

More Majorum

2nd Lockdown Special 2020



Siege of Giarabub

Footnote in History

Brixia light mortar

6.5x53Rmm
Mannlicher Cartridge

Bedford OXA

Standard Car 4x2



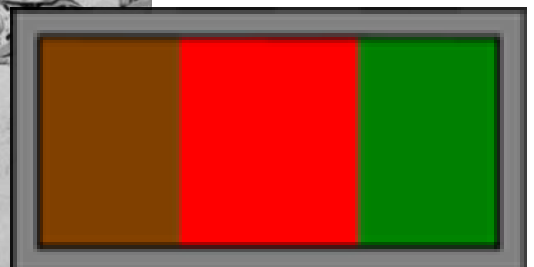
Above is Brixia light mortar round.

To the left is a Italian Tanker
surrendering to an 6 Div.
Australian soldier.

Below 6th Australian Divisional
Cavalry Regiment (6th ADCR)
Colours

UP COMING EVENTS

All up coming events
and club meeting have
been cancel for the
time being due to the
CORONAVIRUS
(COVID-19)
STAGE 3
RESTRICTIONS



N.V.A.C.G. Committee 2019/20

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Vice Pres/M/ship Sec: John Miller

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John Harrington

Scott Jackson

Carl Webster

Peter Roberts

Rob Keen

Sol Sutherland



Achtung !!



From the secretaries' desk

I hope everyone has been staying safe from COVID-19 .

Well here we are 8 weeks into our 11 week "State of Emergency". At least as of the 13th of May the Gun Dealers and Firearms Registry are back in business and as I am writing this I'm planning to go duck hunting tomorrow. Maybe, if and when the "State of Emergency" is lifted on the 31st of May we can go back to having some form of meetings.

While the guild has been in forced recession, some members have been trying to maintain guild camaraderie, Brett has turned out two unscheduled editions of the our newsletter, a group of us have been communicating on the guilds new facebook group and members have been writing articles for the newsletter. Even though we are in recession, I have still been contacted by a number of people wishing join the guild, but as we can't approve these at a meeting, I'll to send out an email to all the members asking asking if they have any objections.

I often get calls from members asking "where can I find a copy of the newsletters", "I need a membership application form", "Where is our facebook page". Well, all those things are available on the internet , you can find links in my email signature or they ar listed at the bottom left of this page.

If you have an email address and are not receiving this newsletter by email , you need to let me know by emailing me at secretary@nvacg.org.au. You can also email President/Treasurer John at president@nvacg.org.au. Both these email divert to our person email addresses so should the these executive position change you can still use these emails.

Last but not least it's annual membership renewal time. Still \$45 or \$40 pensioner. You should have received the notification with this newsletter. This is just a reminder.

Subscriptions may be paid by:

Direct Deposit (or an electronic transfer) to: NVACG Inc. Bendigo Bank BSB No. 633-000 Account No. 101586287 Note: *When paying electronically from an account with a different name, use your surname and/or membership number as a reference so we can identify your payment. You will receive your new membership cards by mail.*



SOME OF YOU MAY NOT KNOW BUT THE N.V.A.C.G. HAS IT'S OWN WEBSITE

Here you will find all the news and details for coming guild events and information for prospective members.

<http://www.nvacg.org.au/>

You can find past & current newsletters here

<http://www.nvacg.org.au/news/>



We are also on Facebook

@nvacgorg

Membership Applications:

<http://www.nvacg.org.au/ab/mship4.pdf>

"FOR SALE"

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&
MEMORABILA**
etc.

Contact Geoff
on 5821 9015

Or
email;
wilsigns1@gmail.com

One of our members is looking to buy several items, namely,
(A). .577/450 Martini Henry rifle Yataghan Bayonet and Scabbard in very good order.
(B). .577/450 Martini Henry rifle Cutlass Bayonet and Scabbard in very good order.
(C). .577/450 Martini Henry rifle Elcho Bayonet and Scabbard in very good order.

If you can help with any or all of these Bayonets contact John Harrington on 03 58213192 or email on jobah450.577@bigpond.com

Italian photograph of the Giarabub oasis in 1941



Siege of Giarabub (now Jaghbub) in Libya, was an engagement between Commonwealth and Italian forces, during the Western Desert Campaign of the Second World War. In the aftermath of *Operazione E*, the invasion of Libya by the Italian 10th Army (9–16 September 1940), Operation Compass (9–16 December) by the Western Desert Force (WDF), the Battle of Sidi Barrani and the pursuit of the 10th Army into Cyrenaica (16 December 1940 – 9 February 1941) the fortified Italian position at the Al Jaghbub Oasis was besieged by parts of the 6th Australian Division.

The 6th Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment (6th ADCR) began the siege in December 1940 and isolated the oasis, leaving the Italian garrison dependent on the *Regia Aeronautica*. Air transport proved insufficient and hunger prompted many of the locally recruited troops to desert. After being reinforced by the 2/9th Australian Battalion and a battery of the 4th Royal Horse Artillery, the Australians attacked Giarabub on 17 March 1941 and the Italian garrison surrendered on 21 March.

