

Chapter 3

First World War

Other CRB Staff who Served

*They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted;
They fell with their faces to the foe.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

*They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables of home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.*

For the Fallen
Laurence Binyon

It is hard to imagine what it was like for the men who survived the First World War returning to civilian life in Australia. Most of the CRB men were single at enlistment so they were not returning to a domestic hearth. The effect on their physical and mental state was palpable. The large size of the overseas Australian contingent – over 330,000 – was a strain on logistics. There weren't enough ships and, as a consequence, most soldiers did not get home until 1919. Many of the soldiers waiting for a ship to bring them back home underwent training programs to pursue new trades and further education. Some factories in France were used as training centres.

The number of Australian casualties during the First World War is a matter of debate, depending on the methodology used. But it can be said with certainty that over 60,000 were killed in action or died of wounds, and over 150,000 suffered wounds – many of them multiple times – and this does not include illness. The hospitalisation of soldiers has been seriously under-reported whether by intent or negligence. There were 750,000 hospital admissions. The AIF was quite bluntly, decimated. How could we ever claim to have won the war with such a high cost to this young nation?

When compared to the armies of Germany, Britain, France, Canada and the United States, proportionately, Australia suffered more deaths and more hospitalisation for wounds, illness and injury. Of the soldiers who survived, more than half were discharged as medically unfit and 60 per cent of the remainder applied for benefits post war for damage or disablement. A further 8,000 men died premature deaths for war-related causes – including suicide. A truly Pyrrhic victory.

It must be remembered too, that 1919, the year of their return, was the critical year for the Spanish Flu outbreak in Australia, although the nation's isolation and quarantine arrangements meant that the effects were not as severe as in other places.

Some ached to be with their loved ones and some wanted to start a new life. In my family, my father's cousin returned to the farm where he worked for a couple of months, and then he moved interstate and changed his name and disappeared from his loving family forever.

Many of the surviving men who left the CRB to go off to the war did not re-join the ranks of the CRB – but some did. Looking at a photograph of the staff of the CRB in 1930 I recognise the following names as returnees. In no particular order, they are: W.H. Neville, W.T.B. McCormack, L.W. White, W.T. Williams and A. Kerry. W.D. Birrell also returned but only briefly before he

moved to the city of Kew – and there may have been others. T.H. Upton returned briefly before moving to NSW in 1925. Furthermore, the field staff and regional staff are not included in the staff photograph.

But some did not resume their old jobs. I am fairly certain they would have been welcomed back and with an ever-growing demand for improved roads through increasing motorization in Victoria, I presume there would have been plenty of opportunity.

However, other returning servicemen joined the CRB after the First World War, and their stories are told below.

Corporal Norman Sinclair Bissett, 1401

There is a photograph taken in 1930 of the staff of the CRB in which many of the men are wearing RSL badges indicating that they are returned servicemen. There are some in the photograph who were yet to serve – such as Ian O'Donnell, Frank Hosking, Wilfred Dolamore, Jack Thorpe, Sid Atkinson, Bill Neville and Roy Rough. Their stories are told later. But there were others who obviously joined the CRB after the war and one of them is identified in the photograph as N. Bissett.

There are four men in the archives named Bissett who have the first initial 'N'. They are Norman Bissett from Liverpool NSW, Norman Sinclair Bissett, an accountant from Bendigo, Norman Hopetoun Bissett from Serpentine (near Bendigo) a farmer, and Norman Harry Anderson Bissett from Sydney. Of the remaining men named Bissett, none of them had another name starting with 'N'. I think it is fairly likely that man in the 1930 photograph of the CRB staff is Norman Sinclair Bissett.

This detective work has proven to be correct as I have found an extensive biography of Norman in *'Pioneers of Australian Armour in the Great War'* by David A Finlayson and Michael K Cecil.

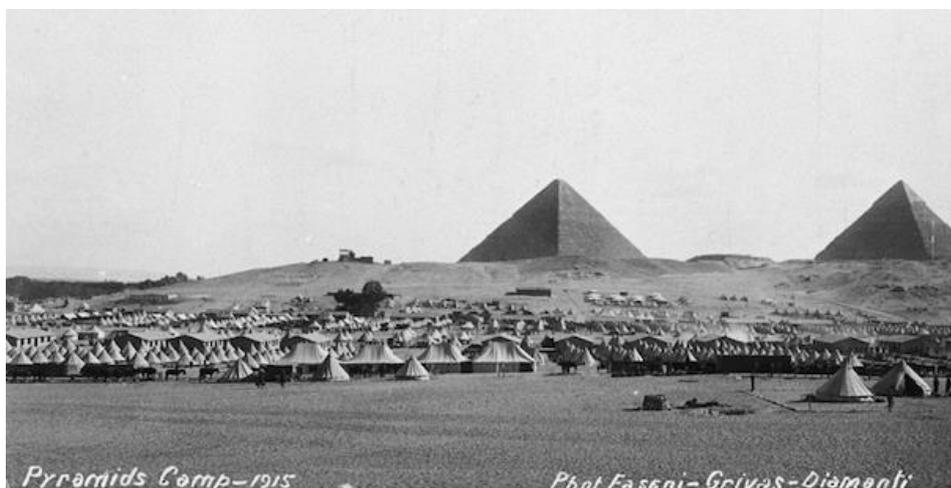
Norman was born in Sandhurst in 1877 and joined the AIF on 13 November 1914. His Attestation Form stated that his hair colour was grey – which matches the photograph below. He was an accountant employed by the Bendigo Permanent Land and Building Society.



Photograph of Norman Bissett in the 1930 photograph of the staff of the CRB.

He was attached to the 1st Reinforcements, 16th Battalion, with whom he embarked from Melbourne on the HMAT A35 *Berrima* on 22 December 1914 for Egypt. They arrived at Aden before travelling up the Suez Canal to Egypt. The Battalion was located in camps at Maadi on the Nile and Mena, situated near the Pyramids of Giza. The training was arduous: marching through sand, digging and attacking trenches for eight hours a day, six days a week.

From a letter written home to his family he refers to his location at Camp Abassia which is located near Mena. He said in the letter that “... a native made a bet of 5/- to run down the biggest pyramid from top to bottom in two minutes. He surprised them by doing it in a minute and a half.” This shows the naivety of the Australians. Surely the Egyptian would not have challenged them unless he was fully confident that he would win?



Mena Camp west of Cairo – 1915.

The archive does not record when he re-joined his battalion or when he arrived at Gallipoli but it is likely he reached the Dardanelles about August 1915. At Gallipoli he developed a septic hand and was evacuated to the 1st Australian General Hospital at Heliopolis on 10 November 1915. After a period of convalescence, Norman returned to his unit in February 1916. In March 1916 he embarked on HMAT A64 *Demosthenes* at Suez to be returned to Australia as an escort, disembarking at Port Melbourne on 19 April 1916. After a brief period of leave, he returned to duty.

It is likely that another Bendigo soldier, Sergeant John Langley, recruited him into the Armoured Car Section. At his own request, Norman reverted to the rank of private and joined the 24th Depot Battalion at Royal Park. He was posted to the newly formed Armoured Car Section as a motor transport driver and embarked, for the second time for overseas service on HMAT A13 *Katuna* on 20 June 1916. He served continuously with the Armoured Car Section – later to become the 1st Australian Light Car Patrol - throughout the Egyptian and Palestine campaigns. In August 1916 he was promoted again to Corporal.

The unit fought against the Senussi¹ in the Sudan and Western Desert. As their original three vehicles became worn out from hard use in the Western Desert and were irreparable due to shortages of spare parts, the unit was reequipped with six Ford light cars. Extra drivers and motorcycles were provided. These were traded in for six new Fords on 11 December 1917.

In May 1917 the unit was redeployed to Palestine by rail, and served throughout the campaign there. It was used to conduct long range reconnaissance and patrol duties, often operating well in advance of forward cavalry units. By November 1918 they had reached Aleppo where they were believed to be the furthest advanced Australian unit at the conclusion of the campaign.

¹ The Senussi were members of a religious order in Libya and Egypt. They were courted by the Ottoman and German Empires. In the summer of 1915, the Ottomans persuaded the Grand Senussi to declare jihad, and attack British-occupied Egypt from the west and to encourage insurrection in Egypt, in order to divert British forces.



Members of No. 1 Australian Light Car Patrol, in two T model Ford cars, each carrying a Lewis gun, returning from the Jordan Valley to the Dead Sea Post, in Palestine.

In November 1919, the following letter was sent to Norman's father in Bendigo.

“Dear Sir,

I have much pleasure in forwarding hereunder copy of extract from Third Supplement No. 31383, to the ‘London Gazette,’ dated 5th June, 1919, relating to the conspicuous services rendered by the undermentioned member of the Australian Imperial Force.

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES

A despatch has been received by the Secretary of State for War from General Sir E. H. Allenby, GCB, GCNG, Commander-in-Chief, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, submitting the name of the undermentioned whom he considers worthy of mention for services rendered during the period from the 19th September, 1918, to 31st January, 1919:- -

No. 8. Corporal N. S. Bissett’

Norman embarked on the HT *Kaiser-i-Hind* at Suez in May 1919 and was discharged in Melbourne on 15 August 1919. He married Rita Jackson in 1922 and in the mid 1920s he joined the CRB as an accountant.



Corporal Norman Bissett of the 1st Australian Light Car Patrol – circa 1918.

He died suddenly on 23 December 1940 (aged 54) in St Kilda.

Lance Corporal Donald Victor Darwin, MM, ISO, 10239

Donald Darwin was born at Redhill, South Australia in 1896. He was a 19-year-old engineering student at the time of his enlistment. He was educated at St. Peter's in Adelaide and the University of Melbourne where he served for three and a half years in the Melbourne University Rifles. He cut short his engineering studies to enlist in the AIF on 3 January 1916 and arrived in France in November 1916 as a Sapper in the 10th Field Company Engineers. This was the company which Major William McCormack (Deputy Chairman of the CRB) commanded. In 1918, Lance Corporal Darwin was awarded a Military Medal. His citation read:

'During the period from 28st March to 1st April, 1918, at BUIRE near ALBERT, this sapper carried out reconnaissance of Front-Line posts in daylight and accurately fixed their position at very great personal risk. This work was of great importance owing to the uncertainty of the line held by the infantry and was carried out under heavy shell and machinegun fire, and it was only his coolness and disregard for danger that he completed the task.'

