my turn to rest the crew would try to get me to eat greasy bacon out of a tin as they knew my seasickness weakness. Funny thing I never got seasick in a Folboat as I was too occupied with my paddling. A sudden storm alarmed us at first, but we soon found the Folboats were quite stable in a storm, something we were glad to learn.



A WW2 RAN Fairmile launch.  
Source. <https://www.navy.gov.au/ml-814>

Even rolling white caps on high swell did not capsize us, because the shape and motion of the wave in deep water is different from the breaking waves in shallow water.

To give the party practice attacking ship with Limpets, Sam would notify the Naval Officer in Charge (NOIC) in Cairns that we would be attacking his training ship that night. As the ship was moored alongside the jetty it was easy to paddle under the wharf without being detected and to leave our mark, normally a message written in chalk on the side of the ship, we did not use actual Limpets as they were in short supply, they were SOE stores that came from England. Our constant successes resulted in the sailors on duty being given extra duties because they failed to detect our presence. It became dangerous for anyone of us to venture through Cairns by ourselves if the Navy boys were about as they had threatened to do us over, fortunately it never happened.

### LIMPET ATTACK - Townsville Harbour

As GHQ were not all that convinced that a Limpet attack on enemy shipping in a harbour would succeed, Sam decided that GHQ would have to be convinced. He decided to attack the shipping in Townsville Harbour without telling any of the three services, Townsville was similar to Rabaul Harbour in size and defences. The raid would be just as dangerous as our planned raid on Rabaul.

Before midnight on 12 June 1943, SCORPION Party climbed down from the last carriage of a passenger train, just before the bridge over the Black River, north of Townsville. We knew we were about 5 miles from the

coast and intended to paddle down the Black River to Halifax Bay. In addition to the five Folboats, 45 Limpets, 300 yards of parachute cord (substitute for cordex instantaneous fuse), binoculars etc, we were carrying hard rations, our weapons and jungle knives. We arrived at Halifax Bay in the early evening and embarked immediately to have several hours before the moon rose. At about 0300 hours the next morning reached the southern end of Magnetic Island located 5 miles off Townsville. We landed between West Point and Prince Bay, fortunately we had picked a good area to land as no-one lived in the area. By dawn the Folboats had been dismantled and a concealed camp established in the scrub. Although we did not see anybody or any house or shack, we lit no fires and no noise was allowed, posted sentries whilst the others slept off their weariness, except Sam who had much to do planning the attack for that night. Sam studied the shipping through his American telescope from the ridge of Mount Cook and could see all the shipping in Townsville Harbour.

The port was crowded with an overflow of shipping in the roads as a convoy was preparing to sail to Port Moresby next day. Sam picked out ships to be attacked by each Folboat team and each pair was brought to the observation point and assigned their individual targets. We all had an opportunity to study the shipping targets and the location of the breakwater entrance through which we all had to paddle to get to our rendezvous at the back of Townsville. I always travelled with Sam, however on this occasion he was not satisfied with Des McNamara, so he decided to change the teams.

I went with Jim Downie, Bob Ford went with Jack Grimson and Des MacNamara went with Sam. Dick Cardew and Tom Barnes were allotted the Katoomba, HMAS "Arunta" and HMAS "Parramatta", Downie and I were to attack three ships in the open roads (the area outside the harbour), Grimson and Ford the ships along the West side of the harbour, Gluth and Bob Page a Dutch merchant ship and two American cargo ships (called Liberty ships) whilst Sam and Des MacNamara were to do the ships along the East side of the harbour. This grouping differs with that written in the book "The Heroes" by Ronald McKie and with Sam's own notes.

We all rested as best we could and after some hard tucker for our evening meal, we assembled the Folboats, filled the Limpets with sand (instead of Plastic high explosive) and connected them together with parachute cord (instead of cordex detonating fuse) in sets of three with 60 feet between each Limpet. Before we set off at about 2100 hours (9pm) Sam gave each one of us a Benzedrine tablet to make our senses trigger alert for the next few hours.

Sam pointed out that the gibbous<sup>8</sup> moon was high

<sup>8</sup>(of the moon) having the illuminated part greater than a semicircle and less than a circle.



in the West, so observers from the port would get moonlight reflections from the high paddle, so the returning paddle should be kept low, and feathered as far as the working paddle would allow. Our greatest hazard was to get through the entrance to the harbour. The gap between the breakwaters is only 230 yards with a mine control sentry on each, and the other four Folboats had to get through successfully before it would be our turn. Jim Downie and I successfully Limpeted three cargo vessels anchored in the open roads area, but we had a slight problem with the last vessel.

We had just put our Limpets on the vessel and were drifting past the stern when we looked up and saw a sailor smoking at the rails. I suppose our faces, although blackened, reflected in the moonlight because he yelled out and asked us what we were doing. Jim shouted back that "we were just paddling around" and the sailor replied, "good night, mate" and we paddled away into the darkness. We silently approached the entrance to the harbour, went through the minefield and could then clearly distinguish the sentries, so we hugged the darkness of the breakwater and drifted through with the occasional help from a paddle, when safely through the entrance and some distance from the sentries we resumed paddling and entered the Ross River to rendezvous with the other chaps under Victoria Bridge. I can still remember people walking over the bridge and looking down at us as we pushed our Folboats out of the black mud onto the bank where they were dismantled and stowed in carry bags.

All the allotted targets were successfully attacked however, Tony and Bob had a bit of trouble with a barge that was moored alongside their target vessel.

As dawn crept across the harbour, the engineer of the 'Arkaba' (an Adelaide Steamship cargo vessel), who had been on duty all night whilst the vessel was unloading, was smoking as he leaned over the rail. What is that thing on the side of the ship just below the water level? What is that line attached to it? Curiosity quickly turned to alarm. The Engineer alerted the Mate, the Mate alerted the captain who said, "We have risen a fathom since unloading, so those things must have been well below the water line They could be mines we picked up before entering port".

The captain reported to the Duty Officer in Command of Port (NOIC), Commander Wheatley, whilst the Mate alerted HMAS "Arunta" one of the recently commissioned destroyers. The news quickly spread, and as other vessels found similar objects on their sides. sirens screamed, alarm turned into panic and panic soon spread wild rumours. Water police, shore police, military police, soldiers, sailors all rushed into action to deal with- WHAT! Nearly every vessel seemed to have been mined, the explosions would blow up the town of Townsville. Saboteurs had infiltrated the wharves. No, the sentries had seen nothing suspicious. It was rumoured that Japanese midget submarines were in

the harbour, impossible said the Navy. Nothing, not even a rowing boat could have got through the minefields into the harbour. The coastal artillery batteries had seen nothing. As' more precise details were signalled south, Admiralty knew nothing of "mines" of that description, the whole town was in a big flap.

The Navy cancelled the sailing of the convoy bound for Port Moresby. Captains were ordered not to move lest the wash from a propeller triggered a mine, and the concussion fired the lot.

Signals ran hot to and from the Admiralty, signals to General MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane, enquiries to ordnance and intelligence, warnings to other ports. Boy did we cause a flap. Eventually the signals were seen by Lieutenant Colonel Allison Ind, an American on MacArthur's headquarters, who was Liaison Officer between GHQ and Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB). He recognized the "mines" as Limpets and knew that the only source of Limpets in the region belonged to 'SCORPION Party' He immediately signalled "Find Captain. S. W. Carey, he will know the answer".

The Townsville raid was a resounding success. It demonstrated the vulnerability of Australian Ports. All around Australia, port security was tightened. The result from our viewpoint was the effect on GHQ as it proved that such operations were indeed feasible. Although the SCORPION raid on Rabaul was cancelled, the raid on shipping in Singapore Harbour, JAYWICK Operation, was approved and it was highly successful and was one of the success stories of the war.

#### **MEMORIES OF AN AWAS STENOGRAPHER - QF 132165<sup>9</sup> CORPORAL NORMA FREEMAN**

*This story was written by Norma post war and unfortunately undated. This material has kindly been provided by Lieutenant Colonel Neil C Smith, AM, Retd from his extensive research notes on World War II Australian Special Operations in preparation for his book 'Mostly Unsung' which is an essential reference for students of World War II Australian special operations history.*

A lot has been written about the mock raid on the Townsville Harbour, the men of Z Special Unit and the 'Krait'. I have read all the stories with great interest as they take me back to that day so many years ago now...

I was young, a member of the Australian Women's Army Service, and my job was Stenographer, working at HQ Aust Line of Communication sub-Area, which was the headquarters of the Australian Army in Townsville. Most of my work was for Brigadier F.R. North, the head of the Army there, and for the Staff

<sup>9</sup>NAA archives have her listed under regimental number Q 132165.



Capt. "A". At that time Headquarters was at the upper end of Denham Steet. Later in the war it was shifted to Kissing Point.

One day two Provosts appeared at the door, an Officer between them, and they asked to see Colonel North, as he was then. The provosts<sup>10</sup> escorted the Officer into the Colonel's office. The Colonel dismissed the provosts. I thought it was strange, as it was the first time I had seen an Officer under arrest.

The next thing was even stranger. I was asked to stay behind and report to Intelligence with my notebook and pencil. When I went upstairs to the Intelligence Officers office. I was told that what I was about to hear was Top Secret and the officer questioned me as to my loyalty. He said the outcome of it all could mean ending the war a bit quicker, but there was a need for utmost secrecy for the plan to work. I told him my boyfriend was up in New Guinea and that the sooner the war was over the better, as far as I was concerned.

The letter I typed was to the General Officer Commanding the Australian Army and marked Top Secret. What followed was a full account from when the 'Raider's' left their base outside Cairns to the mock raid on the ships in the Townsville Harbour and how they had been able to get into the harbour and out again without being detected. They had taken Benzedrine tablets in order to keep &wake.

He<sup>11</sup> referred to a conversation he had had with the General about the feasibility of mounting a raid on the ships in Singapore Harbour. The Townsville raid proved that it could be done.

After I had finished the letter, he read it through and signed it<sup>12</sup> and told me to take it up to register it, but only show the heading to the girl and not allow her to read the contents.



World War II photo of Captain Sam Carey party leader of Operation SCORPION.  
Source: Carey family collection.

I waited till she put it in the envelope, put sealing wax on the back and stamped the seal on it. The report was on its way.

Then I was told to burn my shorthand notes and carbon paper to be sure they did not fall into enemy hands. Once again, I was sworn to secrecy and told that the lives of the men and the success of the exercise depended on no one outside knowing anything about it.

What a tremendous secret to keep. How was I to make sure I never talked about it to anyone. I decided then and there to erase the whole episode from my mind pretend it never happened and don't ever dredge it up or think about it again. If you don't think about something; you don't talk about it, and I never did.

At Next morning when I got to H.Q. someone asked me what I was doing till late in the evening before. I said I had to type a whole lot of Statistical Report - you know figures, figures, figures - so boring. No one asked me again.

The Bulletin<sup>13</sup> came out with the story of ships being mined in the Townsville Harbour and speculation was rife. Everyone was talking about it. but I stuck to the plan of putting the episode right out of my mind. It was the safest thing to do. I won't deny that for some days I felt like looking over my shoulder all the time in case someone should try to kidnap me and wrest the secret from me somehow. Eventually it all blew over and I settled down again.

Imagine my delight when the news came of the successful raid on the ships in Singapore Harbour. I was ecstatic and all I could think was 'They did it, they did it'. However, I was still sworn to secrecy and could not say it aloud. All I could think of was how wonderful it was that it had succeeded.

The next recollection is of the story of the raid "The Heroes" being published in the Sunday Mail after the war was over. At first, I was outraged that this Top Secret information was being published for all to read about.

The next recollection is of the story of the raid 'The Heroes' being published in the Sunday mail after the war was over. At first, I was outraged that this Top Secret information was being published for all to read about then I thought "Well, I suppose the war is over now and the men concerned deserve to be recognised as the heroes they undoubtedly were:

Over twenty years later I met Brigadier North in Brisbane where he was living in retirement. I told him of my part in the above episode, however he said he knew nothing about it. That was just how Top Secret it was then my commanding officer didn't know a thing about it.

<sup>10</sup>Army military police.

<sup>11</sup>Captain Sam Carey.

<sup>12</sup>*ibid*

<sup>13</sup>Townsville Daily Bulletin - a local newspaper. For the article go to <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/61844035?searchTerm=raid%20on%20Townsville%20Harbour%201943>



**Townsville Z Force Memorial**

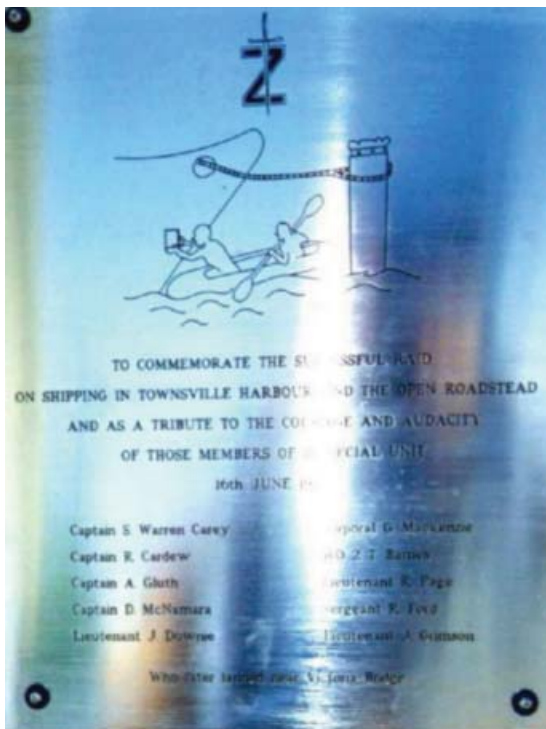
A plaque commemorating Operation SCORPION, although not named as such, was presented to the Maritime Museum, Townsville, by local Salvador Raoul Guides and was dedicated on 22 April 1992. To commemorate the successful raid on shipping in Townsville Harbour and the open roadstead and as a tribute to the courage and audacity of these members of Z Special Unit in June 1943.

