

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARTILLERY IN VICTORIA

## Part 2 - Federation to 1948

*In this period, as we shall see, many changes in Artillery were mooted, but only ever eventuated on paper. Units were often renamed, only to undergo further change a short time later.*

WO2 Alan Halbish (ret)

Editor

Cascabel

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After Federation, State Volunteer and Militia Artillery Forces were designated 'Australian Field Artillery and Australian Garrison Artillery'. On 1 July 1902, the Permanent Artillery was designated the 'Royal Australian Artillery Regiment'. Permanent Force Artillery was redesignated 'Royal Australian Garrison Artillery' and 'Royal Australian Field Artillery' on 25 April 1911.

In World War 1, while the permanent and militia forces were retained for home service, Australia raised the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) for service overseas. Volunteers were enlisted from the permanent and militia forces, as well as the civil community. Garrison Artillery forces were initially precluded from enlisting, but after the defeat of the German Pacific Fleet, some Garrison Gunners were permitted to form Permanent Military Force Siege batteries for service in France. Overall, Australia raised sixty Field, twenty Howitzer and two Siege batteries, along with associated Brigade structures and the Artillery staffs on Division and higher headquarters. Units saw action in Egypt, and on Gallipoli and the Western Front. AIF units were disbanded at the end of the war, leaving permanent and militia forces to again comprise the Artillery component of the Army.

On 1 July 1927, separate titles were discarded and the original title of 'Royal Australian Artillery' was adopted. Citizen forces, the militia, adopted the 'Royal' title on 31 January 1936.

The introduction of compulsory training in 1910 demanded more expansive sites, with large camps at Kilmore, Seymour, Ballarat and Heidelberg. On the outbreak of World War I, a camp was established at Broadmeadows, where the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was concentrated. Accusations of prostitution and other vices traditionally associated with military camps, and a series of riots in city streets, soon prompted references to Melbourne as a 'garrison town'. In early 1915 troops were removed to Seymour to alleviate serious concerns about their health. Several other temporary camps were established in 1915, notably at Ballarat, Flemington, Geelong, Maribyrnong and Royal Park. By the end of the war, Broadmeadows camp achieved a more permanent status. Seymour was consistently employed through the 1920s, with camps also at Heidelberg, Williamstown, Mornington, Queenscliff and Broadmeadows.

Camps were less frequent and more localised after the abolition of compulsory training in 1930. During World War II existing militia forces were gathered at Seymour, a new camp for the Second AIF was constructed at nearby Puckapunyal, and Royal Park and Broadmeadows resumed as important centres. The arrival of US troops in 1942 saw further camps established, notably Camp Pell in Royal Park, facilitating a significant presence of servicemen in Melbourne, if only remembered for the Brownout murders. Post-war development of Australia's regular army and consolidation of Puckapunyal as Victoria's primary training site obviated the need for temporary camp facilities during subsequent conflicts.

<http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00088b.htm>

A 2.43ha stretch of land between Batman Avenue and Swan Street (on the eastern side of AAMI Park) was purchased from the Commonwealth by the Victorian Government in 1988 for \$15m. Here the Swan Street and Batman Avenue Army Depots were built in 1935

at a cost of £36,000. (*I believe that cost was for Swan St. only*). A 'Swan Song' ceremonial march out was conducted in 1991 to mark the facility's closure. The Swan St Depot was variously used by Royal Australian Engineers' (RAE) militia troops (1935-39), RAE headquarters and important tactical base during WW2, a meal and rest area for Olympic athletes and officials, an assembly point for Vietnam National Servicemen and a security HQ for events such as CHOGM (1981) and Pope John Paul 11's 1986 visit.

Batman Ave was occupied in 1936 by 10 and 15 Fd Bde's.

