

A short history of the origins of the

# ROYAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA REGIMENT

South Australia's Infantry



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# BATTLE HONOURS

## THE ROYAL SOUTH AUSTRALIA REGIMENT

The Royal South Australia Regiment is the heir to and custodians of the following Battle Honours awarded to those Battalions of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF raised in South Australia.

South Africa: 1899 - 1902\*

### The Great War

Somme 1916, 1918	Albert 1918
Poizieres*	Mont St Quentin
Bullecourt *	Hindenburg Line*
Messines 1917	Épehy
Ypres 1917*	St Quentin Canal
Menin Road*	Beaurevoir
Polygon Wood	France and Flanders 1916 - 1918
Broodseinde	Anzac
Poelcapelle	Landing at Anzac*
Passchendaele*	Defence of Anzac
Ancre 1918	Suvla
Lys	Sari Bair
Hazebrouck	Gallipoli 1915
Kemmel	Egypt 1915-1916
Hamel	Villers-Bretonneux
Amiens*	

### The Second World War

North Africa 1941 – 1942	Cape Endaiadere-Sinemi Creek
Defence of Tobruk*	Sanananda-Cape Killerton
El Adem Road	Milne Bay*
The Salient 1941	Lae-Nadzab
Defence of Alamein Line	Busu River
Tel el Eisa	Finschhafen*
Tel el Makh Khad	Defence of Scarlet Beach
EI Alamein*	Sattleberg*
Syria 1941	Pabu
The Litani	Liberation of Australian New Guinea
Adlun	Ramu Valley
Sidon	Shaggy Ridge*
Damour	Borneo*
South West Pacific 1942 - 1945	Tarakan
Kokoda Trail *	Labuan
Efogi-Menari	Beaufort
Buna-Gona	Balikpapan
Gona	

Honours marked with \* are emblazoned on the Colours



*The Queen's and Regimental Colours of the 10th Battalion RSAR*

The Royal South Australia Regiment, which was raised on 1 July 1960, is the heir and successor to the various infantry battalions of South Australia. On the Queen's and Regimental Colours of the Royal South Australia Regiment (RSAR) are emblazoned the Battle Honours awarded those South Australian battalions.

### **Pre World War One**

There has been a strong military flavour to the history of South Australia. Many early leading figures came from military backgrounds. Colonel William Light had fought with Wellington in the Peninsula Campaign and the explorers Sturt, Barker and Warburton were serving or retired officers. However as a colony of free citizens without the security threat of a convict population, a strong British military presence was not required. The marine detachment of HMS Buffalo was sufficient to provide initial security until withdrawn in July 1838 to help establish the short-lived settlement at Port Essington, in what is now the Northern Territory.

There were no imperial defence personnel in the colony until a detachment of 85 men from the 96<sup>th</sup> Regiment (Manchester) arrived from Hobart in October 1841. This was the first association of South Australia with what is now the King's Regiment, one of two British Regiments allied with the RSAR. A succession of company-sized detachments from a number of regiments then rotated through the colony until 1870, occupying barracks in successively Grenfell, Flinders and Topham Streets and from 1857, the building now known as the Police Barracks behind the Adelaide Museum.

The first body of South Australian volunteers was raised by Governor Gawler in 1840 and known as the Royal South Australian Volunteer Militia was to comprise light infantry and lancers. Due to the severe economic difficulties of the colony, it was short-lived and was disbanded after five months.

The Crimean War and the associated fears of attack by Russian warships led to the passing of the Militia Act 1854, which authorised the raising of two infantry battalions. With the passing of the fear of attack, volunteer enthusiasm waned and the force became moribund by 1856, but was reactivated in 1859 to comprise fourteen small rifle companies scattered throughout the colony. On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1860, these companies were grouped to form the Adelaide Regiment of Volunteer Rifles. It is, to this date that the RSAR traces its origins.

In the forty years to Federation, the fortunes of this force waxed and waned depending largely on public enthusiasm and the fears of the day. The American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War brought expansion. A visit by the Duke of Edinburgh in 1867 drew society favour and a short-lived change of name to the 'Prince Alfred Rifle Volunteers', although it seems to have remained popularly known then and henceforth, as the Adelaide Rifles. At times, the Regiment would

comprise of up to three battalions and at others, fade to a couple of companies. The Regiments headquarters was located in a building on North Terrace where the Museum now stands, until moved in 1899 to a new shed in the vicinity of the present Torrens Drill Hall (occupied now by the RSL South Australia - ANZAC House).

