

THE ARTILLERY NEWS.

MARCH 2005 – MAY 2005



Official Correspondence.

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R.A.A. ASSOCIATION OF TASMANIA INC.

R.A.A.A.T. HISTORICAL WING MEETINGS

10th. February, 2005

The informal general meeting of the Historical Wing that took place on **10/2/2005** at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Inveresk was attended by members - Norman Andrews, Des Salter, Lloyd Saunders Marc Smith, Rick Woods, Terry Higgins, Charles Tee, Joe Ferguson and Graeme Petterwood. Apologies were received from Max Frost, Gunter Breier, Frank Stokes and Bob Brown.

As this was the first of our informal meetings of the year, discussions ranged over a number of subjects that impact on our members.

The Anzac Day March came under discussion and it was recommended that able R.A.A.A.T. members who can participate, should continue to form a combined Artillery block with other Artillery groups and should make the effort to gather at the Paterson Barracks afterwards for a convivial drink and chat as many of us did last year.

As the Launceston City Council, in its wisdom, has decided to make the Inveresk precinct into a Pay & Display parking area, a relatively *animated* discussion took place about the morals of penalising the public who wished to utilise an area that was supposed to be developed for public use - i.e. the

QVMAG area in particular - to which we already contribute by means of rates and taxes, or a visitor's entry fee. The R.A.A.T. members, who regularly meet at the Friends of the Museum Lounge each second month, have now asked our Secretary to actively canvass other meeting place options, with free accessible parking, as most of us are on limited or fixed incomes and this additional impost, while relatively small, is onerous. Unless common sense prevails, and the Municipality Museum Pass is extended to cover parking for members of community oriented groups who use the facility on occasion, we will be put in a position of either paying up or bucking the system. Even the effort of walking the extra distances to and back from the scattered Ticket machines and then back to the Museum is an effort that some of our more mature members find difficult to the extent they may be forced to boycott the event. A suggestion that a "Letter to the Editor" of the *Examiner* newspaper, expressing concern, was mooted and one of our members actually did pursue the idea and a public discussion is currently taking place regarding the overall situation in regard to the Museum's problems.

Our next meeting will be at QVM&AG InverEsk as usual, Thursday **14th April** – commencing at **2.00 p.m**. Norm Andrews has asked the new Battery Commander MAJOR Chris Talbot if it is possible for us to again use a room at Paterson Barracks on the second Thursday of the even numbered months for a couple of hours – he will get back to Norm on this matter. All Gunners and interested people are invited and welcome to attend the meetings. Please bring a small plate of food to share.

A number of items of correspondence, regarding Artillery newsletters from other interstate associations, and a notice from the Launceston City Council 2005 calling for notification of any Volunteers Awards nominations, were tabled by our Secretary, Norman Andrews, and also reference was made to several emails promoting Artillery functions or trips that our membership were openly invited to - on a Pay Your Own Way basis.

Notice was also drawn to the Harry Murray V.C. event (*that took place on February 16th.*)

A copy of "Manual of Siege and Garrison Artillery Exercises 1879" was handed around for viewing by the members, to illustrate how much things have changed in the technical application of Artillery over the last 126 years. Mention was also made of the first 6 Volumes and the 12th Volume (Pictorial record) of **C.E.W. Bean's "OFFICIAL HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR OF 1914 – 18"** that had been gifted to Graeme Petterwood by a friend from Hobart whose own grand-father had been an active participant in that conflict. As a researcher of early Australia military history these are a welcome acquisition to Graeme's growing military library.

If any R.A.A.T. member would like information regarding military events during the WWI conflict that may be covered by these records, please do not hesitate to ask.

14th. April, 2005

The informal general meeting of the Historical Wing that took place on **14/4/2005** at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Inveresk was attended by members - Norman Andrews, Des Salter, Marc Smith, Charles Tee, Frank Stokes, Gunter Breier and Graeme Petterwood. Apologies were received from Max Frost, Terry Higgins, Rick Woods.

