



DISPATCHES

War Veterans Village (Narrabeen) RSL sub-Branch Newsletter

March 2026

Quasquicentenaries

Australia's Navy and Army mark 125 years



In this issue:

- ◆ *The lead-up to Australian Navy and Army celebration of 125 years of service.*
- ◆ *A letter to the Chief of the Defence Force.*
- ◆ *Sir Edward Hutton's role.*
- ◆ *Reports.*

Address label

READ YOUR EDITION AND ENJOY



DISPATCHES

War Veterans Village
(Narrabeen) RSL sub-
Branch Newsletter

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Dispatches is published monthly by the
War Veterans Village RSL sub-Branch.

Opinions expressed are those of the
individual authors and not necessarily
those of the sub-Branch.

*Through an active membership we keep
the ANZAC spirit alive and growing.*

Cover: Lieutenant General Sir Edward
Thomas Henry 'Curly' Hutton (1848-1923),
was a significant figure in establishing a
national defence force in Australia.

C1900 image by an unknown photographer.
AWM collection.

Dates for the diary:

Thursday March 12: Annual General
Meeting. **9.00am** breakfast in the Lone Pine
Room (Cost \$10), with the meeting to
commence at 9.30am.

Saturday March 21: Fleet Review cruise
(fully booked).

Tuesday April 7: Committee meeting.

Thursday April 9: Monthly meeting. Guest
speaker Hette Molema on the topic of
Trams.

Wednesday April 22: Village Anzac March
and Service.

Saturday April 25: Anzac Day Dawn Service

President's message

It has been an interesting year.

I was elected as Vice-President in May and as
President of the War-Vets RSL sub-Branch at the
July meeting.

These were big shoes to fill, following outstanding
presidents in Bob Durbin and Roy Parkinson.

In October I attended the State conference and AGM in Tamworth.
Alone in an unknown world - it was a very enjoyable time. On the
Friday afternoon the new Acting State President was welcomed.
Saturday was filled by different speakers and Sunday saw voting on
all of the motions which had been put forward.

Remembrance Day on November 11 was a huge success, with old
and new members taking part. Things have been quieter in the
following months.

I hope that some new people will come forward to join the
committee at the AGM.

Geoff Seis, President



FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK

Our Term Deposit of \$42,000 with the Australian
Military Bank matured on 18th February and has
been reinvested with interest of \$921.01 and an
additional \$3,078.99 to increase the principal to
\$46,000 at 4.7% p.a. for 9 months.

Recent economic data may result in even higher
rates being available when the deposit matures in
November.

I expect to receive our reviewed 2025 accounts from our Account
Reviewer in time for the March Annual General Meeting.

Peter Cole, Honorary Treasurer



Fundraising Report

The sub-Branch is still seeking a member to nominate
at the Annual General Meeting on 12 March 2026 for
the Fundraising Coordinator position.

The sub-Branch has been allocated a pop-up table at
Warriewood Square, outside Honey Hive Hair Salon,
near Coles on Thursday 23 and Friday 24 April. Cash
or cards welcome.

A pop-up table near the large print library in the Gallipoli Building will
be open on Wednesday 22 nd , Thursday 23 rd and Friday 24 th April
prior to ANZAC Day 2026. Again, cash or cards welcome.

There are five new items on offer:



\$34.95



\$19.95

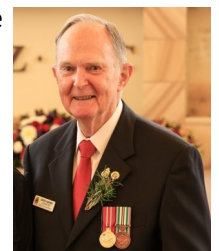


\$8.00



\$8.00

Leigh Haines, Fundraising Coordinator.



Secretary's Report For the Annual General Meeting 12 March 2026

This past year has seen continued emphasis on succession planning with special attention to the Fundraising Coordinator and Secretary positions.



The Secretarial role can be broken into several smaller activities which should encourage members to get involved and take responsibility for one of these smaller roles – e.g. minutes secretary, membership officer, functions coordinator, guest speakers, tours/outings, etc.

There were many positive comments following the “Animals in War” service held in February – the Committee later deciding that this service would be organized every two years.

Following a visit from Pauline James and a suggestion we could consider having an Auxiliary, it was canvassed widely and discussed and a general meeting later decided the sub-Branch would continue with its present structure.

The table we had at the Veterans Expo was well attended and the Market Day in December was very successful with our table close to the Dug Out resulting in much passing trade.

We received a \$1,500 grant from EasyLink for veteran transport which was passed to Naomi to oversee the use of these funds. We approved a Visa Debit Card for use by the sub-Branch which streamlines payment of relatively small value accounts like catering, stationery purchases, etc.

A second student was sponsored for the Training Ship Endeavour 7-day voyage in December. The Defence of Sydney commemoration service was well attended with a sub-Branch-full bus.

Anne Mathur (Homes for Heroes), Hette Molema (The Harbour Bridge), Samantha Amos (Wounded Heroes) were interesting speakers at meetings during the year.

The Vietnam Veterans' (Long Tan) Day commemoration service was well attended with Colonel Dave Wilkins (retired) speaking on the National Service role in the war.



ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day services were well attended with sub-Branch members involved in aspects of the services.

Christmas Lunch was well supported with many positive comments about the menu and the service provided by the Dugout staff. Thanks were passed on to Juri and it was noted with some pleasure that Ruby was back working in the Dugout and looked after us so well.



As Secretary, I assure you the sub-Branch cannot work effectively and smoothly without the help of many members performing small roles throughout the year. A huge thank you to these members and apologies if someone has been left out.

