



**Respect, Gratitude, Admiration**

# *TRIBUTE*

The Newsletter of the Military  
Historical Society Australia,  
Queensland Division

President: Russell Paten  
Website: [www.mhsa.org.au](http://www.mhsa.org.au)

**FEBRUARY/MARCH 2025**  
**No.34**



## **Sombre moments during tour to the north**

Trevor Ball kindly sent in a great little article he thought we may be interested in.

Of course we were. Thanks Trevor.

Thought it may be of interest that I have been to PNG recently.

This is a return trip as I have been a few times now starting 50 years ago and have been to most war cemeteries now in the South Pacific.

The holiday was a welcome break since rebuilding my home after the Lismore flood.



We stopped in Alotau where I did a battle of Milne Bay cruise also stopping at Kiriwina Island and Conflict Islands.

In Rabaul I visited the Kokopo war and cultural museum, the Japanese barge tunnels and the Bitapaka war cemetery.

When I arrived at the cemetery, I placed some tributes and was approached to lay a wreath during the service by the custodians of the cemetery.

## **President Report**

Well, Alan has been beavering to produce another high-quality edition of Tribute for us to enjoy, the first for the new year.

Since the last edition, we have had a successful meeting in Brisbane organised by Jim Nuttall. Anthony Staunton delivered a presentation on retrospective (or late) medal awards. It was extremely well researched and presented, as to be expected from Anthony.

Our next meeting is in Gympie on March 15 when Wuzzy has organised everything for us, including the guest speaker.

Following his success with the Polo Shirt initiative, Wuzzy has thrown himself into another initiative, Quilts of Valour, which is an amazing and humbling project.

More will be revealed at the Gympie meeting so please come along and see it in action.

Your committee continues to work to improve the way we operate and to introduce new initiatives to add value for all.

Jim Nuttall (Secretary), Kelly Lyons (Treasurer) and I have now aligned our activities more closely which should result in good quality documentation and recording of our activities as we go forward.

We hope to meet soon to begin discussing hosting a one-day conference on the Sunshine Coast later this year.

I'm looking forward to the year which will hopefully provide some good opportunities to socialise and learn more about our passion of military history.

Please don't hesitate to give me feedback and advice about any aspect of our society's operations. The more heads we have thinking, the better we'll be able to deliver.

**Russell Paten**

**President**

## **From the Editor**

It was good to get the first edition of the year "off the press" so to speak.

With the computer issues seemingly solved it was the first job the new appliance got its hard drive into.

The new machine has very updated programs and so there may be some foibles in how the newsletter looks. Hopefully I can overcome these for the future.

The new "toy" also came with a publishing program so I plan to have a play with that to see if I can readily use it instead of Word, which I must say, I have gotten use to.

As always, thanks to those who have contributed to the newsletter.

Further to Russell's recent note about free advertising in Tribute, I just want to add that if you know of a military-type business that may benefit from such a great offer, you could mention the newsletter to them and it may spark some interest.

## **Feeling fit?**

**For those who like to, or still can, run, the Run Army events are coming up in Brisbane on March 30 and in Townsville on April 6.**

**Head to [runarmy.org.au](http://runarmy.org.au) for more.**

## **The Day The Tail Wagged The Dog**

**From Terry Dineen**

Not much is written about Admin and Log. They are down the back where nothing of importance seems to occur and not up the front where all the action is.

But without them functioning properly down the back there will be nothing of importance going on up the front. Simple fact.

Two of D Coy's tail were Ron "Nutty" (short for nutshell) O'Halloran our CQMS and Ken "Jessie" James our sergeant cook.

At this stage the troops had been out on ops for more than a couple of weeks on C rations, i.e. three days "yank" and two days 24-hour packs. So the cuisine was getting a bit boring.

There was a slight pause in tempo of the op as we took a resupply and the CO called an "O" group to reveal the next stage of the plot to catch wily Charlie.

Between Nutty and Jessie they organised some extra goodies for us. We received several cartons of almost frozen pineapple juice and several more of those fresh "tinned" buns of US manufacture with a thick slice of cold ham to go with. Enough for all of us and it went down a treat.

Except before the OC could scoff his he was called to an "O" group, a short walk away, where he duly arrived, weapon tucked under his arm and a cup of chilled pineapple juice in his right hand, the outside of the metal cup was dripping condensation in the humidity and in his left hand the half-eaten fresh ham roll.