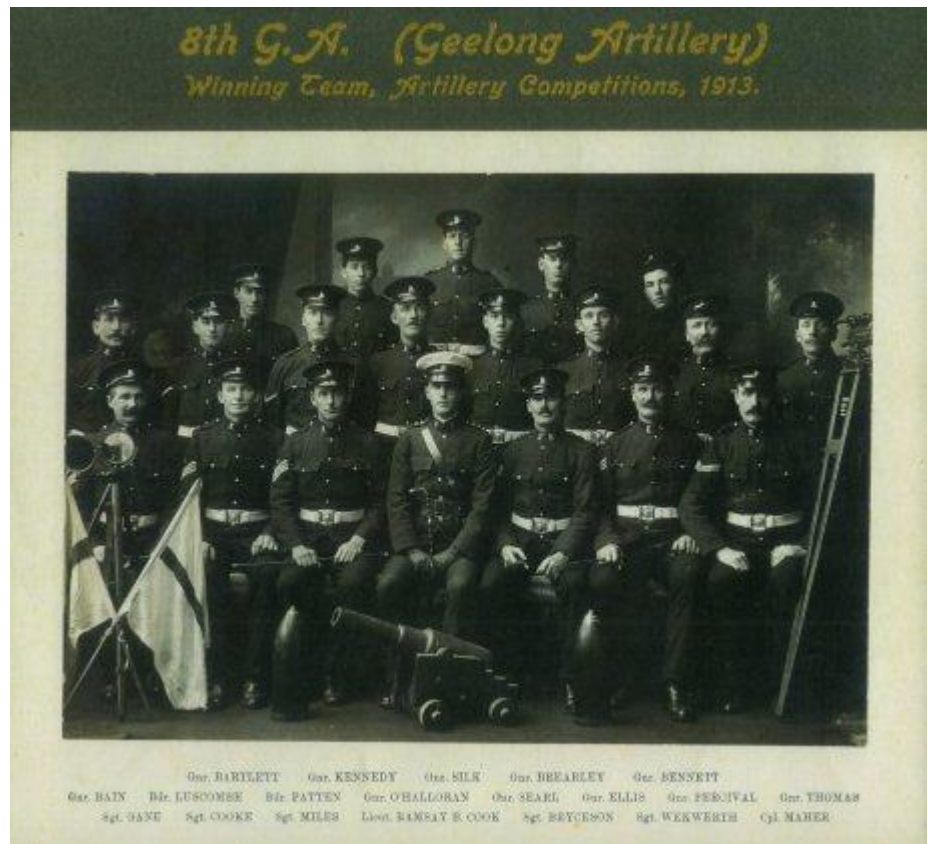
***Our associations "Elder Statesman", Brigadier Keith Rossi , AM, OBE, RFD, ED has been kind enough to compile the following text.***

**INTRODUCTION.** The Colony of Victoria was well defended as it prepared to join the Commonwealth of Australia, having three batteries of volunteer field artillery plus eight batteries of volunteer garrison artillery and three companies of permanent garrison artillery manning the forts of Port Phillip and defending the West coast from Queenscliff to Portland. In the early part of the 20th century some terms used were different from those in use today and are given here to ease the reader's understanding. What we know as a Regiment was known first as an Artillery Brigade and later as a Brigade. The Regular Army was known as the Permanent Army while the Army Reserve has been known as the Volunteers , the Citizen Force and the Militia. Batteries manning the coastal forts were termed Garrison Artillery Companies. An artilleryman with one stripe was a Bombardier. When he got his second stripe he became a Corporal. National Service Trainees were known as Universal Trainees when compulsory military training was in place from 1912 to 1929. Happily,

in the Field Branch, batteries have always been known as batteries!

**GARRISON ARTILLERY.** The Permanent Garrison Artillery companies of the East coast colonies had joined into one Regiment in 1899 and were titled Royal Australian Artillery (RAA). When the Army federated in 1903, the three Garrison Companies in Victoria were allocated the titles V Company (Queenscliff), VI Company (Point Nepean) and VII Company (Part Victoria Barracks and part South Channel). The eight Militia companies were allocated titles in the Australian Garrison Artillery (AGA) as follows: 1 & 2 Coys AGA, Geelong; 3 & 4 Coys AGA, North Melbourne; 5 Coy AGA, Williamstown; 6 & 7 Coys AGA, Melbourne Harbour Trust; 8 Coy AGA Warrnambool & Port Fairy.