Shirley Beggs and the raffle and welcoming team at the door of Bev Kelly, Maureen Moore and Ian Wells; Jan Slater, Peter Yardley, Val Nihill and Barbara Parkinson for setting the tables for meetings and morning tea (Jan often supplies some extra goodies); Bev Ash as photographer on call; Ross Fairhall, Peter Yardley and others who always assist in serving morning tea to the tables; and by no means last the committee of Ralph Clark, Roy Parkinson, Peter Cole, Leigh Haines and Geoff Seis who provide the information necessary to put agenda and minutes together.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being your secretary over the past six years and it is now time for others to carry on to ensure this sub-Branch continues to prosper.

John Sowden – Honorary Secretary

Chaplain's message

Walking in Love

“And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands. As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love.” (2 John 1:6)



For many in the RSL family, the word walk carries deep meaning. We could also use the word “march”. It speaks of steady steps taken over time — through training grounds, battlefields, long recoveries, and the quiet routines of civilian life. Walking, marching suggests perseverance.

In this short letter, the apostle John reminds believers that love is not merely a sentiment. It's not just words spoken on Anzac Day or feelings stirred by memory.

Love is something lived, a tune we march to. It is a daily decision to act with integrity, loyalty, and faithfulness.

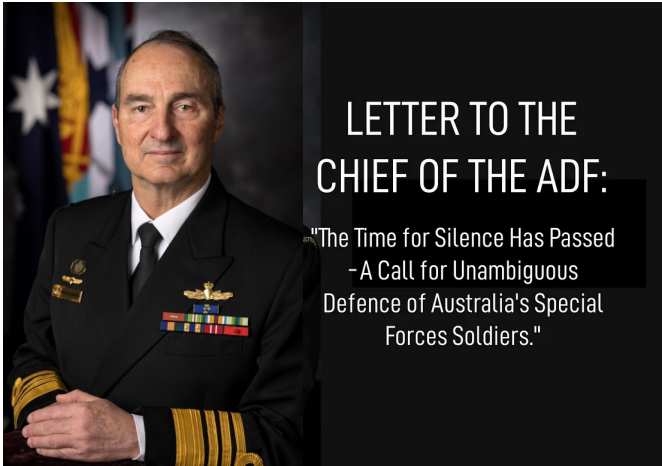
Obedience to God's command to love shapes how we treat our mates, honour those who served, and care for the vulnerable among us. It calls us to patience, forgiveness, and courage in ordinary moments.

True love marches steadily. It keeps step with God's way and His beat. And as we continue our journey together, may we be known not only for service given, but for love faithfully lived as we march on.

Blessings, *Keith*

The following open letter by Dr Daniel Mealey addressed to the Chief of the Australian Defence Force, Admiral David Johnston AC, RAN, was published on the Australian Special Forces Alliance webpage in Facebook on 29 December 2025. It has since been reproduced in several other publications.

It was brought to the attention of the sub-Branch by member Arthur Skene and is reproduced verbatim.



Dear Admiral Johnston,

There comes a moment in every military leader's career when quiet deference to political winds and procedural inertia must yield to clarity, moral courage, and a principled defence of the truth. For you, and for the tri-service Chiefs of the Australian Defence Force, that moment is now.

I do not envy the position you now occupy. The legacy of your predecessor General Angus Campbell, is one of institutional failure — defined by silence, equivocation, and the betrayal of the very soldier entrusted to his care.

Under his watch, the Australian Defence Force became paralysed in the face of media-led condemnation, sacrificing its moral authority and allowing more than 2,000 veterans to end their own lives in a climate of abandonment and shame. We do not need more of the same. We need better. We need leadership that restores honour, courage, and loyalty — not just on the battlefield, but here at home, where the war for truth and justice is now being fought.

Australia's Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) is under siege — not by an armed enemy in the field, but by a determined domestic front of ideological hostility. Its assault weapons are not Kalashnikovs, but carefully curated headlines, courtroom theatrics, and reputational sabotage. The aggressor is a faction of the Australian media that has, with unnerving consistency and ideological fervour, declared war on our most elite soldiers. What has emerged is not legitimate investigative journalism, but a politically motivated campaign waged by activists masquerading as reporters — intent on dismantling the medals, morale, and operational legitimacy of our Special Forces.

The threat is grave. And your silence — along with that of your fellow Chiefs — is costing this nation dearly. I urge you to read the article I published: "Spies, Lies, and Envy: How Our SASR Was Destroyed." It presents a detailed and disquieting exposé of how our military elite have been abandoned — first by internal cowardice and intrigue, and now by a broader civilian leadership unwilling to contest the false narratives being sown by a radicalised media.

The assault has been waged through a campaign of accusation without evidence, innuendo without consequence, and insinuation that bypasses every principle of natural justice. It has led to reputational annihilation for decorated soldiers such as Corporal Ben Roberts-Smith, VC, MG — despite the fact that not a single war crimes charge has been laid against him nor his fellow SASR personnel.

And yet, what language is being used in the national press? "Disgraced war veteran." "War criminal." "Murderer." These are not the conclusions of military courts. They are the fictions of columnists and television producers — none of whom has ever worn the uniform, never fired a shot in combat, and never navigated the ethics of lethal force in fluid theatres of war. The damage being done to the presumption of innocence, to public understanding of the brutal realities of asymmetric warfare, and to morale within the ADF is incalculable.

In the United Kingdom, the same ideological threats were gathering momentum. Like our own, UK veterans were being dragged through legal purgatory, many with PTSD, their names tarnished and their futures obliterated.

But the UK military leadership responded differently.

In July 2025, as reported in the Daily Mail, Special Forces officers — including former leaders of the Special Air Service (SAS), the Special Boat Service (SBS) and the Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) associations — signed an unprecedented open letter condemning "a political witch-hunt" against their soldiers. They called out "malicious" legal pursuits by left-leaning ideologues and affirmed that "the pursuit of British troops through the courts years after events took place is damaging to morale, recruitment and retention." They concluded unequivocally: "Enough is enough."