Background; Giarabub is an oasis in the Libyan Desert, 200 mi (320 km) south of Bardia and 40 mi (65 km) west of the border with Egypt. The Great Sand Sea of the Sahara Desert lies to the south, and the town is at the west end of salt marshes which go up to the Egyptian border. Giarabub is the westernmost in a line of oases on the edge of the Sahara into Egypt. In 1940, it was the southernmost Italian frontier post along the border with Egypt. Giarabub had been garrisoned by the Italians since 1925, after being ceded to Libya from Egypt by the British. In 1940, the garrison, commanded by Major Salvatore Castagna, consisted of 1,350 Italian and 750 Libyan soldiers, in four companies of border guards, five of Libyan infantry, a platoon Libyan engineers, an artillery company with fourteen 47 mm Cannone da 47/32 M35, four 80 mm Cannone da 77/28 and sixteen 20 mm Cannone-Mitragliera da 20/77 guns, signals engineers, a field hospital and a supply section. Gullies and re-entrants had been entrenched and barbed wire laid out around the village. Giarabub was at the end of a long supply line, made worse by a lack of vehicles. The Italian army lacked the mobility necessary to maintain outposts against opposition and could deliver only a small amount of supplies by air.

6th Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment (6th ADCR) insert 15 cwt



6th Australian Divisional Cavalry

On 2 December 1940, B Squadron, 6th Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment (6th ADCR) of the 6th Australian Division, Second Australian Imperial Force, was sent by the Western Desert Force (WDF) to Siwa oasis in Egypt, about 40 mi (65 km) east of Giarabub, to relieve a British force which had been there since September. The 6th ADCR should have had Vickers light tanks and Bren carriers but few were available and those that were proved mechanically unreliable in the desert. A Squadron got the armoured vehicles, while B and C squadrons were equipped with 15 cwt and 30 cwt (750 and 1,500 kg) lorries.

On 11 December, after a week of patrols, a raid was mounted by B Squadron on Garn-el-Grein, 40 mi (65 km) north of Giarabub. The Australians were outgunned and withdrew, after Italian infantry in trucks and three Italian fighter aircraft arrived. On 14 December, B Squadron ambushed and destroyed a convoy near Fort Maddalena. The Australians patrolled to reconnoitre and isolate Giarabub, ready for an attack. On 31 December, 6th ADCR suffered its first losses when a patrol was forced to retreat after coming under artillery fire, with two men killed and three vehicles destroyed.

Prelude; Siege On 20 December, C Squadron conducted a secret reconnaissance of the outer defences of Giarabub. On 24 December, part of B Squadron attacked and captured an outpost at Ain Melfa, at the east end of the Giarabub salt marshes and used it as an advanced post. With the capture of the El Qaseibieya, well to the south-west fringe of the marshes, the Australians dominated the west end of the area. On 25 December, a reconnaissance in force by C Squadron was met with artillery-fire and air attacks. The following night, a raid on an Italian gun position was forced to withdraw after being detected; one man was captured. On 8 January 1941, a relief convoy was destroyed by the Royal Air Force (RAF) near Giarabub. This was the last Italian attempt to supply the oasis by land, after the defeat of the 10th Army in Operation Compass and its withdrawal from Cyrenaica.

The *Regia Aeronautica* (Royal Italian Air Force) made several attempts to supply the oasis by air but on 4 January, four 25-pounder field guns arrived at Siwa; on 9 January, the guns bombarded the Italian airstrip at Giarabub, damaging a transport aircraft and silencing two field guns. Airdrops of supplies were insufficient to feed the garrison. Libyan troops began to abandon their posts and by the end of February, 620 had been captured; the regular troops held on. The 6th ADCR had observed and harassed the oasis defenders but did not have the strength to attack the position. An advanced landing ground was established by the RAF beyond Siwa but a lack of aircraft made it redundant. Small Italian supply drops continued but rations for the garrison were drastically reduced.



6th Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment (6th ADCR)

British offensive preparations

Brigadier-General George Wootten, commander of the 18th Australian Infantry Brigade in the 6th Australian Division, was ordered to Giarabub but a lack of transport restricted the operation to a reinforced battalion, which had to end the siege in ten days. Wootten Force was assembled from the 2/9th Australian Infantry Battalion, reinforced by an infantry company, a mortar platoon, a machine-gun platoon, an anti-aircraft platoon and a battery of the 4th Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery (4th RHA) with twelve 25-pounder field guns. Wootten Force had no air support, little ammunition and no tanks. The Australians reconnoitred the Giarabub defences on 12 and 16 March, finding a track across the southern marshes and a gap in the frontier wire large enough for vehicles. An Italian force in trucks tried to outflank the reconnaissance party and were driven off by artillery--fire.

The heights south of the town were judged to be crucial to the Italian defence and B Squadron was ordered to take the Italian observation post (later named Wootten House) and advance north-west along the track toward Giarabub. B Squadron took Wootten House unopposed on 17 March, by 6:00 a.m. and then ambushed two lorries in which two Italians were killed, three wounded and 15 taken prisoner. (An Italian officer volunteered information of the oasis defences.)

The squadron pressed on for 4.3 mi (7 km) and captured Daly House, the last post before Giarabub. The Australians were forced back by artillery fire and the post re-occupied, Breda cannons at the post being used to keep the Australians at a distance. On 19 March Wootten ordered an attack by two companies along the southern track to re-take Daly House and to drive the Italians back to the last line of the main Giarabub defences, to gain a good jumping-off position to attack the southern heights. Two 25-pounders were pulled through the marsh behind the infantry through heavy going to Daly House, which delayed the attackers until 3:00 p.m.

The post was unoccupied and artillery and machine-gun fire from the town was inaccurate. The Australians pressed on and occupied the Tamma Heights south-east of the oasis against little opposition; 13 Platoon was sent to Ship Hill at the east end of the heights, to provide covering fire, while the other two platoons advanced towards the town. By dark they had reached the south-eastern corner, where the wire had been covered by sand. Two sections advanced into the Italian position and found that Post 42 had been abandoned. On the arrival of 10 Platoon, the party occupied Post 36 and at 2:00 a.m. an Italian counter-attack was delivered and the Australians retired, suffering three wounded and having two men captured. By the morning of 20 March it had been decided to make the main attack in that area; supporting operations, a demonstration by the cavalry to the north and Post 76 on Brigadiers Hill had been taken by D Company, 2/10th Battalion, which secured the flank of the attack and left the Italians unsure of the direction of the main attack.

