

**THE RIFLEMEN:**  
**A History of the**  
**National Rifle Association of Australia**  
**1888-1988**

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*“...followed either as an art or a sport – for it has two sides – there is nothing in the way of recreation that can compare with rifle shooting.”*

Arthur G. Leslie, *Rifle Sketches*, 1906

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**FOREWORD**

Major-General John Hartley AO (Rtd),  
President of the NRAA

## INTRODUCTION

Not all rifle club men have an interest in the history of their national organisation. Indeed, except for one or two very early histories of rifle shooting in Queensland and later in New South Wales to 1956 (and more recently, Bill Casey's *Home on the Range – A History of the Queensland Rifle Association*, very little has been done. This history of the National Rifle Association from 1888 to 1988 is not a history of rifle clubs *per se* nor does it give chapter and verse on State rifle associations. It is not a history of Army rifle shooting either. Rather it is a history of how the national leadership of the rifle club movement coped - for better or for worse - with the enormous change and challenges it faced over the past 100 years, not least as a result of its deep and historical ties with Army and Defence.

It would be fair to say that the rifle clubs, with their democratic spread to most small towns and urban centre by the time of Federation, were as much a part of, perhaps even more a part of the colonial cultural and societal landscape of Australia than any of the great sports with the possible exception of horse racing. The two were indelibly linked in those early years in any case by mounted riflemen and lighthorsemen. The top riflemen were the sports champions of the day, even if many wore a uniform at least part-time. Most of all, rifle shooting was an everyman's sport. It was cheap, sociable and accessible, if not inclusive (women were for the most part excluded from mainstream, i.e., long distance rifle shooting, until 1965).

It took being sidelined in two world wars, massive social change after World War Two and the ambivalent attitude of the Army towards the movement for the rifle club movement to go into decline, stabilising at its current membership levels only in the last 20 years. The Army cut the rifle clubs loose in 1920 only to have them fight to return to the Army's aprons again in 1931. In 1941 they were placed in recession, and in 1948 remained with Defence, not Army. Finally in 1959 the Government itself severed ties with Defence in the strongest way it could – endorsing a change to a more modern service rifle exclusively for the Army and cutting ammunition supplies to the clubs for their older types. By 1988, while the NRAA still had regulatory and legacy ties with Defence even then, at least it had largely accepted that it was time to look forward to a 'sporting' future.

The rifle club movement, represented through the colonial, then State and national bodies, was slow to change. It was a deeply conservative movement. It had developed and prospered in its formative years with the help of the military forces and defence departments and most of its national council delegates had served, or were serving in the military at some point, whether as Volunteers, militia or permanent soldiers, sailors and later, airmen. Almost right from the start, the colonial military forces and then Australian Army wanted to control the rifle clubs as a defence asset; and when it found that it could not mould it to its own image, it turned away from the movement despite good relations at a personal level.

This history will, hopefully, serve as a solid platform for others to continue, especially to write the rich history behind the State associations and the rifle clubs themselves, some of which have been in continuous operation for much more than 100 years. In addition there now lies in NRAA archives the unabridged manuscript of this history, which includes much additional detail on the internal workings of the NRAA itself and the development of rifle shooting generally to 1988, as well as the biographical notes of over 385 riflemen and one woman who were delegates to the national council during its first 100 years.

**John Fitzgerald, Chairman, NRAA**

## Abbreviations

AAMC	- Australian Army Medical Corps
AAOC	- Australian Army Ordnance Corps
ACSRA	- Australian Council of State Rifle Associations
ACT	- Australian Capital Territory
AIF	- Australian Imperial Force
AIR	- Australian Infantry Regiment
AMF	- Australian Military Forces
ANA	- Australian Natives Association
ANF	- Australasian Naval Force
AN&MEF	- Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force
ANZUK	- Australia, New Zealand and United Kingdom
ARA	- Australian Regular Army
ASC	- Army Service Corps
BCOF	- British Commonwealth Occupation Force
CB	- Companion of The Most Honourable Order of the Bath
CBE	- Commander of the British Empire (civil or military division)
CCRAA	- Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia
CDF	- Chief of Defence Force
CGS	- Chief of the General Staff
CI	- Chief Instructor
C-in-C	- Commander-in-Chief
CMF	- Commonwealth Military Forces
CMF	- Citizen Military Forces
CMG	- Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George
CPS	- Commonwealth Public Service
DAAG	- Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General
DCM	- Distinguished Conduct Medal
DRA	- District Rifle Association
DRA & C	- Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs
DRC	- Director of Rifle Clubs
DSO	- Distinguished Service Order
ED	- Efficiency Decoration
<i>ex officio</i>	- appointed by virtue of position, not elected
FELF	- Far East Land Forces
GOC	- General Officer Commanding
KCB	- Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath
KB	- Knight Companion of the Order of the Bath
KBE	- Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire
KCMG	- Knight Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George
Kt.	- Knight
MBE	- Member of the British Empire
MC	- Military Cross
MDRU/A	- Metropolitan District Rifle Union or Association
MHR	- Member of the House of Representatives
MLC	- Member of the Legislative Assembly
MP	- Member of Parliament
MSM	- Meritorious Service Medal

MVO	- Member of the Royal Order of Victoria
NCP	- National Country Party
NRA of GB	- National Rifle Association of Great Britain
NRAA	- National Rifle Association of Australia
NSW	- New South Wales
NSWRA	- New South Wales Rifle Association
NQRA	- North Queensland Rifle Association
NZ	- New Zealand
OAM	- Member of the Order of Australia
OBE	- Order of the British Empire
OCS	- Officer Cadet School
OTU	- Officer Training Unit
PMF	- Permanent Military Forces
QDF	- Queensland Defence Force
QMI	- Queensland Mounted Infantry
QRA	- Queensland Rifle Association
RA	- Royal Artillery
RAA	- Royal Australian Artillery
RAAF	- Royal Australian Air Force
RAE	- Royal Australian Engineers
RAN	- Royal Australian Navy
RAR	- Royal Australian Regiment
RE	- Royal Engineers
RMC	- Royal Military College
RSM	- Regimental Sergeant Major
RSSILA	- Returned Soldiers and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (RSL)
SA	- South Australia
SAMF	- South Australian Military Forces
SAMR	- South Australian Mounted Rifles
SANRA	- South Australian National Rifle Association
SARA	- South Australian Rifle Association
SQRA	- Southern Queensland Rifle Association
TRA	- Tasmanian Rifle Association
VD	- Volunteer Decoration
VDC	- Volunteer Defence Corps
VMF	- Victorian Military Forces
VMR	- Victorian Mounted Rifles
VPS	- Victorian Public Service
VRA	- Victorian Rifle Association
WA	- Western Australia
WARA	- Western Australia Rifle Association

**PART ONE: *THE SETTING***  
***1838-1859***

## Chapter 1: Volunteers and Militiamen

Over time, citizens in the various colonies became anxious about perceived vulnerability to external threats, real or imagined.<sup>1</sup> With the gold rushes in full swing in Victoria from 1851, followed by other colonies, anxieties increased further. Some early Volunteer ‘corps’ were formed, such as the Geelong Volunteer Rifles in Victoria or the 1<sup>st</sup> NSW Rifle Volunteers, which conducted rifle matches in the mid-1850s.

These short-lived ‘corps’ were amateurish and very sociable. Rifle matches between Volunteer units were an integral part of the character of the Volunteers. The musketry was poor – ‘Comment on the firing of this match is almost unnecessary, the score showing how extremely bad it was throughout’<sup>2</sup> – and the Volunteers often seen as figures ripe for parody. The Imperial garrison regiments and detachments, understandably, stood somewhat aloof from these developments.

In England, the country was agog in 1859 with the possibility that Napoleon III intended to invade. Tens of thousands volunteered to join corps of riflemen and artillery companies. The result was an upsurge of interest in rifle shooting, both within the Volunteer movement and generally. The British National Rifle Association (NRA) was formed in 1859 with the support of senior Royals, the aristocracy and senior military figures to promote rifle shooting and the Volunteers. In July 1860 Queen Victoria herself fired the first shot at the NRA’s Wimbledon range by pulling a silken cord attached to the trigger of the carefully prepared rifle. Not surprisingly, she scored a bull’s-eye.<sup>3</sup>

With the Queen’s august blessing of the NRA, rifle shooting in Australia became both patriotic and popular for Volunteers and citizens alike. Rifles and hand-guns were part and parcel of colonial Australia. At first they were used to help supplement the meagre diets of the first colonists and for comfort in the face of sometimes hostile indigenous people. The military arms (the muzzle-loading Brown Bess and later, 1853

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<sup>1</sup> The colonies were New South Wales (from 1788, with self-rule from 1825), Tasmania (separated from NSW in 1825, self-rule in the same year), South Australia (from 1836, self-rule in 1856; gained the Northern Territory from 1863 to 1911), Victoria (separated from NSW in 1851, self-rule in 1855), Queensland (from 1859 – until then part of NSW) and Western Australia (from 1829, self-rule 1890).

<sup>2</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 9 November 1869, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> In 1861 the NRA had 1,387 members; by 1866 it had 2,946. Anon., ‘The National Rifle Association’, Masson, D. (ed.), *MacMillan’s Magazine*, No.93, MacMillan & Company, London, July 1867, p.180. There were by this time over 150,000 Volunteers under arms.

pattern Enfield rifled percussion muskets) were possessed by the various British Army regiments and their detachments which both garrisoned the new colonies and guarded

the convicts in those colonies which had them.<sup>4</sup> Guns also became associated with explorers and bushrangers. However, rifle shooting for sport rather than for utilitarian purposes also began to grow in popularity, especially given the dearth of early entertainment in the first settlements. Even the rifle contests held between regimental detachments were a break from the monotony of barracks life.

It is no surprise then that there were very early attempts to form rifle clubs. The Adelaide Rifle Company began in 1838; the first recorded rifle club in New South Wales (NSW) was Sydney's, formed in Parramatta in 1843 and holding its annual prize shoot each January from 1844.<sup>5</sup> The Adelaide German Shooting Company (the Adelaider Deutsche Schuetzen Gesellschaft) was formed in South Australia in 1853 with another formed in Tanunda in 1856,<sup>6</sup> while some rifle clubs in Tasmania had formed as early as 1858.<sup>7</sup> Rifle matches and community sport went together. For example, a rifle match was conducted at the first ploughing match arranged by the Ulladulla Agricultural and Horticultural Association in NSW in July 1855.<sup>8</sup> There were, in addition, a gamut of informal social sporting rifle groups firing at makeshift targets or at released birds and other local game. They were supported by a number of early gunsmiths to build, repair and maintain the wide variety of muzzle-loader rifles and rarer breech-loading long arms then in use.

NSW was the first to form a rifle association, the NSWRA, on 15 October 1860. Victoria was close behind, with the VRA, formed on 1 December 1860. But it was Victoria which got off to a quick start with its first annual match competition shot over 29 December 1860 to 2 January 1861 on the Sandridge Butts at Emerald Hill in Melbourne. The NSWRA finally shot its first annual matches at the Randwick

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<sup>4</sup> Four companies of Marines arrived in 1788 and twenty-five regiments of British Infantry came between 1788 and 1870. Men of the Royal Marines served aboard Royal Naval vessels based at Sydney until 1913.

<sup>5</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 January 1845, p.2; Zwillenberg, H.J., 'The Military in South Australia, 1836-1854', Honours thesis, University of Adelaide, 1964, p13, Corcoran, J.E., *The Target Rifle in Australia 1860-1900*, Dolphin Press, Sydney, 1975, p17.

<sup>6</sup> Potezny, V, 'South Australian German Shooting Companies (Kingship and Ring Target Shooting)', unpub. MS (2010), provided by author to A. Kilsby, February 2010.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, *Mercury* 16 July 1858, p.2 and 23 July 1858, p.2.

<sup>8</sup> Bell, B.C., 'Milton Rifle Club 1861-1970', *Marksmanship*, Vol.22, No.5, October 1970, p.22.

Racecourse in Sydney over 26-28 September 1861. These two colonies were already highly competitive. Now they had rifle shooting to add to their rivalry.

South Australia declared the formation of its rifle association, SARA, on 14 January 1861 while Queensland, now released from being part of NSW and proclaimed a colony only the year before, established the Queensland Rifle Association (QRA) on 15 May 1861. Tasmania also established a rifle association on the 9 March 1864 with the help of rules from the VRA.<sup>9</sup> In Western Australia, Volunteers established ranges and conducted matches (including one with South Australian Volunteer riflemen by telegraph in 1879) but the small population and geographic spread of its colonists did not lend itself to a rifle association in 'the West'. In fact, the first would not be established there until 1890.

Volunteer corps (and a few rifle clubs of citizens firing privately-owned small-bore rifles) were also formed throughout the colonies and rifle shooting competitions began in earnest. In reality, the Volunteer companies were less competent military forces than *de facto* rifle clubs, but there was no doubting their enthusiasm. The officers were elected, drill was not too onerous, and rifle matches with the muzzle-loaders were always popular. Some of the uniforms were more eye-catching than practical; enthusiastic amateurism ruled the day:

The local corps also sponsored a range of sporting and cultural activities including football and cricket teams to compete against civilian clubs. In addition, there were other recreational pursuits such as the Band, Volunteer theatrical and drama clubs, concerts, dances, balls and picnics, variety performances, regular lectures, Reviews and camps...the companies often marched through their respective towns providing citizens with a colourful and entertaining spectacle.<sup>10</sup>

The Volunteer movement in the Australian colonies was to wax and wane as 'war scares' came and went over the years. The depth of the Government purse in support of Volunteers would also vary accordingly, usually in direct proportion to the size of the alarm. Notwithstanding this, hundreds of Volunteer riflemen were recruited or spontaneously volunteered to join the British Army regiments fighting the Maoris in New Zealand as the 2<sup>nd</sup> New Zealand War spluttered along over 1860-1869.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Mercury*, 11 April 1864, p.2, and 30 May 1864, p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Marmion, B., 'The Victorian Volunteer Force on the Central Victorian Goldfields 1858-1883', MA Thesis, La Trobe University, 2003, p.119.

<sup>11</sup> Hopkins-Weise, J., *Blood Brothers – The Anzac Genesis*, Wakefield Press, (South Australia), 2009, pp.105-109.

The various rifle associations mirrored Britain's NRA as closely as they could. The NRA in turn closely watched the British Army's School of Musketry, located at Hythe, for any developments which might affect their own match conditions and rules. Wherever possible the colonial associations looked to the Governors of each colony to be patron so that the reflected Royal aura could throw light on their activities. Senior government, military and civic leaders were often prominent in the associations. The NRA itself donated a silver medal to each colonial association as a shooting prize while, initially at least, each new rifle association resembled the others in form and function. Inevitably however, they began to develop in their own way, as different types of rifles, Volunteer and militia organisations and their commanders, rifle ranges and the level of government support all began to influence how the rifle associations were managed and conducted.

Rifle matches organised by the associations were inevitably dominated by the Volunteer rifle corps and the presentation of prizes were great social occasions normally conducted in the town halls of the major cities, with the Governor presenting the prizes accompanied by extensive newspaper coverage. This continued to be the case right into the 1890s, when the first recession hit the colonial economies. Socially (rifle shooting was an increasingly popular sporting activity, especially in the country) and politically (a number of prominent Volunteer officers were also members of colonial parliaments), volunteering and rifle association meetings came seamlessly together.

The early rifle associations took on distinct characters of their own. NSW, the oldest colony and the first to form an association, looked down upon all others accordingly. The NSWRA 'was formed at the instance of several gentlemen who took a great interest in the Volunteer movement and who believed that an association formed on the model of the [NRA] of England would tend to give permanency and efficiency to Volunteer Corps, by creating a spirit of emulation amongst the different companies.' At their initial meeting on 5 October 1860, a resolution was passed that an association be formed 'having for its object the encouragement of Rifle Corps, and the promotion of Rifle Shooting throughout the Colony.'<sup>12</sup> It was a model copied by the other colonies. By December 1861 the strength of local forces in the various Australian colonies was 4,002.<sup>13</sup> Most of these would have fired at colonial association matches.

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<sup>12</sup> *NSWRA Report for the Year ending 31 December 1861*, Thomas Richards, Govt. Printer, Sydney 1862, p.5.

<sup>13</sup> Halls, C., *Guns in Australia*, Paul Hamlyn, Sydney, 1974, p.130.

In the chair of that first meeting of the NSWRA was Sir William Montagu Manning, barrister and politician.<sup>14</sup> Manning was walking next to the Duke of Edinburgh in Sydney on 12 March 1868, when an Irishman fired at the Duke, wounding him. Manning believed he had saved the Duke's life by lunging at the would-be assassin's pistol.<sup>15</sup> His standing among the patriots of the Colony no doubt went even higher as a result and gave the riflemen a president to be especially proud of.

Rules were obtained from the NRA and 250 members joined in the first year; the Committee being managed by a number of influential civilians and Volunteer officers. The first match at the Randwick racecourse, courtesy of the Australian Jockey Club (which took a third of the takings for the matches), was a moderate success. The Volunteers were urged by the NSWRA committee to get more practice with their long Enfield muzzle-loaders after the inevitable comparison to shooting at Wimbledon. The Government, nonetheless, contributed an annual grant of £200.

Prizes, apart from the association trophy, a 'range judging telescope', and some individual cash prizes of up to £50, included a wonderful array of prize rifles (purchased especially from England) and carbines including Whitworth, Westley-Richards breech-loading, General Hay's pattern, Calisher & Terry's patent breech-loading and Lancaster. Of the seven matches only one was open to non-Volunteers and no rifle club or civilian who was not also a Volunteer competed. The prizes were given out by the wife of the NSW Governor.<sup>16</sup>

It didn't take long before the colonial rifle associations began to consider inter-colonial competitions. It was the two great colonial rivals, NSW and Victoria, which arranged for the first series of small-bore competitions from 1862, for a bronze Challenge Shield. Despite disagreements about rules, annual matches followed, with NSW the eventual winner in 1867. This gave them, after three wins in a row, perpetual ownership of the trophy. Intercolonial shoots then lapsed until 1873.

By 1871, the NSWRA General Committee of 28 contained 22 Volunteer officers. The annual matches at the NSWRA's new venue at the Paddington range in November of that year saw 820 competitors compete in 23 matches – all Volunteers. Almost £600 in prizes was distributed in front of 1,200 Volunteers and 'an immense number of

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<sup>14</sup> A Scot, Montague was highly influential in the early Legislative Council of the colony, work recognised by his knighthood later conferred by Queen Victoria. He was also elected first president of the rifle association, a position he was to hold for the next 35 years (he would die in that office in 1895).

<sup>15</sup> <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050237b.htm>, accessed April 2010.

<sup>16</sup> *NSWRA Report for the Year ending 31 December 1861*, Thomas Richards, Govt. Printer, Sydney 1862, pp.1-25.

citizens'. In Victoria, gold rich and therefore in the eyes of NSW, a brash and upstart colony, the VRA followed a similar path to NSW. Not to be outdone by their competitive fellow colonists across the border to the north, on 14 December 1860 the VRA announced its committee; it was stacked with a formidable range of dignitaries and Volunteer officers.<sup>17</sup>

Organised for 'the encouragement of rifle shooting among all classes of the community, especially among the Volunteers', the VRA aimed to have two match meetings a year; this somewhat ambitious programme was rarely achieved. From the start the VRA recognised there were riflemen other than Volunteers. Three matches were open only to Victorian Volunteers using their Lancaster and Enfield regulation rifles, but the remaining four matches were open to all comers. As in NSW, however, no civilian rifle club competed in the VRA matches. Over 225 Volunteers competed in the first match and overall competitor numbers remained high throughout. Despite this auspicious beginning, when the Victorian Parliament did not make any grants for rifle shooting from 1867 to 1869, the VRA was in trouble.<sup>18</sup>

The new VRA Council was determined to remedy this state of affairs, and held 23 meetings in the eight months to February 1871. As in NSW, they were almost entirely Volunteer officers. The annual competition meeting of October 1870, still at the Sandridge Butts in seaside Melbourne, was notable. Volunteer and civilian competitors from South Australia, Western Australia, NSW, New Zealand and some local individual civilians showed up to compete, along with no less than six Victorian rifle clubs which had affiliated themselves to the VRA for the day in order to join the matches.<sup>19</sup> In 1876 two events of note occurred. A team was sent to shoot in England and America and 200

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<sup>17</sup>The president was the Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, while the committee included the Parliamentary Speaker, the Chief Justice and a future Chief Justice Sir Redmond Barry, the Chief Secretary, the Treasurer, nine Legislative Council and Assembly members of parliament and the Volunteer commander, Colonel George Dean Pitt, his senior commanders and a host of junior staff officers. Somewhat unusually, the Secretary of the Committee was listed as Professor M. H. (Martin Howy) Irving, MA. Irving was a Volunteer infantry officer (later Lieutenant-Colonel and a VRA vice-president in 1888), but also prominent at the University of Melbourne where he founded their University Boat Club and later the Melbourne Rowing Regatta. He was also a member of the Philosophical Institute of Victoria and the Royal Society of Victoria. *Victorian Rifle Association: 28<sup>th</sup> Meeting November 1888 Official Programme and Scoring Book*, np, Melbourne 1888, p.9 and <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040523b.htm>, accessed March 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Lang, P.S., *Index to the Minute Books of the Victorian Rifle Association 1873-1906*, J. Haase Printer, Melbourne, 1906, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> Rifles used were a variety of muzzle-loaders and breech-loaders including .577 calibre Sniders and Westley-Richards carbines, while the first .577/.450 calibre Martini-Henry rifles made their debut with some of the Volunteers (the .577 cartridge, as used in the Snider breech-loader, converted from the Enfield muzzle loader, was necked down to .450 calibre for the Martini-Henry).

Martini-Henry rifles are issued to the VRA. The following year, the VRA moved to its new Williamstown rifle range, where it would stay for another 110 years.

In South Australia, populated by free settlers and religious immigrants, its rifle association was formed on 14 January 1861, although it didn't hold its first matches until late October that year. The inaugural SARA Committee was a veritable social list of VIPs, including an even higher number of parliamentarians than in the other colonies. This perhaps was a reflection of the size of South Australia's civic population and the entertainments offered in that colony, as much as interest in SARA itself. Indeed, Parliamentarians on the first committee included six Government ministers as well as several Volunteer officers, some of whom were also parliamentarians.<sup>20</sup>

The first SARA matches were finally held between 29 October and 4 November 1861, with a day off for Sunday. It may well have been the best attended matches of the next few years. South Australia suffered more than other colonies with regards to periodic Volunteer 'restructuring', and although the Volunteer rifle corps continued to have regular matches, the rifle association matches were more problematical as Volunteer numbers rose and fell. In 1878 SARA, which had been agitating for a more efficient military force, found its members deserting to join the very force it had asked for. Out of the *Rifle Companies Act* of that year the SANRA was born. It was designed to coordinate the new rifle companies (read rifle clubs) of the Rifle Volunteer Force (RVF) arising from this latest restructuring of the Volunteers.

The inaugural SANRA Council, elected in a special meeting of delegates from those 16 rifle companies, saw a completely different council to the original SARA Committee of 1860. Now it was composed entirely of Volunteer officers with the Commander of Local Forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Major Francis Downes, Royal Artillery, as Inspecting Officer. SARA continued to exist and limped on until at least 1882 but mostly represented by the members of the South Australia Rifle Club (SARC). In its first report, the SANRA Council stated that "The object of the [SANRA] being to

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<sup>20</sup> The president was the Governor, Sir Richard Graves MacDonnell. 'Powerful and hospitable, MacDonnell was fond of both outdoor and intellectual activities. He was an enthusiastic member of local rifle and archery clubs and keenly interested in the volunteer defence movement.' <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050171b.htm>, accessed April 2010. Other members of the committee were the Chief Justice, Sir Charles Cooper and Sir James Hurtle Fisher, South Australia's first resident Commissioner. The Secretary was George Strickland Kingston (later Sir), the first Speaker of the House of Assembly and also a Captain of the East Adelaide Rifles.

organize Rifle Companies, to encourage their formation and to establish an Auxiliary Defence Force to aid in defence of the Province [South Australia] in time of need”<sup>21</sup>

Another rifle association would be formed in that least-governed frontier colony of Queensland. With its population of only 20,000, Queensland was proclaimed a colony in its own right only on 6 June 1859, separating it at last from NSW.<sup>22</sup> By February 1860, a very, very small Volunteer force was called for by the new Governor, and a mounted troop and two infantry companies were recruited. By the end of that year, discussion was already taking place among interested gentlemen as to the establishment of a rifle association. But straitened Government finances, and antipathy towards military forces by both colonists and politicians alike stunted the Volunteer ‘army’ from the beginning: ‘...in 1862 the strength was 248, in 1876, fourteen years later, the total number was only 415.’<sup>23</sup> This made it doubly difficult to sustain the QRA after its establishment on 15 May 1861 at a meeting of its provisional committee.<sup>24</sup>

Delays leading up to the first matches were a symptom of the difficulties the QRA was to face in establishing and sustaining itself in the face of Government parsimony (especially where it concerned the Volunteers) and public indifference. The original QRA was to collapse in the face of this lack of support, not to mention from its own failing finances, by the end of 1869. In 1870, attempts to reconstitute the association were to no avail. It was not until October 1877 that a new QRA was formed and annual matches were resuscitated. The same faces appeared once again as had been there in 1861.

The first matches of the new QRA were held at the refurbished Volunteer range in Brisbane between 20 and 24 August 1878.<sup>25</sup> All in all it had been a much more auspicious start to the QRA than its first attempt in the 1860s. It was probably helped by the status of Sir Maurice O’Connell, who was Administrator for the Colony in 1876-77 in the period immediately before the QRA was proclaimed. The other factor

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<sup>21</sup> *South Australian National Rifle Association: First Annual Report 1879*, Advertiser and Chronicle Steam Printing Office, Adelaide, 1880, p.9.

<sup>22</sup> Johnson, D.H., *Volunteers at Heart: The Queensland Defence Forces, 1860-1901*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1975, pp.1-10.

<sup>23</sup> Pixley, N.S., ‘Queensland: One Hundred Years of Defence’, *Royal Historical Society of Queensland Journal*, v.6, No.1, September 1959, p.99.

<sup>24</sup> President of the QRA - from 1861 until his death in 1879 - was Lieutenant Colonel Maurice Charles O’Connell, who was also President of Queensland’s Legislative Council. In 1861 he was also Commandant of the Local Military Forces, such as they were. Of a distinguished family, O’Connell was born in Sydney. He later fought with the British Legion in Spain in the 1830s before returning to Australia and settling in Queensland. <http://gutenberg.net.au/dictbiog/0-dict-biogN-O.html>, accessed March 2010.

<sup>25</sup> *Courier*, 3 August 1878, p.1.

working in the QRA's favour was that the Queensland Government had finally begun to get serious about the colony's defences, following the presentation to Parliament of a report by a British Army expert, Colonel William Francis Drummond Jervois.

At the southern end of the continent, Tasmania, another small colony like South Australia, had difficulties starting up a rifle association, although there was a strong Volunteer tradition and plenty of outward enthusiasm in early 1861. Even though by the end of 1861 the colony was in economic depression, the Volunteer movement in Tasmania was quite robust, with over 1,100 men enrolled in infantry companies and artillery. This compared very favourably with some of the larger colonies and championship rifle matches were quickly established between the Volunteer companies and artillery batteries. A provisional committee, which included the commander of the Volunteers' Southern Division, Lieutenant Colonel Francis Rawdon Chesney, Royal Engineers (RE), was formed at a meeting on 12 October 1863.<sup>26</sup> It adopted 'a few of the most useful' rules of the VRA and asked the Governor to preside over a general meeting which formed the Tasmanian Rifle Association (TRA) on 9 March 1864.

The Governor became patron and the Commander of Volunteers, Colonel Edward Hungerford Eagar, president.<sup>27</sup> A member of parliament, Thomas Chapman, was made vice-president.<sup>28</sup> <sup>29</sup><sup>30</sup> Volunteer officers, most from the 1<sup>st</sup> Tasmanian Rifles, made up the remainder of the council members. So although small, the new TRA Council packed a considerable punch; these were men who knew how to get things done. But they had reckoned without the challenges before them.

The TRA did not then have sufficient funds to arrange an annual meeting; it also had to contend with suspicion from Volunteers who saw the TRA as a direct threat to

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<sup>26</sup> Chesney (1824-1907) - later Major-General - saw active service in New Zealand and later served in Barbados. Kilsby, A.J., 'Francis Rawdon Chesney, RE. (1824-1907)', *Soldiers of the Queen*, Issue 143, December 2010, pp.3-6, and *The Mercury*, 2 September 1867, p.2 and 27 January 1908, p.2.

<sup>27</sup> Eagar's military career began in 1839 with the 40<sup>th</sup> of Foot. He saw active service (and was wounded) in Afghanistan. He then saw active service in Crimea and then helped to set up the Volunteers in Britain. He came to Tasmania as Assistant Adjutant in 1861 and took troops to New Zealand in 1863. He was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel in 1866. He died in England in 1871. See the *Mercury*, 3 October 1871, p.3.

<sup>28</sup> *Mercury*, 11 March 1864, p.4. In an unrelated action, Chapman was soon after declared bankrupt, but went on to become Treasurer of Tasmania three times and president of Tasmania's Executive Council. He was later described as 'One of the ablest politicians in the colony's history.'  
<http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A030361b.htm>, accessed March 2010.

<sup>29</sup> The TRA secretary was David Lewis, a Volunteer officer from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tasmanian Rifles. He had recently joined parliament; he was also later to serve as the Tasmania Government's Treasurer.  
<http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/history/tasparl/lewisd85.htm>, accessed March 2010.

<sup>30</sup> The TRA treasurer was one Alfred Kennerley, like Lewis a former mayor of Hobart, elected to parliament in 1865 and later to become Premier of Tasmania.  
<http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050021b.htm>, accessed March 2010.

their own well-established annual championship rifle matches. The TRA finally held a very modest two match meeting over the Easter period in April 1865. The TRA was underway, but for how long? In fact the TRA declined rapidly once again from poor government support and Volunteer antipathy.<sup>31</sup> No annual matches appeared to have been fired in 1868. After a small match in January 1869 the TRA simply faded away, although some country rifle clubs at Bothwell, Clarence, Derwent, Hamilton and Sorell continued to operate.

In late 1871 the Government of the day, to save money in the face of the withdrawal of the last Imperial garrison, decided that it was better not to have an ineffective Volunteer force than any force, and so disbanded them. With the Volunteers went any chance for the TRA to survive. It was not until 19 December 1876 that a new association - the Southern Tasmanian Rifle Association (STRA) – was formed, It fired matches in August 1877 and its first prize matches in October 1877, but it got off to a slow start, being £27 in debt after its first year. With the resurgence of the Volunteer movement and a new range at Sandy Bay in Hobart, however, the future looked bright.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast to Tasmania's tentative efforts to sustain its rifle association, in Western Australia the situation was very different. There, the population of just over 3,000 men in the early 1860s was barely enough to keep a few small units of Volunteers in being, let alone support a rifle association. While Volunteers fired at the Mt. Eliza range from September 1863, it was not until 1890 that a Volunteers Metropolitan Rifle Association was formed and more than a decade after that before a Western Australian Rifle Association and the Goldfields Rifle Association was formed.<sup>33</sup>

Internationally, rifle shooting centred on the NRA at Wimbledon in England. Only one individual from the Australian colonies made a private visit to Wimbledon in 1861, a South Australian Volunteer officer.<sup>34</sup> Rifle shooting in the international context came slowly to Australia, mainly because of cost and distance. However, post and telegraph helped to overcome those barriers. One of the earliest 'international' matches

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<sup>31</sup> The Governor, Colonel (later Sir) Thomas Gore Browne, CB – a veteran of active service in Afghanistan - was actually a member of the association. As an old soldier, he enjoyed joining in practice at the Cornelian Bay Range. His influential patronage of the association was missed after his departure in late 1868,

<sup>32</sup> *Mercury*, 7 December 1880, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> Birkbeck, D., 'Mt.Eliza Rifle Range', *WARA Rifle News*, Vol.25, No.3, June 1983, p.9.

<sup>34</sup> Allan MacFarlane, a Scottish-born Volunteer officer and rifle shooting enthusiast. See Corcoran, J., *The Target Rifle in Australia 1860-1900*, R&R Books, Livonia (USA), 1975, pp.24-26.

occurred in 1863, even before the international telegraph system connected the colonies to the outside world. The Milang Volunteer Rifle Company in South Australia challenged the champion English Volunteer company, namely the Robin Hood Company of the Nottingham Rifles, to a rifle match. It was to be shot at a range other than at each corps usual range and the invitation challenge was sent by letter to the NRA from Milang; the reply came by letter and the results were sent by letter.<sup>35</sup> The match was repeated in 1864 with a Victorian Volunteer company – the Bendigo Rifles – taking on the Robin Hoods and winning.<sup>36</sup>

Once telegraph connected Australia and England, other simultaneous matches were fired against Volunteer units and clubs in England, with results this time sent by wire. One match, in preparation since 1878, was fired between the Yorke Peninsula No.1 Company, of South Australia's RVF, on 21 July 1884 against No.11 Company of the Queen's Edinburgh Rifle Volunteer Brigade. Despite the telegraph, results from Scotland came by mail arriving on 3 September.<sup>37</sup>

While these early international matches and the activities of the various colonial rifle associations began to gather pace, however haltingly, other developments were in effect combining to underpin the efforts to survive and to guarantee their eventual success. The foundations for an Australian-wide council for rifle associations, eventually to evolve into the National Rifle Association of Australia, were laid down during the period of 1861-1887. The two largest and richest colonies, NSW and Victoria, led the way with a keenly contested and highly popular series of small-bore (below .577 calibre) intercolonial rifle matches between 1862-1867 and then again with big-bore military rifles from 1873. These matches were seminal in helping all of the active rifle associations, through the various discussions and arguments over rules and regulations affecting these matches, to start thinking beyond their own colonial boundaries.

Initially, colonies other than Victoria and NSW did not participate in these early intercolonial matches, even though invitations were often issued to them. However, from the 1870s, individuals and then teams from other colonies began to appear at annual rifle association prize matches. This accelerated discussions about rules and

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<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 7 July 1863, p.14 and *South Australian Register*, 21 October 1863, reported in the *Mercury*, 30 October 1863, p.3.

<sup>36</sup> Halls, C., *Guns in Australia*, Paul Hamlyn, Sydney, 1974, p.166.

<sup>37</sup> Bailey, H.K., 'Historic Postal Match Revived', *Australian Rifleman*, Vol.2, No.3, May 1980, p.6. The Yorke Peninsula Company was the forerunner to the Wallaroo Rifle Club.

regulations (regarding rifles, targets, ranges and prizes, sizes of teams, marking, ammunition, small vs. big bore etc.) as well as heightened the differences between the colonies. While the early associations based their rules broadly on those of the NRA of England, after a while they borrowed rules from each other and developed local variations as they were affected by the military weapons with which each colony was armed. It led to some heated arguments behind closed doors but these were never allowed to be referred to publicly except in the most oblique terms.

A number of smaller intercolonial matches were also organised over the years between individual clubs in addition to the major series of intercolonial matches. The cost of physically sending teams to other colonies was often prohibitive, especially in the early days of the associations. So matches were often conducted via the new telegraph connections (even Tasmania fired such a private match against a Victorian side in 1869, after Tasmania was connected to the mainland by telegraph). In 1879 and 1880, for example, the SANRA fired simultaneous matches against the Perth Metropolitan Rifle Volunteers. The 'telegraphic' matches, while no substitute for 'shoulder-to-shoulder' matches, remained in vogue for some years as they were cheap to run. They also helped to raise awareness among riflemen of other clubs and of a wider rifle shooting community.

Publicly at least, the associations were fraternal and friendly towards each other. The individual riflemen who competed in these matches also came to know and respect each other over the years. They swapped tips, helped each other out, and encouraged better intercolonial relations between the associations so that they could have a better competition. This augured well for future Australian teams and the administration of them. Many of the riflemen who shot or led Australian teams at Wimbledon and later Bisley (from 1890), had actually begun shooting from the earliest days of the colonial associations. These experienced and dedicated riflemen also provided the leadership for the future of the rifle shooting movement.

Over the years the progress in developing a set of standard rules for intercolonial rifle shooting waxed and waned as the rifle associations seemed to take one step back for every two steps forward in the matter of rules and regulations. The main reason for this was disagreement over issues which, more than one hundred years later, may seem somewhat petty. Nonetheless these disagreements also need to be viewed within the context of the intense rivalry between colonies, especially between NSW and Victoria.

Gradually the associations moved towards a consensus that intercolonial matches in particular needed to be regulated.

At first all went well. In 1871 the VRA and NSWRA warmed up with a 'simultaneous' large-bore match with Government weapons and 30 Volunteers a side. In 1872 discussions continued for the resumption of matches; in 1873 intercolonial competitions resumed with small-bore and now military rifles between NSW and Victoria, with the addition of NZ, in Melbourne. By 1875 however, when the intercolonial matches were held in Melbourne, the 'arms race' accelerated. As a result, in 1876 and 1877 no contest occurred, mainly over disagreement as to what military weapon to use.

In 1876, a Victorian team travelled to Wimbledon in England to compete individually at Wimbledon at the annual NRA matches there; its team of five was too few in number to qualify for the team shoots. More significantly, the Victorians then travelled to the USA to combine with a NSW team which had travelled directly to the United States to fire at the first 'Palma' match at Creedmoor in Philadelphia against a number of international teams. This was the first time that a team from the Australian colonies had fired against the best of other countries. In an interesting dispute which mirrored similar upsets in Australia, the NRA refused to send a team or even an all-English team to the 'Palma' because the Irish and Scottish had decided to compete on their own merits.

Back in Australia, 1878 saw a compromise with half the contest shot with Victoria's Martini-Henry rifles and the other half with NSW's Alexander Henry rifles. Insistence by NSW in 1879 that the matches in Sydney were to be conducted with the Alexander Henry rifle led both Victoria and South Australia to decline to compete. Queensland had no issue, and competed with Alexander Henrys. The NSWRA sent down a medal to Victoria for competition (the winner of which could gain membership of the NSWRA) but was snubbed when Victoria deigned to respond at all to this somewhat condescending offer.

In July 1880 NSW men went to Queensland and fired happily with them. By this time NSW had adopted a single 'Hythe position' for all match ranges - prone, head toward target. This gave NSW two reasons to snub a Victorian invitation to shoot in Melbourne in November - they had just spent all of their available funds going to Queensland and in any case, the Victorians wanted 'any position' for the proposed

matches. Even when some Volunteers in NSW offered to pay their own way, the NSWRA would not support them; their Volunteers went anyway.

So in 1880 the VRA held its own intercolonial shoot with the non-NSWRA military and naval Volunteers. Teams from Tasmania and South Australia also competed. The NSW team promptly gave up their issued Alexander Henrys and fired with the Martini-Henrys offered by the Victorians; the South Australia team used their Martini-Henrys. Somewhat oddly, the South Australians were allowed to use platinum lines on their backsights in the intercolonial match but not when shooting for prizes in other matches!

The Tasmanians used newly issued Martini-Henrys, except for four who used Sniders (the result of an internal dispute which almost scuttled the Tasmanians appearing at all).<sup>38</sup> The NSWRA was not amused, complaining that the VRA had essentially gone behind their back to entice the Volunteer team to Victoria. The VRA replied that the invitations for the Volunteers from NSW had been initiated by Volunteer officers in Victoria, but once they arrived in Victoria, what else could the VRA do but look after them?

Competitions in both Sydney and Melbourne followed, then in 1883 when Queensland invited NSW and Victoria to compete in Brisbane, NSW declined to send a team because Queensland would not change one range from 200 to 300 yards or vary the number of shots at certain ranges. Victoria also declined over similar petty disagreements. It seems that after several years of squabbling over this and that, everyone took a breath in 1883 and no intercolonial matches were held.

Almost to make up for this hiatus, two intercolonial contests were held in 1884. The first, in August 1884 between Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia, was a simultaneous match, with results sent by telegraph. In October, the NSWRA hosted the intercolonial matches in Sydney once again. Victoria hosted NSW and Tasmania in 1885. In 1886 no intercolonial matches were held on account of an 'Australian' team being sent to Wimbledon. However, a 15 a side team match *was* fired between South Australian and Western Australian Volunteers in Adelaide in September 1885; South Australia won.

Meanwhile, in a return to England a decade after the Victorians had visited, in 1886 a hastily assembled all-Australian team, equipped with Martini-Henry rifles,

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<sup>38</sup> *Mercury*, 3 November 1880, p.2, and 29 November 1880, p.2.

travelled to Wimbledon to compete for the Kolapore (or Imperial Challenge) Cup.<sup>39</sup> However, the team came in fourth, much to the disappointment of those who had sponsored the team back home in Australia. Expectations of success had just been raised too high, but the disappointment was enough to retard any new enthusiasm for despatches of teams to Wimbledon for another ten years. The men returned to faint praise from their home colonies.

If it were any consolation to them, the Australian cricketers who were also in England at the time didn't fare too well either. These two disappointments temporarily deflated growing Australian expectations of and pride in, 'national' prowess against England on the sporting fields. In light of the future directions of rifle shooting in Australia more than 100 years later, it is an interesting insight to note the accent on the sporting, rather than military, aspects of the international contests of 1886. The progress of the 1876 and 1886 teams however, published regularly in the newspapers, did create an appetite for international competition which was to compound over the years ahead. It also developed more popular awareness right around Australia of some of its champion shots. Rifle shooting as a sport was certainly regarded just as highly as cricket, boxing, cycling, athletics, rowing and other manly pursuits along with the added military cachet.

Another aspect of international rifle shooting in Australia in this period was periodic matches against crews of visiting Royal Navy (RN) warships and other international warships. For example, in November 1879, the NSWRA arranged a new 'Naval Match', which was fired between the teams from two RN warships then in Sydney harbour, *Wolverene* and *Danze*, and a French warship, *Rhin*. The French fired with 'old pattern and inferior' Chassepôt rifles; a German warship in port held aloof from the competition.<sup>40</sup> One interesting match was played out between twelve-a-side teams of the STRA and the Japanese training warship *Tsukuba*, which visited Hobart in July 1882.<sup>41</sup> The Japanese lost.<sup>42</sup> In March 1884, Tasmanian cricketers were in

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<sup>39</sup> Corcoran, J.E., *The Target Rifle in Australia 1860-1900*, R&R Books, NY, 1995, pp.151-162.

<sup>40</sup> *Report of the New South Wales Rifle Association for the year ended 31 December 1879*, Thomas Richards, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1880, p.6.

<sup>41</sup> *Mercury*, 25 July 1882, p.3.

<sup>42</sup> Japanese warships had been visiting Australian ports since 1878, but this was the first time that a rifle match had been organised. It would not be the last, although the next match (in Sydney) did not occur until 1903.

Invercargill, New Zealand for some friendly matches. While they were there, the rifle shooters among them fired a ‘Tasmania vs. Invercargill Rifles’ match <sup>43</sup>

In another international development affecting rifle association members, the NSW offer to send a contingent to support the British forces in the Soudan was accepted in February 1885. In the contingent of about 750 men who sailed from Sydney the following month were 20 members of the NSWRA, including one of the outstanding shots of his generation, Naval Artillery Volunteer Lieutenant Maurice James Keating. <sup>44</sup> They saw no real action, but Keating’s medal was enough to draw the attention of the Duke of Cambridge, the British Commander-in-Chief, during an inspection at Wimbledon in 1886, where Keating was shooting as part of the Australian team. <sup>45</sup>

Organised rifle shooting continued to develop throughout the colonies against other, more important political, economic and defence backdrops. From the early 1860s, colonial premiers and others with a wider view of the world had been looking to establish common tariffs across the Australian colonies. As the colonies began to connect up by rail, and telegraph, steamships and better roads made communications and travel easier between the colonies, so did an awareness that the colonies were not so different after all. A series of intercolonial conferences conducted between 1863 and 1880 explored tariff questions but also, *ipso facto*, began to tentatively explore the idea of a federated nation. The conference of early 1881 created a Federal Council but it was largely ineffective in moving federal matters forward (it met for the last time in 1899).

On the colonial military front, and following a series of reports on colonial defences in 1877 and 1882 along with various internal commissions and parliamentary investigations, changes began to occur in the colonies’ defence systems. These changes included the start of regular commandants’ conferences. The conferences began to develop a more professional, Australia-wide outlook on defence matters and led directly to the rise of militia forces throughout the colonies in the period 1882-1885. Allied to these developments was the impetus given to common defence measures with the surge of nationalist spirit following news of the death of the British Army’s Major General Charles George Gordon in Khartoum in January 1885, the Soudan campaign which

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<sup>43</sup> *Otago Witness*, 29 March 1884, npn

<sup>44</sup> Cromack, C. H., *The History of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales, 1860-1956*, Utility Press, Sydney, 1956, p.20.

<sup>45</sup> *Argus*, 30 August 1886, p.7.

followed, and yet another of numerous Russian war scares. These various activities had direct implications and consequences for the rifle associations and rifle shooting throughout Australia.

In 1887 South Australia hosted Victoria, NSW and Tasmania at an intercolonial match. It was a meeting of delegates from colonial rifle associations at this intercolonial competition which laid the foundation for the establishment of the General Council of the Rifle Associations of Australasia in 1888. The move towards creating such a council had taken many years, but the colonial rifle associations appeared to have reached a consensus by 1887 that a national body needed to be formed. The first steps had been taken in late 1884 during the intercolonial matches at Sydney when delegates from those rifle associations represented there 'held a meeting at which resolutions were passed for submission to their individual councils for approval, for example the principle that intercolonial matches would be held by each colony in rotation', along with other terms for the conduct of intercolonial competitions.

Negotiations also began at this meeting with regard to putting together a united Australian team for Wimbledon in 1886.<sup>46</sup> Finally, in 1887: '...the Councils of the various Rifle Associations were invited to send delegates to Adelaide to discuss the whole question of Intercolonial Rifle Matches, and to decide as to their future management. At the conference in Adelaide, South Australia, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania were represented.'<sup>47</sup>

The increasing military influence over organised rifle shooting in the colonies and the associations also had a strong influence on the growing sentiment of support for federation among riflemen everywhere. So did the continuing intercolonial and international shooting contests. Civilian rifle clubs, as they began to be encouraged by the military authorities from 1884, tended to be led by the same men who also led civic, community, business and sporting organizations in their local districts. Many Volunteer officers were of the same cloth, and members of the colonial parliaments were prominent in the rifle clubs and associations. In short, the 'cult of the rifle', common to thousands of these men around Australia, played its part in further

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<sup>46</sup> *Report of the New South Wales Rifle Association for the year 1884*, Thomas Richards, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1885, p.62.

<sup>47</sup> Templeton, J.M., *Rifle Associations and the Commonwealth Council of the Rifle Associations of Australia*, Edgerton and Moore, Melbourne, 1903, p.3.

developing momentum in the sentiment for a federated Australia.<sup>48</sup> The next quarter century was to see the rise of a powerful rifle shooting movement right across the country.

The rifle associations which had started in the 1860s were strongly linked to the Volunteer movement. In most association matches, the Volunteers dominated. As war scares came and went, so did the Government support for the Volunteers (and for the associations); recruiting was increased or decreased accordingly. Rifle associations therefore also encouraged private subscribers as members, and from the early 1870s, rifle clubs as well which could affiliate to the association, especially in Victoria. For example, when the VRA introduced a rifle clubs match at their annual matches in 1871, 42 members of seven rifle clubs participated.<sup>49</sup> However, it was the Volunteers who were the mainstay of the rifle association income and growth. Civilian clubs were quite rare even into the 1880s, mostly because for all intents and purposes many Volunteer rifle companies were *de facto* rifle clubs; for example in South Australia.

