

**S A M R A G 207**

Representing the Royal Australian Armoured Corps  
Corporation Limited in South Australia



March 2026, Number 71

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**PRESIDENT'S PAGE**

“An army marches on its stomach” These words are attributed to Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte whose early military successes at battles such as Arcole, Pyramids, Marengo, Jena and Austerlitz were as much the result of logistics planning as they were of tactical mastery.

Food is something that evokes a range of mixed emotions for me. On the one hand, when I have been on field exercises or training courses such as my Crew Commander’s Course or Regimental Officer Basic Course, eating was a low priority during morning routine, after cleaning the machine gun, cleaning your personal weapon, vehicle servicing and first parade, confirmatory orders and checking radio communications. No wonder I lost a few kilos every time I went into the field. Even when you did get a chance to eat, the rations from a 10-man ration pack were good for subsistence but hard to take, particularly after living on them for ten or more days. Thank goodness for jaffles where you could turn a fairly unappetising chicken or vegetable stew (or was that beef and beans, it is so hard to tell the difference) into something special by putting it between two pieces of stale bread and cooking in a jaffle iron over a gas stove. I also remember one time when my driver boiled an egg for each of us. No sooner had he given it to me then a call came over the radio to complete a task. I put the egg in my tank suit pocket and got to work. After two days of almost non-stop activity, I took the hard-boiled egg out of my pocket. It was still in one piece so I cracked the shell and enjoyed it – not the most hygienic of meals but enjoyable none the less.

I also have many good military memories associated with food. The caterer at 3<sup>rd</sup> / 9<sup>th</sup> Light Horse, the late Sergeant Dave Pearks could take a 10-man ration pack, combine with some fresh rations, add some herbs and spices and come up with a gourmet meal. Similarly, the Squadron Quartermaster Sergeant, Warrant Officer Gary Hedt would turn up at a squadron position with a BBQ and his “Gaz burgers” to give the exhausted troops a fresh meal. It was as much a morale boost as a good feed. Then there were regimental dinners where eating together was full of rituals and ceremonies. It can feel somewhat archaic and at the same time produced a sense of tradition and history.

Talking about history, we will soon be commemorating ANZAC Day where we remember those Australian service men and service women who have served their country, including those who have died as a result of their service in war or on peacekeeping operations. On the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915, conditions were extremely difficult, including the supply of good food. Frank Blackwell, a trooper in 3<sup>rd</sup> Light Horse wrote about his experiences, about living in dugouts, finding it impossible to keep clean due to the shortage of fresh water. It was common practice to clean teeth, shave and wash with the one cup of water. Clothes could not be washed very often and were worn unclean for considerable periods, with the result that everybody became “lousy” with fleas predominating.

The food issued during the campaign was plentiful but entirely unsuitable to keep the troops fit under the conditions in which they had to live and fight. It lacked variety and owing to the method of packaging, transport and storage being subject to the vagaries of the climate, was often in a deteriorated condition when they reached the troops. It comprised mainly of bully beef, bacon, cheese, biscuits, various jams and marmalade. They endured bully beef that poured out of the tin on a hot day, cheese that was also very much affected by storage in the sun on the beach, bacon packed in salt that aggravated the constant thirst of the troops, biscuits that defied the strongest teeth and finally apricot jam that was too thin to spread and had the appearance of dirty water....and still they endured.

In the lead up to ANZAC Day let us acknowledge our forebears for their sacrifice, courage and selflessness which have helped make our country what it is today.

**Malcolm Haynes...Nec Espera Terrent**





The relationship between Australian and English soldiers could perhaps be characterised by a friendly rivalry. Working and fighting together during the war, both similarities and differences between the two groups were highlighted. British soldiers were called "Tommies" by the Australians, a reference to "Thomas Atkins", the first name that the Duke of Wellington entered into the first British army sample soldier's pay-book.

There is some debate about the smoothness of relations between the Australian troops and the British troops. Although some Australians went to war with a sense of England as the "Motherland", this also led to a perceived attitude by some "Tommies" that the Australians were backward and coarse "Colonials". While considered excellent soldiers, Australians were known for their easygoing natures, their ability to enjoy themselves heartily when on leave, as well as their reputation for a relaxed attitude to discipline.

