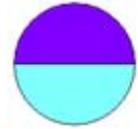




"Sitrep, Over!"



Official Newsletter of The Royal South Australia Regiment Association Inc

50th Battalion AIF SPECIAL EDITION

Editor—David Laing 0407 791 822

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- 1 VC
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- 16 MC, 2 bars
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The 50th Battalion AIF

The 50th Battalion was raised in Egypt on 26 February 1916 as part of the "doubling" of the AIF. Approximately half of its recruits were veterans from the 10th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 10th, the 50th was predominantly composed of men from South Australia. The battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the 4th Australian Division and was dubbed "Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred", after its first CO, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Hurcombe.

After arriving in France on 11 June 1916, the 50th fought in its first major battle at Mouquet Farm between 13 and 15 August and suffered heavily. It took part in another assault launched there on 3 September. The battalion saw out the rest of the year alternating between front-line duty, and training and labouring behind the line. This routine continued through the bleak winter of 1916-17. Early in 1917, the battalion participated in the advance that followed the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line, and attacked at Noreuil on 2 April.

For his actions at Noreuil Private Joergen Jensen was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Later that year, the focus of AIF operations moved to the Ypres sector in Belgium. There the battalion was involved in the battle of Messines between 7 and 12 June and the battle of Polygon Wood on 26 September. Another winter of trench routine followed.

Utilising troops freed by the collapse of Russia in October 1917, the German Army launched a major offensive on the Western Front at the end of March 1918. The 4th



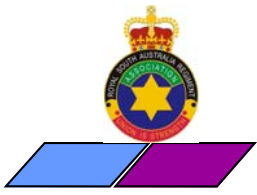
Private Jorgen Jensen VC

Division was deployed to defend positions south of the River Ancre in

France. At Dernancourt, on 5 April, the 50th Battalion assisted in the repulse of the largest German attack mounted against Australian troops during the war. The German threat persisted through April, and on ANZAC Day 1918 the 50th participated in the now-legendary attack to dislodge the enemy from Villers-Bretonneux.

The 50th Battalion continued to play an active role during the Allies' own offensive, launched on 8 August 1918. Its last major operation of the war was the attack on the Hindenburg "outpost line" on 18 September, during which the 50th composed part of the 4th Division's reserve. The 50th Battalion ceased to exist as a separate entity when it amalgamated with the 51st Battalion on 6 March 1919.





50th Battalion AIF Memorial Dedication

His Excellency the Governor's Deputy Mr Hiue Van Le has unveiled the new memorial dedicated to the memories of thousands of soldiers of the 50th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF. Master of Ceremonies Neil Nichols welcomed official guests including Regimental Colonel RSAR MAJGEN Neil Wilson and former Honourary Colonels Don Stewart, Jeff Chittiborough and Don Hawking. Chaplain David Prior from 7 RAR (Mech) said the prayer and consecrated the Memorial.

10th Bn Assoc President Doug Strain read an emotional Ceremonial Dedication, which included his own families ties to the 50th Battalion. Major James Kmet from 10/27 RSAR read the scripture, and Head Prefect Matthew Farmer of Rostrevor College recited a poem, after which Neville Cooper (3 RAR Assoc. SA) recited The Ode. Music was provided by Catherine Lambert and The Terrace Singers with 10/27 RSAR Bugler Trevor Dawson playing the Last Post and Rouse.

About 150 people attended the ceremony, after which a light luncheon which was served in the Torrens Training Depot

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The photograph above shows key speaker Lieutenant Colonel Doug Strain, President of the 10th Battalion Association AIF standing before the original 50th Battalion flag.



Pte Jorgen Jensen VC



Jensen was born in Loegstar, Denmark, the third of four children. In 1908, he moved to England before he emigrated to Australia in March 1909 and worked in Australia for the next five years. A month after the war commenced, he was naturalised a British subject at Adelaide, South Australia, on 7 September 1914.

Jensen served in the Australian Military Forces between March 1915 and December 1918 rising to the rank of Corporal.

When he was 26 years old and a Private in the 50th Battalion AIF during the First World War, the following deed took place for which he was awarded the VC.

On 2 April 1917 at Noreuil, France, Private Jensen, with five comrades, attacked a barricade behind which were about 45 of the enemy and a machine-gun. One of the party shot the gunner and Private Jensen rushed the post and threw in a bomb. Then, with a bomb in each hand, he threatened the rest and made them surrender. He sent one of his prisoners to another group of the enemy, ordering them to surrender, which they did, but our troops began firing on them, where-upon Private Jensen, regardless of danger stood on the barricade waving his helmet,

and the firing stopped. He then sent his prisoners back to our lines.