The emblem at the top of the plaque is the post war Z Special Unit Association badge as the operation was conducted under the operational command of Special Operations Australia (SOA) which had no unit or organisational emblem. SOA, being a predominantly Australian organisation also had members from Allies including New Zealand, the Netherlands, Britain, Canada, and others.



The Memorial within the grounds of the Townsville Maritime Museum

Source. Queensland War Memorials website



Memorial plate

Source. Queensland War Memorials website

The plaque is listed in the Queensland War memorials website and incorrectly referred to as the Z Force Memorial and the Editor will seek to have this corrected as soon as practicable. The date of the raid is also listed as 16 June 1943 and there has been the controversy over the date by number of authors. However, Corporal Gilbert Mackenzie an operative on the exercise clearly states in his records that the exercise was conducted in the late evening of 14 June 1943.






# COMMANDOS FOR LIFE

*Lest We Forget*



**04 January 2009**  
**PTE Gregory Sher**  
2 Commando Company  
1<sup>st</sup> Commando Regiment  
Killed In Action  
Urazghan Province Afghanistan



**06 February 2017**  
**SGT Peter Cafe**  
Delta Company  
2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiment  
Died In Service  
Sydney New South Wales



**13 February 1963**  
**REC Anthony Matulis**  
1 Commando Company  
Killed In Training  
Sydney New South Wales



**14 February 1981**  
**LCPL Stephan Kennedy**  
1 Commando Company  
1<sup>st</sup> Commando Regiment  
Died In Service  
Gosford New South Wales



**17 February 1960**  
**WO2 George Drakopoulos and PTE Roger Wood**  
2 Commando Company  
**PTE Edward Myer**  
41 Amphibious Platoon' Royal Australian Army Service Corps  
Killed In Training, The Rip Victoria



**30 March 1966**  
**PTE Phillip Stewart**  
1 Commando Company  
Killed In Training  
Gan Gan, New South Wales



# Z Special Unit – Let’s set the record straight (again)

by "Noah Little" a former Commando officer with an interest in military history"

We’ll address in this article some commonly accepted stories/facts/fables about Z Special Unit.<sup>1</sup> The first one being: Did it really exist? This may seem an odd question, but fortunately for us, the answer is simple – yes, it did. And no, it didn’t.

We’ll also address the apparent conflation of the activities, and indeed identities, of some of the various special organisations that existed in Australia during World War II, in relation to the Independent Companies/Commando Squadrons.<sup>2</sup>

We’ll also look at the question of who inherited the legacy of and became the successors to what we’ll refer to for the moment as Z Special Unit, after it was disbanded at the end of the Second World War.

At the end of this article, we’ll also look at the question of whether any of this really matters.

The same questions apply to M Special Unit. That however is a similar, but separate story. M Special Unit refers to another, separate entity within the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB), not directly associated with what we’ll continue to call for the moment Z Special Unit.

There are a number of claims about Z Special Unit – some of them partly correct, many of them factually incorrect and some of them wildly inaccurate. To take a few:

- The film "Attack Force Z" concerns a team from the elite Z Special Unit fighting against the Empire of Japan during the Second World War. The film fictionalises the exploits of the Z Special Unit, which was also known as Z Force. It was a joint Australian, British and New Zealand commando unit;<sup>3</sup>

- Z Special Unit (also known as Special Operations Executive (SOE), Special Operations Australia (SOA) or the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD)) was a joint Allied special forces unit formed during the Second World War to operate behind Japanese lines in South East Asia;<sup>4</sup>
- M Special Unit, was a joint Allied special reconnaissance unit, part of the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD), in the South West Pacific theatre of the Second World War;<sup>5</sup>
- In Europe, the Allies had experienced success with a secret fighting force known as SOE (Special Operations Executive). Prime Minister John Curtin believed that a similar underground organisation might help turn the tide in the Pacific. So was born the Special Reconnaissance Department – as it came to be known – and its frequently lethal Z Special Unit;<sup>6</sup>
- The 1971 Australian television series "Spyforce" was about a "secretive special elite unit known as the Special Intelligence Unit, headed by Colonel Cato, who is only responsible directly to the Prime Minister of Australia. Cato's unit is responsible for sabotage and covert operations, often behind enemy lines, against Japanese forces in the South West Pacific during World War II;"<sup>7</sup> and
- after the war, the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) or the Commandos (depending who is telling the story) took on the legacy of Z Special Unit.

<sup>1</sup>Volume 1 (Organization) of the Official History of Special Operations Australian (SOA) refers to Z Special Unit, rather than, for example, "Z" Special Unit. Although "Z" Special Unit does appear in official records of the time, in the interests of uniformity, we’ll stick with the version without inverted commas. SOA Vol 1 was written in 1946 and along with a number of other volumes in that series is now available digitally at the National Archives Australia (NAA) website at <[naa.gov.au](http://naa.gov.au)>. SOA Vol 1 being Item 235324. The (complete) volume on Operations (SOA Vol 2) is Item 235237. There are other volumes on Communications, Training and there is also a volume of photographs (all searchable under "SOA" in Record Search at <[naa.gov.au](http://naa.gov.au)>).

<sup>2</sup>In a series of renumbering and reorganisations, the Independent Companies were initially numbered, for example, No. 2 Independent Company, then became, for example, 2/2<sup>nd</sup> Independent Company. The Companies later became Cavalry (Commando) Squadrons in October 1943 with new Cavalry (Commando) Regimental Headquarters in April 1943. The sub-units were later renamed Commando Squadrons. However, 2/2, 2/3 and 2/8 Commando Squadrons remained independent units for the duration of the war and were not part of the Cavalry Commando Regiments.

<sup>3</sup><[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack\\_Force\\_Z](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attack_Force_Z)>



A plot with a bit of something for everyone – "Spyforce, Episode 1, The General: Erskine is coerced by Cato into re-entering New Ireland to steal a list of German agents in Australia that are being held by a German general. He has to do this before he can give the list to the Japanese."

Source: <https://www.tvflashback.com.au/spyforce-episode-1-the-general/>

<sup>4</sup><[https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Z\\_Special\\_Unit](https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Z_Special_Unit)>

<sup>5</sup><[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M\\_Special\\_Unit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/M_Special_Unit)>

<sup>6</sup>Descriptive piece on Davies, Will, Secret and Special: The Untold Story of Z Special Unit in the Second World War, (Vintage/Random House Australia, 2021) at <<https://www.gould.com.au/secret-and-special-the-untold-story-of-z-special-unit-in-the-second-world-war/ran022/>>

<sup>7</sup><<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spyforce>>

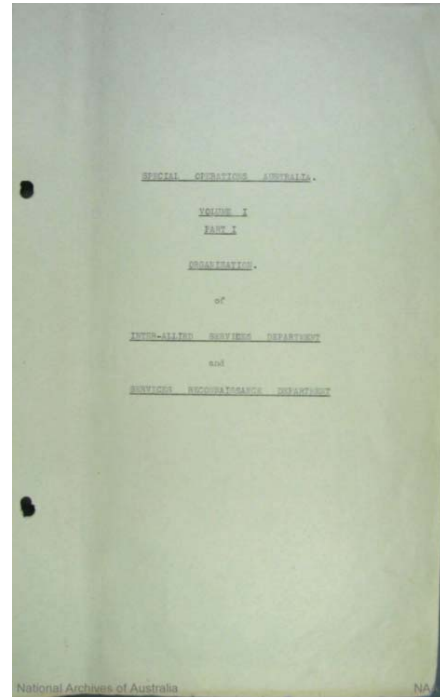


This confusion has come about for a number of reasons:

- For most members involved in the organisation during World War II, they may not even have been aware of the true name or the nature of the organisation to which they were posted. The existence of the “real” organisation – Special Operations Australia (SOA) – was a secret. For Australian Military Forces (AMF) members at least, they were posted to Z Special Unit (for reasons, see below) and that simply stuck in their minds, as a convenient and indeed plausible reality. The veil of secrecy probably made them less inclined to question this, even long after the war.
- Many contemporary records and recollections of others outside of SOA at the time were confused unless the persons concerned had been specifically “briefed in” to the Organisation or a specific operation. Even within SOA records, the organisation is often referred almost interchangeably as SOA or by its cover names ISD or SRD, depending on the date and the classification of the papers, and often inconsistently so. There is however no record, within the available SOA paperwork, of the organisation referring to itself, or even a section of it, as Z Special Unit.
- The Official History of SOA only became publicly available in 1981,<sup>9</sup> a fact probably unknown to many who would otherwise have been keenly interested; and
- Once the names Z Special Unit (and M Special Unit for that matter) became known to the public, it has proven difficult to correct the error. Lazy journalism covering World War II and veterans’ activities afterwards has only compounded the original error. Over-enthusiastic and under-informed publishers and TV producers have similarly contributed to this misapprehension, by the inclusion of hyped-up wording on the dustcovers of books on the topic or concocting exotic series plots.

In this article we have tried wherever possible to stick to official sources of the period during and after the war, principally some of the volumes of the Official History of SOA already referred to and now available digitally at the National Archives of Australia (NAA) website. There are several authoritative works on this issue already in the public sphere, including a book appearing in 1993, by Colonel J.B. (“Gruff”) Courtney<sup>10</sup> who was, we think, the only senior SOA officer ever to write of his time with the organisation. There are also recorded interviews with Courtney at the Australian Commando Association and Australian War Memorial

websites.<sup>11</sup> There are some forensically incisive articles available online by writer/historian Lynette Silver AM,<sup>12</sup> drawing in particular on official contemporaneous records. There is also a commercial publication of three of the volumes of the SOA Official History, published in 2011.<sup>13</sup> The real story has therefore long been out there, but it still needs re-telling from time to time.



Cover page of SOA Vol 1  
Source. SOA Vol 1, p.9.

## Background

To go into some of the background first.

In November 1940 the newly formed British Special Operations Executive (SOE), sent Military Mission 104, headed by Lieutenant Colonel J. Mawhood, to Australia to advise on:

- “Steps to counter possible Fifth Column activities in Australia and to train personnel; (including foreign nationals) in offensive action of this nature, such as sabotage.
- Constitution of independent companies which would receive special training to fit them to take part in combined operations, and

<sup>9</sup>Courtney, G.B., *Silent Feet – The History of “Z” Special Operations 1942-1945*, (Slouch Hat Publications, 1993), p. vii

<sup>10</sup>Courtney.

<sup>11</sup>Interview number 2 LTCOL ‘Gruff’ Courtney MBE MC, *Special Operations Video Interviews and Transcripts*, Australian Commando Association, <<https://www.commando.org.au/ww2-special-ops>>, (short form **Courtney Interview**). The other interview with him is at the Australian War Memorial website at <<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C299662>>.

<sup>12</sup>See Silver, Lynette Ramsey, AM, SOA, M & Z SPECIAL UNITS, OPERATION JAYWICK MYTHS, <<https://lynettesilver.com/special-operations-australia/soa-m-z-special-units-operation-jaywick-myths/>>.

<sup>13</sup>Ed. Brown, C.A., *The Official History of Special Operations – Australia*, (SOA Books 2011). There are three books in this series, based on the SOA Histories – Vol 1 (Organization), Vol 2 (Operations) and Vol 3 (Communications).

<sup>9</sup>Courtney, G.B., *Silent Feet – The History of “Z” Special Operations 1942-1945*, (Slouch Hat Publications, 1993), p. vii

<sup>10</sup>Courtney.



- Formation of military mission which would be available to organise guerrilla operations in enemy territory".<sup>14</sup>

The model which the British had in mind was doubtless along the lines of: SOE (set up in the UK, starting in July 1940); and the (British) Independent Companies which by February 1941 had morphed into (British) Army Commandos.<sup>15</sup>

The Mission instructors started training the newly raised Australian Independent Companies at the new No. 7 Infantry Training Centre at Foster/Wilson's Promontory in February 1941. In March 1941 Australia declined to take up a British offer to train Australian military in the SOE training centre in Singapore (STS 101) saying it had its own training centre (i.e. No. 7 Infantry Training Centre) and also declined to take up the offer of training to enable Australians to "participate in the other activities of the S.O.E".<sup>16</sup> At this stage, for Australia, UK, the Netherlands and the USA, the war in the Pacific was still 9 months away. The SOE Mission 104 instructors left Australia in Sep 1941.



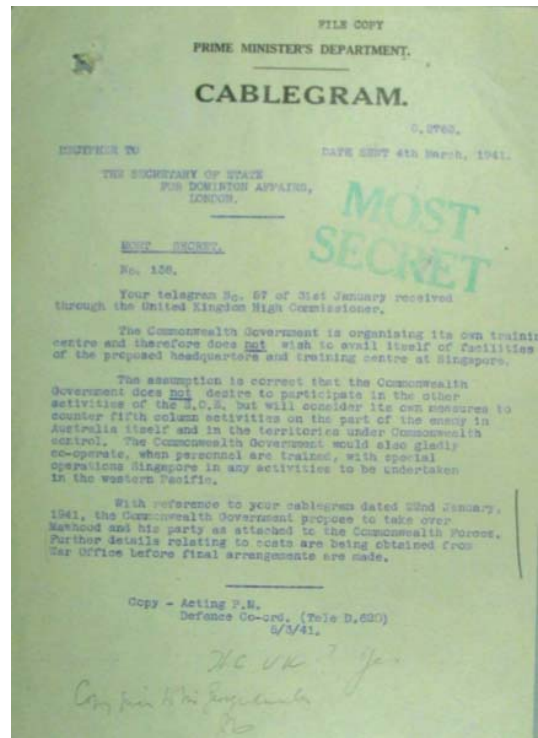
SOE Trainers Captains Freddy Spencer Chapman and Mike Calvert at No. 7 Infantry Training Centre.