Until the introduction of paid militia forces in the colonies from around 1883-84, rifle associations were by and large independent of the formal control of the defence forces, even though many of their committee members were either Volunteer officers or ex-Volunteers. Members of rifle clubs were not expected to drill (that is, to practice battlefield manoeuvres). However, once the associations began to admit them to annual matches, at first with great reluctance, civilian riflemen consistently outshot the Volunteer companies on the range.

Concurrently, as the colonies began to professionalise their defence forces inevitably the military staff began to expect more from rifle club members, especially as Governments began to offer more support with grants, weapons, ammunition, and range staff. Increasingly, the military men saw rifle club members as potential reserves in time of emergency, and to be 'efficient' they had to drill. This was generally resisted by the Volunteers and civilian riflemen, some of whom pointed to the success of Boer

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<sup>48</sup> It is well known that Australia's first Chief Justice, Queenslander Sir Samuel Griffiths, was a key player, and powerful advocate for Federalism, in the constitutional conventions of 1890-91 and later. <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090113b.htm>. What is not so well known is that he had also been a Vice-President of the QRA in 1884, often attended shooting meets throughout the colony, and was patron of at least 2 shooting clubs. Tasmania's Attorney-General, Andrew Inglis Clark, who wrote the Australian Constitution, was also a Vice-President of the TRA.

<sup>49</sup> *Report of the Council of the Victorian Rifle Association for the eight months ending on 28 February 1871*; John Ferres, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1871, p.19.

farmers who had outshot the British regulars in the First Anglo-Boer War of 1880-81. The introduction of paid militia forces began to undermine this sentiment.

By the late 1880s riflemen had to attest to the military oath, serve for three years and complete a musketry course in the same way as militia and regular soldiers to be deemed 'efficient'. They also had to attend a certain number of 'drills'. This was the sore point for the riflemen, although in return the clubs were given a capitation grant for each 'efficient' rifleman and free grants of ammunition. Riflemen could also purchase Government-standard rifles and extra ammunition at reduced cost. Most rifle clubs quickly agreed to abide by the rules in order to get access to the most modern weapons and as much cheap ammunition as they could possibly want. Riflemen who were used to working out the odds of hitting a target in all sorts of conditions didn't take long to work out that the likelihood of a real emergency and call-out was remote. After all, they could still resign on short notice.

When paid or partially paid militias were introduced in most colonies in the mid-1880s, with many Volunteer units being disbanded as a result, a good number of Volunteer riflemen chose not to join the militia. Many chose to join rifle clubs instead, especially in Victoria. The demise of the Volunteers and the rise of the civilian rifle clubs saw a long struggle over the next 20 years between the military wanting control of the rifle associations and rifle clubs on one hand, and the associations and clubs trying to retain their independence on the other. Although the local military commandants became *ex officio* presidents of the associations, their councils tended to remain firmly in the hands of the ex-Volunteers. As the number of rifle clubs grew, being as they were in electorates, the political support they received also grew, especially as a number of prominent Volunteer officers were also politicians.

At the same time, with the introduction of paid militia, pressure also grew for the associations in particular to conduct matches which catered for the needs of the military. With a major war scare in 1885, this time caused by fear that Russia would go to war with England, riflemen of the South Australia and Tasmanian rifle associations and affiliated clubs as well as clubs in other colonies, attended the Easter encampments of the militia and drilled. Even in Victoria, a debate erupted from 1886 as to whether rifle clubs were part of the Defence Forces. This was partly driven by rifle clubs formed from militia units so that they could compete for prizes in the annual matches of the VRA; and partly to allow Victoria to field their best shots in the endless rivalry with NSW. Until then rifle club members who were not also efficient Volunteers were

disbarred from intercolonial matches. Certainly both the VRA and the colony benefited when it was finally ruled in the affirmative.

During this period through to 1887, the tradition continued of having large public parades of Volunteers or now, mostly militia, often at the city town hall, to witness the presentations of prizes won at the colonial rifle association annual matches. These parades often saw thousands of soldiers and civilian onlookers, with prizes inevitably presented by the governor of that colony. Looking on were the senior officers and corps commanders of the militia and naval forces as well as rifle association officials. These events, like all matters concerning rifle shooting, were reported widely in the newspapers of the day. Rifle shooting was growing in popularity at a rapid rate and it was the growth in civilian rifle clubs which was fuelling it.

The NSWRA continued to grow and prosper in the decade to 1887, despite economic downturns, a halt to recruiting of Volunteers such as occurred in 1879, and the need to change rifle ranges from 1888. Intense rivalry with Victoria continued on the rifle range, but greater cooperation as well. In addition new intercolonial competitors arrived on the scene with South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania all entering the fray. The association annual prize matches continued to be an all-military affair, with no NSWRA-sanctioned competitions for the few civilian rifle clubs in NSW, such as the Sydney and St. Leonard's clubs.<sup>50</sup> A Queen's Match was introduced in 1880, along the lines of the NRA's. The NSWRA changed its objectives in 1881 from: 'To give permanence to Volunteer Corps and to promote Rifle Shooting throughout the Colony', to 'To encourage members of the Defence Forces of the Colony to become proficient in the use of the weapons with which they are armed, and to promote Rifle Shooting throughout the Colony.'

The decade was dominated by intercolonial and international shoots. In particular a team from NSW joined the other colonies in competing at Wimbledon in 1886 for the Kolapore Cup in the first all-Australian international team. The intercolonial matches finally resumed in 1878 first with Victoria, then progressively with other colonies as well. These culminated in the most well-attended matches ever seen to date when NSW hosted more than 700 competitors to the February 1888 Centennial Matches in Sydney. In many respects, this was the first 'federal camp' of militia and Volunteers from the

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<sup>50</sup> The Sydney Rifle Club had re-formed in April 1884. See *Sydney Morning Herald* 18 April 1884, p.8 and 16 April 1885, p.8.

colonies. By this time the NSWRA listed affiliations with only four civilian rifle clubs and its council was dominated by permanent and militia officers.<sup>51</sup>

The VRA developed along a somewhat different path to the NSWRA. Partly this was due to the way change came to Victoria's defence organization. Victoria moved strongly towards a paid militia force in 1884, and most Volunteer units were disbanded. However, many of those Volunteers who had been involved in rifle shooting had no real interest in drill or any of the other compulsions that went with being a militiaman, and so joined rifle clubs. Rifle clubs had been strongly encouraged from 1883 by Victoria's first Minister of Defence, former Volunteer officer and Member of Parliament Sir Frederick Thomas Sargood. 'He had long had an interest in the subject, having joined the Victorian Volunteer Artillery in 1859 as a private, rising to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Described as 'one of the best shots in Victoria' he was also closely involved in the rifle club movement...'<sup>52</sup> The now Honorary Colonel Sargood was at this time also a vice-president of the VRA, but as Defence Minister asked the VRA to help draft new regulations for rifle clubs and appoint a liaison officer for him.<sup>53</sup>

It was the formation of the Victorian Mounted Rifles (VMR) from 1885 however, which really gave impetus to the growth in rifle club numbers, although it could be argued that Sargood's enthusiasm for rifle clubs was the catalyst for the mounted rifles. Sargood tasked a retired Australian-born, ex-Indian Army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Tom Price, as Inspector of Rifle Clubs. The all-Volunteer VMR, also commanded by Price, was subsequently created from rifle club members, especially in the country districts. The VMR was quickly followed by the Volunteer Rifles (soon renamed the Victorian Rangers) in March 1888, which also formed from rifle clubs closer to metropolitan areas. The disbandment of Volunteer corps, at least in Victoria, had not lasted long. Even so, in 1886 Price had some explaining to do when he called the Melbourne Rifle Club "pot-hunters" as they competed for prizes against the militia.<sup>54</sup>

In June 1885 the Government recognised only 17 rifle clubs with 217 sworn-in members (listed as infantry), and 302 mounted rifles members. But within a few months 51 more clubs had been 'sworn-in' (there were many more rifle clubs in existence, but

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<sup>51</sup> *Report of the New South Wales Rifle Association 1887 and Grand Centennial Matches*, Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1888, p.9.

<sup>52</sup> <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060099b.htm>, accessed April 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Lang, P.S., *Index to the Minute Books of the Victorian Rifle Association 1873-1906*, Melbourne, J. Haase Printer, 1906, pp.29-30.

<sup>54</sup> Lang, P.S., *Index to the Minute Books of the Victorian Rifle Association 1873-1906*, Melbourne, J. Haase Printer, 1906, p.36.

not consisting of sworn-in men, perhaps as many as 306 clubs and about 6,000 riflemen by September 1885).<sup>55</sup> By mid-1887, the VMR had 968 men under arms while sworn-in members of rifle clubs numbered 4,736 against 3,595 a year earlier.

The men of the VMR, however, were also members of their local rifle clubs. Increasingly they tended to shoot matches between themselves and at their own events at the VRA annual meetings, but later had to become honorary members of their rifle clubs to avoid the confusion.<sup>56</sup> In separate developments, in late 1884, the VRA Council agreed that the military commandant should be the *ex officio* president of the council, while the Melbourne Rifle Club and Ballarat Civilian Rifle Club were recognised by Victoria's Council of Defence, a first in Australia.

The VRA had mixed feelings about these developments but came to embrace them as clubs began to affiliate with the VRA in order to compete for prizes; the loss of income from the disbanded Volunteer corps was soon replaced. The VRA responded to the boom in the popularity of rifle shooting by increasing the variety of its matches, from volley-firing and skirmishing to mounted competitions. Rifle clubs came to have a strong standing and influence within the VRA; rifle club members won the Queen's shoot and the VRA Gold Medal in 1886. In fact the rifle clubs outshot the militia at every turn at the VRA annual matches.

Meanwhile, the VRA reported to the Minister for Defence, not the military commandant.<sup>57</sup> Added to the independent nature of the VRA's organizational character was the fact that the VMR (and later Rangers) was a Volunteer corps and its members heavily involved in country rifle clubs. Despite the disbandment of Volunteer units in 1884, the influence of Volunteers on rifle shooting was given a new lease of life in Victoria. So, notwithstanding the rise of the civilian rifle clubs, 1887 was the last year for some time to see a pure civilian on the VRA Council.

As has been noted, in South Australia the RVF was formed under the *Rifle Companies Act* of 1878. The RVF companies were organized and managed by SANRA, which held its first shoot (including South Australia's first Queen's match), in late 1879. The SANRA riflemen acted as reserves for the militia, accompanied them on exercises and conducted exercises with the other defence forces of South Australia. By

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<sup>55</sup> *Report of the Council of Defence* [Victoria], John Ferres, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1885, p.16. See also the *Argus* 7 September 1885, p.10.

<sup>56</sup> *Report of the Council of Defence* [Victoria], Robert S. Brain, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1887, p.7.

<sup>57</sup> *Report of the Victorian Rifle Association for the year 1886*, np, npn, The Sloane Collection, provided to the author by Alex Sloane 2009.

1881 the annual report of the association gave the strength as 29 companies consisting of 813 men, an increase by 246 on the previous year.<sup>58</sup> But the Inspecting Officer was not happy. Lieutenant-Colonel Downes, the Commandant and Inspector of SANRA, was scathing of the SANRA companies' performance, even after they had attended their ten drills and two parades a year:

The Inspecting Officer [Downes] wishes to point out to such Companies as are negligent and indifferent in acquiring knowledge of the methods by which a soldier is brought into such positions as to be able to use his rifle with effect (drill), that their place in the field would not be at the front; if called out *at all*, they would be employed either as a baggage guard or in defence of some unoccupied post where a man would simply be required to shoot...<sup>59</sup>

Downes was a Crimean veteran and perhaps his expectations were too high, as the RVF rifle companies were actually *de facto* rifle clubs and their members were not all that keen on drill.<sup>60</sup> When the Palmerston [Darwin] Rifle Club appealed to Downes for the provision of iron targets in 1883, Downes provided the targets but refused to send ammunition at the Government price, insisting that it consider becoming a RVF company to enable it to receive such supplies (it never did, as there were not enough members; only 11 turned up for its Annual General Meeting in February 1884).<sup>61</sup>

A new commandant, Colonel John Fletcher Owen, Royal Artillery (RA), recommended changes to the Act in 1886. The RVF became a Volunteer force and SANRA was remodelled. 'As the governing body of both civilian and military rifle clubs, the [South Australia] National Rifle Association was now to have the senior military officers of the Colony on its Council. Thus, rifle shooting as a sport effectively passed under the control of the professional military.'<sup>62</sup>

The decade before 1888 in South Australia was dominated by the SANRA. However, the old SARA appeared to hang on for a few more years mainly through the establishment of the South Australian Rifle Club (SARC) in December 1880. It was a

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<sup>58</sup> *Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser*, 24 February 1881, p.3.

<sup>59</sup> *South Australian National Rifle Association: 2nd Annual Report 1880 [incorporating Annual Return of Rifle Companies 31 December 1880 and Inspecting Officer's Report 31 December 1880]*, J. Williams, Adelaide, 1881, p.11.

<sup>60</sup> Downes twice served as commandant in South Australia, served in Victoria in between those appointments and was part of several official defence inquiries in NSW and elsewhere. See <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040097b.htm>, accessed April 2010.

<sup>61</sup> *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 6 January 1883, p.3 and 2 February 1884, p.2.

<sup>62</sup> Zwillenberg, H., 'South Australia's Army: Part 2', *Sabretache*, v.22 no.2, April-June 1981, p.12.

club with highly influential backers.<sup>63</sup> It was the antithesis of the SANRA rifle companies, but could not hold out against the growing dominance of the Government-sanctioned military shooting culture in South Australia during the 1880s.<sup>64</sup> By 1885 it had faded into history, at least until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when it was reformed on the demise of SANRA.

In Queensland, a Russian war scare and a number of inquiries and reports into the defences of Queensland, including by British ‘Imperial’ experts, brought changes to the defence organization in 1882-83. A new commandant from 1883, Colonel George Arthur French, RA, introduced further changes to reduce Volunteers in favour of paid militia. French was not keen on Volunteers, and under the provisions of the Defence Act passed in 1884, rifle clubs also fell under the Volunteer mantle.<sup>65</sup> While French enjoyed rifle shooting himself - he shot in the QRA meeting of 1884, ‘placing him on a good footing with his men’ - he managed to upset influential Volunteer officers and riflemen as he tried to reduce the independence of Volunteers while advocating rifle clubs in population centres too small to recruit Volunteer corps.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, he was capable of writing strongly in support of the Volunteers’ use of the Victoria Park range when it came under threat from developers in late 1885.<sup>67</sup>

However, under the new Defence Act, rifle clubs were sanctioned by the Government for the first time, and a number of new civilian clubs sprung up in Brisbane and in country areas. In addition, the so-called shooting clubs of the remaining Volunteer units also became rifle clubs under the Act.<sup>68</sup> By 1886, a district rifle club teams’ match was included in the annual matches of the QRA and eight teams entered.<sup>69</sup> This was a new development in Queensland, as was the division of the colony

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<sup>63</sup> Its Patron was the Governor, Lieutenant General Sir William Jervois KCMG; the President was Sir Thomas Elder KCMG; Vice Presidents were Chief Justice Sir Samuel Way, Sir William Milne KCMG, Sir Henry Ayers KCMG and Sir George Kingston, KCMG. Council members included the Hon. Henry Scott MLC; George C. Hawker, MA, MP, George Hamilton JP; Samuel Tomkinson, JP; F.F. Turner; the Hon. John Colton MP; Edwin T. Smith MP; S.D. Glyde MP; William Coleman JP; and James Rankine.

<sup>64</sup> See Garie, F., ‘A Brief History of SARA to 1900’, unpub. MS dated 17 February 2002, provided to author by Frank Garie 6 March 2010, npn.; Willmore, M., *History of the rifle and military forces commonly known as the volunteers in the colony of South Australia circa 1836-1910*, unpublished MS, Adelaide, 1989, npn.; and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 December 1880, p.5.

<sup>65</sup> Jackson, A. T., *Southern Queensland Rifle Association Jubilee, 1877-1927: a brief History of the Association during the past Fifty Years*, Southern Queensland Rifle Association, Brisbane, 1927, p.6.

<sup>66</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 1884, p.8.

<sup>67</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 18 January 1886, p.5.

<sup>68</sup> Noonan, T.J., *History of the Queensland Police Rifle Club 1883-2000*, T.J. Noonan, Murrumba Downs, [Qld], 2004, p.13.

<sup>69</sup> Jackson, A. T., *Southern Queensland Rifle Association Jubilee, 1877-1927: a brief History of the Association during the past Fifty Years*, Southern Queensland Rifle Association, Brisbane, 1927, p.21.

into two military districts, north and south, which also had responsibility for rifle ranges. By and large, however, as rifle clubs appeared they were quickly brought very much under military control. Colonel French insisted on some return in terms of drill and return of service for the ammunition and rifles being provided to them.<sup>70</sup>

In 1885, two new rifle associations came into being, also in northern and southern Queensland, reflecting electoral boundaries and the military division. The Northern Queensland Rifle Association (NQRA) headquarters was in Townsville. This caused a certain amount of angst with the QRA, which naturally felt somewhat threatened by these developments, which were aided and abetted by the needs of military administration. To keep these developments in perspective however, by the end of June 1885 the rifle clubs only had 339 members, although the number of clubs was growing steadily. Growth was restricted by a shortage of suitable rifles with which to arm them.<sup>71</sup>

In intercolonial matches, the QRA hosted NSW for the first time in 1880, and sent a team to Sydney in 1882, as did Victoria. In 1883 both NSW and Victoria refused to send a team to Queensland because of petty disagreements over match conditions. In October 1884, Queensland competed against NSW, Victoria and Tasmania at the Intercolonial matches in Sydney; but in 1885 declined to send a team to Victoria that year because of ‘apathy’ amongst its members to the idea.<sup>72</sup> Queensland did, however, contribute riflemen to the Australian team which shot at Wimbledon in 1886 for the Kolapore Cup. In February 1888 Queensland again sent a team to Sydney for the Centenary Intercolonial matches. At home, the Toowong Range was used for the first time by the QRA in 1887, after using the Lytton range since late 1881.

In Tasmania, meanwhile, the STRA had persevered but not entirely successfully, as it was still seen by Volunteers as a threat to their well-established annual championship match series, rather than a support to them. A Northern Tasmanian Rifle Association was also established, as were a number of country rifle associations (often centred on a single rifle club). A reorganization of the Volunteers in 1878 and more comprehensively in 1882 along with more professional military leadership, and Russian war scares, all combined to encourage the associations to put forward their members as real Volunteers, much along the lines of the SANRA example.

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<sup>70</sup> *Queensland Parliament, Votes and Proceedings* 1884, p.2120

<sup>71</sup> *Queenslander*, 26 September 1885, p.504.

<sup>72</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 November 1885, p.8.

By early January 1882, following an increasing lobbying effort by numerous individuals and military commanders, a proposal was made to amalgamate the southern and northern associations into a new Tasmanian Rifle Association (TRA). It was to prove to be a proposal before its time, even though much encouraged by the examples of the other colonial rifle associations. Four years were to pass before it became a reality. A major obstacle to progress was the provincialism of the northern and southern associations, which reflected a similar rivalry and at times even animosity in other matters between the two geographically divided areas of the island colony.

Finally, after much debate about rules and regulations, rifle ranges and other matters of governance among the various existing rifle associations, a meeting on 23 December 1886 elected a provisional committee.<sup>73</sup> It was noticeable that the meeting was of Tasmanian Defence Force officers only. The Tasmanian commandant Colonel William Vincent Legge became *ex officio* president, and all of the other positions were held by Volunteer officers. Legge was Tasmanian born and was to remain a senior military figure right through to 1904.<sup>74</sup> The first TRA Secretary was Major (later Sir) James George Davies, who later was to play an important role in the later General Council of Rifle Associations of Australasia. Davies' family also owned the *Mercury* newspaper.<sup>75</sup> It was not until a meeting on 17 June 1887 that the TRA finally came into existence.

In Western Australia, there was still no real movement towards an association, although small Volunteer companies and detachments would hold annual matches and qualify Volunteers as marksmen through the 1880s. Telegraphic matches were fired against the Metropolitan Rifle Volunteers from teams in South Australia in 1879 and 1880; in late 1886 a telegraphic match between seven man teams of Sydney's Volunteer Artillery Rifle Club and Perth's Metropolitan Rifle Volunteer corps was won by Sydney. Despite their name, the rifle club was composed only of Volunteers.<sup>76</sup> In March 1885 a team from Western Australia competed against South Australia Volunteers in Adelaide.<sup>77</sup>

The build-up of enthusiasm among the various colonial rifle associations for a meeting of minds on common rules and regulations affecting all associations came to

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<sup>73</sup> *Mercury*, 24 December 1886, p.2.

<sup>74</sup> <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A050091b.htm>, accessed March 2010.

<sup>75</sup> <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A080257b.htm>, accessed March 2010.

<sup>76</sup> *West Australian*, 6 December 1886, p.3.

<sup>77</sup> *West Australian*, 23 March 1880, p.2.

fruition in 1887. Until the standardisation of the military weapon (now the Martini-Henry, with some Sniders left in Tasmania) and the common ground found about defence force structures, the colonial rifle associations had evolved in some respects along quite different paths. But the growing support for federalism, encouraged most of all by the military authorities, was also a strong undercurrent in the rifle associations, containing as they did many of the leading figures of the Volunteer and militia forces of the colonies.

Immediately following the South Australia Centenary matches in early August 1887, delegates from each of the four colonial rifle associations represented there met briefly to discuss the future conduct of intercolonial matches. The meeting was called by Captain George Henry Dean of the SANRA and General John Fletcher Owen, the South Australia commandant and president of SANRA who had together come up with the idea.<sup>78</sup>

At the Conference it was resolved to establish a Federal Council to deal with all matters connected to Rifle Shooting in which more than one Colony was interested, and especially to arrange for Annual Intercolonial Matches open to teams from all the Australasian Colonies, and also to determine the conditions under which the matches should be fired.<sup>79</sup>

The 1887 meeting led to the eventual formation of the forerunner organisation to the NRA of Australia. The road to this point in the ‘pre-history’ of the future NRAA was keenly travelled by the early riflemen. There had been great strides in rifle technology, targets and marking, ammunition, range management and rifle shooting organisation since the late 1850s. By and large, the colonial rifle associations had not only survived but had also firmly underpinned this momentum in what was being referred to by the late 1880s as ‘the rifle club movement’.

A well-established series of intercolonial matches had evolved, albeit in a halting manner; and the Australian colonies had seen some exposure to international rifle matches as well. With Australian federation rapidly approaching, it was now the turn of an Australian union of the rifle associations to take the rifle shooting movement to a new level. However, if colonial delegates to the meeting in 1887 were optimistic that

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<sup>78</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the year 1928*, Keating Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1928, p.49.

<sup>79</sup> Templeton, J.M., *Rifle Associations and the Commonwealth Council of the Rifle Associations of Australia*, Edgerton and Moore, Melbourne, 1903, pp.3-4.



## Chapter 2: The Rise of the Pothunters

The new organisation was to be called ‘The General Council of Rifle Associations of Australasia’, even though there was no association yet in Western Australia, despite ‘Australasia’, New Zealand was not formally invited to send delegates. The formation meeting was certainly a productive one, especially with the forthright Lieutenant-Colonel John Montgomery Templeton of Victoria in the chair.

The first formal meeting of the Council was planned for the next intercolonial rifle matches meeting, the first for Tasmania, in Hobart in December 1888. So the scene was set for what has now become Australia’s oldest national sporting body to come into being.<sup>80</sup> When the speeches were given at the conclusion of the Sydney Centennial matches - NSW won the intercolonial match - in February 1888, Templeton actually proposed a toast to the “National Rifle Association of Australia”.<sup>81</sup> This was certainly premature, but he wasn’t the only one with a vision for what could be.

The presidents of the General Council were to be the military commandants of the colonies. Most were career British army officers whose colonial service was a either a stepping stone to greater things or a last post before retirement. They were, when the General Councils met, already acting as *ex officio* presidents of their own colony’s rifle association. At the same time they were overseeing the development of military standards of musketry among the Volunteer and militia, as well as the small Permanent Forces (mostly garrison artillery and engineers). Increasingly, the commandants wanted to see rifle association matches wherever possible to be emulating ‘service conditions’. As the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew to a close inevitable tensions began to arise between the commandants and the rifle associations, just as civilian rifle clubs began to gain influence and importance within the associations.

It would be easy to dismiss the presidents of successive councils through to 1901 as mere figureheads, appointed simply because they were the local commandant. In fact while they missed at least six meetings between 1888 and 1900 they remained in some respects the most powerful people in the room, whether there or not. It helped if

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<sup>80</sup> The General Council brought military rifle shooting and sport together, which evolved into large bore target shooting as we know it today. Military musketry training remained separate from the General Council’s control, just as prize shooting, by and large, rested with the General Council and colonial, now State, rifle associations. The first national cricket body was not formed until 1892.

<sup>81</sup> *Report of the New South Wales Rifle Association 1887 and Grand Centennial Matches*, Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1888, p.88.

the commandant was sympathetic to the rifle-shooting movement but this was not critical. It certainly didn't help if the commandant was antagonistic. Whatever their attitudes, the commandants held if not the purse-strings then certainly the levers of rifle shooting administration, such as access to key rifle ranges, modern rifles and ammunition supplies, and so could not be ignored. Most important they had command over the Volunteers, militia and permanent local forces in that colony. These forces were the life blood of the rifle associations, and their income.

Other than the *ex officio* commandants who acted as presidents, who were the men who provided the leadership to the General Council? All of the delegates and office bearers were rifle men of note in their home colonies. Most had represented their colony in intercolonial matches and so had a thorough knowledge of the issues facing teams, individual riflemen and administrators at these competitions. All were Volunteer or former Volunteer officers (some now in the new militia forces), often from the ranks, and closely engaged with military musketry requirements. The exception at the formation meeting was Senior Constable George Bain of Queensland but even he had represented Queensland in an intercolonial match. Almost all had been intimately involved with the start-ups of their own colony's rifle associations and were already well-known through the rifle shooting 'community' across Australia.

In the context of their lives and times, the delegates were without exception loyal to Great Britain and Empire. The 'officer types', especially, were ardent supporters of Empire. There were also a number who, true to Australia's developing egalitarianism, were equally sceptical of any Royal fanfare. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century approached, however, the colonials also saw themselves as more than simply Victorians or Queenslanders or South Australians. They increasingly regarded themselves as Australians. Intercolonial and international matches had broadened their outlook. The intercolonial meeting in Sydney in February 1888 at which the General Council was formed was in effect a great gathering of *Australian* riflemen and Volunteers. Discussions of a future federation of the colonies at a political level were matched by discussions about forming *Australian* rifle teams to compete at Wimbledon. But parochial rivalries between the colonies, especially between Victoria and NSW, often remained fatal to attempts at real federal cooperation.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> John George Davies from Tasmania was already successful in public affairs (he was Mayor of Hobart six times by 1900 among his other public appointments), assisted no doubt by his family's ownership of the *Mercury* newspaper. He was active in cricket, football and horse racing, as well as the Volunteer

The first formal meeting of the General Council of Rifle Associations was held in Hobart in December 1888. Even the Council of the NSWRA, flushed with the success of their Centennial Matches, reported to its members that ‘It is confidently anticipated that this General Council will tend to preserve the cordial relations now existing between the several Rifle Associations who have joined therein, and to promote rifle-shooting generally throughout Australasia.’<sup>83</sup> However, these comments belied the uncertainty below the surface, especially in NSW, as to how the General Council would actually work in practice. It wasn’t to take long before ‘cordial relations’ at the association level were tested and found wanting by the same intercolonial rivalries and tensions which had given rise to the General Council in the first place.

The twelve year period which followed was one of unsteady progress. The General Council of Rifle Associations was renamed the Federal Council in 1892; the

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movement in that colony. Davies had been intimately engaged in the formation of the TRA through its variations and was to play a prominent role in the General Council and *its* variations in the year ahead. Similarly, George Dean, a stock and station agent from South Australia, was well-recognised as an enthusiastic Volunteer officer (his career had begun in the early Reedbeds Cavalry) and for his role as Secretary of the SANRA. His fellow representative from South Australia, Captain John William Castine, was a store-keeper from Riverton who had been in the Rifle Volunteers since 1880 and like Dean, a noted rifle shot. Castine was a member of Parliament and would later be Minister for Education. The NSW representatives were Major William Frederick Longfield, a former Volunteer Infantry officer now with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Infantry Regiment, and Commander Lewington. Longfield was an early member of the NSWRA Council and by 1888 was a dedicated member of its Executive Committee; he served in the NSWRA for almost 50 years, including 18 as Treasurer and six as Chairman. Lewington had worked his way up from a sub-lieutenant to command the Naval Brigade and was much sought after in the colony’s social calendar; he was also the manager of a wine and spirits company and a regular rifleman, actively competing. Lewington fell under a train in 1891 and his senior position as much as his dismemberment caused an inquest to be held; it delivered an open verdict. The Victorian representatives were Templeton and Captain William Henry Powell. A Scotsman by birth and a long-serving Volunteer and now militia officer, Templeton had been shooting competitively since the mid-1860s; he was already the outstanding rifle shooting advocate of his time. A successful insurance accountant, he had formed the National Mutual Life Association in 1869 and was a member of the first Public Service Board in Victoria. By 1888 Templeton was a battalion commander, VRA council member and member of the Victorian Council of Defence. He had also represented Victoria in intercolonial shooting teams – there was little that Templeton did not know about rifle shooting. Powell, who had been born in England, was an infantry officer with the Victorian Rifles, a member of the VRA Council and had been a member of the Australian team which had shot at Wimbledon in 1886. This left the Queenslanders, Major Thynne and Senior Constable Bain. Irish-born, Thynne was an excellent rifle shot and a passionate Volunteer officer, later commanding the Queensland Volunteer Force. He was also a lawyer and member of Queensland’s Legislative Council. In 1888 he became Queensland’s Minister for Justice. Later Thynne became embroiled in controversy with the Queensland Commandant, Colonel George Arthur French. French would later serve as Commandant in NSW, from 1896 to 1902. Bain was a member of the Queensland Police Rifle Club (the QRA had allowed the Police Rifle Club to join it in 1883), an honorary member of two others and a member of the Queensland’s rifle team firing at the Sydney Centennial Matches. For both men it was to be their only appearance at a General Council meeting. One wonders what Thynne made of his somewhat undistinguished Police companion, even though Bain had been given an exemplary service award following a major fire in Brisbane in 1884. Service history, G. Bain, personnel file AF 2108, *Queensland State Archives*.

<sup>83</sup> *Report of the New South Wales Rifle Association 1887 and Grand Centennial Matches*, Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1888, p.12.

Federal Council in turn became the Commonwealth Council in 1901. Western Australian Volunteer officers and others tried to start up a rifle association in 1890, but were eventually unsuccessful. New Zealand ‘flirted‘ with membership but in the end declined to pay subscriptions, despite a successful intercolonial meeting in New Zealand in 1896.

Mainly, progress was unsteady because of the almost mischievous role of the NSW Rifle Association, later renamed the NRA of NSW. The NSWRA appeared to resist the authority of the ‘national’ council of rifle associations at almost every turn, sometimes wilfully, other times by default. First a dispute with NSW over which rifle sight should be accepted as the universal sight was at the heart of an ongoing dispute which threatened the very existence of the General and then Federal Council. Then it became more of a dispute over the authority of the respective ‘national’ and NSW councils, leading NSW to drop out of the ‘national’ council on several separate occasions.

Yet progress was made nonetheless. Partly this was managed because some of the issues which dogged the early ‘national’ councils such as different kinds of rifles, targets, sights and ammunition in each colony, were gradually overcome. The last intercolonial match using the Martini-Henry was held in 1900 and the long reign of the .303” rifles began. The gradual rise of the civilian rifle clubs from the mid 1880s, growth accelerated by the Boer War between 1899-1902, led to more homogeneity in the types and conditions of matches. The increasing cooperation among colonial commandants and defence thinking also impacted on the development of associations and their objectives. The controversies that these developments sometimes generated, especially in NSW, actually provided further impetus to the development of a ‘national’ rifle-shooting movement.

Progress was made most of all because of the inevitable tide of public affairs towards the formal federation of the colonies. Riflemen everywhere were by and large willing enthusiasts of Federation. Internationally, colonial rifle associations in Victoria, Queensland and New Zealand managed to get teams overseas to Bisley in the late 1890s. This generated an even stronger desire to field an ‘Australian’ team. Intercolonial matches, which were later called the Federal Match and then the Commonwealth Match, continued to grow in strength even as the NRA of NSW tried to undermine it with its own intercolonial competition. As well, three leading riflemen and outstanding personalities, namely Templeton from Victoria, Davies from Tasmania and

Dean from South Australia, kept the ideal and objectives of the ‘national’ council at the forefront, ensuring that it was not derailed by petty intercolonial rivalries and jealousies.

While yet to establish its credentials as the arbiter of Australian rifle teams shooting internationally, by May 1901 the newly named Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations could look back with pride on how far it had come since 1888. It had overcome numerous challenges. It had provided leadership, especially to the smaller rifle associations. It had proven willing to compromise to achieve the objectives of the organisation, accommodating the interests of civilian rifle clubs and the military. And it had laid the foundations for what were to be perhaps its best years before the spectre of global conflict changed everything. With a new Commonwealth Defence Minister in place and a new Commander-in-Chief of the Australian Military Forces soon to arrive, the rifle-shooting movement of more than 50,000 riflemen appeared to be on the crest of an unstoppable wave of popularity throughout the country.

The General Council’s first meeting took place at the Sandy Bay Range in Hobart in December 1888.<sup>84</sup> New Zealand did not make the meeting, but an important confirmation of the *status quo* was the agreement that ‘competitors shall be members of the Defence force, and *sworn in for defence purposes*.’ This essentially meant that civilian rifle club members could not compete in intercolonial matches. As a result colonies would be unable to field their strongest teams until civilians were sworn in and the colonial defence authorities recognised clubs as part of defence accordingly which NSW appeared to be doing by forming ‘Reserve Rifle Companies’ *aka* rifle clubs. So

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<sup>84</sup> The meeting president was Colonel William Vincent Legge. A former British Army artillery officer, Legge had briefly served in Melbourne in 1868. He retired as a Lieutenant-Colonel to take up command of the Tasmanian military forces in 1883, holding that role until 1890. Legge was again commandant from 1898 to 1902. See ‘Legge, William Vincent (1840-1918), *Dictionary of Australian Biography*, Angus and Robertson, Melbourne, 1949. Templeton took the Chair and the meeting got down to business. Once again, Dean from South Australia acted as Secretary/Treasurer, and other delegates who had also been at the Sydney meeting included Powell from Victoria and Davies from Tasmania. New faces included Captain William Holman Hunt from Tasmania and Captain David Drysdale from South Australia. Hunt, a civil servant who rose to be a deputy commissioner for taxation, was a member of the Launceston Rifle Club. He had not only been part of the winning Tasmanian team at the intercolonial match just held, but also carried off the individual championship. He was the toast of Tasmania, at least for a while. Drysdale was a Scot and a newspaper man. He served in the Volunteers in Victoria for 14 years before moving to Port Augusta in South Australia, where he quickly established himself as one of its civic leaders. Apart from his newspaper interests, he also started up its original Volunteer unit in 1879. The NSW’ delegates were both new to the council: Major Walker who had captained their rifle team at Hobart, and Lieutenant William Foscett. Walker was a senior officer in the NSW Telegraph Department, a property developer and a man of many interests including rifle shooting, cricket, bowls and chess. He was commander of the Torpedo & Signals Corps in Sydney. Foscett was an infantry officer who had been an early Volunteer, and was a civil servant. Like Walker, he was born in England. Foscett had been Secretary of the NSWRA since 1877; it was a position he would hold for 27 years. Although there had been individual New Zealand riflemen at the intercolonial match, no delegates were appointed.

the seeds were sown for the potential ‘militarisation’ of civilian rifle clubs across all colonies.<sup>85</sup>

Then the contentious issue of sights was discussed. NSW was the only colony to use sliding wind-gauges on its rear sights, and its association was caught between the military insistence, in that colony, on using that particular sight on the Government-issue Henry rifle, and the other colonies which did not. At the Tasmanian intercolonial matches, on the other hand, when NSW fired using their wind-gauge sight, this was resented as an unfair advantage by the other colonies. When the Victorians moved and seconded ‘That the three lines on back sight be as issued, and that no lateral sliding bar be allowed’, NSW immediately objected. The meeting details were fully reported in *The Mercury*, and no doubt were read avidly by all riflemen once the newspaper was delivered by intercolonial steamers and by shorter telegraphic reports around Australia.<sup>86</sup>

At the next meeting of the General Council held in November 1889 in Melbourne, the NSW rifle team and representatives to the General Council were noticeably absent. In protest that the General Council meeting of December 1888 had decided that fixed sights would be used in the 1889 matches, NSW declined to attend. To add insult to injury, NSW also refused, for the first time, to allow the Queensland rifle team to travel with franked tickets over the NSW railway system, effectively preventing Queensland from attendance at the matches in Melbourne.<sup>87</sup>

New faces at the 1889 included a number of Militia and Volunteer officers.<sup>88</sup> There were no delegates from Western Australia, New Zealand and, as noted, from

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<sup>85</sup> *Mercury*, 24 December 1888, p.4. At the Intercolonial Match in Hobart in 1888, it is significant that the Tasmanian entries included members of Country Rifle Clubs, by then part of the Tasmanian Defence Reserves. This gave Tasmania the best shots available, and perhaps it was no coincidence that it won the match that year.

<sup>86</sup> *Mercury*, 24 December 1888, p.4. A full copy of the formal report of the December 1888 conference is also contained in Corcoran, J.E., *The Target Rifle in Australia 1860-1900*, R&R Books, New York, 1975, pp.201-216.

<sup>87</sup> *Argus*, 13 November 1889, p.9.

<sup>88</sup> Delegates included Frank Stanley Shepherdson, who was Victoria-born and had spent time in the Victorian Volunteers, was now a Volunteer with the Brisbane Rifles, a member of the Metropolitan Rifle Club, and a relatively new QRA Council member. He left Queensland shortly after his return from the Council meeting and subsequently lived in both Victoria and Queensland. Shepherdson later enlisted in the AIF in World War One, aged 50, and died on active service. Kelly was commander of ‘C’ Battery, Field Artillery Brigade, a militia unit renowned for its systematic accrual of ‘crack shots’ within its ranks. An auctioneer by profession, Kelly was already a highly regarded figure in the VRA and would later lead a Victorian contingent to the Boer War. English-born Makin, a merchant, had previously served with the Volunteers before settling in South Australia in 1869. Joining the Volunteer Adelaide Rifles in 1877, by 1889 he commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment and was *aide-de-camp* to the Governor. Burgess, H.T. (ed.), *Cyclopedia of South Australia 1907-1909*, Vol.1, The Cyclopaedia Company Adelaide, p.288.

NSW either. Unfortunately this was only the beginning of a deterioration of relations between the largest colony's rifle association and the General Council over the next decade and more. In a cross-Tasman footnote to these developments, Australian colonial teams were invited to compete at special matches set up by the NZRA on the occasion of the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition, which opened in Dunedin on 29 November 1889. Victoria, South Australia, NSW and Queensland agreed to send teams for the matches in mid-January 1890. Only the Victorians and South Australians turned up.<sup>89</sup>

Against the weighty matters of Imperial defence, the issues facing the General Council (vexing though at times they were for the colonial riflemen), paled into insignificance. However, the two things were not entirely unconnected. Imperial defence expert General Sir James Bevan Edwards, had been appointed by the British Government to conduct an inspection of colonial defences. He delivered his detailed report to the colonial governments in October 1889.<sup>90</sup> Most important perhaps was the primary recognition that effective defence of Australia could not be implemented without a federation. This gave further impetus to a Federation Council formed in 1891 to give the colonial bureaucrats and politicians a vehicle for discussing barriers to federation, such as tariffs, or even whether federation was desirable at all.

Edwards' report also led to an Australia-wide inspection tour by colonial military commandants of sites for fixed defences at places like Thursday Island in the Torres Strait and Albany in Western Australia.<sup>91</sup> Among the raft of recommendations both general and particular was a specific recommendation that volunteer riflemen become reservists for the militia. This was to have far-reaching consequences for the rifle

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William Martin was an 'up-and-coming' rifle shot, who had risen from the ranks of the Volunteer Launceston Rifles. Already well-known, along with his brother James, as a stalwart of the Launceston Cricket Club, Martin had represented northern Tasmania and the colony in both cricket and rifle shooting, most recently in the Hobart inter-colonial matches. Watchorn, a lawyer, was champion shot of Tasmania in 1884, 1885 and 1886. He had also been part of the 1886 Australian team to compete at Wimbledon. Like Martin, he was an all-round sportsman, and had represented Tasmania in intercolonial rowing. Like Kelly, he was also to lead a mounted rifles contingent to the Boer War. Another lawyer who worked in the legal firm of Findlay Watchorn was Andrew Clark, son of the Tasmanian Attorney-General Andrew Inglis Clark. A. I. Clark, the architect of the Australian Constitution, was also a Vice-President of the Tasmanian Rifle Association. See Neasy, F. & L., *Andrew Inglis Clark*, University of Tasmania Law School Press, Hobart, 2001, pp.222-225.

<sup>89</sup> *Otago Witness*, 16 January 1890, p.17.

<sup>90</sup> Hill, A.J., 'Edwards, Sir James Bevan (1834 - 1922)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, p. 130.

<sup>91</sup> This was for all intents and purposes, the first intercolonial commandants' 'conference', and informally rifle clubs and associations were almost certainly discussed, for it is more than coincidence that from about 1892 commandants seemed to be sending the same message to associations – put more service style matches into the annual prize meetings.

shooting movement in Australia. While Edwards' report was not the first to be delivered on colonial defences, it was the first to consider rifle clubs in any detail. Subsequent to the report, most of the colonies upgraded their respective Defence Acts. Most colonies also regulated rifle clubs in one form or another. In the short term the report stimulated demands for a rifle association in Western Australia and gave impetus to considering exactly how rifle clubs met defence needs.<sup>92</sup>

Edwards' report also stimulated thinking about the type of matches being fired at the annual meetings of the colonial associations, stirred interest by military officers in the potential resource that rifle clubs seemed to offer them, and raised into prominence over the following years a number of important differences between the way that rifle associations had been developing and how the military officers thought they *should* be developing. In short, Edwards' report was the catalyst to what would become a fundamental issue: whether rifle shooting as managed by the associations was there to support the training of the military rifle shot or to train civilian marksmen to win prizes.

By 1889 a number of events connected to give a window of opportunity for the establishment of a rifle association in Western Australia for the first time. General Edwards' report on colonial defences raised awareness of the inadequacy of the defences of Western Australia like never before; especially when it was leaked to the local press in September that year. In December 1889 Western Australia had a population of fewer than 44,000 and it supported from that a slowly growing but still small force of just over 600 Volunteers, mostly infantry. Edwards' report had indicated a need for partially-paid forces, but money remained an issue and everything was on hold while self-government awaited realisation.

In January 1890 Captain Henry Lionel Pilkington, late of the 21<sup>st</sup> Hussars and formerly Broome's Private Secretary was appointed commandant with local rank of Major. Pilkington acted quickly. Within two weeks of taking command he had proposed a military tournament which was held on 16 April with about 4,000 spectators, and that a rifle association be formed.<sup>93</sup> Morale soared among the

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<sup>92</sup> Edwards saw rifle clubs as the 'ready reserve' and recommended their extension across the country. For example in Queensland, Edwards strongly recommended that rifle clubs 'be placed on a more definite footing'. See 'Report of Major-General Edwards, C.B., upon the local forces and defences of Queensland, with scheme for the organization of the military forces of the Australian colonies', *Queensland Parliament Report CA 99-1889, 9 October 1889*, James C. Beal, Govt. Printer, Brisbane, 1889.

<sup>93</sup> *West Australian*, 18 January, 1890, p.3.

Volunteers. The Volunteer officers held the first annual general meeting to form the Rifle Association of Western Australia (WARA) on 26 March 1890.

The objects of the new association were 'to promote rifle shooting in Western Australia and to encourage and assist the formation of rifle clubs in the colony.'<sup>94</sup> The meeting enrolled 47 members and agreed on the rules before it elected a council.<sup>95</sup> The first match held under the auspices of the WARA was at the military tournament in Guildford in mid-April 1890. Momentum continued when the Albany Rifle Club was formed with 40 members on 9 July 1890 as perhaps the first ever civilian rifle club in Western Australia. It immediately affiliated with the WARA.<sup>96</sup>

However, just as a window of opportunity had opened for the rifle association, it just as quickly closed. On 30 June 1890 Pilkington resigned after only six months as commandant.<sup>97</sup> Pilkington was replaced by none other than Major George Braithwaite

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<sup>94</sup> The meeting was chaired by the Hon. Clayton Turner Mason (member Executive Council of Western Australia and Commissioner for Railways), who was later elected a vice-president. An interested observer at the first meeting was Sir James George Lee Steere, at the time Speaker of the Legislative Council and a highly influential figure in Western Australian business and political circles. Bolton, G.C., 'Steere, Sir James George Lee (1830-1903)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.12, Melbourne University Press, 1990, pp.61-63.

<sup>95</sup> Other vice-presidents elected included Majors George Braithwaite Phillips (Retired List but Western Australia's Police Commissioner) and George Bland Humble (RL, former officer commanding Fremantle Volunteer Rifles); Captain Thomas Henry Lovegrove (Unattached List but Western Australia's principal medical officer) and Surgeon Charles Bolton Elliott of the Volunteer Medical Staff. Elected members of the council were Captains Edward Shenton (RL; he succeeded William Jose as mayor of Geraldton in 1889), William Arthur Payne (Fremantle Volunteer Rifles; later principal of Payne & Humble, accountants and shipping agents), Thomas Sherwood (Metropolitan Volunteer Rifles; a civil servant with the Lands Department); Lieutenants John Francis ('Frank') Shaw (Metropolitan Rifle Volunteers; a member of the Western Australian Rowing Club and Metropolitan Cricket Club); William Jose (Geraldton Rifle Volunteers; a former and future Mayor of Geraldton); Joseph Alexander Campbell (Staff Adjutant; a British Army staff officer and veteran of the Egyptian campaign), James Rose (UL; later wounded in the Boer War), James Henry Munday (Guildford Rifle Volunteers; a civil servant), William Alfred Stone (Perth Artillery Volunteers; a cartoonist and civil servant); and Mr. John Maxwell Drummond (a Cottesloe produce merchant). *West Australian*, 27 March 1890, p.3. *Ex officio* members of the council were: Major Stephen Gardiner (Guildford Rifle Volunteers; headmaster of the Guildford Boys' School); Captains Richard Adolphus Sholl (Metropolitan Rifle Volunteers; also the colony's Postmaster-General); Bolton, G.C., 'Sholl, Richard Adolphus (1847 - 1919)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 600-601 and Samuel Mitchell (Northampton Rifle Volunteers; geologist and later Legislative Assembly member for Murchison); Robert Henderson Cowan (Geraldton Rifle Volunteers), Lancel Victor de Hamel (Plantagenet Rifle Volunteers; later Legislative Assembly member for Albany)Garden, D.S., 'de Hamel, Lancel Victor (1849 - 1894)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.8, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp 271-272 and Edward Mayhew (Fremantle Artillery Volunteers; a Fremantle pharmacist). The Honourable Treasurer was Major Phillips and the Honourable Secretary was Lieutenant Shaw. *Rules of the Rifle Association of Western Australia 1890*, T. Bryan, Printer - 'W.A. Record', Perth, W.A., 1890, npn. Quite a number of the men were Freemasons, and well-known to one another. It was, after all, a small military and civil community in the colony.

<sup>96</sup> *West Australian*, 11 July 1890, p.3.