Plan of attack; Two companies of the 2/9th Battalion were to attack, covered by fire from the mortars and machine-guns on Ship Hill and the 4th RHA. The attack was to capture the southern redoubt and then the other two companies would attack along the flanks of the redoubt and D Company, 2/10th Australian Infantry Battalion, would advance from Brigadiers Hill to open a track across the marsh and shorten the supply route. The cavalry would mount a subsidiary attack from the northern approach down Pipsqueak Valley, to take the airfield. A sandstorm blew up and clogged weapons which needed to be cleaned, then in the afternoon the storm abated but was sufficient to obscure the Australian assembly. There were exchanges of fire and from Ship Hill, the Australian machine-gunners could hit the Italian defences around the oasis and suppressed several positions. An Italian sniper stalked the machine-gun posts to no effect. Patrols went forward after dark to observe Italian positions and make sure the Italians were not trying to slip away. An Australian



An Italian troop convoy on its way to relieve the Siege of Giarabub.

listening post was met by an Italian patrol which withdrew when challenged. The Australians found the Italians in the redoubt "very nervous", firing and hurling grenades at shadows and then withdrew for the start of the attack. Zero hour was set at 5:15 a.m., when A Company was to attack on the right and C Company on the left, towards four knolls on the edge of the redoubt. When captured, A Company was to take the fifth knoll further back. The twelve guns of the 4th RHA would fire on the initial objectives, then lift onto the second objective; the machine-guns and mortars on Ship Hill were to give covering fire once the infantry advanced.

Battle; Before zero hour, the lead companies assembled amidst another sandstorm. A Company advanced to within 50 m (55 yd) of the wire and was then bombarded by the British gunners who had underestimated the swirling wind and dropped short. The bombardment cut the line from the forward observer and the battery, which delayed an adjustment of range (shells also dropped short onto Ship Hill, causing one casualty). Twelve men of A Company were killed and twenty wounded; the survivors re-organised and began to move forward. A Platoon had avoided the worst of the bombardment but lost contact with the rest of A Company and continued the attack. C Company found that the wire had been cut and advanced to the first objective. The Italians appeared too stunned from the bombardment to offer much resistance and the Australians quickly reached the first line of knolls.

The Australians used many hand-grenades clearing dugouts and soon ran out. Some of the Australians had apparently been ordered to take no prisoners and were reluctant to advance, when it became clear that few Italians intended not to fight on. The Australians were ordered to encourage the Italians to surrender and by 7:26 a.m., the 2/9th Battalion had occupied the first four knolls.



25-pounder above & below in action



Due to the short shooting on A Company, a platoon of D Company, the battalion reserve, was sent forward to assist in the assault. The Italian defenders rallied, a mountain gun on the last knoll and Italian positions around the fort and plantation area opened fire and an attempt by an Australian platoon, to cross the flats into the town was repulsed. Fire of the mortars and machine-guns on Ship Hill and from a machine-gun detachment with A Company, covered the Australians as they captured the fifth knoll, just after 9:00 a.m. Prisoners said that the garrison had not eaten for two days or nights. B Company on the left flank had advanced and re-gained contact with battalion HQ at 10:00 a.m. In the north, the cavalry diversion down Pipsqueak Valley to the airfield began at 6:15 a.m., an hour after the attack on the southern redoubt had commenced. B and C Squadrons advanced to occupy high ground on either side of the valley, with little Italian resistance except at the *Egbert* feature, which was bombarded and overrun. By 9:00 a.m. the cavalry were on the first objective, an east–west line through Egbert. D Company advanced through the cultivated area north-east of the redoubt into the town but a minefield, spotted earlier by an RAF Lysander crew, took a long time to clear. At 11:25 a.m., the 2/9th Battalion advanced into the town and found the mosque intact. By midday the Australians had entered the fort and ended the siege. After just two days the Australians withdrew from Giarabub, because of the Italo–German advance on El Agheila.



Australian soldiers from the 2/9th Battalion hoist a flag of the Unit Colour Patch over the Giarabub fort.

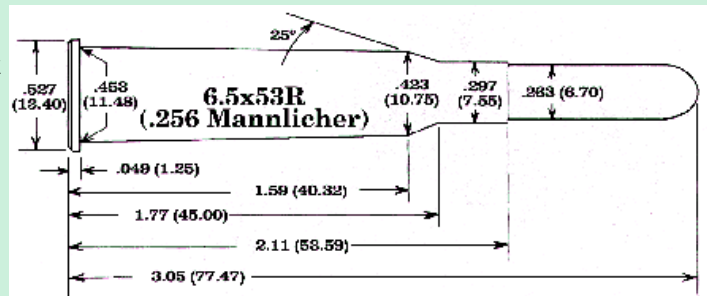
Aftermath; On 17 March, Erwin Rommel had congratulated the garrison on its defence and promised that they would be relieved and on 24 March, Italo-German forces occupied El Agheila. The resistance of the Italian troops was greatly celebrated by the Fascist regime to mitigate the calamity in Cyrenaica. The Italian and Commonwealth forces had fought for three months on the edge of the Sahara, enduring large temperature variations, sandstorms, the defenders suffering a shortage of water and food. Differences in technical quality, leadership, training and supply had put the Italians at a permanent disadvantage to the besiegers. The Australians left behind a salvage party and withdrew from the oasis the next day, just before Operation Sonnenblume (24 March – 9 April), an Italo-German counter-offensive, which recaptured Cyrenaica. A few weeks later, the 18th Australian Brigade Group began its part in the long Siege of Tobruk; the 6th ADCR went east and took part in Operation Exporter (8 June – 14 July 1941), the British invasion of Syria and Lebanon. Giarabub lost its tactical importance and became a backwater, eventually being used as a staging post for the Desert Air Force.