In 1911 the designation of the Permanent



Artillery was changed from RAA to RAGA. In 1927 the designation reverted to RAA, V Coy became 4 Heavy Battery while VI and VII Coys amalgamated to become 5 Heavy Battery at Point Nepean, all brigaded as 2 Heavy Brigade RAA. The Militia AGA companies were also subjected to numerous changes. In 1911, 1 & 2 Coys at Geelong amalgamated to form 5 Coy, 3 &

4 Coys became 6 Coy at North Melbourne, while 5, 6 and 7 Coys became 7 Coy at Williamstown. A year later 5 Coy became 8 Coy, 6 Coy became 9 Coy, only 7 Coy remained unchanged. During World War 1, 9 Coy went to Geelong and 7 Coy was disbanded. In 1921, 8 and 9 AGA were re-designated 18 and 19 AGA and were grouped with 4 and 5 RAGA into 2 Coast Artillery Brigade, re-designated in 1927 to 2 Heavy Brigade RAA. In 1936 18 and 19 AGA were transferred into the newly formed 6th Heavy Brigade. 18 Bty was responsible for the battery at Sandringham while 19 augmented 4 Bty at Queenscliff. There was no significant change during World War II and after, when the forts were not fully maintained until the Coast Branch of RAA was discontinued in 1960.

Two AGA units need to be mentioned although they were not garrison artillery. They were placed on the AGA list as they reported direct to 3rd Military District (3MD) Headquarters at Victoria Barracks. They were 2nd Medium Artillery Brigade (2MAB), formed in 1925, equipped with 60 pounder guns and 6 inch howitzers and based at the Moore Street Depot in South Melbourne initially, then in the Drill Hall in Argyle Street East St Kilda. The unit served in World War II as 2 Medium Regiment but did not see active service. One battery was at sea, on its way to Borneo when hostilities ceased. The other was 2nd Survey Company (2 Svy Coy) Formed in 1925 it was located originally in the Drill Hall on the south east corner of Punt and Commercial Roads, South Yarra and later in Park Street Carlton. It served up to and through World War II as 2 Arty Svy Coy.

*I interrupt Brig Rossi's article to include some more detail of the Geelong Depot. Reprinted Courtesy Australian Gunner 1978.*

### **Crimea to Confrontation and beyond**

Geelong's military history stretches back to 1836 when the first British troops were dispatched to the young town as a permanent peace keeping garrison.

This garrison remained in Geelong, not excluding relieving regiments, until 1870, and from then on, no British unit was permanently based here.

But the first locally raised unit didn't take shape until 1854, when a group of concerned citizens called for the formation of a volunteer rifle corps.

At a patriotic public meeting this idea was adopted, and the Geelong Volunteer Rifle Corps was formed in mid 1854, with its practice rifle range being east of the Botanical Gardens, and weekly drill on Sunday afternoons.

The stage was then set for the rapid development of military units in and around Geelong.

This development was greatly influenced by the much closer ties that existed with the British Empire in those days and the fear of Russia sending a fleet to invade Australia.

One of the keystones of Geelong's defence was the establishment of a beach battery to fire on enemy vessels in Corio Bay.

Since the Rifle Corps, Geelong has been host to a mounted rifle corps, the famous Australian Light Horse, artillery regiments, infantry regiments, anti-aircraft regiments and volunteer defence corps.

Soldiers stationed at Geelong, or born here, have fought in almost every war since the Crimean War against Russia in the 1850s.



The men pictured above are veterans from the British army and navy, and some of them saw service in the Crimea.

They were living at the United Services Home in Drysdale, once the centre of military activity in Geelong when this picture was taken.

Geelong men fought in the Sudan, were in the siege of Ladysmith in the Boer War, really established their reputation in the futility of the First World War, fought to save their own country in the Second World War, served in the United Nations force in Korea, the confrontation in Malaya in the 60s and Vietnam after that.



The resident regiment in Geelong today is the 10 Medium Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery (pictured).

10 Medium has been in Geelong since 1962, and in 1965 Geelong's A Company of the second Royal Victorian Regiment merged with it.

**Can someone supply me names of those above?**

*Brig Rossi continues*

**ANTI AIRCRAFT ARTILLERY.** The only anti-aircraft unit raised in Victoria prior to World War II was 4th Anti Aircraft Battery, raised in 1938 at the Myers Street Depot in Geelong. It provided the nucleus for the tremendous growth in the Anti Aircraft Branch in World War II.

**FIELD ARTILLERY.** There was no Permanent Field Artillery in the colony of Victoria but, when the Army federated in 1903, Field Cadres were raised in the three Eastern states to train the Militia units of the Australian Field Artillery (AFA). "C" Instructional Cadre was allocated to Victoria. In 1911 the Permanent Artillery's designation was changed from RAA to RAGA and RAFA. "C" Cadre AFA then became 2nd Battery RAFA. It was located at Victoria Barracks for some years then moved to Maribyrnong, presumably because the horses were there at the Remount Depot. The battery disappeared in

1930, probably due to the expenditure reduction forced by the onset of the Great Depression.