Norm discussed the pertinent matters that occurred at the last Committee Meeting and had several unresolved matters e.g. dates of some events scheduled for later this year. Confirmation was given regarding the installation of the Gunners Plaque (See notes below)

SECRETARY'S NOTIFICATION

This is the final draft of the plaque we have been arranging for quite sometime now. With a fair bit of luck it will feature the actual Artillery Colours. The order was placed on WEDNESDAY 13th April.

It will all happen at the **Cenotaph Wall of Remembrance Royal Park on Saturday the 4th Jun 2005 at 2.30pm** followed by drinks at Paterson Barracks (*On a user pays system - YET TO BE CONFIRMED*)

***** Donations towards the cost of this commemorative plaque are most welcome.**

This is OUR Tasmanian Gunner history we are honouring. Contact the R.A.A.T. Secretary.

UBIQUUE



In Honour and remembrance of all
TASMANIAN GUNNERS
who served in the defence of our nation
at home and abroad

Unveiled on 4th June 2005

by

His Excellency, LTCOL the Honourable W J E Cox AC, RFD, ED.
Governor of Tasmania and
former Commanding Officer of 6 Field Regiment RAA (City of Launceston)

Erected by

Royal Australian Artillery Association of Tasmania Inc

Launceston Volunteer Artillery Corps serving Launceston since 1860

LEST WE FORGET

GRAPESHOT NEWS

The following pieces of in-coming shrapnel were received during last month but, as this 'Artillery News' is a quarterly publication, some event dates may have come and gone by the time it gets to you. However, these notifications gives us all an indication that we are not alone and that our Gunner comrades are working all over Australia for the betterment of the Artillery.- UBIQUE

2005 SITUATION REPORTS – 16 Field Battery, R.A.A.

2005 has seen rather large turnover of personnel within the Battery.

CAPT Rhyl Opie has been posted in from 107 Fd Bty, 4 Fd Regt, as the new Training Officer.

The Battery has had the first GRES Officer postings since 2000, with the recent graduation from RMC-A of 2LTs Tim Walpole and Brett Coulson. In the OR stream we must welcome SGT Craig Woodhall who was posted to the Battery from Recruiting Hobart. The Battery also gained BDR Andrew Hudson from 108 Fd Bty, 4 Fd Regt on his recent discharge from the ARA. The skills that both members will offer the Battery are sure to be invaluable. Also joining the Battery, this time from 1CSSB is PTE Mark Grey who will be the ARA Storeman in the Q-Store.

16 Fd Bty's training focus thus far in 2005 has been administrative, Mandated Training, Artillery Safety refresher and AIRN. The Battery will however be changing tempo towards Gunnery and All Corps Soldier training such as conducting small arms practices, a Grenade Launcher Attachment (GLA) course and Infantry Minor Tactics (IMT) in the coming month. The Battery elements involved with the 9 BDE Brigade Ready Force (BRF) will have training activities to complete in the coming weeks. All round a busy but interesting time for all involved.

Note from RAAAT Secretary, Norm Andrews, O.A.M.

*As you have gathered over the last couple of days there has been another change in 16 Fd Bty with the appointment of a new BC who is **MAJ Chris Talbot** you will remember him as the ARA WO2 SMIG based in Hobart. He will do a capable job I am sure.*

Note from Major Chris Talbot, BC - 16 Fd Bty, R.A.A.

Anzac Day Activities.

I wonder if it is possible for you to disseminate, through your network, some timings for Anzac Day with relation to activities that include the Battery.

I have had several association members and others approach me to find out what we are doing.

As there are no formal commitments in Launceston at this time, it is anticipated that Launceston will have a Gunfire Breakfast followed by attendance at the City Dawn Service.

I believe that one of the messes will be opened for some form of all ranks gathering after the service.

Hobart have two catafalque party commitments and the mid morning march in the city. After the service the New Sydney Hotel will be the meeting place. I am unsure what arrangements have been made for attendance at dawn service in the south.

As usual there will probably be late changes, association members should contact the respective barracks locations for updates.

Chris Talbot

MAJ Bty Comd - 16Fd Bty. R.A.A.

FRIENDS OF SOLDIERS WALK - From: Adrian Howard - Subject: FOSW Newsletter #17

Note - A Working Bee at 10am on Sunday March 20th; meet at the northern car park at the old TCA ground. BBQ to follow - so bring a gold coin.

