

Number 48 | Summer 2021

# RECONNAISSANCE

The Magazine of the Military History Society of New South Wales Inc

ISSN 2208-6234



## **DUNSTERFORCE:**

**Diggers in Russia, 1918**

**The Battle of Gettysburg**  
**Australia's First Victoria Cross**  
**Beersheba Memorials**

**Reviews: Vietnam, Shaggy Ridge, Afghanistan**

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ISSN 2208-6234

The Magazine of the Military History Society  
of NSW Incorporated

**Number 48 | Summer 2021** (Dec 2021)

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## President's Message

Dear Members,

2021 proved to be another disruptive year on the Covid front which forced us to suspend our face-to-face lecture program for much of the

second half of the year. However, the challenge motivated us to develop a capacity for online presentations as an alternative. I can say that these occasions went very well. We are relieved that the option of remote presentations enabled us to offer some absorbing lectures which many of you seemed to enjoy. Thankfully, the Sydney

lockdown has passed and we are back into a phase of lifting restrictions. In fact we can now resume our face-to-face program with an end of year lecture at the Anzac Memorial. I appreciate the Memorial's support and assistance during this difficult period. I hope you can make it for the final event for the year.

As with last year's lockdown, we were also able to carry on with our online activities and our quarterly magazine *Reconnaissance* was published without interruption. I thank all those involved for their contribution. Hopefully in 2022 we can resume a part of our activities which has been in suspension for almost two years now, namely group visits to sites of historic interest or excursions.

As we approach year's end, I will soon be inviting you to renew your membership for 2022. I would like to emphasise that we appreciate your continuing support during this difficult time and hope you have found your experience in the Society rewarding. The Society can't function without our membership and we are committed to providing more and better offerings as time goes on. We welcome your input and feedback, especially any queries or suggestions you have during the renewals period.

**Robert Muscat**  
**President,**  
**Military History Society of NSW**  
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**Ph: 0419 698 783**

## THE SOCIETY'S LECTURE PROGRAM 2021-22

Please note that the program may be subject to change for unforeseen reasons

### ANNOUNCEMENT

**In December 2021 and the 2022 year the Society's lecture program will return to in-person presentations at the Auditorium, Anzac Memorial Hyde Park, Sydney CBD. The lectures are scheduled for 10:30AM on the first Saturday of each month (except there will be no lecture in January) unless otherwise advised.**



The Military History Society of New South Wales presents:

## AUSTRALIAN ARMOUR AT LONG TAN



**A Lecture By Major (retd) Paul Handel, RFD  
10:30AM Saturday, 4 December 2021  
The Auditorium, Anzac Memorial Hyde Park  
Cnr Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets, Sydney CBD**

On the afternoon of 18 August 1966, Delta Company of 6th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (D/6RAR), fought a desperate battle with a force of North Vietnamese regular troops, a main force regiment of some 2,500 men about 1,000 of whom directly engaged the Australians. The battle became famous as the Battle of Long Tan. 18th August is now commemorated by all Vietnam Veterans as their day. The story of this epic battle has been told elsewhere, but this presentation looks at the role and actions of the Australian armoured unit.

That unit was 3 Troop, 1st Armoured Personnel Carrier Squadron (1 APC Sqn). They were equipped with the M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC), a light tracked, aluminium-hulled, armoured vehicle which had been introduced into Australian service in 1964. The unit had been deployed to South Vietnam in 1965. No 3 Troop, commanded by Lieutenant Adrian Roberts, was given the task of lifting an infantry company to reinforce Delta Company. He had ten M113A1 in his Troop. A large proportion of the soldiers of 3 Troop were National Servicemen, and their actions brought great credit to them.

The Troop was dispatched, with Alpha Company 6 RAR (A/6RAR) aboard, to the battle area late in the afternoon. They joined the battle. Heavy 0.50 inch Machine Guns on the APCs inflicted many casualties on the enemy.

The presentation will give an overview of the M113A1 Armoured Personnel Carrier as used by 1 APC Sqn including its capabilities. The movement of the Troop to the Long Tan plantation and its subsequent engagement with enemy forces will be covered, as will events after reaching D Company.

There is no doubt that the shock action and firepower the APCs contributed greatly to the successful reinforcement of D Company, and thus established the need for armour in jungle conditions, a need that was forgotten after the Second World War.

**For more information call 0419 698 783 or email: [president@militaryhistorynsw.com.au](mailto:president@militaryhistorynsw.com.au)**

## Military History Calendar: September 2021 – November 2021

<p><b>1 September</b> Corporal AH Buckley from Warren, NSW, awarded VC for actions at Pèronne, 1918.</p>	<p><b>1 September</b> Private WM Currey from Wallsend NSW awarded VC for actions at Pèronne, 1918</p>	<p><b>2 September</b> Corporal AC Hall from Nyngan NSW awarded VC for actions at Pèronne, 1918.</p>
<p><b>2 September</b> Anniversary of Japanese surrender ceremony on USS Missouri, Tokyo Bay, 1945.</p>	<p><b>4 September</b> Battle of Milne Bay, Australians inflict first defeat on Japanese in World War II, 1942.</p>	<p><b>11 September</b> AN &amp; MEF, mostly NSW men, land at Rabaul in German New Guinea, 1914.</p>
<p><b>26 September</b> Private BJ Bugden from South Gundurimba NSW awarded VC at Polygon Wood, 1917.</p>	<p><b>29 September</b> Major BA Wark from Bathurst, NSW, was awarded VC for actions at Bellicourt/Joncourt, 1918.</p>	<p><b>30 September</b> Private EJ Ryan from Tumut NSW was awarded VC for actions at Bellicourt, 1918.</p>
<p><b>30 September</b> Gilder Lehrman Prize for Military History to Alexander Mikaberidze for <i>The Napoleonic Wars</i>.</p>	<p><b>3 October</b> Lieutenant J Maxwell from Sydney, NSW, awarded VC for actions near Estrees, France, 1918.</p>	<p><b>3 October</b> Vietnam Veterans National Memorial, Canberra, opened by PM Keating, 1992.</p>
<p><b>7 October</b> 3RAR drives towards Hill 317 in fighting at Maryang-San, Korea, 1951.</p>	<p><b>12 October</b> Captain C Jeffries from Wallsend, NSW, awarded VC for actions at Passchendaele, 1917.</p>	<p><b>18 October</b> Society for Army Historical Research awards Templer Medal to Dan Todman for <i>Britain's War</i>.</p>
<p><b>20 October</b> NSW, Victoria &amp; SA send naval contingents to Peking as part of British Empire force, 1900.</p>	<p><b>22 October</b> C Company 3Royal Australian Regiment in first major action of the Korean War at Yongju, 1950.</p>	<p><b>24 October</b> Australian 16<sup>th</sup> Brigade drive Japanese back along Kokoda Trail at Eora Creek, 1942.</p>
<p><b>28 October</b> First of the World War I conscription referendums, 1916.</p>	<p><b>31 October</b> Australian Light Horse charge against Turkish forces at Beersheba, 1917.</p>	<p><b>1 November</b> National Army Museum in Canberra dedicated by Gov- Gen Bill Hayden, 1989.</p>
<p><b>5 November</b> 3 Royal Australian Regiment in successful assault, Battle of Pakchon, Korean War, 1950.</p>	<p><b>9 November</b> HMAS Sydney destroys German cruiser Emden off Cocos-Keeling Islands, 1914.</p>	<p><b>11 November</b> Remembrance Day, Germany signs armistice ending fighting on Western Front in 1918.</p>
<p><b>11 November</b> Opening of Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1941.</p>	<p><b>13 November</b> Warrant Officer K Wheatley from Surry Hills, NSW, awarded VC for actions in Vietnam, 1965.</p>	<p><b>19 November</b> HMAS Sydney (II) sunk by German raider Kormoran, 1941</p>
<p><b>23 November</b> Unknown HMAS Sydney sailor identified as Thomas Clark.</p>	<p><b>25 November</b> NSW Lancers involved in Battle of Graspan, South Africa, 1899.</p>	<p><b>27 November</b> HMAS Parramatta sunk by Germans near Tobruk, 1941.</p>

## The Military History Society of New South Wales Inc



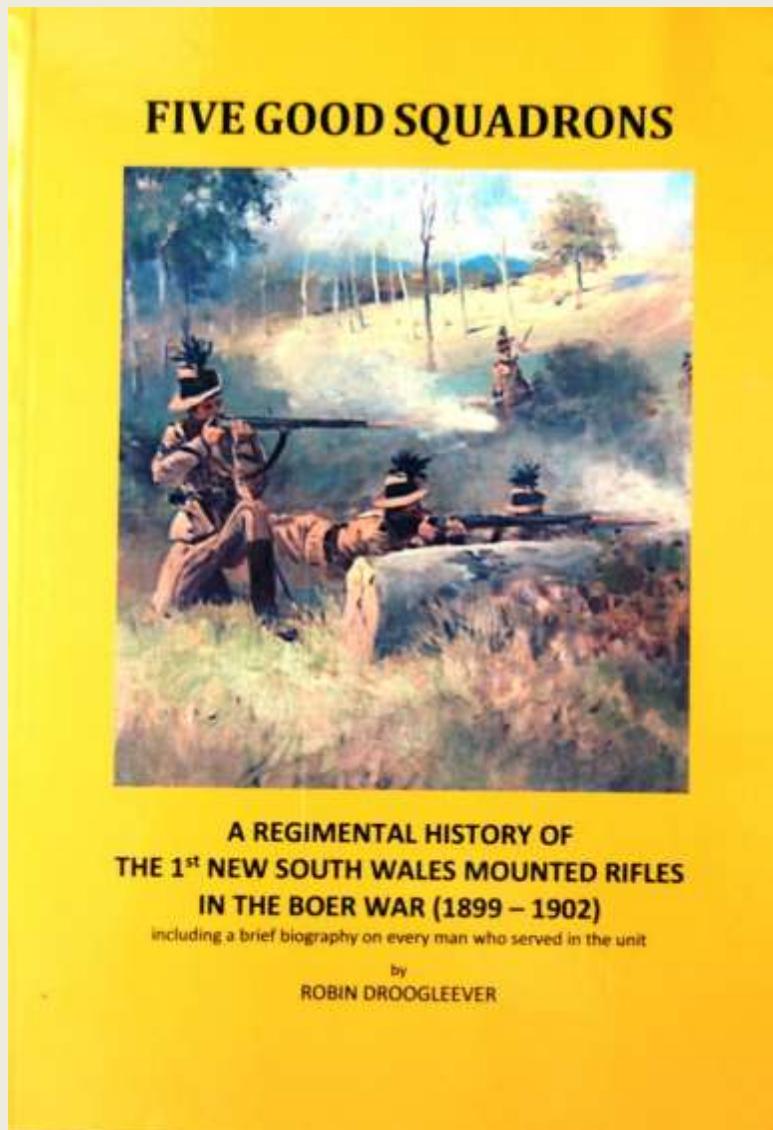
visit our website: [www.militaryhistorynsw.com.au](http://www.militaryhistorynsw.com.au)



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**Sydney's leading forum for the discussion of New South  
Wales, Australian and world military history and heritage**



The Military History Society of NSW welcomes Robin Droogleever's newly published regimental history of the 1st New South Wales Mounted Rifles in the Boer War. *Five Good Squadrons* is a ground-breaking contribution to the record of NSW forces in that war. This comprehensive volume, running to 873 pages, is extensively footnoted and illustrated with a broad collection of maps and images appearing on each page, and includes a biography of every man who served in the unit.

Only a limited number of copies will be printed. To purchase a copy, email Robin at [jerwfd@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jerwfd@optusnet.com.au) or write to PO Box 42, Bulleen VIC 3105 for further details and methods of payment.

The sale price is \$60 plus postage of \$12.50, sent via Australia Post waterproof and trackable red bag.

## From the Editor

Welcome to the Summer 2021 issue of *Reconnaissance*.

While giving famous battles their due, our Society has an obligation to spread knowledge about episodes that are obscure but interesting because they are uncommon feats of arms, or because they influenced better-known developments in military history. The cover feature of this *Reconnaissance* fits the bill on both counts. For a long time historians of the First World War complained that Australia's focus on Gallipoli neglected the Western front. Now there is more general appreciation of the AIF's immortal campaigns in France and Belgium. But how many know that diggers fought in yet another theatre of the war – Russia.

In his lively article, Rod Stewart explains that Russia's collapse on the Eastern Front in 1917 posed more than just a military problem for the British Empire. At the time around half of the world's oil supply came from Baku on the western coast of the Caspian Sea, then transported by train and pipeline to the Black Sea. Oil had become an essential resource for global commerce and the British Government grew alarmed at the prospect of Baku falling under Turkish or German control. To prevent this, the War Office assembled a strategic blocking force made up of officers and men from the Western Front, including some 150 of the most highly-decorated cream of the AIF. They were despatched to the region under British Lieutenant-General Lionel Dunsterville, thus the name 'Dunsterforce'. At first glance the mission seems something of a boys' own adventure, but Dunsterville was a figure of substance, fluent in Russian and other languages. Though Dunsterforce did take on aspects of a rollicking escapade, Rod argues it was more like a prototype 'special forces' operation, conducting the sort of 'hearts and minds' tactics that became familiar decades later.

We also have Steve Hart's examination of Gettysburg, the "high tide of the Confederacy".

A genuine turning point in the American Civil War, Gettysburg was an early demonstration that frontal attacks are futile against entrenched troops with rapid fire weapons. In this first part, Steve presents on the strategic setting, including the North's 'Anaconda Plan' to suffocate the Southern economy.

Dr John Haken provides another fact-filled profile, this time of Australia's first Victoria Cross recipient. The extraordinary Sir Neville Howse emigrated to NSW as a British medical graduate, practiced medicine in Orange, served in South Africa with the Colony's medical corps, earning the VC for rescuing a wounded trumpeter, and in World War I rose to be the AIF's Director of Medical Services with the rank of major general.

Apart from promoting military history, our Society's charter includes promoting the state's military heritage, so I am grateful to the NSW Office for Veterans Affairs for contributing an article explaining the NSW War Memorials Register through the prism of monuments to the charge at Beersheba.

I thank David Martin for two fine reviews of books about the troubled aftermath of two conflicts, Peter Yule's *The Long Shadow* on Vietnam and Mark Willacy's *Rogue Forces* on Afghanistan. Finally, I review Phillip Bradley's extraordinary tale of grit, *The Battle for Shaggy Ridge*.

As always, feel free to contact me at any time if you have any suggestions and particularly if you are interested in contributing an article or book review

I hope you enjoy the magazine.

**John Muscat,**  
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**Ph: 0414 996 863**

*Cover Feature***DUNSTERFORCE: Diggers in Russia, 1918**

■ Rod Stewart

**Preface**

The little-known operation described here was arguably the first 'special forces' action ever undertaken. The British Army, and others, had previously recruited and trained 'levies' (local recruits) in their native country – India is one example – but these forces were organised, trained, paid and operated as a regular army. 'Dunsterforce' was a much looser organisation, with a strategic blocking objective, aiming to recruit and deploy locals in their native countries with foreign officers. Dunsterforce also introduced the concept of what are now called 'hearts and minds' operations to win over the local population.

This article was inspired by a diary kept by one of the Australian recruits in Dunsterforce, Captain Cecil Judge, MC and Bar, Mentioned in Despatches, which was lent to the author by his grand-daughter Mrs Sandy Fallance. Many of the featured images are copied from that diary.



Captain Cecil Judge MC

**Background**

The Russian revolution began to have an impact in Europe and the Middle East after the October 1917 uprising which started the upheaval. First there was the withdrawal of Russian forces from the Eastern Front against Germany, then the internal civil war between the Reds and the Whites. One effect was the Russian pull-back from the Caucasus region where they had held control and blocked any eastern movement of the Turks or Germans. Compare the maps in Figures 1 and 2.

In 1918 half of the world's oil came from the wells around Baku, a city on the western coast of the Caspian Sea, a fact that seems incredible today in an era of billions of barrels produced all over the world. From Baku the oil was carried by train to Tbilisi, by ship to Russia and, after 1907, by pipeline to Batum on the Black Sea.

In 1917 the British Government alerted the War Office that withdrawal of Russian forces in the Caucasus would expose Baku to possible capture by either the Turks or the Germans. Even more important, from their point of view, was that now the way lay open for an advance toward India through territory where the British had no influence. This path had to be blocked.

**Strategic Situation**

On the Western Front the situation had changed little during 1917. There were limited successes like the Canadians at Vimy Ridge, but also setbacks such as the mutinies in the French army. The first American troops arrived at the front, however, and the balance started to swing in the Allies' favour.

In the spring of 1918, the Germans launched a series of offensives which, although initially successful, were contained by the Allies and then

thrown back. In July the Allies started their offensives which culminated in the Armistice of November.

In the Middle East, the Turks had been routed in the Tigris-Euphrates basin and a British-Indian force occupied Baghdad. In Syria, British forces advanced towards and captured Megiddo, inflicting a major defeat on the Turks.