Immediately before Federation Victoria had three Field Artillery Batteries in the Royal Victorian Volunteer Artillery (RVVA) equipped with 12 Pounder guns which were being upgraded to 15 pounders. The three batteries were "A" (Melbourne) Battery, "B"(South Melbourne) Battery and "C"(St Kilda) Battery. There was also another Field Artillery Battery at Hastings, equipped with 40 pounder guns drawn by bullocks. It was the artillery of the Victorian Rangers.

At Federation, A, B and C Batteries became 1, 2 and 3 Batteries AFA, 8 Bty AGA at Warrnambool was re-designated 4 Bty AFA some months later, a new battery, No.5, was raised at Chapel Street, East St Kilda with 3 Bty while the Hastings battery was designated 6 Bty AFA. The six batteries were brigaded as the Victorian Field Artillery Brigade AFA. In 1911 the batteries were re-numbered 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, the Hastings battery having disbanded. With the introduction of Compulsory Military Training in 1912 the Army was considerably expanded to accommodate the Universal Trainees (UTs)

Victoria was allocated five Field Artillery Brigades, each of three 4 x 18 pounder batteries , also two howitzer batteries, The FABs were Nos 7 to 11 with batteries 19 to 33 plus 46 and 47 howitzer batteries.

As it would be several years before sufficient UTs were called up to fully man the five FABs, only two were raised initially. 7FAB, located at Howe Crescent, South Melbourne was allocated 19, 20 and 25 Fd Btys, while 8 FAB at Chapel Street East St Kilda had 22, 23 and 31 Fd Btys. The Warrnambool battery was re-titled 46 Bty(H). The H was supposed to mean howitzer but there were no howitzers in Victoria so it was equipped with 4.7" naval guns fitted with wheeled carriages. So the H meant Heavy in fact. The other FABs and batteries existed only on paper.

In October 1918, near War's end, it was decided to preserve the identity of AIF units by replicating their titles in the Militia. Thus batteries raised in Victoria or raised overseas and deemed to be Victorian batteries had their titles

preserved in the five Militia FABs in Victoria. The allocation of battery titles to brigades was now: 7FAB – 4, 5, 6 and 46 (H) at Chapel Street; 8FAB – 29, 30, 31 and 47(H) at the newly built drill hall in Albert Park; 9FAB – 10, 11 and 12 at Albert Park (not raised except 10 Fd Bty attached to 8FAB); 10FAB – 16, 19 and 21 at Howe Crescent, South Melbourne but existed only on paper; 11FAB – 23, 24 and 32 at Howe Crescent, but existed only on paper. 50 Fd Bty at Ballarat and 52 Fd Bty at Bendigo were raised to support the Light Horse Brigades but existed only on paper.

In 1921 the wish to replicate the AIF organisation in the Militia went further with the creation of a Divisional and Brigade structure that closely matched the Infantry and Light Horse Brigades in France and Palestine in the Great War. Victoria was allotted Third Division, Headquarters and two Brigades of Fourth Division, and Headquarters and two Brigades of Second Cavalry Division. The 3rd Brigade Groups of 4 and 2 Cav Divs were in South Australia. The Artillery in Victoria now became:

#### **HQ 3 Div Arty,**

- 2Fd Bde – 4, 5 and 102(H) Fd Bty's;
- 4 Fd Bde – 10, 11 and 104(H) Fd Bty's, both at Chapel Street, East St Kilda, and
- 8 Fd Bde – 29, 30 and 108(H) Fd Bty's at Park Street, North Carlton.

#### **HQ 4 Div Arty,**

- 10 Fd Bde – 37, 38 and 110(H) Fd Bty's and
- 15 Fd Bde – 22, 24 and 112(H) Fd Bty's both at the Albert Park Drill Hall except 112(H) Fd Bty which was at Fort Gellibrand, Williamstown.

Compulsory Military Training ceased in late 1929 when UTs disappeared and all Militia members were voluntary. In 1930 the Albert Park Drill Hall was destroyed by fire. 10 Fd Bde then moved to the Engineers Drill Hall behind the boatsheds in Alexandra Avenue while 15 Fd Bde was accommodated at the Moore Street, South Melbourne Drill Hall. In 1936 both units moved into the newly built Depot in Batman Avenue, East Melbourne.