"The current Director of Special Forces, who is responsible for SAS, SBS and SRR operations around the world, has also penned a furious letter on the same issue. Last night these unprecedented moves received emphatic support from former Commanding Officers (COs) of the SAS, leading defence voices and shadow ministers." — Mark Nicol — Defence and Diplomacy Editor, Daily Mail.

This is leadership. This is solidarity. This is the calibre of moral courage in the last twenty years that has been fundamentally absent within the ADF.

In stark contrast to the powerful response of UK Special Forces leadership, the senior command of the ADF has remained inert — content to allow civilian defamation courts, operating outside military context, to define the ethics, legality, and fate of battlefield decisions. This abdication is unprecedented in our nation's history. Your office has ceded the narrative space entirely, offering neither defence nor clarity. In so doing, your office has permitted the Australian public to be fed a distorted view of our soldiers as rogues and murderers, rather than men who kill at the behest of their country — often in the greyest moral terrain, where rules of engagement change by the second; where split-second decisions mean life or death.

Do you believe it is reasonable that soldiers should volunteer to kill in war, only to return home and pay millions of dollars to defend their actions in a civilian defamation court — without institutional support, without public backing, and in a vacuum of senior command solidarity?

This silence has demoralised the ranks. It has crippled recruitment and torpedoed retention. It has made clear to every prospective soldier that, should they one day face the enemy in combat, their gravest danger may not come from an insurgent with an IED — but from a journalist with a headline and a vendetta. What young Australian would now choose a life of military sacrifice, only to return home and be cannon fodder for a wealthy media class that profits handsomely from the demonisation of our veterans?

A treasonous narrative is taking root in the national psyche, fuelled by envy and opportunism, by ignorance and ideological spite. And in that moral vacuum — the silence of ADF leadership has been deafening.

Sir, with respect, it is time to speak. It is time to act. It is time for the ADF's senior leadership to follow the example of your British counterparts in an unequivocal support of your SASR soldiers. ➡

This means issuing clear public statements condemning false and misleading characterisations of soldiers in the absence of criminal convictions.

It means formally calling out the dangers of politicised litigation. It means ensuring legal, psychological, and moral support for all soldiers facing vexatious accusations. And it means defending the honour of those who have defended this country.

Above all, it means ending the shameful trend whereby suicide becomes the enduring solution for veterans haunted — not by what they did overseas — but by the betrayal they experienced when they came home.

Sir you once told this nation that “I am extremely proud of the men and women of the ADF. Our people are fundamental to all we can and must achieve, you are our capability.” If you believe that, then show it. The hour is late. The battlefield may have shifted from Kandahar to Canberra, but make no mistake: we are still at war. And your soldiers — our soldiers — are still under fire.

With respect,
Dr Daniel Mealey
Former Army Medical Officer



Dr Mealey, known for his passionate advocacy for homeless veterans, served in Afghanistan as an Army doctor. In 2019, he produced the documentary Man Down which examined veterans' struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and the difficulties

faced when seeking support from DVA. He gave evidence into the Royal Commission into veteran suicide.

Dr Mealey is currently working in a GP practice in Corowa. Some of his other articles can be found at <https://medium.com/@danielmealey>

Shirley McLaren



Shirley McLaren has moved to Canberra to be closer to family; she will be very much missed at future meetings.

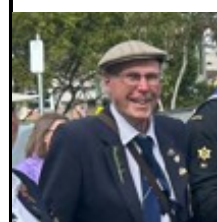
We were able to say 'goodbye' at the last monthly sub-Branch meeting. Shirley was also farewelled later that afternoon at a Dardanelles function in the VB Lounge.

A lady of non-stop enthusiasm, Shirley took an active interest in sub-Branch affairs and the Village as a whole.

Shirley is pictured at the Cenotaph on Anzac Day 2025 laying a wreath on behalf of War Widows and families of veterans.

Max Marvin

A group of about a dozen sub-Branch members and Dardanelles residents attended a small but impressive service in the Memorial Garden at Dee Why RSL Club on February 15 where a memorial plaque for Max Marvin was dedicated.



Max, proudly ex-RAN, belonged to the Dee Why sub-Branch as well as the War Vets. He was an active participant in Village, particularly Dardanelles, activities until he was taken to hospital.

Max Marvin, 101 years young, striding out in the 2025 Village Anzac march.

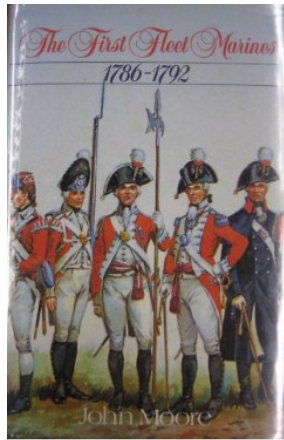
Australia's Military Forces- a brief 125th Anniversary history

The first Colonial period: 1788 to 1810

The Marines on Captain James Cook's *Endeavour* were the first military presence on the East Coast of Australia. There would be gap of almost eighteen years before their successors, led by Major Robert Ross, arrived with the First Fleet in 1788.

The four Marine Companies comprised around 20 officers, 24 NCOs, and 168 men. Their first duty was keeping the convicts under control during the long voyage, then keeping law and order in the new colony and, potentially, defending it.

Marine names of note included Captain-Lieutenant Watkin Trench, Captain David Collins, First Lieutenant David Johnston - Phillip's Aide-de-camp, astronomer Second Lieutenant William Dawes and Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark (*no relation ... Ed*).



This 344 -page book was published by University of Queensland Press in 1987. A copy is for sale on Amazon for \$175.

Major Ross clashed with Governor Arthur Phillip, who solved the problem by putting Ross in charge of the contingent on Norfolk Island. He returned to England in 1791.