Source: <https://doublereds.org.au/forums/topic/85-brigadier-michael-calvert-1913%E2%80%931998-%E2%80%9393-trainer-and-long-term-friend-of-the-doublereds/>.

<sup>14</sup>There is a large amount of miscellaneous documentation on the Mawhood Mission in an archived Prime Minister's Department File entitled "Special Operations Executive (Mawhood Mission)" originally classified as MOST SECRET. At Item 206047 (short form **Mawhood**) at <[naa.gov.au](http://naa.gov.au)>, digital p. 113, is a MOST SECRET Cablegram 39 from the (British) Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Australian Prime Minister, dated 22 Jan 1941. This lays out the aims of the Mawhood Mission and touches on the Mission's rough start due to poor prior consultation by the British side. The Mawhood Mission also became tangled up, perhaps unhelpfully, in a proposal to upgrade Australian domestic anti "Fifth Column" security measures.

NOTE: As the NAA Items often include multiple documents, with their own internal, real page numbering (or no numbering at all), we've opted to use the electronic page numbering of the Item as provided by NAA. The electronic numbering of the pages on the on-line and on the downloaded versions of the Item should be the same. The downloaded version however has a non-numbered cover page. Therefore, while the first page of the actual document within the downloaded Item is electronically noted as page 1, it appears on the viewer's page counter as page 2. We've (hopefully) consistently used the electronically generated page number (not the page counter). We've called this "digital page".

<sup>15</sup>See the (British) *Commando Veterans Archive*, <<https://www.commandoveterans.org/IndependentCompanies>> for an account of the morphing of the British Independent Companies into British Army Commandos in 1940/41.



Australia does not take up SOE's offer. Source: Mawhood, digital p. 97.

With the swift and seemingly unstoppable Japanese advance through the then Malaya, Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and Portuguese Timor starting in December 1941, the Australian government however began to view matters differently. In March 1942, the Prime Minister John Curtin gave approval for the establishment of "a bureau for the purpose of undertaking espionage in enemy-occupied territory, disseminating propaganda ... and the issue to the enemy of misleading information". It was initially proposed to be a civilian organisation headed by Sir Owen Dixon, a High Court judge.



Australia's strategic situation changes drastically after the attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941.

Source: "CHAPTER I THE JAPANESE OFFENSIVE IN THE PACIFIC", Reports of General MacArthur, THE CAMPAIGNS OF MACARTHUR IN THE PACIFIC, VOLUME I, p.24<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Mawhood, digital p. 97. This a MOST SECRET Cablegram 138 of 4 Mar 1941 from the Prime Minister to the British Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

<sup>17</sup><https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/MacArthur%20Reports/MacArthur%20V1/ch01.htm#b1>



Later that month two British SOE officers – Maj G.E. Mott and Maj Trappes-Lomax – escaping the Japanese advance, arrived in Australia from the NEI. Trappes-Lomax, being the senior became “the principal adviser to the (Australian) Director of Military Operations, on SO (Special Operations) matters”. Together with the (Australian) Director of Naval Intelligence Lieutenant Commander Long, Sir Owen Dixon, Pay Commander J.C.R. Proud and Mr Lovink (described as “a Dutch Secret Service expert”<sup>18</sup>, he began lobbying for the creation of an SO organisation in Australia. In early April 1942, General Blamey Commander-in-Chief Australian Military Forces (AMF) ordered that such an organisation be set up immediately under the operational control of the (American) General Douglas MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief of the South West Pacific Area (SWPA).<sup>19</sup> As “foreign policy was no longer a concern in any of the areas where SO Australia would operate”, civilian cover became unnecessary, and the organisation should be controlled through military channels and only the highest staff officers should have any direct knowledge of the organisation. The proposed role of the new organisation shifted a little to become “training and equipping of personnel for left-behind parties in occupied territories to harass enemy lines of communication, general sabotage, attacks on shipping and organising and direction (sic) local resistance.”



Lieutenant Colonel G. E. Mott, first Director of SOA  
Source. AWM

MacArthur approved the establishment of this organisation on 17 Apr 1942 and General Blamey instructed now Lieutenant Colonel Mott, who would head the new organisation (SOA), to set up a HQ immediately “and to act on behalf of the General Staff in contacting the Dutch authorities”. For cover reasons, the organisation was to be known as ISD – Inter-Allied Services Department – and its existence would be known only (initially) to the Prime Minister and the High Command.<sup>20</sup>

One of the unfulfilled aims of the earlier SOE Mission 104 and the offer by the British to train Australians in SOE work had therefore finally come to fruition in April 1942.

In May 1942 ISD set up its HQ at “Airlie” 260 Domain Rd, South Yarra, Melbourne. By the end of the month, the HQ had 15 members, including two Dutch military members. ISD started sending operatives to be trained at the AMF’s Land Headquarters Guerrilla Warfare School (GWS)<sup>21</sup> at Darby River, Wilsons Promontory, where the Independent Companies were already being trained. By June 1942, ISD was set up on a proper basis and operational planning got underway; radio stations manned by the Dutch were set up at Craigieburn (just north of Melbourne) and Darwin; and a joint British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)-ISD radio station was set up in Cairns, Queensland. Climatic and security conditions at Foster were not satisfactory for training SOA operatives so, SOA set up its own training school at the Cairns radio station, under the cover name of the Z Experimental Station (ZES).<sup>22</sup>



“Airlie”, 260 Domain Rd, South Yarra, Melbourne.  
SOA’s first HQ  
Source. Wikipedia

<sup>18</sup>This was A. H.J. Lovink, head of the East Asian Affairs Service (Dienst der Oost-Aziatische Zaken) the NEI-based Dutch agency tasked with countering Japanese espionage there. He had recently been evacuated to Australia from the NEI. See Dr de Jong, L., *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog 1939-1945, Deel 11c Nederlands-Indië III*, (Leiden/Martinus Nijhoff, 1986), p. 12.

<sup>19</sup>The vast majority of Australian forces in our region were under the command, directly or indirectly, of the American-led GHQ SWPA, which was based initially in Melbourne (401-403 Collins St) and later Brisbane (229 Queen St), before moving overseas following the advance of Allied forces towards Japan.

<sup>20</sup>Paraphrased from SOA Vol 1, digital pp 16-19.

<sup>21</sup>No. 7 Infantry Training Centre, set up as a result of the Mission 104, had been renamed the Guerilla Warfare School (GWS) on 10 March 1942 vide AHQ Letter 37-401-700.

<sup>22</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital pp 20-21. The history often inconsistently uses the terms ISD, SRD and SOA.





"Harbury", 39 Acland St, South Yarra, Melbourne.  
The second home of SOA.  
Source. Wikipedia

In order to bring about co-ordination of the growing number of Australian, Dutch, British and US Secret Intelligence (SI)/SO organisations in Australia on 6 July 1942, GHQ SWPA directed the establishment of the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB), to be headed by an Australian military officer with a US deputy. Within the AIB, "Section A" was "Special Operations, Australian Section (Inter-Allied Services Department)". Section A was "charged generally with obtaining information of the enemy and his activities and with the execution of acts of sabotage against the enemy. Special secret instructions will be issued from time to time".<sup>23</sup> (Incidentally and not strictly related to this story, the RAN Coastwatching Organisation became part of the new "Section C, Combined Field Intelligence Section", the (British) Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in Australia became "Section B – Secret Intelligence Service, Australian Section"; and the AMF's propaganda section became "Section D – Military Propaganda Section").<sup>24</sup>

SOA as ISD had a troubled history and was disbanded in February 1943 (while it still had parties in the field), but soon became re-badged with the new cover name of the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD).<sup>25</sup> An April 1943 "AIB Administrative Adjustments" Directive reorganised AIB into three regional sections – Northeast Section (the old Coast-watchers, operating almost exclusively in what is now Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands); the NEI Section (Dutch, focussed on the NEI); and the (American) Philippines Area. SOA (the old Section A) and SIA (the old Section B) were included essentially as

functional sections, who required approval from the relevant Regional Sections to conduct operations in those areas.

Just to digress for a moment, and since this article comments at length on misleading/inaccurate use of the name Z Special Unit, we should address the issue of what to call the first version of this Australian Special Operations Organisation. (Warning: Discerning readers may wish to skip to the end of this section to see the bottom line). There are some conflicting bread crumbs to follow:

- The post war official history refers to "Special Operations Australia being the history of Inter-Allied Services Department and Services Reconnaissance Department".<sup>26</sup> By definition, still under the "SOA" umbrella, "ISD" and "SRD" are therefore either the one organisation with different names at different times or one organisation ("SRD") seamlessly succeeding the other ("ISD").
- The index to the history<sup>27</sup> refers to "ISD" and then its successor "SOA (SRD)", perhaps implying ISD was not actually called "SOA".
- The glossary<sup>28</sup> refers to SOA and ISD, but oddly not to SRD. So, it is unlikely "SOA" is a generic term.
- The history refers to the establishment of an "SO organisation".<sup>29</sup> This "Organisation ... for security reasons was to be known as ISD", but the history alas does not explicitly say what the "real" organisation was actually called;
- Under the July 1942 creation of the AIB, ISD was referred to as "Section A, Special Operations, Australia Section" and elsewhere as "Special Operations, Australian Section";<sup>30</sup>
- The US history of the activities of intelligence units and capabilities in the SWPA notes: "The Bureau was initially subdivided into four main sections; "Special Operations, Australia" (SOA), sometimes referred to as "Inter-Allied Services Department" (ISD) and still later entitled "Services Reconnaissance Department" (SRD)";<sup>31</sup>
- In the official Australian war history, it is stated "General Blamey authorised the formation of 'Special Operations Australia' (SOA) under Mott"; and "It (AIB) was divided into four sections: "A" (SOA. or ISD. — Inter-Allied Services Department)" etc;<sup>32</sup>

<sup>23</sup>"Directive Covering the Organization, Co-ordination and Operation of Inter-Allied Units known as Special Operations, Australian Section, Secret Intelligence Service Australian Section, Combined Field Intelligence Section and Military Propaganda section", Item 134232, <naa.gov.au>, digital pp 184-188.

<sup>24</sup>The AIB did NOT include other Australian or Allied military/security units, civilian security/law enforcement organisations, SIGINT collectors; or specialist entities reporting direct to GHQ (such as mapping and Japanese linguistic support).

<sup>25</sup>See Courtney Interview, timing 01:20 to 3:20, for his comments on the establishment, disbanding and re-establishment of SOA in 1942-1943.

<sup>26</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p.5.

<sup>27</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 10.

<sup>28</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 11.

<sup>29</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 18, 19.

<sup>30</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 22.

<sup>31</sup>A *Brief History of the G-2 Section, SWPA and Affiliated Units*, G-2, GHQ Far East Command, 1948, p. 37

<sup>32</sup>Gavin Merrick Long, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945. Series 1 – Army, Volume VII – The Final Campaigns* (1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1963) , APPENDIX 4 THE ALLIED INTELLIGENCE BUREAU, pp 617, 618, <<https://s3-ap-south-east-2.amazonaws.com/awm-media/collection/RCDIG1070307/document/5519601.PDF>>



- In SOA Vol 2 (Operations) is noted "In Apr 1943 ISD was liquidated, and a new body called Special Operations Australia was formed. Shortly afterwards the name Services Reconnaissance Department was given to SOA for security reasons".<sup>33</sup> So, seemingly the first iteration of the SO organisation was actually called "ISD";
- Under the April 1943 AIB Administrative Adjustments,<sup>34</sup> the old AIB "Section A" is now explicitly called "SOA". SOA Vol 1<sup>35</sup> refers to the creation of a "new organisation with the secret name Special Operations Australia (SOA)", but again does not explicitly name the real name of the old organisation. SOA Vol 1 later notes<sup>36</sup> "The initials SOA, it was decided, were most secret and should only be used on the highest levels, and when the cover description SRD would be inappropriate"; and
- In Courtney Interview, to cut through any confusion, "Gruff" Courtney explicitly says "ISD" and "SRD" were the successive cover names of "SOA".<sup>37</sup>

So, what to make of all this? It is possible that ISD was initially used (for security reasons) for an organisation whose name was rarely enunciated, and even then, only in hushed tones, but which was (with upper or lower case initial letters) a "Special Operations, Australia" organisation. Post the April 1943 AIB adjustments though, it is explicit that "SRD" was the cover name for "SOA".

We've used SOA throughout this article except where the SOA Vol 1 actually uses "ISD" or "SRD". (If readers wish to take exception to this early use of "SOA" for "ISD", by reference to other authoritative, contemporary records, we'll happily concede the point).

Bottom line: This abstruse discussion above may well fall into the "so what" basket, but what is important is that whatever it really was, the Special Operations organisation was never "Z Special Unit".

We won't go into here the complex and often fraught command and control issues and disputes over roles, priorities and transport which persisted throughout the war, especially in regard to SOA, which had two (British) Directors relieved of command in that period. Nor do we need to cover in detail the operations conducted by SOA, with the exception of Operation JAYWICK, as below. The background above however provides a basis on which we can look at the story of Z Special Unit and compare and contrast the role of the real SOA with the vastly different role of the Independent Companies (and later Commando Squadrons).

<sup>33</sup>SOA Vol 2, digital p. 8.

<sup>34</sup>Item 134232, <naa.gov.au>, digital pp. 67-73.

<sup>35</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 27.

<sup>36</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 28.