He was the immediate object of everybody's attention. It was like a quiz show, "Where did you get that?" Repetitively.

Now John Knell our OC has a reputation as a bit of a stirrer as has been noted previously and has been known to ham it up on occasions. So, playing dumb he retorted, "What's the matter, didn't you blokes get yours?" and he promptly finished his feast before he was asked

to share, and the "O" group proceeded among mutterings of discontent from the other coy reps.

When the Bn returned to Nui Dat from this Op questions were asked of the other Coy CQ's and sergeant cooks as to why D Coy got "goodies" in the field and they didn't?

D Coy were not popular elsewhere but our morale was in the black because we understood our Admin & Log worked and what's more it cared for us.

Multiple lessons are applicable here and are timeless in application, initiative and leadership being up the top of the list.

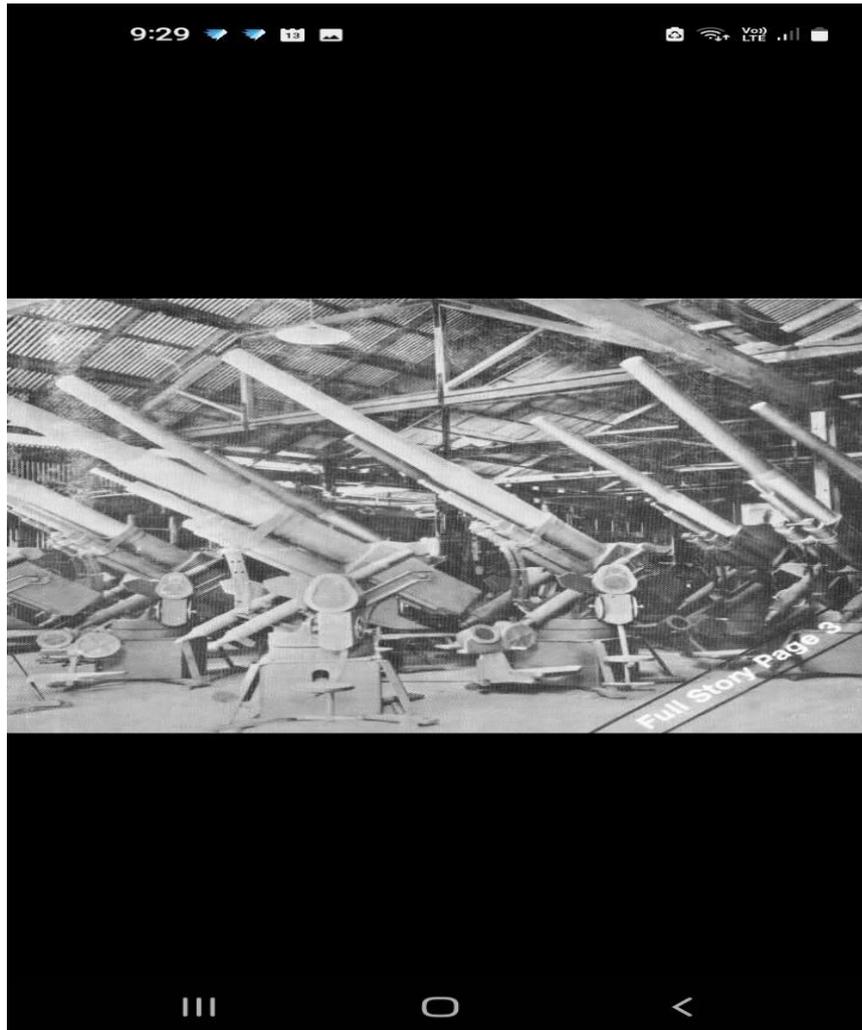
I reckon that day the tail wagged the dog at several levels.



## No dummies here, mate

**From Ken L J Smith and found on Facebook**

During WW2 when Brisbane was made the northern defence line for Australia, these dummy Ack Ack guns were made at the Milton tramway workshops in the woodwork shops to be placed around the city.



They were intended to provide a show of strength of our defences to any Jap reconnaissance photographers.