Marines had first been raised in England as far back as 1664, as the Lord Admiral's Regiment.

At the time they arrived in the Colony of NSW, private marines enlisted for life although discharge by purchase was allowed on payment of 10 guineas. Those who went to NSW, however, had the option of discharge after three years.

Recruits were paid a two guinea bounty as an inducement to join. Daily pay rates in 1743, which included a food and clothing allowance, ranged from £1.6 for a Major to 1/2d for a marine private. Presumably these had increased slightly by 1788.

(These facts are from the excellent *First Fleet Fellowship* (Victoria) website; more detail can be found at:

<https://firstfleetfellowship.org.au/marines/marines/>



The Marines were replaced by a British Army contingent - the New South Wales Corps in 1791-92.

The popular story of the NSW Corps is well-known - Rum, Rebellion, Bligh, Johnston, etc. (*It is too long and too interesting a tale to have justice done to it here, but will be a topic for future Dispatches ... Ed*).

Phillip left on December 10, 1792 and been replaced by Captain John Hunter (1795 to 1800), who in turn gave way to Captain Philip Gidley King (1800 to 1806), then Captain William Bligh (1806 to 1808). All were Royal Navy officers.

Between 1792 and 1795 the colony had been administered by two acting governors (Lieutenant-Governors), Army officers from the New South Wales Corps: Major Francis Grose and Captain William Paterson.

On 4 March 1804, the New South Wales Corps was called into action to put down the 'Castle Hill convict rebellion'. Also known as the 'Irish Rebellion' and sometimes the second 'Battle of Vinegar Hill' in reference to the battle which took place in Ireland during the Irish Rebellion of 1798, it was a rebellion that occurred when mostly Irish convicts, led by Phillip Cunningham and William Johnson, led a revolt near today's Rouse Hill.



Quartermaster Laycock and twenty five privates of the New South Wales Corps defeats two hundred and sixty six armed rebels, 5th March 1804. NLA collection.

An impressive memorial to the Battle of Vinegar Hill is just inside the entry to the Castlebrook Memorial Park, Rouse Hill.

The second Colonial period: 1810 to 1870

By the beginning of 1810 most of the NSW Corps, by then renamed the 102nd Regiment of Foot, had left the colony.



Governor Lachlan Macquarie. Parramatta History and Heritage website.

They were replaced by the 73rd Regiment of Foot (2nd Battalion, 42nd Highlanders) which arrived in Sydney in December 1809 with Governor Lachlan Macquarie, (*Again a story for another day*).

From then until 1870 a succession of British Army Regiments, 24 in all, as well as a few detachments of Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers served in Australia.

They had a variety of duties, included guarding convicts, hunting bush-rangers, suppressing resistance by Indigenous Australians, security on the goldfields, helping police maintain public order, performing ceremonial duties and developing the future nation's defences.



This engraving of the storming of the Eureka Stockade from The Picturesque Atlas of Australasia depicts the attack on the Eureka Stockade by the 12th and 40th Regiments on 3 December 1854. AWM collection.

The last British Army regiment to leave NSW, in 1870, was the 18th (Royal Irish) Regiment of Foot, sometimes referred to as "Paddy's Blackguards". The regiment had served in New Zealand (1863–1870) before leaving for Australia, where they were stationed for only six months on their way home to Britain.

Their departure concluded the withdrawal of British forces from the Australian colonies, although Royal Marines remained on naval vessels until 1913, serving in the Royal Navy's Australia Squadron, which was based in Sydney until the Royal Australian Navy was strong enough to take full responsibility.

The British forces had served in a number of locations apart from NSW, including Van Diemen's Land (later Tasmania); Norfolk Island; Port Phillip District (later Victoria), Western Australia (the Swan River Colony); South Australia; Moreton Bay and Cape York in what later became Queensland; and Melville Island and other places in modern-day Northern Territory.

The post-British forces period: 1870 to 1885

There were several reasons for the British withdrawal: The convict system had ended; beginning with NSW in 1856, the colonies were becoming self-governing; troops were needed elsewhere, particularly in India; and for some time before this the various colonies had built volunteer defence forces to serve alongside British troops.

The first significant, structured voluntary military group in NSW was the Sydney Battalion Volunteer Rifle Corps (also known as the New South Wales Volunteer Rifles) which was formed in 1854, revived in 1860 and served until 1885. It came to be as a result of the fears of Russian invasion around the time of the Crimean War.



The Silver Eagle, 1870

On page two of the Sydney Evening News of Wednesday August 24, 1870 was an article about the departure of the troops. It can be found in the NLA Trove collection:

DEPARTURE OF THE ROYAL IRISH. - Yesterday afternoon the detachment of 2-18 Regiment, quartered here, was embarked on board the Silver Eagle. The soldiers fell in at the barracks at about two o'clock, or a little after, and, headed by the Volunteer Brigade band marched down South Head Road, thence proceeding by the Infirmary and along Macquarie-street to the Circular Quay. They were in heavy marching order, and were preceded by the regimental band, with their instruments cased ; while a small detachment of Royal Artillery brought up the rear. A dense crowd gathered round the soldiery, and the mob swelled along the line of march until at last scarcely any thing was perceptible of the military but the bayonets and the colours gleaming over the surging sea of heads. Near Government House, his Excellency Lord Belmore, attended by Captain Beresford, A.D.C., joined the procession. The windows (and in some instances the roofs) of the houses along Macquarie-street, and every available vantage ground from thence to the point of embarkation was lined with spectators. The Silver Eagle was lying at the Circular Quay, below the Seamen's Church, and having arrived at her moorings the soldiers were halted. They then unfixing bayonets and proceeded

in good order on board. It was a stirring scene, and as the plaintive strains of "Auld lang syne" were wafted from the band an instinctive feeling of sadness seemed to come across the minds of many present at the reflection that they had seen the glitter of British arms, heard the tramp of British soldiery, probably for the last time in the colony. The Silver Eagle appears a lofty and commodious vessel, and no doubt there will be ample provision for the comfort of those on board. There appeared to be scarcely more than a company of the 18th ; but we believe that a very large number, both of the soldiers and the bandsmen have deserted. As the last of the red-coats disappeared over the side of the ship, three hearty and spontaneous cheers burst from the population. The soldiers cordially replied.