C.E.W. Bean, the Australian Official World War One historian, wrote, "For most British Commanders, the Australian was the bad boy of the Imperial family".

The Australians were said to be less concerned with the formality of hierarchy and orders, especially with British officers. Gunner J.R. Armitage wrote on 3 July 1918:

*One night we were hopelessly blocked by an English unit's waggon which had got a wheel over the narrow bridge. After a while we could stand it no longer, so we unhitched the horses and tipped the waggon and contents into the river. The Tommies took a poor view, but everyone else was pleased.*

LH Memorial Horse Trough—2020

Some Australian soldiers felt that their contribution to the war effort was not appreciated. In a letter to his mother in July 1918, Private Ronald Simpson wrote:

*England would have been in a sorry way if it were not for the few Colonials that are over here.*

Even Major General John Monash felt that the Australians were undervalued by the English. In a letter discussing the Australian successes at Villers-Bretonneux in April 1918, he wrote:

*The British public is at last beginning to sit up and take notice, and from an attitude of cold and rather critical patronage towards Australians, and vague allusion to their "slack discipline" (forsooth), the people in England, the English troops and officers, and finally the War Office itself, are beginning to realize that the Australians are some of the best troops in the whole Empire, always to be relied upon, not merely to hold securely all ground but also to carry out every reasonable task set them.*

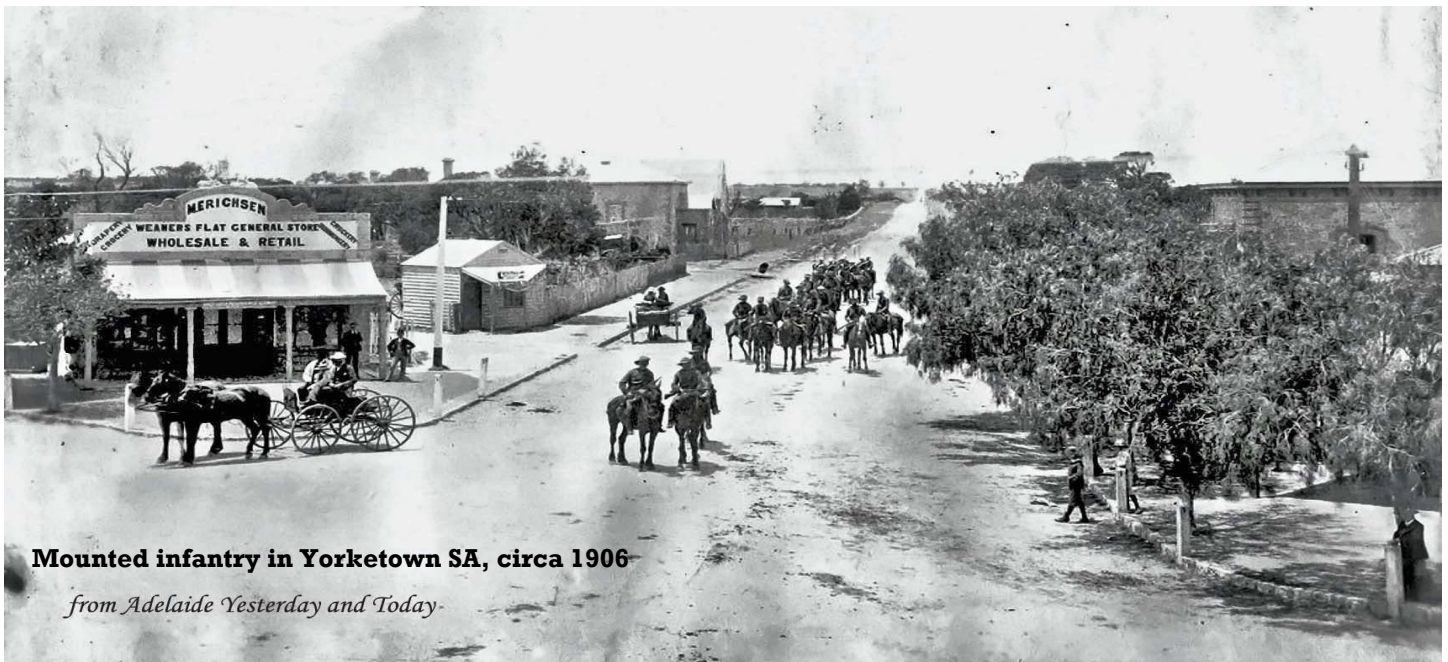
However, any antagonism towards the English may have stemmed from the fact that the latter were often in command of Australian troops. Negative attitudes towards Australian command were probably just as common.