Gradually, the military in South Australia became more sophisticated. In 1878, an Act was passed to form the South Australian Military Forces with a permanent Artillery component to man Fort Largs and Fort Glanville. In addition to infantry, cavalry and artillery, added over the years were ambulance, signal and machine gun corps. In 1894, South Australia joined with other colonies in discussing the form that the Australian Military Forces would take on Federation.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1899, South Australia was able to offer Britain a contingent for the South African (Boer) War. This was the first of nine contingents comprising of six officers and 121 other ranks of South Australian Infantry, to embark on the 26th November 1899.

Although initially planned that the company would be attached to a British battalion, it was decided on arrival in Cape Town, that all of the Australian infantry contingents would be grouped to form a battalion to be known as the Australia Regiment. While the initial phase of the war had demanded conventional infantry, by the time the Australian colonial contingents arrived, the nature of the war had changed, making mounted infantry more appropriate. In consequence, after only one month as an infantry battalion, the Australia Regiment demonstrated its flexibility and converted in a fortnight to a mounted infantry role. It then served with distinction alongside the other Australian mounted infantry regiments and was awarded South Australia's first battle honour '*South Africa*'. In the course of the war, 1500 South Australians served, of whom 60 were killed.

With Federation, the various colonial armed forces came under Commonwealth control. The foundations for all subsequent Australian military organisation was established by the Defence Act of 1903-4, which formalised a system of permanent and citizen forces under which the South Australian infantry was designated the 10<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Regiment (Adelaide Rifles). In consequence of a visit by Lord Kitchener in 1910, a major expansion occurred with the introduction of a 'universal training' scheme, the national service program for all young males. In the associated restructuring, the South Australian battalions were numbered from 74 to 81, with the Adelaide Rifles becoming the 78<sup>th</sup> Battalion and the progenitor of the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the 74<sup>th</sup>

## World War One

On the outbreak of World War One, a force distinct from the militia was raised for overseas service; The Australian Imperial Forces (AIF). South Australia contributed two battalions, one to each of the two Divisions. These were designated the 10<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Battalions and were largely manned with volunteers from the militia. The 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion was one of three which led the assault on Anzac Cove, landing before dawn on 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 1915 and penetrating deeper into the peninsula than any other force was to manage in the remainder of the campaign. For its actions at Gallipoli, it earned the sobriquet 'The Fighting Tenth' and the Battle Honour '*Landing at Anzac*'. Both battalions suffered heavy casualties on Gallipoli. On return to Egypt, they contributed to the expansion of the AIF to five Divisions, all designated for service in France on the Western Front, while the two light horse divisions remained to play a major role in the eventual defeat of Turkey in the Middle East.

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While all battalions eventually held a mixture of members from other states, there were five battalions, the 10<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> predominantly South Australian, whose Battle Honours the RSAR carries and four other battalions, the 12<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 32<sup>nd</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> with strong South Australian contingents. The South Australian battalions were distributed throughout the AIF as follows:

SA Battalion	10 <sup>th</sup>	27 <sup>th</sup>	43 <sup>rd</sup>	48 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>
Brigade	3	7	11	12	13
Division	1	2	3	4	4

By mid-1916, the Western Front had stabilised but the arrival of fresh divisions enabled Haig, the British Commander, to resume the offensive. The line held by the British, extended from Ypres, near the North Sea, south for nearly two hundred kilometres, to the vicinity of the city of Amiens, from where the French line ran south to the Alps.

Generally, the northern sector of the British line was known as "Flanders" and the southern sector as "The Somme". Over the next two years, the AIF Divisions were to transfer back and forth to battles in these two sectors.

The 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Divisions of 1 Anzac Corps began arriving on the Flanders front in April 1916 and were given an extended settling in period, to accustom them to a different form of warfare. No such consideration was shown to the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, whose first experiences of war was a diversionary attack at Fromelles on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1916, resulting in 5500 casualties, the heaviest loss in a day that the AIF was to suffer in the war.