The article went on to outline some of the New Zealand exploits of the unit and list its officers. It concludes:

There are 150 men, including non-commissioned officers and rank and file of the Royal Irish, with forty women and eighty children. The Silver Eagle puts to sea this day.

The article is reproduced verbatim, including the lack of paragraph breaks. Another article appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald of August 31, listing those on board and adding that the ship also carried 630 hogsheads of treacle, 1925 pieces of copper and 178 tierces of beef.

Research into keg sizes has led me into some mysteries, which I will attempt to solve in a future edition ... Ed.



On the Victoria Barracks Parade Ground 1861 (AWM)

The unit was housed in a since-demolished wing of the Hyde Park Barracks and trained on the nearby Domain. While its duties were largely ceremonial, it did see active service, including the Lambing Flat riots in 1861, near Young.

The first time NSW troops served abroad was in 1885, when members of the 1st Regiment and other volunteer units sailed to the Sudan.

This volunteer force is considered to be the direct forerunner of today's Australian Army Reserve. The 1st Regiment NSW Volunteer Infantry, formed in 1878, absorbed the earlier Sydney Battalion. At the same time small payments to volunteers were introduced.

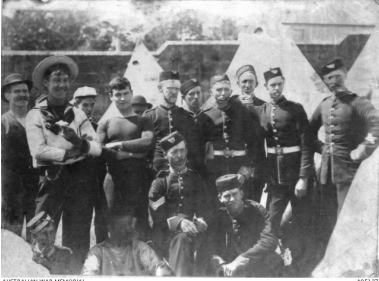
A number of suburban and regional volunteer units were established around the same time, often as rifle corps, such as the Newtown Volunteer Rifle Corps (1862) and the Goulburn Volunteer Rifle Corps (1869).



The pre-Federation period: 1885 to 1901

By 1885, Australian colonial forces were transitioning from volunteer-based units to organized, partially paid militia systems. There was already a total strength of nearly 21,000 men across the six colonies.

Each colony had its own separate naval and army units, although defence cooperation was increasing.



In March of 1885, following the death of General Gordon, NSW sent around 800 troops to Suakin, Sudan - the first time colonial troops had fought in an imperial war.

VOLUNTEERS FOR THE N.S.W. INFANTRY CONTINGENT FOR THE SUDAN AT VICTORIA BARRACKS, SYDNEY, SHORTLY BEFORE THE CONTINGENT'S DEPARTURE ON 1885-03-03.

The colonies also sent contingents to the Boer War (1899-1902), which gave them significant combat experience.

At home, Militia forces were also used during the maritime and shearers strikes of the 1890s.

Five of the six Colonies maintained small fleets, such as Victoria's HMVS *Cererus* and HMCS *Protector*, the largest ship in an Australia fleet, in SA. *(Both ships warrant an individual article at a future date ... Ed).*

NSW, SA and Victoria sent Naval personnel to the Boxer Rebellion (1900-1901).

Federation

In March 1901 the Commonwealth Government assumed responsibility for defence matters and the colonial armies were merged to form the Commonwealth Military Forces (CMF).

Throughout the next 47 years the Australian Military Forces, as they soon became known, remained a part-time force of citizen soldiers with only a small regular component.

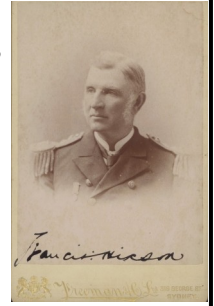
These forces were restricted to service on Australian territory, and two special volunteer forces, both known as the Australian Imperial Force, were formed for service overseas during the two world wars.

At the same time the various colonial navies and their motley collection of vessels were amalgamated into the Commonwealth Naval Forces. In the years that followed, it was debated in Australia and Britain whether Australia needed its own navy or should simply finance Royal (British) Navy vessels to serve in Australian waters.

Finally, in 1909, a decision was taken to acquire new ships for an Australian Navy and on 10 July 1911, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was formed. The first of the new ships arrived on 4 October 1913.

The NSW Navy by the 1890s

Much of the credit for the success of the NSW volunteer, and later full-time, naval establishment must go to Captain Francis Hixson (1833-1909).



A native of Dorsetshire, Hixson arrived in Sydney on HMS *Havannah* in 1848. In January 1863 he left the navy, having reached the rank of Master, and was appointed superintendent of pilots, lighthouses, and harbours in New South Wales.

In the same year he organised the New South Wales Naval Brigade, which he commanded for many years. He was appointed President of the Marine Board of that colony in April 1872, and was Captain commanding the Naval Forces.

In 1882 the New South Wales Naval Artillery Volunteers were formed as a citizen's auxiliary.



Wolverene

Following the 1892 departure of the training ship HMCS *Wolverene*, the force was left with only two small torpedo ships, *Acheron* and *Avernus*, and a volunteer-based, partly

paid Naval Brigade. Both ships had been constructed in Sydney (Wikipedia).

By 1901, just before federation, the forces consisted of 48 officers and 561 men, divided into a Naval Staff, the Naval Brigade and the Naval Artillery Volunteers (NAVs). Hixson was in command.

The main headquarters was located at Fort Macquarie, later demolished in 1902 for a tramshed, which in turn was demolished in 1958 and is now the site of the Sydney Opera House, before moving to



Rushcutters Bay. A major naval storehouse was constructed at Garden Island in 1893.