### Selecting the personnel

In October 1917, the War Office sent a request to General William Birdwood, commander of II Anzac Corps on the Western Front, to nominate one hundred Australian officers and 50 NCOs for a special mission. No details were provided about the mission or the location of this operation. So impressed was the War Office with the quality of the nominees that they asked for another hundred, but Birdwood refused. A similar request was sent to commanders of New Zealand, Canadian and South African forces. A glance at the personnel list (attached) shows that every officer was decorated, some with multiple decorations. Distinguished Service Orders (DSO) and Military Crosses (MC) were the staples. The NCOs were all Warrant Officers and Sergeants, also many with decorations.

In December 1917, the 'force' was gathered in London and at last told what their mission was, in general terms.

Closer to their departure from London, the force was expanded by the addition of eleven Russian émigré officers who had been stranded in England since the revolution. Captain Judge noted that "the Russians were farewelled by a bevy of the most beautiful women he had seen". On arrival in Alexandria the contingent was increased by twenty officers and forty NCOs from the Middle East Force.

### The Task

The detailed task was set out in a letter to General Birdwood as follows:

1. To raise, train and lead an army from local manpower to prevent any move eastwards by the enemy.
2. To take and hold Baku.
3. To establish a navy on the Caspian and control the Caspian Sea.

This breathtaking scope was not matched with adequate support. For example, there were no sailors and no ships to gain control of the Caspian on which numerous Russian gunboats exerted rigid control. In the event the naval aspect was disregarded.



**Fig. 1: The area of operations in early 1917 pre-revolution**

The primary objective of Dunsterforce was to protect Britain's position in the Middle East and India. Operating in an unpredictable strategic environment, the force's objectives evolved over time; the operation suffered from what modern strategists label 'mission creep'. Originally tasked with training local levies, it evolved into a field force which travelled about 350 kilometres from Hamadan in Persia to defend Baku on the

Caspian Sea while also defending against other threats.

mobilise prejudiced any hope of success as it gave the Turks time to move on Baku.



**Fig. 2. The area of operations during the period of Dunsterforce operations**

**Personnel**



**Fig. 3: Dunsterville (far left) with Bicherakov and staff officers**

**Mobilisation**

The nominees from the Western Front were assembled in London and briefed for the first time on the mission. None pulled out. The force commander and his staff were not in London and would rendezvous with the main body at Baghdad.

On 29 January 1918 the first draft of the force left London and travelled by ferry across the Channel, by train across France to Marseille, by ship to Alexandria, by a smaller ship from Alexandria to Basra and finally by a river paddle-wheel steamer up the Tigris River to Baghdad. This trip took six weeks, and the journey was only half complete. In Baghdad, the force met up with the commander, Major General Lionel Dunsterville from the Indian Army and some staff. Thus, the force took on a name – Dunsterforce. It took over two months to get all the personnel to Baghdad. The time taken to

Dunsterville was born and brought up in England and went to school with Rudyard Kipling, with whom he remained life-long friends. Dunsterville was the model for Stalky, the lead character in Kipling’s story “Stalky and Co”. After taking a commission in the Army of India, Dunsterville saw active service in the Khyber Pass, the Northwest Frontier and China. He was a linguist fluent in several languages, including Russian, which was to come in handy. He was a good choice to command Dunsterforce and proved popular among the many distinguished soldiers in its ranks.

Amongst the volunteers were a few names that are still familiar today. Captain Ernie Latchford was one of the ‘characters’ in the group and Latchford Barracks in Bonegilla are named after him. He was the father of Kevin Latchford, Commanding Officer of 1 Armoured Regiment and 1 CAU in Vietnam, later a major general. Captain Stanley Savige, best known for establishing Legacy after the war, rose to lieutenant general in the Second AIF. Captain Cecil Judge retired to his grazing property after the war. While serving in Dunsterforce Judge kept a diary illustrated with many photographs taken at interesting moments. Some of those images feature in this article.

## The First Approach to Enzeli

In Baghdad Dunsterville decided to prepare for an armed reconnaissance into the interior of what was then Mesopotamia while he awaited arrival of the main body. To pay the 'levies' (local recruits) the force received a very large sum in gold and silver coins, and they were given command of an armoured car. For transport of men and equipment they acquired a fleet of fifty Ford Model T cars and 'vans' (what we would call a 'tradie's ute' version of the Model T). For weapons they were issued service rifles and a few Lewis machine guns. The weight of the coins, ammunition, weapons and equipment was such that it had to be spread over all the vehicles.



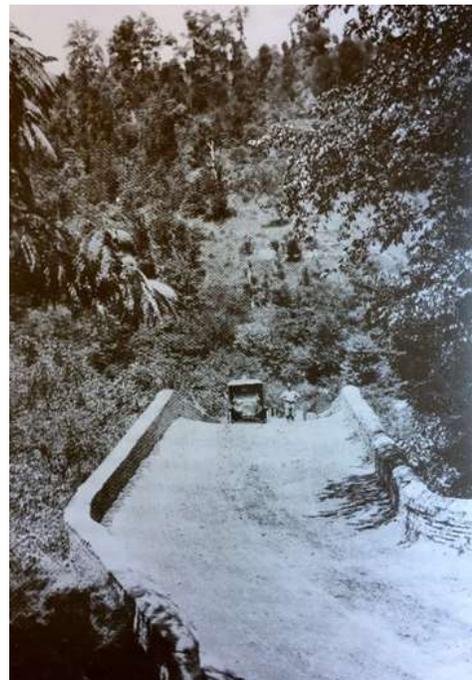
**Fig. 4: The convoy of 50 Model T Fords**

At the end of January 1918, Dunsterville, with an advance party consisting of fifteen officers and NCOs who had arrived in Baghdad from India and Mesopotamia, plus forty-seven soldiers, set off from Baghdad with the aim of reaching Enzeli, one of the principal ports on the Caspian Sea. The poor and unsealed road wound over the Zagros and Elburz Mountains with passes up to 8,000 feet in altitude, under deep snow. The force had to be on the alert, all along the way, for bandits and bands of roving Kurds freed by the Russian withdrawal. After fifteen days they arrived in Hamadan to find a sizeable and rather friendly town with 50,000 people and residential and commercial buildings, even a bank with a British manager and his wife. Dunsterville pressed on to Enzeli. Despite large numbers of

Russian ex-soldiers leaving in disorder and an increasingly surly local population blocking the roads, he reached Enzeli four days and ninety miles later. At Enzeli he was prevented from embarking for Baku by the local Bolshevik soviet and narrowly escaped capture by departing the town very early one morning. This extremely negative Bolshevik attitude was attributable to Britain's refusal to recognise the revolutionary government in Russia, and so was seen as the enemy.



**Fig. 5: A halt for the Model T convoy**

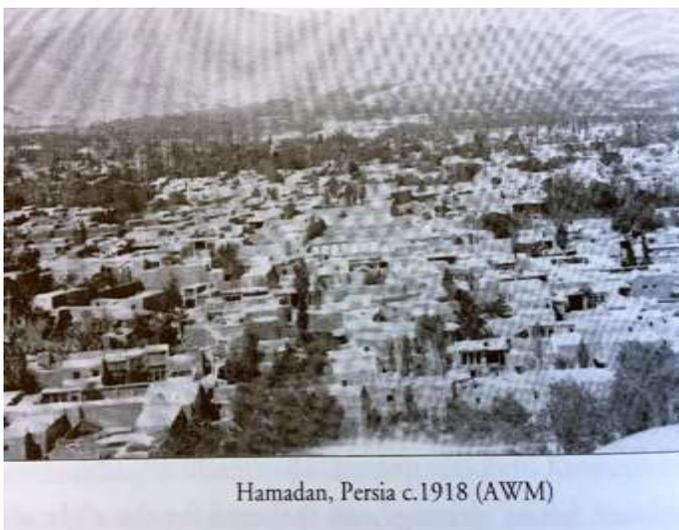


**Fig. 6: The road to Enzeli**

Dunsterville resolved to establish his HQ in Hamadan given to the available facilities, central location and relatively friendly population. Here he was joined by the remainder of the Western Front recruits, reinforcements consisting of thirty men from the 1st/4th Hampshire Regiment, two aeroplanes and other troops. By now it was the end of March and the worst of winter was behind them.

By this time most of the former Russian soldiers who were streaming back to their homeland had gone. But one group of about 1,000 Cossacks remained under Colonel Lazar Bicherakov, who Dunsterville persuaded to remain for a few months by underwriting his costs. Owing to his proficiency in Russian, Dunsterville struck up a friendship with Bicherakov that would stand him in good stead.

At this time Dunsterville took stock of the overall situation and, with the agreement of the War Office, decided to pause in Hamadan to recruit and train as many levies as might be available and to perform works we would now describe as “hearts and minds” stuff – mainly road building and repairing. In addition to improving the attitude of the people toward the small expedition by providing a *raison d’etre*, it fed money into a starving and helpless population.



**Fig. 7: Hamadan in 1918**

They also worked to improve the food supply which was afflicted by hoarders. It was now obvious that Dunsterforce by itself would be unable to resist a concerted attack by the Turks. Dunsterville adopted a plan of distributing his force onto main routes and towns to gain acceptance from the local population and gather intelligence of enemy movements. The ‘British’ were not immediately accepted, but by good public relations and bluff they managed to maintain their positions.

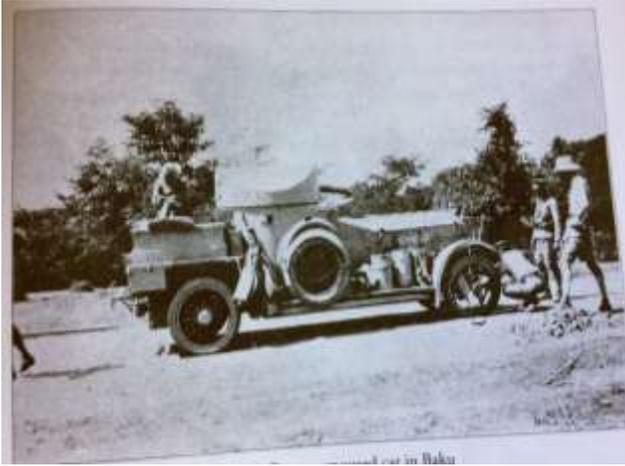
As the weather improved, an aggressive tribe, the Jangalis, whose home was the jungle between the southern end of the Caspian Sea and the inter-mountain elevated plateau to the south, mounted an attack toward Kazvin and Hamadan under their leader Kuchik Khan. Fortunately, Dunsterforce, mainly Bicherakov’s Cossacks, was able to beat off the assault. Kuchik intended to start a “democratic revolution” in Persia, which is ironic considering he was attacking the ‘British’, arguably the only democracy among the combatants.

In June Dunsterville decided to relocate his HQ to Kasvin. With about the same population as Hamadan, Kasvin was more prosperous and, most importantly, was located at the junction of two main roads – the east-west road leading to Enzeli and the north-south road between Teheran and Tiflis.

### **The Second Approach to Enzeli**

By this time Dunsterforce had been reinforced considerably by the arrival of the other original officers and NCOs nominated by Birdwood, taking the total of them to 255, plus about eleven Russian officers, some of whom could fly aircraft. His infantry from the Hampshire Regiment had been increased to fifty rifles, plus a squadron of cavalry from the 14th Hussars and another armoured car. Also, on the way to Hamadan from Baghdad were one thousand rifles of the Hampshires and the Gurkhas, the rest of the 14th Hussars, two mountain guns, eight armoured

cars and a battery of the Royal Artillery. A convoy of 500 Ford Model T vans accompanied the troops. Around 600 levies had been raised and trained to some extent.



**Fig. 8: An armoured car on a Rolls-Royce chassis**

A novel piece of technology for that area was the arrival of the four aircraft that Dunsterville had been promised. These were Martinsydes, a biplane larger than the current fighters but much smaller than the large biplane bombers used in the European theatre. With a crew of two it was possible to carry out bombing and strafing of ground targets. With complete air superiority the biggest risk to air operations was taking off and landing on rough airstrips.



**Fig. 9: A Martynside fighter/bomber**

On 12 June the advance to contact commenced with the Cossacks leading, cavalry and artillery in support. The Jangalis, commanded by a German officer, made a great show of defending the ground around a strategic bridge at Menjil,

but were swept away by the ferocity of the Cossack attack and the fire support, including from armoured cars. After a short interval the advance continued to Enzeli.



**Fig. 10: Cossacks**

Enzeli was important as the only port on the southern arc of the Caspian with enough shipping and infrastructure to serve as a jumping-off point for the combined force of Cossacks and Dunsterforce. Despite the initial rebuff Dunsterville had received, therefore, he had no alternative but to sail from Enzeli. Yet this time he did have the Cossacks to assist in negotiations with the port soviet.

Two weeks after setting out from Kasvin the combined force was in Enzeli. The Jangalis had harassed the troops most of the way but avoided set piece actions. Casualties had been light for the Russo-British combined force, but the Jangalis had lost considerable numbers.

At this point Bicherakov decided to turn Bolshevik. He saw that as the only way to either embark at Enzeli or disembark at Baku, as his destination was his hometown of Tiflis. This "conversion" was greeted with great enthusiasm at both places. Bicherakov and his Cossacks left for Baku and Dunsterforce continued the action against the Jangalis along the Kasvin-Enzeli road, thus wiping out the nascent revolution and

securing the road while awaiting the return of the ships.

### **The Road Route North**

The road from Teheran through Kasvin led to the north via towns such as Tabriz and Tiflis and past cities such as Urmia. At one point, Dunsterville contemplated using this route to Baku but had to abandon the idea due to Turkish advances southwards.

As part of his policy of establishing what amounted to standing patrols in strategic locations, and to secure his left flank while he advanced on Enzeli, Dunsterville despatched a force of about 35 Australian and New Zealand officers and NCOs north along the Tabriz Road. Captain Stanley Savige was second-in-command of this advance guard which marched 170 kilometres to Bijar where they halted to await orders. A few days later they awoke to find “thousands and thousands of men, women and children streaming from the hills into the wide, bone-dry valley”. Months before, the Turks had laid siege to Urmiah, a haven for the Christian Assyrians fleeing from the Turks and Kurds intent on genocide, probably as pay-back for past maltreatment at their hands. Whatever the cause, there were now between 80,000 and 200,000 defenceless refugees fleeing along the road with their possessions in their arms or on carts, while all the time being attacked by the Turks and Kurds.

Savige put a proposal to his superior, and to the Assyrian commander Agha Petros, to find and defend the rear of the refugee column, taking “two officers, six sergeants, three Lewis guns and a hundred Assyrian volunteers and rations for 6 days”. This began a period of three days when this gallant band held off much superior forces by fighting day and night without rest or food or water. Captain Ken Nicol (NZE) and Sergeant France were killed in action, and the rest survived but in various degrees of ill-health. Savige himself was evacuated to Baghdad

suffering from beri-beri, on top of malnutrition, dehydration and malaria. Some of his men died and the rest were ruled unfit for further service and were eventually sent home when they had strength to travel.

In recognition of his gallantry, Captain Stanley Savige was awarded the DSO.

C E W Bean wrote “the stand made by Savige and his eight companions that evening and during half the next day against hundreds of the enemy thirsting like wolves to get at the defenceless throng was as fine as any episode to the present writer in the history of this war.” High praise indeed coming from Bean.

Savige was transferred to Australia via hospital at Bombay, where in a last meeting Dunsterville told him of the fate that befell Dunsterforce.



**Fig. 11: Captain Stanley Savige**

### **Hearts and Minds**

Dunsterville realised that his small force and isolated position were exposed to threats from the local population and specifically armed groups like the Jangalis and northern Kurds. Moreover, the Turks still had considerable forces in the north. To create a favourable image among the local people, and gain intelligence, he set up projects to improve their living conditions.

The roads were in poor condition, having not been maintained despite degradation due to the harsh weather. Dunsterforce employed local men in road gangs under the supervision of force personnel. This had the desirable effect of improving the roads and the wages paid by Dunsterforce improved the local economy.

As well as extensive poverty, the local food markets had become distorted by food hoarders who had pushed the prices out of the reach of most people. Dunsterville approached this by buying up large quantities of food and reselling it at affordable prices. This had the combined effect of boosting the image of Dunsterforce and destroying the market for the hoarders.



**Fig. 12: An Australian Warrant Officer with local children**

The following is an extract from the Official History of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade about another aspect of Dunsterforce operations:

Lieut. Scoular became chief Field Engineer for Hamadan Province, and he and Lieut. Rutherford, of 1st Canterbury,

appointed to a similar position in Kasvin Province, carried out the greater part of the Royal Engineering work of Northern Persia. The former also has to his credit the construction of a British General Hospital consisting of eighteen buildings and fitted to accommodate 520 patients, the staff of 1,500 native workmen having been controlled by himself, Lieut. Wells of the Otago Mounted, four non-commissioned officers, and two privates.

On the intelligence aspect, Dunsterforce set up a network operated by two officers, one from the 8th Sikhs and the other from the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, who created a highly developed secret service. Through their hands, mostly by devious means, passed all correspondence to and from the Turkish and German delegations in Teheran, the headquarters of the rebel tribes, and Constantinople. They knew every enemy move and every enemy agent, native or European. Their skill was fully recognized by their opponents, one of whom wrote, in a letter itself intercepted, "[t]he English hear even our whispers".