It has also been said that the Australians felt more of a sense of class distinction among the British ranks. In a letter dated 26 July 1918, Lance Corporal A.H. McKibbin commented that

*as far as England is concerned, I hope that the flame of democracy, bred by this awful war will utterly destroy for all time the feudalistic and stone-age institutions of this aristocracy-ridden, but beautiful country.*

Most of the time, however, Australian and English soldiers fought well together as Allies united in a common goal. Being a small nation and all volunteers, it is not surprising that the Australians felt they had a right to display a certain overwhelming pride and prejudice against other nationalities. In reality, though, it was the combined efforts of all the Allied forces involved that won the war.

- Letter, Major General John Monash, May 1918. Source: AWM



**Mounted infantry in Yorketown SA, circa 1906**

*from Adelaide Yesterday and Today*

In 1906, South Australia, was home to local militia activities and a growing community of veterans from the Second Boer War (1899–1902). During this period, South Australian military forces were undergoing a transition following Federation in 1901, with local units being integrated into the newly formed Australian Military Forces.



**Yorketown SA—2026**

—2020

- **Boer War Veterans:** Many men from Yorketown and the surrounding District of Melville served in South Australian contingents (such as the **South Australian Mounted Rifles**) during the Boer War. By 1906, these veterans were active in local community life and memorial efforts.
- **Local Militia:** Yorketown was a hub for regional defence training. Local units and Rifle Clubs were common in rural South Australian towns to maintain military readiness.
- **Commemorations:** In 1906, military medals like the **Natal Rebellion Medal** were being awarded to colonial troops for service in South Africa, reflecting the ongoing military connection between the region and the British Empire.

While the term "Mounted Infantry" was specifically used during the Boer War (1899–1902), by 1906, these units were largely reorganized into **Light Horse Regiments** or **Infantry Regiments** with mounted capabilities. No Australian contingents were sent in 1906, however, a small number of Australians volunteered to serve with Imperial Units or local volunteer units.

The **1st South Australian Mounted Rifles** had famously transitioned from pure infantry to a mounted role during their service in South Africa.

By 1912, regional militia in SA included the **24th Australian Light Horse Regiment** and the **81st Australian Infantry Regiment**.

Feedback from our previous SAMRAG (January 2026)

Good morning Dave, WOW!! What a great newsletter. Again! Please pass my congratulations to Malcolm for a very interesting front page article. He stirred my memory banks when talking about the “good old days” of our training, so many, many years ago! I can recall countless activities where we weren’t exactly smelling of roses.

And seeing Aaron Johnson and the OC in the UK was heartening too. I had the “misfortune” of training Aaron and his sidekick Blake Smith as snotty nosed Army Cadets back in the late 90’s! They have both grown to become responsible (?) adults. I also worked with them both for a while at Tenix Defence when they were having great fun driving the new M113AS4 all over the country. I have stories of many other Army Cadets who went on to become good soldiers, including WO1 Darren Wasley and WO2 Peter Papalia. WHERE DID THE YEARS GO??

Well done again mate, stay safe and stay well.

**David Laing—President of the Royal South Australia Regiment Association**

## Welfare and educational support available for RAAC soldiers, veterans and their families in time of need.

### The RAAC’s Colonel John Haynes Trust

As a serving or ex-serving RAAC member, if you or a member of your immediate family, requires assistance because of family trauma, emergency or an educational need you might qualify for a grant or financial assistance from the COL John Haynes Trust.

A career RAAC soldier for 36 years, John enlisted in the CMF in 1948 and soon realised he wanted to pursue a military career. He transferred to the ARA, was accepted to Duntroon and graduated to Armour. He had the rare distinction of having served in almost every RAAC unit during his career. His long service included Vietnam in 1970.

He always had a strong passion for RAAC members’ welfare, especially their families and War Widows. After retiring in 1984 John became a driving

force behind the introduction of the Armoured Combat Badge and as the National President of the RAAC Association he set the groundwork and drove the activity that achieved the construction of the excellent Boer War Memorial in Canberra to honour the Australian Light Horse, our horse mounted predecessors.