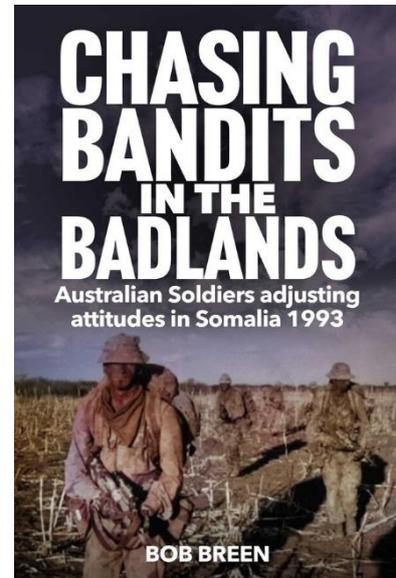
There were real guns positioned in places of strategic importance.

## Book review

BOB BREEN, Bob - *Chasing Bandits in the Badlands: Australian soldiers adjusting attitudes in Somalia 1993*

Big Sky Publishing, Newport NSW, 2013

The first thing this book's title begs is the identification of the bandits, and the badlands in which the story is set. The big setting is the main Australian involvement in a United Nations operation in Somalia, where the Australian Force Somalia (AFS) undertook the first major unit size operational deployment since the Vietnam War. The bandits are the various 'actors', or adversary, faced in that campaign. They were not an army or other legitimate national force by any measure. The badlands are the Baidoa Humanitarian Relief Sector to the west of the capital Mogadishu, the capital and main point of entry for United Nations and other forces into Somalia.



This sector was the 1 RAR Battalion Group's Area of Operations (AO).

The author, probably the most published on the Australian military commitment to the Somalia failed state tragedy, presents the story of the 1 RAR Battalion Group during its tour of duty from January 16 - May 20, 1993.

Of course, Australian Defence Force personnel from all three Services took part, as did civilian aid agencies, and advance parties and some remaining for a short time served outside that block period.

But it is that focus which presents us the story of how, at grass roots level, the Battalion Group troops carried out their mission on the hot and dusty ground they inherited from the US Marines and handed over to French troops.

In the time of their deployment, the troops in this story set about achieving their mission of enabling the more effective operation of the civilian aid agencies in their food and healthcare distribution.

After decades of civil war and the breakdown of law and order, almost every male over twelve either had a gun, or access to one. And this included small arms weaponry of all descriptions and heavy weapons up to 106mm RCLs whose ammunition was found in quantities.

Many of these fighting age males had either received some form of military training or had learnt to fight brutally through the sheer experience of dominating anyone else with less power than themselves. Survival was literally ruled by the gun and dominance of the less fortunate achieved by it, not the rule of law.

The first of two broad groups of bandits were criminal gangs, the biggest consortium being titled the 'Three Amigos'. These three gangs were led by Hassan Gutaale Abdul (eventually executed by a Somali authorities firing squad), Hussein Barre Warsame and Salat Mohamid Ibrahim (Gaaney). They operated across the AO, focussing on population centres, especially Baidoa itself.

A fourth and largely rural group led by "Big Ears" tended to dominate in the countryside.

With no effective government or army and a police force completely out of its depth and not armed, these gangs of bandits pillaged, murdered, raped and dominated the local people almost at will where Western intervention forces were not able to control them.

This was no ordinary war. Ordinary people did much the same to each other to simply survive.

There was no effective Somali army to side with and support, or indeed even one to fight against. Law enforcement was also virtually non-existent, and what little there was proved to be highly inefficient and ineffective, being a problem in itself. Bandits captured and turned over to authorities were almost invariably released and back into their nefarious ways within days.

In Western terms, these gangs were literally ruthless criminals without even a formal cause which many terrorists have.

A second and arguably more problematic group were armed guards, recruited from the Somali population by the Non-Government Organisations (NGO) as the only viable means of protecting the NGO personnel and their supplies coming in from donor countries and private agencies.

Heavily armed, a high percentage of these people stole from their own employers and often formed sub-gangs to do the same from each other's NGO. A volatile cocktail indeed for the Australians to have to deal with.

The author proceeds to tell the story of how CO 1 RAR Battalion Group, Lieutenant Colonel David Hurley, and his troops provided security to the NGO and the wider population. This was not a conventional warfighting mission, 380,000 people lived in an AO which comprised 17,000 sq km of countryside with a smattering of small towns and villages additional to Baidoa.

This environment was the Badlands; none of it under effective control by any one group, including the bandit gangs. How the Australians addressed their mission is the core of this story, and it is told very well.