<sup>97</sup> Pilkington later returned to Western Australia and served in South Africa during the Boer War as a Lieutenant-Colonel with the Western Australia Mounted Infantry where he was Mentioned in Despatches and made a Companion of the Order of the Bath.

Phillips, Western Australia's Police Commissioner. Although Phillips also became the new *ex officio* president of WARA, a further set-back occurred in October with the arrival of the new Governor, who apparently had little interest in the association. Looming over all of these developments was the start of the Australia-wide depression in 1891, which lasted for several years and had an immediate impact on commercial life other than on the goldfields. WARA sank without a trace, much like the first attempts to form the QRA and TRA, and for many of the same reasons.

An attempt to form a Civil Service Rifle Club in 1892, was quickly rejected by the newly arrived British commandant, Major Henry S. Fleming (local rank Lieutenant-Colonel), as was the attempt to form a Police Rifle Club the following year. To his credit Fleming, although battling with a very small budget for defence, played a major role in encouraging a Volunteer team to compete in the intercolonial match in Melbourne in 1893. Any impetus that gave towards a renewed WARA was quickly dashed by Fleming's successor, Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Wilson, who proved to be quite antipathetic to the rifle movement in Western Australia. It would not be until 1901 that not one but two rifle associations were formed in Western Australia and not until 1910 that they unified under a single constitution.

Back in the eastern colonies, in March 1890 the QRA decided to support the NSWRA position on wind-gauge sights, and therefore not to hold the intercolonial matches in Brisbane as had been earlier agreed by the General Council. The mood in Queensland was pessimistic; the great shearers' strike had polarised civil life and the militia had been called out.<sup>98</sup> Late the next year and following the conclusion of the intercolonial match in Adelaide, the meeting of the General Council was overshadowed by the continuing stalemate with the NSWRA over the sights issue. Neither Queensland nor NSW sent delegates.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Militia members of the QRA became involved. For example, Lieutenant-Colonel George Patterson, a QRA member and later rifle association council delegate, had been heavily involved in putting down the strike at Barcaldine.

<sup>99</sup> The meeting was chaired by the president, South Australia Commandant Major-General Major Francis Downes, CMG. Downes was a highly experienced officer and Crimean war veteran who had been commandant in South Australia between 1877-1881 and had just returned from serving on the intercolonial committee of military commandants who inspected areas suitable for fixed defences around Australia. Perry, W., 'Downes, Major Francis (1834 - 1923)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.4, Melbourne University Press, 1972, pp.100-101. The Victorian delegates combined experience and youth in two equally successful rifle shots – an experienced Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzroy Somerset Lanyon Penno and an up-and-coming crack shot in Lieutenant Joseph Herbert Eales. Penno was a professional British Army officer on duty in Victoria as Assistant Adjutant-General. He was an ardent rifle shot (he was still shooting at British Army competitions in 1908) and equally keen on horse and hounds. *The Times*, 13 July 1908, p.12. Eales, also English-born and an architect by profession, had been a Volunteer

The General Council meeting in Sydney in October 1892 was the first where every colony's rifle association (including New Zealand for the first time but not yet, Western Australia) was represented. The NSWRA had thrown open its annual prize meeting to 'the British Empire' and so attracted a large group of riflemen looking to win something of the £3,500 of prize money on offer. When the NSWRA matches got underway, intense lobbying immediately began to finally resolve the question of sights. The issue had to be resolved before the intercolonial match came to be fired, as there was every chance that NSW might cancel the match, even at the eleventh hour, if it did not get its own way. Sights, and the type of rifle to be used, had been a hot issue since the early 1860s. Now the issue threatened the very viability of the General Council.

NSW was itself by then under intense pressure, even from within its own ranks, to find a solution.<sup>100</sup> The NSWRA 'held a considerable difference of opinion on the issue', many members feeling at a disadvantage to shoot without the beloved wind-gauge sights. At the first meeting that week, held to see if a breakthrough could be made to allow the intercolonial match to proceed, a number of delegates were absent.<sup>101</sup>

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in England. Now in Victoria, he had won the VRA's Queen's match in 1890 and was a member of the Melbourne Rifle Club (in 1895 he moved to Western Australia). *Adelaide Observer*, 12 September 1891, p.19. Another Victorian champion rifle shot, Captain John James Hanby, also attended the meeting. A solicitor by profession, Hanby won the inaugural Queen's Prize in Victoria in 1881. Hanby later commanded Australia's garrison artillery. The sole Tasmanian representative was Captain Hunt, who was the Tasmanian delegate to the first General Council meeting in December 1888.

<sup>100</sup> The fact that Reserve Rifle Companies (*aka* rifle clubs) had been disbanded that year and no new regulations yet formulated to place rifle clubs into the defence structure also was unsettling for the NSWRA council; it needed rifle club participation in one form or another to make its annual matches a success.

<sup>101</sup> A NSW delegate was Australian-born Captain George Bagot Stack, a civil servant in the Architects Department. Stack, who served in the Volunteers from 1863 to 1895, was married to the daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Theodore Jaques, a council member of the NSWRA and Registrar-General for NSW. He was joined by Lieutenant William James Nolan Oldershaw, who had previously served in the Volunteer artillery in Victoria. Oldershaw had won the Victorian Queen's prize in 1883 and was formerly a member of the VRA Council, but was now a militia infantry officer in Sydney. He was to become the longest serving secretary of the NSWRA, retiring, like Foskett before him, after more than 27 years in that role. The chair was taken by Lieutenant-Colonel Penno from Victoria, as the most senior officer present. Major Kelly also represented Victoria, while Lieutenant Eales attended as a visitor. From South Australia, along with the secretary Major Dean, was Captain Heinrich *Oscar* Esselbach, a champion shot, restaurant owner, member of the Adelaide Rifle Club and later the commander of the Army Service Corps in South Australia. Major James Henry Room was present from Tasmania; he had represented Tasmania in the Australian team at Wimbledon in 1886. Tasmania's Richardson, with a background in education and later Superintendent of the New Town Depot (Benevolent Asylum), had been involved in rifle shooting since the late 1870s and now served with the Tasmanian Rifle Regiment (he later became Tasmania's Police Commissioner and Chairman of its Public Service Board). Patterson was a draper, a member of the Queensland Mounted Infantry and a keen sportsman; he later served in South Africa as a war correspondent. Hutchison also served in the Boer War, leading the 2<sup>nd</sup> Queensland Contingent as a Lieutenant-Colonel. Unhappily, he was hit by a train and killed in Brisbane not long after his return, in 1902. For the first time two delegates attended from New Zealand, namely Major James Purnell and Lieutenant James Ross. Purnell, a winner of the New Zealand Rifle Association's championship 'Rifle Belt' in 1880 (and second four times to 1892), had fought in the Taranaki campaign

However, almost immediately there was a compromise motion put forward by the NSWRA. ‘After mature consideration [the NSWRA] agreed to take part in the match, the majority believing that it would be for the benefit of rifle shooting to do so, and that it would be a graceful act...’ The motion followed: to shoot future intercolonial matches with the sights approved by the rifle association in the colony in which the match was to take place.<sup>102</sup>

A great relief was felt by all, everyone quickly agreeing to the NSWRA proposal. Victoria then went on to win the intercolonial match, on a windy day when wind-gauge sights would have been useful! NSW came last of the six teams competing, blaming their loss, naturally, on not having had enough practice with open sights. By 1894, the use of the wind gauge and moveable sights in matches under military conditions was disallowed in NSW by the new Commandant, Major-General Edward Hutton.<sup>103</sup> Hutton had attended the NSWRA meetings in October 1893 and began a series of inspection tours of militia units, defences and some rifle clubs throughout the colony. Finally, the controversy in Australia over sights came to an end.<sup>104</sup>

Among the range of matters discussed at that meeting in October 1892 was the opening of future matches to ‘all members of the defence Forces of the British Empire’, and a new name for the General Council. It became the Federal Council of Rifle Associations of Australasia, printing its meeting report under that name. The re-named Federal Council of Rifle Associations first met in Melbourne at the United Services Institution in November 1893.<sup>105</sup> By now the Martini-Henry was the standard rifle throughout the colonies, and the sights question had been settled in favour of open sights.

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of the New Zealand war and was a highly regarded Volunteer officer of the Wanganui City Rifles – he was also town clerk and treasurer of the Wanganui Corporation. Ross, a military settler in the Hawke’s Bay district and member of the Napier Volunteer Artillery, won the NZRA’s championship Carbine Belt in 1884, 1886 and 1888.

<sup>102</sup> *Report of the New South Wales Rifle Association for the year 1892*, Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1893, pp.8-9.

<sup>103</sup> A highly influential officer – Hutton had most recently been an aide-de-camp to the Queen herself - he had also seen recent active service in Africa and Egypt. Hill, A.J., ‘Hutton, Sir Edward Thomas Henry (1848 - 1923)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp 415-418.

<sup>104</sup> *Report of the New South Wales Rifle Association for the year 1893*, Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1894, p.9.

<sup>105</sup> A new Victorian delegate was Major Charles Edward Ernest Umphelby. A farmer from Warrnambool before he joined the Volunteer battery there, Umphelby later joined the Permanent Artillery. He was also a superb shot. Captain Malcom George Patrick Hipwell attended from South Australia. Hipwell was a civil servant who worked in the Audit Office. An accomplished rifle shot of the Adelaide Rifles, Hipwell became the SANRA secretary in 1894. Sadly, like Umphelby, he was to die on active service in South Africa.

In 1893 a Western Australian team for the Federal Match was welcomed. They arrived early and practised hard; but to no avail. But as they had no association, they could not be regarded as members of the Federal Council. Notwithstanding this absence, everyone was happy that NSW was back and that it had been a close fought Intercolonial Match. At the follow-on picnic for competitors and delegates, Colonel Penno of Victoria said ‘Riflemen were showing the genuine federal spirit which would crush out petty jealousies and bring the colonies into a grand Australasian confederation.’ The sentiments were returned by others there, including South Australia’s rifle team captain David Drysdale, who said ‘That grand consummation would never be achieved until the colonies took a sensible view of the position, and did away with those unconscionable, annoying, restrictive tariff provisions which were more heartbreaking than misses to a marksman.’<sup>106</sup>

In the aftermath of the 1892 meeting, after fighting so hard for the retention and use of wind-gauge sights and threatening the very existence of the fledgling General Council over the issue, the NSWRA was left looking more than a little foolish. This did not make the attitude of a number of powerful NSWRA members any more amenable towards arch-rival Victoria; despite the positive picnic sentiments post-1893 Federal Council meeting, much unhappiness continued to bubble away under the surface. In December 1894 the Federal Council met in Hobart<sup>107</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Penno raised

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<sup>106</sup> *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Meeting of the Federal Council of the Rifle Associations of Australasia held at Melbourne in November, 1893*, F. Clark, Sydney, 1894, p.14.

<sup>107</sup> Colonel Ashton Henry Warner, the Tasmanian Commandant, was president of the meeting. He had spent most of his British Army career on garrison duty in the West Indies and India before coming to Tasmania; in 1895 upon retirement he became Governor of the Hobart Gaol. He was however, an avid rifleman (and had been Supervisor of the Country Rifle Clubs organisation), and took keen interest in the proceedings. Warner had captained the victorious Tasmanian intercolonial team in Hobart in December 1888. Delegates from NSW included Lieutenant Maurice James Keating, of the Naval Artillery Volunteers. Keating had the distinction of not only being a veteran of the NSW contingent to the Sudan, but also part of the Australian rifle team to Wimbledon in 1886. As a result, he was probably the first Australian rifleman to be popularly known throughout the country. South Australian delegates were Captain Charles James Reade and Lieutenant-Colonel Lewis George Madley. Reade was born in Bendigo and educated at Geelong Grammar. He studied medicine before moving to Jamestown in South Australia as a newspaper man. There he was a member of the town’s mounted rifles unit and later distinguished himself in the Boer War. Burgess, H.T. (ed.), *The Cyclopaedia of South Australia* Vol. 1, Alfred and Selway, Adelaide, 1907, p.288. Madley was born in England. A former infantry officer with the old Adelaide Rifles, he was now enrolling officer for the militia in South Australia. A teacher by profession, he was the principal of the Adelaide Teachers’ College. Madley was to become South Australia’s Police Commissioner between 1896 and 1909. The Queensland delegates were Captain Frederick Gustavus Hamilton and Captain William Gartside. Hamilton was a civil servant and Crown Solicitor; later he became Queensland’s Crown Prosecutor. He was also a long-term Volunteer officer, later commanding the 1<sup>st</sup> (Queensland Volunteers) Battalion. Gartside, like his father a gun-maker by trade, began as a Volunteer with the Queensland Volunteer Rifles but was now with the militia 1<sup>st</sup> Queensland Infantry Regiment. He was a member of the Metropolitan Rifle Club in Brisbane. The Tasmanian delegates included Davies, Richardson and Major Ernest Townshend Wallack. A permanent

an important question: what was a '*bone fidé* member of the Defence Force'? He raised the question because apparently some of the competitors in the match were not sworn in Defence Force members; the words 'and sworn in under the Defence Act of the colonies to which they belong' was added to the rules. Penno was referring to NSW rifle clubs, some members of which had been included in the NSW team without being 'sworn in'.

In NSW, its rifle reserve companies (rifle clubs by any other name) had been disbanded in 1893.<sup>108</sup> The Parliament had not seen fit to announce any new structure to replace them, so rifle clubs were in limbo. The NRA of NSW, desperately keen to enlist some of its champion shots from rifle clubs into its intercolonial team, paid a call on the Commandant, Major-General Hutton, to ask for help. Hutton subsequently requested of the other rifle associations that for this year and for the Hobart matches in December 1894 that the NSW rifle club men be accepted as part of the defence forces of that colony. The rifle associations could not object, but the Victorians wanted to make it clear that it was through their good graces that this was allowed, but only this once.<sup>109</sup>

In fact the participation of rifle club members in intercolonial teams was a highly contentious matter for some members of the Federal Council. For example, Victoria 'swore in' their rifle club members so that they could specifically compete in the VRA and the now Federal Match. Others, like New Zealand, could not field their strongest teams because their civilian riflemen were not considered part of the Defence Force. Indeed, there had been acrimony in Western Australia only the year before when a crack rifleman was refused entry into the Volunteers in order to allow him to shoot with the intercolonial team, partly on the basis that he wouldn't remain in the Volunteers afterwards. It was hoped that the intercolonial Commandant's Conference, held in October 1894, might provide some clarity or even uniformity about these arrangements.<sup>110</sup>

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officer, Wallack was until 1894 Staff Adjutant to the Tasmanian Infantry Regiment but that year was given command of the Auxiliary Force (the re-named Country Rifle Clubs). He later took the first Tasmanian contingent to the Boer War and became Commandant in Tasmania.

<sup>108</sup> The NSW Military Commission of 1892 had thought to make cost-savings in this and other areas of defence.

<sup>109</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 1894, p.5.

<sup>110</sup> In the end it did not. Rifle Clubs were not mentioned at all in the Conference Report. What was interesting with regard to the rifle club movement however, was the relative strengths of the types of forces in Australia – 1,008 permanent, 7,652 partially paid (or militia), and 5,045 Volunteers. This was a decade after the apparent disbandment of Volunteers had begun in Victoria and helps to explain the

A new matter for Federal Council discussion was a proposed Australian Military Rifle League. This proposal had been put forward by Captain Oldershaw of the NSWRA at the Federal Council meeting of October 1895. The concept was apparently based on an organisation in Canada of the same name.<sup>111</sup> Its object, through nationally organised simultaneous matches, was to ‘encourage and promote Rifle Shooting in the colonies, and at the same time to bring the whole of the riflemen of Australasia into frequent and friendly competition and bind them together in the same Federal spirit.’

The 1895 Council decided to ask each colonial rifle association to form its own branch of the proposed League and to bring the organisation together formally ‘into one powerful national organisation’ by the next meeting, planned for Oamaru, NZ, in 1896. Oldershaw argued that this new organisation would practically entail no expense for the existing associations, ‘while the impetus given to Rifle Shooting will be a great power for good in every way, and especially of largely increasing the entries for matches’ at the rifle association’s annual prize meetings. Oldershaw’s proposal was couched in such obscure language, it is not surprising that little action was taken by rifle associations before Oamaru. Only Tasmania decided to form a branch but only after referral to a committee.

The associations in general most probably saw the proposed League as competition to their own matches and associations. Worse, the League may even have drawn men and clubs away from the associations at a time when they were only just seeing an improvement in the economy after many years of depression. Oldershaw further recommended that the Federal Council of Rifle Associations manage the proposed League and this would no doubt have given concern to some elements in rifle associations who already thought that the Federal Council had too much ‘power’. When later Oldershaw was unable to get to the Oamaru meeting, his absence probably explains why the council ignored the proposal and did not discuss it further. The proposed Australian Military Rifle League never did become a reality, at least not in that form.<sup>112</sup>

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continuing influence of Volunteer or former officers on the rifle associations. Neither Tasmania or Western Australia had any militia. See *Report of the Federal Military Conference assembled at Sydney, NSW, October 1894*, Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1894, p.18

<sup>111</sup> *Canada Military Rifle League Circular No.1, 15 April 1899*, Hamilton (Ontario), npn, National Library of Australia.

<sup>112</sup> *Proceedings of the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Federal Council of the Rifle Associations of Australasia held at Brisbane, September, 1895, and of the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Federal Council of the Rifle Associations of Australasia held at Oamaru, New Zealand, 16 March 1896*, F. Clark, Sydney, 1897, pp.25-26.

The next Federal Match, in 1896, was fired at the seaside town of Oamaru, on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island, between Dunedin and Christchurch. The council discussed status of rifle clubs.<sup>113</sup> New Zealand's prominent rifleman Richard Clement Kirk noted that New Zealand rifle clubs were not part of the local defence force and so by definition could not shoot in the Federal Match. This also explains in part why the New Zealand commandant was not invited to be president of the meeting as, unlike in the Australian colonies, the NZRA had no relationship with the Defence Force. It was alright for the Australian associations with their 'sworn-in' rifle club men, but New Zealand could not compete with them if the Council would not allow their rifle clubs in, 'sworn-in' or not.

New Zealand wanted the Council to change the rules; other council members wanted New Zealand to persist with its Government to change *its* rules. NSW pointed out that until recently they were in same boat as New Zealand and had been competing without rifle club members.<sup>114</sup> Now, club men in both Victoria and NSW were 'sworn-in' and allocated local militia regiments. So although the New Zealand riflemen actually wore the defence force uniform, the rules could not be changed for them.<sup>115</sup>

Meanwhile, contentious ammunition issues were unresolved, leading to threats of withdrawal by some Australian teams. The council turned to the 'burning question' of ammunition for the Federal match to be shot in a few days and matters became heated. NSW and Queensland declared that unless a better quality, and tested, ammunition could be obtained for the Federal match than had been used so far, they would withdraw from the Federal Match. Major Joseph Reginald Sommerville, president of the New Zealand Rifle Association (NZRA), suggested they would be 'showing the white feather if they withdrew'.

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<sup>113</sup> The meeting was chaired by Major Joseph Reginald Sommerville, president of the New Zealand Rifle Association (NZRA). The other representative of the NZRA was Lieutenant Richard Clement Kirk, a member of the Petone Naval Artillery Volunteers and later president of the Petone Rifle Club. Kirk had fired in Sydney in 1893 and would again, in 1898. An individual rifleman from South Australia attended the meeting as an observer (there were no South Australian delegates) - Colour Sergeant William Haines Arnold of the Permanent Force Artillery. Sub-Lieutenant Albert Frank Stephens, of the NSW Naval Artillery Volunteers – and its very successful rifle club – came for NSW. He was a clerk in the record branch of the office of the Inspector-General of Police. Major John Joseph Byron was one of the Queensland delegates. Byron was the acting commander of the Queensland Permanent Artillery and later served with distinction in South Africa. Serle, R.P., 'Byron, John Joseph (1863 - 1935)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp 519-520.

<sup>114</sup> Not quite true. In Tasmania in 1894 they had put them in anyway.

<sup>115</sup> In an ironic reverse twist, two New Zealand Clubs – Petone and Auckland – had been disqualified in 1893 in Sydney by the NSWRA because they had competed in the annual Rifle Clubs Match (Petone actually won the match) with some Defence Force riflemen in their teams, contrary to NSWRA rules!

They finally agreed to test the Victorian ammunition and in the meantime try and get some Imperial ammunition from *HMS Rapid*, a British navy warship moored further up the coast. A telegram confirmed that ammunition stores could not be removed from *Rapid*, and so the teams fired the Federal Match, to everyone's satisfaction, with Victorian ammunition, even then some teams still used the older NZ-supplied ammunition. Queensland won the match but Queensland's captain departed Oamaru with the Challenge Cup in hand before Sommerville had a chance to even present it at the prize-giving ceremony. Perhaps the Queenslanders had been insulted by Sommerville's 'white feather' reference. The departure *did* add insult to injury for the New Zealanders, already smarting after the Australians had forced their own needs on the match re ammunition. It was no surprise that they failed to pay their subscription to the Federal Council. In fact New Zealand never competed again in the coming years.

Following Australia's 'shooting star' appearance at Wimbledon and Creedmoor in 1886, the Federal Council tried to develop a scheme agreeable to all colonies before Federation to assemble and despatch a united team to England. Time and again, such attempts were thwarted by a combination of the economic times and the lack of intercolonial cooperation on the matter. Colonies could simply not agree on how to equitably divide the costs and select the riflemen. Was it to be on the basis of population or equally; how much would colonial Governments contribute to the costs of the venture; and how would the men be actually selected within each colony?

In 1891 the NRA in England was forced out of its Wimbledon home by encroaching urban development and selected a new range site at Bisley, south-east of London in Surrey. In 1891 a detachment of the VMR went to England to take part in the Royal Military Tournament. While there the mounted riflemen dismounted to participate in individual rifle matches at Bisley, the first Australians to do so. While they did not have the eight men required to form a team for the Kolapore Cup, they certainly made a strong impression on all who saw them in action.

In 1897, moves to send an Australian rifle team to Bisley again ended in failure. Although money remained at the heart of the issue, the greater failure was the inability of the colonies to cooperate on a matter of 'national' interest. Despite all of the goodwill which existed for such a team to be formed, and despite the endless discussions which had taken place before 1897 to send a team, in the end only Victoria and Queensland did so, leaving NSW in particular to stay behind nursing grievances

real and imagined. Those grievances again resulted in NSW pulling out of the Federal Council in July 1897.

The year 1897 held particular significance as it was the Diamond Jubilee celebration of Queen Victoria. The Imperial Secretary of State for the Colonies, Joseph Chamberlain, had issued a formal invitation to military contingents from all colonies to represent the colonies at the grand parade for the Queen in London on 23 June, and the invitation specifically included an invitation from the NRA for colonial riflemen to attend the Bisley matches from 13 June. At first all seemed to be moving forward along the lines discussed at previous meetings of the Federal Council of Rifle Associations. In January the Federal Council issued a circular asking associations to consider sending a rifle team 'Home' by April. Victorian and NSW politicians watched each other to see how many men the colony across the border would send and how much money they would put up to send them.

The matter was settled by two separate issues which came to a head by mid-February 1897. The first, perhaps unexpectedly was the stipulation by the NRA, in contrast to 1886, that a combined Australian team could not compete in the team competition for the great Imperial prize, the Kolapore Cup. When it became clear that individual colonies had to fund their own teams, suddenly the minds of colonial treasurers were focused on cost. The colonial governments of Queensland, NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia all sent military contingents to England along with Premiers and colonial delegations to the Imperial conference to be held in London at the same time as the Jubilee. Only Tasmania could not see its way clear to send any contingent, given the expense of sending its Premier. So the question of extra money for rifle teams, for some in charge of government coffers, became 'a pound too far'.

The NRA of NSW (the NSWRA changed its name to the National Rifle Association of NSW in 1896), which had started selection trials for a Bisley team, was at first subsidised by the government. When private subscriptions did not come up to expectations, the government agreed to virtually fund the whole team. But remarkably, the president of the NRA of NSW, General French, then interceded.<sup>116</sup> He persuaded the council that they had left it too late and in any case, they were sure to be beaten by the other colonies who had longer practice lead times. So NSW pulled out and did not

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<sup>116</sup> French had previously been Commandant in Queensland.

send a team. French had other motives for his attitude. He was unhappy with the rifle association council. As subsequent events were to prove, French may have already been planning to restructure the NRA of NSW to conform to his own ideas on how it should be managed and run. He certainly did not want, even as its president, for the rifle association to win any prestige for a Bisley team if he was to succeed with his plans.

In Victoria, the VRA despaired that it could afford to send a team at all when the Government refused even to subsidise costs which were estimated at £2,000, although the Queenslanders went with only £1500. But it was saved by the generosity of *The Age* proprietor, Scotsman David Symes, who uncharacteristically, as he was not known for his generosity, donated the funds. In Queensland, the government subsidised public subscriptions pound for pound. South Australia talked about it but never got anything underway, leaving some of its Mounted Rifle Contingent to the Diamond Jubilee to visit Bisley as spectators.<sup>117</sup> Poor Tasmania was just left out altogether and the question never really came up at all in Western Australia. The NZRA, which had managed to avoid paying even a £5 subscription to join the Federal Council, briefly considered sending two representatives to join the Australian team, along the lines of the formula agreed at Oamaru the previous year. But events moved quickly and New Zealand, feeling ignored by the Australians, as it was, decided to send its own team, with a pound for pound government subsidy against public subscriptions to meet the costs.

At the Kolapore Cup competition, Victoria triumphed over six other teams from around the Empire, including the British Army team. New Zealand came in a close second despite not being able to select its best rifle club men, with Queensland a bit further behind.<sup>118</sup> No Australian team could be considered for Bisley in 1898 and 1899 because NSW had once again pulled out of the Federal Council. However, Victoria (but no other Australian colonies, or New Zealand) went back in 1898 to defend the Kolapore Cup victory from the previous year. They came in a close second to Guernsey. By late 1899, NSW was back again at the Federal Council. But just when it seemed set that an Australian team might finally come together for the 1900 Bisley matches, the effort was scuppered once again by NSW, which played a patriotic card:

That, in view of the serious aspects of affairs in South Africa, and the fact that a call is now being made by the Government for a further contingent of troops for

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<sup>117</sup> Their story is told Kilsby, A.J., *Lions of the Day*, Melbourne, 2008.

<sup>118</sup> The story of the 1897 Victorian team's experiences at Bisley is told in Kilsby, A.J., *The Bisley Boys*, Melbourne, 2009.

service there, this [NRA of NSW] Committee deems it inopportune and inadvisable for the [NRA of NSW] to take any further steps towards sending a team of riflemen to compete at Bisley, inasmuch as every good shot available should first consider his duty to the Empire.<sup>119</sup>

From their own report of 1900, it might appear that the NRA of NSW was in fact more upset by the fact that its delegates at the 1899 Federal Council meeting were once again on the outer by objecting unsuccessfully to arrangements for the selection method for the Australian team.<sup>120</sup> The war and NSW' intransigence once again intervened in 1901 but 1902 was to be a glorious start to Australia's post-Federation rifle shooting prowess on the international stage.

In common with the years prior to 1888, rifle matches against visiting RN crews were a regular occurrence in every colony. Usually these matches were held against local rifle clubs but occasionally the British sailors competed in the annual matches of the colonial rifle associations, such as when the crew of HMS *Orlando*, which had been doing duty on the Australia Station for nearly a decade, joined the VRA matches in 1897. Japanese training ships also continued their training visit series every few years. For example, *Hi-Yei* visited Sydney and Melbourne in 1891; *Kong-Go* visited Sydney in 1898; and *Hi-Yei* again in 1900. However, there is no record of the crews firing in friendly rifle matches. And simultaneous matches remained popular, for example, there was a match between the Melbourne Rifle Club and the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Devonshire Rifles in 1888.<sup>121</sup>

The next meeting of the Federal Council, in Adelaide in October 1897, was overshadowed, once again, by the actions of NSW in withdrawing from the Federal Council.<sup>122</sup> The NRA of NSW Secretary, Captain Foskett, had sent a letter to associations in July which said:

The principal reason which induced my council to withdraw from the federal council was the conviction that the council, as at presently constituted, is of no practical utility as regards rifle-shooting; from that fact that after passing an abstract resolution at its annual or only meeting in the year, there is no continuing

<sup>119</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for 1899*, F. Clarke, Sydney, 1900, p.6.

<sup>120</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for 1899*, F. Clarke, Sydney, 1900, p.6.

<sup>121</sup> Anon., 'Marksman who won the Queen's prize in the Nineties' [reprinted from the *Westralian* 1952], *WARA Rifle News*, Vol.24, No.5, September 1984, npn.

<sup>122</sup> One new delegate from Victoria was Alexander Edward Monsborough from Victoria. Monsborough was an old Volunteer and master mechanic from Ballarat who had fired in Victoria's intercolonial team of 1874 and then won the Victorian Queen's nearly twenty years later in 1893. He was, once again, a member of Victoria's Federal Match team for Adelaide. Monsborough later served with Colonel Tom Price's 2<sup>nd</sup> Victorian Contingent in the Boer War.

organisation to carry out the views embodied after such resolution. In fact, the council is virtually non-existent from the time of one federal match until the next ...my Council is of opinion that any joint action of the different Associations , to be of any practical utility must be by means of a "Federal Rifle Association," which will probably come about when Federation is an accomplished fact." The council wishes it to be clearly understood that this withdrawal has not been caused by any action on the part of any individual associations... <sup>123</sup>

There was little doubt that the NSW association was piqued at Victoria's good fortune in having a financial saviour in Mr. Syme *and* at its success in actually winning the Kolapore Cup. After all, it also was aware that an all-Australian team could not be constituted due to the NRA's ruling on the matter. Nonetheless, there was an element of truth in the complaint. The Federal Council had had a great opportunity to assert itself both with the NRA and with the Australian associations and determine the course of an all-Australian selection. But intercolonial rivalries, money, and the NRA all played a role in undermining any Federal Council resolve and the moment was lost.

The Adelaide meeting was subdued. Without delegates from NSW (including the council secretary), from New Zealand or Western Australia, it seemed that once again NSW had succeeded in throwing a new obstacle in the progress march of the Federal Council. Not only that, in what could be construed as a direct challenge to the Federal Council, the NRA of NSW had announced just weeks before the Federal match in Adelaide that it intended to hold at its annual prize meeting a new international team match along the lines of the Kolapore Cup. It would be open to men from around the Empire, with substantial prizes and would be called the Australia Cup match.

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<sup>123</sup> *Argus*, 28 July 1897, p.9 and *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for the year 1897*, Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1898, p.17.

## Chapter 3: Towards Federation

While the newly named NRA of NSW was being difficult with the Federal Council of Rifle Associations in 1897, trouble was brewing for it at home. In early 1895 the esteemed president of the association, Sir William Manning, KCMG, had passed away after 35 years in the role. The NSW commandant, Hutton, replaced Manning as NSWRA president. Hutton was keen on rifle clubs and the role they could play in local defence. Following the disbandment of the Reserve Rifle Companies in NSW in 1893, Hutton recommended a reorganised force structure. The new organisation recognised civilian rifle clubs if they would have their members ‘swear-in’ with the oath of allegiance so as to be *bone fidé* defence force members (even though they still managed to avoid drill).

Hutton had also proposed to the NSWRA in late 1895 that military and civilian representation on the Council of the association be proportionate.<sup>124</sup> While the vice-presidents of the association contained many military men in their number, it was the Council of the NSWRA which actually ran it, an ‘old guard’ of long-serving, former Volunteers and, increasingly, civilians who themselves were often former Volunteers. The NSWRA Council promptly buried Hutton’s proposal, but it would come back to haunt them later. When Hutton finished his appointment as commandant in early 1896, he was replaced by Colonel (local rank Major-General) George Arthur French, RA.

French had not supported the Volunteers when he was previously Commandant of the Queensland Defence Forces between September 1883 to August 1891, but in NSW Volunteer forces actually expanded during French’s tenure. Moreover French actively supported rifle shooting and partook of rifle competitions himself from time to time. In fact he showed a keen interest in everything to do with musketry, even inventing his own targets which he offered to the NSW association for use and donating a silver prize for the ‘Battle-firing’ competition of the annual matches. It was at French’s urging that three new military style matches were included in the 1896 programme of the now NRA of NSW.<sup>125</sup> Overall, however, French’s past reputation and current practice as an apparent friend of the rifle shooting movement put the NRA of NSW at ease.

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<sup>124</sup> *Report of the New South Wales National Rifle Association for the year 1895*; Charles Potter, Govt. Printer, Sydney, 1896, p.60.

So when Major-General French's annual report was made to the NSW Parliament in June 1897, it took the now NRA of NSW by complete surprise. French directly criticised the association riflemen as 'pot-hunters', essentially elitist marksmen who were not trying to improve general military musketry standards for the bulk of the militia or Volunteers. Other signs were becoming evident of growing military irritation with the rifle association. In July 1897 for example, military units effectively avoided attendance at the military matches of the Northern [District of NSW] Rifle Association meeting because the matches weren't made exclusive to them.

French was absent from the October 1897 annual matches of the NRA of NSW. Seemingly coincidentally, a dramatic falling-off in the number of teams entering for the military matches of the annual meeting made it apparent to everyone but the NRA of NSW that something was going on. The military were also irritated by the small prize money allocated by the association to the military matches, but these were just the visible signs of a growing military antagonism towards the association. French's attitude towards the rifle association would have been widely known by his military and political supporters.

It was not as if this was new. Ever since the first Commandants' Conference in Sydney in 1894 and perhaps even before that as a result of the commandants' inspection tour of strategic defences around Australia, the message had been delivered that the commandants wanted service conditions for shooting in rifle association matches. For example in September 1895, Colonel Gunter, the Queensland Commandant, said at a rifle association prize-giving:

He had been told that there was no need for regular defence in Australia – that all that was wanted was a swarm of sharpshooters. ...A rifleman who lay down at 900 yards with his rug, vernier, and box of appurtenances, was not necessarily a sharpshooter...In addition to range practice, they required field practice and field firing, and he would like to submit to the council of the association that it would be well to lay more stress on this feature.

Perhaps what was new was that in NSW, its commandant was now determined to back up his words with action.<sup>126</sup>

French was a highly professional officer. In common with his commandant counter-parts in other colonies, he was keen to raise standards overall and play his part in moulding together a potential Australian army which might help England if the need

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<sup>126</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 30 September 1895, p.2.

arose. But his frustration at the conservatism of the NRA of NSW and its ageing leadership of former Volunteer officers finally boiled over in early 1898 when he established a military committee to investigate the effectiveness of the rifle association. Unsurprisingly, the committee findings heavily criticised the NRA of NSW and demanded changes. These included the right of the commandant to veto matches and approve association programmes, have the books audited by the Government and most of all, to change the rifle association council by having 12 officers directly appointed by the commandant. The rifle association had simply ignored Major-General Hutton's earlier suggestions of the same in 1895; now it was under pressure again. A newspaper war erupted in the press as the rifle association and its supporters quickly polarised against French and his supporters.

The military complaints were many. The rifle association tried to retain its independence; it appealed for support from other colonial associations and clubs. It even appealed for relief from French directly to the premier, only to be forced to hand over the three main military matches and half the Government subsidy to the commandant.<sup>127</sup> When the NRA of NSW issued its amended programme for the October annual matches in 1898, it was again severely criticised by French.

Altogether it was a major rupture in relations between the military and the rifle association, splitting the membership of the rifle association into factions. The NRA of NSW took years to recover from it. The newspaper war in NSW was reflected in other colonies as some prominent riflemen defended the *status quo* while commandants and their proxies put forward reform. It was against this background of controversy and acrimony that the Federal Council meetings of 1898 took place in Sydney.

The Federal Council meetings were conducted in an atmosphere of high drama. The NRA of NSW, already under siege from its own president, Major-General French, and his supporting military men, fought on two fronts as it continued its other battle with the Federal Council of Rifle Associations. Lieutenant-Colonel Olderfield, who led the NSW association, took umbrage at Templeton's calls for other rifle associations to ignore the Australia Cup match set up by the NRA of NSW and to focus on the Federal Match. As it was, in 1898 both matches were scheduled to be held in Sydney and at first the NSW association did nothing to make any arrangements for the Federal Match. All colonies except Western Australia were represented in the Australia Cup, even New

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<sup>127</sup> The NSW Government made it clear whom it supported when it subsequently extended French's term by for a further two years, until March 1902.

Zealand put a scratch team into place led by its champion shot Captain William Henry Ballinger.<sup>128</sup> New Zealand had decided not to enter a team in the Federal Match, however, because several of its top riflemen could not be picked or get leave from home and work commitments to go. As a result they only had eight men available in Sydney, two men short to form a team.

Internal warfare broke out within the NRA of NSW. One faction desperately wanted to compete in the Federal Match. The other faction, led by Olderfield, considered that the NRA of NSW sponsored Australia Cup Match was sufficient to replace the Federal Match as an intercolonial competition. Before the Federal Council met in October to consider the key question was whether the NRA of NSW would rejoin the Federal Council or the Federal Match, scheduled for 24 October, the pro-Federal NSW faction passed a resolution to rejoin the Federal Council only to discover that they did not have a majority within the rules. So they appointed two delegates to act as their delegates to the Federal Council meeting.<sup>129</sup> Later, Major-General French apologised for his absence, and promised that NSW would take part.<sup>130</sup>

Reporting back to a special meeting of the NRA of NSW, its delegates found much opposition to the idea of re-joining the Federal Council. ‘Several leading ...members contend that, as the local Council is stronger than all the others put together, it has everything to lose and nothing to gain by its re-entry to the Federation, which is regarded to be of really no practical use to rifle shooting.’<sup>131</sup> Then in extraordinary scenes, the pro-Federal faction proposed that an informal rifle team compete for the Federal Match. Olderfield refused a meeting to consider the proposal. The faction posted a list of individual riflemen it selected for the Federal match, only to have it torn down on Olderfield’s order. ‘Subsequently, violent altercations took place between several members.’<sup>132</sup> The informal team decided to shoot anyway, as a protest,

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<sup>128</sup> Ballinger and his brother Arthur dominated New Zealand rifle shooting for a number of years. Eventually, when Arthur Ballinger won the championship belt outright, he returned it to the NZRA where it has been known ever since as the Ballinger Belt.

<sup>129</sup> One delegate was Lieutenant Bernard James Newmarch, a Macquarie street surgeon who had served in the Naval Brigade before joining the Army Medical Corps, was also an enthusiastic rifleman. Newmarch later served with distinction in the Boer War and World War One, retiring as a Lieutenant-Colonel. Another new delegate was from South Australia was Captain James Edward Gooden, a first class shot and natural sportsman. He represented South Australia in cricket, among other sporting accomplishments.

<sup>130</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1898, p.6.

<sup>131</sup> *Wanganui Herald*, Volume XXXII, Issue 9572, 20 October 1898, p.3.

<sup>132</sup> *Thames Star*, Volume XXX, Issue 9207, 24 October 1898, p.4.

and came within a few points of actually winning the match, but the NSW association still did not re-join the Federal Council.

Early in 1899 French established a Defence Force Rifle Association with the Governor as patron, in direct competition with the NRA of NSW, and invited civilian rifle clubs to affiliate with it. The questions raised by French about, and his reaction to, the efficacy of the NRA of NSW would have direct implications for the rifle club movement as a whole and consequences for the Federal Council. The involvement of many riflemen as volunteers in colonial and Commonwealth contingents to the Boer War, which broke out in 1899, would underpin the debate as to whether individual sharpshooters or massed rifle fire was decisive in war.

The outbreak of the Second Anglo-Boer War, or as it was more popularly known, the Boer War, in October 1899 did little to dampen the activities of rifle shooting around Australia. On the contrary, the wave of patriotism that swept the Australian colonies in support of the 'Mother Country' actually generated huge interest in rifle shooting. Thousands joined rifle clubs around the country and hundreds of rifle clubs were formed through to the end of the war in May 1902. Many hundreds (the exact number is not known) of rifle club members volunteered to join one of the colonial and later, after Federation in January 1901, Australian contingents to South Africa. A number were killed or died of disease on active service. From delegates who had represented their colonies at the meetings of the Federal Council of Rifle Associations since 1888, a number served in South Africa. Two died on active service. Colonel Umphelby from Victoria was, ironically, killed by rifle fire in March 1900, and Major Hipwell from South Australia died from enteric fever (typhoid) in 1902.<sup>133</sup> Other delegates of the Federal Council saw active service, some with distinction.<sup>134</sup>

During the Boer war, the growth of civilian rifle clubs across Australia was nothing short of phenomenal, especially in Victoria. Victoria was the first colony, under its local Defence Minister Sargood, to encourage civilian rifle clubs and by mid 1898 already had over 1,500 rifle club members as part of its defence establishment;

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<sup>133</sup> South African battlefield historian Garth Benneyworth has examined the demise of Umphelby in his 2010 manuscript 'Lt Colonel Umphelby, Australia's highest ranking Boer War casualty, recovering his history and heritage'.

<sup>134</sup> These included Lieutenant-Colonels Watchorn from Tasmania, Hutchison and Lyster from Queensland and Kelly from Victoria (who was seriously wounded in action), Majors Wallack from Tasmania and Byron from Queensland, Captains Reade and Norton (who won a Distinguished Service Order) from South Australia and Newmarch from NSW, and Naval Lieutenant Stephens also from NSW. As well, Alexander Edward Monsborough from Victoria served as a Lance-Corporal with Victoria's 5<sup>th</sup> Contingent and Lieutenant-Colonel George Patterson from Queensland as a war correspondent.

Queensland by comparison had 500 rifle club men.<sup>135</sup> But the wave of patriotism which swept across the Australian colonies made these figures pale by comparison:

The stirring events of the year', enthused the VRA report for November 1900, 'emphasize the wisdom of encouraging rifle shooting as a necessary element of our National defence. Like the beacon fires of old, enthusiasm travelled fast, permeating the hearts of the people, and we have witnessed a remarkable and praiseworthy growth of interest in military matters. In particular, Rifle Clubs to the number of 330 have been gazetted, and at the present time Victoria possess a line of defence comprising some 19,000 riflemen, animated with a desire to qualify themselves as marksmen.<sup>136</sup>

As well, the war generated not a little controversy as it re-ignited the whole debate begun in NSW by Major-General French as to the relative value of individual marksmen in war and the need to practice under conditions as close as possible to active service. The Boer commando, individualistic, hardy and country-bred, could ride a horse and fire a rifle with equal skill and in the early days of the war especially, was responsible for the defeat of several regular British Army forces. The comparative skills of the colonial mounted infantry, especially when compared to the British regular army, quickly became myth:

Expert in the handling of the rifle, and dexterous in the management of horses, a few weeks training soon fits [the Australians] to take the field, and the lack of regular training is adequately compensated for by their mutual willingness, their enlightened zeal, and their dogged determination.<sup>137</sup>

The scene was set for a great post-war debate, with the rifle shooting movement squarely in the middle.

By mid-1899, the Federal Council made renewed efforts to persuade the NRA of NSW to rejoin the council. By early September, the sentiment to re-join the Federal Council was overwhelming. A resolution to do so was overwhelmingly endorsed by the NSW members. However, when the Federal Council met in Melbourne in November the Boer War had begun. This year was also the deciding match of the McGregor

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<sup>135</sup> *Report of the Council of Defence* [Victoria], Robert S. Brain, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1898, p.14 and *Queensland Defence Scheme, Corrected to 4 January 1898*, Edmund Gregory, Govt. Printer, Brisbane, 1898, p.7.

<sup>136</sup> *Report of the Victorian Rifle Association meeting, 1900*, Paul A. Hewitt, Melbourne, 1900, npn.

<sup>137</sup> Andrew, A.W., *Rifle Fire and the Higher Individual Training of the Soldier*, Thacker & Co., London and Bombay, 1906, p.17.

Challenge Cup series and the first to be shot with the new .303” calibre rifles, making the match a small-bore match, albeit a military small-bore match, once again.

At a ‘smoke social’ for the visiting Federal Match teams put on by the VRA, the main toast was instructive of the mood – Templeton proposed ‘The Commonwealth of Australia’, and ‘referred to the fact that the opening of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would also be the birth of a federated Australia.’<sup>138</sup> He was proud to think that the federal council of the Rifle Associations had done good work in the cause, having begun their federal work in 1888.<sup>139</sup> The other VRA matches were shot with the Martini-Henry rifle, for the last time. The Australian colonies had begun adopting the Martini-Henry conversion to .303” by the mid to late 1890’s. As Australian contingents came to serve in South Africa, they were issued with magazine .303” rifles. A new era had begun. The long reign of the .303” calibre rifles, led by the Lee-Enfield, was beginning.<sup>140</sup>

In Victoria, meanwhile, Colonel Price finally relinquished his unpaid role as Commander of Rifle Clubs in 1900. The Government appointed Colonel Templeton, former Commander of the Infantry Brigade and member of Victoria’s Local Defence Committee and now Chairman of the VRA, to replace him. His duties, laid down in revised regulations, gave Templeton the status of a commanding officer.<sup>141</sup> Templeton, who had been brought back from the reserves to fill the role, relished his new authority and moved quickly to organise rifle clubs along the lines of regimental rifle clubs. An ardent imperialist, Templeton skilfully exploited his accurate analysis of the patriotism and enthusiasm for rifle clubs to publicly ‘inaugurate the rifle club movement’ whose citizen soldiers had now gained new respect.

In a mass meeting of rifle club men at the Melbourne Town Hall on 27 July 1900, Templeton gave an enthusiastic speech entitled *The Rifle Club Movement: a distinct factor in the defence problem* and declared that the rifle club movement was ‘born in the hearts of the people’: ‘The civilian club is wholly the field of the individualistic theory, while the military theory is that of socialism. A good general average is the height of military ambition; individual excellence that of the rifle club’s.

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<sup>138</sup> Smoke socials were usually dinners interspersed with speeches, singing, poetry recitals, musical interludes and other entertainments. Smoking was *de rigueur*.

<sup>139</sup> *Argus*, 18 November 1899, p.14.

<sup>140</sup> The Martini-Henry had one last gasp as the rifle of choice (or rather, necessity) when the Federal Match in 1900, fired at Hobart, used that rifle because Tasmania simply could not acquire enough of the new .303” rifles to be competitive. The other colonies agreed to use the Martini-Henry one more time.

<sup>141</sup> *Australasian United Service Gazette*, 7 January 1898, p.3 and the *Defence and Discipline Act 1890*, [Victoria] Part 1: *Revised Regulations for Rifle Clubs 10 July 1900*, Robert S. Brain, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1900, pp.3-4.

Both are right. They are distinct phases of the same problem, and are natural polarities in effective rifle shooting.’<sup>142</sup>

It was a meeting accorded full recognition, attended by the Lieutenant-Governor, the Victorian Premier, the Minister for Defence, Members of Parliament including Sir Frederick Sargood and Alfred Deakin, Captain Collins RN and prominent militia officers. Templeton’s speech was later printed and issued as a pamphlet.<sup>143</sup> In hindsight, the whole declaration of the rifle club movement seems overdrawn, but it may not have been to some of the establishment figures who attended that night. By war’s end, Templeton had more men under his command than the Victorian commandant. Disquiet began to surface about the possible political implications in this, leading to action after Federation to bring Templeton’s excessive exuberance for rifle clubs to heel. By comparison, in Western Australia, while Volunteers increased in number, attempts to form rifle clubs fizzled out, mainly due to the antipathy or active discouragement of the military establishment.<sup>144</sup>

It was entirely fitting that the last formal meeting of the Federal Council of Rifle Associations should be held in Hobart in December 1900, 12 years after the General Council of Rifle Associations of Australasia held its inaugural meeting there in 1888. The president of the 1900 meeting was once again Colonel Legge, who had also been president at the 1888 meeting.<sup>145</sup> In some respects little had changed; in others enormous changes had come about within the rifle shooting movement (as it was now being called). During the year, two delegates to previous meetings had died. Commander Maurice Keating, regarded as perhaps the finest shot that NSW had ever

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<sup>142</sup> Campbell, J.B., *The Rifle Club Movement: a distinct factor in the defence problem*, Metropolitan Rifle Clubs Association, Fraser & Jenkinson, Melbourne, 1909, p.11.