1 Anzac Corps moved south to *The Somme* in July 1916 to join the great British offensive of that year. The Australian objective was the village of Pozieres. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1916, the 1<sup>st</sup> Division launched the opening attack and it was during this attack that Lieutenant (later Brigadier) A.S. Blackburn was awarded the first of the Battalion's Victoria Crosses. The struggle for Pozieres continued for 45 days, during which the three Divisions launched a total of nineteen attacks. The fighting was savage, close quarter work, at which the 48<sup>th</sup> in particular, distinguished itself while the 27<sup>th</sup> was heavily committed in the struggle for 'the Windmill'. The crowded one square mile summit of *Pozieres* cost the three Divisions 23000 casualties - 'a ridge more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth'.

During the winter of 1916/1917, the Germans staged a strategic withdrawal to a new defensive position, the *Hindenburg Line* to which they were followed by 1 Anzac Corps, now joined by 5 Division. The Corps prepared to attack the village of *Bullecourt*, one of the bastions of the new line. The first assault by 4 Division was to be accompanied by a dozen tanks, the first time they were to support the Australians. In blizzard conditions, the tanks failed to reach the start line where the infantry lay awaiting them in the snow at dawn.

The attack was postponed until the following night when, although only three tanks had arrived by H Hour, the attack without artillery support went in and was initially successful in penetrating the German defences. Again, 48 Battalion distinguished itself at one stage attacking simultaneously in opposite directions against the German's counter attacks that finally drove the Division from its gains. Again, the position could only be secured through a succession of assaults that involved all four Divisions. It was not until the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1917 that the Germans conceded the position and the Australians eventually won acclaim for having breached the Hindenburg Line.

Meanwhile, in Flanders, II Anzac Corps, with the newly arrived 3 Division (43 Battalion) was preparing to attack the salient at *Messines*, south of Ypres. The attack was preceded by the detonation of nineteen massive mines, dug under German trenches, followed by a heavy artillery bombardment. The attack by 3 Division and the second phase, spearheaded by the ubiquitous 4 Division (the 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup>) was successful in eliminating the salient and clearing the way for the forthcoming major British offensive of 1917, known as the Third Battle of Ypres, or infamously as '*Passchendaele*'.

Third Ypres began on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917 after a fortnight's heavy shelling with an attack by seventeen Divisions on a seven kilometre front in which II Anzac Corps was on the southern flank attacking from the ground, won at Messines. But with the attack came heavy rains and the battlefield turned to a morass in which, after the initial success, the advance became hopelessly bogged. Haig was determined to persist with the battle and it became a succession of massive pushes to achieve very small gains. All five AIF Divisions were now involved and over the next five months, were to spearhead five major attacks in which they inched forward eight kilometres, but at the cost of 38000 casualties.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 1917, the first of these great drives began in sunshine with 1 and 2 Divisions attacking together, to seize the *Menin Road*. In the assault, by coincidence, the 12<sup>th</sup> was sandwiched between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> and it was during this battle that the CO of the 10<sup>th</sup> had newspapers delivered forward during a pause for his troops to read while resting on a sunny hillside. Then on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 1917 came the turn of the 4 and 5 Divisions to take *Polygon Wood*, followed on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1917 by the attack on *Broondseinde Ridge* by 1, 2 and 3 Divisions and the New Zealanders. On leaving their start line at dawn, the startled 1 and 2 Divisions ran into a German force, likewise launching a counter-attack. In the melee that followed, the Australians triumphed and pushed on to their objective that at last overlooked the village of Passchendaele on the opposite ridge. The rains came again and bogged down the final Australian push on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1917, after which the exhausted troops were withdrawn for a much needed rest that was to last through the winter.

On 21<sup>st</sup> March 1918, 'Michael', the great German offensive was launched and within days had overrun that which had been gained with such cost in the Somme and Ypres offensives of the past two years. The Australians were taken quickly out of reserve and flung piecemeal into the battle to stem the German advance. 3 and 4 Divisions were instrumental in slowing the German advance east of Amiens. The 48<sup>th</sup>, again drew recognition, this time from the Germans for the coolness of their steady withdrawal from Hamel. By mid-April, 2 and 5 Divisions were also engaged and seventeen miles of the front was held by Australian Divisions in the face of the main German attack. On 25<sup>th</sup> April 1918, a brilliantly executed quick attack was launched by a Brigade from each of 4 and 5 Divisions to force the enemy back from the village of *Villers Bretonneux*. South Australia was represented in this battle by the 50<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile in Flanders, 1 Division separated from its comrades, had been occupied by stopping the Germans outside *Hazebrouck*, a vital railway centre in what had been deep in the British rear.