Cocktail function at 6:30pm on Saturday April 16th to launch the fundraising campaign. Our Patron His Excellency William Cox will officially launch the campaign.

Mr. Ric Paterson of ABC Radio will act as MC.

Tickets are \$35 and can be obtained by contacting FOSW - details below.

Cheques to be made out to FOSW Inc.

Plaques:- Our first group of 20 plaques will go in on April 24th: more details with the next bulletin.

Cheers, Adrian Howard

President, Friends of Soldiers Walk

11 Franklin St., West Hobart TAS 7000

Ph (03) 6234 4396

GUNNERS AUSTRALIA ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER.

We have recently been contacted again by **Peter 'Tibbo' Tibbett** of Gympie, Queensland, and 'Tibbo' has asked us to advise our Tasmanian members that the 3rd Edition of '*The Guns*' – the newsletter of the **Gunners Australia Association** - is now available on the Internet for those who have access.

<http://tibbsau.com/theguns.html>

TIN CAN BAY – QUEENSLAND QUERY SEPT- NOV 2004

"We have another where, why and when question that many of our members might know the answer to. This aerial shot is identified as being of a training area at Tin Can Bay, Queensland – but, for those of us who are ignorant of its military purpose at that time, the actual location and when in 1972 (?) that this photo may have been taken, it would be great if someone could enlighten us." – Norman Andrews.

Artillery News Sept. 2004



Tin Can Bay c.1972 -3 The B/W photo looks like something out of M.A.S.H.

Subject: Sept – November 2004 Artillery News

Hi Norm, Just looking thru this issue again and studied the photo at Tin Can Bay. Reckon it was taken in 1973 when the Regt did the 105 conversion courtesy of 1 Fd Regt. The photo is quite clear & I can identify the various locations: ie Officers Mess, Sgts Lines, OR'S Mess where I think Jonno baked corned silverside one night. Regards, Shelvo (John Shelverton)

A PIECE OF HISTORY RETAINED.

I was very pleased to receive a brief note from Major General John Whitelaw (*copy below*) – which is self-explanatory and is intended for all Australian gunners. - UBIQUE.

Dear *Gemma*,

Enclosed is a copy of a book review by Colonel Terry McCullagh, CSC, President of the RAA Association (ACT), of *The Fragile Forts* by Peter Oppenheim. The book was launched on 23 March 2005 by the Hon Tony Abbott MP at the National Artillery Museum at North Fort, Manly, at a memorable gathering to mark the unveiling of the Sir Roden Cutler VC exhibit in the Artillery Hall of the Museum by Her Excellency The Governor of NSW, Professor Marie Bashir, AC.

This book is a significant contribution to the recording of the Gunner heritage of Australia.

I would be grateful if you would consider this review for publication.

Sincerely

John

Attached to the correspondence was the review of the book that all serious militaria researchers should ensure is in their libraries. The Artillery News is publishing the review, as supplied, in full.

“THE FRAGILE FORTS”

A Book Review

by Col. Terry McCullagh, CSC, President R.A.A. Association (ACT).

The Fragile Forts: The Fixed Defences of Sydney Harbour 1788-1963, by Peter Oppenheim, Australian Military History Publications, Loftus, N.S.W. 2005, 180 x 250mm (landscape) pps xxvi/326, hardcover, 35 b&w drawings, 26 b&w photographs, 6 maps, appendices, biblio, index, chapter end notes. \$59.00 (RRP), S\$49.00 (through AMPH – tel: 02-9542-6771 or www.warbooks.com.au)

“*The Fragile Forts*” is a joint venture between the Australian Army History Unit and Australian Military History Publications and makes a valuable contribution to the rich history of Sydney Harbour fixed defences. Peter Oppenheim traces this history from the arrival of the first fleet and the early days of this fledgling outpost of the British Empire. He tracks their development through the colony’s fears of foreign invasion to the point at which Australia became responsible for her own defences, describing the impact of the Great War and the threat of Japanese invasion during the War in the Pacific.