<sup>143</sup> *Argus*, 28 July 1900, p.14.

<sup>144</sup> Birbeck, D., ‘History of Shooting in Western Australia’, *WARA Rifle News*, Vol.31, No.3, September 1991, p.7.

<sup>145</sup> From Tasmania, one new delegate was Captain Arthur *Charles* Parker. Parker was a militia engineer officer who managed the Hobart Tramways Company and was married to Florence Davies, a daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Davies. Florence Parker was a highly regarded leader of the Red Cross and other civic and charitable institutions in Tasmania, earning her an entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography. From Victoria were two new delegates, Colonel Robert Robertson and Lieutenant James Michael Semmens. Robertson had succeeded Templeton as the Militia Infantry Brigade Commander in 1897; he had joined the Volunteers in 1872 and was a long serving member of the VRA Council. Robertson was keen on Australian Rules football and was once President of the Carlton Football Club. Semmens, a civil servant with the taxation department, was a relatively new young militia infantry officer – later he served in World War One as commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion at Gallipoli. South Australia sent Major Alfred Edward Marston Norton. English-born Norton, a warehouseman by trade, commanded the Field Artillery. He had recently been invalided home from South Africa where he had won a DSO.

produced up until then, died in Bathurst in March while Colonel Philip Walker died after an asthma attack at his home in Sydney in August. Lieutenant-Colonel Umphelby, in March 1900 had also died of wounds from rifle fire in South Africa.

The Federal match and the apparently last meeting of the Federal Council was also almost completely overshadowed by the impending Commonwealth celebrations planned for Sydney in January 1901. With only a partial Federal Council at hand, and with the Commonwealth celebrations literally only weeks away, the Council was distracted. Many of its more assertive delegates, like Templeton, Watchorn, Kelly and Hutchinson, were away or serving in South Africa. Moreover, as part of the Australian celebrations in Sydney for the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia, the NRA of NSW held a major series of Commonwealth Matches.<sup>146</sup> Over 1,000 riflemen attended from around Australia and internationally, competing for over £4,800 of prizes. Overall, the rifle extravaganza was a huge success and the NRA of NSW clearly saw itself as the pre-eminent rifle association in Australia, or even *of* Australia. Now more than ever, the NRA of NSW saw no reason to recognise in any shape or form the authority of the Federal Council of Rifle Associations.

In April 1901 Lieutenant-Colonel Davies, the long-serving secretary of the Federal Council of Rifle Associations, wrote to the now State rifle associations inviting them to attend a special meeting of the council in Melbourne in May, to coincide with the opening of Federal Parliament<sup>147</sup> The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how, with the Commonwealth Government taking over defence functions, ‘to obtain the same concessions from the Federal Government as regards grants, railway passes, ammunition etc., as are now obtained from the States.’ Davies suggested two delegates attend from each rifle association. The NRA of NSW made an immediate and dismissive resolution in response:

That the chairman be requested to inform the other associations that this council holds that any federal council of Australasia has no power to deal with the matter of obtaining a grant from the Federal Government, and that this association consequently cannot see the necessity of appointing delegates as suggested...

The NSW Council then appointed a committee ‘to deal with the question of the assistance to be obtained from the Federal Government, and ... arrange, if necessary, for

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<sup>146</sup> Formerly the Federal Match.

<sup>147</sup> The Federal or Commonwealth Parliament met in Melbourne from 1901 to 1927, before moving to the new national capital at Canberra.

a deputation to wait upon the Federal Minister for Defence...for the purpose.’<sup>148</sup> In other words, NSW felt that it could and should deal directly with the new Federal Minister for Defence itself. The other state associations responded positively to the Federal Council’s request.<sup>149</sup>

The special meeting called for May in Melbourne had a lot to talk about. The long-standing indebtedness of the New Zealand Rifle Association to the council was discussed; the NZRA had not contributed subscriptions for over a decade and owed £55. This was seen as evidence that the NZRA intended to withdraw anyway. Knowing that the Commonwealth Government would not support funding for the Council if New Zealand was a member, the name change from Federal Council of Rifle Associations of Australasia to CCRAA was quickly formalised. New rules also placed the General Officer Commanding (GOC) the Military Forces of the Commonwealth as *ex officio* president of the council, with a ‘deliberative as well as a casting’ vote; while the now commandants of the military districts (the former individual colonies) were to be the *ex officio* vice-presidents of the council, with a vote (and if in the chair, a casting vote as well.)<sup>150</sup>

A sum of £15,000 was requested to be voted to the council ‘to be expended on international and interstate matches, and in aid of rifle associations, in such manner as the said Council may decide, subject to the approval of the Right Honourable Minister of State for Defence’.<sup>151</sup> Queenslander Alex. Ferguson didn’t think they had asked for enough; he was also concerned that Queensland did not receive less in the forthcoming grant than it had received previously from the Queensland Government. His stance was understandable for Queensland did have three rifle associations to cater for.<sup>152</sup> The

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<sup>148</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 April 1901, p.3.

<sup>149</sup> One of Tasmania’s delegates was new, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas May Evans, VD (Volunteer Decoration, for 15 years of continuous service in the Volunteers. Evans was awarded in 1894), an officer with the Garrison Artillery and an accountant with the Derwent and Tamar Assurance Company. One new delegate from Queensland was Lieutenant James Richard Sankey, a one-time school teacher and now successful jeweller in addition to his keen interest in rifle shooting as a Volunteer officer. Victoria also had a new delegate, Captain Charles Edward Merrett. A former St. Kilda Battery and now Victorian Mounted Rifles officer, Merrett was Treasurer of the VRA and was to hold that role for 14 years before coming Chairman of the VRA in 1908.

<sup>150</sup> At this stage of the new GOC was not yet appointed. The appointment of General Sir Edward Hutton was announced in November 1901.

<sup>151</sup> *Mercury*, 18 January 1902, p. 4.

<sup>152</sup> For a time, Queensland had three rifle associations, the Northern, Central and Southern (the QRA). The Central Rifle Association became moribund sometime before World War One, leaving it to the Northern and Southern (as the military preferred to call the QRA) to fight it out for nominal authority over grants and rifle shooting in the State.

council's current bank balance was not exactly overflowing; it only held £4 16s 9d, so the grant was on everybody's minds.

The council was also concerned by a clause in the draft Defence Act which proposed an 'Australian Association' and urged the Minister for Defence 'that action should be taken so as to see that the clause should be altered to embody the existing constitution of the Federal Council, so far as representation is concerned.'<sup>153</sup> The concern here may well have been driven by the situation with NSW; the new CCRAA wanted to ensure that nothing changed which might encourage NSW to become entirely independent. And so the new era began, with hope and confidence laced with uncertainty and lingering concerns about NSW.

At the meeting a number of resolutions were passed. These included resolutions to form a new Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia (CCRAA) made up of two delegates from each State regardless of population; to request of the Minister for Defence for ongoing funding of rifle association and international shooting matches and activities; and requests for the issuance of a certain number of free railway passes to attend interstate rifle competitions.<sup>154</sup> Colonel J.M. Templeton met with the new Minister of Defence, Sir John Forrest, on 15 May 1901, strongly advocating support for the resolutions. It was not until 25 July, however, that the formal reply was received. The Minister proposed not to do anything until the new Defence Act had been passed by Parliament and the new Federal Commander-in-Chief had been appointed.<sup>155</sup>

When the NRA of NSW received in July 1901 a follow-on council letter from the special meeting in May, requesting two delegates to attend the annual meeting of the Federal Council in Brisbane in August, the NSW association responded by withdrawing, once again, from the Federal Council. This time the grounds were that 'with the achievement of Federation, a Federal Council was no longer necessary.'<sup>156</sup> Needless to say, NSW sent neither rifle team nor delegates to the last meeting of the Federal Council in August. Remarkably, it did not even bother recording its withdrawal from the council in its 1901 annual report. The momentum, however, was with the new CCRAA.

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<sup>153</sup> *Mercury*, 18 January 1902, p. 4.

<sup>154</sup> *Mercury*, 26 August 1901, p4.

<sup>155</sup> *Mercury*, 18 January 1902, p.4.

<sup>156</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 July 1901, p.3.

The opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne in May 1901, coinciding closely with the end of the Boer War a year later, saw the popularity of the rifle club movement and of rifle shooting at an all-time high. Despite the issues and at times, acrimony that had marked the passage of development of the early General and Federal Councils of Rifle Associations, the about to be born CCRAA looked forward to a progressive and expansive future.

The first post-Federation meeting of the Federal Council in Brisbane in August 1901 was a most important meeting, an historic meeting, for it was to set the parameters of the new national council of rifle associations for the foreseeable future. The council also met in an atmosphere of uncertainty. The change to Commonwealth control was unsettling for all associations, both in the short term and the long term. In the short term they were not sure of where and when their next grant for their own annual match series might come from. Questions about supply of rifles, cheap ammunition and the ever-important question of rail passes for interstate match teams were pressing.

In addition, with a new Defence Act under discussion, the status of rifle clubs, state associations and the Commonwealth Council itself was undetermined. An early version of the draft Defence Act proposed an Australian Rifle Association; rumours swirled through the State associations that they would be placed directly under the control of the Federal Minister of Defence. A new Commonwealth Commander-in-Chief was also yet to be appointed. Who he was to be and what attitude he might hold towards the rifle club movement were more unknowns.

The nominal president for the annual meeting of 1901 was Queensland State Commandant Colonel Henry ('Harry') Finn, a professional British Army officer and considered to be a 'friend' of the rifle movement.<sup>157</sup> With Federation, Finn was in demand as the weighty matters of Federal Defence regulations imposed on the time of all senior commanders; so his vice-president took the chair. Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Hutchinson had recently returned from South Africa where he commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Queensland Mounted Infantry Contingent.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Finn had arrived in April 1900 after winning a Distinguished Conduct Medal for bravery in Afghanistan. He had gained further battle experience at Omdurman in the later Egyptian campaign, and had postings in India, Burma and Ireland.

<sup>158</sup> A Victorian Sergeant, James Alexander Ross, stood in for South Australia delegate. Ross, a civil servant and member of Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas William Kelly's famous "C" Battery of the Field Artillery, had represented Victoria twice in their rifle teams which went to Bisley in 1897 and 1898. Ross was also a noted ornithologist. Another Victorian with a military background was Captain Theophilus Smith Marshall and Henry James Guinn were also both new to a Council meeting, but hardly new to rifle shooting. Marshall, a former school teacher who had received his commission in the cadet movement,

There were no delegates from Western Australia, New Zealand or NSW. The National Rifle Association of Western Australia (NRA of WA) was just getting underway. New Zealand, ostensibly a member of the Council, had ignored it since 1896. And NSW, once again, had decided to leave the Council. NSW apparently felt that it was big enough and rich enough to go it alone. It certainly felt that it should be the arbiter of its own fortunes with the new Defence Minister. The NRA of NSW, alone among the members of the proposed Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia (CCRAA), apparently thought that the early councils of rifle associations had only existed to promote Federation, or at least believed it to be a strong enough excuse to once again leave the Council. At the August and last meeting of the Federal Council at which the name of the CCRAA was declared to be the new name for the Federal Council:

Colonel Templeton, in particular, made a thoughtful speech, in which he pointed out that the support of New South Wales was not absolutely essential to the successful working of the council, and urged that the accomplishment of Federation was the best reason for the continuance of the Federal Council. He believed that the action of the Sydney Association in withdrawing was not endorsed by the rifle shots of New South Wales in general.<sup>159</sup>

The rifle club movement's relations with the defence establishment remained cordial and cooperative despite a growing and essentially fundamental divergence of views over the 'ways and means' to support the rifle club movement. The appointment of Australia's first Commander-in-Chief would be an important step in the development of the fledgling national defence structure (including rifle clubs), and the appointment was widely anticipated by Militia and Volunteer officers alike. The anticipation was also mixed with uncertainty, for the defence structure at Federation was in some ways similar to that of the rifle club movement. It was superficially homogenous but actually operated with different levels of development and cultures at work in each State.

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was the VRA Secretary. He had taken the Victorian team to Bisley in 1898. Marshall would be Australian team captain in 1907. Another delegate from Queensland, Lieutenant-Colonel John Sanderson Lyster, had retired from a military career with the British Army to Queensland, but was persuaded to start again with the Queensland forces in 1885. McIntyre, D., 'Lyster, John Sanderson (1850 - 1930)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp. 191-192. Now he was acting Commandant, busy preparing and despatching Queensland contingents to the Boer War. Lyster later commanded a Commonwealth Horse contingent to South Africa, arriving there in March 1902. He then became commandant in South Australia later that year.

<sup>159</sup> *Mercury*, 26 August 1901, p.4.

While the CCRAA was trying to organise itself in anticipation of change under the new Commonwealth jurisdiction, defence commentators generally were also looking to see how the Commonwealth would manage the transition to a new Federal army and defence structure. In an editorial in the *Australian Army & Navy Journal*, in December 1901, it noted that ‘there is much diversity of opinion as to its composition.’ Noting that there was a ‘very considerable party which is entirely in favour of leaving the defence of the country to partially-trained volunteers and the rifle clubs’, it went on to say:

In the different Australian States there is much diversity of method in the organisation and administration of rifle clubs. The [NSW] system differs from the Victorian, and so on. The former was introduced by General Hutton, and is, perhaps, the most faulty of all. It is lax and quite unjointed, and the same may be predicated in a great or lesser degree of rifle clubism in all the other States.<sup>160</sup>

The editor may well have regretted this untimely criticism of Hutton given the announcement that General Sir Edward Thomas Henry Hutton, KCMG, CMG would be Australia’s new Commander-in-Chief and *ipso facto*, the new president of the CCRAA.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Australian Army & Navy Journal*, 18 December 1901, p.51

<sup>161</sup> KCMG – the Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George, the next level up from CMG.

**PART TWO: TO SHOOT OR DRILL**  
*1910-1914*

## Chapter 4: The General Sets His Sights

Hutton had impressed many during his first appointment to Australia in 1894 as NSW Commandant as a singularly determined officer. Since then he had re-organised the Canadian militia system, commanded colonial troops in the Boer War (including Australian troops) and been equerry to the Queen. Now he was Australia's first GOC, its Commander-in-Chief. No stranger to controversy with civilian masters, he nonetheless was ready and willing to make major changes to Australia's new Commonwealth defence forces. The rifle clubs were part of his plans to develop Australia's defence forces into something useful for use by Great Britain in an Imperial emergency. Hutton wasted little time in moving to place his stamp on the rifle club movement.

Throughout 1901 and 1902 Hutton was busy re-organising the Australian defence force through regulation and preparing for Australia's first Defence Act. New Rifle Club Regulations would follow. Federation created a huge amount of work for bureaucracies across the whole country as the consequences on law, rules and regulations began to have an impact, including on the rifle club movement. After 1901, the administrative demands on the CCRAA also increased accordingly. An unprecedented three meetings of the council were held in 1902 alone. In March 1902, at a CCRAA committee meeting chaired by Hutton, he took the opportunity to enunciate his views on rifle-shooting at length to the representative and senior rifle association delegates from across Australia.<sup>162</sup> He was supported by Vice-President Major-General Major Francis Downes, who was about to retire from his position as Commandant in Victoria.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Those present included council veterans Lieutenant-Colonels W.F. Longfield and W.J.N. Oldershaw (NSW), Colonel Templeton and Captain C.E. Merrett, a merchant and agriculturalist from Victoria. Merrett, who started his Volunteer career with the St. Kilda Rifles now served with the Victorian Mounted Rifles. Lieutenant-Colonel G.H. Dean, Lieutenant-Colonel G.J. Davies and Council Secretary Major R. Henry; Lieutenant-Colonel K. Hutchinson, A. Ferguson and Senator Norman Ewing from Western Australia, and from South Australia, Alexander Cornish. Cornish, a clerk in the Land and Income Tax Department of the South Australia Government, was also the newly elected secretary of the SANRA.

<sup>163</sup> Perry, Warren, 'Downes, Major Francis (1834–1923)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/downes-major-francis-3439/text5241>, accessed 7 March 2012.

Hutton picked his moment well; he had before him the very group he wanted most of all to impress his opinion upon. The *Argus* newspaper reported Hutton's comments in detail:

At the meeting of the council of the Commonwealth Rifle Association held yesterday in connection with the selection of a rifle team to go to Bisley, Major-General Hutton, who presided, said that he would strongly advocate rifle shooting in Australia. Had such an institution as the Commonwealth Rifle Association not existed, it would have been one of his first administrative acts to see that such a body was immediately formed. **He would be particularly favourable to the association if that body was prepared to act according to his views.** [emphasis added] The development of rifle shooting must be on a larger and broader basis than has hitherto existed in Australia. It must be practised and carried on after the manner and under the conditions that practical soldiers know to be necessary.

He would impress upon all that rifle shooting was not to be regarded in any way as a sport. The object of Government aid to encourage rifle practise was to provide suitable men to act in defence of the Commonwealth, and it was necessary for the various associations and the Commonwealth Council in particular to see that this military assistance was used to the best advantage. What he desired to do was to bring the art of rifle shooting up to date. It was not to be inferred from this that he recommended the associations to follow blindly in the footsteps of the [NRA] of England. It was necessary to depart from old ideas, and to conduct the practices on those conditions which recent experiences in South Africa had shown to be necessary.

What he wished was that the soldiers of the Commonwealth should be trained in the scientific aspect of rifle shooting. The day of firing at fixed targets was now passed. That was purely the elementary part – the ABC – of rifle shooting. A few years ago, when rifles were unreliable and inaccurate, target practice was of the greatest advantage, but with the introduction of the modern and exceedingly accurate rifle something more was necessary. What he would recommend was practise at moving and disappearing objects at unknown distances – not field firing as it was understood at the present time, where no individual knew the effect of his shooting. It was necessary that each man should know exactly the value of every shot fired.

Another thing he would recommend was miniature rifle practice, or Morris tube shooting, as it was called. This idea was of great importance, both with regard to cadets and adult civilian soldiers. Until he was appointed to the command of the Canadian forces no musketry practice was gone through. He at once introduced the Morris tube system, and the excellent account the Canadians gave of themselves at Paardeberg showed what men could do with this practice only.

The wonderful rifle shooting of the Boers was in the mouths of everyone. The Boer was by nature and tradition a good shot, and understood his rifle thoroughly. Australians excelled in riding, and it would be his object to see that rifle shooting and riding were encouraged in every possible way. He was prepared to offer a prize of £100 for a shooting and riding contest, to be carried on under the auspices of the council.

He advised the introduction of young blood into the council, with up-to-date ideas and a practical knowledge of rifle shooting. He apologized for detaining the meeting so long, but this was the first opportunity he had had of expressing himself on the subject. **If the council was prepared to carry out his views, he would give the rifle movement every assistance in his power, officially and unofficially** [emphasis added].<sup>164</sup>

On that day Hutton made his case clearly. A new era had dawned and how the rifle club movement, the State associations and the Commonwealth council responded would determine their fate. Hutton meant to bring change and he had set his sights on what he saw as the old guard in the rifle associations. Hutton followed up his comments to the CCRAA Committee with a report to Parliament on the defences of Australia, in which he said:

The rifle clubs at present constituted in some of the States are organised on sound lines, and their members form a reserve to existing military units. In at least one instance, however, rifle clubs form an organisation apart, which, without officers, without military instruction, and without a system of military organisation can at best provide only a certain number of partially-armed men with an uncertain use of the rifle. The military value of such men as an integral part of the defence forces of Australia can be but small under the existing conditions, and this system requires modification.<sup>165</sup>

In the period leading up to Hutton's tenure as GOC, the NRA of NSW had been largely cowed by the deliberate program of intimidation against them by their own president and State commandant Major-General George Arthur French, who had succeeded Hutton in NSW in 1896. Rifle clubs were affiliated with local militia units and service shooting, with moving targets, had been instigated. At first, the NRA of NSW thought that it now had a friend in Hutton, but as the CCRAA (and the State associations) quickly began to appreciate, Hutton first wanted direct control of the rifle clubs and associations. He would attempt to gain this, as French had done in NSW from 1896, by using the three weapons at his disposal - Government money grants, railway passes and ammunition. He, like French, would demand a return from the Government

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<sup>164</sup> *Argus*, 6 March 1902, p.6.

<sup>165</sup> 'Military Forces of the Commonwealth – Minute upon the defence of Australia by Major-General Hutton, Commandant', p.6., *Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. II, Robt. S. Brain, Govt. Printer for the State of Victoria, Melbourne 1902. Also see the *Argus*, 24 April 1902, p.7.

aid to the CCRAA while moving against the older, former Volunteer officers running the State associations and the CCRAA itself.<sup>166</sup>

In Victoria, the rifle club movement was a different matter altogether to that in NSW. When Hutton looked at the VRA, he saw an association which, unlike NSW, was only nominally under the direction of the local commandant. The rifle clubs in Victoria were actually run by a staff officer, namely Templeton, but who had been appointed by the colonial [Victorian] Defence Minister and former Volunteer officer, Sir Frederick Sargood. Hutton saw a VRA Council which, as he and then French had recognised and attacked in NSW, was dominated by an ‘old guard’ of Volunteer officers and heavily influenced by an increasing number of civilian rifle clubs.

In the last *Report of the Victorian Council of Defence* before Federation, it stated:

Owing to the great enthusiasm excited by the war in South Africa there has been an enormous increase of membership, and the strength which on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1899, was 2652, is now (on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1900) 14,200, and many more clubs are in the course of formation...Members of rifle clubs are not required either to drill or procure uniform.<sup>167</sup>

Indeed, as the Boer War came to a close in mid-1902 and numbers in rifle clubs in Victoria kept climbing, what was perhaps the most galling feature of the Victorian rifle club movement to senior military officers was that the officer-in-charge of rifle clubs in Victoria and concurrently head of the VRA, Templeton, actually had far more men under his command than did the State Commandant.

By 18 July 1901, membership in Victorian rifle clubs had leaped to 20,800 out of 29,251 for the whole of the country, to which NSW only contributed 1,908.<sup>168</sup> With these numbers the rifle clubs had more men in them than the militia and Volunteers combined. Moreover, ‘Templeton, whose position as Victoria’s senior citizen soldier and commander of its 20,000 riflemen allowed him to speak with authority, argued for a citizen army with only a few Permanent officers as advisers, and with a generous number of unpaid Volunteers and supported by rifle clubs independent of

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<sup>166</sup> It was probably no coincidence that stories of rifle club abuse of railway passes started to emerge in the press along with cuts to ammunition grants at about the same time that Hutton was trying to bring the rifle associations under his control.

<sup>167</sup> ‘Report of The Council of Defence’, p.9, *Victorian Parliamentary Papers*, Vol. II, Robt. S. Brain, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1900.

<sup>168</sup> ‘Statement of Strengths – Defence Forces of Commonwealth 18 July 1901’, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers – House of Representatives*, Vol. II, 1901, Robt. S. Brain, Govt. Printer for the State of Victoria, 1901.

headquarters.<sup>169</sup> A report quoted in the *Argus* noted that the acting Defence Minister, Sir William Lyne, had declared:

...that the clubs must be placed under the control of the military element in the defence forces. They would be under separate regulations, but they must be handed over to the control of the Federal Commandant. It was pointed out to the Minister that members of the House of Representatives, when discussing the Defence Bill on the second reading, had emphatically declared in favour of maintaining the civilian character of the clubs and keeping the members thereof free from military drill, discipline, red tape and gold lace.

Sir William Lyne replied that he did not intend to run counter to the sentiment indicated. It would however, be impossible to permit the existence of a body of about 20,000 as part of the country's defences working outside military control. He had not general Hutton's scheme before him, so could not...go into details.<sup>170</sup>

Hutton's first step to bring the Victorian rifle club movement under control was to retire Templeton from the militia and therefore as Officer-in-Charge of Rifle Clubs in Victoria, from mid-1902.<sup>171</sup> Under a cost-cutting umbrella, he then moved an age-retired but trusted officer from NSW, Major Morris Marian Boam, to become Secretary of Rifle Clubs under Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey George Howy Irving, the Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General (DAAG) in Victoria.<sup>172</sup> The Victorian riflemen, dismayed at this turn of events, appealed to their MPs and other supporters in Parliament. Hutton responded to pressure in Parliament by temporarily delaying Templeton's departure until later in the year and tried to mollify opposition to his actions by placing Irving in charge overall.

Nonetheless, Hutton was not to be deterred. Hutton was publicly supportive of rifle shooting, but on his terms. He attended CCRAA meetings in Melbourne but was unable to attend the Adelaide annual meeting of the CCRAA in August 1902.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Wilcox, C., 'Australia's Citizen Army 1889-1914', PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1993, Ch.4, pp.11-12.

<sup>170</sup> *Argus*, 26 July 1902, p.4. For details of Lyne, see Cunneen, C., 'Lyne, Sir William John (1844–1913)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/lyne-sir-william-john-7274/text12609>, accessed 7 March 2012.

<sup>171</sup> Templeton could not, however, be removed as chairman of the VRA.

<sup>172</sup> Boam, who had been in the Permanent Force as a staff officer from 1884, had served with the NSW Contingent to the Soudan in 1885. Irving was a former Treasurer of the VRA and the son of Professor Maurice Howy Irving, first Secretary of the VRA.

<sup>173</sup> The Adelaide meeting began on a quiet note, with the news that Queensland's Lieutenant-Colonel Hutchinson had been killed by a train at a Brisbane railway station. *Register*, 20 September 1902, p.4. New delegates included Captain John Jackson Paine, Captain James Gatty and Ernest Gerald Diddams. Paine, a solicitor and Mayor of Windsor in Sydney, started his military career in the Albury Reserve Corps and for ten years had been an officer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Regiment. He was a long-

Lieutenant-Colonel Lyster, the newly-arrived commandant in South Australia, chaired the meeting. Through Lyster, Hutton sent suggestions to that meeting to consider, one being that representation on the Council should be based on population. NSW, now back in the CCRAA, strongly supported this for obvious reasons.<sup>174</sup> When NSW tried to force a vote for acceptance it was rejected by the Council. Hutton may have seen that as a rejection of his own support for the motion and further evidence that the Council was working against him.

A new executive committee was formed, nominally headed by Hutton himself.<sup>175</sup> There were no delegates from Western Australia to any of these meetings; in Western Australia, riflemen were caught up in the issues between the Coastal and Goldfields divisions of the NRA of WA.<sup>176</sup> Meanwhile, NSW decided that it would now return to the CCRAA with delegates and a rifle team to shoot in the Commonwealth Match. However, earlier in the year, and after years of discussion between the colonies and now States, it also pulled *out* of an Australian rifle team for Bisley just when it was finally agreed to send one. The heady news that the rifle team at Bisley had won the Kolapore Cup in Australia's first foray into international shooting since Wimbledon in 1886 no doubt made NSW wish that it had representatives in the now lauded team.<sup>177</sup>

In late November 1902 the CCRAA Executive Committee met with Hutton in Melbourne to discuss the future of rifle shooting.<sup>178</sup> The scene was altogether different

serving member of the NRA of NSW Executive Council. Gatty, the council clerk for Zeehan and champion shot of Tasmania in 1895 was an all-round sportsman of the highest calibre – in boxing, sprinting, hurdling, cricket and rifle shooting. In 1899, at the VRA prize meeting, Gatty scored 'possibles' (perfect scores) at 500 and 600 yards with a Martini- Henry rifle over open sights. He had won the first King's prize at the QRA matches in 1901 when he was part of the Tasmanian team for the Commonwealth Match. Diddams, an accountant, was at this time the secretary for the Moreton District Rifle Clubs Association as well as a Council member of the QRA.

<sup>174</sup> *Register*, 19 September 1902, p.4.

<sup>175</sup> The first CCRAA Executive Committee comprised Hutton, W. J. N. Oldershaw, Templeton, G. H. Dean, Davies and Captain James Richard Sankey. Sankey, a jeweller and art patron, was the Secretary of the QRA and had been a member of the Queensland team which had shot for the Kolapore Cup at Bisley in 1897. The meeting appointed Frederick William Thomas, the current Secretary of the VRA, to be assistant secretary of the CCRAA. Thomas was the VRA's first 'professional' secretary, appointed in 1900 from 144 applicants.

<sup>176</sup> Senator Ewing did attend the meeting in Melbourne on the 5<sup>th</sup> March.

<sup>177</sup> Remarkably, the team included no less than five riflemen who had shot in both the 1897 and 1898 Victorian teams to Bisley.

<sup>178</sup> Templeton, Oldershaw, Dean and Captain Sankey represented the CCRAA. Templeton, although now retired from service, continued to be prominent in both the VRA and the CCRAA. Lieutenant-Colonel Montague William Bayly, who succeeded G. G. H. Irving as Deputy Assistant Adjutant General (DAAG) in Victoria, also joined the meeting. Bayly had, as commander of the Volunteer forces in NSW, had chaired French's famous committee which pronounced the rifle club men as 'pothunters' in 1898, and was prominent in the Defence Forces Rifle Association. Bayly was appointed DAAG by Hutton, where his duties included supervision of rifle clubs. Irving left in May for South Africa in command of the 6<sup>th</sup> Australian Commonwealth Horse battalion, but saw no action with the end of the war.

now to 1901. The CCRAA was, on the one hand, looking to protect and preserve or even expand its position by trying to adapt to Hutton's view of rifle shooting. On the other it was also trying to retain its independence. It avoided antagonizing Hutton by pushing back to Hutton for decision the question of whether representation of the States upon the council of the CCRAA was to be equal or according to population. Hutton was also asked to decide on the role of the CCRAA in controlling the votes (grants) provided by Parliament for rifle clubs.

In a press interview in December 1902, Hutton again expounded his views on rifle shooting:

My idea is to gain the hearty co-operation of the expert riflemen, so that they will apply their scientific knowledge and lengthy experience to the different conditions now proposed to be superadded to the old time-honoured style of firing at fixed targets. I hope, that by co-operation and goodwill between riflemen, the one hand, and the militia and volunteers on the other; an altogether higher standard generally of shooting throughout the Commonwealth will result. It is small use for a State to have a few expert shots. It is necessary, if we are to have a sound defence system, that the knowledge of and skill in shooting should be generally disseminated, and not be confined to an expert few.

My desire is that riflemen in Australia shall take the same position in the Empire that the cricketers and other athletes of this continent are wont to do. But it must be emphasised at the same time that the importance to the defence of the Empire involved in improvements in rifle shooting placed the latter as a science on a higher level than sport can ever attain to. It is my earnest wish that Australia should lead in the matter of rifle shooting generally throughout the Empire, and not follow upon the traditions of the National Rifle Association in England.<sup>179</sup>

Hutton was offering an olive branch to the rifle associations, willing them to join him in his crusade to make rifle clubs and rifle shooting a real asset and support to Australia's nascent defence structure. But he underestimated the innate conservatism of the rifle associations, the influence of the civilian ethos upon their culture (especially in Victoria) and the almost religious regard with which riflemen everywhere regarded Bisley and followed the practices of the NRA of England.

Suspicion among the rifle associations about the unstated intent and potential impact of Hutton's actual plans continued to grow through 1903. This was helped along by Templeton's continued criticism of the Federal Government's lack of support for Bisley teams; by extension highlighting Hutton's apparent failure to persuade the Government to provide funding.<sup>180</sup> It might have been coincidence that Hutton refused

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<sup>179</sup> *West Australian*, 6 December 1902, p.5.

<sup>180</sup> In April 1903, Templeton issued a public pamphlet concerning the despatch of an Australian rifle team to Bisley. In a typically sweeping *tour de horizon* of the rifle club movement, laced with patriotic appeals

to agree that the Government might be swayed to support a Bisley team at the very time when rifle association opposition was increasing to his proposed rifle club regulations. In April 1904 Hutton even wrote somewhat farcically as President of the CCRAA to himself as Commander-in-Chief supporting their bid for funds, only to have the request refused once again by the Government. While the Labor Government was opposed in any case, Hutton may well have informally given an impression to it that he was not passionate about the idea. As shall be seen, Hutton was also having his own problems with the Government, which became progressively worse through 1904.

Meanwhile, in January 1904, Hutton circulated a draft of the new regulations for the State commandants to use as a discussion vehicle for gauging the reaction of the associations and clubs. Hutton proposed that the associations become advisory bodies directly to him at the Federal level and to the commandants at the State level while placing rifle clubs directly under military control. Once the detail was revealed, opposition to Hutton, which had been building for some time, exploded. Templeton led a public campaign against the new regulations as far as they affected the CCRAA and the State associations.

In a letter to the *Argus* in January 1904, Templeton argued that while rifle clubs were always part of the military system one way or the other, the associations were entirely civilian and entirely independent of the military, noting that: 'At various times through its history attempts have been made by the military commandant to exercise a veto upon the decisions of the [VRA] Council, but without success...'. Templeton felt strongly that Hutton's plans, if promulgated, would mean the subjugation of the associations to the military. Templeton even questioned the right of the GOC to make up regulations for the associations at all: 'I can see no reason why [Hutton] should have been charged with the duty of framing regulations for the rifle associations which are not, and never have been, under military control.'<sup>181</sup> Every single State rifle association took up the cry publicly in the press, and privately with their Parliamentary supporters.

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and highlighting the important role that rifle men played in Defence, Templeton called for public support to raise funds to send the team. He tried to shame the Federal Government which had once again refused to provide the £2,000 needed. These issues were later sublimated, at least temporarily, with the news came that Australia had again and for the second year in a row, won the Kolapore Cup at Bisley.

Templeton, J.M., *Rifle Associations and the Commonwealth Council of the Rifle Associations of Australia*, Edgerton and Moore, Melbourne, 1903, *Argus*, 4 April 1903, p.18, and *Brisbane Courier*, 18 April 1903, p.11.

<sup>181</sup> *Argus*, 18 January 1904, p.7.

On 29 January, in the face of this resistance, Hutton ordered a special meeting of the CCRAA executive committee in Melbourne.<sup>182</sup> The meeting was conducted *in camera*, and was notable for a singular statement to the press by Hutton reiterating his stated plans and saying ‘that many useful suggestions been made by the delegates’.<sup>183</sup> The opposition of the associations was to no avail. On 19 February it was announced that the new regulations would come into force on 1 March (they finally took force in July). They were unchanged in any significant way. Despite the apparent attempt at consultation, Hutton style, in January, it seemed that Hutton was as usual determined to get his way.

By April 1904, the State associations had begun to toe the line with more service shooting matches and more ‘running man’ targets at the ranges. There was even, in some cases, attendance at drill although not with much enthusiasm. In Victoria for example, as early as July 1902, only 100 Victorian riflemen were turning up to drill; numbers did not increase.<sup>184</sup> In NSW, even the Defence Rifle Association, formed in 1898 as a counter-point to the NRA of NSW by its nemesis Major-General French, folded into the NRA of NSW because of the amount of service shooting now underway in that association. New service rifles, the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield (SMLE or ‘smellie’ as they were most popularly known) were also arriving in Australia; some became available to rifle clubs. However, rail passes were restricted to riflemen within a 50 mile radius of a match (much to the chagrin of those in Queensland in particular), while restricted ammunition issues remained a sore point to many clubs throughout Australia.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> *Argus*, 29 January 1904, p. 6. New delegates included Lieutenant-Colonel Nicholas William Kelly standing in for Western Australia. Kelly was close to Templeton and as Templeton was notable by his absence, may well have been his proxy. By 1904 Kelly was on the Reserve of Officers. Price, J. E., ‘Kelly, Nicholas William (1851–1907)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kelly-nicholas-william-6921/text12011>, accessed 7 March 2012. Other new delegates included George Lindsay, Colour-Sergeant Edward Abraham Wright and James McKinnon Fowler MHR. Lindsay, from the Illawarra District, had won the NSW ‘Queen’s’ in 1897 and was one of the Australian team which competed for the Kolapore Cup in 1903; he was a long standing member of the NRA of NSW. Wright, a builder and contractor from Bathurst and a member of the Western Rifle Association Council affiliated with the NRA of NSW, was a member of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Regiment. It is not entirely clear why the NRA of WA (Coastal) had asked Fowler, a Scotsman and first member representing the Labor Party for the Federal seat of Perth, to represent them. The Labor Party was not favourable to the rifle club movement. McKinnon represented the seat of Perth, first for Labor and later for the Liberals. Queensland was unable to send delegates given the short notice.

<sup>183</sup> *Argus*, 29 January, 1904, p.6.

<sup>184</sup> *Argus*, 9 July 1902, p.6.

<sup>185</sup> The cost and restrictions on ammunition would boil over in NSW in early 1905, with open protests launched against the Defence Department and its Minister by the NRA of NSW.

Hutton continued to put the pressure on rifle clubs and associations, especially in Victoria. On 16 June 1904 he met with delegates from the newly formed Rifle Clubs Unions in Victoria Barracks in Melbourne to reinforce his authority.<sup>186</sup> The acting State commandant, Colonel Robert Robertson, and the new Secretary for Rifle Clubs, Major M. M. Boam (Hutton's replacement for Templeton) were in attendance.<sup>187</sup> Hutton, in no uncertain terms, reminded them that they were part of the military organisation and that he expected them to affiliate with military units. The CCRAA was now simply an advisory body to him, the Commander-in-Chief. Hutton also suggested that if the unions were not represented democratically on the VRA, the State Commandant, Brigadier J. M. Gordon, would create a new association which would make sure that this occurred.<sup>188</sup> It was another thinly disguised threat against Templeton and the former Volunteer officers on the VRA Council, which to date had refused District Union representatives a place on their Council. No doubt there was a message there as well for the CCRAA.

While these changes were occurring Hutton's relationship with the Government and especially with the new Defence Minister, Senator Andrew Dawson, had disintegrated:

Hutton was experienced, autocratic and outspoken, with a privileged background, a pronounced imperial outlook and a dearth of tact. Dawson, in stark contrast, 'a hard-drinking, poorly educated orphan', had been a miner, bullock-driver and republican journalist who not only controversially opposed the dispatch of Queensland's first contingent to the Boer War; he was contemptuous of what he saw as excessive military pomposity, and was intent on overhauling Australia's defence administration. A smooth relationship between the Defence minister and his GOC was never likely.<sup>189</sup>

As a result of public criticism of him by Hutton and the war of words in personal and official correspondence, Dawson moved to abolish the position of GOC and replace the role by a Council of Defence and Military and Naval Boards with an Inspector-General

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<sup>186</sup> Rifle Club Unions were essentially a structure imposed on rifle clubs by the Defence Department. They brought clubs in specific districts together under a local administration and proved to be popular. But Defence also formed them to undermine the authority of the State associations. The Central Office of the Defence Department was located in Melbourne until 1962.

<sup>187</sup> Robertson was a former president of the Carlton Football Club and was Templeton's successor as commander of the Infantry Militia Brigade in Victoria.

<sup>188</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 June 1904, p.6.

<sup>189</sup> McMullin, R., *So Monstrous a Travesty*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2004, pp103-104.

to scrutinize efficiency.<sup>190</sup> The processes for that were being put in place with the new Defence Act of 1904. Hutton's tenure was compromised and he was to depart for London by the end of 1904.

In the meantime however, Hutton pushed ahead with more reform. When the Defence Act finally went before Parliament in July 1904, it presaged an entirely changed situation for the rifle club movement. It brought with it a detailed set of Rifle Club Regulations, tying the rifle club movement into the new defence structure of Australia and Hutton's vision of the Australian Military Forces. Hutton had, as usual, completely ignored both the resistance to his goals as well as any suggestions made to modify them. As a result, Hutton reported to Parliament, 'It is hoped that at an early date it may be possible to make arrangements for enrolling qualified members of the rifle clubs as an organised Reserve, so as to complete the ranks of the peace establishments required, upon a national emergency.'<sup>191</sup>

What had become practice in 1903 became law in 1904: rifle clubs were affiliated to Militia units and brought directly under military command and control; appointments of rifle club captains were gazetted just like any other military appointment and to win efficiency payments and ammunition allowances, riflemen had to pass the standards laid down in annual military musketry practices.<sup>192</sup> It became common practice for rifle clubs and their affiliated Militia units to fire together at the range; and *District Orders* throughout the Commonwealth were filled with range practice notices such as: 'G Company 10<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Regiment and Goolwa Rifle Club on 28 December.'<sup>193</sup>

Despite Hutton's falling out with Defence Minister Dawson and although his dream of the rifle clubs forming a reserve would never be realised, by September 1904 it appeared that there was more acceptance, or at least less overt resistance, of the changes that Hutton was introducing. Even the VRA, which had implacably resisted new wind gauge sights, accepted Hutton's insistence upon them, introducing them for

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<sup>190</sup> Murphy, D. J., 'Dawson, Andrew (1863–1910)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/dawson-andrew-5921/text10087>, accessed 7 March 2012.

<sup>191</sup> 'Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia - Second Annual Report by Major-General Sir Edward Hutton, K.C.M.G., C.B., Commanding', *Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 5<sup>th</sup> July 1904*, Robert S. Brain, Govt. Printer Victoria, 1904, p.15.

<sup>192</sup> *Military Forces of the Commonwealth – Musketry Regulations 1903*, Robt. S. Brain, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, p.14.

<sup>193</sup> 'DO No.118, 23 November 1903', *Military Forces of the Commonwealth - South Australia District Orders 1902-1920*, R.E.E. Rogers, Govt. Printer, Adelaide, 1903, npn.

all of its competitions from October. In a sign that not everyone had stopped complaining however, Hutton had to remind rifle club captains in early September not to correspond with their local MPs but rather through the military chain of command. In October Hutton was even forced to issue a General Order to State commandants to ensure that anyone in rifle clubs, as they were now part of the military system, 'were under no account to communicate with the Minister [for Defence] except through him, the GOC.'<sup>194</sup> As far as Hutton was concerned, the rifle clubs (and associations) were now part of the military system of defence, so they ought to act like they were. This attempt to further muzzle the rifle clubs was to be largely successful.

In November 1904, a general meeting of the CCRAA was called for at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. It was to be Hutton's last appearance as president; Brigadier Gordon, the Victorian commandant, was vice-president for the meeting.<sup>195</sup> His tenure as Australia's first Commander-in-Chief was coming to an end, just as yet another new Defence Minister, James Whiteside McCay, was sworn in.<sup>196</sup> Hutton thanked the

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<sup>194</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1904, p.14. The vice-president for the meeting was Brigadier-General H. Finn, now commandant in NSW. New delegates from NSW were Lieutenant-Colonel William Holmes, DSO, and Edwin John Brown. Holmes commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Infantry Regiment, had served and was wounded in the Boer War and led the returned soldiers in the Federation parade in Sydney in 1901. He was also the Secretary and Chief Clerk at Sydney's Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage. E. J. Brown founded the Parramatta Rifle Association in 1888. Brown became a councillor of the NRA of NSW in 1892 and was to be its Chairman for 31 years; in 1930 he was awarded an OBE for services to rifle shooting. Philip Fargher came from Victoria; he had represented Victoria in 1897 and 1898 at Bisley and was also a member of the Australian team of 1902. He was an Engineer with the Melbourne Tramways Trust. Other new delegates included Thomas Pye. Pye was the *de facto* Government architect with the Queensland Department of Public Works. He was an all-round sportsman, interested in rowing, cricket and rifle shooting; he represented Queensland several times including the 1899 win for the penultimate Federal Cup, the first Commonwealth Match in 1901 and again in 1903. Joseph Herbert Eales and Robert Given Ferguson from Western Australia were also new. J. H. Eales, a Volunteer officer, had moved to Western Australia from Victoria and continued his architecture practice there as well as rifle shooting. R. G. Ferguson was employed in the Queensland Patents Office before also moving to Western Australia, where he became secretary of the NRA of WA (Coastal) and captained the Western Australian team to the Commonwealth Match in 1903. Ferguson, the son of well-known rifleman (and later Military Board member) George Ferguson in Queensland, later became the Commonwealth Commissioner of Patents.

<sup>195</sup> New delegates included T. S. Marshall, VRA Secretary and the chief officer of the Country Fire Brigades Board. Victorian Lieutenant-Colonel N.W. Kelly again represented Western Australia, along with Senator Alexander Perceval Matheson. Matheson was an English aristocrat who emigrated to the Western Australian goldfields in 1894, was a strong supporter of free trade and federation and had written papers on defence matters. They were joined by Private Harry Motton and Captain John Ernest Cecil Lord. Motton, a bicycle machinist by trade and militiaman with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment, was a crack shot from Charters Towers in northern Queensland. He had gone to Bisley on his own account in 1903 and figured prominently in the 'King's' and McKinnon matches; he also represented Queensland in the Commonwealth Match of 1903. Motton moved to Sydney in 1905 where he became an armourer with the Australian Rifles, later the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment. Lord, Chief Clerk of the Police Department and a future Tasmanian Commissioner of Police, was also an officer in the 1<sup>st</sup> Tasmanian Rifle Regiment and newly appointed treasurer of the TRA.

<sup>196</sup> McCay was also an active militia officer in infantry and later saw active service in World War One, retiring as Lieutenant General Sir J. W. McCay, KCMG, KBE, CB, VD. McCay would, in 1920, be a

CCRAA for its support while he had been the GOC. He described his command as ‘an especially difficult and embarrassing one’, but also said that ‘few of his duties had given him greater pleasure than in making the efforts to place the whole system of rifle shooting upon a general uniform basis.’<sup>197</sup>

No doubt the council was in some ways happy to see Hutton depart, but equally had come to recognise his strong will and determination to ‘professionalise’ the rifle club movement as part of Australia’s defence. On Hutton’s departure for England on the 16 November 1904, he gave a warm and complimentary farewell speech on the dock at Port Melbourne. Hutton maintained his ardour for the reforms of the rifle club movement to the last, saying in his speech:

I beg especially to convey my hearty congratulations to the riflemen of Australia for the success which the rifle club system has already achieved. I trust that the scope of its usefulness may still further be extended, and that the patriotic movement, so valuable as an auxiliary to the defence system of Australia, may be still further developed and increased.<sup>198</sup>

Certainly Hutton’s role as President of the CCRAA had brought many changes. He was determined, assertive, even aggressive in pushing change through, but he also had a larger world view than most in the rifle club movement were able to accept. The very leaders of the movement whom he may have seen as impediments to his reforms, such as Templeton, Davies and Dean, were the very men who had overcome many of the petty issues between colonies to bring the rifle club movement to its present level. These men understood that rifle club men in Australia were not, by and large, interested in becoming soldiers. What drove them to join rifle clubs was a basic patriotism underpinned by the camaraderie of the sport on their local rifle range. Hutton had forced the horse to water, but failed to make it take more than a superficial sip from the trough.

In late December 1904, with Hutton gone, the CCRAA met for the first time at the Karrakatta Rifle Range in Perth to discuss the selection of a team for Bisley in 1905

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member of the Military Committee which called for the abolition of rifle clubs. See Serle, Geoffrey, ‘McCay, Sir James Whiteside (1864–1930)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mccay-sir-james-whiteside-7312/text12683>, accessed 7 March 2012.

<sup>197</sup> *Argus*, 7 November 1904, p.6.

<sup>198</sup> *Advertiser*, 16 November 1904, p.7.

and once again, how to fund it.<sup>199</sup> The president for the meeting was State commandant Lieutenant-Colonel Percy Ralph Ricardo, CMG.<sup>200</sup> With the return to its more normal routine and preoccupations, a somewhat tumultuous 1904 came to a close for the CCRAA. What remained to be seen was whether Hutton's replacement – the Military Board and the Inspector-General, supported by the senior State commandants and commanders - would continue the 'reforms' which Hutton had forced upon the rifle club movement. Most of all, would the military influence on the way the rifle associations and rifle clubs conducted their business be reinforced, or, with Hutton's departure, would the *status quo ante* be restored?