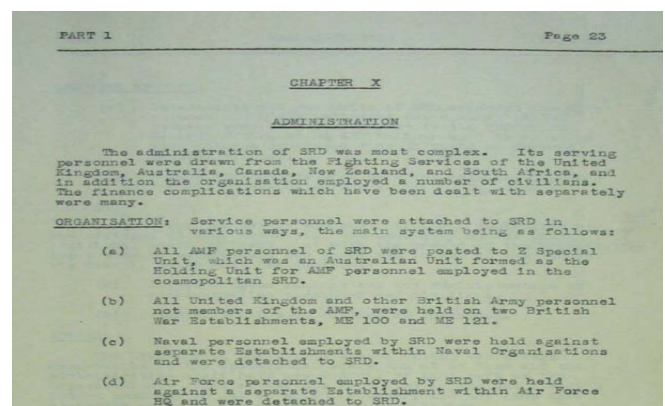
<sup>37</sup>Courtney Interview.

## Z Special Unit – What's in a Name?

The problem faced by SOA (in its ISD and SRD guises) was that it was a "secret" organisation and was in most respects simply the extension of SOE in Australia – its commanders and senior staff officers were mostly British and, to the annoyance of GHQ SWPA, it communicated directly with SOE HQ in London and with its sister SOE organisation the SOE (India) Mission (cover name "Force 136") based in Ceylon.<sup>38</sup> SOA therefore needed a "cover" by which it could interact in the open with unwitting Australian and Allied militaries and civilian agencies.

"Most of the personnel for ISD were being recruited from the three Australian services, but mainly from the AMF" (Australian Military Forces, i.e. Army) "and the question of posting military personnel and arranging military cover for civilians was at first a big problem. This was overcome by the creation by the CGS in June 1942 of a special unit, known as Z Special Unit, which was duly added to the Order of Battle." (Unlike other Army Units) the unit had no war establishment and no war equipment table. It had a 'carte blanche' authority to draw from Ordnance, and as it was controlled, run and paid at that time by ISD, it held a unique position in the Australian Army. Its formation increased security and was of great assistance in stabilising ISD's stores arrangements with the maximum of security".<sup>39</sup>

Of note to our discussion here, as per the Official History of SOA: "it was intended under the new arrangements" (of April 1943) "that Z Special Unit be retained by AIB for administrative convenience, SOA making use of its facilities if desired. However, it was subsequently decided that this unit be transferred to SRD, and that a similar holding unit – M Special Unit – be created for AIB".<sup>40</sup> This is (perhaps not surprisingly) the only mention of M Special Unit in the SOA history.



The "smoking gun" from the Official History. Z Special Unit was only a "holding unit".

Source: SOA Vol 1, digital p. 36.

<sup>38</sup>At Foot, M.R.D., SOE – The Special Operations Executive 1940-46, (University Publications of America, 1984), p. 37, SOA is shown as one of a number of component parts of SOE. At p. 244 "Force 137" is also noted as being a cover name for SOA (along with "Inter-Allied Services Department" and "Services Reconnaissance Department"). We haven't been able to find any other confirmation of the use of the Force 137 cover name.

<sup>39</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 21.

<sup>40</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 28.



On the instruction of General Blamey, Z Special Unit had an unlimited authority to draw from Ordnance and similar arrangements were made in regard to rations, petrol and supplies.<sup>41</sup>

The "Commander" (sometimes noted as Commanding Officer (CO)) of Z Special Unit rotated over the course of the war and was usually a senior Australian SOA administrative staff officer. Known within SOA by the short title of "Z", the (Australian) CO was responsible for all matters of Australian service administration. The duties of another (British) officer known by the short title of "FIN" included service administration for non-Australian personnel (principally British).<sup>42</sup>

AMF personnel posted into SOA were therefore posted to the "holding unit" known as Z Special Unit, while RAN and RAAF personnel were held against separate establishments within their services and "detached to SRD". British Army personnel who were not members of the AMF were held against two British war establishments, ME 100 and ME 121. By the end of the war, the strengths of the component parts of SOA were:

- Z Special Unit - 1201 Officers and ORs.
- ME 100 and ME 121 - 254 members.
- Australian and British Navy - 216; and
- British, Australian and New Zealand Air Force - 44.<sup>43</sup>

One writer noted a hopefully rare example of administrative confusion: "The fact that Z Special Unit administered only the Australian Army component of SOA also created a few hiccups closer to home. Although the unit had been formed to reduce administrative difficulties, a demarcation dispute arose in late 1943 when sailors arrived at SOA's new training school at Fraser Island, Queensland.<sup>44</sup> Being RAN, they did not come under Z Special Unit's jurisdiction, which only handled the pay of Australian Army recruits. Consequently, the seamen went unpaid for several weeks while the matter was resolved".<sup>45</sup>

It should also be noted: "As no WW2 covert organisations, including SOA and its Z Special administrative unit, had any wartime colour patch or insignia, these dagger and Z emblems" (currently used by Commando and M/Z associations) "are purely post-war, ex-service affectations".<sup>46</sup>



Post-war imaginings<sup>47 48</sup>  
Source: ACAVic Historical Collection

Having said that, there was a Z Special Unit colour patch worn only for a few weeks in late 1943 by Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) personnel serving as typists and stenographers at SOA HQ at "Harbury", South Yarra.<sup>49</sup> This colour patch was a black/brown Z over a square badge with horizontal green, white, green.<sup>50</sup>



The short-lived Z Special Unit patch at SOA HQ  
Source: Glyde, plate 61.

Even where authoritative writers could have quashed – or perhaps better explained - the Z Special Unit story, they did not. For example, the actual content of Brown's *Special Operations Australia History* books published in 2011 lays out the real story in excruciating detail, using the official contemporaneous (1946) history, yet the Preface to the book starts off with perhaps needlessly populist comments by the author "Popularly known today as Z Special Unit ..." and goes on to speak about "'Z' Men".<sup>51</sup> Perhaps bowing to the inevitable, in the Foreword to his book, Courtney for his part says: "Z Special Unit was the administrative

<sup>41</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 26.

<sup>42</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital p. 31.

<sup>43</sup>SOA Vol 1, digital pp. 36-39.

<sup>44</sup>i.e. the Fraser Commando School - FCS

<sup>45</sup>Silver.

<sup>46</sup>Silver.

<sup>47</sup>Unofficial history of the Australian & New Zealand Armed Services, <[http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-battles/ww2/z\\_force.htm](http://www.diggerhistory.info/pages-battles/ww2/z_force.htm)>.

<sup>48</sup>Virtual War Memorial Australia, <https://vwma.org.au/explore/units/581>.

<sup>49</sup>Knight, Doug, "WW2 Australian Special Operations and Commando Badges and Insignia", *COMMANDO - The Magazine of the Australian Commando Association*, (Edition 10 | 2022), p. 67. Based on account of an AWAS members serving in Headquarters at that time.

<sup>50</sup>Glyde, Keith, *Distinguishing Colour Patches of the Australian Military Forces 1915 - 1951 - A Reference Guide*, (Australia: K Glyde, 1999), ISBN 0-6460-36640-8.

<sup>51</sup>Brown.





body in SRD to which all Australians were officially posted, and it is the name by which it is best known here today. I have therefore chosen it to be the title of this book".<sup>52</sup>

To be fair though, even at the time there was uncertainty within the AMF as to the real name. A perusal of Z Special Unit pay records in 1942 reveals that, outside of SOA at least, there was confusion as to whether the term was "Z" Special Force or "Z" Special Unit.<sup>53 54</sup>

*So, it was actually SOA which was the "frequently lethal" organisation (see the claims about Z Special Unit in the opening paragraphs of this article). And Z Special Unit was an administrative entity devised to support SOA, never existing as an operational combat unit and was never even part of the organisational structure of SOA, which was set up along geographic and functional lines.*<sup>55</sup>

### Covert, undercover "spy" unit?

Another enduring myth about Z Special Unit (i.e. in actual fact SOA) is that it was some kind of covert, undercover spy unit. It was not.

When the Dutch military intelligence element was initially part of SOA, some Indonesian members were indeed inserted under cover into parts of the NEI, but with overwhelmingly disastrous results.<sup>56</sup>

The Australian and British members of SOA did on occasion use disguise – e.g. the members of Operation JAYWICK wishing to appear to Japanese eyes in the air to be local boats crews; and perhaps on other operations some members of ethnic appearance occasionally donned local garb so they could at first glance pass as locals. In many operations there was also of course an active program of seeking information either passively or actively through local inhabitants, sometimes at great personal risk to those local inhabitants. There was however no sense that any of the deployed SOA members were really pretending to

be anything other than what they actually were – members of a uniformed, armed Allied unit operating behind enemy lines.

Finally, just because they did "collect intelligence", either incidentally or as a deliberate mission aim, did not make them "spies" – and to further that misapprehension devalues the achievements of those who really were spies. Many other organisations/units also collected intelligence on enemy activities – NEA Section of the AIB (originally the "Coastwatchers"), the Army's New Guinea Air Warning Wireless Company, the Far East Liaison Office (FELO)<sup>57</sup>, the Australian New Guinea Administrative Unit (ANGAU), as well as regular units deployed in the field, to name a few examples.

### What about the Commandos?

SOA (or at least its so-called alter ego – Z Special Unit) is often conflated with the Independent Companies (and the Commando Squadrons).

The Independent Companies had already started to be raised more than a year before SOA was even seriously in prospect. No 1 Independent Company started training in February 1941, with the input of the Mission 104 instructors, and was formally raised in June that year. SOA however was not established, and even then, as a small HQ element only, until April 1942. There will doubtless be some individual exceptions, but key points of comparison/contrast are as below:

- The operational role of the Independent Companies deployed from late 1941 to early 1943 in Portuguese Timor, New Guinea, New Hebrides, and New Caledonia included work that was indeed similar to what was later intended for SOA:
  - o No. 1 Independent Company, deployed in small groups in July 1941 in an arc from the outer islands of New Guinea to the then New Hebrides, was intended to carry out guerrilla warfare (GW) against the Japanese forces when they arrived. Essentially however only a small number of them survived death and capture or escaped, to carry out this mission. It was only No. 3 Section deployed on Buka Island and later Bougainville (in what is now PNG) that was able to work on, with elements of the RAN Coastwatchers (which became the North East Area Section of the AIB) for over a year and half until March/April 1943.

<sup>52</sup>Courtney, p. vii. Courtney's recollection here (and in Courtney Interview) that all Australians were posted to Z Special Unit is at odds with the official history (SOA Vol 1) which says that only Australian Army members were posted to Z Special Unit. Foreign military personnel and some civilian SOA personnel were 'Attached' and administered by Z Special Unit. See Z Special Unit ROs at Item 30260529 at <[naa.gov.au](http://naa.gov.au)>.

<sup>53</sup>Assorted SOA pay records contained in Item 725246 at <[naa.gov.au](http://naa.gov.au)>.

<sup>54</sup>In retrospect of course, a less mysterious cover name may have been better. "Z" seems at the time to have been favoured though and included Z Experimental Station (ZES) at Cairns. These names may have been inspired indirectly at least by SIS's Z Organisation (a network of SIS collection activities outside of official cover establishments). In recent years secret/special forces organisations have used a variety of more innocuous cover titles such as "Studies and Observation Group" (SOG), "Development Group" (DEVGRU), "Combat Applications Group" (CAG) and the "Increment."

<sup>55</sup>See SOA Vol 1 for detail of SOA's organisation.

<sup>56</sup>See SOA Vol 2, digital pp. 26-41 for a depressing summary of 13 Dutch operations, under SOA, from June 1942 to April 1943 - one operation was abandoned in the planning stage; 2 parties managed to perform their mission and return safely; and 10 other parties were either killed, captured (and then killed) or just disappeared.

<sup>57</sup>The predecessor of FELO was the short-lived Section D – Military Propaganda Section in the original AIB structure. Shortly after, this section reverted to direct Australian command with a name change to become FELO.



- o No. 2 and No. 4 Independent Companies deployed successively to Portuguese Timor carried out a GW role, including working with local forces until they were withdrawn in Jan 1943 after about 14 months. They operated in circumstances far more difficult than those faced by SOA parties who deployed (more successfully) to Borneo in the closing stages of the war; and
- o No 3. Independent Company was deployed to New Caledonia to prepare for GW there, but since the Japanese forces did not reach that far, it was withdrawn in August 1942.

SOA began deploying parties to Portuguese Timor in July 1942 and to New Guinea in October 1942, thus setting the stage for the Independent Companies no longer being needed to carry out work in enemy-occupied territories. With the withdrawal of the last Independent Company elements from Portuguese Timor in early 1943, and the handful still on Bougainville for only a few more months, the role of the Independent Companies and soon to be Commando Squadrons changed. They were thereafter deployed to carry out often extremely arduous, but regular military tasks for the remainder of the war in support of and under command of the Australian 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Divisions.

- SOA operated most often at extreme distances from friendly forces; after the withdrawals from Portuguese Timor and Bougainville, the Commandos' role was by contrast to operate on the edge of or in front of the battle area.
- SOA, until later in the war in Borneo, operated in small groups; the Commandos (after Portuguese Timor and Bougainville) usually operated in platoon or company sized groups.
- SOA did not train with the Commandos (but they did share use of the No. 7 Infantry Training Centre for a few months in 1942). Nor did SOA's misleadingly named "Fraser Commando School" in Queensland actually train Commandos, it was SOA and later other AIB operatives who trained there;
- SOA was multi-national – UK, Australia, NZ, Dutch (including Indonesians), Portuguese and numerous locally raised inhabitants from Portuguese Timor and Borneo in particular; the Commandos were almost entirely Australian.
- SOA was what we would today call "tri-service" (but mainly Army); the Commandos were by definition all Army.
- SOA had its own organic planning, command, training, support, communications and, later, transport capabilities; Commandos were more focussed on tactical field operations and drew on other Australian and Allied military elements for those capabilities.
- They had different chains of command – SOA had a complex chain of command and control, it

reported to the AIB and hence to GHQ SWPA, as well as to SOE and in some cases to the AMF; Commandos reported through the normal Australian military chain of command.