*This view of the Batman Ave Depot (bottom centre) was taken in the 1950's. The Engineer's Depot facing Swan St. is at the top end of the central (car park!) parade ground.*

The third unit of the Division, 13 Fd Bde, was in Adelaide.

HQ 2 Cav Div Arty and 22 Fd Bde – 40, 44 and 48 Fd Bty's were distributed –

- HQ and 44 Fd Bty in the Drill Hall in Swan Street Burnley, 40 Fd Bty in Albury and
- 48 Fd Bty in Adelaide.

In 1921 the word Artillery was deleted from the title and units became Field Brigades AFA. In 1936 the King conferred the title Royal Australian Artillery on the Militia artillery.

The organisation did not vary until World War II. AIF units were given the title "Regiment" while the Militia remained Field Brigades until they were changed to the 24 x 25 pounder organisation about the time Japan entered the War when they also became Regiments. Called up for full time duty, the 3 Div units and 22 Fd Regt went to Queensland while the 4 Div units went to West Australia. About September 1943, 8, 10, 15 and 22 Fd Regt's were disbanded and their members transferred to other Regiments as reinforcements. 3 Div with 2 and 4 Fd Regt's served with distinction in New Guinea and Bougainville. (*See articles in Cascabel journals 114 & 115*). They were disbanded soon after the cessation of hostilities.

E&OE. Keith Rossi

***The following information has been taken directly from Maj Jim Killender's book THE GUNNERS OF VICTORIA 1948 – 2000***

An Outline History of 2 Medium Brigade and 2 Australian Medium Regiment

Written by Tom Butler (parts 1 & 2) - Alby Kilbey (part 3)

Used by permission of 2 Medium Regiment Association.

(While the writer has been unable to find a written record of the post-war CMF 2 Medium Regiment, there is a record of 2nd Medium Brigade/Regiment of the pre-war Militia. Extracts show a little of the service of a WW2 Militia Regiment as part of the Home Defence Army. Extracts are shown for interest).

### **Part 1. Foundation to World War 2.**

Until 1925 there was no mobile Medium artillery in the Australian Military Forces. The First AIF had Heavy and Field Artillery Brigades. These included volunteers from the Garrison Artillery Permanent Military forces which manned the coast guns of the various forts built and maintained by the individual Australian Colonies and since Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia at strategic places around Australia's immensely long coastline. Queenscliff, Point Nepean and Fort Gellibrand in Victoria; North Head, South Head and Middle Head in Sydney NSW and other places on the coastlines of New South Wales, South Australia, West Australia, Darwin and elsewhere.

### **Two Brigades formed.**

In July 1925 the history of Medium Artillery in Australia begins. Two brigades were formed - the 1st Medium Brigade at Randwick in Sydney and 2nd Medium Brigade at St Kilda in Melbourne.

They were equipped with BL 26 cwt howitzers and BL 60 pounder guns, which had been used by the British Army during the WW1. These weapons were mounted on carriages with iron-

tyred wheels and were attached to horse-drawn limbers. The limbers were adapted for mechanical traction and were drawn by heavy Hathi tractors. The axle bars, swiggle trees and the horse harness in use before adaptation to mechanical transport were included when sent out from England.

1st Medium Brigade establishment was a Headquarters and four Batteries; 1st, 2nd and 3rd were raised and 4th Battery deferred. 2nd Medium Brigade was a Headquarters and three Batteries 5th, 6th and 7th and 8th Battery deferred. The howitzers were allotted to the 1st and 2nd batteries of each Brigade and the 60 pounder guns to the 3rd and 4th. The 4th and 8th Batteries were raised when WW2 began.

### **Voluntary Service.**

1925 was a time of compulsory Military Training in Australia. It was soon discontinued and replaced by a volunteer Militia, which remained until compulsory military service, and general mobilisation took place in the early stages of WW2.

From 1925 until the discontinuance of compulsory military training the uniform worn was khaki "Anzac" style uniform of the 1st AIF. During the volunteer period the uniform worn was blue uniform jackets and caps with red piping slack style trousers with red stripes on each leg - the Bandsman style.