In May 1918, Jensen was severely wounded whilst on patrol after the retaking of Villers-Bretonneux.

Upon returning to Australia Jensen was discharged medically unfit for further service and began work at the Truro Hotel in Truro, South Australia. He later married the hotel manager Katy Herman.

Jensen later worked as a marine-store dealer in the inner city of Adelaide South Australia until his death from war related injuries in 1922. His body was carried on a horse-drawn gun carriage to the West Terrace Cemetery and he was buried with full military honours in the AIF section of the cemetery. It was reported as *one of the most impressive funerals which have*

passed through the gates of the West Terrace Cemetery and probably one of the largest military funerals ever held in Adelaide.



His Victoria Cross is displayed at the Australian War Memorial In Canberra. In Løegstar, Denmark, there is a statue erected in his memory in a local park.

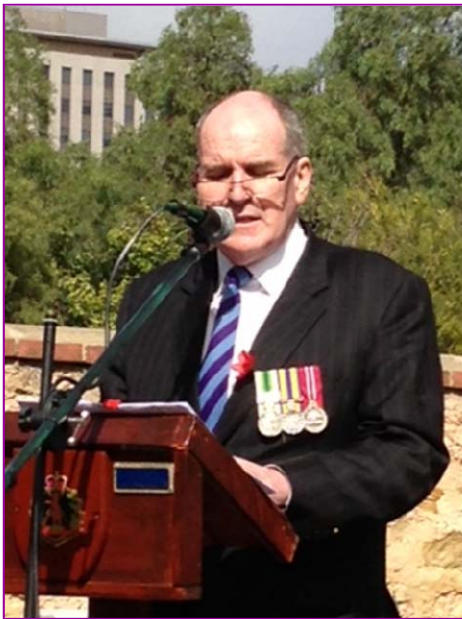




Commemorative Address

by Doug Strain

Commemorative Address
by LTCOL D. D. Strain (Ret'd), President 10th Battalion AIF Association
at the Unveiling and Dedication
of the Memorial to the 50th Infantry Battalion AIF
held on Tuesday 13 August 2013



Following the evacuation from the Gallipoli Peninsula the ANZAC Corps was withdrawn back to Egypt to undertake training and re-equip in preparation for their redeployment to the Western Front in northern Europe.

By then the Great War had been raging across the globe for over 18 months and the demand for manpower was growing as the Allied forces in Europe began to feel the pressure of the great losses being suffered – these only being exceeded by those suffered in later years!

To assist in meeting the growing need for men, in early 1916 it was agreed to effectively double the AIF through the splitting of many of the extant battalions. Thus the 50th Battalion was formed in Egypt on 26 February 1916 with approximately half of its recruits being veterans from the 10th Battalion, and the other half, fresh reinforcements from Australia. Reflecting the composition of the 10th, the 50th was predominantly composed of men from South Australia. The battalion became part of the 13th Brigade of the 4th Australian Division and was dubbed "Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred", after its first CO, Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Hurcombe.

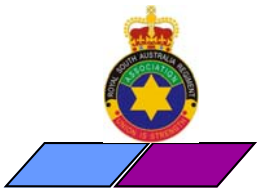
After arriving in France on 11 June 1916, the 50th fought in its first major battle at Mouquet Farm between 13 and 15 August and suffered heavily. It continued to then serve throughout Northern France and Belgium during the series of terrible campaigns that characterise the tragedy of the Western Front. In doing so, the men of the 50th Battalions earned battle honours the names of which now reflect many beautiful French and Belgium towns, villages and country fields but back then they were a hell on earth – names that when taken in the context of the Great War send a chill down the spine, names like The Somme, Pozieres, Bullecourt, Messines, Ypres, Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Passchendale, Hamel, Amiens, and the Hindenburg Line.

But I would like to concentrate on just one of the battle honours won by the men of the 50th Battalion – Villers-Bretonneux. It was here my historical research tells me that for the first time – and only matched by our Divisions fighting in the Western Desert in the early years of the Second World War - that Australian arms played a strategic role in a campaign that may have changed the outcome of the war.

Utilising troops freed by the collapse of Russia in October 1917, the German Army launched a major offensive on the Western Front at the end of March 1918. The 4th Division was deployed to defend positions south of the River Ancre in France. At Dernancourt, on 5 April, the 50th Battalion assisted in repulsing the largest German attack mounted against Australian troops during the war. The German threat persisted through April, and on ANZAC Day 1918 the 50th participated in the now- legendary attack to dislodge the enemy from Villers-Bretonneux.