- SOA used submarines, inflatables, "Folboats" (collapsible canoes), native craft, air drops and/or seaplanes for insertion/extraction/re-supply; the Commandos had conventional means available; and
- SOA was "secret"; the Commandos were not.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00707.002

No 2 Independent Coy in Portuguese Timor

Source. Australian War Memorial,

<<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C209615>>.



SOA SEMUT II Party in Sarawak

Source. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation\\_Semut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Semut).

## Operation JAYWICK – a "Commando" success?

We turn briefly to one of the better-known SOA operations – Operation JAYWICK, the September 1943 attack on shipping in Singapore harbour launched by personnel from Folboats, working off a native craft mother ship (the KRAIT). The various popular tellings of JAYWICK embody many of the misconceptions about SOA (and for that matter the Independent Companies/Commandos).

Often billed as a "Z Special Unit (or sometimes a Z Force) commando raid", JAYWICK was actually of little interest to GHQ SWPA and AIB, as it took place in an area which was part of the (British) South East Asia

Command (SEAC) responsibility. It was planned in conjunction with the British SOE (India) and, in some accounts of SOE, is noted simply as an SOE operation.<sup>58</sup>



An imagining of JAYWICK.<sup>59</sup>

The Operational party consisted of 14 men comprising:

- 2 British Army (SOE)
- 8 RAN
- 2 RN
- 2 AMF (Z Special Unit)

Of that group, the six men who paddled Folboats on the raid were:

- 1 British Army (SOE)
- 3 RAN
- 1 RN
- 1 AMF (Z Special Unit)

So, none were from “Z Force” (a misnomer anyway, as that was really a British Army reconnaissance force in Burma) and none were “Commandos”. It was led by a British Army officer from SOE, for SOE purposes, and three of the four Australians who took part in the raid itself were Navy members recruited from the RAN Training Depot at HMAS Cerberus, Flinders, Victoria.

<sup>58</sup>At Cruickshank, Charles, *SOE in the Far East*, (Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 96-98, JAYWICK is noted as a proposal put to SOE London by the SOE India Mission. It is described as SOE India Mission’s “most successful single operation”.

<sup>59</sup>Cundall, Peter, *Operation Jaywick: A Reassessment of Results*, (2012), <[www.combinedfleet.com/Cundall\\_Jaywick.htm](http://www.combinedfleet.com/Cundall_Jaywick.htm)>.

Only two of the 14 members in the party, as a whole, were AMF and could therefore be considered officially to be members of Z Special Unit.<sup>60</sup>

## SOA’s Legacy

The functions of almost all of the Australian elements of the AIB, including SOA, were discontinued immediately after the war.<sup>61</sup> The same applied to the Commando Squadrons who had no place in the much slimmed-down new regular Army created in 1947.

The first step towards reconstituting some of these functions were however eventually taken in 1952 with the establishment of the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS). According to an until then unique September 2020 public interview with the Director-General ASIS Maj Gen (Ret) Paul Symon:

“There were two primary roles when the Service was created on the 13 May 1952. Prime Minister Menzies signed off on the charter for the Australian Secret Service – as it was known originally – ... to do two things: undertake the collection of foreign intelligence offshore; and secondly conduct special operations. The way special operations were defined was very much in the manner in which the military in the Second World War had undertaken special operations, clandestine operations, sabotage operations, those types of activities envisaged in a time of war”.<sup>62</sup>

An August 2022 statement by the former Chair of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (PJCSIS) Senator James Paterson made a similar rare declaration:

“The new agency “(ASIS) “was to be led by Alfred Deakin Brookes, a former Army intelligence officer<sup>63</sup>. The new agency was charged with two key priorities: the collection of foreign intelligence offshore and the execution of special operations. These operations were envisaged to be very much like the type undertaken in the Second World War, where brave men and women risked their lives to uncover secrets, cultivate critical knowledge and engage in clandestine activities to disrupt or deter an enemy”.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup>See SOA Vol 2 digital pp. 534-550 for a summary of the official 1946 account of JAYWICK. Of interest too is Cundall, Peter, *Operation Jaywick: A Reassessment of Results*, (2012), <[www.combinedfleet.com/Cundall\\_Jaywick.htm](http://www.combinedfleet.com/Cundall_Jaywick.htm)> which focuses on a revised battle damage assessment of the raid, as well as discussion of the Japanese mistaken assumptions as to how and by whom the damage was actually caused.

<sup>62</sup>ASIS Interview 1 Transcript (Interview with the Director-General ASIS Paul Symon 28 September 2020), ASPI, Australian Policy Institute, <<https://www.aspi.org.au/report/asis-interviews>>.

<sup>63</sup>A war-time member of FELO, which was at one stage part of AIB, as per Alfred Deakin Brookes, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred\\_Deakin\\_Brookes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Deakin_Brookes)>.

<sup>64</sup>Adjournment Statement by Senator Paterson in the Senate on 3 August 2022, <[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Hansard/Hansard\\_Display?bid=chamber/hansards/25939/&sid=0000](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Hansard/Hansard_Display?bid=chamber/hansards/25939/&sid=0000)>.



Soon after, elements of what we now call the Australian Defence Force (ADF) began to take on some of those functions in varying degrees, starting with the raising of the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) 1 and 2 Commando Companies in 1955. According to Brigadier (Ret) "Mac" Grant OAM RFD, the first OC of the newly raised 1 Commando Company in 1955: "In Australia in the early 1950s defence planners convinced the government to raise "Special Forces" for clandestine operations similar to those of SOA and of the Independent Companies and Commando Squadrons during the war. Units capable of performing a dual role would provide a pool of trained manpower to be 'farmed off' as needed to an equivalent of Z Special Unit for allocation to special operations, while the rest would undertake more conventional commando operations".<sup>65</sup>

This was followed by the raising of Australian Regular Army (ARA) units – the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Air Service Company in 1957 and the No.1 Independent Signal Squadron in 1958. The ADF capability has grown significantly since then and has culminated in:

- the various units comprising Special Operations Command (SOCOMD), principally SASR and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commando Regiments; and
- various elements of the 6<sup>th</sup> Combat Support Brigade, in particular the 1<sup>st</sup> Intelligence Battalion and the Regional Force Surveillance Units.<sup>66</sup>

Along with ASIS and the two Commando Regiments, SASR also lay claim to much of the legacy of the AIB and in particular SOA, along with the Independent Companies. According to the Special Air Service Historical Association: "With this emphasis on small groups operating deep behind enemy lines the AIB provided the closest parallel to what later became the Special Air Service (SAS) although the Australian Special Forces actually owe their beginnings to the Coastwatchers and the Independent Companies as well."<sup>67 68</sup>

<sup>65</sup>Grant, "Mac", "Reserve Commandos inherit a remarkable legacy", *The Defence Reserves Yearbook 2004 – 2005*, <[http://www.defence-reserves.com/cms\\_resources/documents/yearbook\\_21\\_30.pdf](http://www.defence-reserves.com/cms_resources/documents/yearbook_21_30.pdf)>, p.30.

<sup>66</sup>6<sup>th</sup> Brigade, *Military Fandom*, <[https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/6th\\_Brigade\\_\(Australia\)](https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/6th_Brigade_(Australia))>.

<sup>67</sup>Pre-1957, *Australian SAS History, Special Air Service Historical Foundation*, <[https://www.australiansas.com/pre\\_1957.html](https://www.australiansas.com/pre_1957.html)>.

<sup>68</sup>We should probably not forget that, when it comes to identifying the source of the legacy of today's organisations, also in the mix somewhere are the RAN Beach Commandos formed during the World War 2. See *RAN Beach Commandos*, at the RAN website, <<https://www.navy.gov.au/history/feature-histories/ran-beach-commandos>>. See also SOA Vol 1, digital p. 81 for a summary of the formation in early 1945 of RAAF 200 Flight which provided AIB (including SOA) with a dedicated air transport and resupply capability.

## So, does it really matter?

So, Z Special Unit therefore did exist, but as an administrative convenience and front for the real Special Operations Australia, and as a holding unit for AMF personnel in SOA. It carried out no daring operations, but its existence did facilitate the pay, punishment, postings and awards (for many) and the rations, the bullets, the blankets and the other equipment for the organisation that did conduct the operations, SOA.

But does it really matter? The answer to this, as for the original question is yes, and no.

To take the "no, it doesn't matter" case first. None of the above detracts in any way from the bureaucratic success of military/civilian/political players in establishing a multi-national, multi-agency organisation at a time of significant clashes of political interests, confusion and peril. Nor does it in any way detract from the blood, sweat and tears expended by those who worked in that organisation, by whatever name those people knew it Nor finally does it detract from SOA's operational successes or excuse its failures.

To take the "yes, it does matter" case. It does matter, for three reasons.

First, if we don't understand how these extraordinary achievements were effected in the past, we will find it difficult to replicate this in the future. The bureaucratic and political problems experienced by the pioneers of the early 1940's will be strikingly similar to challenges we are beginning to face now. Geography doesn't change, so presumably also planners are looking, in many cases, at the exact same locations, in which operations took place 80 years ago. Likewise misunderstanding of roles and tasks of units/organisations, i.e. "who does what", leads to poor planning and bureaucratic confusion. If we don't learn the lessons of the past, we'll keep making the same mistakes.

As to the question of who were the successors of SOA – and the other parts of the AIB and the Independent Companies/Commandos – it does matter and ASIS and the various ADF formations noted above have varying degrees of strength in their sometimes overlapping but sincere claims to inheritance. The fact that so many groups lay claim to the achievements of organisations from 80 years ago is testament to the fact that what many seek to lay claim to remains to this day truly remarkable. We ride on the shoulders of those who preceded us.

Finally, as a matter of principle, we owe it to all those who served to recognise the truth of their service. The real story has been in the public domain starting at least since 1981, but for the reasons discussed at the beginning of this article, it has proven difficult to make it stick. There has for a long time been no reason to dissemble or to perpetuate half-true stories.



# THE END OF AN ERA

## A lifelong member of the Commando family

### VALE RITA DRAKOPOULOS

2 April 1927 – December 2022

*Barry Higgins with assistance from Rita's son David and her granddaughter Dona Drakopoulos.*

Association members were saddened to learn of the death in late December of Rita Drakopoulos, aged 95. Rita was the widow of the 2 Commando Company, Company Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Class 2, George 'Taffy' Drakopoulos, who drowned in the tragic Rip incident in 1960.

On the evening of February 17, 1960, 2 Commando Company set off in various army watercraft on a training exercise from Point Lonsdale to Point Nepean, simulating a raid which involved them crossing the infamous Rip at the entrance to Port Phillip.

The weather changed without warning and kayaks, zodiacs, DUKWs and safety craft capsized or were swept out to sea through the Port Phillip heads, encountering massive seas. The DUKW of 'Taffy' Drakopoulos and Eddie Meyer sunk. Both men were in the water for hours and died before they could be rescued. (Elsewhere, Roger Wood selflessly helped his fellow Commandos up a rope ladder on the Italian liner Toscana to safety from their Zodiac inflatable, only then to be flung into the sea and lost somewhere beyond The Rip.)

Taffy had transferred into 2 Commando Company in October 1955, one of the very early members. Rita and Taffy were great friends with a number of the "originals" of the fledgling Company. After Taffy's loss many of his Unit friends gave great support to Rita and her family, including continuing the building of the family home.

When Taffy died Rita was aged 32 with two young children, David and Denise.

David said Rita was a "Brave little Buggar" and all of the family agreed that the word that summed her up was "Selfless". He said Rita looked after the interests of all of her family ahead of her own.

Rita's early forebears were from the Faroe Islands in the North Sea, between Scotland and Iceland and were of Viking Ancestry. Her closer ancestors were convicts on the Second Fleet that went to Norfolk Island and were then cruelly sent empty-handed to Tasmania.

Rita was a draft technician at the Fishermens Bend aircraft factory during the later war years. She was then a geriatric nurse for 25 years, managing the physical demands of her tasks better than many of her bigger colleagues, David recalled.

In 1986 the 2 Commando Company memorial rock, inspired by David Waterston, was dedicated at the Unit at Fort Gellibrand. The original plaque recorded the names of the six Unit and support elements members who had died in training, including Taffy. Rita and her family caught up with former comrades of Taffy for the first time in many years.

At the time, only three years after the Victorian Commando Association was formed, president Roman Stuczynski said, "There were many familiar faces, a few tears and emotions . . . from now on (Rita) will not be short of friends".

In January 2000, thanks to the sterling work of many Association members and supporters, Association patron General Sir Phillip Bennett unveiled a memorial at Shortlands Bluff at Queenscliff, overlooking the Port Phillip Heads – the Rip. It was dedicated to Eddie



*Rita Drakopoulos with her son and daughter David and Denise, cousins Denis and Helen Kelly and grandchildren, prepare to place flowers on the Rip memorial at Shortlands Bluff in Queenscliff.*



*The Commando family. Rita with, from left, then 2 Company OC Major Chris Wallis, Major Steve Pilmore, David Drakopoulos, Denis Kelly, Dona Drakopoulos and Helen Kelly at the 2006 service.*



Meyer, 41 Amphibious Platoon, Roger Wood and Taffy. Rita and her family attended and she later wrote to president John Addison, "It's impossible for me to describe my feelings . . . but you all gave me a day to remember forever".