But the offensive was at last played out, the British front had been savagely bent but not broken, the Germans had achieved local success but failed to break through. The Australian contribution had again been significant.

The newly formed Australia Corps now comprised of all five Divisions, although 1 Division remained detached in Flanders. The Corps remained in the vicinity of its recent victories to the east of Amiens. The new Corps also received a new commander, when on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Monash succeeded Birdwood. During this time, the Australians, through their aggressive raiding, which they termed 'Peaceful Penetration', established a clear physical and moral dominance over the Germans. The most successful example of this tactic was demonstrated by the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion outside Hazebrouck on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1918, when seizing a succession of opportunities, a patrol developed into a raid that developed into a quick attack, resulting in the capture of 500 metres of German trenches.

Capitalising on this dominance over the enemy and applying his skills in meticulous planning and coordination, Monash launched an attack on the village of Hamel, south of the Somme on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1918. The date was deliberately chosen in honour of the Americans attached to the Corps, to gain combat experience. The attack was a resounding success and was noteworthy for the innovative use and coordination of the capabilities of infantry tanks, artillery and aircraft. In this battle, the 43<sup>rd</sup> had the distinction of seizing the village of *Hamel* itself.

Australian success had revealed German weakness, which offered opportunity on a wider scale. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 1918, this was seized with a major attack by the Australian and Canadian Corps, flanked by British and French Divisions. This, the *Battle of Amiens* was one of the most brilliantly planned and executed operations of the War and one of the most decisive battles in history.

The eight hours that the Australians advanced ten kilometres and with minimal casualties, shattered the German Divisions demonstrating conclusively that Germany no longer had any prospect of winning the War. All South Australian battalions were involved, and for the first and only time, all fought together on the same battlefield, on the same day.

With the demonstrated success of Amiens, the general offensive across the Allied front began. Alternating attacks in Flanders and the Somme saw the Germans steadily pushed back to the old Hindenburg Line. In an attack of great audacity, *Mont St Quentin*, the tactical high ground behind Peronne, was seized by two battalions of 2 Division at dawn on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1918. The Australian Corps had closed on and penetrated the outer defences of the Hindenburg Line by 18<sup>th</sup> September 1918. The final Australian offensive of the War, was to break through the Line where *St Quentin Canal*, an otherwise major obstacle flowed through a four kilometre tunnel. The attack was led by two American Divisions that quickly became disoriented, leaving hard fighting for 3 and 5 Divisions, who eventually prevailed. In the exploitation of 2 Division in early October the 27<sup>th</sup> was rewarded with the final South Australian Battle Honour of the war, for the capture of *Beaurevoir*. The exhausted Australian Corps was at last withdrawn for rest, but before it could re-enter the battle, Armistice was declared on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918.

No short summary as this, can describe adequately, the appalling conditions under which the Australians fought or give due credit to their pain and suffering and stoic heroism.

## Between the Wars

On the reintroduction of Universal Training in 1921, the militia battalions were allocated the titles of the AIF 10<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup>, rather than returning to the pre-war militia numbers of 74 to 81. This perpetuated the ethos and pride that had been accrued by these great battalions and many of the senior militia appointments were held by AIF veterans. The number of active battalions varied during the period, but generally three were retained on the order of battle, the title of the 50<sup>th</sup> Battalion being transferred to Tasmania in 1936.

Plans called for a militia of five infantry and two cavalry Divisions but to be manned to only 25% of establishment with only six days full time and six days part time training per year. Funding was abysmally low; the Army eventually was motorised in 1926, but funds allowed only one truck per military district, a total of six for the Army.

Universal Training was abolished by the incoming Labor Government in 1929 and all the volunteer militia sank Australian wide to 27000. However, as the threat of war grew in the mid 1930's, interest again stirred and a recruiting drive at the time of the Munich crisis in 1938 brought the numbers up to 80000. This could not, however compensate for years of failure to re-equip and the Army was to go to war in 1939 with left-overs of 1918.