John died in 2020 bequeathing a substantial sum to the RAAC via the RAAC Association (NSW) which set up the Trust in his name to honour his wish of assisting RAAC members, and their families, when no other means of assistance is available.

For more information, or an application form, visit the Trust’s website:

[haynestrust.org](http://haynestrust.org)

or email: [william.cross@haynestrust.org](mailto:william.cross@haynestrust.org)



Colonel John Haynes AM



Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association

## ANZAC Day – Saturday, 25 April 2026

SAMRA members, their families and members of the general public, are invited to attend the Light Horse Memorial Service at 0800 h on ANZAC Day at the LH Memorial at the cnr of North and East terraces. 3rd/9th LH (SAMR) will be mounting the Catafalque Party.

ANZAC Day March—Meet at the FUP 0945h, Group 11, Western side of Pultney street. Look out for our banner. **DRESS: Beret, medals, jacket, dress trousers and tie.**

# THE OWEN MACHINE CARBINE—PART 2

Pete Tulloch

SAMRA ARCHIVIST

## MAKING IT WORK. LYSAGHTS, GERARD WARDELL AND FRED KUNZLER.

Wardell opened the bag and was intrigued by the weapon inside. He was intending to hand it in to the local police, but instead asked Owen's father about the weapon. Wardell could see the potential of the weapon, and enlisted the help of Essington Lewis, the Minister of Munitions. Wardell enlisted the help of his brother, Gerard, and a fitter called Fred Kunzler, (who had trained as a gunsmith). Owen was released from the AIF to assist in the weapon's development. A prototype was produced in .32 calibre and demonstrated successfully to the Army hierarchy.

Here the story becomes embroiled in Australian Army bureaucracy.

High ranking Australian Army officers, (like their British counterparts), were prejudiced against sub machine guns, but declared that if one was to be adopted it would be of British origin. They waited for shipments of the British Sten, which they hoped would be produced locally. Expecting an example of good British design like the Lanchester, they were horrified at the cheap and shoddy nature of the Sten. It was given to Die Casters of Melbourne to improve its design. Unfortunately, the result, the AUSTEN, was over-engineered and retained the Sten's single stack magazine, and although 25,000 were produced, it was never much liked by front line troops.

## ARMY OBSTRUCTION.

The army demanded a redesign of the Owen gun, chambered for .38 rimmed pistol ammunition, but refused to supply any ammunition or a barrel. Lysaght's produced a prototype, using part of the barrel of a Lee Enfield. Not surprisingly, the weapon failed its trials due to the unsuitability of the ammunition for a sub machine gun. The Army then demanded a prototype in .45 ACP, then disingenuously failed to provide a barrel, and supplied the wrong ammunition. (.455 Webley) A barrel from a Martini-Henry rifle was provided by the NSW Police Commissioner, but the cartridge was too powerful and led to a number of problems.



*Owen Gun Prototypes & Experimentals. On display at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra  
Left side, from top— .22 RF, 1939; .32 ACP, 1941; .45 ACP, 1941; .380 revolver, 1941.  
Right side, from top— Mk I action; .380 revolver, trials, 1941; .45 ACP, trials, 1941; 9mm Para., trials 1941.*

A. W. M.

However, the prototypes utilising .45ACP and 9mm Parabellum performed successfully. Fortunately for the troops fighting in the Pacific, news of Army obstruction was leaked to the press, and along with pressure from Essington Lewis, Army Minister Frank Ford and the Prime Minister himself, Lysaght's were instructed to begin production of the Owen Gun chambered for 9mm Parabellum. The result was one of the best sub machine guns ever produced, and although heavy and odd looking earned the sobriquet of the "Diggers Darling". The Sten by comparison was known to British troops as the "Plumber's Nightmare".

By the War's end 45,433 Owen guns had been produced, including a number of sub-variants, mainly in attempts to reduce the weapon's weight, but also a suppressed model and a horseshoe magazine which held 72 rounds.

**Part 3 to be continued in our next SAMRAG**

# 3/9 LH (SAMR) COMMEMORATING THE BATTLE OF BEERSHEBA AT THE NATIONAL WINE CENTRE OF AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE ON THE 31ST OCTOBER 2025.