(Sgd) John Monash Major Gen. G.O.C. Third Aust. Division



Outdoor group portrait of members of the 10th Field Company Engineers after the end of the war – December 1918. Lance Corporal Donald Darwin is on the extreme left of the third row from the front.



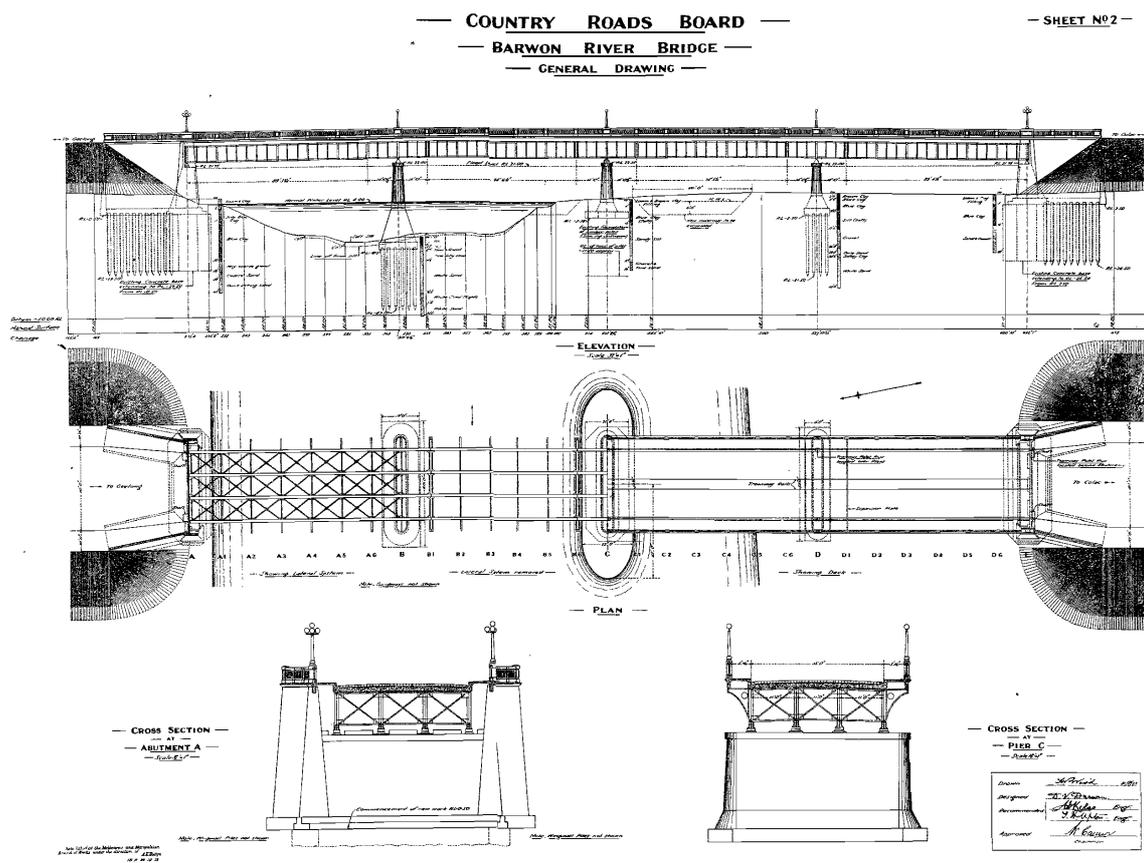
Donald Darwin's Military Medal.

Darwin was discharged in Melbourne on 25 May 1919. He completed his engineering studies at the University of Melbourne graduating with a BCE in 1922 and an MCE in 1926.

Joining Victoria's infant Country Roads Board, Darwin was appointed an Assistant Engineer in October 1920 and Bridge Engineer in 1925. One of his major projects was to design the Princes Highway's crossing of the Barwon River at Geelong. This was the first major bridge to be designed by the CRB.

In 1928, as Assistant Chief Engineer under founding chairman, William Calder, in an era when cars were proliferating, Darwin helped develop CRB plans for a system of 'low cost' roads. The Board tested numerous local soils and rocks for their road-building qualities, and encouraged the development of efficient construction machinery and streamlined bitumen surfacing techniques for arterial routes. Amongst many activities, Darwin supervised the compilation of load limits for the various classes of Victorian roads. All the while, he continued to lecture and examine in civil engineering at his old university.

Promoted to Chief Engineer in 1941, Darwin found his extensive home state highway responsibilities also extended to building munitions facilities and airfields in Victoria, and to defence-related construction in the Northern Territory, including the Stuart Highway from Alice Springs to Katherine.



Donald Darwin's design layout for the Barwon River Bridge.



Donald Darwin – from the CRB staff photographs of 1921 and 1930.

Donald Darwin was appointed to the three-member CRB board in 1945, becoming Chairman in 1949 when W.L. Dale retired. Directing long overdue maintenance and modernisation of Victoria's roads and bridges, he also had his staff plan for and commence work on the high-density, heavy-duty freeways that connect major centres today. Foreseeing that the CRB would increasingly be involved in metropolitan projects, he further ensured some of his staff acquired planning qualifications and became members of the then Regional and Town Planning Institute.

Because of his military service, Donald Darwin always supported the Army, and played an important role in inaugurating the RAE's post-war Supplementary Reserve (SR), which operated very effectively thereafter in Victoria and NSW for some four decades. The West Australian of 23 March 1949 recorded that the Institution of Engineers had just announced that the Minister for the Army, Mr Cyril Chambers, had accepted the Institution's proposal to create the SR, a new force of part-time engineering units sponsored by government departments and authorities, and designed to ensure specialist skills were rapidly available in strategic emergencies. Personnel with trades required more or less immediately after mobilisation did fourteen day's training annually in military skills. The report named Donald Darwin as a key proponent. Many of his employees would soon enlist, or re-enlist if they were WWII veterans, in either of three formidable CRB-sponsored units: HQ 22 Construction Regiment, 104 Construction Squadron and 107 Plant Squadron (Heavy) in 6 Engineer Group RAE at Swan Street, Melbourne.

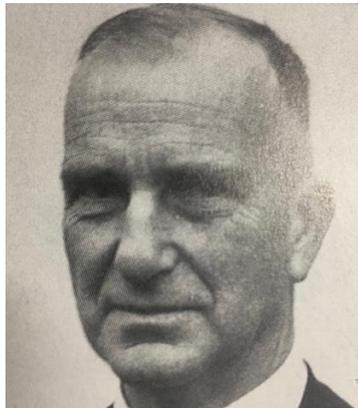
He was articulate with uncommon intellectual ability and a prodigious memory. A demanding administrator with a clear vision of the role of roads in the future, his dedication and determination overrode his lack of ability for compromise or expediency, and sometimes he clashed with his political masters. One protégé described him as 'an academic person . . . quite shy but humorous . . . a hard person to get to know'. That painful shyness, a notoriously clammy and limp handshake, and a devout Anglican's moral scrupulousness contributed to Darwin's difficulties in relating to State and municipal politicians. Apparently, his relationship could have been better with Public Works Minister, Sir Thomas Maltby, whom he met every Tuesday at 10.00 am after a flurry of reassessment of the board meeting the afternoon before, often necessitating retyping and re-briefing, before a swift car ride to East Melbourne. Nevertheless, the Maltby Bypass around Werribee opened in 1961, the first stretch of roadway in Victoria built to freeway standards.

Moreover, he was utterly dedicated to engineering and its professional institutions. Darwin became a councillor of the Institution of Engineers Victoria Division from 1949, and its President in 1957. He was appointed to the Tourist Development Authority in 1958, from which he stood down in June 1962. After he retired from the CRB in 1962 he continued at the Australian Road Research Board. That same year he received the Kernot medal; in 1963 the Imperial Service Order (ISO) followed, and finally the Peter Nicol Russell Medal from the Institution of Engineers in 1966.

Otherwise, his life seems to have been his family and his local Anglican church, and he sketched and painted. On 1 March 1930, at the Presbyterian Church, Malvern, Darwin married 24-year-old Auburn music teacher Evelyn Hope Scott. She was born in Melbourne on 13 September 1905, and was a violinist from a well-known medical and musical family. They lived in Canterbury. Their one child, Alice, born in 1945, sadly had spina bifida, and was wheelchair-bound. Her parents resolved that she would lead a conventional life, rather than go to an institution, so she attended Fintona Girl's School, where facilities for disabled students did not exist. This was probably an almost universal situation then. She got to first-floor classes by pulling herself hand-to-hand upstairs.

Family photos and records however reveal her as a gutsy and happy woman who donned ballgowns for school dances, was a bridesmaid for her cousin Janet Hubbard, drove herself everywhere, painted, played the violin, tutored and was studying for her MA in philosophy at Melbourne when she died of kidney failure, aged 27, a few weeks after her father's death on 8 March 1972 at Malvern. Her experience with her daughter drew Mrs Darwin towards Christian

Science. She continued to live in the family home, but dementia set in and she resided in a hospice until her death in 1997.



Donald Darwin – Chairman of the Country Roads Board – 1949 to 1962.

Donald Darwin's contribution to the development of the Victorian road network will never be surpassed.

Albert (Bert) Davies

There are six servicemen named Albert Davies in the national Australian Archives for the First World War and the nominal rolls of the Department of Veteran Affairs but I can't reconcile any one of them against the anecdotal evidence provided by his colleagues.