## World War Two

On the declaration of World War Two, the Second Australian Imperial Force was formed initially with two Divisions and in the following months, grew to a commitment of four. As in 1914, it was accepted that this force would be separate from the militia. Its battalions would bear the titles of their 1st AIF predecessors, but be identified by the prefix 2/ (as in 2<sup>nd</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Battalion), to differentiate them from both their 1<sup>st</sup> AIF and militia namesakes. Hence during World War Two, there was for example, an AIF 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion and a Militia 10 Battalion. The RSAR carries the Battle Honours of the four AIF Battalions, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>/27<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>/43<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>/48<sup>th</sup>.

Although originally intended that one South Australian battalion would serve in each of the four divisions, a series of circumstances led them to fight the war allocated as follows:

SA Battalion	2 <sup>nd</sup> /10 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> /27 <sup>th</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> /43 <sup>rd</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> /48 <sup>th</sup>
Brigade	18	21	24	26
Division	7	7	9	9

In view of the catastrophes suffered by 6 and 8: Divisions, it was fortuitous that the South Australian battalions were concentrated in the 7 and 9 Divisions.

During the War, the four militia battalions were mobilised and all deployed for the defence of Darwin. In 1942, the 48<sup>th</sup> was reorganised as a light anti-aircraft regiment and the 10<sup>th</sup> was redesignated the 10<sup>th</sup>/48<sup>th</sup> Battalion. From April 1945, the 27<sup>th</sup> South Australian Scottish Regiment, having transferred to the AIF, fought as part of 23 Brigade on Bougainville in the trying and daring campaign to winkle out the Japanese.

The first South Australian action of the War, was fittingly by the 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>, in a minor role in the capture of Giarabub, in March 1941. This was the final victory of the extraordinary Cyrenaica Campaign in which 6 Division had taken Bardia, Tobruk and Benghazi in rapid succession from the Italians. The arrival of Rommel and his panzers, however, changed the scene and by April 1941, 9 Division plus 18 Brigade were locked in the *Defence of Tobruk*. Hence three South Australian battalions 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>/43<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>/48<sup>th</sup> were involved in the seven month siege where the Australians won renown, as the first to halt the panzers and explode the myth of blitzkrieg invincibility. Meanwhile, 7 Division less its 18 Brigade undertook the invasion on Syria. In a tough slogging campaign against pro-nazis Vichy French, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion gained a further five Battle Honours.

On 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941 the Japanese launched the attack on Pearl Harbour and the invasion of Thailand, Malaya and the Philippines. By March 1942 as 6 and 7 Divisions made their way home, the Japanese had conquered Singapore and the Dutch East Indies and had seized Rabaul as a base for the conquest of New Guinea. While Japan's naval losses in the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942 precluded a seaborne attack on Port Moresby, they launched the first element of a two prolonged overland attack with the landing of a strong force at Buna Gona on the north coast of Papua on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1942. This force was met by the raw militia battalion, the 39<sup>th</sup> and a company of the Papuan Infantry Battalion, who fought a heroic and dogged withdrawal back over the Owen Stanley Range. Eventually, on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1942, they were relieved by 21 Brigade, which with its 2<sup>nd</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Battalion continued to be pushed back finally to Imita Ridge, a bare 43 kilometres from Port Moresby. Here the Japanese were finally held and on 26<sup>th</sup> September, turned back. Then began the long hard push back across the *Kokoda Trail*, to the northern beaches.

Concurrently, the second prong of the Japanese drive on Port Moresby had begun on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1942 with a landing at *Milne Bay* on the South East tip of Papua. Here they were met by 18 Brigade, including the 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Battalion and were decisively beaten, the first defeat suffered by the Japanese in the war. While two South Australian battalions of 7 Division were engaged in these historic actions against the Japanese the two South Australian battalions of the 9 Division were about to be heavily committed in a battle of equal significance in North Africa.

Following its withdrawal from Tobruk, 9 Division had been garrisoning in Syria while awaiting its return to Australia. Then Rommel struck again in North Africa. This time, Tobruk with an even stronger garrison fell within 24 hours as the combined German/Italian army swept forward to the Egyptian border where on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1942, they met 9 Division moving hurriedly forward to halt the tide at *El Alamein*. Both the 2<sup>nd</sup>/43<sup>rd</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup>/48<sup>th</sup> were heavily engaged in these initial actions over the first two weeks of July 1942, defeating a succession of strong attacks as the Germans tried to break through. Both sides then consolidated and prepared for the major battle that would decide the fate of North Africa. Montgomery's plan called for pressure by 9 Division on the northern flank to draw the German forces, thence allowing him to break through a weakened enemy in the south. The battle commenced on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1942 and over the next week, the Australians succeeded in drawing north, all the panzers and the best Italian Divisions, but at an enormous cost. In the course of the battle, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/48<sup>th</sup> was reduced to forty-one men.

