

A Newsletter of the Bribe Island R.S.L. Sub-Branch Library

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Produced and edited by Graham Bradshaw

IT HAPPENED IN MAY

9th DIVISION TAKES TARAKAN

Although the Australian forces successfully landed on Tarakan Island on the **1st of May 1945** it would take another three weeks of costly fighting to rid the island of Japanese. The battle was not crucial to the outcome of the war and the Australians were keen to limit casualties although this proved to be difficult as the desperate Japanese still left on Tarakan fought to the death. Sadly, one of those killed in action was 9th Division legend, Lieutenant Tom Derrick VC who (VC won at Sattelberg, 1943). He was wounded five times on the **22nd of May** and died the next day. Corporal Mackey won his VC at Tarakan on the **12th of May**. (see page VC's awarded for May).



Lt. Derrick burial

AWM Photo: 044970

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

044970

THE FALL OF BERLIN

The Berlin Strategic Offensive Operation by the Soviet Union began on the **16th of April 1945** after a day long massive artillery barrage. The Russians quickly surrounded the city with two and a half million troops and within two weeks had forced the Germans to surrender on the **2nd of May 1945**.



Getty Images

The Soviet flag is raised above the Reichstag on 2 May 1945

The 2nd BATTLE OF BULLECOURT

The 6th Australian Division AIF and other British and Canadian forces began the 2nd Battle of Bullecourt on the **3rd of May 1917**. The Australians succeeded in holding on and were counter attacked repeatedly by the Germans until they finally gave up on the **15th of May** and left the line to the Australians. It was a costly operation for the 6th Division which suffered around 7,000 casualties

Australian Field Artillery 18 pounder in action at Bullecourt—AWM Photo: E80600



THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA

This battle was fought from the **4th-8th of May 1942** in the South West Pacific between the Japanese Imperial Navy and Naval and Air forces of Australia and the United States. It was the world's first major battle between aircraft carriers when the opposing ships did not see or fire directly upon each other. The USS Lexington was sunk and the Japanese carriers Zuikaku and Shokaku were badly damaged.

USS Lexington on fire and sinking

US Navy Photo 80-G-6651



GERMANY SURRENDERS. THE WAR IN EUROPE IS OVER.

The Instrument of Surrender was signed at Reims, France on the **7th of May 1945** by Nazi Col. Gen Alfred Jodi. Although the Soviets were present at Reims they had a another document signed at Berlin on the following day.

HOSPITAL SHIP CENTAUR SUNK

The Australian Hospital Ship Centaur was sunk by a torpedo fired from a Japanese submarine off the coast of Moreton Island just after 4am on the **14th of May 1943**. The torpedo hit a port side oil tank which exploded and set the vessel on fire. The Centaur sank so quickly only 64 of the 332 crew, nurses and soldiers on board survived. The sinking of the clearly marked and illuminated hospital ship caused wide-spread outrage in Australia.

AWM Photo: 302796



The AHS CENTAUR was clearly marked as a hospital ship

WEWAK CAPTURED

The Australians took over the Aitape/Wewak area in northern New Guinea from General MacArthur's American divisions in late 1944. Then followed several months

of sometimes bitter fighting, needed to dislodge the numerous group of Japanese forces still operation in the area. Wewak Point was captured by the 6th Division on the **11th**



AWM Photo: 0G2945

The 6th Division landing on a beach east of Wewak

of May 1945 and the whole Wewak area was in Australian hands by **May 15th**. Casualties were high and the Australians lost 440 KIA and another 1,100 wounded.

SURRENDER OF AXIS IN TUNISIA

The series of battles which took place in North Africa between November 1942 and May 1943 came to a sudden conclusion with the surrender of all Axis forces on the **13th of May 1943**. Around 150,000 Axis prisoners were rounded up by the Allied forces.