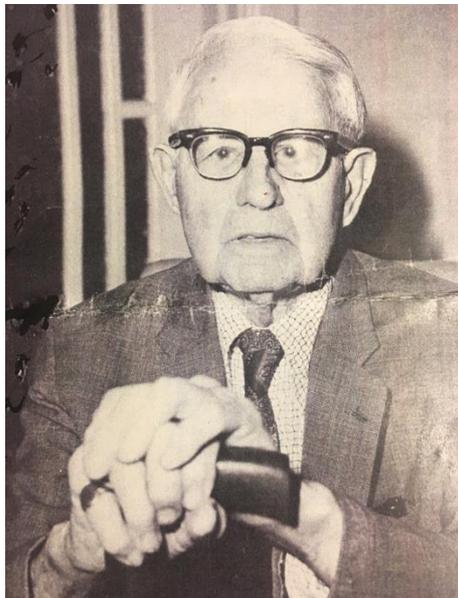
We know certainly that he was born in the UK. In *Roadlines* magazine, published by the CRB in December 1978, it stated that: "*Bert came to the Board with a wealth of experience in survey work. He was a foundation member of the Australian Survey Corps in 1910 and during World War 1 served in Mesopotamia, Egypt and France. His memories go deep into CRB history. He started in 1925 when Head Office was the Titles Office. Bert prepared Documents of Transfer for CRB land acquisition.*" The date of his commencement tallies with Harry George's recollections in *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board*. Harry – one of the CRB's most eminent engineers - said that Bert had gained considerable surveying experience in Africa.

The history of the Royal Australian Survey Corps confirms the establishment in 1910 of the Survey Section, Royal Australian Engineers (RAE). The Section was commanded by an Australian officer and staffed by four non-commissioned officers (NCOs) on loan from the British Army Royal

Engineers, and Australian Warrant Officers and NCOs. All men were professional surveyors and draughtsmen. We can assume that Bert was one of those. The Section was involved in producing military maps in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

The outbreak of the First World War did not, at first, seriously affect the work of the members of the Section as they were not enlisted in the AIF since their role was producing surveys and maps in Australia. At that stage, it was understood that the British Army would provide the maps required by the AIF fighting in war zones. However, in 1915, the Australian Survey Corps was raised as a unit of the Permanent Military Forces. Mapping operations in Australia then came to a virtual standstill when the AIF members departed for the Middle East and the Western Front where some joined the 1st ANZAC Topographic Section in France/Belgium while others served with British Army Royal Engineer Survey Companies.

We also know for certain that Bert married an Australian and that he and another CRB veteran, Frank Hosking, were the last two living, founding members of Southern Golf Club at Keysborough in Victoria.



Bert Davies at 94 years old.

Bert retired in 1954 when he was 70 years old and ran his own title-searching business until he was 92. The photograph above was taken at a reunion where, in typically humble fashion, Bert said “*The only bloody interesting thing about me seems to be that I am 94 ½ years old.*” At that time, Bert still

played golf regularly but said that a recent accident had put him out of action for a while. When asked about his future, he said, *“Well I don’t worry too much about that. My friends allege that my end will be at the hands of a jealous husband.”*

Sadly, he was killed alighting from a tram about a year later.

From the dates above, it would appear that Bert was born in 1884. Of the six people on the roll, none were born around this date and all had occupations other than surveying. I doubt I will find out anything more about him.

Sergeant Robert Main Dempster, 27004

In the 1930 CRB staff photograph, a man called R. M. Dempster can be seen with an RSL badge on his lapel. There are 42 Australian men named Dempster in the nominal roll for the First World War but only one has the initials R.M., and he is Robert Main Dempster. I am fairly certain that he is the one who worked for the CRB.



Robert Main Dempster – from the CRB staff photograph 1930.

Robert was born in Grangemouth, Scotland, and was 21 years and one month when he joined up on 11 January 1916. He described himself as a clerk and both his parents were deceased so he

nominated his brother in Sydney as his next of kin. At enlistment he was given three service numbers before they settled on the fourth, 27004. He was a Private on enlistment but became a Gunner a week later and then a Corporal five months later. He was attached to a number of field artillery brigades during his training including the 25th Field Artillery (Howitzer) Brigade, 5th Division Artillery, AIF. This brigade was formed in Egypt in February 1916. The Division served on the defence of Egypt and on the Western Front in France – Fromelles, the retreat to the Hindenburg Line, Bullecourt, Polygon Wood, Passchendaele, Villers Bretonneux, Morlancourt, Hamel, Amiens, Peronne and the Hindenburg Line.

Robert left Sydney in September 1916 and landed in Plymouth over a month later. On 23 July 1917, he proceeded overseas to France. He was in the 39th Battery of the 10th Field Artillery Brigade, 4th Division. His archive is difficult to interpret. It is not clear where in France he served and there is no mention of sickness or wounds – nor is it in chronological order. There is mention, however, of him being promoted to Temporary Sergeant in April 1918 on account of Sergeant Sleep being killed in action on 5 April 1918. It also appears that he served continuously in France except for a period of leave in the UK in September 1918. In December 1918 he was returned to Folkestone in England and in January 1919, he embarked for Australia.

He was discharged on 20 April 1919.

I was not able to find any information about his career at the CRB.



The Battle of Passchendaele – Diorama by Charles Web Gilbert.
Australian War Memorial.

Lieutenant Reginald (Reg) Francis Foster, 2379

Reg joined the AIF in April 1915, just after the first Anzac landing. Born in Colac in 1889, he was 26 years old when he enlisted giving his occupation as 'Clerk'.

Reg's archive is one of the longest I have studied – 101 pages – and much of it relates to illness and wounds.

He started his army service as a Corporal in the 14th Battalion 7th Reinforcements but later transferred to the 46th Infantry Battalion. The 46th Battalion was originally formed in Egypt early in 1916 after the conclusion of the Gallipoli campaign. The battalion drew most of its experienced personnel from the 14th Battalion which was a Victorian unit that served at Gallipoli in 1915. It received orders to proceed to France where for the next two and a half years it took part in the fighting along the Western Front.

The battalion's first major battle was at Pozières. After a period of rotating through the line throughout the winter of 1916 - 17, the 46th was committed to the First Battle of Bullecourt in early 1917. It was at Bullecourt, on 11 April 1917, that the battalion suffered its worst losses of the war. As part of the pursuit of the Germans once they had withdrawn to the Hindenburg Line, the attack was initially successful as the 46th managed to break through to its objective, but it was eventually pushed back resulting in heavy casualties. The remainder of 1917 was spent in Belgium, where the 46th fought two more major actions at Messines and Passchendaele. In early 1918, it was transferred south to France to play a defensive role during the German Spring Offensive, during which Reg was seriously wounded.

He arrived in Egypt (Zeitoun) from Australia aboard the HMAT *Persia* early in October 1916. Transferred to Mudros on the island of Lemnos a fortnight later, he joined the Dardanelles campaign (Gallipoli) in mid-November. By the end of the year he was back in Egypt - in Alexandria - and was transferred to the newly-formed 46th Battalion. He disembarked from the *Kinsfauna Castle*, at Marseilles, France, in June 1916 designated as the Battalion Orderly Room Clerk with the rank of Sergeant. His first hospitalisation was at Outersteene in Belgium due to a strain of abdominal muscles. In December 1916, he was sent back to England – to Oxford – for training for a commission in an infantry unit. He joined the No. 6 Officers Cadet Battalion.

While undergoing this course, he was hospitalised twice in Oxford with an unspecified illness and returned to France in April 1917 to be commissioned as an officer as Second Lieutenant. There followed more hospital stints – haemorrhoids (multiple times), diarrhoea, dysentery and enteric fever and unspecified). He was in hospital in the field, at Étapes, Boulogne and Havre and was eventually transferred back to England in September 1917. He spent time in hospitals at Sutton Veny and Cobham Hall and re-joined his unit in France in December.

He was wounded in action on 31 March 1918. The archive records ‘G.S.W. Both Legs.’ G.S.W. stands for gunshot wound. It also records that he was dangerously ill and his right leg was amputated on 8 April at Le Touquet. He was transferred back to England – to Cobham Hall – for recovery.

There is one point I want to make about his hospitalisation. I noted that some of it was for VD, possibly picked up during his time in Egypt – although it could just as easily have been contracted in England or France. However, there is a record compiled on 23 August 1918, about Lieutenant Foster’s history of hospitalisation from 3 July 1916. It does not mention the VD. Perhaps VD was a disease of the ranks and commissioned officers did not contract VD?

On 30 June 1918, Reg embarked for Australia aboard ‘D14’ and was ‘struck off strength’, unsurprisingly, because he was medically unfit. He was discharged on 3 January 1919.

He married Minnie Johnston in 1922.

I have no record of when Reg joined the CRB but he was still there during the Second World War because he unkindly chided Mac Wilkinson (see Chapter 7) on his return from the Northern Territory late in 1943, for not joining up. The one thing that saved him from Mac’s ire was his wooden leg.



Reg Foster in the CRB staff photographs of 1921 and 1930.

But Reg had a reputation for practical jokes. The Assistant Accountant ate a raw egg every morning. He would crack it and eat it raw. Reg substituted a china egg for the raw egg one day. Another story also involved the Assistant Accountant who played golf on Saturday afternoons after a morning's work at the Exhibition Building. One day Reg stuck a feather duster in his golf bag as he walked past. The Assistant Accountant only noticed it when he walked past the Myers windows and saw its reflection.

Reg enlisted in Ballarat and Plaque No. 672 under an *Ulmus procera* (planted by Miss B. Young) in the Avenue of Honour, commemorates his service.

He died in Bundoora in 1975.

William (Bill) Egbert Golding

Bill's story is remarkable. He served in both the World Wars - with the Welsh Artillery Regiment in the First World War and with an AIF Signals Corps in the Second World War.

You only have to do the maths to see that Bill was very young when he served in the First World War. He was born in 1900 and incorrectly stated his age when joining the Welsh Regiment at the tender age of 14. He actually celebrated his 15th birthday in the trenches in France. He must have

been in the 2nd Battalion as he was part of the Battle of Mons and the famous retreat in 1914. Despite being wounded by shrapnel in the face and legs, he served the remainder of the war in France and later, Palestine.