### To Baku

Meanwhile Dunsterville reappraised his task, realising that the important thing was holding Baku to deny oil supplies to the Germans and Turks, but it appears this revision of the main task was not fully supported by the War Office.

By this stage Dunsterforce had received significant reinforcements from General Sir Archibald Murray's Middle East Force in Baghdad, despite Murray calling Dunsterforce's task "a mad enterprise". The reinforcements consisted of:

- Infantry: one infantry brigade
- Cavalry: four armoured cars
- Artillery: one field artillery battery
- Aircraft: two Martinsyde two-seater biplanes



**Fig.13: Oil wagons in Baku**

Bicherakov staged a *coup d'état* in Baku and established the Centro Caspian Dictatorship. He then asked for British assistance to defend the town against two divisions of the Turkish Army who were attacking from the north and west. He despatched ships to Enzeli to transport Dunsterforce as well as reinforcements sent by Lieutenant General Sir William Marshall, British commander in Mesopotamia. In all 1,000 troops, two aircraft and several armoured cars strengthened the local defenders at Baku who were organised by Dunsterforce into three battalions. The problem with the local troops was that every time the Turks attacked, they ran away. Charles Bean says in the Official History that the crew of a Bolshevik ship in the port sent a message saying:

We have witnessed with intense admiration the heroic conduct of your brave British soldiers in the defence of Baku. We have seen them suffering wounds and death bravely in defence of our town, which our own people were too feeble to defend.



**Fig. 14: Defenders of Baku**

The Turkish attack began at the end of July and by early September the position had become indefensible. Dunsterforce warned the local soviet that he would withdraw his troops rather than see them killed for no purpose. After attempted discussions and obstructions, the fighting withdrawal was carried out on the night of 15 September with no further casualties. The port soviet ordered the gunships guarding the port to fire on any ships attempting to leave but this failed to stop the three ships. The remains of Dunsterforce arrived back in Enzeli.

Captain Judge earned a Bar to his Military Cross in the battle for Baku. The citation states:

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty at Baku on 14th September 1918. During an attack on a town by a superior force of the enemy he was serving with two local battalions, which by his courage and example he induced to put up a good fight. Later, when both commanding officers were killed, he himself took command, and controlled the battalions with marked ability. This officer performed excellent work throughout the operations.



**Fig. 15: Ships at Baku**

### The aftermath

The Centrocaspian Dictatorship fell on 15 September, after Turkish forces occupied Baku. Dunsterforce had failed to reach Tiflis or to

create a Caucasian military force to hold the line between Batum, Tiflis and Baku. But the cotton crop and oil of Baku had been denied to the Germans. The Turks took over the oil fields in September, though only for a few weeks. On 30 October, armistice with the Ottoman Empire required Turkish forces to withdraw and allow the Allies to re-occupy Baku. Exaggerated rumours about the strength of Dunsterforce had also tied down Turkish troops in Kurdistan, protecting the British flank in Mesopotamia.

On 17 September, Dunsterforce was disbanded and North Persia Force (Major-General W M Thomson) took over the command of troops in the area. The Dunsterforce officers were allowed to choose to return to their regiments, join Indian battalions or stay on in Norperforce. Many chose repatriation but several opted to fight on with the White Russians against the Bolsheviks. Some of the British officers joined the White Russian force in Murmansk but the Australians opted for Vladivostok where a training school was located.

The War Office thought Dunsterforce had failed, and if one looks at the original objectives perhaps it is true that they were not achieved. However, this overlooks the considerable achievements of such a small force operating in a hostile environment. Throughout the period Dunsterforce was in place, the Turks believed it to be a much larger contingent and consequently did not mount offensive operations until September, which denied the oil and cotton to the Germans.

Let General Dunsterville have the last word:

I am prouder of having had in my command these gallant officers and non-commissioned officers than of any other command I have held. Brought together from every corner of the Empire, all have vied with one another to show the absolute unity of our national aspirations. Their work varied from valuable

administrative tasks to daring achievements on the battlefield, and all have striven to do their utmost, even in circumstances for which they were never prepared, and which they never would have chosen for themselves. They have had the privilege of showing the varied races in the lands through which they passed the pattern of the finest army of present times.

### Comment

1. In line with prevailing attitudes in Europe and the UK, this operational concept totally ignored borders, terrain and ethnicity. It showed no appreciation of economic conditions or tribal animosities and loyalties, and it misread the mood of the Russians (not for the first time).
2. To take and hold Baku would be a significant task even for a large well-trained force given that around seven Turkish divisions were just a few days march north of the city.
3. How they were to establish a navy with no navy personnel and no ships remains a mystery, but this was given no further thought and the Russians continued to control the Caspian Sea.
4. There was little appreciation of how long it would take to mobilise the force, given the six-week journey to Mesopotamia before recruiting and training could proceed. In the event it took two months to concentrate the whole force in the area of operations, which greatly prejudiced their slim chance of success.

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C E W Bean, AWM

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Keast Burke, Arthur McQuitty & Co, 1927

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National Archives of Australia 1961-2021

**APPENDIX**

Australian officers in Dunsterforce:

NAME	GRADE	REGIMENT	DATE	STATUS
Major G. H. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major R. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major J. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major A. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major M. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major P. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major S. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major T. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major U. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major V. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major W. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major X. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major Y. ...	Major	...	...	...
Major Z. ...	Major	...	...	...

NCOs in Dunsterforce (Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and South African):



**ROD STEWART** is a member of the Military History Society of NSW. He entered the RMC DUNTRON in 1955 and graduated in 1958 into the Royal Australian Engineers. After a diploma of civil engineering, he was posted to 21 Construction Sqn RAE and spent a year and a half in New Guinea constructing roads followed by a posting to 1 Field Sqn RAE and deployments to Borneo and Vietnam, then DENGERS and finally 3 years at RMC DUNTRON as Instructor Military Engineering.

# The Battle of Gettysburg - Part 1

■ Lt Col (Ret'd) Steve Hart

**Introduction**

The major thrust of this article is the Battle of Gettysburg, the so-called ‘high water mark of the Confederacy.’ However, this single battle can only be understood in the context of the overall conduct of the civil war *up to that point*, making the total article too large for a single instalment. Consequently, the story will be presented in two parts in sequential editions of *Reconnaissance* in the following structure.

**Part 1.** This article focuses on the prelude to the war and the series of battles which led to the important battle of Gettysburg. An understanding of the leadership, politics, motivations and early military successes are driving factors that led to this decisive battle. To complete this part, a detailed review of the first day’s battle will be presented.

**Part 2.** The subsequent edition will concentrate on the final two days of the battle and then an analysis of the aftermath of this battle and the changing military situation leading to the defeat

of the Confederacy. Finally, the paper will review the impacts of the conflict both on the long-term future of the United States and the rest of the world. In effect, the author will present a macroscopic view of the Civil War but a microscopic view of the decisive battle of Gettysburg.

### **Additional Reading**

A list of suggested reading is presented at the end of this article. The author's research revealed that there is something like 50,000 books on the American Civil War and there are literally hundreds of web sites on the subject. It could well be a life-time study. Certainly, many of the references listed had their geneses as PhD theses.

### **Contextual History: Background to Conflict**

By way of introduction, the American Civil War was, after the Napoleonic struggle, the largest and longest major conflict in the Western world during the 19th century. It was the last American war in which (it is believed) infantry attacked in the open in dense formations, but it also saw the employment of railroads, balloons, the telegraph, steamships, armour plate, revolving turrets, rifled artillery, long range rifle, and even breech loaders. Not all these were new, but in the Civil War they were used on an unprecedented scale.

So, what caused the war? Why did Americans fight one another over four long years, at a cost of more than 600,000 lives? What did it all mean? What does it signify today? Most Civil War scholars and historians offer a multitude of answers and different names for the conflict. The War Against Northern Aggression, the War for States' Rights, the War for Constitutional Liberty, the War for the Preservation of the Union, the Brothers' War, Mr. Lincoln's War. Even today, many Southerners prefer the tag of 'our second War of Independence'. The connotations appear to offer no overriding cause, only that slavery and secession lay at the crux. How odd therefore, that the 1860 census revealed that only a very small minority of Southerners owned slaves.

### **Prelude to War**

So, what was the background to the War? Negro slavery existed in all the colonies long before the American Revolution. But it was the northern-most colonies which embraced legal measures to introduce emancipation and abolition, some as early as 1775. While the north found its future in the factory, the Southern states clung to their pastoral way of life. Living by agriculture, they depended on slave labour to produce much of the rice, sugar, tobacco, corn, indigo, wheat and cotton, the latter becoming extremely profitable after the cotton gin's invention in 1793. By 1860, three and a half million slaves lived in the eleven states that were to secede – a region occupied by only five and a half million whites. Little wonder that White Southerners feared that emancipation would create not only social but economic chaos.

The issue of slavery began festering in the late 1840s. Southerners demanded as a right the freedom to take slaves into western land recently acquired from Mexico, with free-soil leaders opposing them. Rancorous debates in the Senate involving possible secession resulted in The Compromise of 1850 in which Union senators agreed to stronger fugitive slave laws in order to placate the South. The Compromise gave only a brief interval of harmony and left the clash of principles unresolved. As the decades passed, new crises arose.

### **John Brown (whose "body lies a' moulding in the grave, but his soul keeps marching on.")**

In October 1859, a band of antislavery fanatics led by John Brown seized the Federal arsenal at Harper's Ferry with a view to initiating a slave insurrection, but his endeavours were quickly put down and Brown executed for treason. Southern fears grew alarmingly during the 1860 Presidential election campaigns and the possibility of an abolitionist candidate winning.

### **The Issue of Slavery**

The issue of slavery in a fundamentally Christian society, which had been created by a Declaration

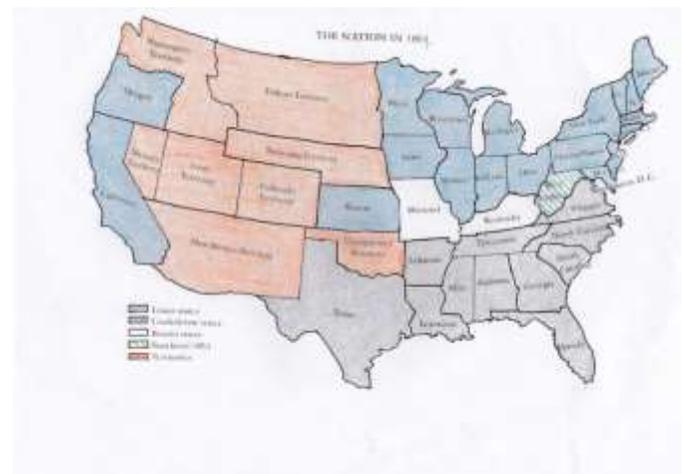
of Independence stating that “all men are created equal” became accepted as what was called the “peculiar institution” and recognised by Southerners as defining their way of life and underpinned their prosperity. Secession secured the means to preserve both, but it did not imply war between brothers. Some cooler heads in the South recognised that neither Lincoln himself nor his Republican Party proposed abolition, the legal ending of slavery by an amendment of the Constitution, which indirectly permitted slavery without positively endorsing it. What Lincoln and his party, and indeed many Northerners insisted upon was that slavery should not be extended into the “territories,” the vast tracts of North America belonging to the Union but not yet organised as states. But Southern sentiment was firmly fixated on the need to export slavery to these new lands.

The Election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency in 1860 triggered the states of the Deep South into enacting ordinances of secession and taking possession of Federal property, including forts, arsenals, and navy yards, within their borders. By February 1861 seven states – South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas – had declared themselves out of the union and set up in Montgomery, Alabama, a provisional government calling itself the Confederate States of America with an ex-US Senator, Jefferson Davis, as its President. By the time Mr Lincoln took the Presidential oath on 4 March 1861, the only places within the Confederacy that were effectively controlled by the US Government were Fort Pickens at Pensacola and Fort Sumter in Charleston harbour.

Eight slave states – Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas – remained within the Union but strongly secessionist opinion prevailed in several of them. Virginia did secede later and its largest city, Richmond, became the capital of the Confederacy. Virginia’s secession lost to the United States the services of Colonel Robert E Lee, a distinguished officer whom Lieutenant-General Winfield Scott, General in Chief of the

Union Army, had decided should have the field command of the forces in the event of war. Colonel Lee, though personally opposed to slavery and to secession, felt that he could not honourably fight against Virginia, his native state. He resigned from the US Army, joined the forces of Virginia, and shortly thereafter rose to the rank of general in the Confederate Army.

This map shows the political structure in 1861. Union states are shown in Blue, Confederate states in Grey, Border states which gained statehood in 1863 are shown in White, and the New Territories in Pink.



**Relative Strengths of the Nation in 1861**

So, what were the relative strengths of the belligerents at the outbreak of War? These are outlined in the table below. At first glance it seems that the 23 states of the Union were more than a match for the eleven seceding southern states.

FACTORS	NORTH	SOUTH
POPULATION	21 MILLION	9 MILLION (3.5 M SLAVES)
MANUFACTURING PLANTS	>100,000	18,000
RAILROAD TRACKS	70%	30%
GOVERNANCE	FUNCTIONING	EVOLVING
ARMS PRODUCTION	NORTH 30-TO-1 SUPERIORITY	
AVAILABLE MANPOWER	NORTH 2-TO-1 SUPERIORITY	
COMMERCIAL/FINANCIAL RESOURCES	NORTH SUPERIOR TO SOUTH	

The Union possessed an overwhelming superiority in population, available manpower, financial and manufacturing resources, coupled with a significant logistic capability to transport troops and supplies by rail. It had a functioning government and a small but efficient regular army and navy.



Jefferson Davis

But the Confederacy was not pre-destined to defeat. The Southern armies had the advantage of fighting on interior lines, and their military tradition had bulked large in the history of the United States before 1860. Moreover, the long Confederate coastline of 3,500 miles seemed to defy blockade; and the Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, hoped to receive decisive foreign aid and intervention. Finally, the grey clad southern soldiers were fighting for the intangible but strong objectives of the home and white supremacy. So, the Southern cause was not a lost one; indeed, other nations had won independence against equally heavy odds.

One of the unique features of this conflict was a factor that became known as the strategy of the rival capitals. The Confederates moved their capital to Richmond which was a railroad centre and the site of the only ironworks in the South at

the outbreak of war. It had some purely military value, as did Washington, which possessed the largest naval gun factory on the continent. But the psychological importance of Washington to northern prestige and morale was too great to allow the Confederates to capture it, even if it had possessed no military value. The Confederates felt similarly about Richmond. Thus, a lunge in the direction of one capital was sure to bring out a contending army.

### **The high commands: Confederacy**

Command problems plagued both sides. Of the two rival Commanders-in-Chief, most people in 1861 thought Davis to be more able than Lincoln. Davis was a West Point graduate, hero of the Mexican War, capable Secretary of War under President Franklin Pierce, and a United States Senator from Mississippi; whereas Lincoln – who had served in the Illinois State legislature and as an undistinguished one term member of the US House of Representatives – could boast of only a brief period of military service in the Black Hawk War, in which he did not overly excel.

As President and Commander-in-Chief of the Confederate forces, Davis revealed many fine qualities, including patience, courage, dignity, restraint, firmness, energy, determination, and honesty; but he was flawed by his excessive pride, hypersensitivity to criticism, and his inability to delegate minor details to his subordinates. For example, he filled the position of General in Chief of the Confederate armies, until he named Robert E Lee to that position on February 6, 1865, when the Confederacy was near collapse. Although his position was onerous and perhaps could not have been filled so well by any other southern political leader, some historians consider that Davis's overall performance in office left something to be desired.

However, the Confederacy could boast an impressive assemblage of military leaders including Robert E Lee, JEB. Stuart, TJ "Stonewall" Jackson, Pierre Beauregard, Braxton Bragg, James Longstreet and John B Hood.

## The high commands: Union

To the astonishment of many, Lincoln grew in stature with time and experience, and by 1864 he had become a consummate war director. But he had much to learn at first, especially in strategic and tactical matters and in his choices of army commanders. With an ineffective first Secretary of War – Simon Cameron – Lincoln unhesitatingly insinuated himself directly into the planning of military movements.

Winfield Scott was the federal General in Chief when Lincoln took office. The 75-year-old Scott – a hero of the war of 1812 and of the Mexican War – was an erudite and distinguished soldier whose mind was still keen in 1861. But he was physically incapacitated and had to be retired from the service on 1 November 1861. Scott was replaced by young George P McClellan, an able and imaginative General in Chief but one who had difficulty establishing harmonious and effective relations with Lincoln. Because of this and because he hardly campaigned with his Army of the Potomac, McClellan was relieved as General in Chief on 11 March 1862. He was eventually succeeded on 11 July by the inept Henry W Halleck, who held the position until replaced by Ulysses S Grant on 9 March 1864. Halleck then became Chief of Staff under Grant in a long-needed streamlining of the federal high command. Grant served efficaciously as General in Chief throughout the remainder of the war. Other key military commanders in the Union were William Sherman, George G Meade, Philip H Sheridan, among others.