The force focused on coastal defence, with the Naval Artillery Volunteers trained to man fixed defences, akin to the Royal Marine Artillery.



The Royal Naval House was opened in 1890 in Grosvenor-street in The Rocks to provide accommodation and meals for sailors. It is now the Sydney Futures Exchange.

Finally, in 1901, came Federation, and the new Australian Government assuming responsibility for the defence of the new nation.

Sir Edward Thomas Henry Hutton

(1848-1923), British regular soldier and first organizer of the Australian Army, was born on 6 December 1848 in Torquay, Devon, England, only son of Edward Thomas Hutton, banker, and his wife Jacintha Charlotte, née Eyre.



Boer War Memorial website image

Hutton was educated at Eton after which he joined the 60th Rifles as an ensign in 1867. He was promoted captain in 1879 and major in 1883. In 1879-85 he saw much active service in Africa, in the Zulu War (1879), the first South African War (1881), the occupation of Egypt including the battle of Tel-el-Kebir (1882) and the Nile Expedition (1884-85).

During this period he became deeply interested in the training and employment of mounted infantry with which he thrice served on operations. At Aldershot, England, he raised and commanded mounted infantry units in 1888-92, becoming recognized as one of the leading proponents of this form of mobility. A good speaker with a flair for publicity, he was identified as one of the 'Wolseley Ring' of army reformers. He also founded the military society at Aldershot as a professional forum.

In 1889 Hutton was promoted lieutenant-colonel and on 1 June, at St Paul's Anglican Church, Knightsbridge, London, he married Eleanor Mary, daughter of Lord Charles Paulet and granddaughter of the marquis of Winchester. His marriage and his appointment as aide-de-camp to Queen Victoria in 1892 afforded him a degree of influence unusual for an officer of his rank.



Promoted colonel in 1892, 'Curly' Hutton became commandant of the New South Wales Military Forces with the local rank of major general in 1893. The advent of an able leader committed to military reform and with recent war experience revived the flagging spirit of the New South Wales forces. Hutton inspected units in every part of the colony, addressed public gatherings and brought the army before the community, beginning with a major review in Sydney in July 1893.

On one of his inspections he travelled 680 miles (1094 km) in twenty days including 500 miles (805 km) on horseback. He visited training camps and exercises, delivered lectures to officers, fostered rifle clubs and supported the movement for raising national regiments such as the Irish Rifles.



Valuable as the public side of his work was, Hutton's reorganization of the New South Wales forces was even more important because it gave the colony an army capable of taking the field as part of a Federal force.

He restructured the headquarters staff, persuaded the government to transfer the influential department of the military secretary from the chief secretary to his own command and organized administrative services to support the fighting arms.

All this was achieved in a period of acute economic depression and in the face of political and military opposition.

At the outset of his command he quarrelled bitterly with the premier, Sir George Dibbs, who had insisted on a reduction of £30,000 in the defence estimates, the practical result of which was the cancellation of the Easter training camps. When Hutton's views on this were reported in the press the premier publicly censured his commandant saying, inter alia, "he is a good soldier but he writes and talks too much. He means well ... but he has much to learn in regard to his official duties."



There was substance in this criticism. Hutton from the start aroused suspicion in some quarters by his outspoken remarks on helping 'England in her hour of need'. He also vigorously supported the movement for Federal defence; in a speech at Bathurst in January 1894 he advocated one defence policy for the six colonies, a common organization of their forces while preserving their identity, a Federal regiment of artillery and a Federal council of defence.

At the **intercolonial military conference of October 1894** Hutton recommended the establishment of a council of defence, composed of delegates from all the colonies, to take charge of the forces in time of war or general emergency. This was supported by the conference but its recommendations made little impression on the colonial premiers.

However, the startling successes of the Japanese forces in the war with China in 1894-95 provided Hutton with a useful argument for greater preparedness, which he placed before his government in March 1895. A second meeting of the commandants, chaired by him, in January 1896 reaffirmed their proposals for the employment of the forces of every colony in the joint defence of Australia under the control of a council of defence, while rejecting a suggestion from London that their field forces should be liable to serve beyond Australia.

By this time the political movement for Federation was overtaking the military movement and political leaders were looking for Federation as the necessary preliminary to national defence.

Hutton returned to England in March 1896. By the end of his command he and his wife had won the esteem of the New South Wales forces and Hutton had become an important public figure. *Continued on page 10*

(Continued from page 9) A convinced Imperialist, he quickly began to propagate his ideas on Australian defence, addressing members of parliament on the topic and the Aldershot Military Society on 'Our comrades of Greater Britain'.

In that address the concept of the Australian soon to be popularized by C. E. Bean was already discernible: 'The Australian is a born horseman. With his long, lean muscular thighs he is more at home on a horse than on his feet, and is never seen to a greater advantage

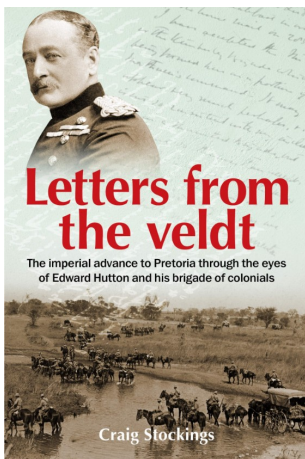


CEW Bean

than when mounted and riding across bush or a difficult country ... Fine horsemen, hardy, self-reliant, and excellent marksmen, they are the beau ideal of Mounted Riflemen ... Accustomed to shift for themselves in the Australian bush, and under the most trying conditions of heat and cold, they would thrive where soldiers unaccustomed to bush life would die'.