The main purpose of the December meeting was to discuss the selection of a team for Bisley in 1905 and once again, how to fund it. Calling on the Commonwealth to fund the team as a national requirement, and requesting a grant of £2,000, the CCRAA went on to make an extraordinary decision. It decided to select the 1905 team on the basis of State representation rather than on individual merits (NSW and Victoria three men each, Queensland and South Australia two each and Tasmania and Western Australia one each). Perhaps the decision was made simply to avoid the recriminations of the past such as when NSW withdrew because it couldn't have three men in the team, or when Western Australia protested as it was not represented at all. The CCRAA reserved the right to name the team captain and approve the State selections; an Executive Committee was appointed to oversee the process.<sup>201</sup> With that, 1904 came to a close.

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<sup>199</sup> Delegates included several newcomers. Captain John Lynch, a mining and land surveyor, had been a captain in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ballarat (Volunteer) Battalion. He was also Chairman of the Country Fire Board of Victoria and a member of the VRA Council. Frank Stanley Bleechmore, a long-standing employee of the Savings Bank of South Australia, was secretary of that State's Affiliated Rifle Clubs Association. Ernest William Hearne was a plumber from Randwick and a crack shot with the Randwick and Coogee Rifle Club. Hearne had represented NSW in the rifle team to Bisley in 1904. William George Willoughby, a miner from St. Arnaud in Victoria, had paid his own way to Bisley in 1904 (coming 33<sup>rd</sup> in the 'King's') and came back via Ottawa where he also shot well, receiving much attention in the Canadian press. George Howitt was the champion shot of the Adelaide Rifle Club and had also just returned from Bisley with the winning Kolapore Cup team.

<sup>200</sup> Ricardo, a Boer War veteran who had formed the Queensland Mounted Infantry, died after a fall from a horse while on a hunt in 1907. Crouchley, B., 'Ricardo, Percy Ralph (1855–1907)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ricardo-percy-ralph-8190/text14325>, accessed 7 March 2012.

<sup>201</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for 1904*, F. Clark, Sydney, 1905, pp.109-112.

## Chapter 5: The Seeds of Discord

Although the promulgation of new Commonwealth Rifle Regulations and Defence Act in 1904 appeared to settle the organisational disturbances created by the dynamic but single-minded General Hutton in both the rifle club movement and the new Commonwealth Military Forces, in fact it was not so. Hutton had been an intense catalyst of change to force the old colonial defence forces into a new paradigm as the Commonwealth Military Forces. Not all sections of the defence forces had embraced the change. However, the rifle club movement had resisted Hutton more successfully than the defence forces; the old guard remained firmly in charge. While the internal defence infrastructure and policies continued to evolve, in the background the international situation was more uncertain as time went by. In turn this placed new pressures on Australia's defence preparedness within the Imperial context.

The growing power of Germany had begun to alarm military and naval planners in England. In Asia however, Japan's rising national strength in north Asia had been harnessed by an Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed in 1902. With the signing of the alliance, by extension, Australia was required to treat the Japanese as allies as well, although Japan was viewed with increasing suspicion by some prominent Australians.<sup>202</sup> After Federation, Imperial Japanese Navy training ships continued the tradition established since 1878 of visiting Australian ports. In 1903, for example, a training squadron consisting of three identical 2<sup>nd</sup> Class cruisers, *Matsushima*, *Itsukushima* and *Hashidate*, with more than 1,000 men aboard, visited ports between Perth and Townsville. In Perth and Sydney rifle matches were organised for the first time between the Japanese sailors and local rifle teams.<sup>203</sup> In Sydney, the president of the NRA of NSW, Brigadier Finn, observed the shooting and afterwards led the entertainment of the Japanese at lunch at the School of Musketry.

Notwithstanding the polite relations with Japanese visitors, however, professional soldiers in the Commonwealth Military Forces remained concerned about Japanese ambitions, especially after their defeat of the Russian forces in 1904-1905. With Deakin now Australian Prime Minister once again, he judged that it was time for some form of obligatory military training to be introduced. As Craig Wilcox pointed out in

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<sup>202</sup> The Anglo-Japanese Alliance continued until 1923.

<sup>203</sup> The only previous rifle match with Japanese sailors had been one organised in Hobart during the visit of *Tsukuba* in 1882.

his thesis the idea was quickly demolished by the Committee of Imperial Defence, which saw little actual strength in Australia's forces at that time. The defence forces were indeed also at their lowest ebb since Federation with the total number of troops down from 28,823 including 1,568 regulars in March 1901 to 20,476 including 1,276 regulars in July 1905.<sup>204</sup> The Imperial Committee did want rifle clubs to drill and enlist as reservists, but Deakin's Government did not insist on it.<sup>205</sup>

Bubbling away in the background to the evolving defence thinking was the ongoing debate about the usefulness of military vs. target rifle shooting. In an article in his rifle club's report for 1905, one club man said:

Let us briefly compare the cost and value of a rifle clubman with that of a partially paid military man. In the military, a partially paid man costs the country twice as much as a volunteer, and a volunteer costs twice as much as [a] rifle clubman. In the case of the partially paid men, you have a body of soldiers efficient in drill, but deficient in shooting (A SCIENCE THAT TAKES YEARS TO LEARN). In the case of the rifle clubman, you have a body of men at a QUARTER THE COST who can within a FEW WEEKS become efficient enough in drill to take the field, and who are as a body the best rifle shots in the world. In time of war, which defenders would you prefer to sleep behind, the shooters or the paraders? Then why should the one receive so much more support from the Government than the other? I cannot give a percentage of first-class marksmen in the ranks of the military, but I am confident that the rifle clubman would more than double it.<sup>206</sup>

In fact, in July 1905 a report on the state of rifle clubs in Australia showed that numbers of rifle club members had dropped from 32,883 in July 1901 to 30,242. Victoria saw the largest decrease, from 21,565 in July 1901 to only 16,283, with Queensland and especially Tasmania seeing falls as well.<sup>207</sup> In Victoria's case, the compulsory retirement of the former commander of rifle clubs Colonel Templeton and imposition of military regulations on the hitherto independent rifle clubs may have accounted for the decline there. In Tasmania the disastrous effects of Hutton's military

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<sup>204</sup> Sissons, D.C.S., 'Attitudes to Japan and Defence', MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1956, p.21.

<sup>205</sup> Wilcox, C., 'Australia's Citizen Army 1889-1914', PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1993, Ch.6 [Fruit of a Dying Tree], p.9.

<sup>206</sup> Diddams, E.G., 'Rifle Shooting from the Rifle Clubman's Point of View', *North Sydney Rifle Club: Report from 23 March 1904 to 19 June 1905*, pub. unk., Sydney, 1905, npn.

<sup>207</sup> 'Military Forces – Return showing numbers in the several States, 21<sup>st</sup> November 1905', *Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Session 1905*, Vol.II, Report No.57, Robt. S. Brain, Govt. Printer Victoria, 1906, p.325. The CCRAA was quiet in 1905; newspaper reports even of the annual meeting in October 1905 in Melbourne, most unusually, are virtually non-existent. Reports of delegates being elected to attend the Council meeting were absent from all State Association proceedings except NSW. The usually reliable report from the NSW delegates in the NRA of NSW Annual Report for 1905 is also missing. It seems that the CCRAA had little to discuss, meeting only to determine the final conditions of Light Horse matches and challenge trophies for the following year.

reforms were seen to be directly responsible.<sup>208</sup> However the reasons were more likely practical. Perceptions that there was less ammunition available for practice, increased bureaucracy around obtaining railway passes and fewer of them available, and the end of the Second South Africa War all contributed to the decline.

Paradoxically, in May 1905, Queenslander Alexander Ferguson and a CCRAA delegate, was appointed as a consultative member of the Military Board, representing Australian rifle clubs.<sup>209</sup> The rifle club movement now had a ‘seat at the table’ and was poised to be perhaps at its highest level of influence since it was declared a ‘movement’ by Templeton at a public meeting in Melbourne’s Town Hall in July 1900. Attending *that* meeting was none other than Alfred Deakin. Deakin, a former Defence Minister and three times Prime Minister, was a leading advocate of strong Australian defences. Coupled with rising concern at growing Japanese power and Deakin’s shepherding of a rising political consensus that Australia needed to be better prepared for its own defence, the rifle club movement was by 1905 uniquely positioned to capitalise on the sentiment.

The rifle club movement had even reached far away Darwin. By the end of 1901, Darwin had two rifle clubs, the original and now civilian Darwin Rifle Club and a newly formed Port Darwin Defence Rifle Club (PDDRC). The new club was approved by Adelaide’s Military Staff office (the Northern Territory was in South Australia’s jurisdiction) and it sent from Adelaide by sea ‘41 Martini-Henry rifles and slings and 2460 rounds of ball cartridges’. In April 1902 the club received a further ‘15 rifles of the latest type’ (Martini-Enfields) with 20 more to come. In January 1903 the PDDRC had 41 members of which about 20 were active; the Darwin Rifle Club in April 1904 had 27 full and four honorary members.<sup>210</sup>

Throughout the early 1900s the two main clubs competed against each other, fired matches against visiting Royal Navy vessels and the occasional visiting club from South Australia. They fired at a single target range on the Police paddock in Darwin. Early enthusiasm for drill in the PDRRC quickly faded. However, at the Musketry course fired in May 1904 the PDDRC produced six marksmen and five 1<sup>st</sup> Class shots. By 1909 the Darwin Rifle Club had folded with some of their members joining the

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<sup>208</sup> In Tasmania, militia units virtually went on strike over pay issues. The Hutton reforms struck at the heart of Tasmania’s unique Volunteer tradition.

<sup>209</sup> ‘Military Order 32 of 11 May 1905’, *Index to Military Orders 1905*, Robt. S. Brain, Govt. printer Victoria, 1906.

<sup>210</sup> *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 29 March 1901, p.2; *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 11 April 1902, p.5; and *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 1 April 1904, p.3.

defence rifle club, now called the Palmerston Defence Rifle Club (PDRC). By this time it was a defence rifle club only in the sense that it did its musketry course to obtain the efficiency ammunition allowance and capitation grant.

Meanwhile, developments in the wider scene would have positive effects on the Australian rifle club movement. In 1902 Field Marshall Lord Roberts, hero of the Afghanistan campaign and the war in South Africa, had come out strongly in a speech at Bisley in England in support of rifle shooting. Lord Robert's views that accurate rifle shooting was the queen of the battlefield gained much prominence in Australia; his major speech on the issue even promulgated to all Australian units by General Order.<sup>211</sup> Supporters of rifle shooting at the time seized on the campaign as evidence that the rifle club movement in Australia should, *ipso facto*, be supported by the Government as well with equal fervour.

By 1905, however, with his campaign in England for public support of rifle clubs a relative failure, Roberts began to support a broader objective, namely mass military training. He openly supported a new, popular organisation formed to promote the idea called the National Service League. This campaign also gained widespread newspaper coverage in Australia. In turn this led to a closely related organisation, the National Defence League (NDL) being formed in Sydney in September 1905.

The NDL preached universal compulsory military training for boys and adult men and the establishment of an adequate and effective system of national defence. Among the leaders of the movement was W.M. 'Billy' Hughes 'who...was one of the founders...[and] among its influential supporters and office-bearers were Sir Normand MacLaurin, Sir Julian Solomons, J.C. Watson, Bruce Smith, Professors Mungo MacCallum and J.T. Wilson of the University of Sydney, the Bishop of North Queensland, and A.W. Jose, Australian representative of *The Times*.'<sup>212</sup> In NSW, particularly in the countryside, many riflemen became involved in the NDL. The State secretary of the NDL was Lieutenant Herbert Dakin, who had become secretary of the NRA of NSW in 1904.<sup>213</sup> In August 1906, writing in the NDL's journal, *The Call*, Dakin had called for greater recognition of rifle clubs in the defence system and for

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<sup>211</sup> 'General order 162 of 13 September 1902', *Military Forces of the Commonwealth – Index to General Orders 1902*, Robt. S. Brain, Govt. Printer Victoria, 1903, npn.

<sup>212</sup> Robson, L.L., *The First A.I.F.: a Study of its Recruitment 1914-1918*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton (Vic.), 1970, pp.11-12.

<sup>213</sup> Dakin was to become the longest serving secretary of the NRA of NSW until his death in 1946.

them to play a greater role in defence along the Swiss system where rifle clubs conducted the militia musketry courses.<sup>214</sup>

The most prominent member of the NDL in NSW was Lieutenant-Colonel Gerald Ross Campbell, its first secretary and editor of its newsletter *The Call*. Campbell was the commanding officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment, NSW Scottish Rifles (which he helped raise in 1885) and was also a vice-president of the NRA of NSW.<sup>215</sup> In December 1905 he addressed the Council of the NRA of NSW about the objects of the NDL and asked for its sympathy; the council responded positively. The smaller Victorian Division of the NDL was led by newspaper man and former Victorian Mounted Rifles officer Lieutenant-Colonel William Thomas Reay.<sup>216</sup> The well-known Victorian rifle shot, delegate to the CCRAA and from May 1906, secretary of the VRA, Philip Fargher, was one of his lieutenants.<sup>217</sup> The NDL grew in influence in the general political atmosphere promoting militarisation in Australian society. Major-General Finn, the former Inspector-General of Military Forces who had retired to England, became a member there in 1907.

Despite these developments, it sometimes appeared as if the rifle shooting movement remained at odds with itself. Western Australia suffered the most from internal divisions. The NRA of WA along the coast centres and the WA Goldfields Rifle Association based on Kalgoorlie held only two 'King's' prize matches between 1903 to 1909.<sup>218</sup> Their attempts to work together broke down by 1905 and the two associations separated once again, even though by 1905, there were 48 rifle clubs in the State and over 2,069 riflemen.<sup>219</sup> Finally, in March 1906 and only with the intercession of the State commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Wallace, were the two associations able to put aside their differences and amalgamate once again.<sup>220</sup> It was

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<sup>214</sup> Dakin, H., 'The Rifle Clubs and National Defence', *The Call*, No.1, 8 August 1906, p.13.

<sup>215</sup> Barrett, J., 'Campbell, Gerald Ross (1858-1942)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp.548-549.

<sup>216</sup> Reay had commanded the Victorian Contingent to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in London in 1897 and had served in the Boer War as a major and as a war correspondent. Langmore, D., 'Reay, William Thomas (1858-1929)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.11, Melbourne University press, 1988, pp.344-345.

<sup>217</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1906, p.7.

<sup>218</sup> With the death of Queen Victoria in 1901 the 'Queen's' prize match became the 'King's'.

<sup>219</sup> *Western Australian*, 3 April 1905, p.3.

<sup>220</sup> Wallace was a permanent officer of the Royal Australian Artillery, and commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Commonwealth Horse battalion in the Boer War. A Victorian contemporary of the VRA's Lieutenant-Colonel Umphelby, Wallace had been long involved in rifle shooting in Victoria and was a strong supporter of rifle shooting.

still not a happy marriage. The NRA of WA saw itself as the more senior body; the Goldfields saw themselves as equal, perhaps more so.<sup>221</sup>

Overall, despite a more positive outlook for rifle shooting arising from the interest in stronger defences, 1906 was little better as a year for the CCRAA, for once again the Commonwealth Government refused to provide a grant to send a team to Bisley.<sup>222</sup> No Australian teams competed for the Kolapore or McKinnon Cups for the third year in a row, much to the frustration of Australian riflemen everywhere. In fact on the Estimates that year the Commonwealth Government only provided for £100 for the CCRAA and £1,000 for rifle clubs everywhere. This was hardly generous, although the rifle clubs grants were later increased to a little over £5,000.<sup>223</sup>

The military meanwhile, continued to increase its control of rifle clubs. Threatened with effective disenfranchisement by the development of new district rifle clubs unions encouraged by the military, changes to the constitutions of the State associations were accepted whereby district ('State') commandants were appointed as *ex officio* presidents of the councils and commanding officers of corps/regiments as *ex officio* members. In return the associations were recognised as the 'State Rifle Associations' and given control of the rifle clubs unions. A Staff Officer for Rifle Clubs was also appointed to represent the commandant in each military district.<sup>224</sup> In other States, too, military influence was growing, such as in Queensland:

In deference to public opinion, and the expressed wish of the military authorities service matches were then made a special feature in the annual prize meeting programme, and these matches soon gained in popularity, more especially in the Militia units, and the Volunteers. At the 1906 prize meeting there were no less than seven military or service matches provided for in the programme. These included field firing, rapid firing, and magazine fire competitions, recruits rapid firing,

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<sup>221</sup> Debilitating personality conflicts and other issues destroyed the work to bring the two groups together. There were disagreements over the need for affiliation fees to be paid to each other association. Small issues, such as not inviting any Goldfields riflemen to join the team rushed to Fremantle to shoot against the American fleet in 1908, became seen to be deliberate slights, even though there was no time to do otherwise (and the match was cancelled anyway). In late 1908 the military in Western Australia decided to impose a district rifle union organisation on rifle clubs throughout the State. This forced the NRA of WA to re-write its constitution, but only after fiercely contested views over grants and powers from the Coastal and Goldfields divisions of the NRA of WA were adjudicated by the military commandant. It was not until mid-1910 that the new constitution was adopted and peace broke out, again with the help of the new State commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel G. G. H. Irving. The NRA of WA was at last one unified body. Birkbeck, D., 'The Goldfields Rifle Association', *Rifle News*, Vol.32, No.2, June 1992, pp.5-7.

<sup>222</sup> Some individual riflemen again competed, like George A. Turner of Victoria's Footscray Rifle Club, who reached the second stage of the King's.

<sup>223</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 3 August 1906, p.5 and *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 August 1906, p.10

<sup>224</sup> Cromack, C. H., *The History of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales, 1860-1956*, Utility Press, Sydney, 1956, p.41.

teams snap shooting and fixed head and shoulder target shooting, and good entries were received for each of these events.<sup>225</sup>

However, one prominent figure in the rifle shooting movement continued to show the flag and encourage the development of the sport for its own sake. Colonel Templeton, still chairman of the VRA, left for England early in 1906 and attended Bisley in July.<sup>226</sup> At the annual meeting of the NRA he read out a formal invitation for a British team to visit Australia in 1907 and lobbied endlessly to achieve that end. NRA chairman, Major-General Lord Cheylsmore, understanding the value of a British team brand and in acknowledgement of Templeton's powers of persuasion and high standing with the NRA, suggested that if an Australian team got to Bisley in 1907 then the NRA might well be able to reciprocate.<sup>227</sup> This news and non-stop 'nagging' of the Australian Government by the CCRAA finally drew a positive response with the promise of a £1 for £1 subsidy up to £1,000 to send a team to Bisley in 1907.

Meanwhile, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been renewed in 1905 following Japan's victory over the Russians that year, but this did little to dispel growing unease in Australia of Japanese power in the Pacific. The Victorian Colonel John Charles Hoad, who had been attached to the Japanese forces during the war against the Russians, gave presentations on the war and the Japanese forces to officers and the public around Australia. And by 1906 RN battleships and cruisers were no longer stationed in Australian waters. Yet Australians remained fascinated by their Japanese visitors, and accorded them often enthusiastic and comprehensive programs of welcome wherever they visited.

Not all Australians were enamoured of the Japanese. In February 1906 a letter to the editor of *The West Australian* stated:

Do Australians realise the temptation the wealth of Australia presents to hungry Japan, with her bristling armaments, and do they realise what would be their position if 10,000 Japanese were tomorrow landed in Australia? While ...Deakin indulges in flowery perorations, the Asiatic nations are building up huge

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<sup>225</sup> Jackson, A. T., *Southern Queensland Rifle Association Jubilee, 1877-1927: a brief History of the Association during the past Fifty Years*, Southern Queensland Rifle Association, Brisbane, 1927, p.38.

<sup>226</sup> Templeton was not against militarisation of rifle clubs but remained a staunch advocate of the independence from the military of the CCRAA.

<sup>227</sup> In an interesting example of 'rifle politics' at Bisley that year, Templeton discovered that eight individual Australian riflemen who were at Bisley in 1906 had entered their names as an Australian team to compete for the Kolapore Cup. He smartly stepped in and dissuaded them from proceeding, presumably on the basis that this would have undermined the CCRAA's lobbying for support from the Commonwealth Government.

armaments and whetting their weapons for the conflict with Australia as the prize.<sup>228</sup>

Senator Dawson, the former defence minister, made news in London and New York when in May 1906 he famously refused the hospitality of the Admiral Shimamura, commanding the Japanese squadron:<sup>229</sup>

He explained that he did not wish to be discourteous, but that he would not be a hypocrite, and he believed the Japanese came to spy upon the land [and] prophesies, that Japan someday will try to seize Australia...Mr. Dawson's actions are condemned, but that his views reflect the secret fear of many Australians.<sup>230</sup>

Despite these sentiments, Imperial Japanese Navy training warships visited Australia again in 1906.

Arriving first at Thursday Island in April, the Japanese training squadron consisted of the same three cruisers which had visited in 1903. The squadron made its way to Cooktown, Townsville, then directly to Melbourne before returning to Sydney. In Melbourne a team of ten Japanese 'tried conclusions' with the Kew Rifle Club on 12 May; then a team of 12 shot against a combined Metropolitan Association team and a Port Melbourne Rifle Club team at the Port Melbourne range at 500 and 600 yards. The Japanese lost both times: 'It is stated that the Japanese are unaccustomed to the target practice with the service rifle.'<sup>231</sup> In Sydney, a match was held at Randwick on 26 May. It was a 'running man' match, with 13 men a side at 300 yards firing as many shots as possible as the target 'ran' for 50 yards, with bull's-eyes counting for five and other hits for four. As in Melbourne the Japanese were outclassed, scoring only 170 against the NRA of NSW's team score of 285.<sup>232</sup>

Despite the Commonwealth nature of the receptions and entertainment of the visiting foreign warship crews, the CCRAA did not become involved in arranging any formal rifle shooting program, preferring to leave arrangements where they could be

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<sup>228</sup> *West Australian*, 12 February 1906, p.2.

<sup>229</sup> Shimamura had seen active service in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 as Chief of Staff to Admiral Togo, and later as a division commander in the combined fleet.

<sup>230</sup> *New York Times*, 21 May 1906, npn.

<sup>231</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 May 1906, p.8.

<sup>232</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for 1906*, F. Clark, Sydney, 1907, p.112 and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 May 1906, p.12. A comparison of Japanese team names from Melbourne and Sydney show only two men who had fired in both locations, indicating that for the Japanese at least, no team of 'cracks' had been prepared. One of the Japanese team of 1906, Petty Officer Okuda, had also been in the 1903 visit as an Able-Bodied Seaman and had been top scorer in the match held in Sydney that year.

made to the State rifle associations. International shooting was a CCRAA interest, but clearly, despite the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, matches with Japanese were hardly regarded in the same light as matches against the 'Mother country'. The CCRAA's eyes remained firmly on Bisley.

Anti-Japanese sentiment was again stirred by the *Bulletin* magazine, which referred openly to Admiral Shimamura as Admiral Monkey, but: 'The march by the sailors through the city [Melbourne] was witnessed by a friendly and interested crowd of 50,000....The squadron appears to have met with the same friendliness that characterized its previous visit in 1903 but with less amazement.'<sup>233</sup> Receptions for the Japanese were friendly and polite, but never again as engaging and popular as the earlier visits. Although Japanese squadrons visited Australia again in 1910 and 1912, attitudes towards the Japanese were changing, as suspicions of its power and intentions continue to grow in isolated Australia.

During 1906 the wider defence debate also continued and it would have a direct impact on the rifle club movement. As calls for compulsory military service of school boys and men grew in England, so did they grow in Australia. In August the Committee of Imperial Defence in London made a number of suggestions for the organisation of defence in Australia. One of these was to formally affiliate rifle clubs to militia units. This was later rejected by Australia's Military Board, but as a result of Alex. Ferguson's advocacy, it was announced in November that captains of rifle clubs could apply for militia commissions as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants on a ratio of 1:100 to rifle club members in the State of origin.<sup>234</sup> On 28 September 1906 Deakin made a major speech following up on the Imperial Committee's recommendations. While it focused on naval defence, the speech further set the scene for an intense debate on defence measures.

By late December 1906, when the Commonwealth matches were conducted at Launceston in Tasmania and the CCRAA met for its annual meeting there, it seemed that situation for the rifle club movement had changed for the better. The meeting was

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<sup>233</sup> Sissons, D.C.S., 'Attitudes to Japan and Defence', MA thesis, University of Melbourne, 1956, p.46.

<sup>234</sup> 'General Order 299 of 11 December 1906', *Military Forces of the Commonwealth – General Orders for 1906*, Robt.S. brain, Govt. Printer Victoria, 1907, npn. Not everyone were impressed: 'In the event of active service, the rifle clubs would act largely as sharp-shooters, and would probably be left much to their own devices as regards rifle equipment. Bearing in mind the weird contrivances that occasionally make their appearance on the range, an inspection of a commando in battle array, would be largely reminiscent of the Marquis of Worcester's "Century of Inventions." - Leslie, A.G., *Rifle Sketches*, Author's Edition, George Robinson & Co. Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1906, p.105.

chaired by Major-General J. C. Hoad, CMG, the new Inspector-General.<sup>235</sup> There were no delegates or rifle team from Western Australia that year, a fall-out from the ongoing issues between the two rifle associations there. Bisley dominated the discussions. Before the meeting began, an announcement had been made by the NRA that it intended to send a team to Australia in October 1907. Suddenly new life was breathed into the CCRAA, which not only had to send a team to Bisley in 1907 but also host a British team in Australia.

1907 was to be another extremely busy and complex year for the rifle shooting movement and the CCRAA. With the Government supporting the costs of the team for Bisley to the tune of £1,000, it proved relatively easy to raise the other £1,000 through public subscription, with most funds coming from riflemen in the various States. The selection of the team was made over the protest of some who pointed out the inherent weakness of a team based on population rather than other measures. For example, Western Australia had more rifle clubs than South Australia, but was only allowed one rifleman on the team against two from South Australia. Nonetheless, the team was sent overseas in good time.<sup>236</sup>

The Australian team at Bisley, lead by Theodore Stanley Marshall, the new CCRAA Secretary, was superbly successful. It tied with Britain in the Kolapore Cup competition on 12 July 1907 with a record score of 778. Individually the men also won a wide range of prizes (totalling £1,400), and trophies. Lieutenant Walter Colman Addison from South Australia's Orroroo Rifle Club and a member of the local squadron of the 17<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment, also famously became the first Australian ever to win the coveted King's Prize, news of which galvanised Australian riflemen and the public.

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<sup>235</sup> The vice-president was the Tasmanian State commandant Colonel Henry Douglas MacKenzie, MacKenzie had started his military career in the RN, had transitioned to a successful career as a staff officer with the NSW forces, and went to the Soudan with that colony's contingent as Brigade-Major in 1885. He became State commandant of Tasmania in 1904. A new delegate at the meeting was George Shaw. English-born Shaw was one of Queensland's best rifle shots – he represented Queensland several times in Federal and Commonwealth Match teams, had won the State associations' 'Queen's' and 'King's' three times in succession from 1899, and represented Australia at Bisley in 1902 and 1907. Other first time delegates included the now Captain Dakin, secretary since 1904 of the NRA of NSW and Lieutenant Oliver Lambert Alan Burford, ANF, from Victoria. Burford had joined the Victorian colonial navy in 1881 and in 1900 was attached to HMS *Phoenix*, in active voluntary service in connection with the Boxer rebellion in China. During World War One he was to serve as naval transport officer at various ports with the RAN.

<sup>236</sup> The 1907 team had a number of 'Reservists' riflemen attached. Among them were William Todd and Joseph Grummett, members of the Victorian 1897 and 1898 Kolopore Cup teams as well as the Australian 1902 and 1903 teams. They were no doubt saddened to hear on arrival in England of the death of Colonel P. R. Ricardo, the Victorian Commandant, in early June, as well as the death of Colonel Kelly, who also died in June 1907.

<sup>237</sup> These successes meant that when the CCRAA executive committee met again in July to call on the defence minister, Senator Thomas Ewing, and ask for Commonwealth assistance in the matter of hosting the British rifle team due out in October, the Government responded promptly with a grant of £1,000.

After the Bisley matches, both Australian and British teams went to Canada to compete for the Palma Trophy. Fired at the military range next to the Ottawa River at Rockcliffe, near Ottawa on 7 September 1907, the Australians found themselves outclassed by the Americans and Canadians, although coming in before the British and with Addison top-scoring for the team.<sup>238</sup> The British and Australian teams then traversed Canada to embark together from Vancouver for Australia, disembarking in Brisbane in October 1907.

There was much excitement surrounding the visit by the British team. Here was vindication that the Britishers felt highly enough of the Australian rifle shooting movement that it would actually send a team out to compete in Australia. A special match was designed to honour the occasion. The Empire Match was to be fired over 28 and 29 October against Britain and NZ during the NRA of NSW programme in Sydney. After participating in the QRA annual matches in Brisbane and observing the Commonwealth Match, won by South Australia, the British team then went to Sydney to practice for the Empire Match.

The CCRAA also met in Brisbane in October, 1907. Major-General Hoad, now Australia's most senior military officer, again presided over the meeting; Colonel Lyster, the Queensland State commandant, was vice-president.<sup>239</sup> Also present at the council meeting was Commander Samuel Augustus Pethebridge, the acting secretary of defence and a former commander of the Queensland Naval Brigade.<sup>240</sup> The Council meeting agreed to Military Board suggestions for the Light Horse trophy matches.

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<sup>237</sup> *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia*, F. Clarke, Sydney, 1907, pp.18-30.

<sup>238</sup> Cheshire, C.C.C., *The History and Records of the Palma Match (The World Long Range Rifle Team Championships)*, Oxonian Rewly Press Ltd., England, 1992, pp.4.96-97

<sup>239</sup> A returning delegate was Lieutenant-Colonel John William Castine. Castine, a MP in South Australia, had competed in England in 1882 at his own expense, represented South Australia at the original General Council of 1888, and had been appointed Inspector of Rifle Clubs in the colony in 1897. Other newcomers included Lieutenant Frederick Charles Curwood, a law clerk from Kalgoorlie and a new officer with the Goldfields Infantry Regiment – he moved to NSW in 1911. Lieutenant Harry Edward Mills, the treasurer of the NRA of NSW, was also new; he was to be made a life member of the NRA of NSW when he retired due to ill-health in 1917. Captain James Michael Semmens, a civil servant with the Victorian taxation department and a long-serving member of the VRA and Militia infantry, stood in for Templeton, who was ill - Templeton was ailing, and never returned to a CCRAA meeting

<sup>240</sup> Pethebridge was Acting Defence Secretary from 1906-1910, and author of a 'Memorandum on the Proposed Organisation of a National Guard' in 1907, which did not recognise rifle clubs.

After an unsteady start to this new and costly competition it was agreed that the Prince of Wales Trophy would be shot for on a State by State basis, in each State in turn in conjunction with the Commonwealth Match for that State, starting with South Australia in 1908. The Hutton Trophy Match would also be conducted in the same manner, except that it would begin with Queensland in 1908. Both matches were to be handed to State commandants to manage; the CCRAA did not want to be seen to be simply managing service shooting for the Militia.<sup>241</sup>

In contrast to the State rifle associations, among other matters the CCRAA council agreed to were changes to its constitution and regulations which *dispensed* with the *ex-officio* military president and vice-president, and allowed for a chairman to be elected from within the State association representatives on Council. It was an interesting move at the very time when military control and interest in rifle shooting was on the increase, and in effect paved the way for non-military members of State rifle association councils to be more influential. At the very least, it was a move designed to retain the independence of the CCRAA; it was perhaps no coincidence that Templeton was voted in again as chairman for 1908.

Attention then shifted to the Empire Match. Held at Randwick rifle range, the match, 'for supremacy in the British rifle shooting world' and 'the shooting match of the year', had been designed by Colonel Templeton.<sup>242</sup> The prize was a Challenge Shield (not yet designed or purchased) and the match was held for teams of eight over two days with 10 shots at each 200, 500 and 600 yards on day one and the same at 800, 900 and 1,000 yards on day two. The Empire Match was won by Australia, with NZ second and Great Britain third; the Australian team was a notable one and contained among the best shots ever produced by Australia.<sup>243</sup> But the *Advertiser* thought that 'the finish was no more exciting than a steeplechase with all the horses down but one'.<sup>244</sup> Later, there was criticism by a State Commandant that 'on the occasion of the most important rifle match ever held in Australia, there was only a sparse attendance by the

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<sup>241</sup> *Nineteenth Annual Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia*, F. Clarke, Sydney, 1907, pp.12-16.

<sup>242</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association for New South Wales for 1907*, F. Clarke, Sydney 1907, p.33.

<sup>243</sup> Anon., 'History of the Empire Match' [reprinted from the 1984 Great Britain Team Souvenir programme], *Australian Rifleman*, Vol.6, No.2, May-June 1984, p.20.

<sup>244</sup> *Advertiser*, 30 October 1907, p.7.

public. The people would, however, have crowded to a cricket match if an English eleven had been present'. Even the champions of Bisley could not draw a crowd.<sup>245</sup>

The British team left Australia in late November after a series of individual matches in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia, including in some country centres. It was a highly successful year and everybody was very pleased. Deakin wrote to the Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun: 'In no previous year has such general interest been taken in rifle shooting in the several States and the result of the visit of a team of such renowned shots cannot fail to be of great value generally to our Military Forces including the Rifle Clubs of Australia...the National Defence of the Empire will thereby be largely benefitted.'<sup>246</sup> The British team left, but not before comparing the Australians to the Americans who had won the Palma Match in Canada: 'phenomenal shooting, phenomenal men, phenomenal rifles, and phenomenal organisation. America had reduced rifle shooting to a fine art'.<sup>247</sup> As the Australians were soon to discover, if the British were tough opponents on the rifle range, the Americans were certainly to be no push-over.

While the CCRAA was looking inwards, despite the international flavour of its endeavours, the defence debate in Australia was developing apace. 1907 had seen the Army Council in Britain write to the NRA, 'expressing new views as to the manner in which rifle shooting should be practiced in regard to training for war':

Deliberate shooting at bull's eye targets was regarded as of little use and treated as an elementary practice, not to be continued after the first three years of the soldier's service, from which time the firing was to be of the nature of snap shooting or rapid fire, or at advancing or crossing targets, and sometimes at unknown distances. It was laid down that too much importance must not be attached to unequal conditions as between competitors, and that the element of chance must be accepted. And it was announced that these principles were intended to govern the conditions of all Meetings towards which assistance was given from Public Funds. Except in so far as this pronouncement came from an authority which had it in its power virtually to ruin the Bisley meeting, its contents did not inspire profound respect among the members of the [NSW] Association,

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<sup>245</sup> The British team refused to fire matches against individual States as a team, and instead sent detachments to Bathurst (the Cutler's home town) in NSW and Hamilton and Bendigo in Victoria. Even when the team visited Tasmania, Victoria and South Australia in turn, it was to take part in individual matches. The team was officially welcomed by the Minister for Defence in Melbourne, and everywhere they went, they were entertained and feted. The British team departed for England on 28 November 1907. *Report of the National Rifle Association for New South Wales for 1907*, F. Clarke, Sydney 1907, p.33.

<sup>246</sup> Letter PM Deakin to Governor General Lord Northcote 26 November 1907, Series A6662, National Archives of Australia.

<sup>247</sup> *West Australian*, 12 November 1907, p.7.

who had been accustomed to regard the military authorities as wanting in serious interest in rifle shooting and indeed as having no great knowledge of the subject.<sup>248</sup>

A lively public debate quickly sprung up about the subject, amplifying earlier public interchanges on the subject since the 1890s and even before that. A Militia officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Hubert John Foster, later Director of Science at the University of Sydney, wrote a series of articles for the NDL in *The Call*. Foster stated that the effect of rifle clubs ‘in forming soldiers for war will be seen to be but slight, if the conditions attending shooting in battle are analysed, and there will be reason to believe that their military utility has been greatly overrated’, that ‘good individual shooting is useless in battle’, and that ‘the citizen need not waste time in trying to become a good shot, in order to become an effective defender of his country.’<sup>249</sup>

Naturally these statements evoked a quick response from rifle shooting supporters. The debate between the military men who wanted the rifle club men to toe the military line and drill in camps with the militia as well as adhere to military thinking on rifle shooting continued apace. Rifle associations continued to resist calls by military men to replace ‘pastime’ shooting at fixed targets at known ranges with ‘service shooting’, not because they did not believe service shooting was important, but because they knew riflemen would not join clubs if they did. In short, revenue was a large motivator in retaining ‘pastime shooting’, putting aside the very good reasons rifle men put forward to counter the military views on how to best teach recruits how to shoot. One thing the rifle associations and the military absolutely agreed in was the need to introduce compulsory military service.

Despite these disagreements over the methods and purposes of the rifle clubs, or perhaps because of the rising public knowledge of and interest in, national defence matters, membership of rifle clubs was on the rise again. By early 1908 Deakin’s proposal for a National Guard and three years of military training for every able-bodied male citizen, preceded by service with the cadets where boys would learn the fundamentals of military life like drill and rifle shooting, was beginning to take shape. It would take several years of debate and legislation before the final version of universal

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<sup>248</sup> Humphry, A. P., Fremantle, T.F. et al, *History of the National Rifle Association during its first fifty years, 1859 to 1909*, Bowes & Bowes, London, 1914, pp.463-465.

<sup>249</sup> Foster, H.J., ‘The Battle Value of Good Rifle Shooting’, *The Call: Journal of the Australian National Defence League*, No.4, May 1907, pp.5-10.

military training became a reality, but sentiment in support of such a scheme was growing fast.

With the Labor Party's White Australia policy (designed to keep jobs in Australian hands) in place, it was also recognised that such a policy potentially courted attack from those it was aimed at, namely the Chinese and especially the Japanese. A robust Australian defence was essential if Australia was to be kept white. Men who could not join the militia should join rifle clubs. Regardless of what the military men wanted from rifle clubs, the politicians just wanted numbers, and cheap numbers, at that.

By 30 June 1907, there were 42,890 rifle club men; at the beginning of 1908, there were 880 rifle clubs with 45,293 members. But as Hoad noted in his first annual report as Inspector-General, delivered in March 1908, only 60 per cent of riflemen had completed their musketry course in 1907, indicating that aversion to military regulations was as strong as ever.<sup>250</sup> As many rifle club men, perhaps a significant number, had seen military service either as Volunteers, as militia or in South Africa, it is not surprising that they were not convinced that they needed drill to become efficient riflemen. While military men believed rifle fire by infantry should be massed and directed fire, riflemen argued that it was the individual sharp shooter who could determine infantry success in battle. Military men believed that riflemen must be able to manoeuvre to bring to bear their rifle fire at the critical point of the battlefield. On the other hand, the rifle club men believed that drill was unnecessary, or at least just not as important as rifle shooting skills.

Outside of this debate, recognition grew nonetheless that a compulsory scheme was required; the school cadet movement was boosted and in early 1908 Earl Roberts in England introduced an Imperial [Empire-wide] cadet rifle shooting scheme, which Australia enthusiastically supported.<sup>251</sup> In fact 1908 saw a spate of Empire styled matches. These included the Lord Roberts Cup for the school cadets, an Empire Postal Services match, and the *Daily Mail's* Empire Trophy, competed for by nearly 2,000 rifle clubs around the world, in which Australian rifle clubs figured prominently. Even the military got involved with an Empire-wide competition for teams of 40, the

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<sup>250</sup> *Year Book Australia*, No.1, Section 28, Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics Canberra, 1908, p.889 and the *Advertiser*, 20 March 1908, p.6.

<sup>251</sup> Stockings, C.A.J., *The Torch and the Sword*, UNSW Press, Sydney 2007, p.51.

inaugural Schumacher Cup, named after its proposer Lieutenant-Colonel Schumacher of South Africa. In the first competition it was won by a Ballarat militia regiment.

At the national level, it was a different story. There was no Empire Match in 1908 and in July 1908 when the Bisley competitions got underway, an Australian team did not participate. Meanwhile, the 1908 Olympics, held that year in London, saw rifle shooting introduced as a sport for the first time. Sergeant Sidney A. Green from the Australian Rifle Regiment in Sydney, competing as his regiment's representative at Bisley that year, was put forward as a possible contender. But in the end it appeared that only one Australian had competed, a William Hill, in three small-bore competitions. Although entries had been made for other matches, no-one came forward on the day. No formal record of Green's participation has been found despite claims that he had competed. Perhaps his score was simply too low to make the official history.<sup>252</sup>

Back in Australia, the lively and often heated newspaper war continued across Australia between correspondents writing for and against the rifle club approach to rifle shooting. This was no small matter. Military writers universally sneered at the rifle club men and their target shooting; the rifle club writers sneered at the militia's apathy and lack of skill with the rifle. Everyone fretted about defence matters, with hundreds of columns and letters to the editor that year. State commandants urged riflemen to attend camps of training with the militia; very few did. In Melbourne, after three attempts, 730 men paraded at Williamstown; in Ballarat only 150 of over 1,600 riflemen in the district turned up.<sup>253</sup>

In Western Australia the State commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Haviland Le Mesurier, got into such a state of frustrated angst with the attitudes of the two rifle associations there towards service condition shooting that he formed his own Military Rifle Association, emulating the DFRA formed by French in NSW in 1898.<sup>254</sup> It was rumoured that when Le Mesurier left suddenly to take up a new post in NSW in 1909, it was because he had been forced out by the many complaints about him, not least by the rifle associations.<sup>255</sup> The fact that he was replaced by Colonel G. G. H. Irving, with his

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<sup>252</sup> Cook, T.A., *The Fourth Olympiad being the Official Report – The Olympic Games 1908*, British Olympics Association, London, 1908, pp.254-283. It is not known whether Hill was a formal member of the combined Australian-New Zealand team. He was noted in 1910 as a vice-president of the Victorian Amateur Athletics Association.

<sup>253</sup> *Argus*, 13 April 1908, p.9 and 11 May 1908, p.5.

<sup>254</sup> *West Australian*, 29 January 1909, p.9.

<sup>255</sup> Le Mesurier was a native of Western Australia, but had been commissioned into the British Army (Artillery) before a series of appointments in NSW. He commanded the NSW Imperial Bushmen

impeccable rifle shooting pedigree, was seen as evidence of this. Meanwhile rifle associations bemoaned the small turnouts by militia for association service matches.

## Chapter 6: Days of Musketry

By mid-1908, the number of riflemen in Australia had risen sharply again, to over 53,000, now more than double the size of the entire Australian Militia force of about 23,000.<sup>256</sup> Both the rifle club movement and defence was about to receive a boost in interest, for the Americans were coming to Australia. In December 1907 United States of America (USA) President Theodore Roosevelt decided to send a US Navy Fleet, painted white to show its peaceful intentions, on a round-the-world trip to show the American flag. The voyage was to last almost two years. Prime Minister Deakin saw an opportunity to counter growing Japanese strength in the Pacific as well as prosecute his case with the British for an Australian fleet at home, by inviting the US fleet to visit Australia. The US fleet consisted of 16 battleships and five auxiliaries and created a sensation when it visited Sydney, Melbourne and Albany in Western Australia over August and September 1908.

In Sydney a rifle match was arranged against a US team at Randwick, on 26 August. Unlike the Japanese, the US Navy team camped at Randwick for a week before the match, practising assiduously. It was 20 a side, with seven shots at 200, 500 and 600 yards. The Americans won at every range against what the NRA of NSW later described as a 'social team'. The US 'sharp-pointed' ammunition proved superior against the British issue used by the local riflemen, being faster. At 600 yards the Americans were using 10° less elevation than the Australians. No less than eight of the NSW team were CCRAA delegates, past and future. By way of comparison with the 1906 visit by Imperial Japanese Navy men to Randwick, here the luncheon was attended by the Minister for Defence Thomas Thomson Ewing, and Colonel Davies of the CCRAA.<sup>257</sup>

When the US Fleet, now dubbed 'The Great White Fleet', visited Melbourne, again the Americans defeated a local rifle team, when they shot against the Melbourne Rifle Club at Williamstown in a 15 men-a-side match at 200, 500 and 600 yards. Once more the Americans camped at the range for a week, getting used to the local conditions. This time the Melbourne Rifle Club made no pretence of a social meeting; they put forward their very best shots, including P. Fargher and J. A. Ross who had both

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<sup>256</sup> *Year Book Australia*, No.2, Section 28, Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics Canberra, 1909, p.1083.

<sup>257</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 August 1908, p.8.

represented Victoria and Australia at Bisley. It was to no avail, for the Americans won by over 100 points using their new M1903 Model, .30-06“calibre, Springfield service rifles with peephole sights, and the sharp-tipped bullets which had so impressed the NSW men at Randwick.<sup>258</sup>

With the arrival of the US fleet moved to Albany to ‘coal up’, a mixed rifle team from a variety of rifle clubs and militia units in Perth was pulled together and rushed south by train, on the understanding that a rifle match had been arranged. Unfortunately they were to be disappointed, for the Americans had no time for the match as their vessels underwent intensive refuelling and maintenance in preparation for the next leg of their voyage to Manila in the Philippines.

The scale of the rifle matches between the Americans and the local clubs in 1908 was bigger than anything the Japanese had managed to provide in their visits of 1903 and 1906. This was understandable given the huge difference in the size of the fleets and purpose of the visits. A number of CCRAA delegates had fired against both sets of visitors, but the common ties of heritage and language made the matches with the English and Americans more satisfying all round. Underlying the rifle matches with the Americans was the unspoken relief that Australia, as Deakin had calculated in extending the invitation to visit, had discovered it had like-minded cousins across the Pacific at a time of rising fear in Australia of Japanese power and intentions.

The CCRAA held its annual meeting for 1908 in Adelaide. The meeting was overshadowed by the recent death of Templeton. It was the passing of an era. Templeton had stood like a colossus in the rifle club movement and had influenced every facet of it. He had been an ardent supporter of Empire, Federation and of the independence of rifle associations from the military. Templeton had given solid service as a Volunteer and Militia officer, in public service, and in business, to his State and the nation. His experience, if not his bullishness, would be sorely missed by most in the rifle club movement. Even those like Hutton, who saw Templeton as too powerful or independent, would have been among the first to recognise and praise his outstanding

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<sup>258</sup> While in Melbourne, American junior officers also fired a friendly match against the Commonwealth Ladies Rifle Club, fired on the Moonee Valley Racecourse on 4 September, probably with .230” calibre Francotte rifles were used by both sides. Although this was almost certainly a social event, the ladies still took it very seriously, winning by 75 points. *Argus*, 5 September 1908, p.15.

contribution. This was recognised in Australia and England, where he was accorded that ultimate accolade, an obituary in *The Times*.<sup>259</sup>

With a new constitution for the CCRAA approved by the Military Board, Davies from Tasmania returned as CCRAA chairman, the first time a chairman came from the ranks of the Council itself. There were no *ex-officio* members any more, although on this occasion, guests included Colonel Ernest Townshend Wallack, CB, the Adjutant-General of Commonwealth Military Forces and member of the Military Board and Colonel John Henry Alexander Lee, the South Australia Commandant.<sup>260</sup> The Council meeting discussed, as usual, approaching the Commonwealth for funds to support a team to Bisley in 1909. Subsequently, £1,000 was placed on Commonwealth Estimates for sending a team to Bisley in 1909. When the State rifle associations led by NSW and Victoria declined to make up the difference, Davies wrote to Senator Sir George Foster Pearce, the Minister for Defence, asking for a full £2,000. In November, even the new Prime Minister from the Labor Party, Andrew Fisher, was approached, but to no avail. 1909 was to be another dead year as far as an Australian team to Bisley was concerned.