Casualties; In the final assault, the 2/9th Battalion lost 17 killed and 77 wounded, while the Italians lost about 250 men killed, 1,300 prisoners (including Castagna, who sustained a head wound in the fighting) and 26 field guns.

Australian soldiers from 6th Australian Divisional Cavalry Regiment (6th ADCR) of the 6th Australian Division, using captured Italian Tanks in Operation Exporter



6.5x53Rmm Mannlicher (Dutch & Romanian) Historical Notes: This is an earlier rimmed version of the 6.5x54mm Greek cartridge. It was designed by Mannlicher and used in the bolt-action Dutch Models 1892 and 1895 and Romanian Models 1892 and 1893. The cartridge was dropped by both countries after World War II. General Comments: This cartridge delivers ballistics practically identical to the regular 6.5x54mm Mannlicher-Schoenauer known for many years in the United States and, at one time, loaded by most cartridge companies.



The rimmed version is used in a few single-shot and combination European sporting rifles. Commercial hunting ammunition for rifles so chambered was once loaded in both England and Europe. This cartridge was introduced in the United States after World War II, when quantities of the Dutch and Romanian military rifles and carbines were sold in surplus stores. Only imported sporting ammunition is available, but some dealers have furnished hunting loads based on the military round with the bullet replaced. Rifles in this chambering are suitable for deer, antelope, black bear, and the like. The British listed this cartridge as the .256 Mannlicher, and many bolt-action rifles were turned out for it by Jeffery and others. It has been popular in parts of Africa. No commercial manufacturer currently offers this ammunition. Brass can be made from .303 British cases.



Brixia light mortar is a 45 mm calibre light mortar mounted on a legged base and designed for operation by two crew. The rear legs are fitted with a pad for the gunner to lay forward on behind the mortar, or sit upon when the situation allowed. A lever allowed for operating the breech and firing the weapon, while ammunition was fed in by the loader. Well trained teams could reach up to 18 rounds per minute, although operational rate of fire was less intense to avoid damage to the firing tube. The Brixia mortar differed from comparable World War II weapons in that it was trigger fired with the help of separate ignition cartridges to be fed into a special magazine, making the weapon more similar to modern cannon-mortars than conventional parabolic grenade launchers of the time.



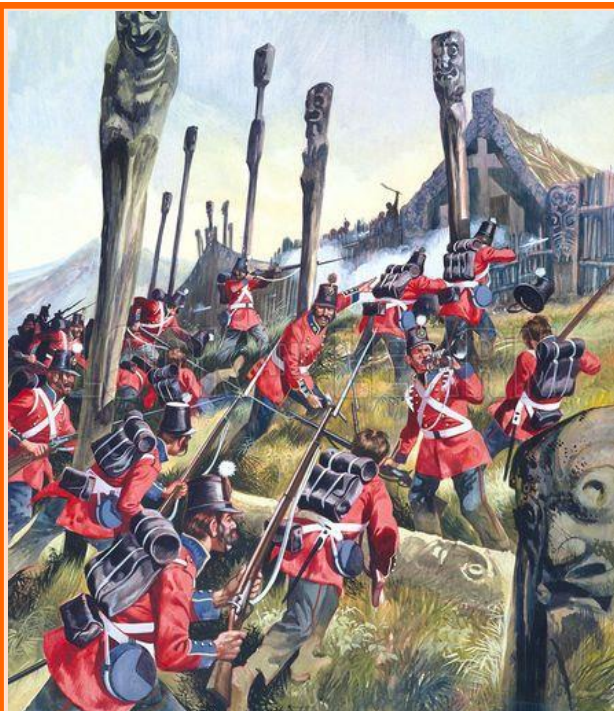
Brixia Model 35 Mortar

Type	Infantry mortar
Place of origin	Kingdom of Italy
In service	3 October 1935 – c. January 1950
Used by	Kingdom of Italy
Wars	World War II
Designed	1935
Produced	1935
Mass	15.5 kg (34 lb)
Barrel length	26 cm (10 in) L/5.4
Crew	2
Shell	465 g (1 lb)
Caliber	45 mm (1.8 in)
Elevation	+10° to +90°
Traverse	20° ^[1]
Rate of fire	8-10 rpm
Muzzle velocity	83 m/s (270 ft/s)
Maximum firing range	530 m (580 yd)

At tactical level, an infantry battalion had two platoons each of 9 Brixia mortars assigned. Each Brixia mortar platoon was divided in three squads with three mortars each, which were distributed to the companies. The heavier 81mm mortar was assigned to the heavy weapons company of the regiment. The Brixia was a complicated weapon but could lay down very precise and intense curtains of fire. This was offset by the shells, which fragmented poorly and, due to the limited calibre, had a very light and low-yield warhead. The weapon served on every front where Italian troops were involved (North Africa, Balkans, East Africa, Southern Russia, France) and was also employed during defence of the homeland against invading allied troops and during clashes between RSI formations and Italian partisans, on both sides, due to many Italian partisans having a former military background it was one of the few support weapons which could be found in the hands of the local Resistance. Mortars used by the German units fighting alongside the Italians were given the designation 4.5 cm GrW 176(i).