Oppenheim concludes with the dismantling of the great guns which protected the harbour.

The book is meticulously researched, abundantly illustrated with drawings, photographs and maps, and features a comprehensive index. Oppenheim’s descriptions are generous in their detail of ordnance and fort design. The author provides more than a technical description of the forts and guns of Sydney Harbour – he unfolds the complex military, political, social and economic factors which shaped the establishment of the defences, retelling the story behind the countless schemes, reports, inquiries, appreciations and commissions relating to the defences of Port Jackson. It is an intriguing account of colonial fear and isolation, technology, and independence, with hints of intrigue and early colonial jealousy told fluently and stylishly, making the book compelling reading.

“*The Fragile Forts*” caters for a broad readership, including military historians; those inspired by the architecture of the fixed defences such as the Martello tower on Fort Denison; those gunners fascinated by the vast array of ordnance; and others who simply have an abiding interest in the spectacular heritage of Sydney Harbour.

An architect by profession, Peter Oppenheim taught at the University of NSW School of Architecture, and spent 10 years researching and writing his book, working closely with a number of key heritage

organisations including the National Artillery Museum at North Head, and the Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company.

“The Fragile Forts” is a major contribution to the literature which describes the rich heritage of the Sydney harbour defences. This book makes a significant contribution to the history of Australian artillery in particular and Australia’s military history in general.

This is a book that is long overdue, is readable, and comes thoroughly recommended.

Reviewed by Colonel Terry McCullagh, CSC, President R.A.A. Association (ACT).

It is interesting to note that the book ,“The Fragile Forts”, which is 352 pages in total, is already retailing at between A\$60.00 and A\$66.00 at some mainland retail booksellers.

FORT DENISON



Fort Denison, Sydney Harbour – showing Australia’s only Martello tower fort.

By the 1840s the NSW colony, fearing invasion from the Russians, had converted the island into a fort and by 1857 the fort was manned, including two ten inch guns and twelve 32 pounders. The guns have only been fired during ceremonies and on special occasions.

Fort Denison is designed in the Martello style and one of the few intact examples surviving in the world. Martello Tower* (a circular masonry fort for coastal defence). You can climb Australia’s only Martello Tower and then lunch in the island café gazing at bustling harbour traffic and a view most Sydney siders never get to see.



ARTICLE

THE MEDALS OF THE ENEMY (FIRST WORLD WAR) -THE IMPERIAL GERMAN- “ORDEN POUR LE MERITE” 1914 - 18 THE “BLUE MAX”

Probably, like a lot of our members, I would not have recognised the official name of this famous Imperial German Central Powers WWI medal except for a movie produced in 1966 called “*The Blue Max*”, starring the late **George Peppard**, who played the part of an imaginary German Imperial Airforce fighter pilot ace, Bruno Stachel.

The ‘**Orden Pour le Merite**’ is far better known as the “**Blue Max**” and many people are under the impression that it was solely awarded to German aviators who achieved ‘ace’ standard i.e. the ‘Red Baron’– Leutnant Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen with 80 victories – when, in fact, this high award or its predecessor was available to all arms of the German military, and eligible civilians, from the mid 1600’s onwards.

The ‘*Blue Max*’ started life as the ‘*Ordre de Generosité*’ over three hundred years ago, in the Germanic principality of Brandenburg. The *Ordre de la Generosité* was founded by the electoral prince, Friedrich Wilhelm. This was a secular military and civil order that was created for the purpose of rewarding loyal subjects for their outstanding service. The original Maltese Cross design, and accompanying ribbon, was revised in 1740 with the establishment of the *Orden Pour le Mérite* which ran in conjunction with the earlier life-time Order, however, if the awardee earned both Orders the earlier medal had to be surrendered.



The Orden Pour le Merite

With gold text and decorations on a blue enamel background - it was nicknamed the ‘Blue Max’

A common question about these Orders and the medals is why would "Germanic" knight orders in the kingdoms of Prussia and Brandenburg have French names. The answer to that question is that, during the conceptions of both the *Ordre de la Generosité* and the later version, the *Orden Pour le Mérite*, the favored court language was French – even in the various Germanic Imperial Courts..