Despite a formal invitation from the popular Americans to join the Palma matches in 1909, funding remained the major problem across the board. The rifle club movement was suffering from years of neglect by successive Australian governments. Riflemen everywhere were seeing much talk but little action around issues like replacement of worn-out barrels, provision of uniforms, upkeep of ranges or provision of new ranges for the ever-popular rifle clubs. To add insult to injury, the new SMLE .303-inch service rifles were being doled out to rifle clubs in meagre numbers, one rifle per ten men. An attempt by Prime Minister Andrew Fisher to obtain a long service medal for riflemen who had seen 20 years' service and who had been deemed 'efficient' for 20 successive years, also came to nothing.<sup>261</sup> Feelings were summed up in a pamphlet circulated in 1909:

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<sup>259</sup> Templeton was also influential in Government and business. *The Times*, 12 June 1908, p.15.

<sup>260</sup> Lee became Commonwealth Inspector of Rifle Ranges upon his retirement in 1911. New delegates to the CCRAA meeting were Lieutenant William Henry Berry, George Smith and William Walker. Berry was a warehouseman in the railways and the Secretary of the QRA. He was also a Volunteer in the Australian Field Artillery before serving in the Boer War as a Sergeant with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Queensland Contingent. Smith, who was president of the NRA (Coastal) in Western Australia and later Chairman of the NRA [combined] Council, moved to Tasmania to become Railway Commissioner there in 1911. Walker, a gold assayer, was secretary of the Kalgoorlie Rifle Club.

<sup>261</sup> 'Letter from Prime Minister Fisher to Governor-General Lord Dudley 14 November 1908', *Series A6661*, NAA.

There is something about our Rifle Club Movement which causes it to be viewed with feelings of misgiving by many honest-minded military men of the Conservative type, and by those who claim to be progressive it is regarded as something which must be understood, and in some way identified with the military forces. It is quite possible that the movement has more to fear from its military friends than from those pronouncedly hostile.<sup>262</sup>

By late 1909 there were more than 57,000 men in rifle clubs but the system was creaking at the seams, with the number of 'efficients' actually decreasing by 5% over the previous year alone.<sup>263</sup> The struggle for the Australian Government to provide for defence needs in a time of rising expectations was matched in rifle shooting by military apathy towards the movement. Militia chose not to compete against civilian match rifles in association competitions, despite a large investment in service shooting matches and prizes, culminating in the great rifle matches of the NRA of NSW's Jubilee where over 3,000 riflemen competed. One reason put forward was that they could not compete against club men who invested heavily in match rifles and shooting aids. However:

Even Joseph Cook, defence minister in Alfred Deakin's third government, acknowledged in parliament that it would take three to four weeks after war was declared to build the field force to war strength by recruiting rifle club members and then bringing its brigades to their nearest capital cities. Such was the strength of the rifle club movement that there would be a great surplus of riflemen. But they would be unorganized, untrained, without officers and equipment, and so, according to prevailing doctrine, militarily useless.<sup>264</sup>

The new Defence Act was passed in September 1909, which called for universal military training. Under its shadow, the CCRAA held its annual meeting at Randwick in the midst of a highly successful NRA of NSW Jubilee meeting. This offered the richest prizes ever, over £4,000 to the riflemen who had come from NSW, interstate and overseas to compete. The final of the Prince of Wales and Hutton Matches for the Light Horse, due to be held at Albury, however, had been postponed; more consideration needed to be given as to the future of those matches. With the final retirement of Sir John George Davies KCMG, after 21 years of service to the CCRAA and its

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<sup>262</sup> Campbell, J.B., *The Rifle Club Movement: a distinct factor in the defence problem*, Metropolitan Rifle Clubs Association, Fraser & Jenkinson, Melbourne, 1909, p.3.

<sup>263</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 11 September 1909, p.4, and the *Argus*, 4 October 1909, p.5.

<sup>264</sup> Wilcox, C., 'Australia's Citizen Army 1889-1914', PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1993, Ch.6 [Fruit of a Dying Tree], p.34.

predecessors, another great stalwart stepped down from active leadership of the rifle shooting movement.<sup>265</sup>

At this juncture, the Australian Government invited Lord Kitchener to visit Australia, in effect, to endorse its defence scheme.<sup>266</sup> In a whirlwind visit around Australia over December 1909 and January 1910, Kitchener did just that. One consequence of his report was the recommendation for Australia to be organised around training areas.<sup>267</sup> He also suggested more staff for administering rifle clubs, and Major Boam, the Staff Officer for Rifle Clubs in Victoria since 1902, was subsequently appointed in early 1911 as the first Commonwealth Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs (DRAC) reporting to the Army's Adjutant-General. By the beginning of 1910, Lord Kitchener's endorsement of Government defence policy was in hand, the cadet movement well established and the structure of the militia and universal military training being prepared to accommodate the planned thousands of trained men for the militia. The rifle clubs were in place as the third tier of defence for those men who had completed their militia service or who were in some other way unable to do training; it seemed that all was complete. However there were major problems in the system.

Until the new rifle factory at Lithgow could get manufacturing underway, there remained a chronic shortage of rifles. The rifle clubs were eventually promised a single modern magazine SMLE on loan between five men, instead of between ten.<sup>268</sup> The rest were issued worn-out older 'long' Lee-Enfields from Militia service. Rifle ranges were in short supply everywhere, causing conflicts with militia units which wanted to practice on the same days as rifle clubs. The militia demanded precedence, sometimes on ranges which had been constructed mainly by rifle club effort. The Government, chronically short of money, eked out grants to the rifle associations and the CCRAA as well as to the new rifle club districts and unions throughout the States. Meanwhile men continued to flock to rifle clubs. This was before thousands began their universal training obligations; the scheme got underway in 1911. The Australian Government was stretched thin indeed trying to maintain a very small army of 26,000 militia let alone the riflemen with their seemingly endless requests for more and larger amounts of money.

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<sup>265</sup> Davies was knighted in June 1909. He resigned as Chairman CCRAA after being defeated in the election at the TRA on 23rd July 1909.

<sup>266</sup> Field Marshal Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum, G.C.B., O.M., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.L.E., etc., to give the full title at the time.

<sup>267</sup> Kitchener, Field Marshal, Viscount of Khartoum, GCB, etc., *Memorandum on the Defence of Australia*, J. Kemp, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1910, pp.8-12.

<sup>268</sup> Lithgow officially opened on 8 June 1912.

At this time of rapid change in the defence structure, the impact on rifle clubs and their associations were profound. Suddenly there were questions about riflemen's fitness levels; mobilisation plans were drawn up, more pressure was applied to induce rifle club men to wear uniform, drill and join militia training. Alex. Ferguson's tenure as a member of the Military Board was extended but some were disappointed that rifle club movement representation on the Board was not greater; others were disappointed that long service medals were not awarded.<sup>269</sup> A fundamental tension remained. The Government wanted the rifle clubs to be the 'third line of defence' but wouldn't (or couldn't) give them the resources to become efficient; while the associations and rifle clubs demanded more and more money, without which they maintained that they could not wear uniforms or drill.

By this time, the programmes of the State association matches were, despite all the ostensible efforts to conform to the military's desires for shooting under service conditions, essentially the same as they were twenty years before. There were a few service matches, but by and large the associations remained wedded to their fixed target matches and continued to argue vehemently that the marksman was the key to good rifle shooting and success on the battlefield. This, even when military men held dominant positions *ex officio* on the councils.<sup>270</sup> As one South Australia military officer was later to put it:

[There are complaints] about the lack of co-operation between the Military Department and the rifle clubs. This has always been the cry for many years, and it does not seem that the matter will ever be got over unless a universal rifle is used. The military man has no use for telescopic sights, long barrels, peep sights, and long, slow aiming. He must have the rifle that will stand the wear and tear of a campaign. He wants a man who can load and fire rapidly, and fairly accurately, at moving figures as well as almost invisible earthworks. The military shot has to learn to judge distance, how to take cover, and render covering fire. In other words, the military rifleman shoots collectively, and forms a beaten zone, whereas the rifle shot is a bullseye man. He requires the exact range, the exact wind, and plenty of time to sight. So long as they are shooting under such vastly different conditions there will never be any co-operation between the two.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> 'Letter from Office of British Prime Minister to Governor-General of Australia Lord Dudley 10 March 1909', *Series A6661*, NAA.

<sup>270</sup> For example, SANRA had 16 *ex officio* members and only 12 elected. *South Australian National Rifle Association: Official Programme and Scoring Book September 1909* [incl. 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Prize Meeting report for September 1908 and SANRA Annual Report for year ending May 1909], Whillas & Ormiston, Adelaide, 1909, p48.

<sup>271</sup> *Advertiser*, 24 August 1912, p.7.

When universal military training got underway in earnest in 1911, relations between the rifle club movement and its associations with the military had reached a critical impasse. This was the tipping point which would inevitably lead to a *dénouement*, but not for another decade, and a world war was needed to break the impasse. The military began to gear up for the mass military training which planned for an army of over 300,000 by 1921. They saw the rifle clubs, by and large, in the same light as tennis clubs and ignored suggestions that the rifle clubs train recruits.

The essential failure of the rifle club members to embrace service shooting meant that the rifle club movement was completely unable to influence rifle shooting in the military. The rifle clubs and associations were saying, on the one hand, that they wanted to drill and be efficient but then they were asking for more and more resources from the Government to enable them to do so on the other. The Government could not provide the resources, and meanwhile the rifle associations and clubs continued to entrench target shooting as the only way to maintain membership and prize money. It was both an opportunity missed and a vicious circle.

In 1910, almost at the last minute, the Government had offered £2,000 towards a team for Bisley. The Bisley team left with high expectations on their shoulders, but failed to do well in the major team matches, mostly blaming the weather for their results. Nevertheless, the outcome was heavily criticised as the inevitable result of a team based on State ratios rather than on best performance. Meanwhile, the VRA Jubilee matches were also marred by a strike by the markers, and at the same time a scandal broke in NSW when it appeared that winner of its King's match in July had falsified his results, resulting in a court case and further embarrassing publicity. While these events were occurring, the CCRAA Council agreed to support the QRA as the only recognised State association in Queensland, much to the disappointment of the North Queensland Rifle Association. It also recommended to the Minister that £250 should be allotted to each State rifle association, and the balance distributed based on the basis of the number of efficient in each State.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> A newcomer to the 1910 meeting was Tasmanian Justice (later Sir) Herbert Nicholls, a former Minister in the Tasmanian Government and a newly appointed *puisne* judge of the Tasmanian Supreme Court in 1909. Nicholls was also captain of Hobart's Metropolitan Rifle Club. Another new face was Queensland's Andrew Ferguson, brother to Alexander Ferguson. Andrew Ferguson also shot with the Queensland Scottish Rifle Club and was a member of the QRA Council. Harry Brisbane Jamieson from NSW also began with the Council that year. He was to serve on the NRA of NSW Council for 41 years and was awarded an MBE for services to rifle shooting in 1939.

While the greater matters of Australia's defence affecting the very future of the rifle club movement were evolving, the CCRAA and the State rifle associations remained preoccupied with the *status quo*, fatally confused as to its *raison d'être*. Was the rifle club movement to act as an arm of the military and feed its needs for the battlefield, or was it to provide the means for the common man to defend 'hearth and homes'? There was no easy answer to this conundrum. The government needed cheap defence manpower but was reluctant to enforce the military discipline upon rifle club members who, after all, were potentially a political factor in electorates right across Australia.

The rifle associations in the States, dependent upon the rifle club men for the large part of their revenue, could not break free from their need to conduct prize shooting matches. The military, despite bullying the rifle club movement as far as it could towards its military viewpoint, could not, in the end, control the rifle club movement. Those rifle club men who were militarily inclined, joined the Militia; most rifle club men did not. The coming period of universal military training and a growing emphasis on preparing for a war outside of Australian soil would exacerbate even further the antipathy felt between the two camps despite the good will expressed by individuals on both sides.

In 1911 the attention of the military was focused on the roll-out of the universal training scheme. The rifle club movement however, continued on with its usual annual programme of club, district and State association, and Commonwealth matches. With the exception of South Australia, the State rifle associations seemed at times oblivious to the antipathetic feeling towards them in military circles. Well-entrenched with political and by any measure, popular support, the rifle club movement felt impervious to criticism. However, all of this would be turned on its head in the coming years.

The debate over service *vs.* target shooting continued, although neither side conceded the other's point of view. In a curious move given the state of relations with Defence, the NRA of NSW decided to abolish service matches altogether from its October programme. It reasoned that there had been such a dearth of military entries for those matches it could not afford to continue them, despite the fact that they were obliged to devote half of the prize money grants to military matches.<sup>273</sup> Military men

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<sup>273</sup> Purser, M., 'Some Reasons why the Citizen Forces do not Complete at N.R.A. Meetings', *The Commonwealth Military Journal*, v.6, 1915, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, pp.556. 'Serious concern was caused in 1911 by an announcement from the Director of Rifle Clubs that at least

defended themselves when the question was asked why the citizen forces did not compete in greater numbers in service matches. One commentator explained that soldiers were disadvantaged at the range:

having to wear equipment, conduct a route march and have points deducted accordingly while the Rifle Clubs entries have no such deductions for the same shoot as they don't have to wear equipment and just turn up; also the service teams are not allowed to choose their teams from members of the Regimental Rifle Clubs – as these are not RAN ships, batteries, companies, squadrons but 'rifle clubs.'<sup>274</sup>

In 'militarised' South Australia, on the other hand: 'Council had 23 *ex-officio* [military] members and 12 elected...the 25<sup>th</sup> Programme included a battle firing match [a fire and movement match]; a Teams Service Match [unknown distances, pop-up targets on the advance] and Squad Snap-Shooting.'<sup>275</sup> Overall however, the rifle club movement came under increasing pressure to conform as the measures associated with the universal military training scheme took effect:

In 1911 [the Military Board] required club captains to strike off any members who failed to qualify as efficient for two years in a row; next year it decided that clubs without efficient members for two years would be disbanded. The number of riflemen fell by 5,000 in a year, but headquarters was pleased that "dead-heads", as one Permanent officer described poor shots, were being struck from the rolls. During 1911 headquarters staff proceeded to plan how riflemen would be used in war, and allotted the fittest club members to fill local units in war.<sup>276</sup>

The newly appointed Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs (DRAC), Major Morris Marian Boam, introduced new Rifle Club Regulations, which gave him the power to administer every aspect of associations to rifle clubs, including the CCRAA.<sup>277</sup> Somewhat controversially it was the DRAC who would now also

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50 per cent of the Government Grant for prizes must be allotted to Service Matches and that entry fees must be limited to 1/6 per match. The Government Grant was £1911/12/-. A deputation succeeded, however, in having the decision deferred for, at any rate, one year.' Cromack, C. H., *The History of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales, 1860-1956*, Utility Press, Sydney, 1956, pp.47-48.

<sup>274</sup> Purser, M., 'Some Reasons why the Citizen Forces do not Complete at N.R.A. Meetings', *The Commonwealth Military Journal*, v.6, 1915, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, pp.556.

<sup>275</sup> *South Australian National Rifle Association: Official Programme and Scoring Book September 1911 [incl. 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Prize Meeting report for September 1910 and SANRA Annual Report for year ending May 1911]*, Whillas & Ormiston, Adelaide, 1911, pp.54-55.

<sup>276</sup> Wilcox, C., 'Australia's Citizen Army 1889-1914', PhD Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1993, Ch.7 [Forced to be Free], pp.43-44.

<sup>277</sup> Boam had served with the NSW Forces since 1873 and was a veteran of the Soudan Expedition. was

distribute grant money to associations.<sup>278</sup> When the CCRAA met in November 1911 at Karrakatta Range in Western Australia, it had quite a bit to discuss.<sup>279</sup>

The new Rifle Club Regulations, especially with regard to the administration of association affairs (powers now given to Boam or Military District (State) commanders), directly undermined the authority of the associations to conduct their affairs. It was resolved to ask the Defence Minister to reconsider these regulations. Another issue was that despite the support of the CCRAA for the QRA to be the authoritative body in that State, the Defence Department had formed two rifle associations there in late 1910 with one representative from each being allowed on the CCRAA. An appeal was made to the Minister to resolve this vexing question. Among other matters the meeting also discussed the threatened closure of the Karrakatta Range by the military but, in a gesture to the military, teams in the Commonwealth Match at Karrakatta would wear uniform.<sup>280</sup>

The CCRAA also determined, in an attempt to recover the powers it had before the new Rifle Club Regulations were issued, to have the Military Regulations amended to properly recognise the role of the CCRAA and State rifle associations as advisors to the Minister for Defence and Military District commanders on rifle shooting matters. Military units were to be asked through the minister to pay for the entrance fees for military teams in service matches, personal payment by military teams to enter being considered a major reason for why entries continued to decline.<sup>281</sup>

Like the previous year, 1912 again saw no team for Bisley or an Empire Match, although the standard £2,000 had been placed on the Government's estimates for a team for Bisley in 1913. The Universal Military Training scheme was well underway, and

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<sup>278</sup> *Advertiser*, 28 March 1911, p.8.

<sup>279</sup> New faces included Sergeant Solomon William Parker, John Ross Wallace, Lawrence Herbert Story, Charles Edward Johnsey and Captain Leslie Barnard Welch. Parker was a former 'C' Battery Horse Artillery man under the then Major N. W. Kelly; he remained in the artillery after Federation. A saddler by trade, he shot for the Melbourne Rifle Club and later became Secretary of the Victorian Rifle Association. Wallace was captain of the Randwick Rifle Club and a council member of the NRA of NSW. A publisher and editor of trade magazines, Wallace was a former *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist who had gone with the China Naval Contingent in 1900 to cover the Boxer Rebellion, while embarked as the Assistant Paymaster to the NSW Naval Brigade – see the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 December 1954, p.8. Story was a clerk in the Department of Defence. Joining the new Commonwealth Public Service in March 1901, by 1911 he was Secretary for Rifle Clubs at the Military Staff Office in South Australia, but was soon after transferred to the Ordnance Department in Queensland. Johnsey, a printer from Charters Towers before moving to Townsville in 1912, was a Council member of the North Queensland Rifle Association. Welch was a public servant with the Department of Agriculture, a militia infantry officer and Treasurer of the NRA of WA. He was killed in action at Pozieres, France in 1916 while serving with the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion.

<sup>280</sup> *West Australian*, 16 November 1911, p.8.

<sup>281</sup> *West Australian*, 17 November 1911, p.8.

rifle clubs felt the impact as scarce rifle ranges came under even more time use pressure by increased numbers of cadets and trainees firing musketry courses. This was especially felt by clubs in Western Australia, where by 1913 the frustration began to assume political overtones. A rifle association ‘Vigilance Committee’ was formed which threatened to urge a vote against Defence Minister (and Western Australian Senator) George Foster Pearce if rifle clubs did not receive promised improvements to their resources.<sup>282</sup>

However, the military control of the rifle club movement in most States continued to grow tighter as universal training grew apace. By 30 June 1912 the numbers in rifle clubs in the States (the Northern Territory did not register except as part of South Australia’s numbers), were as follows:

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	Total
Rifle Clubs	12,580	17,026	9,437	5,421	4,510	1,647	50,621

In addition, the report indicated that of 23,696 in the Militia, dedicated officers and NCOs in the Pay Department, rifle ranges and rifle clubs were only 77 strong.<sup>283</sup> At least the light horse regiments service matches were finally held at Albury, Victoria in September 1912, but no doubt the military noted the hiatus since 1906 and laid the cause of it at the feet of procrastination by the CCRAA.

It was in this atmosphere that the CCRAA met again in Hobart in late December 1912.<sup>284</sup> One attendee was Major Francis Bede Heritage from the School of Musketry at Randwick. Heritage was a Permanent Officer with the Administrative & Instructional Staff, with long service in the Volunteers in Tasmania. Heritage was under no illusions as what rifle shooting meant. In his treatise *Modern Musketry Training*, published in 1911, he wrote:

There are so many varying influences at work in regard to musketry training in general that it is essential to consider its object. All will agree that it is, or should be, conducted solely with a view to national defence. Rifle training must be a duty

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<sup>282</sup> ‘*Rifle Clubs Vigilance Committee of WA Circular dated 10 May 1913*’, Item 2616A/7b, State Records Office of Western Australia.

<sup>283</sup> *Year Book Australia*, No.6, Section 28, Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics Canberra, 1913, p.1047.

<sup>284</sup> New delegates included George Peirce Foot, Robert Peart and Robert Reuben Rodgers. Foot, a grazier from Cardington between Townsville and Charters Towers, was a member of the North Queensland Rifle Association. He later served at Gallipoli. Peart was a clerk from Boulder near Kalgoorlie, while Scottish-born Rodgers, who had formerly served in the Victorian Infantry Regiment and the Victorian Rangers, was a distiller from Maylands near Perth. Rodgers also later saw active service in World War One.

rather than a sport. It is necessary to insist on this because to-day many people, a few even in the army, regard all rifle shooting primarily as a sport, and advocate the use of weapons and rifle accessories which are not suitable for war conditions.

An extraordinary degree of skill in applying a long series of shots at a stationary mark when each shot is signaled and all service difficulties are carefully eliminated is of little value for *war* purposes. War is not a matter for individuals. Battles are not fought between picked teams, but between battalions, and, therefore, the general *standard* of marksmanship should be as high as possible. *There are no spotting discs in war.* A soldier must be a fighting shot – not merely a rifle club shot.<sup>285</sup>

Another attendee at the Hobart meeting was Boam's replacement as DRAC, Major William Henry Osborne. Osborne was a captain of Engineers and had commanded No.2 Submarine Mining Company in Melbourne before his promotion to major with his new appointment. It is not clear what particular qualifications Osborne held to be given the role, but it was perhaps an indication of how little importance the Defence Department attached to the position and to the rifle club movement in general.<sup>286</sup>

The threatened closure of the Karrakatta Range came up again; it was expected to mean the closure of five rifle clubs. The Minister for Defence was to be asked once again to reconsider. The next topic was the age-old question of sights. After a virtual free-for-all on types of sights prevailing for some years with States being allowed to use virtually any sight approved by their associations, the CCRAA now wanted to regain control of the sights question and wanted the power back to approve uniform sights for the Commonwealth.<sup>287</sup>

Ammunition was also a major issue in 1912. The Ordnance Department insisted that the 1912 ammunition was acceptable but strong complaints had come in from NSW and South Australia about the quality of the 1912 batch: 'Tests were made in the presence of Major F. B. Heritage, Commandant of the School of Musketry, and showed that not only were the bullets of irregular sizes, but some cartridges were so loosely packed that the cordite could be heard rattling in the shell.'<sup>288</sup> The CCRAA also advised the Minister that members of rifle clubs should be utilised to coach senior

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<sup>285</sup> Heritage, F.B., 'Modern Musketry Training', *The Commonwealth Military Journal*, v.1, April-December 1911, J. Kemp, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1911, pp.147-148.

<sup>286</sup> In 1920 the now Lieutenant-Colonel Osborne was awarded an MBE for his services to rifle shooting.

<sup>287</sup> It was another sign of the gulf between the military and the rifle shooting movement that the CCRAA even had to raise the issue. In theory the two branches of the Defence Forces should have been using the standard military sight.

<sup>288</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 14 October 1912, p.8.

cadets on their musketry course. Major Heritage was also asked to develop a scheme that all men over 16 in 'exempt areas' be compelled to join the nearest rifle club. The Military Board did not agree, citing the need to make an amendment to the Defence Act and the cost of running the scheme.<sup>289</sup>

In Queensland in early October 1913, the Commonwealth Match at the Enoggera Range in Brisbane was the usual backdrop to the annual CCRAA meeting. CCRAA Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Edward Merrett was now also Chairman of the VRA as well as commanding officer of the 29<sup>th</sup> Light Horse (Port Philip Horse). He had been promoted to lieutenant-colonel specifically to captain of the 1914 Bisley team.<sup>290</sup> Welcome news arrived of a proposed tour by a British rifle team to Australia in September 1914. The future looked bright for target rifle shooting in Australia but no-one who attended the meeting there that year had any prescience that it was to be the last full meeting of the Council until 1920.

Meanwhile, the debate continued as to the state of Militia shooting skills vs. those of rifle club men. Writing in *The Commonwealth Military Journal*, one Militia officer opined:

I have noticed for years past, and I can say it without fear of contradiction, that the average man who joins a rifle club, within three months generally shows an improvement that is impossible to be seen in that of the average citizen soldier in three years after he has been sworn in. The only reason by which I can account for this is, that the former has the assistance of expert brother riflemen to teach him in the beginning and afterwards splendid encouragement given to him for continuous practice. I cannot but confess that unless a great change is made in our system of musketry training this will ever continue to be the case. I do not wish to infer for a moment that our citizen soldiers as a whole are the worst shots in the world by any means, but they are, taken as a whole, a very indifferent grade. This is a sad state of things, for there is nothing in the wide world to hinder the average Australian from becoming highly expert in the art of handling a rifle...<sup>291</sup>

At this juncture, in early 1914, amid rising concern about the possibility of a real war in Europe, yet another inspection of Australia's defence posture by an Imperial officer occurred. General Sir Ian Hamilton came to Australia at the invitation of the

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<sup>289</sup> Exempt areas were those with no training zone allocated under Kitchener's scheme.

<sup>290</sup> New delegates included Arthur William Skewes, a 23 year-old miner from the Charters Towers Rifle Club. He had been a Sergeant with the Kennedy Regiment and was now a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant with the Senior Cadets. Other newcomers were Constable 1<sup>st</sup> Class John Smith Simpson of the Police Rifle Club in Perth, and Noel Augustin Webb, a solicitor, one-time Mayor of Port Augusta and president of the NRA of SA. Webb was to become a Deputy President of the Federal Arbitration Court and the South Australia Industrial Court.

<sup>291</sup> Thorn, P.J., 'A Word in Favour of Rifle Shooting', *The Commonwealth Military Journal*, v.4, 1913, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, p.738.

Government. Like Lord Kitchener before him, Hamilton swung through most of the country before providing a high level report to Parliament. He inspected rifle club parades organised for him and pronounced himself to be happy enough: ‘I have noticed that, when being assembled for inspection or to be addressed, they show themselves capable of performing the more elementary military movements’. But he also had a more important comment and warning: ‘Rifle Clubs constitute the only reserve for the Militia Forces’, he said, [and] ‘so long as the Rifle Clubs form the only reserve for the active army, Australian defence must rest on too narrow a foundation.’<sup>292</sup> He went on to say: ‘Everything outside of the Militia – the Regular Force for example, the Rifle Clubs and the cadets – are essentially of military interest and value only in so far as they affect the well-being of Australia’s real war instrument – her Militia army.’<sup>293</sup>

In July 1914, Captain Osborne completed his first report to Parliament on the state of the rifle clubs in Australia, a report informed by his visits to almost every rifle club in Australia since January 1913.<sup>294</sup> He reported that on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1914, compared to the same time in 1913, the state of the movement was as follows:

Military District	1 July 1913				1 July 1914			
	Clubs	Members	Efficients	percent	Clubs	Members	Efficients	percent
1 <sup>st</sup> Qld	211	9701	6399	66	227	9758	6963	71
2 <sup>nd</sup> NSW	293	13,400	11,264	84	305	14,500	10,708	74
3 <sup>rd</sup> Vic	322	15,617	10,220	65	318	14,505	10,064	69
4 <sup>th</sup> SA	120	5408	3123	58	119	4093	3411	83
5 <sup>th</sup> WA	142	3809	2896	76	127	3790	2826	75
6 <sup>th</sup> Tas	45	1629	1148	71	46	1580	1108	70
	1,133	49,564	35,050	71	1,142	48,226	35,080	73

Osborne reported that the number of rifle ranges in operation had risen to 798 and that there were a total of 64 District Rifle Club Unions throughout the country. Government

<sup>292</sup> Hamilton, I., *Report on an Inspection of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1913, pp.14-16.

<sup>293</sup> Hamilton, I., *Report on an Inspection of the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia*, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1913, p.7.

<sup>294</sup> ‘Report on the State Rifle Associations, District Rifle Club Unions, and Rifle Clubs for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 1914’, *Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1914, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer Victoria, 1914, pp.1-8.

grants had been handed out as follows: CCRAA £700, State associations, £5,000, DRCUs £5,000, and remote area unions and clubs £5,000.<sup>295</sup>

Considering the size of the rifle club movement, this was a cheap defence reserve indeed, even when adding the cost of range construction and maintenance and salaries of the rifle club supervisors and range inspectors (the 800,000 rounds of ammunition expended annually was bought by riflemen at a discount). Osborne's report addressed at length the dramatic falling off of militia riflemen competing in rifle association and district union competitions. There was, he said, no clear reason for this occurring although he had noted that in many instances, commanding officers of militia units just happened to call their weekly parades when these matches were to be held. Osborne's summary was damning:

It seems a hard thing to say, but it would seem that the Rifle Clubs are composed of men who can shoot but can't drill, while the Citizen Forces can drill but can't shoot; if they can, they are very modest about it.<sup>296</sup>

Later, a table was produced by one commentator to show how Militia riflemen were disadvantaged in target shooting against rifle club men:

<b>Citizen Forces</b>	<b>Rifle Clubs</b>
Short rifle	Long rifle
Better service weapon	Better for prize shooting + aids available for it
No alterations to sights	verniers, orthoptics, coloured pencils, paints, elbow pads etc
No additions, colouring, blackening, orthoptics	use of slings encouraged
Use of slings discouraged	1 shot/60 secs
Fire at quick rate – 1 shot/20 secs	alter for wind and elevation as often as liked
Minimize wind and elevation changes	Many more opportunities for practice
No changes after first shot	
Cannot practice as often	

It will be seen from the foregoing that the soldier's training is in the direction of making him a "war shot" and not a "pot hunter," and this being so he cannot hope to compete successfully with the rifleman at prize meetings.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> 'Report on the State Rifle Associations, District Rifle Club Unions, and Rifle Clubs for the year ended 30 June 1914', *Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1914, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer Victoria, 1914, pp.3-5.

<sup>296</sup> 'Report on the State Rifle Associations, District Rifle Club Unions, and Rifle Clubs for the year ended 30 June 1914', *Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1914, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer Victoria, 1914, p.7.

<sup>297</sup> Purser, M., 'Some Reasons why the Citizen Forces do not Complete at N.R.A. Meetings', *The Commonwealth Military Journal*, Vol.6, 1915, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, pp.555-556.

However, the wheel was turning towards the Militia and service shooting, and fast. Mobilisation schemes were now prepared for each State. Rifle clubs, of which the 'efficients' were expected to be available in time of war, were allocated to militia units: '3,000 to the Light Horse, 15,000 to the infantry, 1,500 to Army service and medical corps, 120 to be cable guards, and 9,000 for future allotment.'<sup>298</sup> But the rifle club men still had no uniforms, had few modern service rifles, and certainly were not being used in any meaningful way to assist in training the recruits into the militia or cadets with basic rifle skills. In a speech made in July 1914, the now Defence Minister, Senator Edward Millen promised to ensure an annual allocation of funds for Bisley teams and increase the allocation of service rifles to clubs to bring the ratio up to 1:2 men, but still balked at the cost of uniforms. He noted the antipathy of militia officers to the rifle clubs but felt that Australia had no choice but to depend on the riflemen as its own ready reserve.

His stance was underpinned by Australian success at Bisley in 1914 when the team won both the Kolapore Cup and the McKinnon Trophy along with numerous other prizes, to much acclaim. The Bisley matches took place in a similar atmosphere to Australia in that in Britain, the War Office was pressuring the NRA to change its sacred 'King's' match and more. The War Office wanted:

... use of rifles as issued; no orthoptics; no slings; no apertures as sights; rapid firing in the King's Match; rapid firing in the St. George's Match; military targets at all ranges up to and including 600 yards; and lastly, a time limit of 20 seconds per shot for deliberate shooting, with an addendum that the N.R.A. might alter the conditions of their competitors from time to time to comply with the musketry regulations. Sighters, of course, had been abolished for some time.<sup>299</sup>

The Australian team captain, Merrett, took the opportunity to register his disagreement with the War Office and opined:

Australians would refuse to accept the War Office proposal to dispense with bull's-eye shooting and introduce service conditions - namely, shooting at figure and moving targets - because it would mean the *décadence* of rifle clubs, on which rested Australia's second line of defence. No Australian Government would accept the War Office ultimatum.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 July 1914, p.9.

<sup>299</sup> *Advertiser*, 14 September 1914, p.13.

<sup>300</sup> *Argus*, 23 July 1914, p.9.

Still, with the upbeat results and positive publicity from Bisley and the expected arrival of the British rifle team in September, the rifle club movement had no reason not to anticipate a bumper year ahead.

**PART THREE:**  
**GREATCOATS ON, GREATCOATS OFF**  
**1915-1938**

## Chapter 7: The Great War

However, in early August 1914, war broke out in Europe; World War One had begun. The rifle associations responded by cancelling the various prize meetings planned for that year, including the Commonwealth match in Adelaide, and offering their services to train Expeditionary Force recruits in musketry.<sup>301</sup> In Sydney 40 riflemen were requested to support training at Long Bay; 30 Victorian club members assisted Army NCOs with training at the Williamstown range. Rifle clubs quickly subscribed to supporting activities like the Regimental Comforts Funds in NSW and the Motor Ambulance Fund in Tasmania. In Victoria, 1,200 rifle club men paraded as part of a Patriotic Carnival in September 1914.<sup>302</sup>

In Katoomba, NSW, Senator Millen had attended the 24<sup>th</sup> Katoomba Rifle Club annual meeting in July where he gave a patriotic speech in support of rifle clubs and defence. As a result of Senator Millen's visit, 'the club rallied as never before with 77 members offering their services one August day in 1914.'<sup>303</sup> Still, no-one expected the war to last very long. In South Australia, not surprisingly, the German Kingship rifle clubs were faced with anti-German sentiments. The Hahndorf club decided not to hold any Kingship matches for the duration of the conflict, but the Tanunda, Lobethal, Metropolitan and Oakbank clubs all continued to hold their annual matches, at least at first. These were well attended by both shooters and the general public and the events were well covered in the South Australia newspapers.<sup>304</sup>

In the early months of the war, as gears started to engage on the large-scale and frantic preparations to despatch an expeditionary force overseas, called the Australian Imperial Force or AIF, riflemen questioned whether they would continue to drill as part of their prescribed militia units or would form their own rifle brigade? However, as the recruiting machine began to take effect and hundreds, then thousands rushed to the colours, rifle clubs began to feel the loss of their ablest and fittest men to the AIF. But new recruits also entered rifle clubs, some because they could not join up for various

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<sup>301</sup> The NRA immediately cancelled the visit of the British team to Australia until after the war and Bisley was placed at the full disposal of the British Army.

<sup>302</sup> Anon., 'Those were the Days –Parade of Riflemen', *Marksman*, Vol.21, No.3, March 1969, p.4.

<sup>303</sup> Roberts, C., *From Cascade to Wentworth Creek : a History of Katoomba Rifle Club 1893-1988*, Katoomba Rifle Club Committee, Lawson (NSW), 1988, p.28.

<sup>304</sup> Potezny, V, 'South Australian German Shooting Companies (Kingship and Ring Target Shooting)', unpub. MS (2010), provided by author to A. Kilsby, February 2010, p.3.

reasons but wanted to be seen to be doing something useful; others no doubt in the hope of avoiding service. In NSW, for example:

On June 30, 1914 there were only 305 clubs, with a membership of 14,000; on January 1 1915, there were 321 clubs with a membership of 15,430; and the latest figures ...show that there are now 390 clubs with a membership of 22,000, and more are being formed every week.<sup>305</sup>

The most graphic use of rifle club men came when the Australian Naval & Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) was mobilised to garrison strategic Thursday Island above Queensland and later, to land in New Guinea and Rabaul to seize German protectorates there. The AN&MEF contained many rifle club men, many of them members of or assigned to the north Queensland Kennedy Regiment, which was the core unit of the Force:

On 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1914, the Kennedy Regiment, which consisted of Companies at Charters Towers, Townsville, and Cairns, was ordered to mobilize and proceed to its war station at the Northern gateway of Australia. The Regiment required 386 men to raise it to war strength, sixteen Rifle Clubs being instructed to provide this number between them. These Clubs at once sent forward 474 medically fit members. The required 386 were selected from this number, and embarked with this Regiment. The Irvinebank Club from an active strength of 115 sent 90 members; the Herberton Club with an effective strength of 44 sent 41, the remainder of the 16 Clubs referred to sending the balance of 255 men required.<sup>306</sup>

However, not all the action was happening overseas. Some rifle clubs did see some 'action' on the home front, just not perhaps as they might have imagined.

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<sup>305</sup> Hill, E.J., 'The Rifle Club Movement in Australia', *Lone Hand*, New Series Vol.3, No.6, May 1915, p.356.

<sup>306</sup> Jackson, A. T., *Southern Queensland Rifle Association Jubilee, 1877-1927: a brief History of the Association during the past Fifty Years*, Southern Queensland Rifle Association, Brisbane, 1927, p.68. CCRAA delegates who served in the AN&MEF included G. P. Foot and A. W. Skewes. Foot, who described himself as a 'bushman' on enlistment, had mobilised with the Townsville Rifle Club in August 1914 and proceeded to Thursday Island with the AN&MEF. On return he re-enlisted with the 5<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment, served at Gallipoli, and then with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Light Horse Brigade Machine Gun Squadron in the Gaza campaign. There he was badly wounded and repatriated to Australia in 1917. Skewes, from the Charters Towers Rifle Club, served on Thursday Island for four months before enlisting in the 41<sup>st</sup> Battalion for service on the Western Front. Lieutenant Skewes was killed in action in late 1917, in Belgium. Riflemen other than Queenslanders joined the AN&MEF as well. Major Robert Henry Beardsmore went to Rabaul with the force and returned with a German Mauser to present to the NRA of NSW Council. Beardsmore went on to the Western Front. He was wounded at Fromelles in 1916 where he was awarded a DSO. He was made commanding officer of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and was mentioned in dispatches in 1917. In 1918 he was transferred to the general list on account of his health, and was placed in charge of the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division base depot at Etaples – see Argent, A., 'Beardsmore, Robert Henry (1873 - 1959)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp.231-232.

Broome, the home of Australia's pearl fishing industry but isolated in the far north-west of Western Australia with a population of only 1,200 'Europeans' often saw the population of Japanese and 'koepangers' (Javanese and Timorese pearlers) swell to several thousand during the season. Rivalry and mistrust between the two groups finally exploded with an attack by about 400 Japanese on the 'koepangers' in December 1914. Rifle club men, including some of those who had been mobilised as wireless guards when World War One broke out, were immediately called out to help the Police to bring the rioters under control. This they managed to do, remaining on duty for some time afterwards, with up to 30 being sworn in by the Police as Special Constables.<sup>307</sup>

More famously, the 'war' at Broken Hill also saw the involvement of rifle club men. On 1 January, 1915, a picnic train with 1,200 men, women and children on board left Broken Hill for Silverton to attend an annual New Year picnic. The 25 kilometre journey was interrupted three kilometres into the journey by rifle fire when two men, described as Turks, opened fire on the train from a culvert near the railway line under a Turkish flag. Four men and women were killed. Another seven men, women and children were wounded, some seriously. Armed with a Snider and a Martini-Henry, the 'Turks' (later identified as two Afghans) then retreated under Police pursuit. Shooting another civilian on the way, they found a position on a nearby hilltop, among large rocks.<sup>308</sup>

There they held off a group of present and former rifle club men, Police and Citizen Force soldiers for two hours before being overrun. One was dead, the other died of wounds in hospital. Letters were found indicating that one of the men had recently returned from Turkey where he had been accepted as a soldier. The men were buried in unmarked graves and that night a crowd burned down the Broken Hill German Club and had to be dispersed peacefully by the same forces which had killed the 'Turks', including rifle club men. It was the only occasion when rifle club men were called out to 'defend Australia' in World War One.<sup>309</sup>

As mentioned, some men of rifle clubs had been allocated as cable or wireless station guards; a few dozen at most were mobilised at strategic points like Darwin. A number of Darwin's Defence Rifle Club men were employees of the British Australian Telegraph and Overland Telegraph companies (BAT & OT). The BAT men (called

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<sup>307</sup> *West Australian*, 14 December 1914, p.8.

<sup>308</sup> *Argus*, 2 January 1915, p.9.

<sup>309</sup> *Argus*, 4 January 1915, p.6.

submarine ‘lightning jerkers’) often competed with the OT men (‘the overlanders’).<sup>310</sup> That these employees were members of the defence rifle club underscored the strategic importance of the submarine telegraph cable which came ashore at Darwin from Singapore via Jakarta – it was opened in 1871 - and proceeded to Adelaide and beyond through the centre of Australia.

This situation was reinforced with the introduction of universal military training and by the visit in November 1911, of Commander Samuel Augustus Pethebridge, Australia’s Secretary for Defence. Pethebridge transited Darwin *en route* for Melbourne as he returned from an Imperial Conference in London. Discussions at the Imperial Conference had included Australian defence measures including the defence, and importance of, submarine cables to Empire communications in time of war. Pethebridge was instructed, while in Darwin, to set up a defence rifle club under the new arrangements pertaining in Australia. He moved quickly to do so, promising free rifles, ammunition and uniforms to those interested, along with an instructor.<sup>311</sup> The Darwin Rifle Club and Cable Guard came into being the following year, consuming the old Port Darwin Rifle Club into its ranks.

The instructor, a Sergeant Moncreiff, duly arrived in October 1912 and a civil servant and later Sheriff and Chief Clerk of Darwin, Robert James Lewis, became club president. A lieutenant with the Militia 26<sup>th</sup> Signals Company (Engineers), Lewis was given the honorary rank of Captain as he assumed the command of the rifle club and cable guard. When war came in 1914, men of the Darwin Rifle Club and Cable Guard were mobilised to guard the landing point of the strategic telegraphic submarine cable. Subsequently, many of the club members enlisted in the AIF, including Captain Lewis.

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<sup>310</sup> One Commonwealth employee in Darwin of the Post Office & Telegraph – OT Department - and member of the PDDRC was telegraphist Francis James Burgoyne. Sent ‘south’ due to ill-health he recovered to become captain of the East Torrens Rifle Club in Adelaide and South Australia representative in the Australian team to Bisley in 1910.

<sup>311</sup> *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 3 November 1911, p.2.

<sup>312</sup> Scottish-born Lewis had served in the Boer War with the 13<sup>th</sup> Hussars, and had six clasps to his Queen’s South Africa medal. He led a Darwin contingent to enlist, as captain adjutant of the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion. After service in Gallipoli, he was promoted to company commander and major on the Western front, only to be killed by a sniper in Belgium in June 1916. His wife, the matron of the Darwin Hospital and staff Sister in the Army, whom he married just before embarkation, had by this time volunteered for active service and was at sea for England when he was killed. Their daughter had been born when Lewis was on Gallipoli. Gertrude Lewis also lost her brother on the Western Front.

Elsewhere, rifle club membership began to climb, mostly in response to patriotic appeals such as this one to local men in 1915 by the Roseville Club of NSW, calling upon them to join the rifle club:

“Men, be efficient” it says. “Quit indecision and lethargy. Join this semi military organisation, which indefatigably drills and shoots, in a picturesque locality, and under attractive circumstances. Do not be lulled to sleep by that peace which as yet blesses Australia. Join the rifle club, which is, for most of us, the only possible way in which we business men can demonstrate our wish to get training. By such smaller sacrifices we may pay real though humble tribute to that illustrious army of millions which is gathering in Great Britain. Noble sport! Excellent physical training! Conscientious effort! It anticipates the question – “I have no time. I want to garden, go pleasuring, read, fish, play tennis, see the girl. Will the club interfere with this?” And answers simply - “Yes, a little. But 1914-15 - is this playtime?”<sup>313</sup>

By mid 1916, rifle club membership had reached a staggering 101,000 and then gradually declined to 92,000 by mid-1918 and further to 86,144 by the end of 1918. From the outbreak of the war until 31 March 1917, for example, 24,735 members of rifle clubs enlisted for service abroad with the Expeditionary Forces. About 28,000 had enlisted by the end of the war.<sup>314</sup> Rifle clubs became places for rifle instruction, certainly, but their most valuable contribution to the war effort, other than as a source of recruits themselves, was as recruiting agents and promoters of subscriptions to patriotic funds, such as the Lord Mayor’s patriotic fund in Sydney. Some riflemen, like Captain Herbert Dakin and Victoria’s Philip Fargher, were already Area Officers under the Universal Training scheme, and acted as recruiters.<sup>315</sup> Dakin was already supporting conscription. In comments to the NRA of NSW in early 1916, said:

Many labourers employed at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory are posing as skilled munition workers to provide themselves with a reason for not enlisting...there was a strong feeling in the district that these men might well go to the front...responsible people were agreed that the only way to reach men of this description was by compulsory enlistment.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> *Advertiser*, 11 February 1915, p.8.

<sup>314</sup> *Year Book Australia*, No.11, Section 28, Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics Canberra, 1918, p.1020 and *Year Book Australia*, No.12, Section 28, Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics Canberra, 1919, pp.1004-5.

<sup>315</sup> It is curious that they appear to be the only rifle club men to be so appointed, and that both were prominent members of the NDL in their respective States.

<sup>316</sup> *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 3 February 1916, as reported in Griffiths, T., *Lithgow’s Small Arms Factory and its People*, Vol.1, 1907 to 1950, Toptech Engineering, Terry Hills, NSW, 2006. p.147.

Two major recruiting drives were indelibly associated with rifle clubs. The first was the series of recruiting marches originating in country towns. The first of these began in Gilgandra, NSW with 35 men and ended in Sydney with 230; it was led and initiated by the captain of the Gilgandra Rifle Club.<sup>317</sup> This so-called ‘Coo-ees March’, was quickly emulated by other centres around NSW and Queensland, and rifle club men were often to the fore. The second was the push in 1916 to recruit men into the so-called ‘Sportsmen’s Thousand, to show the enemy what Australian sporting men can do’. Using the exhortation of ‘join together, train together, embark together, fight together’, these recruiting campaigns were moderately successful.

The best known of these units was the ‘Carmichael Thousand’, named after Ambrose Campbell Carmichael, a NSW Parliamentary MLA: ‘Meetings were addressed in city and country by N.R.A. executives and club officials. Clubs held street parades to recruiting centres. It is estimated that to the ‘Carmichael Thousand’, approximately 600 volunteers were enlisted from Rifle Clubs’.<sup>318</sup> Carmichael himself was no stay-at-home. He enlisted with his own unit, was wounded in action and won a Military Cross in France; returning in 1918 he raised another ‘Thousand’ and led them to France as well. It is not known how many riflemen joined the second unit.

While these few units had an unusually high number of rifle club men in their ranks, rifle clubs themselves never formed complete units as some might have anticipated before war actually broke out. Within units individual rifle club men were sometimes recognised as potential sniper material, and employed accordingly. Billy Sing, perhaps the best known of the World War One snipers, had at one time been a member of the Proserpine Rifle Club in Queensland, but it was supposedly his experience as a kangaroo hunter that gave him the edge when firing at fleeting targets at distance rather than any skills learned on the rifle club firing mounds.<sup>319</sup>

One anecdote from Gallipoli however, illustrates the tactical usefulness of former rifle club men as snipers; in this case related by the commander of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion there, Lieutenant-Colonel Harold Edward (‘Pompey’) Elliot:

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<sup>317</sup> Meredith, J., *The Coo-ee march: Gilgandra – Sydney, 1915*, Macquarie, Dubbo, NSW., 1981, p.11.

<sup>318</sup> Cromack, C. H., *The History of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales, 1860-1956*, Utility Press, Sydney, 1956, p.52.

<sup>319</sup> O'Connor, John Michael, *Shooting awards and prize medals to Australian Military Forces 1860-2000*, Kingsgrove [N.S.W.], John O'Connor, 2002, p.67 and Jackson, A. T., *Southern Queensland Rifle Association Jubilee, 1877-1927: a brief History of the Association during the past Fifty Years*, Southern Queensland Rifle Association, Brisbane, 1927, p.75..