The youngest authenticated British soldier in the First World War was twelve-year-old Sidney Lewis, who fought at the Battle of the Somme in 1916. Lewis' claim was not authenticated until 2013. In the First World War, a large number of young boys joined up to serve as soldiers before they were eighteen, the legal age to serve in the army. It was previously reported that the youngest British soldier was an unnamed boy, also twelve, sent home from France in 1917 with other underage boys from various regiments.²

According to the BBC documentary *Teenage Tommies* (first broadcast in 2014), the British Army recruited 250,000 boys under eighteen during the First World War. This included Horace Iles who was shamed into joining up after being handed a white feather by a woman at the age of fourteen. He died at the Battle of the Somme at the age of sixteen. Also signing up as a private at age fourteen was Reginald St John Battersby. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant at the insistence of his father and headmaster who thought that his rank was inappropriate for a middle-class boy. Battersby was wounded by machine gun fire while leading his men over the top at the Somme. Three months later he lost a leg to shellfire.

Bill Golding came to Australia in 1921. The story of his Second World War experience and the work he did for the CRB as a Bridge Overseer is provided in Chapter 7.

Konstantin Ciry³ Halafoff

I remember Konstantin sitting in his office in Bridge Branch - usually wearing a fedora hat and a heavy coat to ward off any cold breezes. The door and windows of his office were always firmly closed creating a cigarette haze that would not be tolerated today⁴. This fear of the cold was very odd for a man born in Moscow – or perhaps it was because he was born in Moscow that he feared

² The youngest Australian soldier known to have served in the First World War was Alick Bryant who enlisted at 13, giving his age as 18. Alick survived the war. The youngest on the Roll of Honour was Private James Martin who died of typhoid at Gallipoli, aged 14 years and 9 months.

³ Some references give his second name as 'Konstantinovich'. This is a patronymic which is a personal middle name derived from his first name – ending in 'ovich'.

⁴ This was in 1961 when smoking in the office was permitted. I estimate about half the people in the office smoked – including me.

the cold so much. His wife, Irina, also worked in the office as a tracer. She came from Kiev – now the capital city of Ukraine. I always addressed them as Mr and Mrs Halafoff. They were both diminutive in stature and I recall that his English was quite good but Irina’s was only fair.



Konstantin Halafoff – circa early 1960s.

Irina was the eldest child of Vladimir Pavlovich Komarov. He came from a noble family and graduated as a military engineer from the Pavlovsk Military School in St Petersburg. In the First World War, Vladimir Pavlovich commanded the Fifth Pontoon Battalion in Kiev. When war was declared, he went immediately to the front lines and was awarded the Order of St Vladimir with Swords III grade ‘For Bravery.’ During the Russian Revolution, he fought with the White Army until the very end under the command of General P.N. Wrangel.



Irina Halafoff – date unknown.

Konstantin and Irina sponsored her father, Vladimir Pavlovich and his family to come to Australia under the family reunification program. They arrived in Australia in early 1950 and joined the fledgling Russian community in Melbourne where Vladimir played a leading role in creating a regular Russian-language newspaper – Единение (Edinenie).

Strictly speaking, Konstantin does not qualify for an entry in this chapter as he did not serve in the First World War as we usually define it. However, (according to Wikipedia) he did serve in the White Army during the Russian Civil War which raged between 1917 and 1922. After the armistice in Europe in 1918, Britain, Australia and other allied forces became involved in the Russian Civil War, so it is appropriate that Konstantin's service is recorded here. About 150 Australian volunteer army and navy personnel served with British forces in North Russia, the Black Sea and Siberia assisting the White Army between 1918 and 1919. Two Victoria Crosses were awarded to Australian soldiers – Corporal Arthur Sullivan and Sergeant Samuel Pearse (posthumously).

Konstantin was born in 1902 and, as a young man, trained to become a concert pianist but his studies were cut short by the Bolshevik Revolution. The revolution, also known as the October Revolution, was a coup against the provisional Russian government which had earlier overthrown Tsarist rule in February 1917. The coup was executed in October, 1917, by Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik Party, eventually leading to the establishment of a Soviet Socialist Republic and precipitating the Russian Civil War. The war had a devastating effect on Russia. It is estimated that between seven to twelve million people perished – most of them civilians – through armed conflict, famine, pogroms and disease.

I have been unable to find any details of his time in the White Army but his service must have been brief, because in 1920 – when he was only 18 years old – he moved to Belgrade in Yugoslavia to resume his interrupted studies. I surmise that he read the signs that Russia would eventually become a Communist State and this prompted his emigration to Yugoslavia before the conclusion of the civil war. In Yugoslavia he attended the Russian High School in Hercegnovi and undertook the matriculation course in Panchevo for Zagreb and Belgrade universities. It was not music that he chose the second time round; it was civil engineering. He graduated with a degree from Belgrade University.

In an obituary to Konstantin, published in 'Edinie', his friend Slava Rositslav Sazonov wrote about his time in Belgrade as follows:

“A true acolyte of the “Silver Age” of Russian poets, a connoisseur of the music of Prokofiev and Stravinsky, K.K. Halajoff was a member of the Belgrade Group of Poets and, being an outstanding pianist, wrote small lyrical compositions for the piano on themes invariably linked with the beauties of nature, for which he had an appreciation equalling that of the painter (Isaac) Levitan. He made his own contribution to art, and later to colour photography, a sphere that opened new opportunities after immigration to Australia.”

He remained in Yugoslavia till the end of the Second World War when he fled to Germany. Again, this flight was most likely prompted by the prospect of the new Communist regime of Josip Bros Tito which came into effect in 1945.

Slava Rositslav Sazonov also wrote:

“The Second World War overset completely the peaceful and settled life in Yugoslavia. It plunged K.K. Halajoff's family into new ordeals. Fleeing westward from the advancing Soviet army front line was full of hazards and dangers. The trek through Austria and Germany involved all methods and means of transport – from trains to trudging on foot. After a month on the road (or rather – on the run) the Halajoffs managed to reach one of the large “DP” (Displaced Persons) camps near the city of Kassel in West Germany, where they remained until finally leaving Europe.”

Konstantin wanted to migrate to Canada or the USA but his age precluded him from gaining entry. Australia had no such restrictions on age and was in dire need of engineers, enabling Konstantin, Irina and their son, Sergei, to emigrate to Australia in 1948.

He commenced working as a bridge design engineer with the CRB. He specialised in steel construction and designed the strengthening of the steel truss bridge over the Yarra River on the Chandler Highway. He also wrote a comprehensive guide 'Handbook on the Construction of Suspension Bridges'.

As mentioned earlier, in addition to his love of music, Konstantin also had a passion for poetry. He published poems in various Russian émigré publications in Europe and Australia including an essay on musical aspects of Boris Pasternak's language – which was published in a Russian literary

review in Munich. But his great passion was the musicology of the songs of lyrebirds. He was a regular visitor to Sherbrooke Forest on the outskirts of Melbourne near his home in Ferntree Gully where he studied and recorded the songs of lyrebirds. He wrote 11 papers for *Victorian Naturalist* and his recordings can now be downloaded on streaming platforms such as Amazon Music.



Konstantin at the piano and in Sherbrooke Forest – circa 1960s.

Konstantin died in Ferntree Gully in 1969. Irina lived for over 105 years and she died in ??.

The Enigmatic Mr Hart

In the staff photograph of 1921, a man named Mr Hart, is standing on the extreme right in the back row. He is wearing a badge of the RSL in his lapel. I have been unable to find a likely match in the National Australian Archives.



Mr Hart – 1921.

Gunner Frederick (Freddy) William Hine, 911

I was able to trace Frederick through the CRB staff photograph of 1921.

He was born in Fitzroy and was already a soldier when he enlisted at the age of 19 on the 1 January 1917. He signed up for the duration of the war plus four months which was normal practice. Frederick gave his residential address as the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery (RAGA), Queenscliff. He was assigned to the 36th Australian Heavy Artillery Group.

The group served on the Western Front. It was organised into two batteries equipped with 8 inch and 9.2 inch Howitzers⁵. Each battery initially had four guns; this was later increased to six. These were the heaviest guns operated on a continuous basis by Australian gunners in the First World War (and subsequently). As well as inflicting physical damage to men, equipment and buildings, artillery had a great psychological effect through the fear it instilled in opposing forces. The magnitude of the blast causing shrapnel to wreak its horror, the deafening noise of bombardment, the sheer helplessness of soldiers to combat it, and the uncertainty of where shells would land all contributed to what became known as the terror of shell shock, which I have described elsewhere

⁵ A Howitzer is a long -range heavy gun that fires shells at trajectories between those of cannons (which fire flat trajectories) and mortars that fire at high angles of trajectory. The projectiles from a Howitzer can go over obstacles such as hills – where a cannon cannot because of its relatively flat trajectory.

in this narrative. Artillery was the main cause of casualties and the pock-marked images of the battlefield created hazards for men drowning in water and mud.

Artillery was usually positioned distant from the front line but required considerable logistic resources to move the guns around and to keep them supplied with ammunition. Artillery batteries drew the attention of enemy batteries making them a very dangerous occupation at the front.

There were four defensive measures taken into account when locating the batteries. These were:

- Distance from the enemy - but they had to be in range for their purpose meaning that they were also within the enemy's range.
- Concealment - although the noise and muzzle flash were prodigious so that enemy batteries could locate the general position of the artillery batteries.
- Protection – usually defensive earthworks such as trenches and bunkers – although they could not sustain a direct hit from enemy artillery. They did however, provide some protection from shrapnel. On some occasions, such as the Battle of Cambrai in 1917, the German Infantry were able to get close enough to destroy artillery installations.
- Mobility – it was necessary to move batteries to avoid enemy artillery triangulating on them. But the Howitzers were not mobile. They required heavy equipment and considerable time to shift them.



A 9.2 inch Howitzer of the 36th Heavy Artillery Group in action near Ypres in September 1917 – a month before Frederick arrived. The Gunner with his hands above his head has just pulled the lanyard that fires the vent tube which ignites the bag charge propelling the shell – much like a naval gun. This photograph was taken by the renowned war photographer, Frank Hurley.