On May 31, 1842 a separate civilian division of the Order was created by Kaiser Friedrich Wilhelm IV to honor prominent artists and scientists. This division of the Order is still active despite a short break in activities due to World War II.

During WWI, the ‘*Pour le Merite*’ - the ‘*Blue Max*’ - was awarded on 687 occasions.

Initially, it appears that it was reserved for high-ranking staff officers (over 214 awards) but as the War dragged on the PLM was presented more frequently to lower ranks – mainly for morale boosting and propaganda purposes. It became common practice for items, such as postcards and souvenir cards, to be published bearing pictures of the Pour le Merite and Iron Cross awardees.

From 1914 -18, members of the German Imperial Army won 533, the Navy won 49, the Airforce won 80 and another 25 PLM's were awarded to foreign and other personnel.

The addition of Oakleaves was the equivalent of a Bar to the Order.

THE IRON CROSS

The **Iron Cross** (German: *Eisernes Kreuz*) is probably the best known of the military decorations of Germany. It was established by King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, and first awarded on 10 March 1813. The Iron Cross is only awarded in wartime. In addition to the Napoleonic Wars, awards were made during the Franco-Prussian War, and the First and Second World Wars.

In contrast to many other medals, the Iron Cross has a very simple design, unadorned, and is made from relatively cheap and common materials. It was traditionally cast in iron (although, in later years, the decoration was cast in zinc and aluminium). The 1813, 1870 and 1914 Iron Crosses had three grades: Iron Cross 2nd Class; Iron Cross 1st Class; and Grand Cross of the Iron Cross

The Iron Cross was awarded for bravery in battle as well as other military contributions to a battlefield environment. The Iron Cross Second Class was worn as a black and white chest ribbon with the cross suspended from the ribbon.

The Iron Cross First Class was a pin-on metal worn centered on a uniform breast pocket. The Iron Cross was a progressive award, with second class having to be earned before the first class and so on for the higher degrees.

In the First World War, approximately 5 millions Iron Crosses of the lower grade (second class) were issued, as well as a about 218,000 of the higher grade (first class).

Exact numbers of awards are not known, since the Prussian archives were destroyed during the Second World War.



A typical 1917 propaganda post card with an un-named N.C.O. recipient of an Iron Cross 2nd. Class and a Bavarian Military Merit Cross 3rd. Class

BAVARIAN MILITARY MERIT CROSS

Most people are familiar with the Iron Cross but many may not recognise the Bavarian Military Merit Cross with Swords that is also shown on the chest of the soldier portrayed on the card above..

It came in three grades from Class 3 up to Class 1. It was equivalent to similar grades in the Iron Cross.

My scans of the card and the medal are not that good but they will give the general idea.

The Class 3 shown (*I am sure it is Class 3 on this old sepia-toned postcard*) has no highlights - it appears to be just plain bronze - other higher grades were often silvered and had enamelled centres.

Additional research seems to point towards the fact that the military gentleman portrayed on the card may have been an N.C.O. in an Bavarian Infantry Regiment.