After the initial call by Lincoln and Davis for troops and as the war lengthened indeterminately, both sides turned to raising massive armies of volunteers. Local citizens of prominence and means would organise regiments that were uniformed and accoutred at first under the aegis of the states and then mustered into the service of the Union or Confederate governments. For both sides, the combat efficiency and state of training of the new units varied from good to very poor. Some of the state militia regiments were well trained and

equipped; others were regiments in name only. These practices were based in part on the belief that soldiering, whether on the level of the squad or the regiment, was something that a man of good sense and goodwill could easily muster. The standard of officer leadership also varied considerably as many were commissioned by election of soldiers or appointed by State governors. As the war dragged on, the two governments had to resort to conscription to fill the ranks being so swiftly thinned by battle casualties.

## Strategic plans

In the area of grand strategy Davis persistently adhered to the defensive, permitting only occasional “spoiling” forays into Northern Territory. Yet perhaps the Confederate’s best chance of winning would have been an early grand offensive into the Union states before the Lincoln administration could find its ablest generals and bring the preponderant resources of the North to bear upon the South.

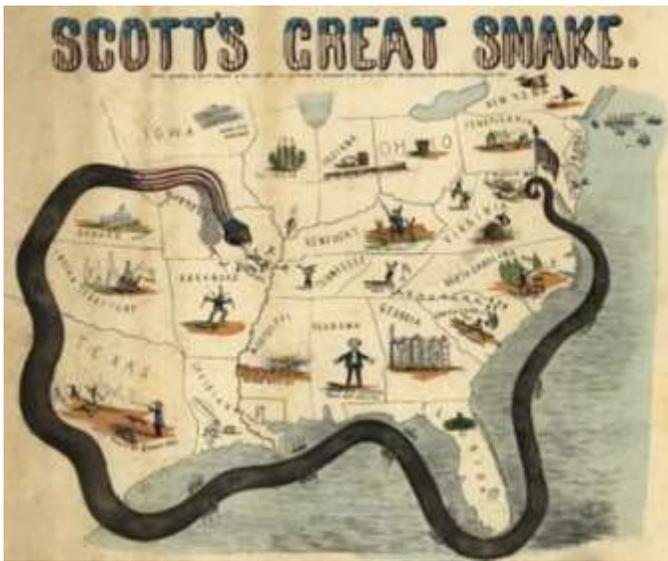


Winfield Scott

Lincoln, on the other hand, in order to crush the rebellion and re-establish the authority of the federal government, had to direct his blue-clad armies to invade, capture, and hold most of the

vital areas of the Confederacy. It now appeared that a war was inevitable, and with four more states joining the Confederacy, Lincoln determined that he could declare the blockade of the entire Confederate coastline and called a special session of Congress to begin on 4 July 1861. Correctly anticipating that Congress would approve his actions, on his own authority he increased the regular army's fighting capacity with additional artillery, cavalry, and infantry regiments. Although Lincoln did not, despite the warnings of General Scott, anticipate the length or scale of the war which faced him, his foresight was remarkable, and he called up far larger forces than the United States had ever before possessed.

His grand strategy was based on Scott's so-called Anaconda Plan, a design that evolved from strategic ideas discussed in messages between Scott and McClellan throughout April and May 1861.



The initial strategy of this plan was designed to put down the rebellion by the Confederacy. Scott came up with the plan in early 1861, intending it as the means to end the rebellion through mostly economic measures, thereby preventing a bloody war. The basic plan was to blockade the saltwater ports of the South and to stop all commerce on the Mississippi river so no cotton could be exported, and no war supplies could be imported.

The assumption was that the South, feeling considerable economic punishment if it continued the rebellion, would return to the Union before any major battles would be fought. The strategy was nicknamed the Anaconda Plan in the newspapers because it would strangle the Confederacy the way the Anaconda snake constricts its victims. It was the general plan by which the North eventually won the war, but its initial manpower estimates were too modest. President Lincoln certainly had doubts about the plan, and rather than wait for a slow strangulation of the Confederacy to occur, he chose to do battle with the Confederacy in ground campaigns. But it was to take four years of grim, unrelenting warfare and enormous casualties and devastation before the Confederates could be defeated and the Union preserved. Yet elements of the Anaconda Plan, such as the naval blockade, did become part of the Union strategy. However, the geographical features and wide dispersion of the Confederacy forces may have influenced the overall strategy of the Union because it was determined to conduct the conflict in six military theatres, which are illustrated below.



**Union blockade.** (Blue line). 3500 miles of the Atlantic and gulf coastlines including 12 major ports, especially New Orleans and Mobile.

**Eastern theatre.** (Black ring). Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland and, Pennsylvania, and the District of Columbia.

**Western theatre.** (Red ring). Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Missouri, North Carolina, Kentucky,

South Carolina, and Louisiana (east of the Mississippi River).

**Lower seaboard coastal.** (Brown line). Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas.

**Trans-Mississippi Theatre.** (Green ring). Missouri, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arizona, and New Mexico.

**Pacific Coast Theatre.** (Black ring). States West of the continental divide. California, Oregon, Nevada, Washington, Utah and Idaho

About the same time as Lincoln repeated the Presidential oath, the month-old Confederacy readied a call for 100,000 volunteers. Conflict was now inevitable, but Lincoln was determined to maintain the Union, noting that “a house divided against itself cannot stand.” Equally, he was anxious to avert civil war, eager to avoid any act that would drive the eight-remaining slave-holding states out of the Union, and well aware that he was not backed by a unanimous public opinion in the north. However, he also wanted to hold the two forts previously mentioned (Pickens and Sumter) but he had to move cautiously. Lincoln despatched a seaborne expedition to support the now besieged garrison on Fort Sumter but by then the die had been cast.

### Conflict Begins

In the pre-dawn hours of 12 April 1861, Confederate artillery began a 34-hour bombardment which resulted in Fort Sumter’s surrender.

This incident may have been minute in itself, but the rashness of the Confederates in committing an overt act of war removed any difficulties from Lincoln’s path. It crystallised a large body of northern opinion in favour of preservation of the Union and gave the President the resolution to act swiftly and decisively. But it would take time to prepare his field armies and a grand strategy needed to be developed to ensure the defeat of the Confederacy.

### Battles rated by the CWSAC

#### Developing a macroscopic view of the war as a prelude to Gettysburg

As stated in the introduction, the author hoped to present a macroscopic view of the War and its lead-up to Gettysburg. This objective was difficult, because there are an estimated 8,000 occasions in which hostilities occurred in over 10,000 locations in the American Civil War. Therefore, a rationale had to be found to identify those significant battles that preceded and followed Gettysburg and research on the internet inevitably led to a site which introduced the American Battlefield Protection Program. This was established within the United States National Park Service to classify the preservation status of historical battlefield lands.

#### CWSAC Ratings

In 1993, the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (or the CWSAC) reported to Congress and the American Battlefield Protection Program on their extensive analysis of significant battles and battlefields. They identified a total of 384 battles that were of significance, and these were classified in accordance with the definitions listed below:-

**Class A: Decisive.** A general engagement involving field armies in which a commander achieved a vital strategic objective. There were 24 such battles prior to Gettysburg. Major Southern victories included Manassas/Bull Run, First Winchester, Second Bull Run, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville (all Eastern Theatre) and Wilson’s Creek (Trans-Mississippi Theatre).

**Class B: Major.** An engagement of magnitude involving field armies or divisions in which a commander achieved an important objective within the context of an ongoing campaign offensive. 44 battles before Gettysburg are listed under this category.

**Class C: Formative.** An engagement involving

divisions or detachments of the field armies in which a commander accomplished a limited campaign objective of reconnaissance, disruption, defence, or occupation. Too numerous to document.

**Class D: Limited.** An engagement, typically involving detachments of the field armies, in which a commander achieved a limited tactical objective of reconnaissance, disruption, defence, or occupation. Even more numerous. Although the North achieved overall more successes in these battles, its losses were significantly greater than those of the South. No one really knows just how many Americans died during the conflict because of the numerous missing in action. In relation to casualties, the Encyclopaedia Britannica sums up “The Cost and Significance of the War” with these words. “Based on the three-year standard of enlistment, some 1,556,000 soldiers served in the Federal armies, which suffered a total of 634,703 casualties (359,528 dead and 275,175 wounded). There were probably some 800,000 men serving in the Confederate forces, which sustained approximately 483,000 casualties (about 258,000 deaths and perhaps 225,000 wounded).”

The relative losses became a major factor in Lee’s subsequent strategy. For example, after the Battle of Harper’s Ferry where, in September 1862, the North lost over 12,000 men, mainly POWs, to Jackson’s losses of only 286.

When coupled with the losses the North sustained in the Eastern Theatre at Shiloh (April 62), Antietam (September 62), Fredericksburg (December 62) and Chancellorsville (May 63), Lee probably had good reason to believe that a second invasion of the north could be a war winning strategy. Supremely self-confident himself and in the capacities of his soldiers who, he believed, if properly supplied and led, could defeat any Union army they encountered. His emboldened belief could well have been fortified by recognising the revolving door problems that Lincoln was having with his commanders of the Army of the Potomac.

## Lee’s advance to Gettysburg

So let us now take a microscopic view of the Gettysburg battle and the immediate events leading up to it. After the terrible Battle at Chancellorsville, where Lee lost his most trusted and audacious corps commander, “Stonewall” Jackson, the northern army under Hooker was still deployed between the Rappahannock and Potomac Rivers, around Fredericksburg. While both armies were licking their wounds and reorganising, Lincoln called his generals to debate Union strategy. They were thus engaged when Lee launched his invasion of the north on 3 June 1863.



His advance elements moved down the Shenandoah Valley towards Harper’s Ferry, brushing aside small federal forces near Winchester. Marching through Maryland and Pennsylvania, the Confederates reached Chambersburg and turned eastward. They occupied York and menaced Carlisle and

Harrisburg. Meanwhile, the dashing Confederate cavalryman, JEB (“Jeb”) Stuart, set off on a questionable ride around the federal Army and was unable to join Lee’s main army until the second day at Gettysburg.

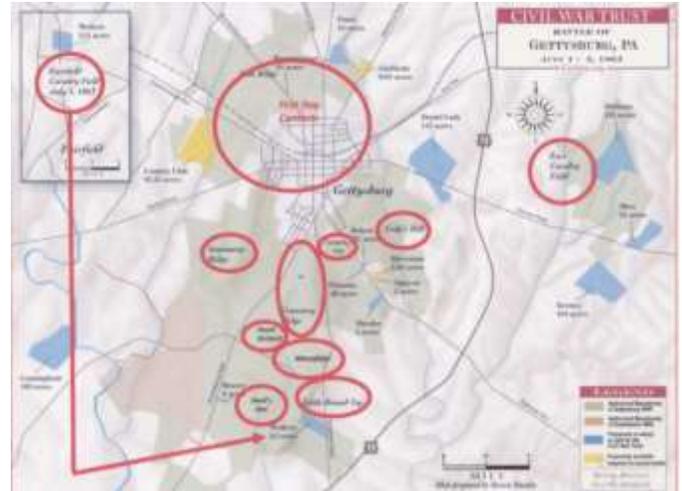
The Blue Ridge Mountains initially masked Lee’s invasion force but by June 8, it was clear to the Union that the Confederates were using the valley as its axis of advance. Lincoln was naturally concerned about the movement of such a large enemy force but could not encourage the timid Hooker to attack Lee and hence dismissed him, replacing him with General George Meade, previously commanding the Army of the Potomac’s Fifth Corps. Lincoln’s instructions to Meade was to move his army on a parallel track between Lee’s forces and Washington. This so-called “inside track” shortened Meade’s lines of communication while Lee’s were lengthening. Both armies must inevitably make contact.

On 28 June the Army of the Potomac was concentrated north of the Potomac in the area of Frederick. Meade knew that he had to protect both Washington and Baltimore and at once decided to position the army to prevent Lee crossing the Susquehanna River which divides Pennsylvania East-West. Meade, who had considerable strategic acuteness, undertook an appreciation of the situation and came to the following conclusions about his and Lee’s respective instructions. Lee had to attack since he was an invader on enemy territory. Were he to withdraw without staging a fight, it would be a serious loss of face. Lee was dispersed, Meade relatively concentrated. If Meade concentrated further, Lee would be obliged to attack him. Meade decided his best plan was to assume a strong defensive position and await Lee’s attack. Examination of the map suggested that Pipe Creek, just south of the Pennsylvania State line, was a suitable place to give battle.

News of the advance of Union forces alarmed Lee, who began hastily to gather his scattered troops. He concentrated them first at Cashtown, between Chambersburg and Gettysburg, but when it was reported that some union troops

were at Gettysburg, he then switched his point of concentration there. The added reason for so doing was that his scouts reported that a supply of shoes, of which the Confederate were always short, was to be found at Gettysburg. On June 30 foraging parties were sent and found union cavalry filling the town and outskirts. The second reconnaissance on July 1, would swell into the opening of a major battle.

### Gettysburg terrain



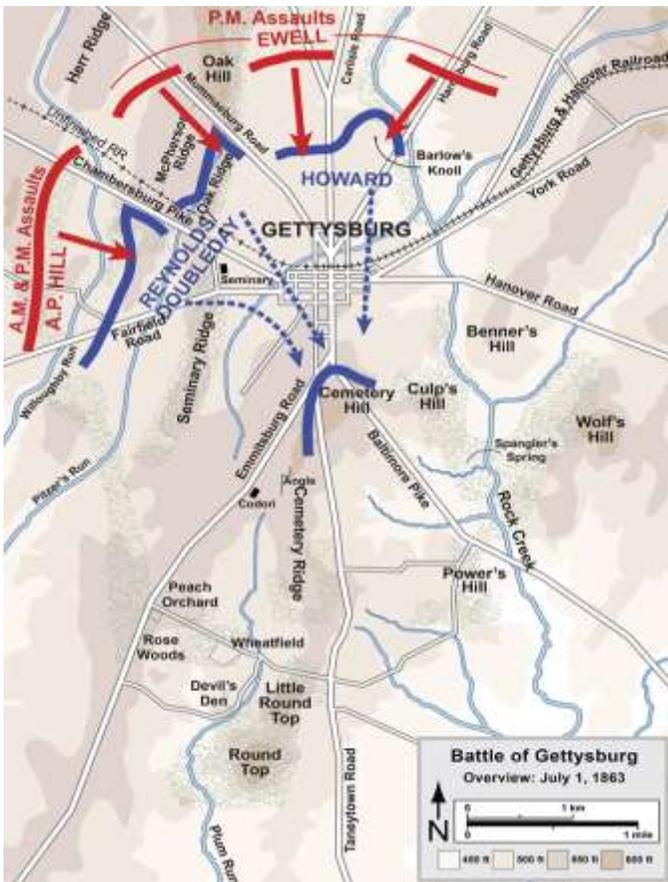
Before progressing to the details of the battle, it would be instructive to orientate oneself with a view of the Gettysburg topography. The town, standing at the north of a tract of open, rolling countryside, only sparsely wooded, was a comfortable, prosperous place, containing several brick houses as well as the large, solid buildings of Gettysburg College and a Lutheran seminary, both with cupolas which officers of the north and south were to use as points of observation in succession. South of the town the terrain formed two ridges, known as Seminary Ridge to the West and Cemetery Ridge to the east. The north end of Cemetery Ridge swelled into the two low hills of Cemetery Hill and Culp’s Hill, the latter being the “barbed” portion of what is described as the “fish-hook” line. Culp’s Hill was important to the Union army since it dominated Cemetery Hill and the Baltimore Pike, the latter being critical for keeping the Union army supplied and blocking any Confederate advance on Baltimore or Washington. To the south the ridge culminated in the prominences of

Little Round Top and Round Top. In front of the Round Tops the ground was broken and boulder-strewn, with fields and fences forming what would become the killing grounds of the Devil Den, the Wheatfield, and the Peach Orchard. The illustration above highlights the areas where subsequent battles ensued.

### Day 1: 1 July

The first of three days of intensive battles began on the morning of 1 July 1863 and began as a clash over shoes. There was rumoured to be a large supply of shoes stored somewhere in the little crossroads town of Gettysburg, and at dawn on July 1, an infantry officer in Ewell's command led his men there to commandeer them for his footsore men.