Users

Nazi Germany
 Kingdom of Greece: captured from the Italians
 Kingdom of Italy
 Italian Social Republic
 Yugoslav Partisans



Footnotes from History

Maori war from 1863 to 64, the New Zealand Government recruited around some 2500 odd volunteers from the colonies of Australia to serve in militia units of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th battalions of the Waikato Regiment and the Taranaki Military Settlers units. The Waikato Regiment was an infantry unit that established a reputation for being good for patrolling and engaged in small unit operations on the flanks of larger unit formations.

The Maori Wars was the first occasion that Australian volunteers served on active service outside of the colonies; however these men were not members of any official Australian colonial contribution to the wars. The volunteers were recruited mainly from the colonies of Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania and their recruitment is believed to have affected the recruiting of men for serves in local colonial militia units.

SELECT



SEED

GROWERS

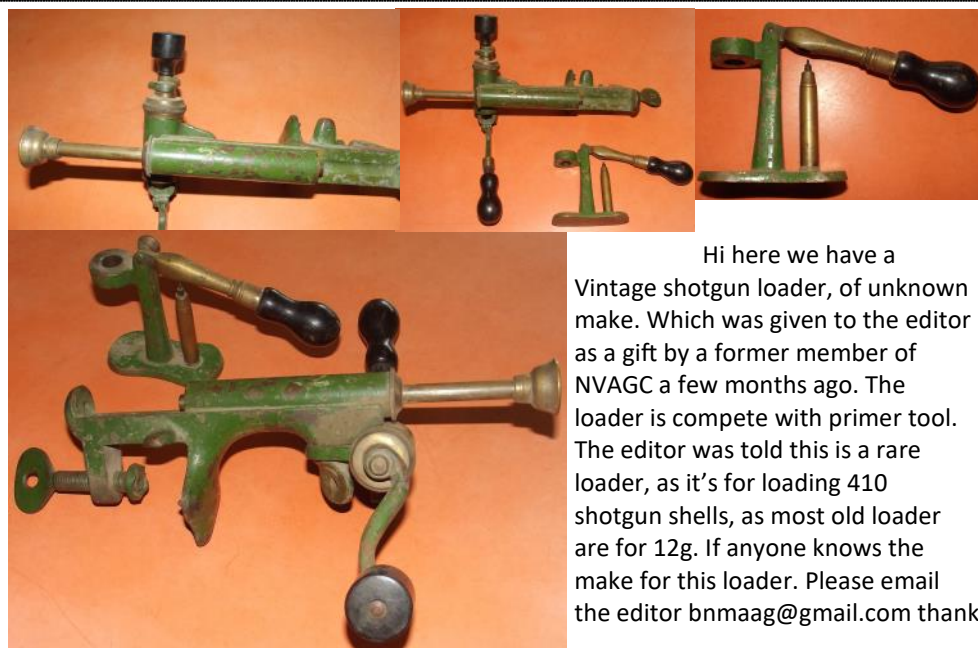
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Something from your Collection

With each newsletter we would like to feature something special from a members collection, it doesn't have to be valuable or rare, just something you don't see every day. Members who would like to have an item featured can contact Brett Maag or Graham Rogers. If you can supply a digital photo and a short spiel it would be good if not, bring it along to a meeting and we will photograph it there and take notes.



Hi here we have a Vintage shotgun loader, of unknown make. Which was given to the editor as a gift by a former member of NVAGC a few months ago. The loader is complete with primer tool. The editor was told this is a rare loader, as it's for loading 410 shotgun shells, as most old loader are for 12g. If anyone knows the make for this loader. Please email the editor bnmaag@gmail.com thank

Type	Armoured car
Place of origin	United Kingdom
Manufacturer	Bedford (General Motors)
No. built	948
Mass	6.5 t (6.4 long tons)
Length	4.68 m (15 ft 4 in)
Width	1.63 m (5 ft 4 in)
Height	2.14 m (7 ft 0 in)
Crew	8
Armour	up to 9 mm
Main armament	Boys anti-tank rifle
Secondary armament	0.303 in (7.7 mm) Bren machine gun
Engine	Bedford 6-cylinder petrol engine 72 hp (54 kW)
Power/weight	11.1 hp/tonne
Suspension	4x2 wheel, leaf spring
Operational range	480 km (300 mi)
Maximum speed	64 km/h (40 mph)



Bedford OXA was a British heavy armoured car, produced during the Second World War.



Development; Bedford OXD truck, on which the OXA was based
It was developed by mounting an armoured body onto a Bedford OXD 30cwt (1.5 ton) truck chassis, armed with a Boys anti-tank rifle. Its official designation was "Lorry 30cwt Anti-Tank". A total of 948 units were built in 1940–1941.

Operational use; The vehicle was used by regular British Army units in 1940 and British Home Guard units until 1942



Beaverettes of 53rd Reconnaissance Regiment on manoeuvres in Northern Ireland, 1941

Standard Car 4x2, or **Car Armoured Light Standard**, better known as the **Beaverette**, was a British armoured car produced during the Second World War. **History**

The first version of the vehicle was built in 1940 by Standard Motor Company at the instigation of Lord Beaverbrook, then Minister of Aircraft Production (hence the name **Beaverette**). It was based on commercial car chassis, on which a simple riveted armoured hull was mounted. The 11mm of steel was backed by 3 inch thick oak planks. The hull was open at the top and at the rear. The armament consisted of a Bren light machine gun, which could be fired through a slot in the casemate armour. Subsequent versions received all-around protection and a machine gun turret - an enclosed one with a Bren MG or an open-topped one with twin Vickers machine guns. Some vehicles also carried Boys anti-tank rifles. Some also had a No. 11 or No. 19 radio set. Production was stopped in 1942. About 2,800 units were delivered.