It was here that the Australians, including the 50th Battalion, counter attacked the Germans and denied them their objective of Paris and their aim that by their doing so the Allies would have been forced to sue for peace on terms favourable to the Germans. To many, it was here that the Germans decided that defeat was inevitable and they turned and started their withdrawal back to Germany and their inevitable collapse and the eventual peace.

Continued next page



Commemorative Speech by Doug Strain

Continued from Page 3

Villers-Bretonneux still remembers the Australians, the Ecole Victoria, continues to proudly display the banner: "N'Oubliions Jamais l'Australie" (Let us never forget Australia) with a plaque on the front of the school telling how 1200 Australian soldiers died liberating the village from the Germans on 24 April 1918.

I can attest that to this day, the people of Villers-Bretonneux continue to hold most seriously their debt to Australia. I can say this because about 15 years ago I visited that school and I had young children come to me resplendent in my slouch hat and express their gratitude – and why did they do so I asked their response "because of what you Australians did for us".

But, as many here would appreciate, an infantry battalion is made up of men, each an individual with their own strength and weakness, hopes and fears, aspirations and expectations. It is about one of these that I would now like to speak a little.

3656 Private Roy Leslie Hutchesson, a farmer of Glencoe in the state's South East, was a single man of 22 years who enlisted in Mount Gambier on 27 May 1917. Roy was the oldest of three, with a younger brother and sister, and I am told that he had determined that the time had come for him to serve his country.

On the 4th of August 1917 he embarked in Melbourne for his adventure, disembarking in Glasgow some two months later. He finally arrived in France in January 1918 and was taken on strength as one of the 10th Reinforcements to the 50th Battalion. For some short three months he served with the Battalion before falling in the assault on Villers-Bretonneux.

His service record shows nothing of great significance. He appears to have been a somewhat unassuming character, only of a slight build and with a limited education. A country boy loved by many but expecting of little. I understand his family, especially his father, took the loss very badly.

Despite the return of his effects – which were modest and only extended to a few personal items – I understand the family refused to believe he was lost, something I understand was common for those who suffered such a loss. Indeed the Red Cross records show that later in 1918 a returned friend stated to the family that Roy had only been "wounded but not seriously" and hence a flurry of letter resulted to affirm the facts.

Sadly, his loss was confirmed and what I can only assume was a friend and a fellow member of the 10th reinforcement wrote:

"he was C Company. On night of 24/25 April during our attack at Villers Bretonneux, was killed outright by shell. I saw him lying on the field, but did not stop to examine him, as things were too warm. I did not see it actually happen, Know nothing of burial, came from South Australia" 3676 LCPL E. C Miinns.

I am told that his parents mourned his loss until the day they died. His father was said to be a broken man. His photo in uniform remained always displayed on the polished sideboard in a bowl of fresh rose petals and his young brother always carried the burden of trying to live up to his brothers memory. His name is etched on the National War Memorial in Adelaide, and in the memorials in the SA country towns of Glencoe, Millicent and Mt Gambier. His name also appears on the Wall of Honour at the Australian National Memorial at Villers Bretonneux as one of those who has no known grave.

I mention Roy as he was just one of many thousands of ordinary Aussie boys who served in the Battalions of the AIF. He was merely one of the 720 from the 50th Battalion who made the supreme sacrifice. But he was my wife's Grand Uncle, my mother-in-law's uncle and her father's older brother.

Today we do honour to Roy and all those who served in the 50th Battalion. Some made the supreme sacrifice but all paid a terrible price.

May you all Rest in Peace.

Lest We Forget.

Doug Strain - President 10th Battalion AIF Association



Letters to the Editor

Dear David,

Just a quick note to make a request for assistance to the subject event.

As I understand you are aware, the 3 RAR Association will be undertaking a commemorative event on Tuesday 13 August 2013 to recognise those who served in the 50th Australian Infantry Battalion AIF. As you are no doubt aware, this Battalion was the daughter battalion of the Fighting 10th and, hence, recognised as an SA unit. In light of this it has always been recognised as a part of the RSAR family. In recognition of this and my role as present of the 10th Battalion AIF Association I have been extended the honour of participating in the event.

In my dialogue with Adrian Craig, who has been managing all around the conduct of the event, he has asked if I would know of anyone who could assist with providing the luncheon that will follow the formalities. Noting the great job that you and the members of the RSAR Association have done in the past in organizing a feed, I thought I'd approach you to ask if you would be able to assist on this occasion. I'm not sure of the extent of the work needed but I'm sure that Adrian could advise and, no doubt, will have already made sure much is in place but it's in the area of "boots on the ground" that I think any deficiency may exist.