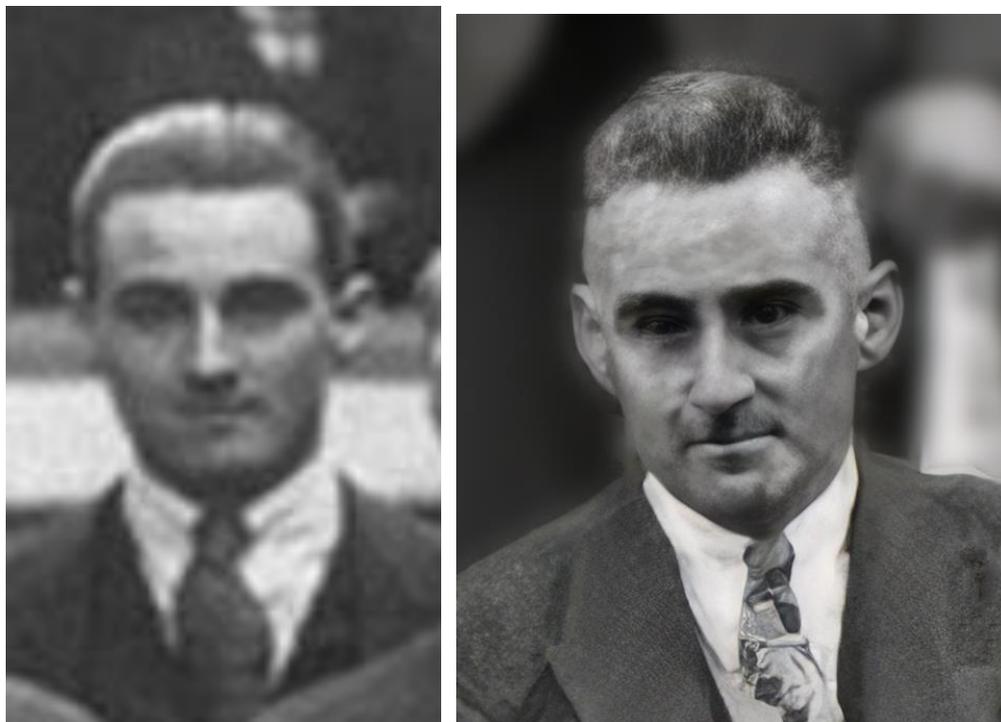
The purpose of heavy artillery was to pulverise enemy defensive positions. The Germans had plenty of time since their occupation in 1914 to construct sturdy defences comprising concrete blockhouses and deep, underground, concrete dugouts which were impervious to field artillery. Big guns were a prime target for opposing artillerymen who would seek to apply counter battery fire to enemy gun positions. Locating them accurately was a story in itself. In the end it was the British who triumphed thanks largely to the work of Adelaide-born (later Professor and 1915 Nobel Prize winner) Captain Lawrence Bragg, serving in the Royal Artillery. He and his team developed a surprisingly accurate technique based on sound ranging that gave the Allies a decisive advantage being able to locate enemy heavy guns with remarkable accuracy. It was a decisive factor in the Allied victory on 8 August 1918 at the Battle of Amiens.

Having served in the RAGA at Queenscliff for nine months before enlisting, Frederick Hine had obviously been trained in artillery operations and his archive commences with his embarkation from Melbourne on A 11 HMAT *Ascanius* on 11 May 1917, He disembarked in Devenport, England on 20 July 1917. From there, the group moved to Catterick in Yorkshire to prepare for transfer to France which occurred in early October. He transferred to the front on 24 October 1917 but Frederick's war didn't last too long. He was hospitalised in the field on 17 November

with an ankle injury and transferred to the 10th General Hospital in Rouen on 22 November. It stated that he had a fractured tibia and fibula near the left ankle.

For the Australian soldiers who had been wounded and shipped back to hospitals in England, there was a defined process for their recovery and training. As no Australian General Hospitals were established in Britain during the conflict, Australian casualties arriving from France went to British hospitals across the country. Once well enough to be moved, they were transferred to the Australian Auxiliary Hospital in Harefield, Middlesex, Dartford in Kent and at Southall in West London. Upon discharge from hospital, they were then sent to one of the four Command Depots in Wiltshire and Dorset to convalesce and continue their recovery. The aim of the four Command Depots was to receive and rehabilitate men who were likely to be fit enough to return to the front.

In Frederick's case, he was transferred to hospital in Hampstead in England on 24 November and placed in the 1st Australian Auxiliary Hospital – Harefield House - on 19 December 1917 and was discharged on 31 December to No. 2 Command Depot. However, his injury was considered to be too severe for him to return to France and he returned to Australia in May 1918 for discharge on 31 August 1918.



Frederick Hine – from the CRB staff photographs of 1921 and 1930.

He joined the CRB soon after returning from the war. He wrote to the Army in June 1962 seeking the amount of accrued army leave owing to him saying that the information was required by his employer, the CRB, for whom he had worked continuously for 42 years.

There is a story in *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board* which involved three 1st AIF veterans. It was described by Marjorie Phillips.

“Reg Foster used to like his glass of wine and crayfish. He had crayfish the night before for dinner and he brought the legs in the following day for morning tea. We had coal fires in those days and he was sitting beside the coal fire and as he ate the flesh out of the pieces of leg, he placed the shell in the fire. Mr Jansen came round and said, ‘What’s that awful smell?’ and Reggie Foster said, ‘It’s Freddy Hines’ socks”.

Frederick was a Paying Officer in the Accounts Branch when he retired in August 1962 and he died in 1978.

Private Robert (Bob) Griffith Humphreys, 554

Bob’s name should have been on the Roll of Honour because he first started work at the CRB in 1916 as a chainman in a survey party. He enlisted in January 1917 and was posted to the 1st Anzac Light Railways. He came from North Melbourne and had just turned 20 years of age. His occupation was ‘Fireman’ - so perhaps he had left the CRB before joining up. He must have tried to enlist earlier but had been rejected because of *varicella* – more commonly known as chicken pox. But he was successful the second time around.

The 1st Light Railway Company was raised in Victoria, in December 1916 and embarked from Melbourne on the HMAT *Ballarat* in February 1917 – so, Bob had only just joined up before heading to France. The *Ballarat* was torpedoed by a submarine in the English Channel but everyone was recovered to Devenport (Plymouth) and no lives were lost.

The raising of this and other Light Railway units coincided with the implementation of a new battlefield strategy. The widespread use of battlefield rail transformed supply, movement of soldiers and casualty evacuation.



Members of the 5th Australian Field Ambulance bringing in wounded in the Ypres Sector.

The photograph above shows the useful light railway by which the majority of the casualties of that sector were transported to Westhoek Ridge, being taken from there by horse ambulance back to Birr Cross Roads, from which loading post they were removed in motor ambulances to the advanced dressing stations on the Menin Road.



A light rail adjacent to the road near the Menin Gate, Ypres – September 1917.

The Light Railway Companies were operated by the Engineers. The maintenance of roads had become problematic because of the lack of available manpower and the movement and storage of materials - such as rock - clogged up the supply routes.

The first light railway operated by the British was, in fact, French. It had a track gauge of 60cm (2 feet), and this was subsequently applied to all light railways constructed by the army. Prefabricated, lightweight tracks could be easily carried and laid quickly, with minimal preparation of the ground. Special units were formed for the construction, maintenance and operation of the new system.

Bob was hospitalised for 20 days on the ship and a further three times in England. He did not serve in France. He was diagnosed with trachoma – an affliction that dogged him for the rest of his life.

Trachoma is an infectious disease caused by bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*. The infection causes a roughening of the inner surface of the eyelids. This roughening can lead to pain in the eyes and the breakdown of the outer surface or cornea of the eyes. Untreated, repeated trachoma infections can result in permanent blindness.

The bacteria causing the disease can be spread by both direct and indirect contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Indirect contact includes through clothing or flies that have come into contact with an affected person's eyes or nose. Children spread the disease more often than adults. Poor sanitation, crowded living conditions, and not enough clean water and toilets also increase the spread. Bob could have easily picked the infection up on the troop ship.

He returned to Australia on the HT A24 embarking in late August 1917. He was discharged from the Army in May 1918.

After his discharge, he worked with a number of building contractors and met a young CRB engineer who was so taken with Bob, he persuaded him to join the CRB. That young engineer was the venerable Paddy O'Donnell, later to become the Chairman of the Board. Because of his semi-blindness, the CRB allocated a car and driver to ferry him around. Bob was a great manager of men and inspired loyalty in all those who worked for him.

From 1933 to the Second World War, Bob supervised the construction of the major bridges in the State. These included the Hoddle Bridge over the Yarra River and the Latrobe River Bridge at

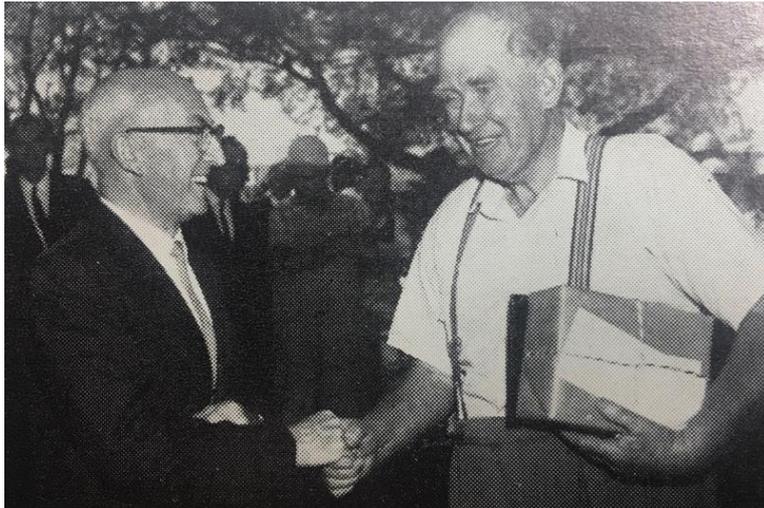
Rosedale. During the Second World War he worked for the Allied Works Council building the runways, roads and buildings at Essendon Airport. After the war he built the Swan Street Bridge, Johnston Street Bridge over the Yarra, Bell Street Bridge over Merri Creek, Brunswick Road Bridge over Moonee Ponds Creek, Banksia Street Bridge, Albion Rail Overpass, Reynard Street Bridge, Pascoe Vale Road Bridge and the Lancefield Road Interchange Bridge on the Calder Freeway. It is fair to say that no-one has had a greater influence on bridge construction in Victoria. Not bad for a fellow with dodgy eyesight.