This address was widely reported in Australia as well as in Britain. In April 1898 he read a paper on 'A co-operative system for the defence of the Empire' before the Royal Colonial Institute in London, using the Australian Federal defence scheme as the pattern for a scheme of Empire defence.

After a staff appointment in Ireland Hutton went to Canada in 1898 to command the Canadian Militia, a force which presented him with opportunities of reform as far-reaching as those in New South Wales. His aim was to build a national army for Canada which would also be available to serve abroad. Unwisely, he became involved in Canadian politics; his efforts to pursue a military policy of his own became known to the Canadian government and his public speeches at the time of the South African War in 1899, with other devious activities, led to a crisis in which he was forced to resign.



He returned to his true sphere, serving in South Africa where, as a major general, he commanded a strong brigade of mounted infantry with great distinction in the advance to Pretoria.

His brigade included Australian, New Zealand, Canadian and British units and he chose his staff largely from the colonial forces. His letters reveal his enthusiasm for the

colonial citizen soldier and his awareness of a special responsibility in such a command which seemed to him as much political and Imperial as military. For his services in South Africa he was appointed K.C.M.G. in 1900.

In 1901 the first Australian government appointed Hutton to command and organize its land forces. He was recommended by Field Marshal Lord Roberts after several other officers had refused or were rejected by the government. He returned to Australia in January 1902 to tackle the congenial task of transforming the six colonial forces into a national army.

He was warned by his friends about speech-making, his intemperate language and the need for tact when dealing with ministers, but such warnings were quickly forgotten. That year in Melbourne he published some of his addresses, *The Defence and Defensive Power of Australia*.

Hutton came with high hopes and with the intention of organizing an army capable of supporting Australian and British interests beyond the Australian Commonwealth. His command began with personal frustrations owing to the refusal of the War Office to promote him lieutenant-general despite his much wider responsibilities and the refusal of the Australians to allow him to bring his own aide-de-camp.

The government was without a defence policy, having withdrawn its first defence bill after it had been roughly handled in parliament. Confident and ambitious, Hutton submitted a minute in April 1902 outlining the strategic situation of Australia and the military organization he considered appropriate to it.

He proposed a garrison force to defend the major coastal centres and ports and a field force which could be sent wherever Australian interests might require it. His proposals aroused adverse criticism not only in Australia but also in the Colonial Defence Committee in London. A new draft defence bill, prepared by Hutton at the request of the **prime minister**, was passed and finally proclaimed in March 1904 but it made no provision for sending Australian troops overseas. Nevertheless the general shape of the Australian Army as proposed by Hutton was preserved.

Meanwhile Hutton was merging the colonial militia forces into an Australian citizen army, although not without difficulty. He was furiously attacked in parliament and the press over the disbandment of small volunteer units whose disappearance was necessary to the development of a properly organized force. There was an alarming shortage of trained officers but the posting of a regular officer to a command in place of an elderly and inefficient militia colonel aroused a storm of protest.

Similarly the transfer of instructors from one State to another caused a crisis between South Australia and the Commonwealth in 1902. Hutton fought a losing battle in trying to maintain a headquarters staff adequate for its task but reduction of the numbers of permanent officers and soldiers was a ready and popular way of saving money, especially as there were no pensions for those retrenched.

Hutton promoted efficiency, discipline and training in every department of the new citizen army. Much that he proposed had to wait for better times and the better atmosphere which the general officer commanding was incapable of creating. Among his proposals were a military college, an Army Service Corps, an Ordnance Corps, and superannuation for the permanent force. He was successful in creating the field force and the garrison force, with complete war and peace establishments.

The cavalry and other mounted units he transformed into mounted infantry known as light horse.



Members of the NSW Lancers and other Australian detachments ride through London during the Diamond Jubilee celebrations for Queen Victoria. (AWM).

On the other hand Hutton could not obtain funds for the equipment and rearmament of the forces. He instituted staff rides for the tactical training of officers and non-commissioned officers and began the process of producing an educated officer corps. These changes involved a degree of control and centralization which inevitably aroused resentment in the States. That some officers were also members of parliament or influential politically hindered his plans.

Hutton quarrelled frequently with his ministers, some of whose interventions were petty or foolish in the extreme. A more tolerant man would have made allowances for their inexperience and ignorance and for the very novelty of the experiment in which all were engaged. But Hutton the autocrat and fighter was in a hurry. He had insisted on a three-year appointment rather than the five he had been offered and there was still much to be done.



Fortunately he had an eye for talent; chief among his protégés were Lieutenant-Colonel (Major General Sir) W. T. Bridges, Lieutenant-Colonel (General Sir) Harry Chauvel and Captain (General Sir) Brudenell White, all of whom were to play important roles in the development of the

army, especially in World War I. His constant battles with his ministers were Hutton's undoing. In 1904 a succession of ministers worked at revising the Defence Act along the lines of the recent reorganization of the War Office where the commander-in-chief had been replaced by an army council.

No government wanted another G.O.C., whether British or Australian. Hutton strongly opposed this policy but the bill providing a military board in place of the G.O.C. was passed by the end of the year. By that time he had resigned after another furious quarrel over payment for a cable in cipher, the contents of which he refused to divulge.

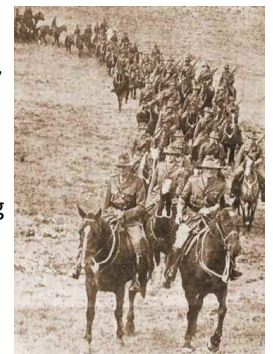
The handicaps under which Hutton worked cannot be disregarded. He began his task in years of recession when weak governments were struggling to reduce expenditure. In three years he had to deal with four prime ministers and six ministers of defence. Parliament and the army itself included men of parochial outlook in military affairs and there was widespread popular suspicion of regular officers who were associated with 'militarism' and 'gold lace'. For all his soldierly qualities, professionalism, experience and zeal, Hutton was devoid of the tact which might have eased his relations with the ministers whom, too often, he despised.