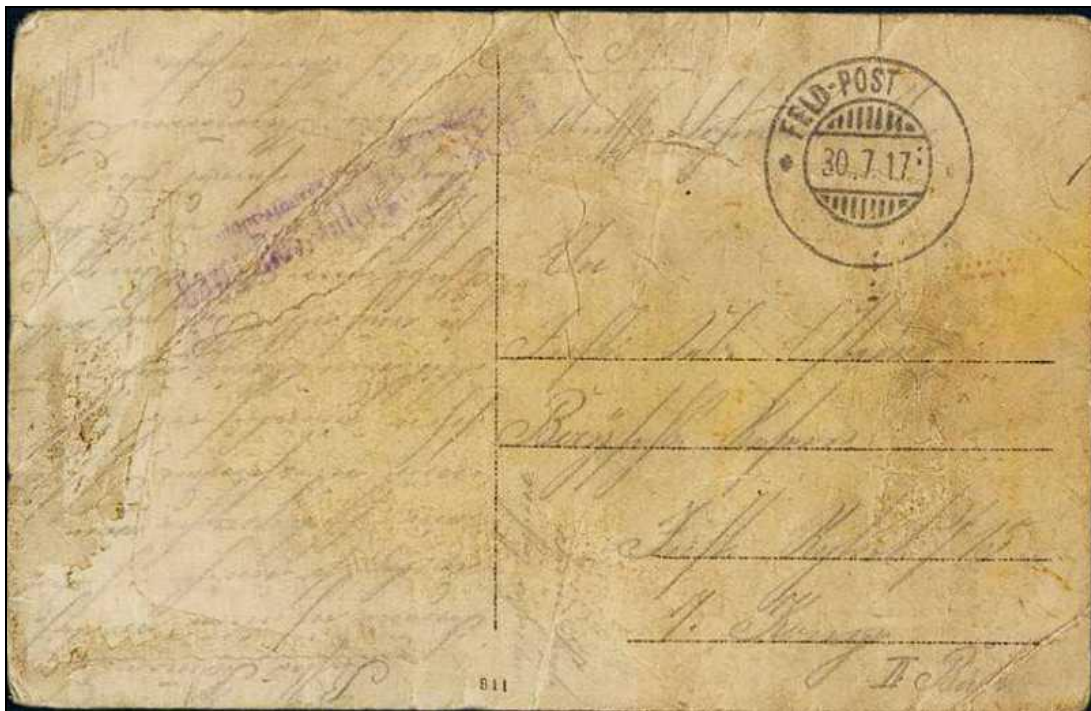
A record of an award document has recently been brought to my attention - but it is a big stretch of the imagination - even if some of the facts 'nearly' fit the person shown in the picture.

Even if it is not so, the military propaganda - of both sides - at that time would have been quite liable to have featured such a decorated soldier.

"The award document is dated 5 April 1917 and 17 April 1917. The recipient (at that time) was a Gefreiter (Lance Corporal) Johann Pflieger, who served in Infantry Regiment Nr 23. The document has been folded and there is a bit of foxing at its bottom. Also included is the same man's 1914 Iron Cross 2nd Class and its award document while he was still serving in the same regiment (Bavarian Infantry Regiment Nr 23). The Iron Cross document is dated 10 April 1916. The document bears the regimental stamp for Infantry Regiment Nr 23. It is interesting that a Bavarian received the Iron Cross 2nd Class a full year before he received the Military Merit Cross 3rd Class with Swords from his native state."

However, I have noted the style of headwear is definitely not that of a Gefreiter although there may have been the usual promotions, at the time the photo was taken, to suit the soldier's new hero status.

From 1915, senior Feldwebel (Sergeants) and above were entitled to wear a peaked cap, continuous lace trim around the collar edges and a sword with a knotted braid attached. There was no trim around the folded-back style sleeve cuffs of N.C.O's. The full version of the post card shows such a uniform and sword. A bayonet with knotted braid was allowed for some lower ranking N.C.O's but they normally wore the round cap called a Feldmütze (Field cap) as did the privates.



Bayern (Bavarian) Feld Post card dated 30th July 1917

The message side of the postcard, which is shown above, was dated by the German Feld Post on 30/7/1917, a single day before the 3rd Battle of Ypres commenced, and it was addressed to a soldier - probably with the rank of a Fusilier (Private) - in a Bavarian Infantry regiment that was known to be in the Ypres area in mid - late 1917. The reverse of the card shows signs of a substance stain that is possibly not water - although there was incessant rain in August of that year,. It was reported by war historians that it was the worst Summer rain for 75 years and it turned the area into a quagmire..

The card was among the effects of one of the Editor's several great-uncles in the 3rd. Division who also served in the Ypres area during the conflict. Unfortunately, the factual history of the card died with the last of the WWI great-uncles in 1968 before I had a chance to ask about it.

Of course, it may have been swapped with someone - as the practice often happened with souvenirs that were found at that time, but the most likely uncle to have actually retrieved it, was near Polygon Wood and other nearby battle-sites in Sept – October 1917.

It is a mystery that may never be solved - and the fate of the original owner can only be guessed at..

References:

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iron_Cross

The Artillery News.

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