But the plan succeeded and the breakthrough was achieved and by 4<sup>th</sup> November 1942, the Africa Corps was in retreat. After a pivotal role in the battle, 9 Division could at last come home.

Meanwhile in Papua, 7 Division and the militia battalions had, by mid November 1942 finally driven the Japanese back into their base area in the fetid swamps on the north coast. *Gona* was taken on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1942 but the 2<sup>nd</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> had been reduced by disease and the savage hand to hand fighting, to seventy men. 18 Brigade now came forward to clear the enemy from *Buna* and



*Sanananda*. In the five week struggle, it lost 96% of its strength and by the time of the final attack of the battle, the 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> numbered only one hundred. Then followed some months of rest and retraining for both 7 and 9 Divisions, in preparation for the next offensive.

The most ambitious operation of the War by the Australians began on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1943, for the recapture of central New Guinea. 9 Division was launched in an amphibious assault to take *Lae*, while a couple of days later, 7 Division began to fly into *Nadzab*, which had been secured by an airborne drop. This two-pronged attack on the Markam Valley was co-ordinated with a further landing by militia and the commandos on Salamua. The plan met quickly with success and 7 Division was soon following up the retreating enemy through *Ramu Valley* and led by the 2<sup>nd</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> up onto *Shaggy Ridge* in the Finisterre Range. After hard fighting, 18 Brigade took the lead down the mountains to the coast to capture Madang in April 1944.

Meanwhile 9 Division was withdrawn from Lae to launch its next amphibious assault, this time with four battalions that included the 2<sup>nd</sup>/43<sup>rd</sup> at *Finschhafen*. After a savage two week battle to secure their beachhead, *Scarlet Beach*, against a numerically superior enemy, they broke out and began the push to *Sattelberg*, a missionary station in the hills. The advance was then assumed by 26 Brigade and with 2<sup>nd</sup>/48<sup>th</sup> leading pushed up the road. On the crest on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1943, Sergeant Tom (Diver) Derrick DCM, for a series of extraordinary acts of courage, was awarded the fourth Victoria Cross of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/48<sup>th</sup> a record unsurpassed in the War.

Both Divisions then again returned to Australia for rest and retraining, in preparation for the final campaign of the War.

On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1945, 26 Brigade began the campaign by 1 Australian Corps, for the re-conquest of *Borneo*, with an amphibious assault on the east coast island of *Tarakan*. This was no mopping up operation, but one of heavy fighting. On Tarakan, 2<sup>nd</sup>/48<sup>th</sup> suffered more casualties than it had in New Guinea and among them was Diver Derrick, their one and only surviving VC winner. In early June 1945, the remainder of 9 Division landed at Brunei Bay on the south coast, to clear it for future use as a naval base. 24 Brigade was tasked with securing *Labuan Island* and the 2<sup>nd</sup>/43<sup>rd</sup> went ashore in the first wave. The Battalion was subsequently engaged in heavy fighting around the Bay, culminating in a brilliant battalion operation, to clear the village of *Beaufort*. The final phase was the landing by 7 Division at the oil refining centre of *Balikpapan*, on the south-east coast. After heavy bombardment by RAAF Liberators and under the cover of naval gunfire from RAN cruisers, the landing was led by the 2<sup>nd</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> on either side of the 2<sup>nd</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>, just as it had been on the Menin Road, 28 years earlier. The landing was successful, but the struggle in the hinterland continued until the end of hostilities on 11th August 1945.



*The Queen's and Regimental Colours of the 27th Battalion RSAR*

## Post World War Two

Even before the Japanese surrender, plans were being formulated for the post-war Army. This was formalised in June 1947 with the announced policy of a Regular Army Brigade and a Citizen Military Force of two Infantry Divisions and an armoured brigade with a strength of 50 000. Once more the battalions were raised, this time as 10, 27 and a linked 43/48. With the Cold War as a focus of concern and the CMF failing to reach it's target strength through volunteers, it was decided in 1950 to introduce National Service on the basis of 98 days initial full time training and 42 days with a designated CMF unit over the following 2 years. Against the backdrop of the Korean War, the first intake of South Australian youths completed their training at Woodside and reported to their battalions. Generally, the programme was a success and had wide public support.