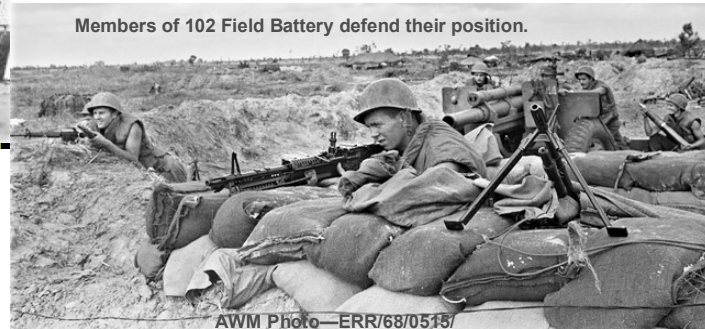


POWs at Tunisia

FSB CORAL ATTACKED

Fire Support Base "Coral", Vietnam was attacked early morning on the **13th of May 1968**. 1RAR mortar platoon position and a 105mm howitzer of 102 Field Battery were overrun. With the aid of air support the attacks were beaten off and the gun pit recaptured. Australian casualties were 11 killed and 28 wounded and 3 more died on follow up patrols on the **14th**. North Vietnam forces attacked again on the **16th** and 1RAR, supported by A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment, repelled the attack for the loss of 5 killed and 19 wounded. Rocket and mortar bombardments continued on the **22nd, 26th and 28th**.

Members of 102 Field Battery defend their position.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

AWM Photo—ERR/68/0515/

ERR/68/0515/VN

FSB BALMORAL ATTACKED

Fire Support Base "Balmoral", manned by 3RAR and located a mere 4.5 km north of FSB Coral was attacked on the **26th and 28th of May 1968**. 3RAR, supported by centurion tanks of C Squadron, 1st Armoured Regiment, repelled these attacks and inflicted heavy losses on the NVA forces. This was the first time since 1945 that tanks operated in close support of the infantry. 3RAR losses were 3 dead and 14 wounded.

Centurion tanks at FSB Balmoral— AWM Photo P01768.010



HMAS SYDNEY'S 1st TRIP

HMAS Sydney started her first voyage to Vietnam on the 20th of May 1965 with 1RAR on board. Then, between 1965 and 1972, the Vung Tau Ferry completed a total of 25 trips carrying men, vehicles, equipment, stores and ammunition.

DAM BUSTERS RAID

Lt. Matsuo's midget sub is hauled to the surface. It is now on display in the War Memorial.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Another midget, which successfully entered the harbour, fired 2 torpedoes at the American cruiser USS Chicago. Both torpedoes missed the Chicago. One beached itself on the shore at Garden Island without exploding and the other went under the wharf and hit HMAS Kattabul, killing 21 sailors. The third midget was destroyed without causing any further damage.

A Lancaster bomber releases a bouncing bomb.



Photo: - Imperial War Museum

1st NATIONAL SERVICEMAN DIES

Private Errol Wayne Noack of B Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, was the first National Serviceman to be killed in action in Vietnam. He was killed by friendly fire on the **24th of May 1966** during Operation Hardihood just ten days after arriving in Vietnam.



MAJOR TURKISH COUNTER ATTACK

On the **19th of May 1915** the Turks launched a massive counter attack at the centre of the Australian positions. Their aim was to force the Anzacs back to the beach and off the peninsula. These attacks failed with Turkish losses of 10,000 (3,000 dead) while Australian casualties totalled only 700 (160 KIA). After several days the stench of the dead bodies forced the Turks to request a 9 hour armistice on the **25th of May** to collect and bury their dead.

Turks bury their dead after the May attack.



AWM Photo—A01413

FAILED GALIPOLLI ATTACKS

On the **4th, 5th and 8th of May 1915**, Australian, and New Zealand troops supported British and French forces in attacks on Gapa Tepe, Cape Helles and the 2nd battle of Krithia. All of these actions failed to reach their objectives.

5 BOER WAR VC AWARDS

Captain Neville Reginald Howse, Lieutenant Guy George Egerton Wylly, Trooper John Hutton Bisdee, Lieutenant Frederick William Bell and Lieutenant Leslie Cecil Maygar were the five Australians who were Victoria Cross recipients in The Boer War. Lt. Bell received his award on the **16th of May 1901**.