When on field exercises and on other occasions as provided mounted style riding breeches with leggings were worn and not withstanding that there were no horses - with spurs - a felt Digger hat was worn in lieu of the peaked Bandsman cap. Gradually after the commencement of WW2 the blue style uniforms were replaced by khaki British Style Battle dress.

From 1925 until the outbreak of WW2 training followed the traditional pattern of part-time citizen military service - one evening per week and occasional Saturday afternoon small arms training. There were weekends of field training and an annual camp with some shooting of live ammunition. These camps were usually held from 1925 to the early 1930s at Queenscliff in the grounds of the Fort establishment there and

from the early 1930s at Seymour Military Camp at the well-known Site 17.

On the outbreak of WW2 in 1939 the real life of the 2nd Mediums begins until eventual demobilisation and disbandment shortly after the end of the war. It was a period of loyal and hard service, mixed with frustration and tears but also with comradeship and "laughter and the love of friends". The Brigade became a Regiment and eventually it formed part of the 2nd AIF. It travelled and trained and manoeuvred in many parts of Australia from Western Australia to Northern Queensland. The 5th Battery with elements from RHQ embarked for overseas service.

On the outbreak of war in spite of the uncertainty of the part Australia was playing, there was intense activity at the Drill Hall at Argyle Street St Kilda. Eventually the Australian Militia Units were called to serve varying periods of full time duty.

### **Thirty Days at Mount Martha.**

The 2nd Medium Brigade was sent off for a thirty-day period of training at Mount Martha on the Eastern side of Port Phillip Bay just south of Mornington near Dromana.

The equipment moved partly in a few army trucks, civilian commercial lorries and assorted vehicles hastily hired. The howitzers and guns were hauled by heavy transport trucks hired from Neales Cartage Contractors of Fairfield Victoria. The Hathi Tractors had long since worn out and sold.

Neales insisted that its own employees drive their vehicles. There was therefore the curious situation of a group of civilians living and working with a military unit, but not subject to army discipline and/or control except as provided by their contract of employment with Neales. They lived virtually "the life of Riley" in separate quarters and came and went as they pleased as long as they were available to haul the guns behind their vehicles when required. Some ordinary motor cars and other vehicles were hired from Officers for military use.

### **Plenty of "not enough".**

Arriving at the Mount Martha campsite it soon became apparent that despite valiant work by the Army Ordnance men - most of them civilian public services - the site was far from ready for proper and efficient use. There were insufficient tents, blankets, floorboards for tents, cooking kitchens, eating utensils and even sanitary cans. At the appropriate time heavy rain fell. Notwithstanding this after a few days some semblance of order was achieved and the Brigade commenced the serious business of military training.

The period for the ensuing thirty days was an interesting experience for all. It was probably the first time that the Brigade apart from short ceremonial parades was together as a unit and certainly the longest. It was a time of quite intense training and an opportunity to develop a sense of esprit de corps. There were some live shoots at an artillery practice range, which had been laid out in picturesque country on the seashore near the then small settlement of Boneo.

On 14 November 1939 camp was broken and the members of 2nd Medium Brigade returned to their civilian occupations. For the time being the war was over, to be resumed on 3 January 1940, this time for a period of 90 days.

### **Ninety More days at Mount Martha.**

The period of 90 days service from 3 January to 1 April 1940, again at Mount Martha, resulted in further soldierly development. The physical conditions of the camp were much improved. However the situation as to equipment and war stores was much the same. There was more firing practice at Boneo Range and by the end of this period it was apparent that the unit was "on the way".

Two interesting events are worth recalling - one, the arrival of nearly a Brigade of Light Horse comprising of country men from Gippsland fully equipped, rifles slung, sabres at their saddle and wearing slouch hats with emu feathers. It was a sight to be remembered as these cavalry regiments would be mechanised, the horses gone and Bren Gun Carriers and light tanks in

their place. The slouch hats and plumes gave way to berets and the stable smells replaced by petrol, oil and engine lubricants.

The other event was the arrival of the first party of "USPs" Universal Service Personnel, as they were officially called. The Australian Government had again introduced compulsory military service and these men of 18 years were the first call-ups. They were in civilian clothes but were soon fitted out with uniforms and personal equipment and most quickly adjusted themselves to life in the army.