Johnston Street Bridge – Abbotsford.

Brian Kemp was Bob's Supervising Engineer on the construction of the Albion Rail Overpass. He described Bob as a large, tall man who had the absolute respect of the workers in his direct labour gang. He took a great interest in his men both on the job and in their private lives. Ted Malcolmson (later to become a CRB bridge overseer legend in his own right) was one of his gangers – and a close friend of Bob - was given the task of administering drops in Bob's eyes. Ted later inherited Bob's gang after Bob retired.

Bob served the CRB for 32 years and died in Heidelberg in August 1984.



Chief Bridge Engineer, Basil Abery, farewelling Bob Humphreys at his retirement after a stellar career with the CRB. February 1965.

Lieutenant (Sir) Louis Francis Loder, CBE, 330

Louis Loder was born in Sale in 1896. Like Donald Darwin, Louis Loder was an engineering student when he enlisted in April 1916. He was a Private in No. 2 Company Machine Gun Depot where he was promoted to Sergeant in November 1916. He served as a machine-gun instructor and armament officer with the 15th Machine Gun Company 2nd/10th Reinforcements.



Louis Loder – from CRB staff photograph taken in 1930.

He embarked for England in December 1916 and, in April 1917, he was commissioned in the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) where he trained as a flyer. He was promoted to Lieutenant in May 1917 and was attached to 68 Squadron of the AFC. However, he was grounded two months later because he suffered from migraine headaches which permanently incapacitated him from further flying.

The report of the Medical Board said: *“He is tremulous and given a history of typical attacks of migraine, which permanently incapacitate him from further flying. Should an attack come on whilst he is in the air he would probably lose control of the machine. Poor balancing. He has thickened arteries, and cardiac hypertrophy. PERMANENTLY UNFIT as PILOT OR OBSERVER.”*

However, he remained with the AFC and was sent to the Western Front in September 1917. He returned to Australia on the SS *Orva* arriving in February 1919 and was mentioned in dispatches⁶ in March 1919. He was discharged in 1919 and resumed his engineering studies at the University of Melbourne and graduated with first-class honours.

He joined the CRB in 1924, initially as a bridge designer, and was appointed Highways Engineer in 1925. He was promoted to Chief Engineer in 1928 and appointed Chairman of the Board in 1940. He became the co-ordinator of the Victorian instrumentalities for the Allied Works Council which managed the construction of 787 miles of the Stuart Highway in the Northern Territory. In 1944 he became the Director General of Allied Works and after the cessation of the war in 1945, he was appointed the first Director-General of the Commonwealth Department of Works to look after all Federal Government infrastructure.

He retired in 1961.

Loder was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in June 1953. He was appointed a Knight Bachelor in 1962.

⁶ To be Mentioned in Dispatches (or MiD) describes a member of the armed forces whose name appears in an official report written by a superior officer and sent to the high command, in which their gallant or meritorious action in the face of the enemy is described. Servicemen and women who are mentioned in dispatches are not awarded a medal for their actions, but receive a certificate and wear an oak leaf on the ribbon of the appropriate campaign medal.



Sir Louis Loder by Graeme Thorley 1961.

A teetotaler, Sir Louis was a tall, sparsely built man with a resonant voice and a finely tuned sense of propriety. As a youth he had been a keen footballer and an accomplished sprinter; in his advanced years he enjoyed tennis.

Sir Louis' son, John, also worked for the CRB but, after carrying out a number of independent assignments, he partnered with John Bayly to form a successful town planning and traffic engineering practice.

Sir Louis died in 1972 at the age of 76.

Lance Corporal Aubrey Duncan Mackenzie, 3157

Aubrey Mackenzie was born in 1895 at North Carlton and was educated at Melbourne Continuation (High) School. He joined the Victorian Public Works Department as a pupil-architect in 1912, changing in the following year to pupil-engineer. He enlisted in the AIF in April 1915 and landed in Gallipoli in August. He was hospitalised on three occasions with dysentery, diarrhoea and colitis and also suffered shell shock.

Aubrey served in the 6th Field Ambulance as a private. After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, he was again hospitalised in Egypt. In June 1916, he disembarked with the British Expeditionary Force at Marseilles where he joined the 8th Field Ambulance as a Lance Corporal. The unit's first major battle came during the disastrous Battle of Fromelles in July 1916, after which it served throughout the remainder of the war supporting the 8th Brigade's operations in France and Belgium.

He later joined K Supply Column in France and had another spell in hospital. While still in France in January 1919, Aubrey went absent without leave for 10 days for which he received a punishment of 14 days confined to barracks with forfeiture of 20 day's pay. He arrived back in Australia in March 1919 and was discharged in Melbourne in July 1919.



Lance Corporal Aubrey Mackenzie.

He re-joined the Public Works Department and married in 1924. In 1934 Mackenzie was promoted to Chief Engineer of the department in charge of ports and harbours. He had previously acquired experience in road engineering having been responsible for construction of the Yarra Boulevard and the Mount Donna Buang, Acheron Way and Ben Cairn roads. He also managed the construction of the surroundings of the Shrine of Remembrance. Aubrey was at various times Chairman of the State Tourist Committee, the Motor-Omnibus Advisory Board and the Foreshore

Erosion Board, was Vice-President of the Marine Board, and a member of the committees for Rivers and Streams and Mount Buffalo National Park.

From 1938 to 1940 he became a full-time member of the Country Roads Board. This was a unique appointment at the time because he was the first person ever to be appointed from outside the Board.⁷



Aubrey Mackenzie – Member of the CRB from 1938 to 1940

In 1940 Mackenzie was appointed Chairman of the Melbourne Harbor Trust. After stagnating in the interwar period, the Port of Melbourne saw unprecedented development over the next twenty years. Under wartime conditions the Commonwealth government enabled extensive shipbuilding and repair by the Trust. Merchant vessels were armed and others converted to minesweepers. Naval anti-submarine vessels, freighters and cargo barges were soon under construction; new slipways, fitting-out berths, mobile cranes and workshops were developed. In 1942, Melbourne was the chief American supply port in Australia - traffic that year broke all records.

Under Mackenzie's administration, Melbourne remained the best mechanized Australian port, especially for bulk-loading. Construction of the Appleton Dock (opened in 1956) was a highlight, and the Tasmanian car-ferry was a notable achievement. A dredge was named after him.

He died in March 1962, aged 67.

⁷ There was one other similar appointment. F.M. Corrigan was appointed directly to the Board in 1940 from the position of Shire Engineer at Alberton Shire. He served under the Chairmanship of D.V. Darwin until his retirement in 1955.

Private Ernest William Miskin, 422

Ernest was born in Allendale near Creswick and enlisted at 23 years of age in July 1915 - calling himself 'labourer'. He had some trouble with bureaucracy in that his name was often misspelt as 'Misken'. In 1922, in a letter written by Ernest on the Country Roads Board letter head requesting his Victory Medal, the typist made the same mistake. Ernest crossed out the 'e' and replaced it with 'i'. But his dilemma continued. In the photograph of the CRB staff taken in 1930 his name was again incorrectly spelt. Even on the Roll of Honour for the Allendale Fire Brigade, the spelling is incorrect.



Ernest's brother, Hugh, is also on the Roll of Honour.

Ernest was attached to the 31st Battalion and left Australia in November 1915 on HMAT A62 *Wandilla*. The page on his embarkation roll in the Australian War Memorial contains 34 names of whom thirteen were labourers (including Ernest), two were farmers, one a cordial manufacturer, two clerks, one shearer, one confectioner, two butchers, two miners, one barman, one book-keeper, one carpenter, one caterer, one plumber, one baker, one cook, one contractor, one tram conductor and one trucker. They were all privates except one of the labourers described as 'bugler'. None would be deemed to be educated in any way. They were all from Victoria, NSW and Queensland except one from New Zealand and a few from Great Britain. Most were Church of England and Roman Catholic except for two Presbyterians, one Baptist and two Methodists.

Some historians have written about class distinction in the British forces during the First World War. For example, Susan Tyne wrote a research paper studying the relationship between officers and enlisted men in World War One. (Department of History, Rochester University, 2006). In it she said:

“The officer class recruited for the war was officially upper class. Prior to the war, all officers in the army were recruited from British society’s elite, and once war broke out, these men continued to serve in higher positions among the senior officer staff. The officers closest to the men, junior officers, are largely remembered as the “Public School Officers” since most received their training in the Officer Training Corps (O.T.C.) at boarding schools. Historian John Keegan sums up the qualities of these men: “Officers had to be gentlemen...though education at one of the public or better grammar schools which ran an O.T.C. was in practice often found sufficient...” These broader qualifications for officers opened their ranks to men from the middle class. Many arguments have been made as to why these officers, most coming from the academic world, could assimilate into the role of commander. Most discussions, however, generally conclude that the competitive spirit and structure of the public schools was so similar to the army’s that there was a natural transition from school to army: “For the British regiment, with its complex and highly individual accretion of traditions, local affinities, annual rituals, inter-company rivalries, fierce autonomy and distinctive name... was an extension, indeed a creation of the Victorian public school system.” Although these public school officers could assimilate into army life and structure, they brought a distinctly civilian approach to discipline and built relationships with their men just as they would with schoolmates.”

It is possible that similar distinctions occurred in the AIF although, possibly, not as pronounced. The hierarchy of upper-class commanders, middle class officers and working class rank and file were apparent in the Australian Army. In fact, some soldiers played the role of servants and waited upon officers of higher class who enjoyed luxuries that the men in the trenches could not comprehend.