The following incident which occurred about the end of June, 1915, may be taken as an illustration of the great keenness which animated our snipers and observers on Gallipoli, and also of the great value which attaches to the trained and picked riflemen in position warfare such as then prevailed...many casualties occurred at the hands of Turkish riflemen who were firing ...from the left rear of Steele's [Steele's Post]. To cope with this nuisance, a sniper's post was constructed one night facing the danger zone and carefully camouflaged. Amongst the permanent garrison told off for its occupation were Carne, a Bendigo ex-King's prizeman; Young, formerly the crack shot of the St. Arnaud Rifle Club; and Fisher, another well known militia shot.<sup>320</sup>

They were supplied with field glasses, telescopes, verniers, telescopic and peep sights, and all the other gadgets favoured by the target rifle shot, and speedily proved their value by gaining complete mastery over their opponents...they sniped a Turkish officer who had been a regular visitor to the Turk trenches; recorded in the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion diary. C.E.W. Bean in his Volume II of the official History of Australia in WWI says that Mustapha Kemal, Commanding the Turkish 19<sup>th</sup> Division, had been planning an attack on the Australian lines at Russell Top with the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment commanded by a highly regarded officer; it was this officer who was sniped and the attack went badly.

Time and date fixed his identity, and while we may deplore the loss of a very gallant foe thus obscurely and untimely slain, we may nevertheless congratulate ourselves upon the results which flowed from the untiring watchfulness and deadly skill of our own men, which saved us from a possible disaster at the hands of the enemy.<sup>321</sup>

How many former rifle club men became casualties in World War One will never be known. Some States like NSW and Queensland kept reasonably accurate records. These noted nearly 1,200 who died on active service, roughly about 10 percent of enlistees from rifle clubs from those States. An extrapolation would give an estimate of at least 2,600 who died in the war, plus many hundreds of others assumed suffered wounds or illness resulting from their service. The records held by clubs are also patchy, but some club examples will give an idea. The Melbourne Rifle Club had 99 'active' members in 1914. By 1919, 39 had volunteered for active service, 29 were accepted and of these, eight did not return.<sup>322</sup> In country NSW, the Katoomba Rifle Club recorded in July 1918 that it had 67 members. By then five members had been killed in action, one had died of wounds and one of disease, and six had been invalided

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<sup>320</sup> Percival Reuben Carne and Ernest Sydney Fisher from Bendigo and Harold Henry Young from St. Arnaud, Victoria. Both Young and Fisher were wounded twice, each at Gallipoli and France; Fisher served with the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Regiment before the war. All three returned to Australia.

<sup>321</sup> Elliott, H.E., 'Sniper's Bullet Broke Turkish Plans' [reprinted from *The Reveille* 31 March 1930], *The Victorian Bullseye*, February 1992, p.6.

<sup>322</sup> *Melbourne Rifle Club: Thirtieth Annual Report for the Year 1914*, Thomas Urquhart & Co., Melbourne, 1915, p.8 and *Melbourne Rifle Club: Thirty-Fifth Annual Report for the Year 1919*, Thomas Urquhart & Co., Melbourne, 1920, p.5.

home; 13 were still at the front with another two members *en route*, while two were on home service. Altogether about a third of the membership had enlisted.<sup>323</sup>

The Cottesloe-Claremont Rifle Club in Western Australia had 188 men on their roll in June 1915 (not all active). By the end of 1918 they had 110 on the roll of which 91 men had enlisted, and seven did not return while many others were casualties. The club's annual report of 1918 said: 'During the year we have had the great pleasure of welcoming back from the Front several others of our members [the report listed six men]. We all sincerely trust that none of these fellows will suffer any permanent ill-effects from the injuries or sickness by reason of which they were invalided home, or discharged.'<sup>324</sup>

In Tasmania's Old Launcestonian Rifle Club, by the end of 1914, 53 men had joined the club, of which 19 had joined the 'expeditionary force', two were commissioned, and four were later noted to have been killed or died on active service.<sup>325</sup> In South Australia, the Cyclists Rifle Club enlisted 28 members during the Great War; six were killed and ten returned to the club.<sup>326</sup> The Palace Emporium Rifle Club, in Sydney, had 262 men pass through the rolls during the war. Of these, 75 enlisted and ten did not survive the war. This rifle club was typical of clubs established around a work place, and the losses would have been keenly felt.<sup>327</sup>

Over 20 former delegates or office holders in the CCRAA served during the war.<sup>328</sup> Several received decorations and awards, rising to senior ranks. Two were

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<sup>323</sup> Roberts, C., *From Cascade to Wentworth Creek : a History of Katoomba Rifle Club 1893-1988*, Katoomba Rifle Club Committee, Lawson (NSW), 1988, p.37.

<sup>324</sup> *Cottesloe-Claremont Rifle Club Reserve No. 164: Annual Report for year ending 30 June 1918*, Perth, 1918, pp.9-18.

<sup>325</sup> 'Old Launcestonian Rifle Club – Register of Members 1 January 1914 - 30 September 1915', *Item NS523/1/2, Archives Offices of Tasmania*,

<sup>326</sup> Ramsey, A.M., 'Early History of the Cyclists' Rifle Club', *Bullseye*, No.64, August 1994, p.17.

<sup>327</sup> *The Palace Emporium Rifle Club – Fifth Annual Report 1918-1919*, np, Sydney, 1919, npn.

<sup>328</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Bernard James Newmarch, VD, who had been a delegate to the 1898 Federal Council, enlisted in 1914 at the age of 58. He took the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Ambulance to Gallipoli, then served on the Western Front as commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian General Hospital. During the war he was promoted to colonel, awarded the CMG, CBE, and was mentioned in dispatches. Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Dean became chairman of a 4th Military District committee charged with selection of officers for the AIF and later commanded the 13<sup>th</sup> Light Horse at Gallipoli. Evacuated ill he left the AIF in 1916 but served on as officer commanding troops on transports.<sup>328</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel John James Hanby, who had won the first Victorian Queen's prize in 1881, served in World War One as a sea transport officer, aged 60. Major-General J. M. Gordon served in the British Army, commanding the 92nd Brigade and the 10th Reserve Division in England over 1914-15, was an inspector in the Ministry of Munitions in 1916-17, and in 1919 was with the army of occupation in Cologne, Germany.<sup>328</sup> Delegate to the Federal Council in 1896, Major John Joseph Byron, had served with distinction in the Boer War and had subsequently settled in South Africa. During World War One he was appointed colonel in the South African forces and held commands in German South West Africa, German East Africa and Central Africa. He was made a temporary brigadier general in 1916. In 1917 he commanded a British artillery

killed in action. Major L. B. Welch took the Western Australian 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion to Gallipoli and then to the Western Front, where he was killed by enemy artillery fire at Pozieres, France, in 1916. Probably the most prominent of the delegates to the CCRAA who became a casualty during the war was Lieutenant-Colonel William Holmes, DSO. Holmes commanded the AN&MEF which captured Rabaul, German New Guinea. In early 1915 he was given command of the 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade, as a brigadier. He saw service in Gallipoli and France including at the battles of Pozières and Flers. In 1917 he was promoted major-general and commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, and commanded the division at 1st Bullecourt and Messines. He died of wounds from artillery fire in July

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group on the Western Front and was then appointed second-in-command of the Dunsterforce Caucasus Military Mission. His war honours included the DSO and the Légion d'honneur, as well as several mentions in dispatches – see Serle, R. P., 'Byron, John Joseph (1863 - 1935)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp. 519-520. Colonel J. S. Lyster was inspector of equipment in Australia – see McIntyre, D., 'Lyster, John Sanderson (1850 - 1930)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp 191-192. Lieutenant S. W. Parker served as Quartermaster at the Royal Park Camp in Melbourne, where thousands trained before embarkation. Western Australian rifleman R. R. Rodgers joined the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion in France in 1917 at the age of 43. Repatriated with the effects of trench fever, the now Staff Sergeant-Major of the 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion was killed in an accident in 1921. Another Queensland delegate to the CCRAA to serve was Captain W. H. Berry who in 1913 was in command of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Service Corps. Berry went to Gallipoli briefly in 1915 with the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Horse Brigade Train (5<sup>th</sup> Australian Army Service Corps) and then to the Western Front with the 5<sup>th</sup> Division Train, where he was awarded a DSO and was mentioned in dispatches. Colonel G. G. H. Irving was commandant in South Australia when war broke out. He became 'General Officer Commanding Australian Troops in Egypt', with temporary rank of brigadier was transferred to command the 14th Brigade in 1916; for a time he commanded the 5th Australian Division. He was relieved of command for a poorly organised route march of troops and returned to South Australia where he took up his old post again in June 1916. See Coulthard-Clark, C. D., 'Irving, Godfrey George Howy (1867 - 1937)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp. 441-442. Major F. B. Heritage saw service with the AN & MEF in 1914-1915, was promoted lieutenant-colonel and served through 1916 as Director of Military Training in Melbourne. He then saw active service with the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF in France, with the 2nd Division at Bullecourt and the 4th Division at Messines. In 1917 he commanded the Anzac and the Australian Corps Schools but in early 1918 was invalided home, ill. On resuming duty in late 1918 Heritage served as Director of Personnel. For distinguished service in France he was awarded the Croix de Guerre – see Finlay, C.H., 'Heritage, Francis Bede (1877 - 1934)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp.269-270. Arthur Rupert Cross, a 'stereotyper' by trade and who would be a member of the CCRAA Executive Committee representing Queensland in 1920, served in the field artillery from 1916. He was wounded in action (gas) in Belgium in 1917 but recovered and was repatriated home in 1918. Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. Semmens formed and took the 6th Battalion from Victoria to Egypt, but was repatriated after the physical and nervous strain took its toll; he ended his war in command of the AIF Camp at Castlemaine. Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Paine from NSW at first escorted troops embarked for Egypt in 1915. He then returned to Egypt where he commanded the Mounted Division base and AIF Headquarters in Egypt, before returning to Australia in early 1917 – see World War One Service Records, J J Paine, B2455, NAA, Canberra. Major C. E. Merrett became the acting CCRAA secretary during the war: 'To his disappointment he was not to go overseas in World War One, but served instead on the selection committee for officers of the Expeditionary Forces.' Vines, M., 'Merrett, Sir Charles Edward (1863 - 1948)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp. 486-487.

1917. He had been appointed CMG, awarded the Russian Order of St Anne and been mentioned in dispatches four times.<sup>329</sup>

Back in Australia, rifle club activities continued but some suspended matches altogether while others acted as fund raisers. While modern service rifles were withdrawn for service in the AIF, the clubs had few of these rifles anyway:

The difficulty of obtaining rifles for such a large body of men as that now enrolled in the ranks of rifle clubs has not yet been fully overcome. All the rifles that can be turned out at our small arms factory are required for the Expeditionary Forces; but this has not deterred men from joining the clubs. Any old kind of rifle does to teach a man how the weapon is to be handled, and more than one club drills with rifles of out-of-date pattern, or with miniature rifles, until as such time as the club can be supplied with the latest thing in lethal weapons.<sup>330</sup>

While the rifle clubs were in some ways more active in terms of members than even at the peak of the Boer War, the actual rifle club movement as such did not advance during World War One, sidelined as it were by the AIF and the war abroad from fulfilling its home defence role. With many of its leadership away on active service or in other ways engaged with the war effort, the CCRAA did not meet during the war at all. Even the Executive Committee only held one formal meeting between 1915 and 1918 and that was early in 1915. Otherwise the rifle club movement marked time, waiting for the war to end, perhaps assuming that it would then be a return to business as usual. But as it was to find out, World War One had changed everything, including the standing of the rifle club movement within Australia's Defence paradigm.

On 1 May 1919, the CCRAA Executive Committee met in Melbourne for the first time since the end of the war. A full CCRAA Council meeting had not been held since October 1913, but was now planned for February 1920. The war was over, but the state rifle associations were in some disarray, with many of their pre-war members still overseas, awaiting repatriation to Australia from Europe and other war theatres. At the Melbourne meeting in May, delegate numbers were also restricted because of the influenza regulations in force due to the world-wide pandemic; only Dean, Merrett, the DRAC Osborne and J. R. Wallace were able to attend.

There was a tremendous amount of work to be done, and the most critical issue facing the rifle club movement was whether the Commonwealth Government would

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<sup>329</sup> Travers, B. H. , 'Holmes, William (1862 - 1917)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp. 349-351.

<sup>330</sup> Hill, E.J., 'The Rifle Club Movement in Australia', *Lone Hand*, New series Vol.3, No.6, May 1915, p.356.

restore the pre-war grants, and how soon. This would determine whether the CCRAA and its state associations would wither on the post-war vine or be reinvigorated. The committee reported:

The whole future of rifle shooting in Australia is bound up with the question of the Associations receiving at the hands of the Government adequate grants to enable the various Associations to carry out rifle meetings worthy of the name of Australia, and it cannot be too strongly pressed on the Government that, unless they come to the rescue and restore pre-war grants to Associations, the future of the Rifle Club Movement, which has proved of such use in war time, is doomed. It would appear to be of no use mincing matters at this stage, for unless the grants are forthcoming, the inevitable disaster is at hand, and the work of Associations of over half a century destroyed.<sup>331</sup>

These words show clearly that the CCRAA Executive Committee, focused as it was on a return to the *status quo*, could not foresee that the greatest threat was not to come from a lack of grants, but from the very generals who had commanded the riflemen at war.

Another pressing issue for the CCRAA in the aftermath of the war was how to obtain money to allow a visit by a British team to Australia to proceed. An Australian rifle team was being formed from AIF men in Europe to shoot at the Victory Meeting at Bisley in July 1919. Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Beardsmore, DSO, VD, was already in place, as after the cessation of hostilities, he was appointed staff officer for demobilization at Australian depots in the United Kingdom. Beardsmore was a recognised rifle shot in his own right, and a pre-war member of the NRA of NSW Council.

It was an easy decision to appoint him team captain and representative of the CCRAA. The coming presence of the Australians at Bisley from early June (and assertive advocacy by Beardsmore), led the NRA to begin to organise a team to visit Australia in 1920, its first since 1907. CCRAA Secretary Paine, now demobilised, applied to the Defence Minister for £500 to cover the costs of hosting the British team. When the Committee met in May, the grant had not been made, and in England the NRA was waiting to know whether the trip was on or not.

It was also agreed that a deputation of Dean, Merrett and J. R. Wallace would call on the acting Minister for Defence, Senator Edward John Russell, regarding the

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<sup>331</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the period 1915 to 1920*, Cook and Fisher, Sydney, 1920, p.18.

resumption of club shooting throughout Australia.<sup>332</sup> At that meeting in early May 1919, which was joined by both George Henry Wise, the Assistant Minister for Defence and Osborne, the CCRAA deputation asked for the reinstatement of the pre-war grants in the 1919-1920 Estimates. This would allow the resumption of prize meetings from late October 1920. Merrett claimed that the rifle clubs were composed half of citizen force men and civilians, and there was military support for the resumption of shooting. Senator Russell was assured that all returned soldiers would be eligible to join rifle clubs and prize matches, while none of the grant would go the members but only for ‘ammunition, salary of secretaries and incidentals.’ Russell agreed to take their case to the Treasurer. But no grants were forthcoming for 1919; state associations, such as the VRA, had to hurriedly cancel planned matches in October.<sup>333</sup>

At the end of 1919, there were 1,383 clubs with a membership of 81,006, and in addition 128 miniature rifle clubs having a membership of 5,827.<sup>334</sup> It seemed that the rifle club movement was as popular, perhaps even more so than before the war began. However, the war had destroyed any sentimentality left over among senior military officers about the rifle club movement. In late January 1920, a special Military Committee, responsible to the national Council of Defence, was convened in Melbourne to ‘formulate a military defence scheme for Australia in the light of the war experience and the current world view.’ It was composed of six of the most prominent senior officers in Australia, three Permanent and three Citizen Force; all had served in the war. The committee was chaired by the Minister for Defence Senator Sir George Foster Pearce.<sup>335</sup>

Even though, among many other matters, the Military Committee was looking closely at the value of rifle clubs to defence, it had no time to consult with the CCRAA for it was under pressure to present its report to the Council of Defence by 9 February. However, on 6 February Merrett met with the Military Committee and give his views on the value of the movement to defence. Osborne was also called before the

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<sup>332</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the period 1915 to 1920*, Cook and Fisher, Sydney, 1920, p.8.

<sup>333</sup> VRA letter to CCRAA 24 September 1919, A461/9, NAA.

<sup>334</sup> *Year Book Australia*, No.13, Section 28 Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 1920, p.1000.

<sup>335</sup> The officers were: Lieutenant-Generals Sir Henry George (‘Harry’) Chauvel and Sir John Monash, and Major-Generals Sir James Whiteside McCay (a former Defence Minister), Sir Joseph John Talbot Hobbs, Sir Cyril Brudenel Bingham White and James Gordon Legge.

committee.<sup>336</sup> However, it looked as though the Defence chiefs were inclined to recommend the disbandment of all rifle clubs for defence purposes. This news was met with dismay by the rifle shooting community and it was in this context that the first CCRAA Council meeting since 1913 was held in Melbourne in February 1920.

The Military Committee findings posed the most serious threat to the rifle club movement in its entire history. It unanimously agreed that the rifle club movement had no military value and initially recommended the disbandment of rifle clubs. Meeting under time pressure the Committee did not consult the CCRAA, but did call Colonel Merrett, VD, as Chairman of the VRA (and a CCRAA Council member) and Major Osborne, Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs in Australia, to address the Committee.

Colonel Merrett's defence of the rifle shooting movement was reported in the *Argus* on 18 March 1920:

**RIFLE CLUBS. Their Value Discussed.** Should the policy of including rifle clubs in the Defence forces of the Commonwealth be continued? In many quarters the opinion is held that the rifle club movement should be a thing apart, and that clubs should either become self supporting or cease to exist. The other side of the case was recently presented to a special military committee appointed to consider the question by Colonel C K Merrett, chairman of the Victorian Rifle Association.

Colonel Merrett, in a spirited defence of the rifle club movement, pointed out in his report that since 1885, when the first detachments of mounted rifles and dismounted units were formed in Victoria, the organisation had rendered signal service. Of 90,000 members of rifle clubs in Australia more than 25,000 had enlisted for service in the European war, while 667 men had been called up for duty within Australia. The value of their early training had been appreciated by many commanding officers, who, when snipers were required, had selected rifle shots of note for the work. The view was expressed by Colonel Merrett that if Australia were attacked it would be guerrilla warfare, as in South Africa, rather than trench warfare as in the last war. A large proportion of mounted men would, he said, be required on account of mobility, and rifle clubs would form the nucleus of such a force, and also be an organised but scattered unit of men trained to the care and use of the rifle.

Colonel Merrett contended that members of the military had not in the past been taught to shoot. Members of rifle clubs, on the other hand, regarded shooting as a pleasure and the result had been that they had invariably defeated military teams in military matches. In recalling the fact that all arms in the possession of the military forces were withdrawn, he stated that the department would not dare to publish the number of rifles rejected by the ordnance branch as unsuitable. This, he said, was

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<sup>336</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia: Department of Defence – Report on the Military Defence of Australia by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces*, 1920, Vol.1, Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1920, p.4.

due to the fact that the men in the ranks had not been taught how to keep their rifles clean - one of the first lessons impressed upon the new member of a rifle club.

The main objection to the rifle club movement has been on the score of expense. Colonel Merrett, however, pointed out to the committee that the largest amount voted by Parliament for rifle clubs was £51,000 in 1914, the vote including range upkeep, salaries, votes to rifle associations, unions and clubs. Adding the sum of £60,000 for free ammunition the outside cost in one year had been £111,000. The advantages to be gained by maintaining the organisation were that the Commonwealth would have available an easily mobilised force of over 50,000 men fit for service, with their own rifles, at a cost of £2 each per annum.

Whether the Ministry will decide, as a matter of national policy, to encourage and assist financially the rifle club movement, will not be known until the new defence scheme has been announced. Since Colonel Merrett's report was received the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations has submitted to the Minister for Defence (Senator Pearce) an additional statement, in which a strong plea is made for the retention of the existing organisation.<sup>337</sup>

Merrett's full statement did not appear in print until 1935.

After many long years, in mid-February 1920 the CCRAA came together at last.<sup>338</sup> With rifle club membership at an all-time high, and former members rapidly coming back to Australia from the war, it should have been an optimistic occasion. But it was overshadowed by a downturn in both the post-war economy and popular sentiment towards military-related activities. The CCRAA was faced with difficult finances, the spectre of disbandment of all clubs which could not be self-sustaining, a British rifle team awaiting confirmation that it might tour with the added uncertainty that it might not be welcomed properly to Australia if it did arrive. In addition, the CCRAA itself needed to recover from the war interregnum and re-assert its authority with State associations looking for leadership.

Merrett explained the case he had put to the Military Committee. Soon after the Minister for Defence, Senator George Foster Pearce, joined their meeting to discuss the question of grants and future of rifle clubs. Immediately Dean asked for the restoration of £500, which had been returned to the Ministry in 1915, to conduct the British rifle

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<sup>337</sup> *Argus*, 18 March 1920, p.5. Merrett's full statement was later re-produced in the *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the year 1935*, Keating-Wood Pty., Ltd, Melbourne 1935, pp.19-23.

<sup>338</sup> The recently promoted Brigadier Dean was in the chair, Paine was Secretary and Treasurer, and Osborne as DRAC represented the Minister for Defence. A newcomer to the council meeting was James Freeman Ryle, captain of the Perth Club and president of the Metropolitan District Union. He had become well-known less perhaps because he had represented Western Australia in the Commonwealth Match of 1912, but because he had headed the so-called 'Vigilance Committee' in 1913 which had attacked Senator Pearce for his perceived lack of support for the riflemen of Western Australia. Ryle was a 'tuckpointer' by trade, and a senior officer of the Loyal Orangemen Institute.

team tour. Pearce replied that there was no money, and until the Military Committee had reported on the future of the rifle movement he could make no commitment. Merrett complained that although he had seen the Military Committee, he did not do so on behalf of the CCRAA (he had apparently spoken as chairman of the VRA), nor were any notes taken of his views. The Minister responded by suggesting that the Council send in a written position directly to the Council of Defence. Wallace, speaking for NSW, wanted that State to also have the opportunity to speak to the Military Committee. Impossible, said the minister, the Military Committee had already dispersed.<sup>339</sup>

Again the Council requested £500 for the visit of the British team and a further £300 for travel expenses, but was asked to submit a written request. This the Council did, with a letter that very day, adding a further request for free ammunition for the State associations to hold their matches with the British team. Later that afternoon, a reply was received in the affirmative to the requests for money, 'without prejudice to the future policy of the Government in respect to financial assistance to Rifle Clubs.' The Council was galvanised into issuing the formal invitation to the NRA to send their team and distributed their grant accordingly. £75 was retained by the Council and the balance was distributed equally among the States to be visited by the British team. The Council also agreed also to send a paper to the Council of Defence through the Minister setting out their case as to why rifle clubs should be supported in any new Defence scheme.

Meanwhile the Council of Defence had met and discussed the findings of the Military Committee. As far as the military chiefs were concerned, they wanted no more to do with rifle club movement. Their main concern was money. Already a grant of £50,000 for 1921 was to be placed on the Estimates for rifle clubs. While arguing strongly that the rifle club movement had brought little return from the investment made in it by Government and Defence over many years and especially during the war, the Defence chiefs were mostly concerned about how to pay for the future defence structure they felt was needed for Australia.

In its final report the Military Committee devoted just one paragraph to rifle clubs:

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<sup>339</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the period 1915 to 1920*, Cook and Fisher, Sydney, 1920, p.11.

The circumstances in which rifle clubs formed part of the Reserve Forces of Australia are now changed. Having regard to modern military training requirements, and the numbers of trained personnel available in emergency, the Conference is of opinion that the maintenance of rifle clubs as a Reserve is no longer militarily necessary. If, for other reasons, it is desired to continue to subsidize rifle clubs, the expenditure should not be carried on the Defence or Army Estimates, nor need the organization be administered by the Defence Department.<sup>340</sup>

So when a compromise was suggested, either by Pearce or the CCRAA itself at Pearce's suggestion, that the administration of rifle clubs be placed with the Civil Branch of the Defence Department, there was no objection, at least publicly. The Defence Chiefs had 'bigger fish to fry'.

The initial views of the Military Committee, however, as they became known, caused an urgent meeting of the CCRAA Executive Committee in Melbourne for late August 1920, especially when it became known that the Government was about to consider the its new Defence policy.<sup>341</sup> Pearce requested a final representation to him by the CCRAA before Cabinet made its final decision on the future of rifle clubs. A deputation (which included Dakin of the NRA of NSW) met with the Minister that same day and 'forcibly put before him what a disastrous step it would be to sever the Rifle Club Movement from the scheme of Defence...'<sup>342</sup> The CCRAA made the following recommendations:

1. That the control of the Rifle Club Movement in Australia should remain under the Defence Department but be transferred to the Civil Branch thereof in consequence of the lack of sympathy for, and interest in, rifle shooting, as a means of national defence, shown by the military for many years past.
2. That in addition to the proposed grant of £50,000, the ammunition presently in stock and already paid for by the [Defence] Department, be made available as formerly, otherwise the Rifle Club Movement must cease, owing to want of necessary funds to carry on.

To the rifle associations, failure was unthinkable. Tied as they were to the defence system by emotion, finances, tradition and sentiment, the leadership of the rifle club movement could see no other future for themselves. Composed itself of many

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<sup>340</sup> 'Report on the Military Defence of Australia by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces, 6 February 1920, Vol.2, Commonwealth of Australia – Department of Defence', Albert J. Mullett, Govt. Printer, Melbourne 1920, *AWM 1 (20/7)*, Canberra, p.24.

<sup>341</sup> A new face in the Executive Committee was Arthur Rupert Cross representing Queensland. Cross, a stereotyper from Brisbane, had recently been discharged from the AIF after service with the artillery on the Western Front where he was wounded (gas). Cross was a former Volunteer soldier.

<sup>342</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the period 1915 to 1920*, Cook and Fisher, Sydney, 1920, p.19.

returned men as well as senior officers who had been brought up from the Volunteer period within the ethos and values of rifle shooting as both a national pastime and defence asset, the leaders and membership of the movement looked into an unpalatable future and resolved to fight against it. Remarkably it was not until 10 November that the future of rifle clubs was officially confirmed in a letter to the CCRAA, just in time for their meeting at the Empire Match against Great Britain in Melbourne.

For the second time in 1920, the full CCRAA met. This time there were three *ex-officio* members. Representing the Minister for Defence was the newly promoted Lieutenant-Colonel Osborne, with a new title as Director of Rifle Associations for the Commonwealth. Also attending was Lieutenant-Colonel Heritage, the Commandant of the School of Musketry (located at the Anzac Rifle Range in Sydney) and, representing the Adjutant-General Branch, was Brigadier-General Cecil Henry Foott.<sup>343</sup>

The letter from the Secretary of Defence brought much comfort to the CCRAA and all riflemen of Australia at the eleventh hour. It stated that until further notice the administration of rifle clubs would be conducted by the Defence Department's Civil Branch; that a grant of £50,000 had been made to carry on in 1921, along with £30,000 worth of ammunition *and* a further grant of £15,000 for free ammunition to conduct rifle association and rifle club unions prize meetings.<sup>344</sup> Brigadier Foott then addressed the meeting to explain the new system of administration and the desire of the Military Board not to take part in it; formal military ties were thereby severed. To be fully funded and as generously as it was in those difficult financial times and under the new arrangements, came as a huge relief.<sup>345</sup>

With their future in safe hands, at least for now, the Council turned to the other issues on its table for consideration. Merrett presented a trophy, the McAlister Shield, to be shot for in the Commonwealth Match. David Lindsay McAlister of NSW was a member of the Australian rifle team to Bisley in 1914 under Merrett, and had been killed in action in France in 1917. Heritage proposed that service matches conform to military requirements as far as is practicable. This was agreed, and Heritage was asked to draw up conditions for the Northcote, Gordon Highlanders and the new Colonial

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<sup>343</sup> Heritage had served as Commandant of the School of Musketry since its inception in 1911. Foott, an engineer, had served with distinction as a logistician in World War One and had been Mentioned in Despatches no less than seven times.

<sup>344</sup> The £15,000 worth of free ammunition amounted to 9 million rounds alone, as reported in the *Register*, 10 November 1920, p.9.

<sup>345</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the period 1915 to 1920*, Cook and Fisher, Sydney, 1920, p.25.

Ammunition Co. Trophy Matches. As well, 'tin hat' targets were authorised for use in the Northcote Match in Adelaide.<sup>346</sup> Accepting Heritage's proposal seemed like an odd abdication by the Council after it was now free from direct military control of its affairs, but as will be seen, old habits were hard to break.

In what could be described as a failure of imagination in the face of its rejection by the Defence chiefs, the CCRAA concluded its Melbourne meeting with a re-confirmation of its objects. In an eight point statement, later to be sent to the Minister, it appeared to try and re-inject itself back into the defence system:

That it be recommended to the Minister that, in order to maintain the objects for which Rifle Associations were established, namely:-

1. To encourage the members of the Defence Force of Australia to become efficient in the use of the rifle and to promote rifle shooting throughout His Majesty's dominions as a necessary element of national defence, Rifle Clubs be continued as part of the Defence system, and including attestation and other conditions as have heretofore prevailed in regard to membership.
2. That the basis of efficiency of a rifleman be the firing of a specified course.
3. That members of Rifle Clubs be utilised as cable guards.
4. To provide instruction to trainees in exempt areas in the use of the rifle (later amended to say 'That Rifle Clubs be utilised to provide trainees in exempt areas with facilities of learning the use of the military rifle if they so desire').
5. To assist in providing rifle ranges where military rifle ranges do not exist.
6. That members of Rifle Clubs be encouraged to attend voluntary instructions in
7. machine gunnery.
8. To provide a reserve of rifles.

On 16 November 1920 the British Rifle Team were entertained by the CCRAA at a dinner hosted by the NRA of NSW at Melbourne's Cafe Francais ('Melbourne's premier cafe') in Little Collins Street. The evening was notable, not for the hospitality gladly extended to the visitors, or because of the shooting medals handed out, but because the guests of honour were the Australian Prime Minister, 'Billy' Hughes, and the Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce. The presence of the Prime Minister underlined the influence that the rifle club movement still held with politicians as well as the importance placed upon this visit by the British team, the first since 1907. The Prime Minister made a short friendly speech to the British team, where he 'emphasised the value of training in the use of the rifle as an asset of national defence....It would be a splendid thing for Australia if greater numbers of citizens learned the use of the

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<sup>346</sup> 'Tin hat' targets were introduced by the NRA as early as 1915 to simulate service conditions. They were painted very light grey on top and a sandy colour on the lower half with only half the bull showing, hence the 'tin hat'.

rifle...and gave his assurance that the Australian Government regarded the visit of the British team as of the first importance.’

The Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce, then spoke and took the opportunity to address his remarks to the senior rifle association executives present. In the wake of the Military Committee findings the previous March, the CCRAA and NRA of NSW executives present, including Dean, Paine, Merrett, Alexander Ferguson, J. R. Wallace and Colonel Semmens in his capacity as Chairman of the Repatriation Committee, would have found no comfort in the Senator’s speech. The State commandant, Brigadier-General Charles Henry Brand, CB, CMG, DSO, who had served for many years alongside the members of the Military Committee, was also present and no doubt took careful note of the Senator’s comments. Pearce took direct aim and fired:

“There is one point about which I must be candid”, he said. “I was not satisfied with the numbers of men from the rifle clubs when the war came. I was not satisfied that it showed that any country could rely on any rifle movement for anything like an adequate defence. It has been stated that 28,000 riflemen volunteered with the A.I.F, in which were some 400,000 men, but 28,000 out of a total of 85,000 riflemen is not a proportion about which there was a great deal to boast of.”

Owing to the age limit as well, continued Senator Pearce, the rifle club was not a defence on which Australia could rely in war. The most it could ever be was an adjunct of defence. He did not agree, however, with the contention of those who said that to encourage a love of rifle shooting and the spirit of competition was of no value. It was Australia’s duty, as a component part of the British Empire, to prepare in training and equipment to meet any emergency. This the Government was doing as far as it lay in its power; but even for the defence of a country there could only be a limited amount of money available. This was especially so in Australia, owing to her scanty population, and present demands on the Treasury were exceedingly heavy. He trusted that the visit of the British rifle team would do something to tighten up the kinship that existed between the English and Australian soldiers overseas.<sup>347</sup>

It was not clear that the rifle club movement would ever recover to its former strength, influence and reach. Senator Pearce had basically called into question their loyalty. In the post-war period, this was stern stuff indeed, especially as many of the officers present had served throughout the war themselves. Pearce had served up a cold dessert.

On 18 November 1920 the CCRAA Council meeting resumed, in Adelaide.<sup>348</sup> The Adelaide meeting concluded with the approval of a 25-point letter from the Council

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<sup>347</sup> *The Argus*, 17 November 1920, p.8.

<sup>348</sup> New delegates included Oswald Joseph Stanton - Stanton had served in the Boer War with the NSW Medical Corps, had shot against the Americans in Sydney in 1908, was the founder and Captain of the

to the Minister for Defence, containing its recommendations for the future administration of the rifle clubs. Picking up from where it had left off after its previous eight-point recommendations, the letter went on to state:

1. That Rifle Clubs be a connecting link with the military units and thus help to maintain the national spirit of loyalty and patriotism.
2. That a member of a Rifle Club be effective if he has fired in a recognised practice of his club on three separate days – a total of 30 rounds.
3. That Rifle Clubs and Associations be administered by the Civil Branch of the Defence Department and that they be controlled by the Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs [DRA], who will be responsible to the Secretary for Defence for the allocation and distribution of any annual grant or subsidy provided by Parliament; that he be also responsible for the allocation of such free ammunition to Associations, District Rifle Club Unions, and Rifle Clubs as may be approved by the Minister on the recommendations of the [CCRAA].
4. That the [DRA] also be responsible for the Secretary for Defence for the safety of Rifle Club ranges and expenditure of grants for ranges, the tenure of ranges, procedures regarding rental of ranges, and for the control, number, status of District Rifle Clubs Office Staffs.
5. That members of the Citizen Forces or Military Forces desirous of joining a Rifle Club be allowed to do so as active members on payment of the ordinary club fees
6. It was a detailed, matter of fact, even hubristic affirmation that the CCRAA was in full control.

And so the tumultuous, exciting, remarkable year of 1920 came to a close. The rifle club movement, under the leadership of the CCRAA, had managed a strong comeback in the face of complete disintegration. Although military ties had been formally severed, Defence ties had not and the movement was rewarded with a return to the *status quo* with regard to grants and capitation. In large part this was due to the sheer number of men around Australia who had been, or still were, members of rifle clubs. This included many influential individuals at all levels of society, not least in State and Federal parliaments. Their sentimental attachment to rifle shooting cannot be underestimated when it came to forcing a compromise on the recommendations of the Military Committee of 1920 to disband rifle clubs.

The decision to move administration of rifle clubs to the civil arm of defence was perhaps yet another opportunity missed. There was certainly an option to gradually move rifle shooting back to its true roots as a target shooting pastime for civilians and citizen soldiers alike. But history and tradition were compelling forces on the rifle club movement. The drive for the militarisation of Australian society, epitomised by

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Railway and Signals Rifle Club, and was a member of the NRA of NSW Council. Stanton also won the NSW 'King's in 1926, after trying for twenty years.

universal military training from 1910, had been smashed by the grim realities of World War One. Rifle club men had played their part, to a point, but had not been called upon to defend Australia.

While many thousands of riflemen had served overseas, their return to the post-war period saw them faced with a societal 'hang-over' from the war from which the rifle club movement would struggle to recover. With the military connection all but severed, at least for the time being, and money barely guaranteed, rifle shooting was suddenly not as important in the public eye as it once seemed to be. Nonetheless, the leaders of the movement were not going to give up. The movement was now more than 60 years old, and had garnered strong traditions of its own. It had faced challenges before and had overcome them. Its leaders, driven first and foremost by their great love of the sport, were determined to return the movement to its best days once again.

## Chapter 8: The Lean Years

With the new decade, at first there was great optimism mixed with equal amounts of pessimism. The CCRAA had been dismayed by the recommendation of the Military Committee to the Cabinet that rifle clubs should devolve to the 'civilian' side of the Defence department. It was equally determined to restore the *status quo*. At the CCRAA meeting of 1921, held in Sydney, there was also a changing of the guard on the Council. The South Australian stalwart and long-serving chairman, Brigadier Dean, stepped down in favour of Colonel Charles Edward Merrett, VD. Financial issues were also becoming prominent. All State rifle associations were suffering from falling numbers and the costs of travel was becoming difficult for interstate teams and individual riflemen both.

There was a wholesale reorganisation of the militia in 1921, when the militia units adopted many of the associations and colours of the former AIF units. This, and the resumption of universal military training, presented new opportunities to the State rifle associations and the CCRAA to re-energise militia rifle clubs and its relationship with the Army.<sup>349</sup> Subsidies were coming back, but with the 'peace dividend' after World War One, they were smaller than before. In fact most of the rifle associations were strapped for cash after years of inactivity, following the situation in Britain where the NRA even had to make a public appeal for funds to keep it solvent. Economic conditions continued to be difficult. Politically, cuts from the defence budget were the most palatable. In 1922 the Army was reduced to 37,000 men and annual training camps were discontinued.

What did the rifle club movement look like at the beginning of 1922? Rifle club membership was already rapidly declining. From 81,000 members in 1919, rifle club membership had dropped to 60,000 by May 1922 and would fall to an all-time low of 38,253 by 1927.<sup>350</sup> Returned veterans of the AIF, unless they had been members of rifle clubs before the war, rarely joined rifle clubs afterwards. Indeed, the Government was hard pressed to induce veterans to join the newly created Militia Reserves either. A

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<sup>349</sup> Although the CCRAA refused to support a request for £100 prize money for the 1<sup>st</sup> Division's rifle competitions. See *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for 1922*, Harold Murray, Sydney, 1923, p.28.

<sup>350</sup> *Year Book Australia*, No.13, Section 28 Defence, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 1920, p.1000; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1922, p.10; and *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1935, pp.54-55.

positive note was that the number of ‘efficient’ riflemen was rising even as overall numbers dropped; this increased income from the capitation grants.

No figures are available on average ages in the rifle clubs at that time although enrolments from a single club in August and September of 1922 was put forward as anecdotal evidence, somewhat hopefully: ‘...that it is not elderly men alone who join rifle clubs’.<sup>351</sup> Of course these figures gave no information as to what the age groups were already in the club, whether the club was urban or rural, or how the figures compared to other clubs – and the figures themselves were hardly reassuring.

Rifle ranges everywhere had largely been neglected during the war years except for some key ranges used extensively for military training. The military even then were only prepared to upkeep their ranges to 600 yards and maintain their own ‘tin-hat’ targets. The resumption of universal military training in 1921 placed further pressure on rifle range budgets.<sup>352</sup> Rifle range rents had stayed the same or increased, but rifle club incomes had mostly declined as membership declined.

Stocks of Mk.V and Mk.VI ammunition were becoming obsolete; and rifle clubs had few of the .303-inch SMLE rifles being issued to the militia. These rifles used Mk.VII ammunition unsuitable for the single shot ‘Long’ Martini-Enfield and other types of ‘long’ .303-inch rifles being used in rifle clubs. The Lithgow Small Arms Factory was struggling to even supply the militia with the new service rifles. In fact, rifle production fell dramatically after June 1922 as Lithgow was: ‘...ordered to operate on a ‘nucleus’ basis – just ticking over, keeping the skills polished and the rust at bay.’<sup>353</sup> Inevitably, with production of the ‘long’ rifles and barrels ended, continued use of those rifles would be unsustainable.

Military men still played prominent roles within rifle associations. State commandants appointed their own men to rifle association councils despite the 1921 ruling that administration had moved to the civil arm of defence. In fact the Army had it both ways. It kept a tight fist around the operations of the rifle association councils through nominees while avoiding the administration costs associated with rifle range

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<sup>351</sup> *Mercury*, 8 February 1923, p.11. ‘Out of 100 enrolment forms received in a rifle club's office the results were as follow:- Date of Birth and number: 1902-1906-36; 1892-1901-31; 1882-1891-21; 1872-1881-10; 1862-1871-2; Total- 100.’

<sup>352</sup> Compulsory training was quickly further reduced to populous areas only.

<sup>353</sup> Griffiths, T, *Lithgow's Small Arms Factory and its People*, Vol.1: 1907 to 1950, Toptech Engineering, Terry Hills (NSW), 2006.p.199. See also the *Cairns Post*, 9 February 1923, p.8.

upkeep, train travel and so on.<sup>354</sup> In NSW, Western Australia and Victoria, Citizen Force Rifle Associations (CFRAs) were established with their own match fixtures and prize money, some of which was contributed to by the State rifle associations.

The State rifle associations usually had two or three of their own council members on those of the CFRAs, ensuring cooperation and the continued engagement with the Army. By the end of 1922, at least on the surface, there was a return to most of the routine activities of State and regional rifle associations; it seemed like business as usual for the Commonwealth Council.<sup>355</sup> But the initial enthusiasm was to wilt in the face of economic restrictions and tight purse-strings. With the meeting of the CCRAA in Melbourne in early March 1923, many of these emerging challenges were becoming more evident; some were pressing. The CCRAA Executive with W.H. Osborne as the new and salaried Secretary, met at the VRA offices in Melbourne in November 1923.<sup>356</sup>

The purpose of the meeting at Victoria Barracks was specifically to meet the Minister for Defence, the Hon. Eric Kendall Bowden, and put their case to him with regard to the Rifle Clubs Grant, the need for additional funds for repair of large central military rifle ranges, and to ask for additional loan rifles for the Bisley team.<sup>357</sup> Although the vote of £50,000 had been re-instituted after World War One, in reality only about £42,000 had been provided in 1921 and 1922. From this amount, major repairs had to be undertaken on the large rifle ranges as well. Could the Minister get the vote back to £50,000 and establish a separate, special vote of £42,000 for rifle range maintenance?<sup>358</sup> The Minister would consider it, was the cautious reply.

At Bisley in 1924 the Australian team did not win the coveted Kolapore Cup or McKinnon match, but the team did manage to win the Empire match. The team also

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<sup>354</sup> The NRA of NSW Council held no less than 20 nominees of the Commandant including several NRA of NSW members with military backgrounds like J.J. Paine, presumably to give the NRA of NSW itself the chance to bring more of its own onto the Council; even the TRA had 12 military and one naval nominee on its council.

<sup>355</sup> The September 1922 meeting also saw two new CCRAA delegates with military backgrounds attend. Benjamin Cloudsdale had begun his rifle shooting career as a Volunteer and then militia officer in South Australia. Thomas John Henwood Mitchell, of the Adelaide Rifle Club and acting Chairman of the SARA had been to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in London with the South Australian Mounted Rifles in 1897, served in the 4<sup>th</sup> South Australian Imperial Bushmen contingent in the Boer War and by 1921 was the senior ordnance officer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Military District (South Australia). Kilsby. A.J., *Lions of the Day*, A.J. Kilsby, Melbourne 2008, pp.115-117.

<sup>356</sup> Osborne was formerly the Director of Rifle Clubs and Associations.

<sup>357</sup> McCarthy, J., 'Bowden, Eric Kendall (1871 - 1931)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, p. 360. Bowden was Defence Minister in the first Bruce-Page Government 1923-25. He was inexperienced and largely ineffective.

<sup>358</sup> The ranges in question were Sandy Bay (Tasmania), Long Bay (NSW), Warwick (Queensland), Williamstown (Victoria), Osborne, (Western Australia) and Adelaide (South Australia).

met with the Prince of Wales on his first ever visit to Bisley. The team also used new Lithgow-produced rifles, another source of pride. Merrett went with the team. Last in Bisley in 1913 and whose son was buried in England, a casualty of World War One, it was an emotional return. A number of the team were veterans, and the bonds of Empire and sense of shared sacrifice with the British were still strong among this body of men.<sup>359</sup>

In 1923 the Army meanwhile had instituted its own champion rifle shooting programme, the King's Medal, a revival of the former 'champion shot of the Army' prize originally awarded by Queen Victoria in 1869. A medal was provided for the British Army and in each of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa (including Rhodesia), Canada and India. The conditions of the matches, to be held over two days, were the same for each day and included snap shooting, rapid shooting, fire and movement, and timed shooting, all at targets between 200 and 600 yards. There were 17 competitors in all, each the top military riflemen of their respective States. Competitors had to be members of the Army, militia or Volunteer forces. In Australia this meant that civilian rifle club members were explicitly not allowed to compete.<sup>360</sup>

The CCRAA next met over three days in December 1924 in Tasmania.<sup>361</sup> CCRAA Secretary Osborne reported that 2,000 barrels for the long .303-inch rifles had been ordered from England and a special order of 5,000 had been placed with Lithgow. Of the 7,400 long rifles on hand with the Defence Department, 5,640 were on loan to rifle clubs and 1,760 in store. The rifles in store would need re-barrelling before being issued; barrels would be issued to rifle clubs as well. The 2,000 barrels from England were due to arrive in December 1924, but when Lithgow could deliver was uncertain.<sup>362</sup>

In any event, it was decided to see whether the long .303 rifles could be modified to accept short barrels for the .303-inch SMLE service rifles. This was the first step to re-equipping the rifle clubs eventually with the military rifle. It was also reported that rifle clubs had expended over 6,000,000 rounds of ammunition during the past year.

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<sup>359</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Archibald Clifford Blacklow, DSO was team captain for Bisley that year. A well-regarded rifle shot from Sydney and an AIF veteran, Blacklow was also a prominent member of the 1913 Australia Bisley team.

<sup>360</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 July 1923, p.12. The winner of the first competition, fired in Melbourne in May 1924, was Captain Cyril Ruddock, of the 40<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Tasmania. Ruddock was an AIF veteran with three years of active service during which he was wounded four times.

<sup>361</sup> New delegates with military service included Captain William Harold Gray of Tasmania. Gray, a foreman, and three times wounded AIF veteran of Gallipoli and France and now militia officer, was Secretary of the TRA.

<sup>362</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd, Melbourne, 1924, pp.36-37.

Old ammunition stocks would be destroyed if not used. So in an effort to use these stocks up and further popularise rifle shooting generally, it was recommended that the ammunition grant for efficient riflemen be raised from 200 to 250 rounds per man, and the 50 rounds *gratis* to new members be raised to 150 rounds.

Related to this the Council debated whether 'inefficient' clubs (there were 264 around Australia including 60 in Victoria), could be made more 'efficient' and thereby bring in more income. If only rifle range supervisors could be put in touch with these clubs more could be done organisationally.<sup>363</sup> Inefficient ratings meant no 'capitation fees' being paid by the Government to the clubs through the associations; hence the subsidies were declining to the associations as a whole. Again such sentiment foundered on want of funds.

Overshadowing all of these issues were the never-ending demands on funding and the fear that the Government would not be able or willing to provide them. While the Military Committee of 1920 had agreed to move the rifle clubs vote over to the Minister for Defence's office, this had not lessened in any way the reliance of the rifle clubs on Government grants and assistance. Worse was that the CCRAA had no say in how to expend the grants. The CCRAA and the rifle shooting movement remained under immense financial pressure.

A major highlight of 1925 was a visit to Sydney and Melbourne from the powerful US Pacific Battle Fleet in late July and early August, consisting of dozens of warships under the flagship *USS Seattle*. More than 25,000 officers and sailors, including 12 nurses, were entertained and feted, although in a more muted fashion than the 1908 visit given the financial circumstances and the post-war weariness. As in 1908, rifle shooting matches were arranged (and baseball, lacrosse and boxing) in both Melbourne and Sydney. The US Fleet team won against all-comers.