### The Day 1 Battles



The South came in from the north that day and the North came in from the South. About three miles from town, the Confederate advance guard ran headlong into General John Buford's Union

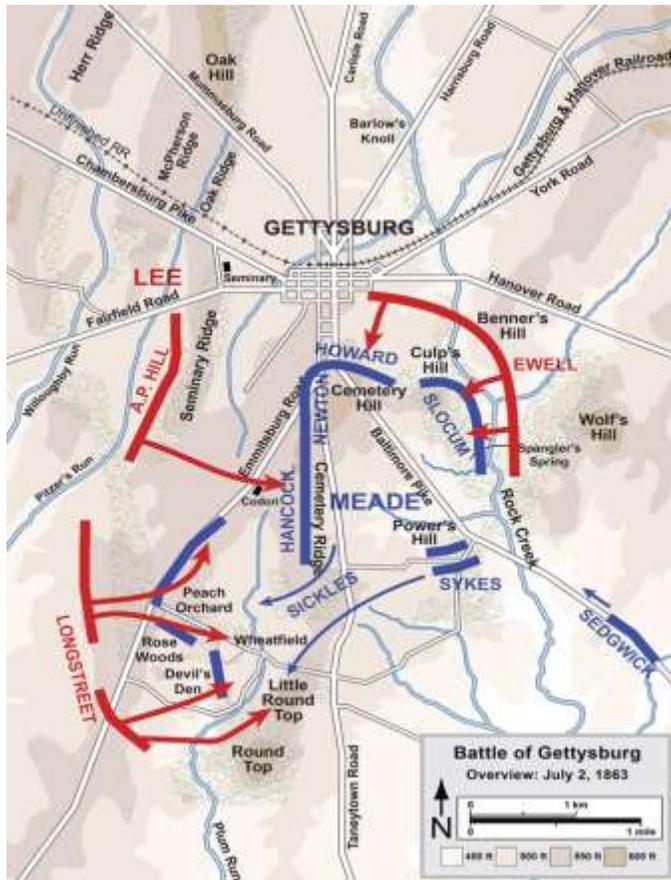
cavalry. While both sides sent couriers pounding off for reinforcement, Buford tried desperately to hold his ground. Union infantry under General Reynolds came to the support of the under-strength cavalrymen and in the ensuing melee, Reynolds was killed. Abner Doubleday then assumed command of the force and conducted a fighting withdrawal through the town.

Every Confederate and Union division in the area now converged on Gettysburg. The Confederates were closest, and as the Union forces slowly gathered, the rebels pushed them back through the town until General Winfield Scott Hancock rallied the retreating troops into defensive positions on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill. Lee arrived in the middle of the afternoon and ordered Ewell to renew the attack on the high ground before nightfall, "if practicable." Ewell gave this task to one of his divisional commanders, Edward Johnson, who sent a small reconnaissance party which was driven off by Union infantry. The failure of Ewell's Corps to take Culp's Hill or Cemetery Hill that evening is considered one of the great missed opportunities of the battle. This first day at Gettysburg, more significant than simply a prelude to the bloody second and third days, ranks as the 23rd biggest battle of the war by the number of troops engaged. About one quarter of Meade's army (22,000) and one third of Lee's army (27,000) were engaged. Union casualties were almost 9,000, Confederate slightly more than 6,000.

### Overview of Day 2

Lee's plan for 2 July called for Ewell's corps to assault Culp's Hill, while Longstreet went after the Round Tops with the aim of driving the rest of the Union forces off the high ground. General James Longstreet, Lee's most experienced subordinate, was not enthusiastic about the overall plan. He argued that Lee should disengage, march the army south and take a defensive stand somewhere between Meade's army and Washington, and wait for the union to attack. Longstreet's reasonable view was predicated upon the fact that the Union was awaiting attack, because that was what it wished

to do. He was alluding to the convention of military wisdom, that a general should not do what the enemy wanted. Even though Lee still did not know his enemy's strengths or whereabouts – Stuart had still not been heard from – he overruled Longstreet, stating that “I am going to whip them here, or they are going to whip me.” Longstreet held his tongue but showed no urgency in carrying out Lee's orders. It was not until 4:00pm on 2 July that his units were in motion.



Through the night, the two armies continued to gather. By morning, 65,000 Confederates faced 85,000 Federal troops. The union line along Cemetery Ridge was shaped like a fishhook. Hills overlooked the Federal positions at either end: Culp's and Cemetery Hills on the right, Big and Little Round Tops at the left. Tactically Lee wanted the heights taken. Meade in command of the Army of the Potomac for just five days, was no less determined to hold his ground and issued stern instructions to his officers. “Corps and other commanders are authorised to order the

instant death of any soldier who fails in his duty at this hour.” And so, the opposing forces spent the night preparing for the next day's battles.

## Day 2: 2 July

As the preparations for Day 2 operations got away, around noon Jeb Stuart rode up tired, dusty and far ahead of his men. You will recall that Stuart had taken his three best brigades of cavalry on a pointless ride around the right flank of the Union Army of the Potomac and had been out of touch with Lee's Army of Northern Virginia since June 24, depriving Lee of critical intelligence information and of screening services. Stuart's exhausted brigades arrived that evening, too late to affect the planning or execution of the second day's battle. Lee was furious with him for not maintaining contact for so long and it was recorded that Lee raised his hand as if to strike him. Then seeing Stuart's anguish, Lee's voice grew gentle, stating “Let me ask your help. We will not discuss this matter further. Help me fight these people.”

## End of Part

In Part 2, presented in the next edition of this magazine, the paper will review the subsequent two days of conflict as outlined below.

## The Day 2 Battles

**Union Left Flank.** Battles for Devil's Den, Little Round Top, Peach Orchard and the Wheatfield.

**Union Right Flank.** Culp's and East Cemetery Hills.

## The Day 3 Battles

**Cavalry Battles.** East and South Fields

**Infantry Battles.** Culp's Hill and the Union Centre – Pickett's Charge

The Paper will conclude with a review of the events of the Civil War after Gettysburg.

## Suggested Additional Reading

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- Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- Numerous internet sites.

**LT-COL STEVE HART (Rtd) served in the 101 Wireless/7 Signals Regiment of the Aus Army 1962-1976, with a two year attachment to the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) in Germany from 1964-66. He was Commanding Officer of the Regiment's 547 Signal Troop during a twelve month tour of duty in Vietnam in 1969. He later held a diplomatic post in Washington and left the army in 1980 after 25 years service.**

## Australia's First VC: Maj-Gen Sir Neville Howse

### ■ Dr J K Haken

The Victoria Cross was instituted by Queen Victoria on 29 January 1856 (1) to commemorate the Crimean War. The medal was awarded for extreme bravery and was backdated to the war's commencement in 1854. Since its introduction, 1,358 Victoria Crosses have been awarded to 1,355 recipients, with 96 awards being made to Australian servicemen. The Australian awards occurred between the time of the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), Lieutenant N.R. Howse displaying heroism on 24 July 1900 (2), and 15 January 1991 when the identical Victoria Cross for Australia was established (3) within the Australian Honours System (4). The Victoria Cross has not been awarded to any other Australian medical person.

Lieutenant, later Major General, Sir Neville Reginald Howse was born in the village of Stogursey in Somerset, England on 26 October 1863. He finished tertiary studies at London Hospital attaining in 1884, the qualifications MRCS and LRCP and then became demonstrator in anatomy at the University of Durham. Ill health prompted migration to Australia and after practice in country New South Wales he

returned to England in 1895 for postgraduate studies. A fellowship in Surgery (FRCS) was obtained in 1897 followed by return to Australia and practice in country Orange, New South Wales (5).



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL ART02151

Figure 1: Portrait of Sir Neville Howse

A long Army association commenced with a commission in the New South Wales Army Medical Corps on 17 January 1900 and transport to South Africa with the second contingent (6). At Vredefort, Orange Free State, on 24 July 1900 Howse was with the 2nd Mounted Infantry Brigade which came under attack. A trumpeter fell and was rescued and carried to safety. For this heroism the Victoria Cross was awarded. (2). Promotion to Captain followed in October 1900 and later capture and release as a non-fighter. He was invalidated to England on 28 November 1900, but subsequently returned to Australia in February 1901 with the Victoria Cross being presented at Victoria Barracks, Sydney. After returning to Australia, a further trip to South Africa as honorary major was made in February 1902. However, the war was winding down and ended in May (6), little action was encountered. Overall, though, much action was experienced, the Queens South Africa Medal with six bars being issued.

After the war in South Africa, Howse remained as a major in the Medical Corps Reserve. He commenced service in World War I as Principal Medical Officer with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force which took German New Guinea. The campaign was brief and he accompanied the troops on the first convoy as Staff Officer to Surgeon General WDC Williams.

Success continued, and he was appointed assistant director of medical services of the 1st Australian Division with rank of Colonel. Plans were made for the medical Services for the Gallipoli Landing and the subsequent evacuation of Australian wounded was supervised by Howse. While at Gallipoli, he founded the Anzac Medical Society for the education of the medical officers and the betterment of the wounded. For his services he was Mentioned in Despatches (7). The first of numerous honours was received in July 1915 when he became a Companion of the Order of the Bath (8). He was appointed to command all Australian and New Zealand medical services in Gallipoli in September and two months later he became Director of medical

services of the Australian Imperial Forces with the rank (temporary) of Surgeon General, effective 22 November 1915 (9). Promotion to Major General occurred in 1917. A portrait of Major General Sir Neville Reginald Howse in military uniform is shown as Figure 1 and is located in the Boer War Section of the Main Hall, of the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. The work was executed by James P Quinn in 1918.

Howse was knighted on 22 January 1917, the award of Companion of the Order of the Bath being upgraded to the rank of Knight Commander (10). In 1919 he was appointed Knight of Grace in the Order of St John of Jerusalem (11) and in the same year, Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (12).

The military career ended in 1922 as it was necessary for Howse to resign his commission to allow him to stand for Federal Parliament. During his parliamentary career, a number of ministries were held, it not being usual for a new politician to occupy a ministry quickly. Howse was elevated to Cabinet as Minister for Defence and Health in January 1925 by the prime minister. Ministries held were Defence (1925-1927), Health (1925-1927;1928-1929) and Home and Territories (1928). Ill health caused resignation of his ministry and he remained as an honorary minister without portfolio. The parliamentary career came to an end in the 1929 General Election when he lost his seat in a depression driven Labor landslide.

Howse was a member of the delegation to the 1926 Imperial Conference and influenced parliament in making several lasting contributions to medical science. The Institute of Anatomy was founded while Australia early established a Radium Bank. He promoted the operations of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratory and mass vaccination programs. The laboratory was founded in 1916 becoming a public company in 1984. As CSL Limited it is now one of Australia's premier companies. In addition, the General was also supportive of non-government medical endeavours including

cancer organizations and the establishment of the Australian College of Surgeons in 1927, after several years of preparation.

Howse travelled to England seeking medical treatment for cancer in February 1930. He died on 19 September 1930 and was buried in London. In a life of almost 67 years, Howse distinguished himself in three careers of which he was able to interlock as a medical practitioner and medical administrator, a soldier and politician.

The Victoria Cross award to Major General Sir Neville R Howse VC KCB KCMG FRCS is remembered by memorials in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney. The Royal Australian College of Surgeons have displayed a statue of Howse and at the centenary of the award a postage stamp and a commemorative one dollar coin were issued.

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# Remembering Beersheba: The NSW War Memorials Register and The Australian Light Horse

## ■ NSW Office for Veterans Affairs

The [NSW War Memorials Register](#) is an online database of war memorials in New South Wales. It enables communities to record accurate information about war memorials and connects memorials and veterans to sustain NSW military and commemorative history.

The Register was launched on 22 April 2002, and now, almost 20 years later, it holds more than 3,000 war memorial records and more than

200,000 veteran records. Our records reflect the diversity of memorial forms across the state, from small marble tablets for individual veterans, to timber honour rolls for a district, to swimming pools and halls that serve a practical function as well as a commemorative one. The Register also plays an important role in supporting grant applications for memorial restoration, extensions and care, through the NSW Government [Community War Memorials Fund](#).

Information on the Register comes from members of the public, including historians, researchers, and veterans. It spans all conflicts in which Australia has been involved, however most of our records relate to the First World War.

### **The Charge at Beersheba**

One of the many enduring stories of Australia's involvement in the Great War are the heroic – and unconventional – efforts of the 4th Australian Light Horse (ALH) Brigade on 31 October 1917 at Beersheba in Turkey.

Beersheba was a strategic site for the Allied forces, needed to secure the Sinai Peninsula and maintain access to the Suez Canal shipping channels. It also had numerous wells, which were essential to cater to the high volume of mounted troops and horses who would need to move through the area.

On the afternoon of 31 October, Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, commander of the Desert Mounted Corps, ordered the 4th Light Horse Brigade to attack the Turkish trenches near the front of the town, as they were not protected by barbed wire. The brigade, under the leadership of Brigadier General William Grant, rode across the open plain towards the Turkish line, using the bayonets from their rifles like swords, in an unusual 'cavalry-style' approach.

The Turkish defended their positions with machine guns and artillery but were soon overwhelmed by the speed and style of the assault. Some light horsemen from the 4th ALH Regiment dismounted and fought at the trenches. Others from the 12th ALH Regiment rode on to successfully secure the town itself, and its all-important water supply, achieving their objectives.

### **Honouring their memory**

This now famous charge resulted in the death of 31 light horsemen and around 70 horses. It is

remembered on several war memorials across NSW, including the large-scale [Australian Light Horse Sculpture Parade](#) on the Westlink M7 Motorway, near Eastern Creek in Western Sydney. This abstract artwork features dozens of poles, arranged in straight rows, representing the light horsemen on parade. They are bright red, in reference to the poppies that flowered throughout the region and the blood shed on the battlefield. In recognition of the loss the light horsemen felt for their faithful companions, there are no horses represented in this memorial.



Image 1 - [Australian Light Horse Sculpture Parade, Light Horse Interchange Memorial](#). Photograph provided to the NSW War Memorials Register by Ian R. Stehbens, 2020.

On the other side of the city, this relationship is honoured in another way. The [Horses of the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial](#), at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney's CBD, is a well-known tribute to the more than 120,000 horses who served in the Great War but did not return to Australia. It is a sandstone-block wall, bearing a cast-bronze relief sculpture of a light horseman leading three horses. It was unveiled on Anzac Day, 25 April 1950 by Lady Chauvel, wife of the late Sir Harry Chauvel. Inscribed alongside the artwork are the words:

*Erected by members of The Desert Mounted Corps and friends to the Gallant Horses who carried them over Sinai Desert*

*into Palestine 1915–1918*

*They suffered wounds, thirst, hunger and weariness almost beyond endurance but never failed. They did not come home. We will never forget them.*



Image 2 - [Horses of the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial](#). Photograph taken by the NSW War Memorials Register, 2021.



Image 3 - Close-up of relief sculpture on the [Horses of the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial](#). Photograph taken by NSW War Memorials Register, 2021.

## Searching the Register

It's easy to start exploring the Register's rich database. Each month, five memorials are featured on the [Register's homepage](#) image gallery. Simply click the link in the image's caption to read more about each unique example, chosen for their interesting design, craftsmanship and artistry, or excellent

photography.

Further down the homepage you will find a useful location search, allowing you to quickly find memorials by suburb name or postcode. You will receive a list of related results to browse based on your search, as well as a map indicating the spread of memorials across the search area. This can come in handy if you are researching a regional or rural area, where one postcode includes multiple suburbs.

New memorials are also added to the Register each week, so make sure to read through the list of 'Recently published memorials' at the bottom of the homepage.

## Contributing to the Register

The Register relies on people who are interested in military or local history to contribute content and photographs. These community submissions help to keep memorial and veteran records up-to-date and ensures the Register continues to grow as a comprehensive and accurate picture of military commemoration in NSW.

Are you interested in contributing to the Register? You can do so in three ways:

1. Submit information and photos of recently built memorials, or memorials not already on the Register.

You could start by searching for memorials in your neighbourhood. If a memorial is missing from the Register, now's the perfect time to record it for your community.

2. Submit additional details to update or add to existing memorial records. This can include providing newer or higher-quality photos or updates to content, such as physical descriptions of the memorial, historical details about its construction, unveiling or any refurbishments, plaque transcriptions, or information about the

veterans inscribed on them.

We are especially interested in any updates that can correct errors or omissions, or that expands on information already captured on the record.

3. Provide biographical information about a veteran who is inscribed on a memorial in NSW. This can include their early life, military service, or post-service family life, career, or achievements. We also accept digitised photos of veterans or service documents to accompany their bios.

### Help us record history

The Register is a unique, community-driven database that acts as an important record of military commemoration and pride for and by the people of NSW. You can help support and strengthen this wonderful resource by contributing your own content and research.

Joining the Register is free and easy, why not try today?

### Learn how you can contribute to the NSW War Memorials Register at:

<https://www.warmemorialsregister.nsw.gov.au/contribute>

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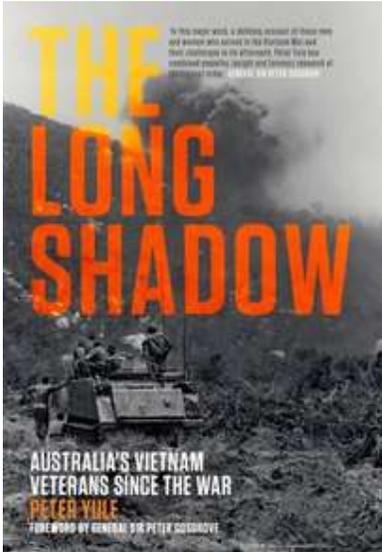


NEW SOUTH WALES  
WAR MEMORIALS REGISTER

## Book Reviews

**Peter Yule, *The Long Shadow: Australia's Vietnam Veterans Since the War*, NewSouth, Sydney, 2020, HB 672pp. RRP \$49.99.**

■ By David Martin



Dr Peter Yule is an independent historian based at the University of Melbourne, who writes freelance histories. He is not a military historian. His previous books have covered a very wide range of topics, including *The Royal Children's Hospital: A History of Faith, Science and Love* (1999), *In the Public Interest: 150 Years of the Victorian Auditor-General's Office* (2002), *Carlton: A History* (ed., 2004), and *Steel Spies and Spin: The Collins Class Submarine Story* (2008).