Describing the vehicle in 1941, a correspondent for *The Light Car* magazine reported "touching the 60-mark [60 mph (97 km/h)]" while following one along a road. Restricted vision meant the Beaverette driver had to rely on an observer to relay information about other road traffic and also to consider situations well in advance, for example, when making a turn, the driver had to base his steering on "observations made something like ten yards [30.00 ft (9.14 m)] back".

The Beaverette was extensively used by the Home Guard (United Kingdom), British Army and RAF Regiment for home defence service and training. The vehicle is said to have suffered from excessive weight and to have been hard to handle.



Beaverette Mk II light reconnaissance cars manned by members of the Home Guard in the Highlands of Scotland, 14 February 1941.

Type	Armoured car
Place of origin	United Kingdom
Manufacturer	Standard Motor Company
Mass	Mk I: 2 tonnes (2.2 short tons; 2.0 long tons) Mk III: 2.6 tonnes (2.9 short tons; 2.6 long tons)
Length	Mk I: 4.11 m (13 ft 6 in) Mk III: 3.10 m (10 ft 2 in)
Width	Mk I: 1.60 m (5 ft 3 in) Mk III: 1.73 m (5 ft 8 in)
Height	Mk I: 1.52 m (5 ft 0 in) Mk III: 2.16 m (7 ft 1 in)
Crew	3
Armour	Mk III: up to 9 mm (0.35 in) Mk IV: up to 12 mm (0.47 in)
Main armament	0.303 (7.7 mm) Bren MG or twin Vickers machine gun
Engine	Standard 4-cylinder petrol engine 46 hp (34 kW)
Power/weight	17-23 hp/tonne
Suspension	4x2 wheel, leaf spring
Operational range	Mk III: 300 km (190 mi)
Maximum speed	Mk III: 38 km/h (24 mph)

Variants

Mk I - original version.

Mk II - had all-around armour and the radiator grill was moved from a vertical position to a horizontal one.

Mk III Beaverbug - had a shortened chassis, a redesigned hull without curved front wings, top armour and a machine gun turret. A Mk III was used by the RAF Regiment in the capture of a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 and destruction of another when they landed at RAF West Malling in April 1943.

Mk IV - glacis armour was redesigned to improve visibility.

A similar vehicle, known as Beaverette (NZ), was produced in New Zealand Railways workshops, Hutt Valley. The car used a Ford 3/4 or 1-ton truck chassis and plate salvaged from the ships Port Bowen and Mokoia for armour. They had a crew of four; 208 units were built.

Survivors

A Mark III Beaverette is displayed at the Imperial War Museum Duxford. In 2018, the Tank Museum acquired a similar Mark III for restoration whilst a third Mark III is in the Cobbaton Combat Collection, a private collection of military vehicles in Umberleigh, Devon in the United Kingdom. A Mark IV Beaverette is displayed at the *Museum Bevrijding Vleugels* in the Netherlands. A second Mark IV is preserved at The Curragh Military Museum in Ireland.



The Beaverette Mk III at the Imperial War Museum Duxford Citations

ON THE HERITAGE TRAIL: The Secret Airfield

A Secret Aerodrome! Perhaps Heritage Trail is giving his age away when he tells of his awareness of Aviation starting with listening to 'The Air Adventures of Biggles' on a valve radio when younger, but yes, a wartime secret aerodrome actually did exist near Shepparton, and hopefully its story interests Guild members as well.

It was, originally at least, an Emergency Airfield near our neighboring township of Murchison, and was stated to have been one of 26 such, located down the eastern coast of Australia — but never acknowledged for reasons of security.

And a stroke of luck, when asking people from Murchison about this wartime airfield: one was the daughter of the farmer who owned the land the airstrip was constructed on. She remembered her father leaving the homestead, and going to the property's front gate, where a strange utility vehicle had parked. The occupants proved to be from the Royal Australian Air Force, and they advised that the farmland had been compulsorily acquired. Dad must have been a good negotiator — the Family were given 48 hours to relocate to another farmhouse. (Those in a similar situation over at Tocumwal, New South Wales, were given just 24 hours to remove themselves from the future site of an American Army Air Force complex, given the name McIntyre Field.)

Construction of the first Murchison landing strip commenced - and it was used very shortly afterwards. The first aircraft to touch down was a Royal Australian Air Force DC 3 Dakota, that had been caught in an electrical storm over Kilmore. (The Murchison field was only known because the pilot happened to be a local — from Toolamba, I believe.) When turning around prior to take off next morning, one of the aircraft's wheels went through the newly-sealed bitumen runway. Which leads to our next consideration: how does the above compare with the official records of the time?

Quite well, as it happens.

In 1942 two runways were constructed in the region, located on the Shepparton Highway and about two miles from Murchison East. Each of the bitumen runways was 50 yards wide, and over one mile long. Approaches from all four points of the compass were incorporated into this design. They were built by the Allied Works Council, with the intention that the new airfield would serve as an auxiliary to the above-mentioned Tocumwal aerodrome. (McIntyre Field would take a book to detail — suffice it was of such a size that the Americans planned a railway system to link the various buildings.)

But no sooner built, at extreme cost, than passed on to the Royal Australian Air Force, as new American policy put the location of such support facilities as close to Operations in Northern Australia/New Guinea as possible.

And yes, the Murchison airfield, although costing thousands of pounds, was in fact secret, due to being able to accept the heaviest of current Service aircraft — in other words, the R.A.A.F. B 24 Liberator bombers training at Tocumwal from 1944.

There were, in total, 52 military airfields in Victoria during the Second War.

And of these, Murchison East was intended to become 'a large air station' due to its being located on flat, clear land, additionally having access to power and telephone.