Perhaps his chief difficulty arose from his desire to serve two masters, the War Office and the Australian government. He saw the Australian Military Forces and the armies of other dominions as branches of one great British Army. He intended to give Australia an efficient citizen force for its own defence but he also wanted it to be ready to defend any part of the Empire.

Despite the strength of the Imperial ties, Australian national sentiment and a growing appreciation of the country's proper interests were too strong for Hutton. However much he was disliked and distrusted by politicians, he was held in affection and admiration within the army and he left his mark on those who were to lead the Australian Imperial Force.

On his return to the United Kingdom he was given charge of administration in the Eastern Command and made G.O.C. of the 3rd British Division. At last in November 1907 he was promoted lieutenant-general on the eve of retirement. He was appointed K.C.B. in 1912. When Bridges was raising the Australian Imperial Force he suggested that it be commanded by Hutton. The government rejected the suggestion but Hutton was recalled by the War Office to organize and command the 21st British Division. A riding accident in 1915 brought about his final retirement.

During World War I Hutton corresponded with Bridges, Chauvel, White and others, rejoicing in Australian successes. After the victory of Romani in August 1916 he congratulated Chauvel, commanding the Anzac Mounted Division. 'You and your men are establishing Australia as a Nation great by land and sea — which shall stand for British Freedom, Justice and Honour in the Southern Seas for all time.' Senior officers of the A.I.F. would visit the old soldier, whose health was declining.



ANZAC Mounted Division

He died on 4 August 1923 and was buried with full military honours at Lyne near his home at Chertsey, Surrey. He was survived by his wife; they had no children. Portraits by Tom Roberts are in the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and Victoria Barracks, Sydney.

From the Aust Dictionary of Biography, author AJ Hill

The back page

Last meeting

Our guest speakers on February 12 were Samantha Amos and her colleague Bridget from Wounded Heroes, a Queensland-originated military welfare organisation.



Members were impressed to learn of the group's work.

Secretary John reminded members that the March meeting would be the AGM and that it appeared likely several roles would be open.

The traditional "For she's a jolly good fellow" was sung in tribute to Shirley McLaren as this was her last meeting as a member here. Cake was enjoyed with morning tea. (See story on page 5).

Victoria Barracks

Members would have seen the recent announcement that the Government intends to sell off dozens of no longer required Defence sites around the country. Among them is the 1840s Victoria Barracks, something which one of our esteemed members recently described to me as 'a disgrace'.



Looking at this image of the thirteen-hectare site one can



only guess at the land value, situated as it is in Paddington, less than three kilometres from the GPO were a crow to fly it.

The proposal has met with a mixed reception. The total amount estimated to be raised from sale of all of the nominated sites is \$3 billion - not to be sneezed at if it is dedicated to defence. Sydney Council has welcomed to proposed sale of the Barracks as it offers prime land for, hopefully residential, development.

Even some historians have guardedly agreed with the idea, so long as the heritage of the site is ensured.

On the other hand, the National Trust and others have raised a number of objections.

The Government proposal can be seen at: <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/locations-property/delivering-future-estate/victoria-barracks-sydney>

The link to the NT press release is too long to copy - a simple Google search of *National Trust Victoria Barracks* will bring it up.

A personal question - is the heritage intact if 180 years of continuous Military use comes to an end? There will be more on this topic in the April Dispatches ... Ed.

From the Editor

The Australian Navy and Army are both celebrating 2026 as their 125th Anniversary (*Quasquicentenary*) year. I explained this term at the February meeting, but the brief synopsis is this:

100 years is a *centenary*, so 200 is a *bicentenary* - as we celebrated on January 1, 2001. A 150th anniversary is a *sesquicentenary* - *sesqui* meaning one and a half.

So, after 125 years we have a *quasquicentennial* - *quasqui* being the Latin term for one and a quarter. (Why don't scones recipes call for *quasqui* cups of flour?).

Your editor is never one to miss the opportunity for a celebration, but the authorities seem more reluctant - it seems that 125 years since Federation is receiving scant attention.

The main RAN event marking the anniversary is an International Naval Review, which a bus-load from the sub-Branch will observe on the Harbour. The chosen date is March 21, rather than January 1, January 3, July 10 2036 or October 4 1938, which all have more relevance.

Both the RAN and the Army have designated 2026 as a year to be celebrated, but details are hard to find. Some may be found in the 2025 end-of-year message from the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond, AO, RAN, at <https://youtu.be/WQf5ydkBygM?si=TODdg3amhf5afY12>

There will be Open Days in Sydney on March 14, at: Victoria Barracks - noon to 7.30pm, with the Army Band. Randwick Barracks - 10.00 to 2.00. This Barracks will also play host to an International Military Drone racing tournament on March 12 to 14.

Holsworthy Barracks - 10.00 - 12.00; 1.00 - 3.00.

The Army is also hosting a series of four free seminars under the heading of *Firepower*. The first, in Melbourne on March 19, will look at lessons learned from WWII. Others will be in Brisbane (May 21), Adelaide (August 6) and Canberra (October 14).

The RAN website does not mention anything after the March 21 Review.

Closer to home, Shirley McLaren has asked me to let you know that Legacy has recently altered its policy in a way that will allow it to widen the scope of its service.

Enclosed with this copy of *Dispatches* is a short survey which I would very much appreciate your completing. As well as continuing as Editor I will be assuming some other sub-Branch roles after the AGM. Information harvested from survey responses will guide future activities and the shape and content of your newsletter.

On a personal note, I would like to extend my thanks to outgoing Secretary John Sowden for his help and guidance to a very much wet-behind-the-ears Editor. *Ralph Clark*