### **2/2 Medium Regiment AIF formed.**

The periods of Stand Down and Call Outs continues with camps at Nagambie and Balcome for 2nd Medium Brigade. Many of the more senior and experienced officers were seconded to the 2nd AIF on the formation of 2/2 Medium Regiment. There was quite an exodus to the newly formed Regiment. The life of 2/1 Medium Regiment was comparatively short as it became 2/12 Australian Field Regiment AIF of 9 Division AIF and saw action in Tobruk, El Alamein, New Guinea and Borneo.

In the meantime at the headquarters of 2nd Medium Brigade a small staff was maintained - NCOs were sent to training Schools to help fill the gap caused by the secondments to the AIF. In December 1940 there commenced a further period of stand down and on 1 May 1941, the Mediums were called out again for full time duty. The Brigade marched in to Balcombe Camp and commenced a period of full time service which continued until the end of WW2 and during which it was eventually incorporated into the 2nd AIF.

Balcombe Camp consisted of huts of various sizes and shapes built of corrugated iron. Its layout and facilities provided an opportunity for general training and development that proved very useful in the years ahead. The Brigade was at this camp until early 1942.

### **Brigade organised as a Regiment.**

Perhaps one of the most significant developments, which took place during 1941, was the introduction of new unit structures aimed at providing more firepower and improved administration. A battery was altered to a headquarters and two troops each of four guns - a doubling of firepower controlled by each Battery Commander. The title Brigade was changed to Regiment - thus 2 Medium Brigade became 2 Medium Regiment comprising HQ and two Batteries 5th and 6th. The 5th Battery Headquarters and A and B Troops - 6th Battery Headquarters and C and D Troops.

### **War Time History of 2nd Australian Medium Regiment 7/12/1941 to 30/11/1945**

On 7 December 1941 WW2 came and rapidly soon spread into South East Asia, East Indies, New Guinea and Northern Australia. A "cadre" force of the regiment had its quarters at Balcombe under 4 Division command.



A Marmon Herrington gun tractor towing the newly introduced 25 Pdr and its ammunition limber which held its first line ammunition. Syria 1941.

For the 2nd Medium Regiment there was immediate activity and on 10th December A Troop 5th Medium Battery was dispatched to Western Port Bay and deployed for defence of the coast. The construction of gun pits was completed on 6 January and their 60 pounders tested for firing by the 29th. The Regiment was almost at full strength by the end of the month.

Orders were received to move the remainder of the Regiment to Dandenong and by 6th January after the main body had moved. In February A Troop at Western Port was relieved by B Troop and the Regiment came under command of 2nd Cavalry Division. The unusually spread out Regiment was undertaken in accordance with



the Higher Command plans for the defence of Port Phillip Bay and Melbourne.

Two separate army elements were formed - Mornington Peninsula Force Headquarters at Frankston to defend the eastern side of the bay and Bellarine Peninsula; and Geelong Force to cover the Western side with Headquarters at Geelong. Elements of 5th Battery Headquarters and A Troop with four 60 pounders were stationed in its emplacements at Western Port. RHQ and 6th Battery was at Dandenong.

After a few months more changes were made: 6 Battery began training in manoeuvres and deployment and at Puckapunyal carried out a live shoot and some aerial shoots in conjunction with the RAAF.

### **The Regiment together again.**

By April 1942 the Regiment was together again in winter quarters in a bivouac dispersion area covering the East Burwood - Tunstall - Blackburn area. Gunnery classes and special training for motor cyclists were held during the month. In May 6 Battery and Mitcham Voluntary Defence Corps conducted an exercise in which the VDC were to infiltrate the 6 Battery lines. All were taken prisoner by 6 Battery - the War diary is silent as to the fate of the prisoners.

On May 23 2nd Australian Army took command and approval was given for CMF troops to transfer to the AIF. The last day of May saw the delivery of eight 6 inch howitzers for 5 Battery replacing the 60 pounders. The Regiment now had sixteen 6 inch howitzers.

New tractors (4WD CVT) arrived and passed tests for towing the 6 inch howitzers and the Regiment moved out in August on manoeuvres, finally calibrating all howitzers in the Lower Tarwin area. On September 30th the Regiment began a trek from Sunbury/ Gisborne area to Leongatha/ Lower Tarwin.

A week of night training following in November, this required a "midnight" meal and a parade after "lunch"- a number of gunners and others fell asleep during the break and had to be aroused for the parade.