Dr Peter Yule

Vietnam veterans had been 'angered by the tone and conclusions' of the medical volume, *Medicine at War: Medical Aspects of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asia 1950-1972*, of the official history of Australia in the Vietnam War published in 1994. Controversy revolved around the chemical herbicide Agent Orange used in Vietnam, with veterans convinced it was the cause of cancers they were suffering and also birth defects in their children. (Such a link was suggested by laboratory experiments with animals conducted during the 1960s.) So incensed had some veterans been at the way the Agent Orange controversy was presented by the ANU's Professor Barry Smith, a medical historian, that they campaigned for the section of the official history he wrote to be replaced. But that was never going to happen. (Smith had confined himself to presenting the 'official' version of the controversy, which rejected, outright, the cancer and birth defect claims. In particular he relied heavily upon the *Evatt Report*, described as being 'authoritative', thereby rejecting the contrary case mounted by what Smith described as a 'small minority of disgruntled Vietnam veterans' – who, supposedly, were out to rot the system. Smith's research had not involved any interviews with veterans, to achieve an understanding of their perspective.) Something else that also displeased Vietnam veterans was the way in which the use and effects of Agent Orange were referred to in a new gallery opened at the Australian War Memorial in 2008. It was against this background that, in 2015, Peter Yule was approached by the AWM to do a scoping study for a possible new book on the medical and health legacies of the Vietnam War. Two years later the AWM's Council commissioned Yule to write that book, and it was published in November 2020 as *The Long Shadow*. 'Make sure that the voices of the veterans are heard': that was the only instruction he was given.

*The Long Shadow* is a big volume, packed with information about Australian legacies of the Vietnam War. Often it is told in the first person, through the words of the 122 veterans Yule

interviewed: 'every individual had a different Vietnam experience and even those whose experiences appeared similar, their perceptions were often very different'. For most veterans, service in Vietnam was 'the most significant event in their lives' which, whilst for some was a positive experience, 'more regard it as having been damaging and destructive'.

The Vietnam War was, according to Yule, a 'war without purpose' for the approximately 61,000 Australian servicemen and women who were to get involved – and became more so over time. 'Most Australians arrived in Vietnam confident that they were fighting for a worthy cause and keen to uphold the Anzac tradition. Within a short time many began to question why they were there'. Australia became involved, according to the official rhetoric, out of solidarity with the USA – neatly summed up by the slogan 'All the way with LBJ', viz in support of President Lyndon Baines Johnson's foreign policy, 'to stop the southward thrust of communism'. North Vietnam's leader Ho Chi Minh certainly was a communist, yet he was just as much a staunch nationalist. The war Ho fought against the South from the late 1950s to 1979 (against what was, essentially, 'a corrupt military regime' with negligible popular support) was a 'civil war' – Yule's description. Australia's military support of the South was based, at best, 'on flimsy moral foundations'. Many of those they supposedly went to protect, from communism, regarded the Australians with 'suspicion and hatred'. 'Our armed forces were sent to Vietnam with the flimsiest of justifications, and early public support evaporated as the government's case for the war collapsed'. What transpired was a 'tragedy', with 'disastrous' consequences for Australia's returning veterans. They were to be unified by a pervading 'sense of betrayal'. 'Even the RSL failed to welcome [home] Vietnam veterans, with many sub-branches openly excluding them on grounds that Vietnam had not been a real war'.

According to Yule, many veterans themselves would eventually form the opinion that

'Australia should never have become involved' in Vietnam – 'Even some senior officers changed their views on the war after experiencing it first-hand'. Consequently, 'A large proportion of Australians returned from Vietnam [suffering "moral injury"] with feelings of guilt, unresolved grief and a strong sense of betrayal ... The lack of purpose for their sacrifice has been a common theme in explanations of the long-term mental health problems of many Vietnam veterans'. 'Moral injury', Yule argues, constitutes 'one of the most serious medical legacies of the Vietnam War'.

During deployment to Vietnam, between July 1962 and November 1971, Australian troops were engaged in a conflict which was 'substantially different' from the world wars in which their nation had been involved. It was a nerve-racking guerrilla war, with combat troops on typical 8-day-patrols experiencing 'chronic exhaustion'. 'Outside the wire' of the bases at Vung Tau or Nui Dat, 'there was always the possibility of danger': 'there was constant danger from ambush, mines and booby traps'.



And, in the jungle environment of Phuoc Tuy province, 'it only took a minor miscalculation for Australian soldiers to be fired on by their own artillery or mortars'. For the 'tunnel rats' who went down Viet Cong tunnels, such as at Cu Chi, it was 'always dangerous and frequently traumatic'. But even for those back at base, just living in a war zone had its psychological stresses. 'In a war with no front lines, where it was impossible to tell friend from foe, and where nowhere was completely safe, everyone was

aware of a pervasive sense of danger'. Most suffered chronic sleep deprivation.

On 6 July 1964 the first Australian was killed in Vietnam; before being withdrawn in 1971, 521 Australians had died there. During the conflict, 2348 were officially recorded as being wounded or injured in action – most as a result of bullets, mines, booby traps, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. Non-battle injuries exceeded this by more than a thousand. More than 12,000 hospital admissions were due to: malaria, Japanese encephalitis, dengue fever, hepatitis, typhus, dysentery, skin rashes, worm infestations, etc. Beer was readily available, it was often a daily feature of life, and occasionally there was binge drinking. Almost everybody smoked heavily. Yet it seems few Australians were interested in the illicit drugs heavily used by US servicemen. On average, roughly one person per day was referred to a psychiatrist, equating to about 5% of the force per year – an unexpectedly *low* incidence, and probably not mainly due to combat fatigue, with alcohol a bigger cause. Limited, one-year tours of duty appear to be a key factor, with troops being less subjected to conditions of continuous combat than during the world wars. However there is anecdotal evidence that psychological problems were more widespread than indicated by official statistics. Crucially, 'the build-up of stress, combined with the poor reception of veterans on their return, meant that psychiatric collapse was postponed rather than avoided'.

Yule's investigation of what Vietnam veterans experienced upon their return to Australia in the 1970s produces some interesting findings. From the interviews he conducted, it is apparent veterans *believed* they had been given a hostile reception from anti-war activists when they participated in marches. And this has become the orthodox understanding. Yet Yule's own independent research found very little documentary evidence to support their memories. Rather, on such occasions the public reception they received was generally very welcoming.



Yule: 'Press reports mention protests at only two welcome home marches'. The real issue was that Australian society had 'changed radically between 1965 and 1972': the 'conservative' returning servicemen, with their short haircuts, found that many Australian men had grown longer hair and sideburns, community values about sex and drugs had changed, and a popular chant was 'All you need is love'. By 1970 most Australians favoured withdrawal from Vietnam – which veterans took personally to be a betrayal. They were met with at least indifference, if not outright hostility, which led to a belief that their service and sacrifice were not recognised by society. Alcohol abuse seems to have been rife with many. At home, veterans were prone to displays of rage resulting in tense family relations – although not many divorces. Yet most integrated well back into the workforce: 'for every veteran who struggled to adjust to civilian employment, there were probably ten who had a work history in the 1970s indistinguishable from others of their age'. Yule designates the 1970s a 'decade of silence' for the veterans, because they retreated into self-imposed isolation, hiding their true feelings and emotions. But all the while their 'anger and bitterness were growing'.

At the outset, those deployed to Vietnam constituted an elite force, a body of exceptionally physically fit individuals – much fitter than the general population. And this was reflected into the 1970s with Vietnam veterans having little contact with Australia's Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). The most common disability claim involved hearing loss – although there was a rising number of unexplained illnesses, which

doctors did not recognise as war-related. Subsequently, however, there would be an explosion in claims based upon medical conditions that, it was argued, had their origins in service in Vietnam. The official explanation for worsening health involved the unhealthy lifestyle adopted by Vietnam veterans, e.g. it was induced by alcoholism and smoking tobacco. But the 1980s was to be 'a decade of sound and fury, as veterans mobilised ... to demand that their service be recognised and their health concerns addressed'.



What was to be the focus of the veterans' major concern originated with the use of chemicals in Vietnam. Most Australian service personnel had probably been heavily exposed there to a wide range of insecticides and herbicides. A likely contributor was an American undertaking, Operation Ranch Hand from 1961 until 1971, which was designed to deprive the Viet Cong of jungle cover and food-crops, through the spraying of herbicides, mainly from C-123 aircraft. About 20,000 sorties sprayed 12 million gallons of herbicide over 5 million acres of jungle and 500,000 acres of crops. The herbicide most widely used was Agent Orange (contaminated with toxic dioxin). However the province in which most Australians served, Phuoc Tuy, was probably sprayed with less than most other provinces.



Herbicides including Agent Orange (and others such as diquat and paraquat) were also sprayed by various means around the perimeters of military bases, to clear surrounding vegetation, so defenders had an unobstructed field of vision in case of enemy attacks.

And, in addition to herbicides, large quantities of insecticides (such as malathion and chlordane) were used on and around military bases (spread undiluted, on an 'industrial scale', by hand-held sprays or truck-carried 'foggers'), to exterminate mosquitoes and disease-carrying insects – as a safety measure, intended to protect troops, e.g. against malaria. (Troops were also given the anti-malarial drug dapson.) Record keeping was far from efficient, and it has not been possible to determine with any certainty which particular chemicals may have been sprayed at any particular place or time, nor the quantity. It is debatable just how exposed Australian troops were to Agent Orange – or any other chemicals. A 1984 study found that Australian veterans' recollections of exposure to chemicals were highly unreliable. Few concerns had been expressed by troops at the time – officials assured them that they were harmless. And, forty years on, there is still no scientific consensus about the consequences of being exposed to the chemicals that were used in Vietnam. What can be said with certainty is that there continue to be strong views on either side. And, as Edward Derwinski, Secretary of the US Veterans' Administration, put it in March 1990: 'The debate may well go on forever. There may never be enough scientific and technical evidence to put to rest forever all the charges and counter-charges relating to Agent Orange'.

Back on 23 March 1978 Chicago television station WBBM Chanel 2 had aired a documentary, *Agent Orange: Vietnam's Deadly Fog*. This investigative report had been

prompted by concerns of a US Veterans' Administration employee, Maude deVictor, who had experienced many US Vietnam veterans presenting with poor health and reproductive problems – issues which they attributed to exposure to Agent Orange. The documentary offered a simple explanation to veterans for their problems, seemingly offering definitive confirmation for their hunch. It acted as a catalyst: in response, US veterans would form their Vietnam Veterans Association; and thousands of claims for compensation for ill-health resulting from exposure to chemicals began to be made to the US government.

It was in the wake of developments in the USA that concerns were raised in Australia about a connection between Agent Orange and health problems being experienced by veterans. An increasing number of Australian veterans had been suffering illnesses which were hard to explain and remained largely undiagnosed by DVA doctors, who would not accept they were war-related. As a result of lobbying from veterans, the Agent Orange issue was raised in Parliament at Question Time on 23 November 1978 by ALP member John Kerin, who asked the Minister for Defence: 'How many servicemen and servicewomen were affected by the defoliant Agent Orange whilst serving in Vietnam? ... What are the range of illnesses caused by Agent Orange?' In January 1980 the Vietnam Veterans' Action Association (VVAA) was established – by Australian veterans, many of whom were suffering major health issues, as were their children. The VVAA was promised by the ALP that if it won the 1983 federal election it would establish a Royal Commission into the effects of chemicals on Australians who had served in Vietnam. And the subsequent Evatt Royal Commission sat for 16 months, from January 1984 to May 1985.

A Committee of the Australian Senate had already conducted an inquiry into the question of chemicals and their effects, between late 1981 and November 1982. The VVAA's submission stated that: 'It is now obvious that Vietnam was

used as a proving ground for chemical warfare and massive quantities of very dangerous compounds were dumped repeatedly in areas where Australian troops were required to conduct operations'. Operation Ranch Hand and other use of chemicals meant that Australian servicemen were exposed to 'a wide range of toxic chemicals' that were used 'constantly and negligently'. The VVAA's President Phill Thompson, who had been a Warrant Officer with 1RAR, serving in Vietnam in 1965-6 and 1968, told the Senate enquiry that 'Our statistics show something to the tune that [veterans] have [children with] deformities of 35.5 per cent'. (This contrasted with a normal frequency of birth defects in the general population of 2 to 3 per cent, with minor malformations of a further 5 to 8 per cent.) However the claim that children of Vietnam veterans were 10 times more likely to suffer abnormalities was an assertion, based upon anecdotal evidence – not the result of rigorous scientific investigation. The only major Australian epidemiological study of birth defects found that Vietnam veterans were no more likely to have deformed children than fathers who had not gone to Vietnam. The VVAA's 'expert' witnesses told the later Evatt Royal Commission that the children of veterans had a greater than expected incidence of birth defects and argued that 'the only plausible interpretation ... is that the increase in offspring detriment is in some way related to events that took place in Vietnam'. But under cross-examination, these experts conceded that their study was based on poor methodology and was virtually useless. The final report of the Evatt Royal Commission rejected, with very little qualification, the VVAA's claims: 'There is no reliable evidence that the chemicals in Agent Orange cause cancer in humans'; 'The hypothesis that exposure of fathers to chemicals in Vietnam caused birth defects in children conceived in Australia is fanciful'; and, 'Vietnam veterans are significantly healthier than the Australian male population'. Indeed the *Evatt Report* can be criticised for being so accepting of the case presented by the Monsanto chemical company, the VVAA's adversary. (Whilst rejecting the proposition that exposure to

chemicals caused mental problems, the *Report* did accept that there were widespread mental health problems existing among, roughly 25 per cent, of veterans – which it argued could be explained by the nature of the war in Vietnam. But the *Report* claimed that PTSD could be readily cured in a few therapy sessions.)

It is Yule's contention that, 'Governments, veterans, scientists and the public became mesmerised by Agent Orange, with the consequence that there was remarkably little interest in the possible effects of the other chemicals used in Vietnam'. Rather than focussing so very narrowly on Agent Orange, to which the evidence of exposure of Australian troops is debatable, the veterans and their advocates should have investigated a much wider range of chemicals to which the troops were definitely exposed. Perhaps the explanations for the health problems that the veterans undoubtedly suffered are to be found there. Perhaps tropical diseases encountered in Vietnam were where some serious problems originated. 'Vietnam during the 1960s was one of the most dangerous disease environments in the world ... Many contracted gastrointestinal diseases, intestinal parasites and tropical fevers ... The long-term impact of infectious or tropical diseases contracted in Vietnam is difficult to estimate'. The possibilities were not thoroughly, exhaustively investigated. 'It is surprising that so much has been blamed on Agent Orange, when service in Vietnam resulted in exposure to many other causes of possible long-term health problems'.

Despite its devastating defeat suffered courtesy of the Evatt Royal Commission, the VVAA persisted with its advocacy that the ill health of Vietnam veterans was due in large part to exposure to Agent Orange, supporting its members and their families in disputes with the DVA. Occasionally it managed to achieve an ever so slightly favourable outcome in an appeal taken to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. In the meantime, however, due to political calculations, there had been a decided shift in the

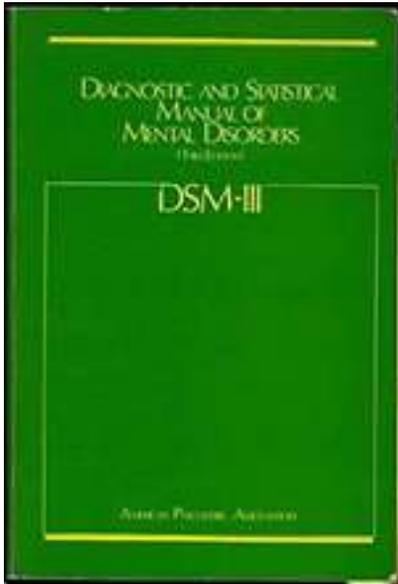
position of the US Veterans' Administration. Rather than requiring of American veterans that they prove their poor health had been caused by chemicals used in Vietnam, by 1994 the burden of proof was on the government, to disprove such a connection. (In reaching this position, the US agency accepted, as valid, studies which the Evatt Royal Commission had had some justification in dismissing.) This development was observed with some alarm by Australia's Department of Veterans Affairs. But, according to Yule: 'For the Repatriation Commission to have maintained its position once the Americans had conceded ... would have been politically untenable'. There occurred, subsequently, a 'gradual whittling away' of the resistance of Australia's DVA to veterans' claims of harm resulting from herbicide exposure. Having only been recently appointed Minister for Veterans Affairs, in March 1994, the ALP's Con Sciacca saw himself as an advocate for the veterans, and he threw his support behind changing his department's policy – despite the financial implications.