Therefore, could you advise if you'd be able to help on this occasion, and, if so, I'll then organize for Adrian to make contact with you about what he's after?

Finally, thanks in anticipation of your favourable response and I look forward to catching up with you and all on the day.

Warmest Best,

Doug Strain

President - 10th Battalion AIF Association

David,

As always, the newsletter is great reading and keeps me in touch with South Australia. I was particularly interested in the article on 50th Bn as my grandfather served in 10th Bn and then the 50th. He died in 1939 as a result of being gassed on the Western Front and is buried in the soldiers section of West Terrace cemetery.

There is a great book on the history of the 50th *Hurcombe's Hungry Half Hundred*, which I have. Good to see that a famous South Australian unit is not forgotten.

Regards

Phil Brookes QLD

David,

If I'm still in Australia then, I will be attending but regrettably I won't be able to help you as I'll be assisting my 90 year old mother at the ceremony.

Her father, my grandfather, Corporal Arthur Penn, served with the 50th Battalion (transferred from 10th Battalion on 22 Feb 16) and was awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field on 3 Sep 16 at Mouquet Farm (in fact was recommended for the DCM, but this was downgraded by HQ). One of my role models!

Best regards,

Lyndon Gaborit

Dear Players in the dedication of the 50th Infantry Battalion AIF Memorial,

I probably should address you all as "Key Players" as without your assistance the dedication of a memorial to the 50th Infantry Battalion AIF would not have been the success it was. We were all cogs in a large wheel making the dedication work.

Your assistance ranged from the students of Rostrevor College and the Royal South Australian Regiment Association in those low profile and generally out of sight tasks such as car parking, ushers and looking after the lunch to the more high profile tasks of reading the scripture and the poem, delivering the welcome and commemorative addresses, the leading of prayers plus the bugle and choral support.

There were many in the background before the Service such as S.D. Tillet Memorials manufacturing and installing the magnificent Memorial, Sandra Britain making the beautiful Veil, the Adelaide City Council for cleaning up of the Service venue early on the morning of the 13th, the Site Manager of Torrens Training Depot for the assisting in the setting up for the Lunch, the RSL for the loan of the 50th's Flag, the publicising the event in its newsletter and the hot water urns for the beverages and the Royal Australian Regiment Association for the loan of the PA system, the physical support at the luncheon and for also publicising the event.

The 3 RAR SA Committee did its "normal" great team effort with much of the detailed preparation and conduct that was not obvious to those that attended the Service and Lunch.

So thank you one and all. We have now done what should have been done many years ago and we now have a fitting tribute to those men of the 50th who were killed in action, died of wounds or disease, remain missing in action or came home physically and mentally wounded.

Kind regards,

Adrian Craig

Ceremonial Officer 3 RAR SA



Meet Mark Donaldson VC

The City of Marion Library Service has an upcoming Meet the Author event which may be of interest to members of the RSAR Association Inc - Mark Donaldson, VC, *The Crossroad*.

Meet the Author - Mark Donaldson, VC



When Mark Donaldson was awarded the Victoria Cross in 2009, he was the first Australian to receive our highest award for bravery since Keith Payne's medal in 1969. Mark showed extraordinary courage when he rescued an Afghani interpreter under heavy fire during an ambush in Afghanistan. Something about Mark's modesty and quiet determination struck a chord with the Australian public, because in 2010 he was voted Young Australian of the Year.

Mark's journey to that crucial decision in Afghanistan, where he chose to risk his own life to save another's, is almost as extraordinary as the act itself. He was a rebellious child and teenager, even before the death of his father - a Vietnam veteran - when Mark was in his mid-teens. A few years later, Mark's mother was murdered, although her body has never been found.



*From teenage rebellion to the stark realities of combat in the mountains and valleys of Afghanistan, Mark's book, *The Crossroad*, is the frank and compelling story of a man turning his destiny around by sheer determination and strength of mind.*

When: Wednesday 13th November, 7.30pm - 8.30pm
(followed by book signing)

Where: Marion Cultural Centre - Domain Theatre, 287 Diagonal Road, Oaklands Park

Cost: FREE

Bookings essential -
please phone **8375 6785**
or email libraryevents@marion.sa.gov.au



Keith Payne VC Congratulates Mark Donaldson VC during his Victoria Cross presentation ceremony.