This led to quite some interest at war's end. Murchison East was advanced as a civil aerodrome that could bring aviation to the Goulburn Valley — Nagambie, Euroa, Rushworth and Murchison, Stanhope, Tatura, Mooropna and Shepparton.

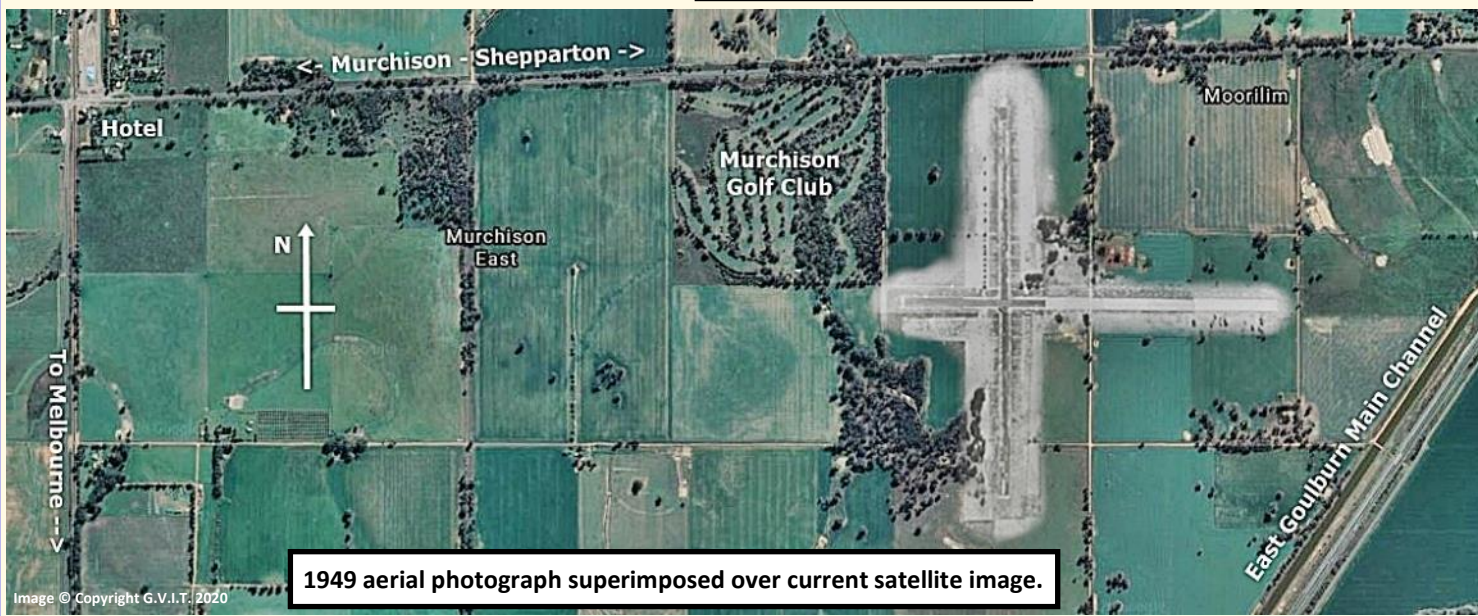
The matter was vigorously supported by the Murchison Progress Association, who added that the Drome by now was already marked on aerial navigation maps. But unfortunately, they were to be unsuccessful. The land, regarded by officialdom as being leased, was returned to farming usage by the Commonwealth, which in turn was sued for 1,200 pounds — the cost of removing weeds introduced through runway construction.

Part of the runway remained until the 1960's, enough to support the landing of a Tiger Moth aircraft — but today few know about this part of our Regions aviation history.



Australian B-24 Liberator

Aerial photograph taken around 1945. Looking East along the East West runway. What is now the Golf Club, was then, the clear paddock in the left foreground.



1949 aerial photograph superimposed over current satellite image.

The Single Action Revolver in the Age of the Semi Auto Pistol

I was watching a Sylvester Stallone movie the other day, Stallone played the part of a modern day mercenary armed with all the latest fully automatic assault rifle and high capacity 9mm semi auto pistols. But there was a twist, Stallone had a much modified Colt Model P Single Action Army revolver in a fast draw holster behind his left hip. When he was in a tight situation, the assault rifle jammed and his 9mm out of ammo facing five opponents, he would reach behind his hip draw the Colt SAA fanning the hammer he would take out all five opponents in a fraction of a second. Bought back memories of the 1970's when the very anti gun actor Dennis Weaver played the part of Deputy Marshal Sam McCloud, from the small western town of Taos, New Mexico, who was on loan to the metropolitan New York City Police Department (NYPD) as a special investigator. McCloud attire typically consisting of a sheepskin coat or Western jacket, bolo tie and cowboy hat and boots, his gun was a blued .45 Colt SAA with a 4¾" barrel. **Could only happen in Hollywood? Maybe not.**

Francis Augustus Hamer (1884 – 1955) was an American law enforcement officer and Texas Ranger who led the 1934 posse that tracked down and killed criminals Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow. Frank Hamer knew his guns and their capabilities. On his pursuit of Bonny and Clyde, he carried in his car a personal arsenal of long arms and used these to equip the most of the posse on the day of they ambushed Bonny and Clyde's stolen 1934 Ford V8. The rifle included a .35 Remington Model 8 semiautomatic rifle with 20-round magazine extension, a .25 Remington Model 8 semiautomatic rifle, 30-06 Colt R80 Monitor machine rifle (a law enforcement variant of the M1918 BAR) and a Winchester 94 lever action 30/30. (What? No Tommy Guns?) All these firearms were chosen for their ability to penetrate the heavy panels of 1930 vintage cars. It was with this in mind that Frank Hamer purchased a 1911 Colt Semi auto pistol in caliber .38 Super as this had superior penetration to the usual .45 ACP chambering. The 1911 he carried tucked in his waist band because on his hip in a holster was the pistol he carried his entire law enforcement career, an engraved nickel plated .45 Colt SAA revolver with 4.75" barrel he called "Old Lucky". Nickel plating is almost completely worn off when revolver was photographed.