What had transpired was a change brought about by *political* considerations, not as a result of any scientific breakthrough – to the contrary, most scientific advice maintained that the connection between ill-health and chemicals used in Vietnam was, at best, 'uncertain'. According to Yule, the change was *not* a direct response to VVAA confrontation.

Something that was successfully transferred from the United States to Australia, to be readily

adopted by medical professionals in treating Australia's Vietnam veterans, was the concept of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many would be diagnosed with this mental condition. PTSD took on a definitive form with the publication in 1980 of the Third Edition of the American Psychiatric Association's guide for diagnosing mental disorders, its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*.



DSM-III described PTSD thus: 'The characteristic symptoms involve re-experiencing [a] traumatic event ... The traumatic event may be experienced in a variety of ways. Commonly the individual has recurrent painful, intrusive recollections of the event or recurrent dreams or nightmares during which the event is re-experienced'. PTSD symptoms could appear soon after the original traumatic event, but might possibly be repressed and delayed for years, even decades. The behaviour of Vietnam veterans that was interpreted by psychiatrists as manifestations of PTSD included anxiety, panic, depression, guilt, unresolved grief, anger, rage, panic, hypervigilance, emotional numbing and sleep disorder. But a different, more generalised interpretation of the trauma with which such veteran behaviour originated was proposed by American clinical psychologist Jonathan Shay. Although it could originate with a particularly terrifying combat-event, he posited that it could also be attributed to a broader 'moral injury'

suffered, such as a feeling that veterans had been fighting a war without solid moral foundation – resulting over time in profound guilt and shame. Thus, non-combatant members of the military could also be considered potential PTSD sufferers.



Dr Jonathan Shay

The DSM-5 of 2013 would recognise that PTSD can be the product of a 'malevolent environment', rather than just a specific traumatic episode. Present-day studies conclude that between 25% and 30% of US veterans are suffering from PTSD. The psychiatric model is now much more complex, suggesting that the PTSD afflicting Vietnam veterans could be the end product of traumatic episodes in Vietnam compounded by rejection and abuse when they returned to the USA. (The DSM-5's PTSD model would be endorsed by Australia's Specialist Medical Review Council.)

Having been exposed to such ideas on a study tour of the United States in June 1981, Australia's then Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Tony Messner, would declare: 'The trauma of war, not exposure to Agent Orange, was to blame for the health problems of Vietnam veterans'. Messner announced that the type of counselling services that had been established in the USA would be rolled out in Australia. In December 1981 the first Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service

(VVCS) was opened. The 1986 *Veterans' Entitlement Act* established VVCSs on a more permanent basis. By the end of 1986 4926 clients had made use of the service. Few were cured of PTSD, but many found the counselling helpful. During the 1990s the service was extended to the families of veterans. In 2018 the service was further expanded to cater for all members of the ADF, being renamed Open Arms.

During the 1990s, there was a steady increase in the numbers of veterans applying to the DVA for assistance, with mental health claims increasing dramatically. A point made by Yule is that, quite often it is presumed that if an Australian Vietnam veteran had mental health issues, it must be PTSD. Yet, 'PTSD is not the only mental health problem' of relevance. A majority of the veterans he interviewed were suffering from PTSD – together with other mental health problems. The 1996 *Vietnam Veterans' Health Study* found that 18.7% of Australia's veterans were suffering from PTSD, 23% from phobias, 16.5% from depression, with 42.6% suffering from alcohol dependence. A 2017 report found that 8.7% had 'chronic ongoing PTSD', with more than 40% having had PTSD at some time.

Australia's DVA responded to the changing nature of veterans' health problems by familiarizing itself with developments in the USA, and keeping abreast of the latest treatments, particularly involving mental issues. Full cures were rare, but about one-third of Australian patients would show major improvements and one-third minor improvements – although one-third deteriorated.

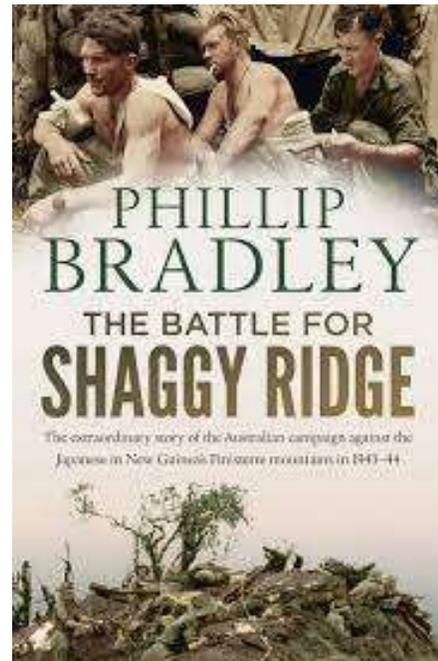
The *Long Shadow* is a big book. Its ostensible purpose was to mollify Vietnam veterans, angry at the way in which the authorities had addressed their health concerns across fifty years. And angry at how they had been represented in the medical section of the official history. To that end, Peter Yule allocated a significant portion of his alternative history to allowing veterans to voice their concerns. The

end product is impressive - albeit exhaustive and over-long at 600+ pages (and would have benefitted from extensive editing). Yule does not provide the fulsome endorsement of the veteran position that might have been expected. Rather, his book provides us with an extremely well researched, very balanced and nuanced assessment of this particularly controversial episode in Australia's history. It is indispensable reading for anyone wanting to have a sound understanding.

Worth contemplating is Peter Yule's closing observation: 'The experience of Vietnam shows that a large majority of soldiers return home permanently damaged by war service. The cost of caring for them must be factored into politicians' calculations when they choose to send our armed forces to fight in wars for the frequently questionable foreign policy aims of our allies. The only way to avoid war trauma is to avoid wars'.

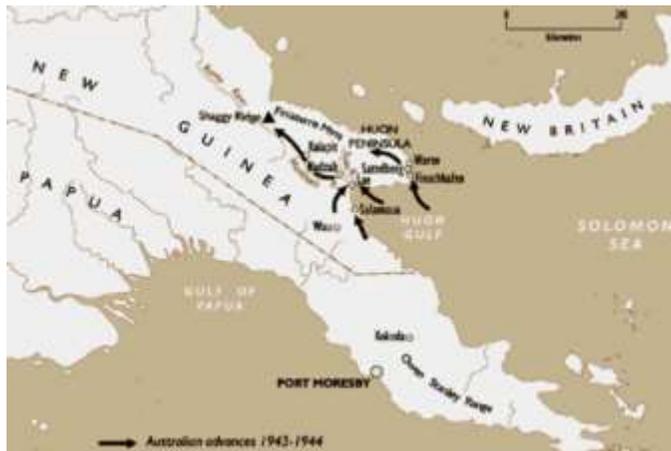
**Phillip Bradley, *The Battle For Shaggy Ridge*, Allen & Unwin, 2021, PB, 318pp. RRP \$32.99**

■ Review by John Muscat



This is Phillip Bradley's eighth book about the Australian Army's Second World War campaigns

in New Guinea. *Hell's Battlefield* is an overarching history starting from the Japanese invasion of January 1942 to war's end in August 1945, while particular engagements are covered in *The Battle for Wau, Wau 1942-43, To Salamaua and Salamaua 1943, D-Day New Guinea*, about the airborne and amphibious landings at Nadzab and Lae in September 1943, and *On Shaggy Ridge*, an earlier account of the extraordinary actions revisited by Bradley in his latest book. He has been justly described as "one of the finest chroniclers of the Australian Army's role in the New Guinea campaign". *The Battle for Shaggy Ridge* starts, chronologically, where *D-Day New Guinea* left off. Hopefully Bradley will produce more books delving deeper into phases of the campaign covered more generally in *Hell's Battlefield*.



The fruits of Bradley's many years of research are on full display in *The Battle for Shaggy Ridge*. The narrative is informed by a deep understanding of New Guinea's distinct style of warfare, shaped, at the strategic level, by long-haul sweeps between widely scattered land-maritime objectives and, at the tactical level, by improvised ground-level clashes over impenetrable terrain – high-peaked ridges, thick jungle, scrub and torrential rivers, often enveloped by mists and monsoonal rains. The strategic setting was Operation Cartwheel, General Douglas MacArthur's grand plan to leap-frog less essential territory and capture vital junctures to isolate and starve-out lingering Japanese forces while the Allied main body advanced north to the Philippines. The capture

of forward logistics sites for development as airstrips and ports in particular, but also roads to the extent that the ground permitted, was essential for the success of Operation Cartwheel. Bradley gives due weight to the supply line context while explaining how various battlefield clashes came about.



Shaggy Ridge

In mid-regions of the trudge westwards along the north of New Guinea south of the Finisterre Mountains, this task was assigned to the Australians at the behest of American military planners. By late 1943 the hard lessons learnt by Australian troops in theatre since 1942 made them effective exponents of the set-piece commando operation. Flexible small unit discipline, combined with mobility and individual initiative, were the only way to outfought the tenacious, elusive Japanese in the absence of anything resembling a defined front line. Bradley opens the book with an account of the September 1943 wipeout of Japanese forces by the 2/17th Independent Company (commandos) at Kaiapit, earmarked by the Americans for airstrip construction. Not so focused on capturing territory as such, Australian troops became something like logistics infrastructure security guards. But this doesn't detract from the importance or danger of their mission. On the contrary, it put them at the sharp end of fighting across hellish territory occupied by divisions of a far from defeated Japanese Army. Contact with the enemy tended

to be sudden, ferocious, and for the unlucky ones, lethal.

As Bradley records in detail, succeeding clashes involving units of 21st Brigade, 7th Australian Infantry Division generally took the form of ambushes or cat-and-mouse scrambles for ridges, rock faces, knolls and hills overlooking more passable valley floors and gullies, where movement was faster but more exposed to enemy fire. Each side was out to cut off the other's sources of supply, feeling their way in small patrols over landforms offering few options for good lines of communication. This game of positional one upmanship erupted in a sequence of fire-fights marking the diggers' march up the Ramu River valley. Sometimes in mobile 'encounter battles' like Pallier's Hill (11 October 1943) and Johns' Knoll (12 October 1943), and at other times attacks on secured Australian perimeters like Kesawai and Isariba (8-13 December 1943) or entrenched Japanese positions including Shaggy Ridge (27 December 1943 to 22 January 1944).



Men of 2/16th Battalion ready to attack

Bradley explains that one of the distinguishing features of the unconventional New Guinea theatre was that resourceful platoon and company commanders had a better grasp of the tactical realities than their superiors at battalion, divisional and army headquarters. The lessons were learnt at ground level and, sometimes, trickled upwards. The generals were slow to catch up, writes Bradley:

[Commander of 7th Division, Major General George] Vasey's own understanding of how to fight an enemy in country where there were essentially no flanks was lacking. He still thought you had to have enough strength to either create your own flanks or to attack enemy flanks and, as [6th Division commander Major General George] Wootten was also learning at Finschhafen, you could not afford to fight that way in New Guinea. Holding the vital high ground was the key to success with the available resources.

Vasey was dabbling with deep penetration operations using his two commando squadrons but only as patrols. He never took on board the lesson that he should have learned at Kaiapit: that small, lightly armed force moving swiftly could negate conventional military thinking and defence lines ...

The actions at Pallier's Hill, Johns' Knoll and MacDougal's Hill had clearly shown the ability of smaller formations in such country ...

The limitations of Vasey and [New Guinea Force Commander, Lieutenant General Leslie] Morshead, with their knowledge and experience founded on their ability to work with large formations in open country, were clear.

"The linchpin of the Japanese defences in the Finisterre Range", Shaggy Ridge loomed as one of the foremost challenges for Australian forces at this stage, and in this sector, of the campaign. By all accounts it was the most defensible – in the opinion of some, impregnable – Japanese position threatening the Allied supply line along the upper reaches of the Ramu Valley, especially airfields at Dumpu and Gusap. For his part, the local Japanese commander focused on "holding the area to prevent any Australian advance on Madang which would cut off the majority of his army in New Guinea."

To the diggers "it was an incredible ... feature that most of us had never seen anything like

before in our life.” Not so much a mountain, but “more like a long narrow mountain range with no individual peak, just an outcrop of rock or a pimple as we used to call it.” The ridge was named after Lieutenant Bob ‘Shaggy’ Clampett, who had taken up the first 2/27th Battalion units. “It is as steep as hell on both sides and is only flat for a couple of feet on top”, Clampett told Bradley. One old New Guinea hand thought “the Cape and Sanananda [Battle of Buna-Gona] were nightmares to fight in but [here] the steep, slippery, long zig zag climb, steamy and wet, was terrible.” Yet the middle ranks, again, were best able to size-up the challenge:

Vasey also met with the acting commander [of 2/16th Battalion] Major Garth Symington. Symington had been in command since 30 November [1943] after Colonel Sublet had left for a training course in Australia. Symington told Vasey that ‘the boys were fed up with just patrolling’ before saying that ‘I think we could take Shaggy Ridge’. ‘I don’t think you could’, Vasey replied. ‘Two colonels have told me it was not possible to take it from the front.’ After Symington repeated that he thought it could be done, Vasey said, ‘Thanks Symington that’s interesting.’

On 17 December Symington had a call from [21st Brigade commander] Brigadier [Ivan] Dougherty. ‘Garth, did you tell Vasey you could take Shaggy Ridge?’ ‘Yes I did,’ Symington replied. ‘You had no right to do it, but now you have to do it,’ Dougherty told him.

And done it was. Bradley has an effective way of narrating battle action by laying a series of quoted observations on top of each other, drawing on personal interviews and private communications with some hundred participants listed in the bibliography. The story is substantially told by the men themselves.

Dougherty left Symington to organize the northward attacks on ‘the pimple’ and two further strong posts beyond called ‘intermediate

snipers pimple’ and ‘green snipers pimple’. Because the Japanese defended Shaggy Ridge with a group of fixed positions, the Allies could on this occasion exploit air superiority as well as deploy artillery pieces and heavy machine guns, without having to drag them over the jagged terrain. The Japanese had mountain-guns but their supply of munitions was limited. The action on 27 December 1943 started with an intense wave of strafing and bombing by Boomerang and Kittyhawk aircraft in concert with eight 25-pounder guns. “Boy are they pasting shit out of Shaggy”, said one observer.



Green snipers’ ridge

But the well dug-in Japanese held out, necessitating an infantry assault on ‘Nature’s Bastille’. Platoons of B and D Companies, 2/16th Battalion maneuvered themselves along the insecure footing of the ridge’s western and eastern slopes respectively. Relying on their own initiative, units alternated their forward advances, coordinating grenade and small-arms – rifle, Bren and Owen gun – flank attacks around each Japanese dugout, bunker, pill-box and sangar. But the debris strewn conditions were awkwardly dangerous. The men risked being hit, especially by treetop snipers, every

time they raised their head above the ridge line to gain a bearing. Too often this was unavoidable to silence enemy fire or rescue wounded mates, and casualties were heavy. All of this while dodging Japanese grenades rolling down the steep slopes “like rain”. Owing to some courageous one-man sallies, “the pimple” was taken by 30 December, sometimes with artillery and Australian or American air support. Bradley’s technique of describing the action from eye-level view is compelling.



Descending with the wounded

Still, the Japanese exacted a heavy price in blood for every attempt to dislodge them and the battle stalled at the further northward feature called McCaughey’s Knoll. 21st Brigade was relieved by platoons of 2/9th, 2/12th and 2/10th Battalions of Brigadier Fred Chilton’s 18th Brigade, who made their way forward along the ridge in similar vein. The going was no less arduous. “The ridge falls away in sheer declivities”, wrote a journalist accompanying the troops, “and the top is, in places, no more than a few inches wide.” Just reaching that precarious top was more than enough to exhaust the men, let alone the combat that followed:

“You’ve got to climb; climb where there are no holds and the slopes fall down like a leaning wall ... You’re flat – you’re upright – you’re slipping. Your chest burns with the pain of effort and you fight for gulps of air. The climbing is worse than the firing. You don’t care about the

bullets much. You only want to reach the peak where you can lie and rest.”

Once there, the lethal risk of exposure was ever present, and the confined space made it difficult to bring numbers to bear. Again, breakouts came down to individual acts of heroism. As one digger had put it earlier, “to attack the Jap means a single-man front on the narrow ridge”, a phrase echoed in a contemporaneous battalion report: “this is the first time that it could be truthfully said that [the battalion] was holding a one-man front”. Here the small unit initiative style of fighting honed in the jungles of New Guinea faced its ultimate test. The Japanese fought like demons and their mountain-gun fire on intermediate pimple was particularly telling:

The mountain-guns open a barrage against which Brens can do nothing ... This is hell ... Shrapnel is whining around you and there is nowhere you can go for cover. Go over the ridge and you’re a sitting shot for snipers in the trees ... You must lie ... and lie and wait ... and wait. Wait for the caress of agony from flying steel.