Breen has positioned himself in the literature on Australia's deployment to Somalia focussing on the importance and value of the prominent role played by junior non-commissioned officers (NCO), coining the phrase "strategic corporals" in other writings.

In this book, he also uses the term "fight leaders" to refer to the same level of battlefield command. This is an interesting perspective as it allows the telling of the encounters (also known in military parlance as "contacts") between the Australians and the bandits.

Like most military operations, there are long periods of sleep-deprived, tedious, monotonous patrolling and surveillance interspersed with short, sharp episodes of high-adrenalin action.

Most of the contacts involving shooting engagements occurred between small Australian patrols and reaction teams, as these small-sized manoeuvre elements were characteristic of the operational tempo. Hence the term "fight leaders".

Some contacts were actually settled with non-firing solutions including rugby tackle apprehensions and staring down juvenile stone throwers. This was not your ordinary peacekeeping.

Most but not all of the officers and senior NCOs are mentioned in the book, as are some of the Force Headquarters staff. This reflects the reality of the nature of operations; some people in virtually every warlike deployment never get to fire a shot yet remain as essential as those who did.

Such is the random nature of the application of armed force. All ranks worked tirelessly doing their respective jobs. But with no large-scale operations such as a company or battalion attack, it was essentially a junior officer's and junior NCOs' direct show.

And irrespective of the scale of operations there can be tragedies. The death of Lance Corporal Shannon McAliney, 21, caused by an accidental discharge of a fellow Australian's rifle as a patrol headed out on patrol at night, represents the only Australian fatality.

Another soldier – Private Bramwell Connolly – would probably have been a second except for a bandit sub-machine gun failing to fire with its muzzle in his stomach. The fortunes of war are fickle indeed.

The book tells the story of the Australians' success during their tour of duty. They were not replaced by other Australians, and it is for the record that the savage conditions found when they arrived and addressed were eventually reverted to after UN forces withdrew.

The 1 RAR Battalion Group was recognised with a collective award of a Chief of the General Staff Commendation, an unusual award, and individuals the Australian Active Service Medal, the first so awarded.

In 2023, the former award was upgraded to a Meritorious Unit Citation which could actually be worn by all ranks additional to their campaign medal upon appeal by veterans.

The interview technique and use of a range of official and personal photographs dispersed throughout the book work well in enabling the story to be told in the manner that it is.

However, for the reader who might not know as much as the author, the lack of any references and the absence of a map to show the many villages and locations referred to reduces one's ability to follow the story as well as one might otherwise do so see the wisdom behind Hurley's modus operandi.

Similarly, a map showing the main contact locations, NGO sites, the Australian base locations inside the township of Baidoa itself, would, in my opinion, have enhanced this good read.

Curiously, there are no Endnotes, list of references and interviews or other means by which one might place the book's sources into perspective. Nor is there an Index.

The former might reflect the author's technique of basing the book almost entirely on his own detailed knowledge of and publications surrounding the AFS deployment to Somalia.

Should a re-publication of this work be carried out, these shortcomings might be addressed in what is otherwise an easy-to-read coverage of the Somalia deployment.

**Reviewer: Lt Col Russell Linwood ASM (Retd)**

## **Military humour**



## Important Dates

March 1, 1901 – Naval and military forces of the States transferred to Commonwealth control following federation.

March 1, 1942 – HMAS *Perth* sunk in Sunda Strait off the western tip of Java during a battle against overwhelming Japanese forces.

March 2, 1943- Battle of Bismarck Sea begins.

March 3, 1885 – Sudan contingent from New South Wales departs Sydney.

March 3, 1942 – Japanese bomb Broome and Wyndham in Western Australia.

March 4, 1942 – HMAS *Yarra* sunk by Japanese ships off Java.

March 5, 1970 – HMAS *Sydney* arrives at Fremantle, en route to Sydney. On board was 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, RAR after a tour in Vietnam.

March 7, 1942 – Japanese occupation of Java.

March 8, 1942 - Japanese land at Lae and Salamaua.

March 9, 1942 – 7<sup>th</sup> Division AIF arrives in Adelaide from the Middle East.

March 9, 1942 – Japanese land at Finschhafen, part of a plan to protect their forward base at Lae.

March 11, 1845 – First Māori War. British troops based in Australia were sent to suppress an uprising.