Every year since, Rita and her family members attended the annual 'Rip' memorial service, held in February. Some years there were four generations – she was a great grandmother. She was often supported by her brother-in-law, Dennis 'Ned' Kelly. Dennis was a WW2 air force veteran who parachuted from his bullet riddled Lancaster aircraft over German-occupied France and finally escaped with the help of partisans. He was later awarded the French Legion of Honour.

Rita found the annual Rip commemorations most supportive and enjoyed catching up with those who had known Taffy during their service together. The wife of a former Unit member who also went through the Rip incident once remarked to Rita that she, Rita, was fortunate to have a gathering each year to remember Taffy. Rita replied that it was very comforting and she enjoyed and appreciated catching up with Taffy's old friends each year, especially as they recounted memories of him.

The Association and members kept in touch and Rita was a guest at anniversary functions. She was also bestowed honorary membership of the Association to make it easier for her to stay in contact and receive correspondence and publications.

President John Addison earlier presented to Rita a bayonet, beautifully mounted on a polished timber stand crafted by Richard Godden. It was retrieved from the Rip in 1960 and was passed on to the Association by Queenscliff fisherman Lewis Ferrier who was involved during the Rip episode.

Before the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rip incident in 2010 Rita sat with president Peter Beasley and other members in interviews at Portsea for an article for The Age newspaper.

Rita's last attendance at the Rip service was early last year. Her son David said she died peacefully in her sleep in hospital and by her wishes had a private cremation. She finally joined Taffy, her only life partner, when her ashes were placed beside his at the Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

All Association members offer their sincere sympathy to David, Denise and all members of Rita's extended family.



*Family and friends. Rita with family and former 2 Commando Company comrades of Taffy in 2007. From left, Dona Drakopoulos, Denis Kelly, David Drakopoulos, Helen Kelly and Denis Jenkins. Front, Rita, Jan Jenkins and Frank Wheatland.*

oOo

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

## AN UNSUNG HERO OF THE 1960 RIP TRAGEDY

### VALE NEVILLE ANTHONY BIRCH

3165766 Private

2 Commando Company

May 18, 1942 – June 16, 2022

*Barry Higgins with assistance from Rita's son David and her granddaughter Dona Drakopoulos.*

**W**hen Neville Birch enlisted in 2 Commando Company as a young recruit he had no inkling of what was ahead of him.

A few months before he turned 18 Neville moved from Geelong to Melbourne for training and work with Telecom. He passed the stringent entry tests for the Commando Unit in October 1959 and soon after completed a Small Craft Handling course, along with Herbie Ross, Ernie Conyers, Ted Sugden, Chris Williams and Noel Mavric. They were soon drawing on their newly earned skills in an unexpected way.

In February, at the Unit's annual camp the final

exercise was to cross the Bay in darkness from Lonsdale Bight beach to raid the Officer Cadet School at Portsea. The flotilla consisted of canoes, 3-man zodiacs, 10-man zodiacs and various safety craft. After about two hours the seas turned wild, with giant waves scattering the kayaks across the horizon. Neville and his paddling partner Glen Doyle made it to the DUKW safety craft, along with Ted Sugden and John 'Utah' McDonald.

Glen recalled, "Towing proved impossible and we thankfully scrambled aboard the safety craft . . . The rough seas swept the kayaks away and while struggling with a tow line Neville was slammed into the side of the



DUKW and fractured three of his ribs”.

“Shortly afterwards the DUKW was swamped by the waves, the pumps couldn't cope, and it sunk. Captain Jack Fletcher ordered us to jump, and had the foresight to grab a life buoy.”

Ted Sugden said when they all surfaced and swam to each other there was one life buoy between the eight men. When they sighted a ship close by after about an hour-and-a-half in the water the men called out, but were not seen. Soon after, Birch saw Taffy Drakopoulos drift past and grabbed him and pulled him back to the lifebuoy, between him and Utah.

Glen Doyle said, “Jack . . . kept us around the life buoy and had the huge task of keeping us on the ball, as we were all exhausted and prone to drift off.”

Later Neville, despite his injury, helped support Taffy, who succumbed to the constant immersion and drowned.

After another couple of hours the Port Phillip pilot ship, Akuna, spotted the men in the water and launched its tender to pick them up. In an interview with the Herald-Sun on the 60th anniversary of the Rip incident in 2020, Neville said, “When the tender was about 15 feet away I swam over to it, towing Taffy”. Its crew members lifted Taffy into the tender. Neville then looked back and saw someone was not attempting to swim. He swam to him and towed him to the tender. When he was being lifted into the boat Neville saw it was Will Vicum, one of the DUKW crew. Back on land, Neville was admitted to the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital with broken ribs.



*Ian Wischusen assists Neville Birch from the pilot ship Akuna to the ferry Mari Ann on the morning following the Rip incident, with Ian Halliburton in the background.  
Photo Melbourne Herald, Thursday, February 18, 1960.*



*A happy grandfather. Neville celebrates a birthday with his two grandsons, Liam and Josh.  
Photo Alan Birch*

Neville’s grim experience in the Rip did not affect his service in the Company. But about a year later he was transferred back to the Geelong region for work and reluctantly discharged. He continued his career with Telecom, retiring as a senior manager.

Neville was a life member of the Bannockburn Football Netball Club and its Past Players Association. The club said he would be greatly missed. Neville was also acknowledged as an esteemed member of the Inverleigh RSL Sub-Branch.

Neville’s wife Lorraine and their son Mark pre-deceased him.

Neville’s many early friends and all members of the Commando Association offer their sympathy and thoughts to Alan and to Neville’s extended family.



# DOUBLE DIAMONDS

Reprinted from Double Diamond (Victoria) Edition 15 June 1954

## TWO SHORT STORIES ~ ALL IN A DAY'S WORK AND OLD HORSE AND HIS MATES

By VX79083 Private Robert Owen Phillips,  
2/4 Australian Commando Squadron

After a period spent at Milne Bay in New Guinea doing some jungle bashing, though mostly jungle bogging is more to the point. The unit eventually embarked on LST's<sup>1</sup> split up in various sections and parties on different barges along with troops of other brigades, etc, bound for action in New Guinea somewhere. An uneventful trip to Buna and joined up with other LST's in convoy and then a couple of days wondering what was in the wind. It turned out to be the Lae show, which started 6-7<sup>th</sup> September and went on all the time the rain lasted I reckon.

### ALL IN THE DAY'S WORK

On the morning of the big "do" our convoy was sailing along peacefully enough and not worrying over much about aeroplanes 'as most of those visible were our own breed, when all of a sudden, the peaceful atmosphere was turned to a bedlam of sound. A squadron of Jap bombers had dived on us out of the sun and were seen just too late to avert the surprise effect they had hoped for.

As the first bombs were dropped the first guns opened up and in few seconds everything was in action and everybody else was either in the road or else doing something useful. Being in the road was unavoidable as on this convoy all LST's were heavily loaded inside with stuff and very little room on deck to move for war equipment and most troops lived on deck during the convoy; no other place to go much. Also being shorthanded the LST's were using Army Bofors<sup>2</sup> etc. on decks for ack ack<sup>3</sup> and during the attack they did good work, but on occasion had to cease firing on account of troops being in the road.

The bombers were closely followed by more bombers carrying torpedoes and coming in at Ship level, they were fair game for the Bofors Crews. Hard on the heels of the bombers came our own Lightnings<sup>4</sup> and the enemy, not

being able to regain height, were easy prey, and most of them paid the penalty - while still in sight of the Convoy.

We later heard that none returned home to Rabaul, their base at that stage of the war.

The first I knew of anything doing was being hurled to the deck of a passage way near a water tap where I had gone to fill my water bottle. Rising up, only to be hurled back again, I wondered what was on. Finding my way up to the top deck just in time to see the torpedoes being dropped, and to see the barge opposite cop a torpedo that had passed very close to our own bow, right in the stern. By this time our own barge had become a shambles, a salvo of bombs catching us about the bridge area, completely blowing away one bridge gun turret killing the gunners instantly. Strafing had exploded other ammo etc, the cook house area and all those sheltering, either for shade prior to the attack, or from strafing was a welter of bits and pieces, both human and ship.

After the tension had eased a bit, Captain O'Connor of our Unit, who was the Officer Commanding of troops on our barge, mustered up the members of our unit to attend to the gruesome work of cleaning up, assisting in helping the wounded and rigging up shade for them. It was found that out of all the Regimental Aid Post (RAP)<sup>5</sup> men and Doctors on the barge, Corporal (CPL) Hanisch of our unit and a CPL of another unit, were the only ones left on their feet. To these two men fell the task of doing what they could to help those who were in need of medical attention, and of these there were plenty. Our parties rigged what shelter they could, carried the wounded to these shelters and gave what help they could to Corporal Hanisch. It was also found at the same time, that one bomb had blown up ship's medical supplies, and after all available medical gear had been mustered it certainly was not a very impressive array.

Both the RAP men worked under very trying conditions, even for the wounded there was very little water available for drinking. After some hours, during which time the barge was just swinging about without engine or steerage a destroyer came alongside to take off the

<sup>1</sup>Landing Ship Tank

<sup>2</sup>40 mm anti-aircraft gun

<sup>3</sup>Anti-aircraft fire

<sup>4</sup>The Lockheed P-38 Lightning is an American designed single-seat, twin piston-engined fighter aircraft.

<sup>5</sup>Regimental Aid Post





seriously wounded and to replenish the sadly depleted medical supplies. It was during the evacuation of the wounded that the wonderful work of the two RAP boys became evident. As the doctor of the destroyer ran his experienced eye over their work, he expressed with satisfaction the skilful work they had carried out under the circumstances. Those of us engaged in assisting of the job also realise that our CPL Hanisch had been having the bulk of the responsibility, we were very proud of him and did not forget to tell him so but he just passed it off by saying "it was all in a day's work." Eventually the barge was towed to Mocohe Bay where the equipment stores, etc were unloaded into another LST which rejoined the convoy just passing the Bay. We finally ended up a bit late for the "big do" on the beach beyond Lae, where at a later date we took part in a general scheme of things.

Though a RAP section of a unit falls in for a lot of shellack about number nines, aspros, etc, the work of CPL Hanisch on the LST had won for him a place in the hearts of his mates and their confidence in his ability helped in many a battle.

Those interested in following this particular Operation POSTERN - The Battle of Salamaua and Lae 1943 can be viewed at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z09u1CPx\\_I0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z09u1CPx_I0)

## OLD HORSE AND HIS MATES

After a short period on Tarakan Hill, B Troop shifted to Hospital Hill and spent a bit of time prowling about awaiting developments concerning Snags Track, which was the hold up in general progress of the whole show.

A little time spent by patrols probing on one flank and finally picking up a portion of A Troop under Lieutenant (Lt) Wally Marshall. After passing the time of clay, the patrol moved back to the area while Marshall's men occupied a knoll for the night in Jap holes already dug. During the night they were attacked, but beat off the Japs, and the next morning when the first lot of B Troop contacted them, they were very relieved to find no major casualties but plenty of minor ones and a few dead enemy close handy.

They passed through B Troop, and we occupied a position nearby on a horseshoe ridge, with the opposite face of the horseshoe a little higher than our position. A quiet night, thol easy, as everybody concerned were an exposed position to the enemy's main last stronghold of defences.

In the morning an A Troop patrol was fired on, wounding Lt Marshall, the patrol returned, and position of enemy being reported. B Troop took over the patrol and area and No. 6 Section allotted the job of routing the enemy. Sam Collins, better known as the "Old Horse" and a couple of mates were successful in flushing a couple of Nips out of a square hole on top of the horseshoe ridge. No. 6 Section then moved over and occupied this portion of the feature later known on maps as Agnes. No. 5 Section setting up on the curve of the horseshoe and HO elements with Sigs, HQ, 4, 5 and 6 Section the other curve were at almost hand to and also at the base of the ridge.

The work of digging in and getting set proceeded rapidly and a midday snack partly finished when a hell of a rattle of wood peckers and hail of bullets clipped the top of ridge for some minutes. While this was going on a large party of Nips were putting on a great noise and advancing in a "Banzai" charge' up the almost straight side of the ridge face. As soon as the machine guns stopped, their yelling intensified, and the last few yards was accompanied by their own rifle 'fire.

The whole of Six Section and some of five hand grips, with them and the automatic weapons played havoc with the Nips. A cry went up for "ammo and in a hurry". Not being in the "do" at the moment, a couple of 5 Section blokes dived back to HQ area for grenades and Owen gun slugs plus 303's.

Filling their shirts and anything they could carry, they had time to notice that HQ area had fallen foul of a couple of mortar bombs during the barrage; and Signaller Duncan was operating his set under a pile of branches and mud with a dud mortar bomb half buried only a couple of feet away.

On arrival at the sorely pressed area and distributing the various ammo and loading wags for the ones who couldn't stop shooting, I found myself at "Old Horse's" side. "How are you going, Horse;" rag around his head and a grim look on his face he replied, "Only got half a mag left, but I still got a tomahawk and a machete, the bastards won't get me."

Next hole Ted Hobbs having a struggle to keep a Jap from taking the Bren gun while a mag was being put in for him. This Bren gunner did wonderful work in stemming the' first rushes of the attack while under fire from enemy machine guns.

Unfortunately, it was his swan song as he joined the ranks of those who grow not old along with Snowy Theikelsten a couple of clays later in the finale on "Freda."

It was here that the humour of Bob Timmins and the charmed life of Frank Mannion had run for their money. Both in same hole and both got hit, but kept at it until their place was taken. When relieved "Timmo" said "keep on of that B -hole, there's no B- dough in this: army." Hades of Ravenshoe and pay parade twice in one week, second pay caught a various stages of jungle juice beano.