A Squadron Sergeants Major Honour board presented by WO1 Steve Langdon



Greg Hill being presented his Certificate for 40 years service to the RAAC presented by the OC, HONCOL & BDE Comd)

## HOW MANY FACES DO YOU RECOGNISE?

1. Date of activity (month and year if possible)
2. Name and location of activity or exercise.
3. Names of any people you recognise (please be specific e.g. TPR Bloggs - second from left)

If you have any anecdotes of the photo or the relevant activity, please let us know so they can be published in the next edition of SAMRAG.



The Army Museum Puckapunyal will be reopening in the near future. Many will know this as the Puckapunyal Tank Museum. For current Defence members and their families, access will be available from Tuesday 27 January 2026.

For the public and former Defence members, access will be available from Saturday 14 March 2026.

The museum will be open from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. To ensure base security requirements are met, all members of the public and former Defence members are asked to email the museum in advance with their preferred visit date and name and number of attendees. The email address is: [aahu.amp@defence.gov.au](mailto:aahu.amp@defence.gov.au)

A lot of refurbishment has taken place over the past few years for both Armoured Corps and Artillery exhibits. A visit to Army Museum Puckapunyal is highly recommended.



LIFE MEMBERSHIP	LIFE MEMBERSHIP	ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP	ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP
SIMON BRAID	CHRISTOPHER MANNING (SM)	TREVOR BALDOCK	JOHN IRVINE
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PETER CORNELIUS	PETER MATTHEWS	GEOFFRY BARNETT CSC	BON JORDAN
CHARLIE BELPERIO	DAVID MERCER OAM	THOMAS BEGG	RICHARD PAILTHORPE
SHANE BISSMIRE	MATTHEW MITCHELL (SM)	JOHN BLACK	TIM LAMONT
RODNEY CATHRO	TERRY MONTEN	JANE BODLEY	BRIAN MADDISON
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JAKE KEARSLEY CSM (SM)	FRANK WADE RFD	GERALD HOPGOOD	GRAHAM TWEEDDAL
JIM KENNELLY	BRENTON WALTON	ROBERT HUTCHINSON	<p><b>THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT TO SAMRA</b></p>
STEVE LANGDON (SM)	DAVID WATTS RFD	MALCOLM HUGHES (SM)	
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MARK McKENNA		MICHAEL KUILBOER	
	(SM) = SERVING MEMBERS		

**The following items are available for purchase. All profits support the Association:**

- NAME BADGES—\$25.00
- BLACK POLO SHIRT, BADGE ON THE FRONT, WITH SAMRA UNDERNEATH— \$45.00 WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING SIZE IN STOCK 2XL x 2
- 3rd/9th LH (SAMR) BLAZER POCKET BADGE - \$25.00
- RAAC LAPEL BADGE—\$6.00
- SAMRA MEMBERSHIP LAPEL BADGE—\$5.00
- ASSOCIATION TIE—\$33.00
- UNIT TIE—\$33.00

**SOUTH AUSTRALIAN  
MOUNTED RIFLES  
ASSOCIATION INC  
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Public Officer &  
Webmaster**

**63 Barramundi Drive  
Hallett Cove SA 5158  
Mobile: 0439 843 897**

**Place your orders with Simon Braid, Mobile: 0417 705 147 please add \$11.00 for postage and packing. The preferred method of payment is via your financial institution using EFT, details are;**

**Account Name—Association, South Australian Mounted Rifles  
BSB—833 205, Account No—20760940, or send your payment to:  
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## **2026 SOCIAL CALENDAR**

- **Saturday, 25 April—ANZAC Day, LH Memorial Service & RSL march.**
- **Thursday, 14 May—Old & Bold lunch at the Seacliff Hotel.**
- **June, TBA—Black Hat Night.**
- **Thursday, 23 July—Old & Bold lunch at the Victoria Hotel, O'Halloran Hill.**
- **Wednesday, 19 August—38th SAMRA AGM at the Naval, Military & Air Force Club.**
- **Thursday, 17 September—Old & Bold lunch at the Earl of Leicester Hotel.**
- **October, TBA—Black Hat Night.**
- **Saturday, 5 December—SAMRA EOY family function, TBA.**