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March 11, 1917 – Members of the 1<sup>st</sup> ANZAC Wireless Signal Sqn were part of a British force to occupy Baghdad.

March 12, 1900 – Australians arrive at Bloemfontein, South Africa. They were members of the New South Wales Mounted Rifles.

March 13, 1943 – Japanese reconnaissance flight over Darwin.

March 14, 1942 – Horn Island in the Torres Strait bombed. It was a tactical base for Allied air operations in the strait.

March 15, 1940 – First two women from the Voluntary Aid Detachments organisation enlist in the AIF.

March 16, 1943 – Posthumous VC for Lt W.E. Newton from St Kilda, Victoria, for action at Salamua Isthmus, New Guinea.

March 16, 1942 – Darwin bombed. One of 64 raids over the city.

March 17, 1917 – Australians occupy Bapaume on the Western Front as part of the Somme campaign.

March 17, 1942 – General MacArthur flies to Darwin.

March 18, 1915 – Second Allied fleet attempt to force the Dardanelles.

March 19, 1916 – Sir John Maxwell withdrawn from Egypt, leaving Sir Archibald Murray in command to lead Allied forces against Turkey in the Sinai and Palestine.

March 20, 1916 – ANZAC lands in France prior to going up to the Western Front.

March 20, 1917 – Lt F.H. McNamara, Rushworth, Victoria becomes first Australian airman to win a VC for rescuing a downed comrade in Palestine.

March 20, 2003 – Iraq War.

March 21, 1918 – Final German offensive of the First World War begins.

March 21, 1942 – Air battle for Port Moresby begins.

March 22, 1942 – Japanese aircraft bomb Katherine. The only raid on the town.

March 22, 1945 – VC for Cpl R.R. Rattey, 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion, from Barmedman in NSW on Bougainville.

March 23, 1945 – Waitavolo and Tol plantations captured by Australians in New Britain. In 1942 Tol plantation was the scene of a massacre of about 150 Australians as they tried to flee Rabaul.

March 24, 1901 – Australians capture Boer convoy and guns at Veldfontein.

March 24, 1942 – Port Moresby bombed by Japanese.

March 25, 1945 – Posthumous VC for Lt A. Chowne of Sydney at Dagua, New Guinea.

March 26, 1917 – Posthumous VC for Capt. P.H. Cherry, 26<sup>th</sup> Battalion, from Drysdale, Victoria at Lagnicourt.

March 26, 1917 – First battle of Gaza begins.

March 27, 1944 – First of 12 Victory Loans offered to raise funds for the war effort.

March 27, 1953 – Last engagement between Meteors and MIGs in the Korean War after they were found inferior in air combat and were transferred to ground attack.

March 28, 1918 – VC for Sgt S.R. McDougall, 47<sup>th</sup> Battalion, from Recherche in Tasmania at Dernancourt.

March 29, 1885 – NSW contingent arrives in Sudan.

March 29, 1941 – Battle of Mattapan, Greece. HMA ships Perth, Vendetta and Stuart were among the 13 Allied ships involved in the battle when five Italian ships were lost.

March 31, 1921. Formation of the Australian Air Force. The Royal prefix was approved on August 13, 1921.

**Military Historical Society of Australia, Old Division**  
**Committee 2023 – 24**

President	Russell Paten
Vice President	Glenn Lyons
Honorary Secretary	Jim Nuttall
Honorary Treasurer	Kelly Lyons
Committee Members	Scott Meares, David Geck, Wuzzy Alford

<p align="center"><b><u>IMPORTANT EVENTS</u></b>  <b><u>AND DATE</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bi-Monthly Meeting, 15 March, Gympie RSL</li> </ul>	<p align="center"><b><u>FELLOWS of MHSA</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• John Meyers (Deceased)</li> <li>• Anthony Staunton</li> <li>• Donald Wright</li> </ul> <p align="center"><b><u>NEW MEMBERS</u></b></p> <p align="center"><b><u>VALE</u></b></p>
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AUSTRALIA

Australian Business Number (ABN) 97 764 781 363

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**Queensland Division**

**Membership Fee Ordinary Member \$50, Family Member \$55 (ie 2 or more domiciled at the one address)**

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As part of your membership you will receive a quarterly edition of Sabretache, the journal of the MHSA. **I require a hard copy (mail) / electronic (via email) version. (circle your option)**

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