"Timmo," collecting and retiring across the parade ground with a loud shout, "Dough in this Army, pay twice a week whacko!" Frank Mannion had run foul of Jap lead on other occasions and had some adventures before regaining the Section.

It was here that "Ding Dong" Bell copped a busted leg that kept him for a spell in hospital and home. This episode in 6 Section's history was fast and furious, and when a general check-up was made it was found that the enemy attacking the face was around 60 strong and desperate to 'the extent of charging with spear heads tied to their barrels with jungle vine'.

This story of Horse and his mates may lose some of its glory in telling but it is certain that those of us associated with 6 Section have not lost any of our pride and respect for them.



### **RSL Australia Outlines Budget Wins for Government to Improve Veteran Healthcare and to Address Royal Commission Outcomes**

Australia's largest ex-service organisation has outlined a list of critical budget policy initiatives to immediately improve access to services and entitlements for veterans and their families.

RSL Australia has made a detailed pre-budget submission to the Australian Government calling for financial provisions to break down bureaucracy in the Department of Veterans' Affairs and for funding to be made available for the prompt implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

RSL Australia President Greg Melick says the 2023-24 Budget is the starting point in securing funding and addressing policies that will make a material difference to the health and wellbeing of veterans and their families in Australia.

"The forthcoming Budget provides the Australian Government with the opportunity to comprehensively change the way Australia treats its veterans," Mr Melick said.

"An appropriate Budget response will ensure that our service men and women are able to experience a healthy transition from service, engage in fulfilling civilian careers and continue to make positive social and economic contributions to our nation."

The budget submission calls for the Government to work towards merging the three veterans' entitlements Acts, which will have an immediate impact on the claims backlog within the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

The RSL has also made suggestions for the removal of significant barriers currently faced by veterans when accessing timely and appropriate healthcare, particularly by reviewing and increasing the DVA fee schedule to better align it to the actual cost of healthcare. If implemented, this will also result in a reduction in the administrative burden placed on healthcare providers in accessing DVA remuneration.

Mr Melick said it is critical that the Government invests in the enhancement of the DVAs Advocacy Training and Development Program for volunteer and paid advocates to assist veterans navigate the DVA claims process.

"RSL Australia is urging the Government to comprehensively change the way Australia treats its veterans," Greg Melick said.

"The RSL's submission calls for the next Federal Budget to provide funding to support this process."

According to the 2021 National Census, one in 20 Australian households include at least one person who has served or is currently serving in the Australian Defence Force, representing a significant cohort of the general population.

RSL Australia welcomes the National Cabinet's commitment to making health its first priority for 2023. The RSL stands ready to work with all levels of government to ensure that the men and women who have served our country can access the healthcare the Prime Minister says they deserve.

#### Overview of RSL Australia submission:

- Prompt implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, including funding for the establishment of an independent body to oversee this, led by a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Wellbeing.
- The Government to simplify and bring together the three current legislative Acts for a cohesive approach to veterans' entitlements – with the end goal being a reduction in the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) claims backlog to ensure veterans and their families are not left waiting for entitlements designed to support their health and wellbeing.
- The immediate extension of non-liability healthcare for mental health treatment to ADF reservists on completion of the enlistment process.
- Veterans to have the support of trained advocates to help them navigate the DVA claims process through the provision of funding to enable DVA to enhance its Advocacy Training and Development Program for volunteer and paid advocates.
- The removal of significant barriers currently faced by veterans when accessing timely and appropriate healthcare, particularly by reviewing and increasing the DVA fee schedule to better align it to the actual cost of healthcare.
- A tangible reduction in the administrative burden placed on healthcare providers in accessing DVA remuneration.

ENDS

National Media contact: Tony Harrison – 0417 318 178; [tony@wearebright.com.au](mailto:tony@wearebright.com.au)

Authorised by L. Gosling, ALP, 3/266 Trower Road, Casuarina NT 0810

## Have your say on the Veterans' Legislation Reform Pathway

Public consultation has begun to simplify veteran compensation and rehabilitation legislation.

We know the veterans' compensation system is difficult to understand and stressful to navigate.

We want a system where veterans' claims are considered under one piece of legislation rather than three, to make claims processing easier and faster.

To learn more and to provide feedback:  
[www.dva.gov.au/legislationconsultation2023](http://www.dva.gov.au/legislationconsultation2023)

 (08) 8928 0180

 [Luke.Gosling.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Luke.Gosling.MP@aph.gov.au)

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**RSL**  
Australia

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

16 February 2023  
For immediate release

### **RSL Australia Welcomes Government's Proposed Reform of Veteran Entitlement Legislation**

The Returned & Services League of Australia (RSLA) has hailed the Federal Government's intention announced today, to simplify legislation governing Veterans' compensation, rehabilitation, and other entitlements as long overdue.

The RSL has been calling for many years for the consolidation of the current legislation comprising three Acts into a single piece of legislation to simplify claims for veterans and their families.

RSLA President Greg Melick said the Government's commitment to now reform the legislation was welcomed.

"The Government's commitment to consult with the veteran community which is also welcomed, must be extensive, collaborative, and continual," he said.

"The new Act should introduce a cohesive approach to veterans' entitlements, with the end goal being a reduction in the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) claims backlog to ensure veterans and their families are not left waiting for entitlements designed to support their health and wellbeing."

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide found the existing three pieces of legislation, dating from 1917, were so complex and adversely impacted on the mental health of veterans and their families. The more than a century old legislation has never been fully reformed, but updated and amended which has only added to its complexity.

Greg Melick said legislative reform was a key interim recommendation of the ongoing Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

"The RSL commends the work of the Royal Commission in recommending this reform. All the previous inquiries have done likewise with insufficient action, and the Federal Government is to be commended for honouring its commitment to now implement this reform."

Greg Melick reiterated the RSL's call for the Federal Government to use the forthcoming Budget to provide demand-driven funding for the implementation of all the Royal Commission's recommendations to materially improve the lives of Australia's veterans and their families.

"The RSL stands ready to support and inform this important work, both directly to Government and through the Royal Commission process," he said.

ENDS

National Media contact: Tony Harrison – 0417 318 178; [tony@wearebright.com.au](mailto:tony@wearebright.com.au)



# The lessons of the bombing of Darwin

By Luke Gosling OAM MP

When war came to Darwin's skies 81 years ago, a city's fate rested in the hands of a few patriots.

They were outgunned. The enemy was overhead. And reinforcements were far away. With nothing but their arms to save the innocent from terror raining down, their anti-aircraft guns and rifles fired back at hundreds of screeching Japanese aircraft strafing and bombing them, the port, and civilians.

The bombing of Darwin forced us to turn to ourselves to ensure our national survival. Coming only weeks after the traumatic fall of Singapore to Japanese forces, the 19 February 1942 raid felled the hope Australian leaders had placed in the capacity of Britain, the imperial centre, to protect us.

This tragedy kindled a new hope in our government and in our people that our salvation would not be secured by an external power, but by our own independent foreign policy. It has been bipartisan policy ever since that Australia looks to its national interests above traditional ties of kith and kin.

A second way that the Darwin raid reshaped modern Australia was paradoxically by forging our enduring alliance with America. The first allied loss on Australian soil, the bombing



put our fledgling alliance with America on a war footing when a U.S. destroyer, the USS Peary, was sunk in the attack.

The bombing failed for Japan by steeling our countries to resist in the South Pacific and helped lay the foundations of our U.S. alliance, which now sees 2,500 Marines rotating in Darwin each year. Across every metric, our modern alliance with America is deeper and stronger than ever before.

I saw that first-hand when working in a security role with the U.S. Army and special forces in Afghanistan. Kandahar was a very dangerous place to support an Afghan-led political process, for which the Taliban bombed our compound. But U.S. forces were always reliable in times of crisis.

As a sovereign state, Australia's highest priority must always be to deter and defeat armed attack on our territory. The bombing of Darwin reminds us of the high costs of failure and why we must work tirelessly to grow our defence force and work with our allies to learn the lessons of our darkest hour.

**Luke Gosling OAM MP is the Federal Member for Solomon, representing Darwin and Palmerston in Canberra. He served in the ADF for 13 years.**



# COMMANDO AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS MEMORIALS

## South Australia



The Keswick Memorial

Within Keswick Barracks, Keswick an inner-city suburb of Adelaide, on the north side of the main parade ground there is a memorial comprising four monuments enclosed within a three-sided rosemary hedge. The main section of the memorial faces south comprising two white marble boulders, a smaller in front of the larger with bronze plaques (No1 and No 2) affixed to the faces. White painted angle faced concrete blocks with bronze plaques affixed face east and west respectively.

### Front plaque



### Rear Plaque

This appears to be the oldest part of the Memorial and has the badge of the post war M& Z Commando Association at the top and the colour patches of the eight Independent Companies and the three Cavalry (Commando) Regiments.



Source: <https://vwma.org.au/explore/memorials/406>

**Left Plaque:** South Australians who served with Independent Companies, Commando Squadrons and M and Z Special Units during World War 2.



Source: <https://vwma.org.au/explore/memorials/406>

**Right Plaque:** South Australians who served with Independent Companies, Commando Squadrons and M and Z Special Units during World War 2.



Source: <https://vwma.org.au/explore/memorials/406>

There are no records readily available which show the dates this Memorial was constructed. The Memorial is maintained by the Department of Defence as it is within Keswick Barracks. From the M&Z Association badges on some of the memorial plates it is assumed that the Association commissioned these plaques. The SA Branch of the Association no longer operates.



# NEW BOOKS AND REVIEWS



## Kill the Major ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> edition

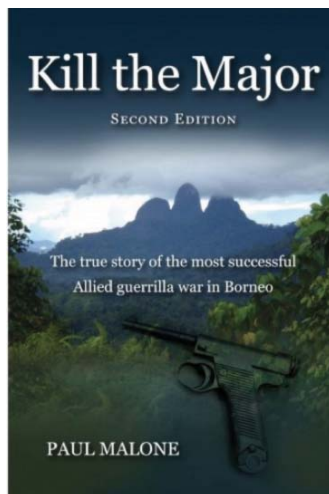
Malaysian publisher, Gerakbudaya has produced a second edition of *Kill the Major*, the true story of the highly successful allied "SEMUT" guerrilla operation, mounted behind Japanese lines in Borneo in 1945.

The significantly revised Second Edition of Paul Malone's book has new chapters covering the operations of SEMUT II and SEMUT III and is restructured to more clearly tell the harrowing stories of the individual participants.

The main focus of book is the SEMUT I operation, in which a force of only 42 men led by British Major Tom Harrison, took control of 41,000 square kilometres of Borneo, killed over 1,000 Japanese, and forced the surrender of the last two companies of Japanese combatants two months after the war's official end.

The second edition reveals the shortcomings of the initial overall leader of the SEMUT operation, Major Toby Carter, who became leader of SEMUT II when the operation was split into three. Carter was ultimately sacked from his post as SEMUT II leader, a decision that has mystified some writers.

But, as Malone makes clear, there is no mystery. Carter was risk averse and did not display the key characteristics of a guerrilla leader. He was unwilling to lead the party in its first parachute drop into the unknown jungle clearing in central Borneo. When he did arrive in Bario -- three weeks after Harrison -- he would not head off along the trek across the mountains to Long Lellang, sending ahead a small party led by Major Bill Sochon to ensure that the path was clear. In contrast with Harrison's SEMUT I operation, which hit the ground running, gathering useful intelligence, engaging in valuable denial of supply operations and taking a number of key inland outposts, Carter was



slow to go into action. And after the AIF landings at Brunei Bay, rather than run the inland warfare himself, as Harrison chose to do, Carter continually requested that AIF troops take on the enemy in his area of responsibility.

The final straw in Carter's dismissal must surely have been news of his delay in withdrawing his force from the administrative centre of Marudi.

After mounting an ambush of a substantial Japanese force approaching the town, Carter was strongly advised by his Second-in-Command, Major R. K. Wilson to withdraw from the town. Carter dallied and then withdrew in haste, leaving behind stores, money, arms, ammunition and the W/T and code books.

The new edition adds some personal stories revealing the sometimes amusing and complex relationship between the guerrillas and their local warriors, such as that related by South Australian Lieutenant Jeffrey Westley, a 28-year-old at the time.

With 20 men, short of food, no salt or fruit, Westley decided to "bomb" a stream for fish. Village women and kids were sent downstream to gather floating fish and the men prepared to dive for those that sank. Westley prepared a device with condoms stuffed with the plastic explosive, Cordtex, a detonator and a 15-minute time pencil and cast it into the deep hole. Fifteen minutes passed, but nothing happened.

Another 15 and still nothing. Now Westley explained to his offsideer Riang that one of the condoms had probably perished and let water in and asked him to dive in and retrieve the explosive. Riang thought about it for a while and then asked how sure Westley was that it was a 15-minute time pencil. Westley explained the colour coding of the pins, but Riang then





asked whether the installer, Westley, could have made a mistake. After further discussion Riang said he'd rather not dive in as his malaria was bothering him. Westley now offered the gathered crowd a \$5 reward for anyone who would retrieve the explosives. No takers.

Riang was then tasked to ask the crowd: "Who is the bravest man?"

After a time discussing the question with his warriors and the villagers, Riang returned: "We talked it over and decided: 'You are the bravest man Tuan.'"

Westley was caught and did the only thing he could. He stripped off and dived in. In less than a minute he had found the charge and showed everyone the torn condom. "I didn't say that I'd never been so shit scared in my life!" Another charge was prepared, tossed in the river, blew up on schedule and delivered the fish.