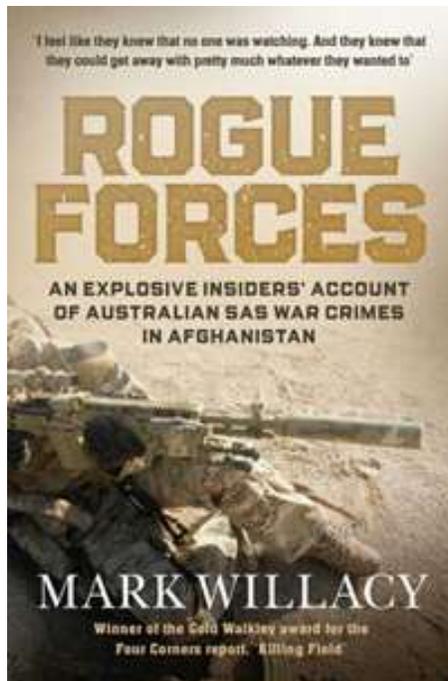
By sheer grit, Green Hill was finally taken on around 21 January 1944. However as “the key heights” were captured, senior command decided the northern remainder of Shaggy Ridge needed to be cleared, which was largely achieved by the end of the month. For the combatants, it was a searing experience: “You’ll never forget Shaggy Ridge”. Bradley’s meticulous account does justice to their extraordinary achievement:

... on 22 April, the Americans had made a great leap forward and had landed at Aitape, 450 kilometres north-west of Madang, and at Hollandia, another 250 kilometres further west. The battle for Shaggy Ridge had helped draw most of the Japanese army in New Guinea from these locations, while the capture of the Ramu Valley had enabled Allied airpower to destroy the Japanese air assets at Wewak and Hollandia prior to the landings. Allied forces were fighting a

three-dimensional war using naval forces to move their army along the New Guinea coast under the cover of superior air power made possible by the captured airfield sites. The Japanese armed forces in New Guinea were essentially reduced to fighting in only one dimension – the ground – and now those forces had been isolated.

**Mark Willacy, *Rogue Forces: An Explosive Insiders' Account of Australian SAS Crimes In Afghanistan*, Simon & Schuster, Sydney, 2021, PB 406pp, RRP \$35**

■ Review by David Martin



The ADF would have nothing to do with the research of this book. Chief of Defence, Angus Campbell, and Chief of Army, Rick Burr, declined to be interviewed by author Mark Willacy. He concedes that he will be accused of ‘treachery’ for daring to write a book which many will consider constitutes an attack on the reputation of Australia’s SAS Regiment and its ‘daring soldiers who for years fought valiantly and tirelessly in Afghanistan against a callous and miscreant enemy’ – in that ‘graveyard of empires’ which proved beyond the ability of the British Empire and, more recently, Soviet Russia, to

conquer. Those Empires were to sink into ‘an inescapable quagmire’. As part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) established in December 2001, Australian troops would encounter ‘cunning, ruthless and relentless Afghan resistance’, losing 41 killed, with another 261 wounded in the ‘forever war’ – with perhaps as many as 20-25% of veterans experiencing ‘profound mental scars’, possibly contemplating suicide.

Mark Willacy is an investigative journalist of 25-years’-experience, having reported for the ABC from more than 30 countries, in 2004 from Baghdad. In 2019 he won a Logie for his *Four Corners* report about the cave rescue of a team of young Thai soccer players; the following year he won the Gold Logie, Australia’s highest honour in journalism, for his 16 March 2020 *Four Corners* programme ‘Killing Field’ about Australia’s SAS in Afghanistan. He is also the author of two previous books, one about the situation in the Middle-East and the other about the 2011 Japanese tsunami and the associated crisis involving the Fukushima nuclear plant.



After one of his Afghanistan stories went to air, Willacy would receive an email describing him as: ‘THE most treasonous Australian to ever walk the earth ... you are the most hated person in Australia ... you are a communist traitor to your country’. Another suggested: ‘It’s time to commit suicide’.

*Rogue Forces*, Willacy’s third book, draws upon two years of research beginning in August 2019 when he was assigned to dig into allegations

concerning an SAS raid on an Afghan village, Sarkhume, back in February 2012. Requests for information through official Australian government channels met with stone-walling, complemented by a pervading attitude of 'What happened in Afghanistan stays in Afghanistan'. Then an article by Willacy posted on-line attracted an email response, on 29 October 2019, from Braden Chapman, who had been an Electronic Warfare Operator with 3 Squadron SAS in Afghanistan, wanting to unburden himself. The almost two-page email began: 'Just some info on SAS war crimes I witnessed. And other info you might find useful ...'. According to Willacy, it was 'dynamite', containing as it did some 'incredible and shocking detail'. In a follow-up email, Chapman attached photographs of the leading members of his squadron in Afghanistan. This then led to a face-to-face meeting, at which Chapman provided Willacy with hundreds more photographs and dozens of videos lasting a total of more than 10 hours, taken by (privately owned) cameras, mounted on helmets or assault rifles, with Chapman providing very detailed information about context.



Mark Willacy

One of the videos filmed from the helmet-mounted camera of a dog handler, FILE0185, was 13 minutes 12 seconds long, of a raid conducted on 28 May 2012, near the village of Deh Jawz-e Hasanzai. It culminates at about 4:05 pm that day with the shooting, from almost point-blank range, three times, of an unarmed, disabled 25-year-old Afghan male, Dad

Mohammad. In the 30 seconds leading up to the shooting, he can be seen cowering helplessly on his back in a field of green wheat, clinging to a set of prayer beads, being stood over by an SAS operator. (The subsequent official Department of Defence report would state that the operator acted within the Rules of Engagement because the victim had been 'tactically manoeuvring', thereby constituting a threat. And, that he had in his possession a radio. Also, that he had been shot from a distance of 15-20 metres. When required to give evidence, other patrol members concurred. As for Afghan witnesses to similar incidents, investigators would presume their testimony could be dismissed because they might well be motivated by wanting cash compensation.) You can make your own assessment of FILE0185 by viewing 'Killing Field', the *Four Corners* programme in which it features, [on-line](#).

Willacy's sources include some serving and former ADF officers, most of whom remain anonymous. One who is named is Andrew Hastie, now a member of the Australian parliament and recently promoted Assistant Minister for Defence, who served in Afghanistan as an SAS captain from February to July 2013. Most of Willacy's information is provided by certain individuals who are identified: Braden Chapman, the SAS signals intelligence operator referred to above; Dusty Miller, a combat medic attached to the SAS; Christina, an ADF data analyst; Angela, the (former) wife of an SAS operator; and Tom, an SAS operator. All five have suffered various degrees of mental trauma emanating from Australia's involvement in the Afghanistan conflict; all gave evidence to Brereton's five-year-long IGADF Inquiry. Another of Willacy's sources is Louise, a senior ADF intelligence officer who was deployed to Afghanistan: she also gave evidence to the IGADF Inquiry (specifically about Soldier C, mentioned below), and then, in November 2020, she had her family's home bombed, at 3:15am – luckily with nobody being injured. Despite being relocated by the Department of Defence, because it couldn't be certain 'we were safe any longer in that

house', Louise remains terrified: 'I don't feel like safe anywhere'.



SAS combat medic Dusty Miller

One of the criticisms that could be made of Willacy's book is that it is based very much upon information provided by disillusioned persons such as the 'greenhorn', relatively inexperienced Braden Chapman – which is totally at odds with the perspective of the likes of many SAS Patrol Commanders (PCs) who led the Australian Army's counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan from the front. Chapman's PC, a veteran of 14 deployments – in Iraq, East Timor, Somalia and multiple times in Afghanistan – would say of Chapman that he was 'a kid, a sack of shit [who] has lost his marbles', who 'wasn't fit for ... deployment'. 'You're making split second decisions which he'd never comprehend ...' As for himself, the PC explains: 'What I've been training to do for the last 25 years ... I've been training to kill dudes. That's all I've ever ... done ... training every day to kill people better'. And: 'When we were overseas I wasn't the nicest bloke. I wasn't there to build bridges and schools and shake hands with the locals'.

Two SAS operators who are presented in a very disturbing light in Willacy's book are designated 'Soldier B' and 'Soldier C'. The physically imposing, 'built like a brick shithouse' Soldier B, a senior sergeant and PC, is described as being 'in his element [when] heading out on a raid with his men, hunting their quarry' and, at times, 'out of control'. When they first got the chance to speak, he said to SAS medic Dusty Miller: 'You

need to make sure that you're okay with me putting a gun to someone's head and pulling the trigger'. As a result of Soldier B's behaviour on operations such as the Sarkhume raid, Dusty, a 25-year-army-veteran himself, describes him as 'a psychopath who derives sadistic pleasure from killing', 'He's a monster ... He really is an animal'. Yet Braden Chapman's PC says of him: 'He is probably my best friend ... He's the real deal ... Where you've got a job like we do, you need blokes like [Soldier B] ... it's not all ... rainbows and unicorns and little flying bunnies running around ... he's a great soldier'. Soldier C was the SAS operator who shot Dad Mohammad. Dusty says: 'He just wanted kills up. It was bloodlust'. Tom describes him as an 'egotistical sociopath'. Yet he is described by Chapman's PC as being 'fantastic'. He wouldn't comment directly on the shooting, but observes: 'We don't go around shooting blokes willy nilly ... We just go in there and just do the job, because it takes bad men to do bad work in the end'.

Of his priorities in Afghanistan, the PC explains: 'I was only going there to make sure me mates came home safe. I don't [care] about any big picture bullshit. None of us did'. As for counter-insurgency and operating within the bounds of the rules of war, it was pointless: 'We'd get guys [suspected of being Taliban terrorists], we knew they were bad guys. We would put them in the detention facility, and they would be out three days later'. From what can be read in *Rogue Forces*, it appears it was considered appropriate to disregard the rules. One operator says: 'We may as well just ... shoot them'.



The war being fought in Afghanistan during the period under investigation in *Rogue Forces* was, for the SAS, a counter-insurgency operation. The enemy didn't 'play by the rules' – it blatantly contravened international conventions about how warfare should be conducted. 'The Taliban uses civilians as human shields, brutalises those it sees as aiding its adversaries, employs IEDs and suicide bombers to terrifying effect, and often dispatches prisoners after horrendous torture'. Like guerrilla forces everywhere, one of its most pernicious tactics involved blurring the line between combatants and civilians. One of its intentions was that, over the protracted campaign, its opponents would make mistakes – and wrongly target civilians, thereby contributing to an alienation of the population at large. Willacy: 'It presented Coalition troops with a complex series of moral dilemmas and questions that often had to be solved and solved in a split second. The most fundamental of which is, who is a combatant and who is not'. And when mistakes were made, especially the killing of civilians, it exposed the members of the SAS to 'moral trauma'. In the meantime, any civilian who had suffered the loss of a relative at the hands of the foreigners was under a religious obligation to avenge his death. 'The fog of war on the battlefields of Afghanistan and the shape-shifting enemy' presented the SAS with enormous difficulties.

Captain Andrew Hastie experienced this moral dilemma on 28 February 2013, when leading a reconnaissance mission from 1 Squadron SAS in the Taliban-infested district of Shahid-e-Hasas in Uruzgan Province. He was given credible intelligence that his patrol would soon be the subject of a Taliban attack, with his electronic warfare operator identifying a nearby shepherd they could see with some sheep and donkeys, apparently operating as a 'spotter', radioing their position to the Taliban. Thereupon Hastie called in Apache helicopter gunships to use their 30-millimetre cannon to eliminate the shepherd. Most unfortunately, the gunships got the coordinates of their target wrong and killed two young Afghan boys.



Andrew Hastie

Two months later, on 28 April, Hastie encountered an even more troubling moral dilemma, one which would attract for the SAS some international notoriety. On that day his patrol was engaged in a firefight near the village of Olum Ghar, which resulted in three Taliban being killed. Unbeknownst to Hastie, one of his corporals cut off the right hand of each of them, supposedly to help with their identification back at base. Another SAS corporal, a veteran of more than 100 missions, told Willacy: 'People were doing it not necessarily because they needed to – it was because they were enjoying it. It was fun'. And: 'Everyone knew that this was going on, including commanders'. But Hastie didn't think it was funny. Nor did Americans when it was reported in the *The New York Times* – resulting in a rebuke from the top US general in Afghanistan, General Joseph Dunford. The response he got was that the Australians did 'not believe the severing of the hands by the SAS is a war crime'.

Retired Australian Major General Fergus McLachlan is of the opinion that the SAS, at its best, is the equal to any and every special operation unit in the world – but by 2013 'something had gone seriously wrong'. He poses the question: 'How did they become so brutalised that this guy thought that was okay?', viz. cutting off hands. Andrew Hastie opined: it's 'symbolic of what war does to people over time,

and the way it degrades people's moral sensitivities and compromises your restraint and your ethical decision making'.

In addition to the 'cutting off of hands' incident and the death of Dad Mohammad, *Rogue Forces* highlights seven episodes which, as presented, appear to raise serious questions of legality:

- \*February 2012: the deaths of Mirza Khan and Haji Sardar at the village of Sarkhume;
- \*28 March 2012: the death of Ziauddin, known as the 'village idiot', at Paryan Nawa;
- \*4 April 2012: the death of an insurgent bomb-maker at a camp in Deh Rawood;
- \*16 May 2012: the deaths of two villagers and their Imam at Shina;
- \*late August 2012: the deaths of an Imam and his son at Sola;
- \*15 December 2012: the deaths of 12+ villagers at Sara, subsequently known as 'the tractor job'; and,
- \*6 January 2013: the death of Mawlawqi Sher Mohammad at Nawjoy.

Analysing what happened in Afghanistan and why, Willacy invokes what he terms a '*Lord of the Flies* syndrome'. In that classic novel by William Golding, when without parental supervision and left to their own devices, a group of marooned schoolboys gradually became barbaric, torturing and killing. According to *Rogue Forces*, that's exactly what happened with the SAS. What should have been in place was firm leadership – in the form of close supervision by higher command, of how operatives were trained, to perform with a sound moral compass, with the outcomes being monitored. According to General McLachlan: 'Leadership involves curiosity, determination, sitting in quiet corners, listening, governance checks, visits'. Apparently, however, the necessary type of leadership was missing from the SAS.

Andrew Hastie is of the opinion that the SAS was inculcated with the wrong values – with an American style concept, of kill/capture. As to what transpired in Afghanistan, Hastie believes

the SAS's higher command must have known that war crimes were being committed.

This supposed failure in leadership was evidenced by what played out in Afghanistan, at its most extreme involving a pattern of grotesque behaviour which the Brereton Inquiry terms 'Blooding'. This, apparently, is the key to an understanding of how 2 Squadron SAS, the 'Bushrangers', would sometimes conduct itself. Pre-deployment, when being trained at Lancelin north of Perth, one of the Squadron's scenario-based exercises apparently involved the capture of prisoners, culminating in participants being told: 'Okay, execute the bloke'. When an execution had been dutifully simulated, this was approved by the trainer, saying: 'Okay, that's how it's going to be. Are you cool with that?' Willacy: 'This was the initiation rite of [seasoned sergeants] telling junior soldiers to shoot a prisoner or a civilian, in order for the soldier to rack up his first kill ... Once the killing ritual was performed [in the field], the rookie soldier was locked into the group and bound by its secrets. A hold was now placed over him, one almost impossible for him to break'.

Other SAS Squadrons did not employ 'Blooding'. But they did engage in behaviour we are led to believe sometimes resulted in unlawful killings, with elaborate methods being employed to disguise this, e.g. the use of 'throwdowns' in the form of AK-47 assault rifles, Russian Makarov pistols, 'battle bras' containing ammunition and radios, to be placed alongside those killed, then photographed as evidence of a supposed Taliban connection. Trained not to 'break' under interrogation, SAS members proved expert at covering their tracks.

Hastie: 'Australian soldiers who joined for the right reasons, who wanted to do the right thing, were led astray by toxic and effectively evil leadership'. In the absence of higher command's involvement, SAS leadership devolved to its sergeants who served as trainers, then Patrol Commanders. It would appear that they constituted the dominant influence within the

Regiment – to which even junior officers deferred, or risked their careers being destroyed. According to Willacy, it was the Patrol Commanders who were the prime movers behind the ‘warrior culture’ that emerged - they were, in effect, ‘demigods’.

It would appear that by around 2012/13 this new version of the SAS had emerged fully, shaped by its Patrol Commanders. It took as its anthem the 2001 hit tune by English rock band James: ‘Getting Away With It (All Messed Up)’ – to be sung boisterously when SAS operators partied hard.

Since June 2018, reports about Australia’s SAS

forces in Afghanistan have been appearing ever more frequently in our newspapers and on television. It is a story which anybody with an interest in Australia’s military history will have followed with increasing interest. There is no doubt that it is an extremely divisive topic, with strong views either in favour of our SAS or against their supposed conduct in Afghanistan. Mark Willacy’s *Rogue Forces* is an important book because it offers a wealth of detailed information and incisive analysis. As to whether you agree with his findings is another matter. But his book certainly provides much food for thought.

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