It was usually the Lieutenants who led the men in the field and looked after them like a mother hen and her chickens – so when an action was successful it was usually the Lieutenant who was awarded a decoration while an infantryman may have only got a mention in dispatches. Certainly, in the CRB annals those who were decorated were mainly the officers. I think the Second World War broke down these distinctions. Sir John Monash was an exception to the rule. Although an educated man, he had the added burden of both German and Jewish heritage to resist. In fact, it was more pronounced in the Australian hierarchy than the British. The Anzac historian, Charles Bean, and Keith Murdoch – a war correspondent - conspired to remove Monash because of his

supposed inborn Jewish propensity to push himself forward. When Australia's Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, went to England to sack Monash, he consulted senior British and Australian officers who were aghast at the notion – saying that Monash was their most effective leader. Hughes changed his mind and Monash became one of the most effective generals on the Western Front. He was knighted on the battlefield by King George V.



Private Ernest William Miskin – from the Australian War Memorial.

Ernest disembarked at Suez in December 1915 and was transferred to hospital at Tell el Kebir in March 1916. He had two stints in hospital before embarking aboard a ship called '*Horcrata*' in March 1916 bound for Marseilles in France to join the British Expeditionary Force. He was wounded in July 1916 with a gunshot wound to the leg – described as being slight. The 31st Battalion fought its first major battle at Fromelles on 19 July 1916, having only entered the front-line trenches three days previously. The attack was a disastrous introduction to battle for the 31st - it suffered 572 casualties, over half of its strength. I presume this was the battle in which Ernest was wounded.

He was hospitalised in France and then evacuated to England in August 1916. In the hospital at Norwich his wound was described as 'severe'. I suspect his leg had become infected.

In November he was transferred from Norwich to the First Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield Park House in Middlesex. There, his leg was amputated. The file says “L(ef) leg amp. to thigh.” In December 1916, Ernest was transferred to another hospital and was discharged in April 1917 for return to Australia.



Australia's 1st Auxillary Hospital at Harefield Park.

Ernest married Vera Cox in 1918 and they had three children. He probably joined the CRB soon after his return from the war as he wrote a letter from there in 1922. He had a long career at the Board – at least into the 1950s. Noel Anderson (Chapter 7) remembers him working in the ‘Tin Shed’ at the Exhibition Building in the Postal Section.



Ernest Miskin – from the CRB staff photograph 1930.

Ernest died in Melbourne in 1964.

Sergeant Sidney (Sid) James Mulford, MS 4499.

Sid was born at Brentford in Middlesex, England in 1881. In his youth he worked for a tug and barge firm driving floats of the crank-handle and solid tyre vintage, and he recalled how sceptical drivers were when pneumatic tyres and self-starters were introduced. These new-fangled ideas wouldn't last long!

He joined the British Army in 1914 and served in the Royal Army Service Corps Motor Transport No. M.S. 4499. The British Army was already the most mechanised in the world when the First World War began, in terms of use of mechanical transport. It maintained that leadership, and by 1918 this was a strategically important factor in being able to maintain supply as the armies made considerable advances over difficult ground.

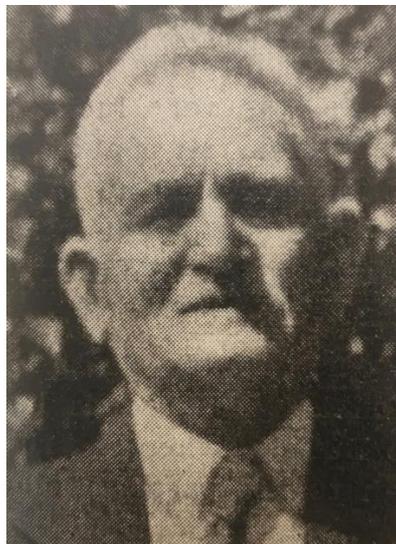
All Mechanical Transport Companies were part of the lines of communication and were not necessarily under the orders of a division. They operated in wide variety of roles, such as being attached to the heavy artillery as Ammunition Columns or Parks, being Omnibus Companies, Motor Ambulance Convoys, or Bridging and Pontoon Units.



A British soldier and vehicles of 960 Motor Transport Company.

Sid was invalided from France and later went to Beaufort to join a newly-formed Company for service in Italy. When they sailed, Sid managed to go along. In recognition of his services, he was mentioned in dispatches.

Sid came out to Australia aboard the P & O liner *Ballarat* with his wife (Jemima Busby) and their five children in 1927. He called himself a mechanic. He completed an Engine Driver's Certificate at the Working Men's College in Melbourne (the predecessor to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology) and then joined the Country Roads Board as a roller driver in Gippsland where he became a legend. He served with the CRB for 32 years.



Sid Mulford – 1950.

Sid died in Moonee Ponds in 1967 aged 86.

Lieutenant Caleb Grafton Roberts, MC

Caleb was the only child of the famous Australian impressionist painter, Tom Roberts, of the Heidelberg School fame. Although he was born in Australia (in 1898), he spent most of his early life in England where he attended St Paul's School, London, and the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich.



Tom Roberts modelled this portrait of his son, Caleb, on the eve of his ninth birthday – 1907.

He was a good scholar and excellent sportsman, playing Rugby Union at international level for the British Army. He was commissioned in the British Army in August 1916 and served in Palestine (1917), the Western Front (1917-18) and northern Russia (in 1919 in the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War).



Lieutenant Caleb Roberts, MC.

He won the Military Cross at the Battle of St Quentin Canal where American, Australian and British troops breached the Hindenburg Line for the first time, ultimately convincing the German High Command that there was little hope of a German victory. The citation for his Military Cross reads:

Lt. C.G. Roberts, 23rd Fd. Coy, R.E. For conspicuous gallantry and skill near Maissemy, Sept, 17-18, 1918, in taping the forming-up line on two occasions under heavy shell and machine-gun fire. His section was also employed repeatedly in consolidation under fire. On all occasions he set a fine example of courage.'

After the war, Caleb studied engineering at the University of London and graduated in 1922 with a BSc Eng Hons and became an Assistant Engineer with the Ministry of Transport.

Caleb's father and William Calder, Chairman of the CRB, were friends. Tom Roberts painted a portrait of Calder – reputedly from a photograph - which was hung on the wall outside the Boardroom at the CRB head office in Kew. Caleb must have been in touch with Calder while the latter was on a study trip to England in 1924. Calder wrote to Caleb as he was returning to Australia while on board the Cunard Line's RMS *Scythia*, writing:

"Dear Sir,

Yours of the 14th June reached me after I left London and I had no favourable opportunity of replying. Should you decide to risk a move to Australia I shall be pleased to hear from you at any time and may be able to proffer some advice.

My inquiries in England elicited the fact that professional men, particularly those in higher end positions, were being paid better salaries than in Australia i.e. relatively.

With best wishes for your success and advancement.

Yours faithfully

W Calder"

Caleb took that risk. With no prospects other than the promise of a chat with William Calder, Caleb and his family arrived in Melbourne in 1925. That year he began his employment with the CRB as an Assistant Highway Engineer.

Roberts was promoted to Highways Engineer in 1928. His responsibilities included the modernizing of road-making techniques and the introduction of cheaper construction methods. In 1937 he prepared the Board's first 10-year plan for highway development and was appointed Chief Engineer in 1939.

Caleb also played a very important role in the army during the Second World War where he achieved the rank of Colonel – refer to Chapter 6.

Leng Challenger Tupman aka ‘Tuppy’

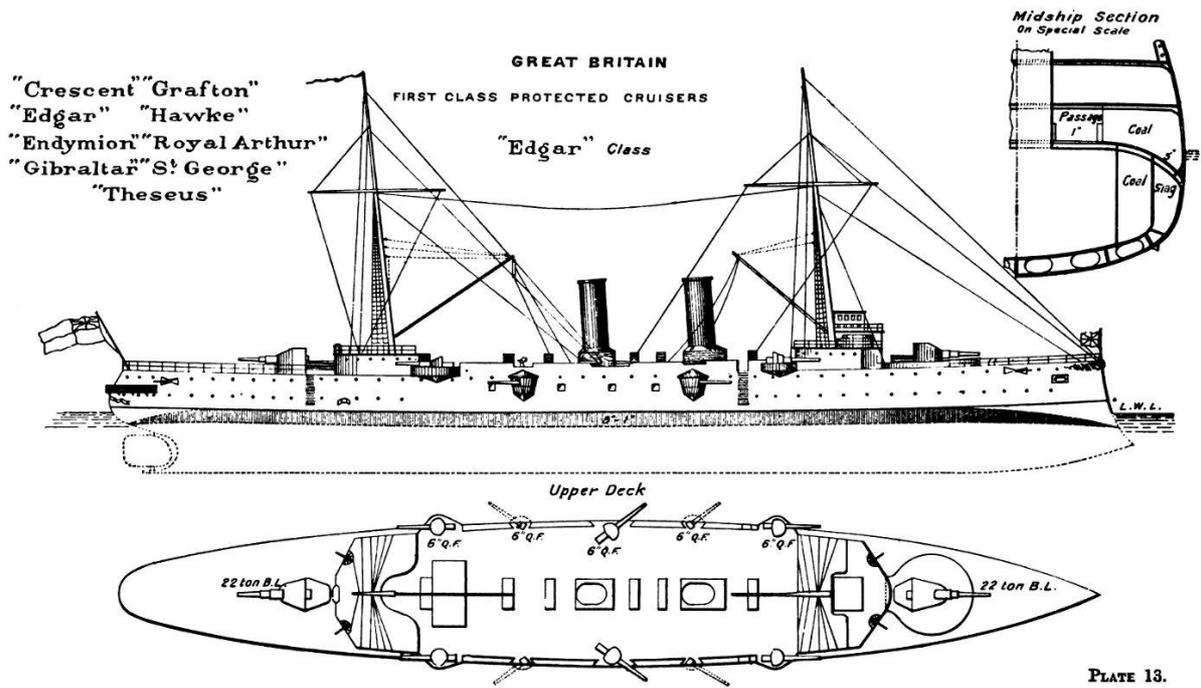
Little is known about Tuppy's roots other than he was born in England (possibly Yorkshire) and that he served in the Royal Navy during the war. He was a marine engineer in the famous 10th Cruiser Squadron aka the Northern Patrol.

