

7 Field Regiment Association

Yandoo

Royal Australian Artillery

1994

Vol 1 No 8



7 FD REGT RAA ASSOCIATION
YARRANE ROAD VILLOUGHBY 2068

GNR. PECK NX 000

The "official" version of how Harry Peck was born started at Ingleburn Army Camp, NSW, in 1940, when an officious orderly sergeant was inspecting the huts of the gunners of the 2/5th Australian Field Regiment (Royal Australian Artillery). The sergeant, seeing an untidy bed littered with gear and accoutrements, said to a gunner standing nearby, "Who sleeps in that bed?". The answer came back in a flash, "That's Harry Peck's bed." The sergeant noted the name of Gunner Peck in his book with a view to extra fatigues in the near future and left the hut.

The regiment sailed overseas and settled in at Deir Suneid Camp, Palestine. One night, an almighty fracas broke out among the gunners and the sergeant of the guard inquired who had started the trouble. Again came the answer that Gunner Harry Peck was the culprit and the poor unfortunate sergeant dashed off and prepared a charge report, the object of which was to confine Gunner Peck to the camp for 14 days.

The regiment moved down to Mersa Matruh and here the "Peck racket" started in earnest. A nearby Ordnance store of the British Army began to supply vast and incredible quantities of war materials and supplies to an Australian unit, the goods in question ranging from motor vehicles to pistols and binoculars.

Not until the British began to check the issue vouchers was it discovered that all the goods were signed for by ostensibly the same person - Harry Peck - although the signatures were in a dozen different hands and many different ranks ranging from bombardier to major.

By some twist of fate there chanced to be an inoffensive officer named Peck in another unit at Mersa Matruh and rather naturally he was viewed with a great deal of suspicion by the high authorities, who had come to hear of the matter and were furious.

And so it went on: A Jewish sports dealer in Tel Aviv sold many pairs of football boots to an Australian officer with a very Jewish appearance; the docket was signed for by Heinrich Pfeck but the boots are still unpaid for.

In Syria, Harry Peck became notorious. Ten tons of building stone was carted away by Australian military vehicles and the bill was received by Headquarters AIF. It referred to the "goods taken away by the soldat Henri Peque of the 31st Anchovy Division Army Australienne". Needless to say, the building stone is still another bad debt.

Vast quantities of goods were taken over in Syria by Harry Peck but his unit, the Anchovy Division, was not on the Order of Battle and therefore untraceable.



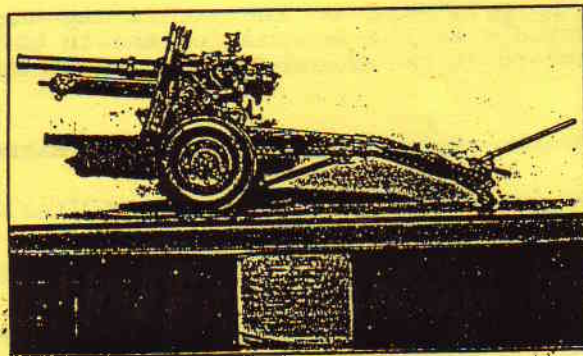
The only concrete evidence of Peck's "existence" was the Harry Peck trophy which was commissioned by Harry Peck and Company in 1950.

It was a large field gun carved out of pieces of wood, exactly to scale, by Warrant Officer Adlam of the AIC, and sprayed with bronze.

The inscription reads: "The Harry Peck Trophy for inter battery shooting and gun drill competition. Presented to the 5th Field Regiment, AMF, by Harry Peck & Co (Aust) Limited, in recognition of the fictitious Gunner Harry Peck who served with such distinction in the 2/5th Field Regiment, AIF."

This trophy was used as a prize for the inter-battery direct-firing competition held annually.

In 1960, following an army restructuring, the trophy came to rest in the officers' mess of the 7th Field Regiment in Willoughby, Sydney.



The Harry Peck trophy, commissioned by Harry Peck and Company (now Peck's) in 1950, in recognition of the fictitious gunner.