*Kill the Major*, the true story of the most successful allied guerrilla war in Borneo, (Second Edition) by Paul Malone can be purchased from its Malaysian publisher at:

[https://www.gerakbudaya.com/index.php?route=product/product&product\\_id=3633](https://www.gerakbudaya.com/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=3633)



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*So, I ordered 2 more bottles, this oil is magnificent.*

I'm 16 days post-surgery and I'm riding an exercise bike and can do all the exercises required, my physio is in disbelief at how quickly I'm recovering as I can bend the new knee 100% which is unheard of at week 2.

So your product is getting a massive plug from me at my Surgeon's office and Physio and I hope it can help others."

Mark L



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# The Positive Relationship between Sport and Physical Activity and PTSD

Exercise has a positive clinical effect on depressive symptoms and may be as effective as psychological or pharmaceutical therapies for some individuals with PTSD.

Rosebaum *et al*, 2014 suggests Physical activity/exercise is a highly effective method in reducing symptoms of depression and for people experiencing other mental health disorders.

Evidence demonstrates that an appropriate exercise intervention can achieve significant benefits to symptoms, depression, anxiety and stress, changes in body shape and sedentary time associated with PTSD, and non-significant trends for sleep quality improvement according to Rosenbaum, 2013.

The associated symptoms and the improvements may be related to psychosocial benefits of the intervention, rather than functional capacity, but there is also a strong empirical (observational) link between improvements in functional capacity and psychological status according to the author, 2016.

People with PTSD are four times as likely to have type 2 diabetes (Lukaschek *et al*, 2013) and rates of overweight and obesity are as high as 92%.

To add to these statistics, sufferers of PTSD are shown to be less physically active due to a number of factors including pain, dysfunctional and general lack of desire or both, according Boscarino *et al*, 2004.

Adding some form of regular physical activity can have a significant effect on a sufferer of PTSD. It's important to note, the type of activity doesn't matter, what matters is that the person is moving and also having fun doing it.

If you would like to become physically active again and help to combat some of your PTSD related symptoms then please consult your GP and discuss your options for referral to another health care professional (exercise physiologist or physiotherapist) for help with your other associated or co-morbid conditions ie lower back pain, arthritis and or obesity.





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# Defence Personnel Primed to Thrive In Franchising

Kerry Miles, Director, FranchiseED

While entering the world of franchising may not be top of mind for most Australian Defence Force personnel planning a transition to civilian life, it is a career path that presents many synergies and can play to your proven strengths.

The battleground of franchising requires strict adherence to systems and procedures, hard work, dedication, leadership and teamwork to achieve the shared mission of business success.

This makes those leaving the Australian Defence Force perfect candidates to conquer the challenge of franchising when returning to civilian life. The structure of a franchise system provides franchisees with the ability to work to set policies and procedures while at the same time allowing the independence to lead, inspire and develop their own teams to achieve shared goals.

These are all concepts very familiar to those who have train and served in the Australian Defence Force, and ones that make you suited to forging your own path to business success in franchising. Indeed, the transition from defence to the franchise sector can be a 'win win' situation for franchisors and franchisees alike.

Franchise businesses are actively seeking out high quality and committed candidates as franchisees, while you may be targeting a new autonomous career where you are calling the shots and putting your considerable skills to good use.

Where others may fail, those trained in the Australian Defence Force bring an appetite for hard work, a hunger for success, the proven ability to lead teams and the discipline to adhere to set systems to survive and thrive in the world of franchising.

Your life experiences and skills sets could be highly suited and transferrable to owning and operating your own franchise business, of which there are countless options to choose from. Everything from fitness franchises, food franchises, home improvement franchises and everything in between are available. It all depends on what you love doing and where you see yourself thriving.

There are over 1200 franchise systems operating in Australia, from the world's biggest consumer brands to local success stories and up-and-coming franchisors providing just about every product or service imaginable. Within these systems, there are nearly 100,000 franchise units in Australia, which are local and usually individually owned and operated businesses.

The opportunities are endless in franchising and whatever path is chosen, it is one in which the owner-operator is in charge and driving their own destiny, with the security of a set plan of attack and supporting systems for long-term sustainable success.

As former Australian Defence Force personnel are



comfortable with following systems and procedures in order to successfully complete a mission, you are therefore very well equipped to deal with the challenges of franchising and make a new owner-operator business work.

While having the right skills set, experience and attitude is a competitive advantage in franchising, they do not alone guarantee success. Just like in the Australian Defence Force, preparation is the key to setting the course for victory.

Knowledge is power and nowhere more so than in the world of franchising where new franchisees are taking the ultimate leap of faith into owning and operating their own business.

Thoroughly researching the sector, the options that are available and are best suited to each individual circumstance, and fully understanding and managing the financial and lifestyle expectations and demands, should be the starting point in any franchising journey. I cannot emphasise this point enough. While there are considerable opportunities in franchising, you need to work out which one is right for you and to ensure the franchise you choose is both ethical and sustainable.

While a franchise provides a set structure to follow, compared to buying an independent business, this in itself is no guarantee of success. Seeking out quality information and resources on franchising in order to make informed choices, and exploring the reality of being a franchisee, is the logical starting point for any former Australian Defence Force personnel considering their future career options.

**If you are wanting to educate yourself about franchising, there's a lot of free information at [www.franchise-ed.org.au](http://www.franchise-ed.org.au).**

**If you are looking at buying a franchise and would like to understand how FranchiseED can help you, book a free 15-minute conversation with Kerry at <https://calendly.com/kerry-franchise-ed/meeting-with-kerry-miles-1>**

## About the Author:

Kerry is at the forefront of understanding what it takes to create thriving franchises with a comprehensive perspective encompassing both the franchisor and franchisee. Shifting from 5 years owning a business within the franchise sector, to more than 10 years heading up Griffith University's Franchise Centre as General and Business Manager Kerry's work is unique and driven by maintaining an independent perspective. Her clients include prospective franchisees, large and small franchise organisations and not-for-profits looking to scale up their operations. For more information visit [www.franchise-ed.org.au](http://www.franchise-ed.org.au). You can connect with her via LinkedIn [www.linkedin.com/in/kerry-miles-franchiseed/](http://www.linkedin.com/in/kerry-miles-franchiseed/)



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# Leaving the ADF



At some point in their career, all ADF members will leave the military and transition to civilian life. It's a significant decision that can involve your family. Planning early will make sure you're informed and ready to enter the next phase of your life.

You must complete your transition with ADF Transition Support Services so you understand the process, your administrative requirements, and the support available to you. We encourage you to involve your family throughout your transition experience.

### Transition support network

Transitioning to civilian life is a shared responsibility. When you decide to leave the ADF you should engage with your family, your Unit, and ADF Transition Support Services.

Your Unit can speak to you about the transition process and connect you with your local ADF Transition Centre. Your Centre will introduce you to a Transition Support Officer who will help you and your family through the transition process and:

- provide you with an individual transition plan
- offer career coaching during your transition and up to 12 months afterwards
- help you meet your administrative requirements
- help you leave with all documentation like service, medical, and training records
- facilitate connections to Defence and government support services

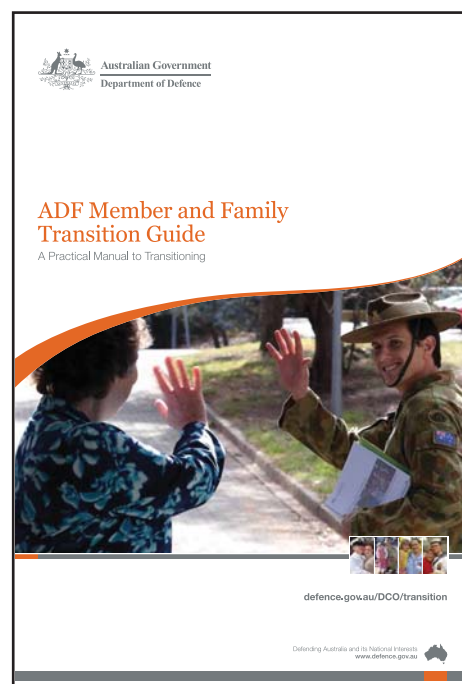
### ADF Transition Seminar

You and your family can attend an ADF Transition Seminar at any time during your ADF career to help you prepare for your transition. Seminars are held

nationally throughout the year. You'll receive information from Defence and other organisations on topics like finance and superannuation, health, relocating, employment, and ex-service organisation support.

### ADF Member and Family Transition Guide

The ADF Member and Family Transition Guide – A Practical Manual to Transitioning contains detailed information on the transition process for ADF members. The Guide includes information on support services and administrative requirement. It includes checklists to help you navigate transition process.



## LEAVING THE ADF – COURSES



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# #1 Thing ADF Candidates Do to Block Their Own Career Transition

By Next Job Now, ADF Career Transition Experts – 1300 112 114

...When it comes to job interviews, Navy, Army and Air Force candidates just don't see shades of grey. Ask any of the thousands of Defence members I've coached over the years and you'll almost always get the same response.

The answer to one simple question is a major reason why military professionals struggle to transition quickly and effectively.

So here's the 64,000 dollar question...

'Do you have **EXPOSURE** to....(DESIRED SKILL)?'

When we hear that little gem of a question our military training kicks into gear. In fact, the preferred answer to this common question is:

'Oh no... **I couldn't claim to be an EXPERT** in that...I'd be lying.'

After so long collecting the Queen's coin and working in an environment where integrity is paramount...**we self-impose a rule** that we need to be considered a Subject Matter Expert before we can stake a claim to even having 'exposure'.

Civilians aren't normally burdened by any such impediment: You can almost picture the worst offenders sitting across from the interviewer explaining, 'I've got a friend who knows someone that can spell that word...so I've had some exposure.' Sure, I'm exaggerating...but not by much if the latest research into resume fraud is to be believed.

So, we have two groups of candidates (military and civilian), each at different ends of the spectrum (black and white). The big question now is '**How do we get ADF folks to start seeing shades of gray and move them closer toward the other end of the spectrum whilst still holding true to their values.**'



Think about the reality of the situation. Even a soldier who graduated Kapooka yesterday has exposure to leading teams, since they can't graduate without being assessed as a supervisor even for a short period. So rather than say 'I'm not a supervisor' that sailor could say 'I've had some exposure to supervising teams in a training environment for specific work activities.'

Similarly, a Sergeant might be slow to claim expertise in human resources (perhaps due to an ADF understanding of what a civilian views as HR) but when prompted they typically agree that they have **exposure** to specific HR skillsets such as coaching, mentoring, training, counselling and leadership development.

At the end of the day saying that 'I've had some exposure to XYZ' could be validated by the fact that you've seen it done, maybe assisted once, and can read the policy if needed.

## Opportunity helps those that help themselves

If you want to give your Defence transition the best possible chance of success, then you need to start seeing shades of grey. 'Exposure' is your new best friend.

*Stop being your own worst enemy. Never claim what you don't have, but always claim what you do have...to the degree that you have it!*

David Penman is a Certified Professional Resume Writer, ex-Commando and one of Australia's leading ADF career transition experts. Call 1300 112 114 to enquire about NJN's ADF resume services.

## Nuance is the key

The answer lies in our willingness to accept that its okay to be 'less than an expert'...and that we do indeed have exposure to a great many skills that we can talk about in an honest fashion. Its simple. If you are an expert, then claim expertise. If you are not, then just claim whatever level of skill you possess. Here are a few suggestions for claiming different levels of capability:

- I do have an awareness of...
- I've had exposure to...
- I'm okay at...
- I'm good at...
- I'm very good at...
- I'm competent at...





**ARRIVE ON TIME**  
**APPLIANCE REPAIRS**

*Good people meeting the needs of good people*

## Leaving the ADF? Based in Melbourne?

How do you feel about

- \* Solving problems every day in a client focused organisation with thorough training, and lifetime support provided.
- \* A well-established market leader, who values integrity, with a proven long term history of providing financial stability for the families of our technicians.
- \* A lifestyle that offers more family time.

Here's one of our technicians to tell you about why he joined Arrive On Time

**My name is Kip Campbell. I joined because I was seeking a better work life balance for myself and my family. The entire company has been incredibly supportive from the office to the training. I couldn't have asked for more from our head trainer Shaun. His knowledge is incredible but his patience is his strength. Joining AOT has been one of the best decisions I've made.**

Want to hear more? Use this QR code to watch videos of Mick's journey with Arrive On Time.



Have a chat with our Director Shaun on 0404 043 367 for more information.



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**Thank you to the following companies for supporting Commando.**



# Free 12 Month Health and Fitness Program

- Returned Veterans, Peacekeepers & ADF Firefighter Scheme -

Run on behalf of the DVA by Corporate Health Management, the program aims to help you increase your physical health and wellbeing through practical exercise support and 12 months of telephonic health coaching and advice on healthy lifestyle choices provided by one of our team of highly qualified allied health professionals.

The Heart Health Program is flexible and able to accommodate participants living in metropolitan areas, rural or remote areas, those still working or retired, studying or with other time constraints.

[www.veteranshearthealth.com.au/eligibility](http://www.veteranshearthealth.com.au/eligibility)



## Am I eligible?

Started over 20 years ago for those returned from Vietnam, the Heart Health Program is free and open to all veterans with operational service, peacekeepers and those covered under the ADF firefighters scheme who have not previously participated in the Heart Health Program before.



## Program Exercise Resource - Exercise how you like to

The program can provide an exercise resource to help participants to exercise the way they like to or provide an opportunity to try something that's different than the usual.



## Registering Your Interest

Registering your interest or checking eligibility is easy.

Simply visit our website and follow the steps.

Call the program phone number 1300 246 262 at any time to speak to one of our team.

Heart Health Team - DVA Heart Health Program

Program proudly delivered on behalf of the DVA by:  
CHM Corporate Health Management Pty Ltd  
Toorak Place, 521 - 529 Toorak Road, Toorak VIC 3142