The Northern Patrol was part of the British blockade of Germany. Its main task was to prevent trade to and from Germany by checking merchant ships and their cargoes. Its' aims were three-fold - to stop German warships, raiders and other naval ships from leaving the North Sea for the Atlantic Ocean (or returning), to protect Shetland against invasion and to gather intelligence from intercepted neutral ships.



Map of the North Sea showing the area of operation of the Northern Patrol.

The Patrol comprised 'Edgar' Class cruisers. These were protected by a belt of side armour and an armoured deck but were, nevertheless, old Victorian ships. They carried two 9.2-inch guns and ten 6-inch quick firers for the ships to fire broadside into opposing ships. The Edgars had been built originally to patrol the seas, protecting trade and overawing recalcitrant colonials. By 1914 they were in no condition to spend long periods in such dangerous seas; many of the crews were recalled pensioners, somewhat surprised to return to service. They were slow in speed and acceleration and had to make frequent returns to port for coaling, reducing each patrol to three ships. During autumn, the weather deteriorated and sometimes was so bad as to preclude boarding ships.

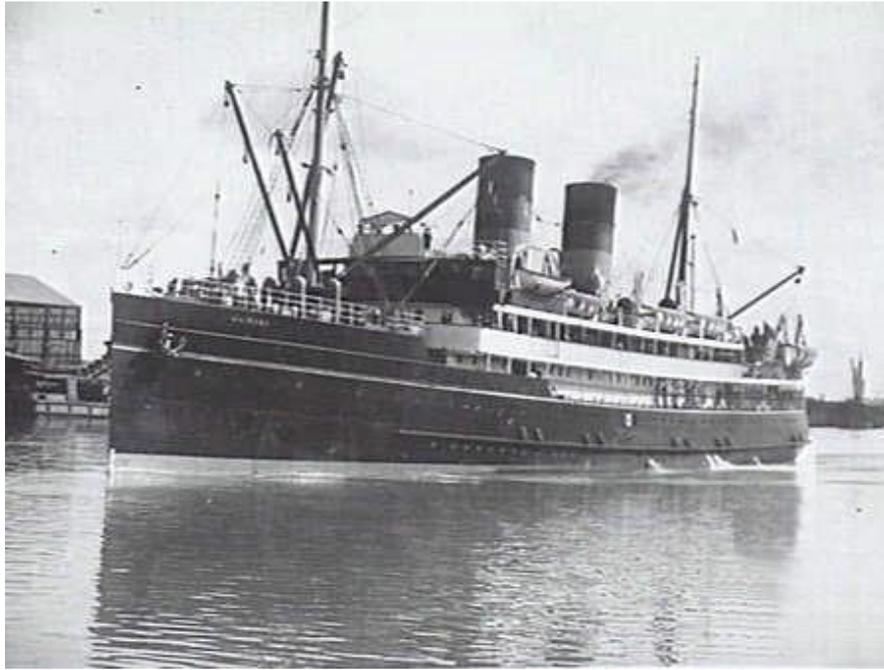


Details of an Edgar Class Cruiser.

After the war, Tuppy came to Australia as the Chief Engineer on the HMS *Nairana* which operated between Tasmania and Melbourne. *Nairana* was laid down in Scotland in 1914 for an Australian shipping line but on the outbreak of war, she was reconfigured to become a seaplane carrier. She was launched in 1915 and became part of the Battle Cruiser Force of the Grand Fleet operating out of Scarpa Flow in the Orkney Islands – which was also the base of the Northern Patrol. After the war, in 1921, *Nairana* was handed over to its original owner where it plied for many years as a passenger ferry between Tasmania and Melbourne. Tuppy was the Chief Engineer of the ship and I think it is reasonable to surmise that he came out to Australia on the ship.

In 1929, he married Dorothy Seabrook.

Tuppy joined the Plant Branch of the CRB in South Melbourne in May 1934 and was appointed Plant Engineer in May 1938. In August 1944 he was appointed Mechanical Engineer and when due to retire in 1949, he was given a 12 month's extension. He retired in March 1951 and joined Kelly & Lewis as Inspecting Engineer.



Nairana as a Bass Strait ferry between the wars.

Tuppy was quite a character. He played a ukulele in a band and was looked down upon as it was thought to be improper for a man of his status. Tuppy ruled his workshop with military rigour and some people were intimidated by him. On the other hand, he loved practical jokes and showed exceptional kindness when needed.

Bruce Grayling told the following story.

‘During one of the transport strikes we suffered in the late ‘40s, I used to ride to work on the back of my brother’s motor bike. Ian would drop me off at South Melbourne and go on his way to Melbourne Technical College. One morning after dropping me off, my brother was back half an hour later; Ian had an accident up the road and his motor bike was bent. It was only half a mile away and he asked if I could help him at lunch time and put the bike in the yard at South Melbourne until he could get it home.

I went to see Tuppy and asked if I could borrow one of the trolleys out of the workshop to put the bike on to bring it back to the yard. Tuppy said, ‘No good. You go and see Ernie Baker (the Transport Foreman) and you tell Baker to get a couple of men, now, to go and get the bike and to bring it back here. You tell Baker to take the bike back home to your place, today, in one of the Board’s trucks, and you tell Baker that when he is picking up the people in the morning, he is to pick up your brother so he can get to school too.’”

Tuppy died suddenly in Brighton in 1965 at the age of 86 years.

I could find no primary source information about Tuppy – nor could I find a photo. The information above was obtained from Tuppy’s colleagues in the oral history of *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board*.

Norman E. Vaughan

In the staff photograph of 1921, a man named N. E. Vaughan is seated on the ground. He is wearing a badge of the RSL in his lapel. I have been unable to find a man named Vaughan with these initials in the National Australian Archives, nor could I find one with that surname that seemed a likely match.



N. E. Vaughan – 1921.

On the very first page of *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board* there is a reference to Norman Vaughan. It was about Frank Docking getting a job at the CRB. It said:

“On joining the CRB on 23 May 1923 I found that two other UHS (University High School) former students were on the Board’s staff, namely Clem Perrin and Norm Vaughan, both a year or two older than me.”

Clem was born in 1904 and presumably, Norm would have been born around the same time. I did find in the Victorian birth records Norman Ernest Vaughan who was born in South Yarra in 1902. He was an engineer (information I obtained from the electoral roll) and he died in 1984. This is most likely N. E. Vaughan who worked for the CRB – but when you do the maths, he would have been too young to serve in the First World War.

I am afraid that Norman will remain unknown to us. The only person of that name in the Army archives is Norman Harold Stanmore Vaughan, who was a 23-year-old bedstead maker from North Melbourne – and I doubt he is the right one.

Major Vernon Joseph Whitehead

I found Vernon in two photographs of the staff of the CRB taken in 1921 and 1930. When I searched the archives, I came to realise that Dick Whitehead, who also worked for the CRB and served in the Second World War, was his son. Vernon was the CRB's first Legal Officer and Estates Officer and served in that position from 1918 to 1939. Refer to Dick's story in Chapter 6.



Vernon Joseph Whitehead – from the CRB staff photographs of 1921 and 1930.

Rather than an Attestation Form, Vernon's details are set out on an Application for a Commission in the Australian Imperial Force. It is the only one I have seen of all those I have researched. It is

also the only one I have seen which was typed. The nominal roll states that he enlisted on 16 February 1915.

Vernon was born in February 1874 and was just over 41 years of age when he enlisted. He was a qualified Barrister and Solicitor and he was married to Ileen Isabelle Whitehead. From August 1893 to January 1910, he served in the Australian Garrison Artillery where he gained the rank of Major. From January 1910 to February 1915, he was the Area Officer of Area 69A. I haven't been able to find out where this area was.

Before the First World War, the Australian Government had raised a large civilian militia to defend the country against a feared attack by Japan. It also expanded the pre-Federation network of coastal defences to provide protection against raids from Japanese or German warships. In 1912, these defences were manned by 14 companies of the Australian Garrison Artillery, each of which had a strength of over 100 men.

Members of the coastal artillery units were not initially permitted to volunteer for overseas service in the AIF. However, the threat of naval attack from German raiders greatly decreased after the British victory in the battle of the Falkland Islands in December 1914, and in early 1915 the Australian Government decided to form a heavy artillery for service in France from the permanent members of the garrison artillery units.

Vernon's story is a sad one. He embarked with the 8th Battalion, 4th Reinforcement from Melbourne on HMAT A18 *Wiltshire* on 14 April 1915 for the Middle East. His archive does not record where he disembarked, but it states that he arrived in Gallipoli on 26 May 1915. He took command of B Company on 29 May after Captain Kerry was wounded. He went down with enteric fever (typhoid) and dysentery in August 1915 and was evacuated to England via RMS *Andania* from Mudros (Lemnos, Greece). His condition was severe and he was admitted to the 3rd London General Hospital in Wandsworth. It also appears that he contracted diarrhoea and was further detained in hospital.

On 5 February 1917, the Army wrote to Vernon's wife, Ileen, to inform her that Vernon had been admitted to Queen Alexandra's Hospital suffering from Delusional Insanity.

Delusional insanity is a psychotic disorder - its main symptom being the presence of one or more delusions. A delusion is an unshakable belief in something that's untrue. The belief isn't a part of the sufferer's culture and almost everyone else knows this belief to be false.

Affected people often experience non-bizarre delusions. These types of delusions involve situations that could possibly occur in real life, such as being followed, deceived or loved from a distance. They usually involve the misinterpretation of perceptions or experiences. In reality, these situations are either untrue or are highly exaggerated.

Non-bizarre delusions are different from bizarre delusions, which include beliefs that are impossible in our reality – such as believing someone has removed an organ from your body without any physical evidence of the procedure.

People with delusional disorder often continue to socialize and function well, apart from the subject of their delusion. Generally, they don't behave in an odd or unusual manner. This is unlike people with other psychotic disorders, who might also have delusions as a symptom. In some cases, however, people with delusional disorder might become so preoccupied with their delusions that their lives are disrupted.

Vernon returned to Australia on 17 March 1917 and gradually recovered.

He joined the CRB in 1918.