YANDOO

The title "Yandoo" is derived from the title of the Newsletter of the 7th Field Artillery Brigade AIF. "Yandoo" is an Aboriginal word signifying "Messenger". The first edition was issued at sea on board HMAT "Argyllshire" on 18 June 1916, two days out of Capetown, whilst the 7th was en route to the United Kingdom for training at Lark Hill. Original numbers were duplicated from wax stencils. Needless to say, the combination of wax and heat whilst "Argyllshire" was passing through the tropics caused the enthusiastic Editorial Committee many headaches.

The original numbers proved to be so popular that they were issued in three bound volumes illustrated with photographs and were sent back to Australia by the members of the 7th. I am happy to say that there are two original duplicated numbers in the archives of the Association, together with several sets of the bound volumes which have been identified as belonging to original members of the 7th. The bound volumes are now collectors' items, with one sighted recently in a dealer's premises priced at \$200.00.

Original members of the "Yandoo" Editorial Committee were Captain (later Brigadier) T.A.J. Playfair, BC 26th Battery, and as one would expect, two members of the Battery, Bombardier Sil Rohu and Gunner Eric Harding. Sil Rohu was later a well known gunsmith in Sydney. Eric Harding was seriously wounded when a stray shell burst in the Battery wagon lines on 11 September 1917.

The duplicating equipment was purchased in Capetown and had a short but busy and exciting life. It was manufactured by Ellams and accompanied the 7th to France. When the Australian Divisions moved south to cover Amiens at the time of the German Offensive in March 1918, the equipment was jettisoned in the interests of mobility but fortunately was recovered intact some months later. In addition to printing "Yandoo", it printed menu cards, sports programmes and concert programmes. When the last issue of "Yandoo" was run off in 1919, the counter attached to the equipment had registered 225,000 revolutions.

Laurie Hindmarsh

THE ASSOCIATION'S COLLECTION

As you know the 7th Field Regiment RAA Association's collection of memorabilia has been transferred to the National Artillery Museum. By the time you read this, selected items from the collection will be on display in the Regimental Room at the Museum. The display will be representative of all periods in the Regiment's history. It will be the first in a series of Regimental displays and will be on view long enough for all members to see it.

An ideal time to view the display would be the occasion of the next "Gunner Drinks" at the Museum on 30 September 1994 (5.30 to 7.30pm). Meet other Gunners, view our display and other interesting exhibits with a drink in hand.

Needless to say the search for memorabilia does not finish here. I am still searching and I look to all members to support me in this important project. I welcome enquiries any evening or weekend on (02) 449.1169.

Laurie Hindmarsh

HONORARY MEMBERS

It is with very great pleasure that the President, Major Bob Corbett, is able to announce that three new Honorary Members were elected at the Annual General Meeting on 27 July 1994. The new members are;

- Mr T.H.Elder, who as a Gunner in 27th Battery arrived in France on 31 December 1916 and served with the Battery until the Armistice and later. Mr Elder participates in the ANZAC Day March in Adelaide each year and resides at Hove, South Australia.
- Mrs G.E.Serviss is a War Widow who accompanied the War Widows and Veterans on the return to the Western Front last year. Her late husband, Corporal C.W.Serviss served with the 26th and 27th Batteries. Mrs Serviss resides at Kensington Park, S.A.
- Mrs C.Wynn is another War Widow who has supported the Association by donating memorabilia of her late husband's service in 7th Field Artillery Brigade AIF. Driver E.W.Wynn served with 28th and 107th Batteries and later 3rd Army Field Brigade AIF. Needless to say, the memorabilia has been deposited with the National Artillery Museum. Mrs Wynn resides at Wellington, New South Wales.

All members of the Association join with the President in congratulating the three Honorary Members upon this award of distinction.



FRED BASTOCK SHARON FULCHER ALEC BURKE
ANNUAL REUNION - OCTOBER 1993



DENE NELSON DON COLLINS JACK GWILYM
KEITH LEEK OWEN SAVILLE MAX FALCONER