More manoeuvres in the South Gippsland area completed the years training - 12 months in field camps during which time we became acquainted with the gun pits and became accustomed to the rapid movement of guns and equipment on manoeuvres. The Regiment while not knowing it had commenced the long "Walk about" Western Australia and back, to North Queensland and for some Balikpapan.

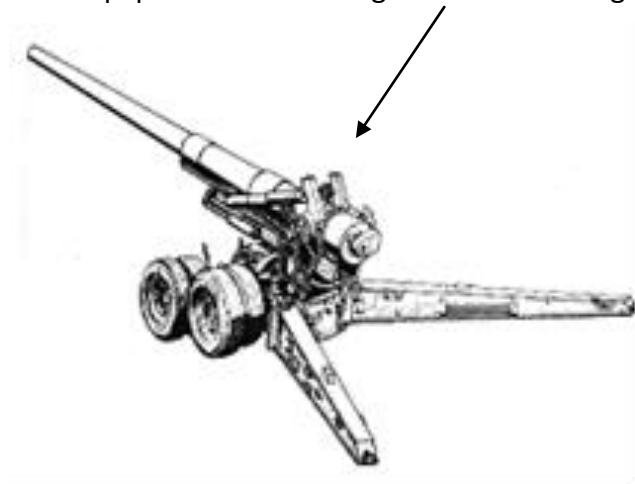
On 4 January 1943 the Regiment shifted camp to Wilson's Promontory, one of Australia's most picturesque areas. Intensive training in weaponry began on January 7 with the unit being divided into Squads for training by means of the bull rings which focused on the Bren gun, Thompson sub-machine gun, rifle and bayonet, anti-tank rifle and pistol. At low tide the beach at Tidal River proved quite adequate for a day of athletics on firm sand and a wide beach.

On January 20 the Regiment became 2nd Australian Medium Regiment (AIF) the proportion of AIF personnel having reached 75%.

### **Western Australia and Queensland.**

The Regiment saw service in Western Australia and Queensland as part of the Home Defence Army

New equipment arrived - eight 155mm and eight



5.5 inch guns and new Mack tractors. Training in the new equipment continued at a steady pace & included infantry training in jungle warfare at Canungra.

### **Still waiting.**

VE day came on 9 May 1945 and was a cause for celebration, but still no movement order for the



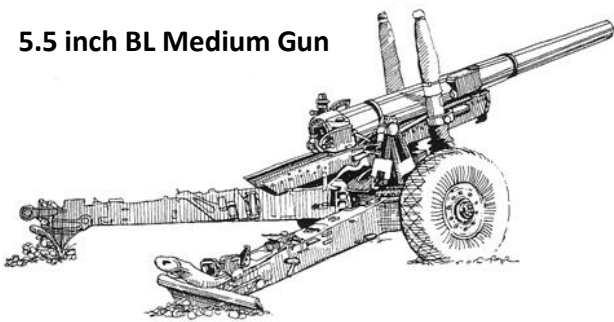
**The Mack 7 1/2 ton 6 x 6 Prime Mover**

Regiment. Demolition of camp buildings in the Wondecla area began and lasted for several weeks. On June 4 while the Commanding Officer was away on leave Maj Reg Scott received a Warning Order for movement of the Regiment.

At last it seemed that the Regiment would be on its way to an operational area but on 24 June the movement was deferred because of a shortage of shipping. Within the Regiment it was business as usual with troops receiving Cholera injections and stores were packed soon after the Warning Order.

On 28 June 11 Division HQ ordered a 155mm Battery for immediate operations and this was later changed to a 5.5inch Battery, some RHQ personnel, a signals section and a mixed LAD selected from 9 and 5 Batteries. The Regiment less this detachment transferred to Cairns where 6 Battery and RHQ were disbanded.

**5.5 inch BL Medium Gun**



By the time 5 Battery arrived in Balakapan the war had ended and they were detailed to clean up duties. On the arrival of the first Japanese prisoners and which included an Admiral, Captain and three other ranks: 82 arrived later and were placed in the compound. Thus began our most important duty in Borneo, the guarding of war prisoners.

Eighteen members of A detachment (5 Battery, RHQ and LAD elements) volunteered for service in the occupation force for Japan and transferred to 34 Infantry Battalion.

On 22 October a disbandment order was received from RAA 7 Division Headquarters.

This article will be updated from time to time as further research is carried out.

*To be continued*