THE BOER WAR ENDS

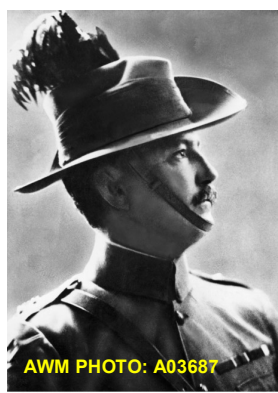
The Boer war came to an end on the **31st of May 1902**. Around 16,000 Australians went to South Africa and over 600 did not return. Although 282 were killed in action, disease and accidents claimed over 300.

MIDGET SUBMARINES ATTACK

After leaving their mother submarines outside Sydney Heads, 3 midget submarines entered the harbour on the **31st of May 1942**. One managed to get tangled in the boom defence nets and when operator realised he could not free the vessel he set off a charge which destroyed it.

FIRST VC OF WWI

Lance Corporal Albert Jacka was the first Australian to receive the Victoria cross in World War One. For his actions on the night of **19/20th of May 1915**. He was holding a trench with four others, all of whom were killed or wounded when they were attacked by Turkish troops. Jacka killed all of the attackers.



AWM PHOTO: A03687

Lieutenant Frederick Bell.

Boer War

VICTORIA CROSS AWARDS FOR MAY

Corporal George Julian Howell

Of the 1st Battalion AIF, received his award near Bullecourt on the **6th of May 1917** after he climbed onto a parapet under heavy fire and bombed the enemy back along the trench. In hospital they found 20 wounds.

Cpl. Howell MM receives his VC
AWM PHOTO: P02939.020



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P02939.020

WO2 Rayene (Ray) Stewart Simpson

Sergeant William Ruthven

Ray Simpson, was a veteran of WWII, Korea, and Malaya and Vietnam 1962 where he was wounded and received the DCM. Discharged, he re-enlisted for a final tour serving with the AATTV when he was awarded the Victoria Cross on the **6th of May 1969** for rescuing wounded men who were trapped by enemy fire, placing himself between them and the enemy until they could withdraw.



AWM PHOTO: LES/69/0544/VN

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

of the 22nd Battalion, AIF, received his VC at Ville-sur-Ancre when he bombed a machine gun post and captured the surviving crew. He then rushed another enemy position with only a revolver. He single-handedly mopped up this position and captured the whole garrison amounting to 32 surviving enemy and held them until assistance arrived. He later became a Victorian politician and Collingwood Club time keeper.



AWM Photo: D90019

Lieutenant Rupert Vance Moon

of the 58th Battalion AIF, at Bullecourt on the **12th of May 1917** was awarded his Victoria Cross when he led an attack on an enemy stronghold. He was soon wounded but continued to lead his men and was badly wounded twice more and yet again he still led on until he was wounded a fourth time and forced to retire.



AWM Photo: A03718

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL A03718

Corporal John Bernard Mackey

2/3 Pioneer Battalion, was awarded his VC on Tarakan Island on the **12th of May 1945**. He led his section in an attack against a Japanese position on a steep narrow ridge which was defended by 3 machine guns. He silenced the first two crews with bayonet and grenades. When he charged the third position he was mortally wounded.



AWM Photo: 134468

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Private Edward Kenna

At Wewak, New Guinea on the **15th of May 1945**, when Kenna's company was pinned down by a Japanese machine gun at close range he stood up in view of the enemy and fired his bren until empty. He then grabbed a rifle and continued to fire at new enemy positions. For his action he received the VC.

WO2 Keith Payne

Keith Payne was serving with the AATT in Vietnam when he was awarded the VC on the **24th of May 1969** while leading Vietnamese troops. His company was surrounded and under heavy fire. He organised a defensive perimeter and searched for wounded men for three hours although wounded himself. He found some 40 men.