General George Smith Patton Jr. (1885 – 1945) Patton Graduated West Point as a cavalry officer at a time when the US Cavalry still had horses and sabres, but they also had motor vehicles, and Colt 1911 semi auto pistols were issued to all troopers. Commissioned Officers could still purchase their own sidearm and following his senior officers, in 1916 Patton purchased a Colt SAA .45 LC nickel plated, engraved with lanyard swivel and ivory grips with his initial GSP. He first used his Colt SSA in the famous gun fight with Mexican Villista bandits in 1916. During this encounter, he came to the conclusion that due to the speed of reloading a SAA, one revolver wasn't the best choice when facing multiple opponents. Perhaps that is why, during WW1, he alternated between the Colt SAA and a ivory gripped 1911 Semi Auto. He tended to be seen carrying the Single Action in relatively safe rear areas, while the 1911 semi auto was carried into battle. Between wars, in 1928, Patton purchase another Colt SAA 4 3/4" .45 LC with lanyard swivel, it was a plane blued version, although Patton's much photographed WW2 holster set appears to have been made for two Single Action Colts, the newer Colt SAA was never seen paired with his original SAA. Come WW2 Patton was a Major General, Commanding the 2nd Armored Division, his job was to direct and inspire his men not personally engage in ground combat. The ivory grip Colt SAA became part of his "Fighting General" image, but he only carried it when he needed to be seen and if it was likely that a lot of photographers would be present, he added another ivory handled revolver on his left side so that he looked the part when photographed from either side. His other ivory handled revolver was a S&W large frame .357 mag. In his headquarters office, when photographers were likely to be present he wore a holstered snub nosed Colt Detective Special double action .38 spl. His personal protection weapon that he carried at all times in his jacket pocket was a Remington Model 51 .380 semi auto. At the end of hostilities in Europe, when his "Fighting General" image was no longer required, Patton reverted to his issue General Officers pistol and belt/holster set. Generals were issued a Colt 1909 hammerless .380 auto.

Lt. General Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright IV (1883 – 1953) Best known as the field commander under Gen. Douglas MacArthur in the Philippines. An old cavalry officer he favoured a Colt Single Action Army .45 LC, he bought his 4 3/4" barrel revolver in 1906 and carried it through the 1909 Moro Campaign and France in WW1. As the Philippines situation got worse, Gen. MacArthur was ordered away, and Gen. Wainwright was left in command, having the unpleasant duty of surrendering Allied troops to the Japanese. Just before the fall of American forces, the Colt was hidden from the Japanese in a hollow tree. Gen. Wainwright's Colt was retrieved in 1947 it was badly pitted, but still serviceable.

Maj. Gen. Stan Leon McClellan (1924 –1988) used an 1884-manufactured .44-40 (.44WCF) Colt SAA later while seeing combat in Korea and Vietnam. McClellan was no rear echelon soldier; he saw plenty of action while serving a tour as a rifle company commander of the 7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Division in Korea (1952-1953) and later as a brigade commander of the 4th Infantry Division in South Vietnam (1968-1969), earning a silver star and a purple heart in each of these campaigns. Again in 1972, McClellan returned to Vietnam where, as a major general, he was in command of training our Vietnamese and Cambodian allies in infantry tactics. In 1973 he took charge of the first American-North Vietnamese POW exchange.

The Vietnam war saw the development of Air Cavalry and revival of the many US Horse Cavalry traditions, when they went charging into battle in helicopters instead of horses. Helicopters had crossed sabres painted on their noses and the old horse cavalry pennants blazoned on the sides. On parades, air crew wore cavalry Stetsons, spurs and carried sabres. In the air, some door gunners and pilots carried single action revolvers in western style holsters. A lot of these single action revolvers were Great Western Arms Company and Ruger's, being more affordable to the enlisted man than a Colt SAA and the caliber was often .357 mag giving the owner the option of using issued 38 special ammunition.

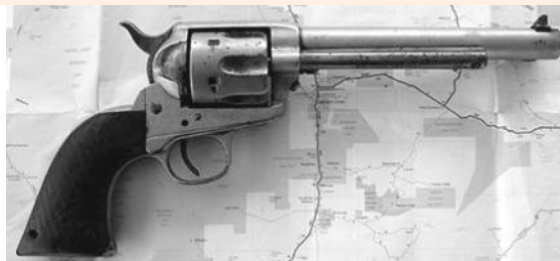
Lt. Gen. Henry Everett Emerson (1925 – 2015) AKA Hank "Gunfighter" Emerson commander of Second Battalion, First Brigade, 502nd Regiment, 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam carried a 5 1/2" blued Colt SAA of unknown caliber (he possibly had a .45 ACP cylinder fitted).

And in Australia the "Out Back Policeman"

Charles Victor Hall (1896—1972) a Policeman and Novelist. Vic Hall joined Northern Territory Mounted Police in 1924 and served to 1942 during this time he carried his own Colt SAA a 7 1/2" barrel version caliber 44-40 (.44 WCF) manufactured in 1894.



Sylvester Stallone Movie Gun



Vic Hall - NT Policeman



Maj. Gen. Stan McClellan — US Army



General George Smith Patton Jr.



Frank Hamer — "Old Lucky"



Lt. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright—US Army