The battalions came quickly to full strength and with a cadre of 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF, experienced reserve and regular officers and NCOs were able to provide active and interesting training for the young national Servicemen. A legacy of goodwill from the community dating from this experience is still evident today.

While the Regular Brigade was orientated to conflict in the region, namely Korea and Malaya, the CMF Divisions were earmarked for the Middle-East and trained and equipped accordingly: khaki protective dress, 17 pounder anti-tank guns, Vickers, jeeps and 62 set radios were the equipment of the day with training at Cultana and Murray Bridge.

The strategic circumstances however, were changing and the National Service obligation was first reduced to 77 days and then abolished in 1960 when a major re-organisation of the Army brought new perspectives. Looming security concerns in our region demanded a CMF focus on South East Asia and this was coupled with the introduction of the "big battalion" Pentropic organisation.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July 1960, the Royal South Australia Regiment was formed and the three battalions were amalgamated into a single large all volunteer 1 RSAR. With it came new tropical warfare doctrine, jungle green uniforms, the SLR, M60 machine guns, 81 mm Mortars, ANPRC 10 radios and Landrovers. It was an interesting and stimulating experience that ended in 1965 with the commitment to Confrontation and Vietnam. National Service was reintroduced, but on a significantly different basis and this time for the Regulars, rather than for the Reserves.

Big was no longer deemed beautiful and the Army reverted to the smaller standard battalions. In July 1965, 1 RSAR was divided into two battalions, 10 and 27 RSAR. 10 RSAR, based at Torrens Training Depot was responsible for Adelaide and the State, south of the River Torrens, while 27 RSAR was initially at Hampstead Barracks and subsequently at Smithfield for all north of the River Torrens. With volunteer service in the CMF an alternative to National Service and with then initial wide public support for the Vietnam commitment, the battalions became strong and viable. In July 1966, they were joined by the re-raised 43 RSAR, designated to cater for "special condition" volunteers opting for periods of continuous duty, rather than the conventional bivouacs and night parades. These were the days of battle on "the jungle covered hills of Cultana", Iroquois helicopters deployed by Caribou and familiarisation rides in M113 APC. In 1972, National Service and the commitment to Vietnam ended and support for the Reserve again waned. In December 1974, both 27 and 43 RSAR amalgamated with the 10 RSAR. With a fleeting resurgence in numbers, 27 RSAR again broke free from 1982 until the two battalions were again amalgamated, this time as 10/27 RSAR, in 1987.

The subsequent story has been one of slow incremental development, as the Regular Army is reduced and greater attention is paid once more, to the Reserve.

## Victoria Cross Roll

### South Australian Infantry Battalions

Before the Crimean War from 1854 to 1856, there was no recognised military gallantry medal but so that exceptional deeds of heroism by individuals in this and later wars might receive proper public recognition, the Victoria Cross was instituted by Royal Warrant, dated 29<sup>th</sup> January, 1856. This award is available to deserving persons, irrespective of rank.

While the conditions governing the award have varied from time to time, it has remained the supreme reward for exceptional gallantry, honouring not only its worthy recipient but also that person's comrades in arms and unit.

There have been eleven awards of the Victoria Cross, to members of lineage units of the Royal South Australia Regiment and they are listed below in date sequence.



Lieutenant A. S. Blackburn	10 Bn	23 Jul 1916	Pozieres
Private J. C. Jensen	50 Bn	02 Apr 1917	Noreuil
Private R. Inwood	10 Bn	20 Sep 1917	Polygon Wood
Corporal P. Davey	10 Bn	28 Jun 1918	Hazebrouck
Corporal L. C. Weathers	43 Bn	02 Sep 1918	Peronne
Private J. P. Woods	48 Bn	18 Sep 1918	St Quentin
Private A. S. Gurney	2/48 Bn	22 Jul 1942	Tel el Eisa
Sergeant W. H. Kibby	2/48 Bn	23 Oct 1942	El Alamein
Private P. E. Gratwick	2/48 Bn	25 Oct 1942	El Alamein
Sergeant T. C. Derrick	2/48 Bn	28 Jun 1945	Sattelberg
Private L. T. Starcevich	2/48 Bn	28 Jun 1945	Beaufort