In Victoria, the US Fleet team fired against the Melbourne Rifle Club at Williamstown in a revisit of its 1908 match. One of the MRC team included a 1908 team veteran while the US officer who had been in charge of the 1908 team, Lieutenant, now Captain Lanning, came down from the docks to watch.<sup>364</sup> The US Fleet had accepted a Commonwealth Ladies Rifle Club challenge to a match with Francotte rifles; the ladies were keen to repeat their big win of 1908. This match may have been cancelled or at least the result unreported. In Sydney the principal match against the

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<sup>363</sup> *Argus*, 5 January 1925, p.4.

<sup>364</sup> Lanning was now in command of the battleship *USS Pennsylvania*.

NRA of NSW was cancelled owing to the best men of the US Fleet Team being in Melbourne; this didn't help the Australian riflemen in a match between teams from the US Fleet, the NRA of NSW, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Citizen Forces Rifle Association. The US team still won.

The economy remained depressed and Government budget cuts were ongoing. It was with unease that the CCRAA matches, held in Brisbane in October 1925, were competed for without a team from Western Australia, due to the reduction in the travel grant for interstate rifle teams imposed by the Department of Defence. At the CCRAA meeting October, the new DRAC, Edward Fetherstonhaugh, was placed on the defensive; the travel cuts were, he said, were a misunderstanding.<sup>365</sup> However, yet another cut was made to the rifle association grant allocation by the Department of Defence. A further £537 was lopped off as part of general savings to revenue, which reduced the vote to £48,430. However, rifle clubs everywhere would have been cheered by the news that the Minister for Defence had agreed to release 7,000 SMLE rifles to rifle clubs (on loan) to begin the replacement of the 'long' .303-inch rifles still in service, while Lithgow was managing to produce 250 new 'short' barrels a month to replace worn-out 'long' barrels.

A proposal from the Minister for Defence to change the regulations to allow militia trainees to form their own rifle clubs, was discussed in late 1925. It was generally supported, including by Major Horace Clement Hugh Robertson, DSO, Chief Instructor of the Small Arms School at Randwick, who attended the meeting in an *ex officio* capacity.<sup>366</sup> But suspicions remained, as the Minister had not consulted with the

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<sup>365</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 October 1925, p.15. Fetherstonhaugh, a civil servant, had replaced W. H. Osborne in 1924. New or returning attendees at the meeting with a military background included Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Henry Beardsmore, DSO, VD, now an accountant in the NSW Department of Lands. Formerly captain of the 1919 AIF team at Bisley, Beardsmore had won his DSO at Fromelles in 1916, for 'conspicuous bravery'. He was later instrumental in the fall of the Lang Government in NSW. Argent, A., 'Beardsmore, Robert Henry (1873 - 1959)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp.231-232. Southern Queensland was represented by Colonel Lawrence Herbert Story. A clerk with the Ordnance Department, Story was previously Secretary for Rifle Clubs in South Australia and had been a CCRAA delegate in 1911. Posted to Queensland in late 1919 as the Senior Ordnance Officer, from 1923 he was also chairman of the QRA, a position he held for seven years. Hon. Captain William Edward McIlwaine was an insurance manager from Townsville and a member of the Townsville Rifle Club for 12 years when World War One broke out. He had been mobilised in 1914 and deployed to Thursday Island. He then enlisted for active service in German New Guinea, but had to return with others of the rifle clubs and Kennedy Regiment when the firemen on the troopship *Kanowna* refused to continue to operate their troopship. In November 1915, volunteering for the AIF, the now Lieutenant McIlwaine found himself posted to Rabaul instead with the '4<sup>th</sup> Tropical Force' and served there for two years before being discharged in 1917. W.E. McIlwaine, B2455, NAA.

<sup>366</sup> Robertson had replaced Lieutenant-Colonel Beardsmore as its Officer Commanding. Robertson, a Gallipoli veteran, went on to a distinguished military career. Grey, J., 'Robertson, Sir Horace Clement

Council, that the proposal would mean a reduced vote for the associations as money would be taken from it for the new regimental rifle clubs.<sup>367</sup> On the other hand, there were those delegates, especially from NSW, who saw the changes positively, even hoping that it might see the demise of the Citizen Forces Rifle Association, which continued to draw funds from the associations in NSW and other States.<sup>368</sup>

In the beginning of 1927, a very interesting letter to the editor was published in Sydney, written by the secretary of the Randwick Rifle Club, Richard Meredith Fox. It strongly criticised the election of the new Council of the NRA of NSW. Although a NSW-centric letter, it actually raised a number of issues relevant to all state associations, and the rapid riposte from a member of the NSW Council showed that it had hit a nerve. The main issue raised concerned military representation:

The whole movement stands in urgent need of a drastic rebirth to enable it to compete successfully with its more popular, though (from a national point of view less essential), rival sports, such as cricket, tennis, and golf. That end can be achieved, but it can be achieved only on the basis of emphasising rifle shooting as a purely civilian sport. Some years ago the rifle club movement was reconstituted on a civilian basis, but it is something of an anachronism to find that the district base commandant still exercises his old prerogative of nominating half of the full membership of the N.R.A. Council - a body charged with the Government of civilian rifle shooting in the whole State.

Most of these military nominees are not concerned with civilian rifle shooting, and even as expert advisors to the N.R.A. Council their influence is not at all apparent. The very existence of the Citizen Forces' Rifle Association was due primarily to the encouragement given to that body by civilian riflemen. The £200 which the N.R.A. gives annually to develop rifle shooting among the trainees and citizen forces is money which could be spent more profitably in subsidising the country [clubs]...If the military authorities were keen on rifle shooting they would finance their own association, and leave the civilian movement to work out its own salvation, realising that in the event of salvation, national necessity there would be a ready and spontaneous and more efficient co-ordinating and coalescing of the two forces for public safety.<sup>369</sup>

It was the norm in all State associations that the military commandant appointed up to 12 non-elected officers to sit on the Council, and the Naval Commander would also appoint an officer (and soon, an officer from the new RAAF would also be

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Hugh (1894 - 1960)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.16, Melbourne University Press, 2002, pp. 109-110.

<sup>367</sup> Victoria formed its own Citizen Force Rifle Association in early 1926. See the *Argus*, 28 April 1926, p.14.

<sup>368</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for 1926*, H.T. Dunn & Co., Sydney, 1927, p.23. The DRAC, Fetherstonhaugh, noted that associations should now allow, with the formation of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1921, to have a RAAF representative on their councils.

<sup>369</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 February 1927, p.10.

appointed). Even Executive Committees could have half of their number as unelected members. Moreover, while the officers appointed were more often than not highly decorated, they did not come specifically with a rifleman's background, although some Commandants did make an effort to find officers who did.<sup>370</sup> It was, as Fox's letter pointed out, a contradiction that the military had not wanted anything to do with rifle clubs in 1920 but kept control, while the rifle club movement had an opportunity to embrace the civilian sporting opening but acquiesced to the military control anyway.<sup>371</sup>

In June 1927, the DRA&C, Fetherstonhaugh, made his annual report for the previous year. He reported that while rifle club membership continued to drop, by about 500 in the past year, while the number of 'efficients' continued to rise. Tasmania was the most 'efficient' State, with 90 percent of its rifle club members completing the requirements.<sup>372</sup> Fetherstonhaugh's report also noted the change to Rifle Club Regulations to allow citizen force trainees to join regimental rifle clubs and the extension of the civilian rifle club regulations to those clubs. It was hoped that trainees who joined unit or regimental rifle clubs, would, upon completion of their training obligation, go on to join civilian rifle clubs.<sup>373</sup>

Fetherstonhaugh went on to report:

The progress of the rifle club movement may be said to be almost wholly dependent upon the maintenance of a regular and sufficient supply of suitable rifles and appurtenances, and ammunition. Further, the whole object of the establishment of rifle clubs is to build up a "reserve" of eligible manhood, trained in the use of modern weapons, who could be called upon to supplement the active military forces in case of emergency. The training of riflemen must, therefore, conform as nearly as possible to the training of the active forces.<sup>374</sup>

With that, he urged the rifle clubs to adopt standard military targets throughout Australia, move away as soon as possible from the obsolete 'long' rifles to the SMLE,

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<sup>370</sup> For example, the appointed officers in the TRA Council included Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Francis Humphris, DSO, VD, who had been involved with rifle shooting ever since he was a volunteer with the South Australia Mounted Rifles in the 1890s, Lieutenant-Colonel A.C. Blacklow, DSO, who had been in the Australian team to Bisley in 1913 and Captain of the Australian team to Bisley in 1924, Lieutenant Charles William Croft, MC, MM, who had been a rifle club member for six years before the war, and Charles Alfred Sherry, Supervisor of Rifle Clubs. Perhaps this was a factor in Tasmania having the highest rate of efficiency of any State.

<sup>371</sup> This issue was to continue as a sore point in some quarters of the rifle club movement for decades.

<sup>372</sup> To be classed as 'efficient' in 1927 meant that a rifleman had to fire three practices of eight rounds each on three separate days between July 1 and June 30 the following year. He must also keep his rifle and accoutrements in good order.

<sup>373</sup> *Mercury*, 17 January 1928, p.3.

<sup>374</sup> *Mercury*, 17 January 1928, p.3.

and affiliate with the rifle associations in each State, noting that only 13 percent of efficient riflemen were actually members of the rifle association.<sup>375</sup> By mid-1927, the membership of rifle clubs had dropped to 38,258, its lowest number since before World War One.<sup>376</sup>

In 1928, the year in which the founder of the Olympic Games, Baron de Coubertin, was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, at last another Australian rifle team was despatched off to Bisley.<sup>377</sup> The Executive Committee of the CCRAA met in Melbourne in early January to finalise the Bisley team detail.<sup>378</sup> The meeting also raised four key matters with the Minister for Defence, Senator the Hon. Sir William Glasgow, KCB, CMG.<sup>379</sup> These were requests to:

1. send a team to Bisley every four years instead of six (the Minister could not commit to this),
2. restore the rifle clubs vote to £50,000 from £48,000 (the Minister replied that the vote for 1928/1929 would not change);
3. increase the supply of Mk.III SMLE rifles to rifle clubs (the Minister regretted that the loan ration of one rifle to five riflemen could not be altered);
4. ask for implementation of the commitment by an earlier Minister (Bowden) to spend £5,000 he had promised on the Sandy Bay Range to enable Commonwealth Matches to be conducted there (the Minister opined that Launceston's range was more than adequate for this purpose).<sup>380</sup>

It was a sign of things to come.

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<sup>375</sup> Many riflemen affiliated for the period of the annual State rifle association prize meeting only, not seeing any point in paying fees to their club *and* an association.

<sup>376</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for 1928*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd, Melbourne, 1928, p.47. Changes to the Council in 1927 saw the attendance of Frederick William Allsop and Robert Henderson Hall. New Zealand-born and Victoria-raised Allsop, who had been a Volunteer with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ballarat Rifles, was a metallurgist who had worked in Victoria, NSW and South Africa before coming to Kalgoorlie in 1905. There he was Mayor for five years and was elected Chairman of the NRA of WA in 1927. Hall, who had started a brilliant shooting career as a Volunteer with the Adelaide Rifles, was a member of the *Register* [newspaper] Rifle Club from 1896 and then the Adelaide Rifle Club from 1902. He won the 1909 King's in South Australia; in 1924 he was a member of the Australian team to Bisley.

<sup>377</sup> J. R. Wallace, a one-time CCRAA delegate, accompanied the Australian Olympic Team in Amsterdam; 18 athletes went to Amsterdam (eight were self-funded), but none were riflemen, as shooting was not on the program that year except as part of the modern pentathlon.

<sup>378</sup> *Mercury*, 19 January 1928, p.14. Merrett was appointed team commandant, Bleechmore as captain and Frederick G. Harrison (Mosman Neutral Bay Rifle Club) as coach to the 13 man-team.

<sup>379</sup> The CCRAA had to deal with three separate Ministers for Defence in five years – first Bowden (February 1923 - January 1925); then Sir Neville Howse, VC, MHR to April 1927, then Glasgow until October 1929. Both Howse and Glasgow had highly successful military careers, with Howse winning his VC in the Boer War.

<sup>380</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the year 1928*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne 1928, pp.13-16 and pp.30-34. At the meeting, the DRAC, Fetherstonhaugh, reported that he had recovered 559 long rifles from the Navy for use by the clubs.

The annual meeting of the CCRAA was held in Perth in early September 1928.<sup>381</sup> Among the matters discussed was the introduction of the military ‘tin hat’ targets for the next Commonwealth Match. It was considered by many riflemen that it was the military nominees on the State councils that were pushing for the full introduction of these targets. Some States had introduced them and others had not; and those that had, had done so at different ranges.<sup>382</sup> Eventually it was decided to introduce ‘tin-hat’ targets in the next Commonwealth Match only at the 300 yard range, with traditional ‘bulls-eye’ targets at 600, 700 and 900 yards range.<sup>383</sup>

These matters were important, but a letter from the Secretary for Defence was read to the meeting which made the delegates pause. The letter stated that the Commonwealth Match should not be held twice in a single financial year, i.e., it could not be held in Perth that September and again in Victoria the following March, 1929, as planned. This was reluctantly agreed and Victoria was asked to move its annual meeting into the 1930-1931 financial year instead. Unfortunately this also meant that the Commonwealth Matches could not be held in Western Australia in its centenary year either.<sup>384</sup> It was the end of a difficult seven years for the rifle club movement and much, much worse was yet to come.

The DRAC’s annual report for 1928/29, showed the number of efficient on the rise and inefficient clubs declining in number. Trainee (Citizen Forces) rifle clubs had also increased to 92 with almost 4,500 members.<sup>385</sup> These numbers were counted among rifle club membership overall, but strictly speaking they remained under the control of the Citizen Forces. The combined numbers probably masked a continued slow decline in underlying rifle club membership. There was no other explanation as to why, in the difficult times facing rifle clubs through the 1920s, overall numbers and numbers of efficient began to rise from 1928.

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<sup>381</sup> New delegates included Major Arthur Jordan, a local photographer, a former Militia officer, and member of the Warrnambool Rifle Club. He was a long-term member of the VRA Council and captain of the winning Victorian team in the 1926 Commonwealth Match in Adelaide. Colonel James Murdock Archer Durrant, CMG, DSO had begun his military career as a bugler in the Adelaide Rifles and saw active service in World War One. He was a keen rifleman throughout his life and had been a member of several regimental and civilian rifle clubs and associations.

<sup>382</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the year 1928*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne 1928, pp.20-22.

<sup>383</sup> Later the Defence Department stated that ‘tin-hat’ targets were to become mandatory in clubs for ranges between 200 and 600 yards, but implementation of the order was delayed until the start of the financial year 1930-31.

<sup>384</sup> The Council was not to know that the Commonwealth Match would not be held again until 1937.

<sup>385</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 March 1930, p.16.

However, 1929 was to be a much more challenging year. A columnist in Adelaide's *Advertiser* reported the unsettled state of the rifle club movement:

Any estimate of what will happen in rifle shooting during the coming twelve months must be qualified, otherwise it would rank on a par with the official estimate of the wheat yield which comes to light every now and again when a little rain falls. Unfortunately the year is not opening well...<sup>386</sup>

In June, it became public that £800,000 was to be slashed from the Defence budget, including £150,000 from Army.<sup>387</sup> Retrenchments began almost immediately, training was curtailed and bases and units disbanded. The CCRAA's government grants were not exempt. The Government grant was slashed from £48,000 to £40,000 with the result that the Commonwealth Matches were cancelled for 1929, leaving the hope that they would be fired in Victoria in 1930.<sup>388</sup> Money for travel was severely curtailed as well. Consequently in 1929 the CCRAA did not meet at all, correspondence taking the place of direct meetings.

In the middle of these cuts, Colonel Merrett was honoured as a Commander of the British Empire, in the Civil Division, and Edwin John Brown, chairman of the NRA of NSW and former CCRAA delegate, was awarded an Order of the British Empire for his services to rifle shooting. The new Labour Government, elected in October 1929 partly on a platform to abolish compulsory military training, did just that the following month; henceforth it was an all-volunteer system of enlistments. Bigger issues were about to take precedence. Soon after the Australian general election of October 1929, the Stock Market crashed in New York and the unmitigated global disaster known as the Great Depression began. The world financial system began to collapse. Australia was extremely hard hit with its currency pegged to British Sterling and with a heavy dependence on exports.<sup>389</sup>

Meanwhile, with the spiral into financial disaster, it soon became clear that there would be no Commonwealth Match in March 1930. The militia, which was supposed to have a strength of 35,000, slipped to 27,000 by 1931. By March 1930 when the

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<sup>386</sup> *Advertiser*, 11 January 1929, p.27.

<sup>387</sup> *Argus*, 21 June 1929, p.9.

<sup>388</sup> *Argus*, 6 April 1931, p.3.

<sup>389</sup> It didn't help that coal strikes in NSW hit the economy as well. Police gunfire killed a teenage striker at Rothbury. The CCRAA was forced to clarify the actions of NRA of NSW Secretary Herbert Dakin's involvement in the Police actions against the coal strike at Rothbury. The role of Lieutenant-Colonel Beardsmore, a member of the NRA of NSW Council, in also supporting the Police camp at Rothbury was not so public. Later it emerged that Dakin had hired out to the Police camp 'supplies' from the stores of the NRA of NSW. For the CCRAA, the question was whether these 'supplies' were Commonwealth stores? What was hired out was not disclosed. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 December 1929, p.10.

CCRAA Executive met the new Minister for Defence, Albert Ernest Green in Melbourne, to protest against the reduction in their grant.<sup>390</sup> But the most important item on their agenda, however, was to discuss the future administration of rifle clubs. In a remarkable proposal, the delegation proposed to the Minister that rifle clubs be moved from the Secretary, Department of Defence back to the military, specifically under the Adjutant-General, Major-General Thomas Henry Dodds, believing this would allow more efficient economies.<sup>391</sup> Furthermore, the deputation asked if the rifle clubs could then be placed as Reserves to the Australian Military Forces (AMF).

This proposal had not been discussed at the Council meeting of 1928 and if it was discussed prior to this meeting it must have been by only a few. In fact, when word got out about this proposal, it elicited sharp protests from at least the NRA of Western Australia, and SARA, indicating that State rifle associations had not in fact been consulted. Colonel Merrett was forced to defend himself after a strong letter against the move was published in Western Australia, where riflemen were still sensitive to the issues with military control it had experienced before World War One.<sup>392</sup> As anticipated, the Minister could give no immediate replies.

With changes underway to the AMF and militia training, the Citizen Military Forces Rifle Associations became known as Militia Force Rifle Associations by mid-1930. The DRAC, Fetherstonhaugh, released his 1929/30 report about the same time. In it, he confirmed that the Minister had approved the changeover of administration of rifle clubs back to military control as of 31 March 1931. Fetherstonhaugh also noted that the Government grant had been further reduced to £40,000. Surprisingly, despite the dire economic circumstances, the number of clubs, efficiencies and members overall continued to rise steadily. There were 821 rifle ranges in operation throughout the Commonwealth, and there were 132 militia rifle clubs in operation, an increase of 40 over the previous year.<sup>393</sup> The improvement in rifle and machine gun scores of those members of the militia rifle clubs was a notable feature of the report. But it only proved

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<sup>390</sup> Albert Green, Member for Kalgoorlie, was Minister for Defence from 1929 to 1931. See Bolton, G. C., 'Green, Albert Ernest (1869 - 1940)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp.89-90.

<sup>391</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia – Rifle Clubs: Report of the Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs for the year ended 30 June 1930*, H.J. Green, Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1930, p.3. Also see Hill, A.J. , 'Dodds, Thomas Henry (1873 - 1943)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 8, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp 314-316.

<sup>392</sup> *West Australian*, 9 April 1930, p.14 and *West Australian*, 13 May 1930, p.16.

<sup>393</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia – Rifle Clubs: Report of the Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs for the year ended 30 June 1930*, H.J. Green, Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1930, p.1. and the *Argus*, 6 April 1931, p.3.

to civilian riflemen that which they had known for years, that additional practice in the rifle club environment would also always better the marksman capabilities of militia restricted to an annual musketry course.

Meanwhile, most of the State rifle associations were showing the strain as the budget cuts continued, with record low prize amounts on offer, and generally red ink in the Treasurers' reports. The quick response to the CCRAA proposal for rifle clubs to move under military control was no doubt a response to the same economic pressures and the imperative to reduce the economic pressure by any means. Even relatively 'wealthy' rifle clubs, such as the Sydney Rifle Club, were feeling the effects of the Depression by this time. In its annual report for 1930/31, it wrote:

In presenting the Annual Report for the past year, your Committee believe that they voice the opinion of members when they state that the Club has passed through one of the most strenuous periods of its existence. The great cause for regret at the present juncture is the inability of a great number of members being unable to attend owing to the existing depression causing a lot of unemployment...<sup>394</sup>

It was in this atmosphere that the CCRAA Executive came together in Melbourne in November 1930, this time to meet with representatives of the Military Board.<sup>395</sup> Some immediate decisions were the outcome. On targets, it was agreed that the AMF 'tin-hat' target with a grey top and yellow bottom, would be used to 300 yards. At 500 and 600 yards, a similar coloured target but with a black bull's-eye would be used, while at longer ranges, the white target with black bull's-eye would continue.

It was also agreed that while the efficiency requirements for rifle club members would be unchanged, snap shooting (individual) and 'tiles' (teams) matches for military shooting would have to put on to every association and union match program from then on, otherwise efficiency grants would not be given.<sup>396</sup> This last decision was cloaked

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<sup>394</sup> *Sydney Rifle Club: Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1930/31*, np, Sydney, 1931, pp.1-3. The club had a balance of £155/5/6.

<sup>395</sup> As of 1 March 1930, the members of the Military Board included the Minister for Defence (A. E. Green); the Chief of the General Staff who also exercised the duties of Inspector General of the AMF (General Sir H. G. Chauvel – who had been a member of the 1920 Military Committee); the Adjutant General (Brigadier T. H. Dodds); the Quartermaster-General (Major-General W.A. Coxen – who replaced Chauvel as CGS in April 1931); a Finance Member; an Associate Member (Brigadier C.H. Brand – who had been responsible for establishing CFRAs in NSW and Victoria); and a Secretary. *The Army Staff List of the Australian Military Forces*, H. J. Green, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1930, p.9.

<sup>396</sup> *Advertiser*, 14 November 1930, p.6 and *Mercury*, 15 November 1930, p.5. Efficiency requirements remained at three practices a year, of eight shots each (including a sighter). This was hardly a stringent test, and perhaps couldn't have been placed much lower for efficiency grants to be awarded.

as a measure to standardise militia and rifle club small arms shooting practices, but the military also laid down exactly what percentage of grants the associations were to provide to conduct military matches in their programmes. All of the measures were to be adopted from 1 July, 1931. The CCRAA had brought the rifle clubs back under military control; and control was being exercised already.

In February 1931, the Adjutant-General, Major-General Dodds, issued a memo for the Military Board to members of all rifle associations and rifle clubs. It stated that the Minister had agreed to the recommendations arising from the meeting in September 1930. It went further. The memo stated that while there was no pressure on any rifle club, those rifle clubs who wished to be earmarked as a reserve unit and allocated to a militia unit could do so, and by doing so would allow the mobilisation plans to earmark them for deployment in event of hostilities in support of their unit. As a 'sweetener' to these decisions, the Minister agreed to increase the ammunition allowance to riflemen, while the Rifle Clubs vote would remain as a separate item in the Estimates. However:

It must be realised too, that, if further economies in the Defence Department are decided upon, the vote for rifle clubs and associations can hardly hope to escape a proportionate reduction, though this is a matter which remains outside the control of the Board.<sup>397</sup>

The Military Board also took some pains to point out that the rifle clubs and their associations would remain independent. In his memo, Dodds went on to say:

On the general question of the change of control the Military Board desire to emphasize that the Clubs are fully represented in their State Associations and the Commonwealth Council, and that the control of their administration and the power of continuing the success of the movement, in which the Board will wholeheartedly co-operate, still remains in their hands.<sup>398</sup>

Fetherstonhaugh, now acting Secretary to the Military Board, also issued a memo in March to the military districts, formation and school commanders and to militia unit commanders, outlining the changes to come in July. In it, he stated: 'All members of the Permanent Forces are required to assist in maintaining the success and efficiency of the Rifle Club movement, and the co-operation of the Commanding Officers of Militia

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<sup>397</sup> *West Australian*, 3 March 1931, p.6.

<sup>398</sup> 'Memorandum for Members of Rifle Associations and Rifle Clubs', *Department of Defence – Military Board Memo dated 20 February 1931*, H.J. Green, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1931, p.4.

Units is desired.<sup>399</sup> Nonetheless perceptions persisted that despite CCRAA Chairman Merrett's assertions to the contrary, the independence of associations would be eroded further by the military. A columnist in the *Advertiser* stated:

The above will not be pleasant news for many riflemen in this State. The subject which would have given pleasure - no reduction in the grants to associations and unions - is not mentioned. Nothing is said about the grant, except that so much per cent of it is to be used on snap-shooting and for the association, tile shooting...Until particulars regarding the grant are received it is difficult to say how the associations, unions, and clubs have fared as a result of the conference...one fails to see why the associations, unions, and clubs were not given an opportunity to consider the recommendations before they were sent on to the Minister.<sup>400</sup>

These changes also caused some angst among the various supervisors of rifle clubs in military districts, who now found some of their duties taken from them and given to the military staff officer now allotted in each State to report to the State Commandant on rifle clubs. For example, the detailed staff officer:

...in addition to his normal military duties, has been charged with the preparation of mobilisation plans for Rifle Clubs, the organisation of Rifle Clubs as military reserves, and the allocation of clubs to militia units, all of which are definitely military duties for which the civilian Supervisor of Rifle Clubs is neither competent nor qualified to perform.<sup>401</sup>

So from 1 July 1931, the rifle club movement effectively reverted back to 1914; even Cable Guards were back in vogue.<sup>402</sup> Ten years of civilian administration had been accepted, even preferred, by civilian rifle clubs since the seminal military committee conference of 1920. While some grumbled about the continued military dominance of association councils, on the whole rifle clubs had gone about their own business over that time unfettered by direct military control of any sort.<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> 'Administration of Rifle Associations and Rifle Clubs', Military Board Memo dated 4 March 1931, SP459/1, NAA.

<sup>400</sup> *Advertiser*, 2 January 1931, p.14.

<sup>401</sup> 'Administration of Rifle Associations and Rifle Clubs', Military Board Letter to Commandant 2<sup>nd</sup> Military District dated 13 June 1931, SP 459/1, NAA.

<sup>402</sup> As in the years before World War One, Cable Guards were rifle club members who were assigned to guard the strategic points around Australia where the international telegraph cables came ashore. Cable Guards were given militia pay, honorary ranks, uniforms and webbing, and were regarded as a unit in military terms. See *Australian Rifle Club Regulations 1931*, H. J. Green, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1931, pp.9-10.

<sup>403</sup> A letter to the editor called the CCRAA a 'furtive' and 'ghostly' body. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 1931, p.10. The CCRAA remained controlled by former military officers for years to come.

Since the end of World War One a whole new class of member had been made into clubs, which had not known any military control. Unfortunately figures are not available which show the essential demographics let alone the numbers of 'pure' civilian versus military or former military men in rifle clubs by 1930. However, what is known is that by mid-1930: 'Out of 1,025 clubs in the Commonwealth, only 398 are affiliated with State Rifle Associations, and of the 37,818 riflemen only 2,990 are members of State Associations.'<sup>404</sup>

The 1930-1931 period saw the Rifle Clubs Grant reduced further, to £33, 617. The DRAC report to 30 June 1931 noted: '...that the reduction of the vote was countered chiefly by reducing the provision for the construction of new ranges.' It went on to state:

While this expedient serves at the moment, it is only a matter of time when construction of, and repairs to, rifle ranges will require additional funds, and unless extra appropriations are made in future there will be no option but to divert a proportion of the amounts now devoted to grants to rifle associations and clubs towards the maintenance of ranges.<sup>405</sup>

At the same time, the number of clubs continued to rise (to 1,177), as did efficiency (to 88 percent), with an overall membership of 44,946, the highest for a decade.<sup>406</sup> Militia rifle clubs now stood at 128 while 557 civilian rifle clubs had applied to be allotted to a militia unit as a reserve rifle club.<sup>407</sup> These figures were extraordinary. Men were joining rifle clubs in unprecedented numbers at a time when unemployment had struck figures of about 30 percent. Perhaps the chance to win some prize-money was a motivation because only Cable Guards received their efficiency allowance, all of £1, personally.

By late 1931 the international situation was deteriorating, with Japan invading Manchuria. Rifle club recruitment may have been a reaction to those new dark clouds on the security horizon. Paradoxically, AMF numbers reached their lowest point that year, and the rifle club vote had been reduced even further to £25,007, so there seemed

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<sup>404</sup> *Mercury*, 14 May 1931, p.12.

<sup>405</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 April 1932, p.12.

<sup>406</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>407</sup> *Mercury*, 27 April 1932, p.10. The new DRAC was Major Victor Paul Hildebrande Stantke, appointed 1 November 1931 (he became Adjutant-General during World War Two), see 'Stantke, V.P.H.', *B4717*, NAA.

to be no connection between the external international situation and the rise in rifle club numbers.<sup>408</sup>

In mid-1931 the CCRAA tried to encourage more clubs and the State Associations in turn, to affiliate with their State Associations and the CCRAA respectively. When the new Rifle Club Regulations were issued in October 1931, it actually became mandatory to do so from 1 July 1932.<sup>409</sup> The regulations were clear. The Military Board controlled rifle clubs; the DRAC controlled the associations, including the CCRAA, on its behalf.<sup>410</sup> District commanders - the former State commandants - controlled the State rifle clubs and the State Supervisor of Rifle Clubs worked for the commanders.

This was essentially little different from what had been the case before World War One, but whatever the depth of feeling about the changes, 1931 was not the year in which to protest. Higher efficiency demands were placed on rifle clubs, putting more pressure on them to maintain the standards for membership. Rifle clubs were not to have less than 15 efficient members and not more than 30 percent inefficient members, otherwise the club would be disbanded.

In September 1931, Colonel Merrett travelled to Western Australia to attend the State rifle association's annual prize shoot. Perhaps Merrett felt that he should show the CCRAA flag in the 'West', given the greatest resistance to changes to rifle club administration and direction had come from that State. In a speech there he appealed to the Western Australians' sense of patriotism:

The public would be astonished if they could see a map of Australia whereon were dotted the various places where rifle clubs have been formed. Western Australia has several of these clubs, which are of great strategical value. That is, there are organised men armed with a rifle who, under the Defence Act, could be called upon for service in time of need...Australia is dotted with these little outposts of loyal, patriotic citizens who can be depended upon in time of need.<sup>411</sup>

While the vast majority of riflemen adjusted to the changes at the top angst still remained into 1932. For example, in January 1932, the new Commandant of Western

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<sup>408</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 April 1933, p.14. Some suspected 'padding' of club memberships to obtain extra supplies of ammunition to be the cause of the increase in numbers.

<sup>409</sup> *Rifle Club Regulations 1931*, dated 31 October 1931, H.J. Green, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1931, p.6.

<sup>410</sup> Members of the Military Board at 1 May 1931 included the Minister for Defence (J. B. Chifley); the CGS (now Coxen); AG (Dodds); QMG (Brand); a Finance Member; and the new Assistant Secretary (E. Fetherstonhaugh, formerly DRAC). *The Staff and Regimental Lists of the Australian Military Forces, 1 May 1931*, H. J. Green, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1931, p.9.

<sup>411</sup> *West Australian*, 1 September 1931, p.8.

Australia, Brigadier Athelstan Markham Martyn, a keen rifle shot himself, felt compelled to say, in a speech at Kalgoorlie:

The rifle movement was coming to be recognised as something akin to the military. In some States the alliance with the military was not taken too kindly and keen resentment was shown in parts to what was considered the 'interference' of the military authorities. However, in most instances great benefit had been reaped as a result of the combination. There were matters which could be dealt with much more effectively by the military man than by the civilian.<sup>412</sup>

A strongly worded letter from the president of a rifle club to the *Sydney Morning Herald* demonstrated that the resentment was not confined to Western Australia:

The civilian riflemen will seriously resent any attempt to foist a military government on their sport because they have had a long and bitter experience of its unsympathetic and inefficient control. The civilian rifle club movement in New South Wales has laboured and suffered serious disorganisation under this unhelpful military domination. It lost thousands of active and potential members in being forced out of Randwick range to Long Bay and then from Long Bay to the outlandish Liverpool range and even here the increasing invasions by the militia clubs and machine gun units seem to indicate that in a few years the civilian rifle clubs will be sent further afield.<sup>413</sup>

There is no doubt that the 1931/32 year was one of the toughest ever felt by the rifle club movement in its entire history. On the face of it the movement was robust. The DRAC report for the year ending 30 June 1932 noted that the rifle club movement was strong, despite the financial pressures, with: '1172 rifle clubs, with 44,537 members...of this number 39,964 members, or 90 percent, were efficient...as well as 90 miniature rifle clubs throughout the States, with membership of 2,770, while 56 miniature ranges were in operation.'<sup>414</sup> Nonetheless, a moratorium was imposed on new rifle clubs being formed or rifle ranges being constructed, range maintenance was minimised, while numbers at some State rifle association prize meetings were dropping along with prize money.<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> *West Australian*, 25 January 1932, p.12. Details of Martyn can be found at McNicoll, R., 'Martyn, Athelstan Markham (1881 - 1956)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp.429-430.

<sup>413</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 1932, p.6.

<sup>414</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 April 1933, p.14.

<sup>415</sup> *Western Australian*, 19 April 1933, p.4.

Over the 1931-1932 financial year, no meetings of the CCRAA or its Executive were held.<sup>416</sup> While the ill-effects of the Great Depression still had a long way to run, CCRAA delegates, especially the Chairman, Colonel Merrett, had not lost sight of the longer-term objectives of the rifle club movement and continued to work to achieve those objectives whenever and however possible. However, the ban on any new clubs forming due to financial restrictions was still in force, leading to a decline in club numbers once again. It was finally announced that the CCRAA would hold a meeting in late October 1932, its first since 1928. The deputation from the Council waited on the Minister for Defence, Sir George Pearce to raise issues directly with him.<sup>417</sup>

Weighing on everyone's mind was the reduced vote, which for the 1931-1932 year had declined further to just £22,644 exclusive of salaries. The Council faced continuing challenges. There was no money for Commonwealth Matches, very little money for the CCRAA itself, no money for new clubs, and no immediate relief in sight even with the change of administration. While the Adjutant-General, Dodds, addressed the Council and: '...stressed the great value of the Riflemen from a reserve point of view', and although Minister Pearce also expressed sympathy for the council's issues and travails, there was no succour financially, at least not immediately.<sup>418</sup>

Merrett floated an idea for a riflemen's camp to boost reserve numbers, while there was some discussion of using unemployed with a Government grant to effect improvements on rifle ranges.<sup>419</sup> A spirited discussion on the value of the 'tin hat' targets at 300 yards and the utility of the single-arm sling to improve marksmanship

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<sup>416</sup> In June 1932, Brigadiers Dean and Paine became Commanders of the British Empire (CBE) for their services to rifle shooting, a well-deserved honour for these veterans of the CCRAA. Dean was an original member of the 1887 General Council, while Paine had devoted more than 30 years to the rifle club movement.

<sup>417</sup> Pearce represented Australia on the Empire delegation at the Washington Disarmament Conference held between November 1921 and February 1922. See Beddie, B., 'Pearce, Sir George Foster (1870 - 1952)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 177-182. The new DRAC, Lieutenant-Colonel Stantke, and the commandant of the Small Arms School at Randwick, Major John James Lawton McCall, DSO, also attended the meeting. McCall was an officer in the Permanent Military Forces who had entered Duntroon in 1912. He had won a DSO in France as a staff officer in infantry. Coincidentally he served in the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion with John Austin Chapman who replaced him as Chief Instructor at the Small Arms School in 1934. Archibald Clifford Blacklow, who captained the 1919 AIF rifle team at Bisley, also served in the 30<sup>th</sup> Battalion. A delegate from South Australia was Clement Claude Castine, the son of General Council founding member Lieutenant-Colonel J.W. Castine. C.C. Castine was a Boer War veteran, the Secretary of the NRA of SA and had been a member of the Rifle Club Staff Office between 1903-07. From Queensland came William Gordon Duncan, originally from Victoria and a Boer War veteran of the 5<sup>th</sup> Victorian Contingent. He was the clerk of a Brisbane investment firm and also the Chairman of the SQRA.

<sup>418</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for the Year ending 30 June 1933*, W.J. Anderson, & Co., Sydney, 1933, pp.20 and 24.

<sup>419</sup> *West Australian*, 25 November 1932, p.24.

ended the meeting.<sup>420</sup> A majority of delegates wanted the slings made compulsory from July 1933 against the common-sense opposition from NSW, which was: ‘...under the impression that the only reason why a service rifle was equipped with a sling at all was, for the sole purpose of enabling a soldier to carry the weapon on the march.’<sup>421</sup> While the routine business of the rifle club movement continued, it continued under the pall of the Great Depression, which few saw ending any time soon.

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<sup>420</sup> Until then, a double arm sling was able to be used. Fifty-four and a quarter inches long, it went around both arms to give the shooter additional stability, hence the ‘double-arm’ sling. It was not permitted following the adoption of the SMLE from 1 July 1933 for Service Matches, and from 1 July 1936 for all competitions.

<sup>421</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for the Year ending 30 June 1933*, W.J. Anderson, & Co., Sydney, 1933, pp.21-24.

## Chapter 9: Two Steps Forward, One Step Back

The grant in 1932/33 was the same as the previous year. Figures issued by the DRAC on 30 June 1932 showed a small drop in rifle club membership and efficient, no doubt the result of the high unemployment.<sup>422</sup> A year later there was a conference in May 1933 between Military Board representatives and the Lithgow Small Arms Factory to discuss a range of matters. Lithgow had been converting old long rifles to the new short barrels, but no SMLE rifles had been produced since 1929: ‘...people were forgetting how to make them.’ However, the changeover to the service rifle for rifle clubs, foreshadowed for 1933, was a reason for Lithgow to be in discussion.<sup>423</sup> This conference in Melbourne led to positive outcomes for the rifle club movement.

At the conference, the Military Board agreed to increase the size of the aiming mark for the ‘tin hat’ targets, but: ‘The Long Range target remains unaltered, the Army not being interested beyond 600 yards.’<sup>424</sup> There was also a palpable excitement about the introduction of the Mark VII ammunition and the service SMLE rifle from 1 July 1933. The ammunition was a high velocity, point-nosed bullet, not the obsolete blunt-nose Mk.VI cartridge; still in service 25 years after the US Pacific Fleet marksman displayed the effectiveness of the ‘pointed’ bullet in matches in Sydney and Melbourne in 1908. The last of the Mk.VI ammo and the long .303 rifles were to be phased out by 30 September, but not before some faulty lots of war-made Mk.VII ammunition had to be recalled by the Defence Department.<sup>425</sup>

On other fronts, it appeared that the purse-strings of Government were loosening, at least a little. It was announced in October that that the CCRAA had indeed managed to obtain an increase of £5,000 in the grant for the 1933/34 year. In part a grass-roots campaign by CCRAA Chairman Merrett probably gave some impetus towards that decision. In February 1933 he had issued a circular through rifle clubs to all riflemen which set out the straitened circumstances of the movement, the efforts and contributions made by riflemen in difficult times and an appeal to increase the vote to

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<sup>422</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia – Rifle Clubs: Report of the Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs for the Year ended 30 June 1932*, L.F. Johnston, Commonwealth Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1934, pp.1-5.

<sup>423</sup> Griffiths, T., *Lithgow’s Small Arms Factory*, Vol.1, 1907-1950, Toptech Engineering, Terrey Hills [NSW], p.234. There was no CCRAA Council meeting in 1933.

<sup>424</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1933*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne 1934, p.9.

<sup>425</sup> *Courier-Mail*, 29 September 1933, p.9.

rifle clubs by £5,000. Riflemen sent the circular to their Members of Parliament. In the case of NSW, riflemen were actively encouraged to do so and even provided with a draft cover letter to go with the circular.<sup>426</sup> As Merrett later put it: ‘I am of the opinion that the issue of this memorandum has assisted the Minister in inducing Parliament to agree to an increase in the Vote for rifle clubs and Associations.’<sup>427</sup>

In August 1933: ‘...the Munitions Supply Board ordered that rifle production should begin again and continue at modest levels – about 1000 a year – each year thereafter...No complete rifles were made in 1933-34, but extensive preparations commenced and continued – restarting was a very big task’ (although production of short, heavy barrels continued).<sup>428</sup> Service matches were re-introduced into a number of State association and district union meetings, albeit reluctantly. The decision was criticised by some associations, like Western Australia, for not having been consulted properly by the CCRAA, but the Military Board simply threatened to make service matches compulsory if associations did not take them up. At the same time, it was announced by the Government that militia training would be extended to country districts, which was seen as a positive step for the expansion of new rifle clubs.<sup>429</sup>

In January 1934, Colonel Merrett was knighted for his services to agriculture in Victoria, although his long service to the rifle clubs movement was recognised in the various press narratives around his distinction, along with his other civic and military roles. There was little question that Merrett thoroughly deserved the honour. Riflemen had much to thank Merrett for. More tactful than his predecessor at the CCRAA, Templeton, conservative, cautious at times in his dealings with Government and the military, Merrett was nonetheless an indefatigable proponent for the rifle club movement. Among his many achievements was his role in the introduction of the heavy barrel to the SMLE:

With the introduction of the new [SMLE] rifle on 1st July [1933]...(the) change over to the Short Magazine Lee-Enfield rifle had been viewed with much concern by Australian riflemen, owing to the fact that the lightweight standard service barrel fitted to this rifle was not sufficiently accurate for target shooting. However, Colonel Merrett, acting as Chairman of the Commonwealth Council

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<sup>426</sup> ‘CCRAA Circular dated 10 February 1933 and Secretary NRA of NSW letter to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion (Newcastle) Rifle Club dated 22 February 1933’, *SP459/1*, NAA.

<sup>427</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1933*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne 1934, p.19.

<sup>428</sup> Griffiths, T., *Lithgow’s Small Arms Factory and its People*, Vol.1, 1907-1950, Topotech Engineering, Terrey Hills [NSW], p.235.

<sup>429</sup> *West Australian*, 14 October 1933, p.16.

of Rifle Associations, arranged with the Defence Department, after several conferences, that the M.L.E. rifle be converted by reducing the length of the barrel and fore-end by five inches; also that a standard heavy barrel be made for the S.M.L.E. rifle. This agreement made the way clear for the introduction of the S.M.L.E. rifle for general target shooting, without any opposition from the rifleman. In fact, it was generally considered that our new rifle would be superior to anything in use in the Empire.<sup>430</sup>

This good start to the year was followed by an increase to the rifle movement grant of almost £5,000 in mid-1934 and a lifting of the moratorium on forming new rifle clubs, while a further £3,000 was added to the Estimates for 1934/35. By June 1934, 59 new rifle clubs were approved, 35 new rifle ranges were constructed and additional funds provided for the upkeep of 160 other rifle ranges. By late 1934, approval was also given for a further 50 new rifle clubs.<sup>431</sup> Meanwhile the VRA held successful Centenary matches in Melbourne.<sup>432</sup> Money was loosening up, but it would take years to get back to 1914 or even pre-Depression levels.

In May 1934, the Army's Rifle Clubs Office issued a circular which outlined the rights and privileges of honorary members, and in doing so noted that women were not active members. This whole issue had been raised in 1927 by a Melbourne club. At that time, the attitude of the VRA and CCRAA Chairman, Merrett, was simply that if women competitors paid their fees they were as entitled as anyone else to compete. The CCRAA declined to rule on the issue as did the Defence Department. In 1934, the VRA appeared to have seized on the circular to justify a ban on women competing in the State prize meetings. This decision saw an immediate reaction in the Victorian press:

Without going into the merits or demerits of the case, it seems a harsh regulation that women are not permitted to shoot in competition. In New South Wales advice has been received that although some privileges have been withdrawn, the National Rifle Association will permit them to shoot in the annual matches in October. Women have been competitors at the Victorian rifle matches for more than 25 years<sup>433</sup>

The *Australian Women's Weekly* chimed in a week later:

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<sup>430</sup> *Seventy-second Annual Report of the Victorian Rifle Association 1932-1933*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, pp.19-20.

<sup>431</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1934*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1935, p.16 and *Courier-Mail*, 17 August 1934, p.12. .

<sup>432</sup> At these matches, an 'Inter-State' match was held, which included a New Zealand team, as a poor substitute for the still moribund Commonwealth Match.

<sup>433</sup> *Argus*, 6 August 1934, p.7.

**Men Aim To Keep Them Off the Rifle Ranges** - Our riflewomen have themselves become the targets for a direct hit from the Men's Rifle Association. They have been banned from the rifle ranges in Victoria and their position in other States is uncertain... In nearly every case they have met with opposition, and the keenest rivalry by the men players who, as controlling authorities, have held the whip hand.

As the Government provides ammunition at reduced rates for men at the ranges they are anxious that shooting at these places should be done from a defence point of view, and do not want it to become a sport, as is golf. No doubt there will be disappointment among the women rifle shooters, as there are some brilliant shots among them...The new ruling debars women from competing for the King's prize and quarterly shoot.<sup>434</sup>

By this time the VRA may well have felt a little discomfited, especially as the other States had not adopted the anti-women stance, let alone the NRA in England. At the CCRAA meeting in Melbourne in late October 1934, the VRA asked that the CCRAA consider: '...that the whole matter be discussed by the Commonwealth Council, seeing that other Associations are still allowing them to compete.'<sup>435</sup> After all, said the VRA, it had only acted in compliance with: '...the [Defence] department instructions relative to honorary members (which include ladies) competing in rifle matches.' The Council subsequently passed a resolution: 'That, in the opinion of this Council, ladies should not be allowed to compete at State Association prize meetings' (the vote was not unanimous).<sup>436</sup>

This resolution was then forwarded to the Secretary of the Military Board at Army Headquarters and asked that: '...instructions be issued to Districts accordingly'.<sup>437</sup> The Adjutant-General replied: '...that instructions were issued to District bases [the Military Districts] on 18/5/34 pointing out that only active members were entitled to the privileges and concessions authorised under the Rifle Club regulations, which

<sup>434</sup> *Australian Women's Weekly*, 18 August 1934, p.43.

<sup>435</sup> The Council met in Melbourne in late October 1934. The meeting began with an address by the Army Chief of Staff, Major-General Julius Henry Bruche, CB, CMG, standing in for the Adjutant-General, Dodds, who was about to retire. Bruche gave an upbeat assessment of progress for the rifle club movement. Major John Austin Chapman, DSO, who had replaced McCall as the head of the Small Arms School also attended the meeting. *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1934*, Keating-Wood Pty.Ltd., Melbourne, 1935, pp.38 and 49. Details of Bruche can be found at Rowell, S., 'Bruche, Sir Julius Henry (1873-1961)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp.462-463. Major-General Chapman, CB, DSO and bar, retired from military service in 1950 after a distinguished military career. The Council also discussed the adoption of a single pattern uniform for riflemen. *West Australian*, 12 November, 1934, p.8., and the *Mercury*, 6 December 1934, p.16.

<sup>436</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1934*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1935, p.43 and *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for the Year ended 30 June 1935*, The Land Newspaper, Sydney, 1936, p.8.

<sup>437</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1934*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1935, p.11.

regulations in no manner recognise women competitors.' The Military Board then ran for cover: '...as the general conduct of the Prize Meetings of State Rifle Associations is left to the Associations, it is preferred that the resolution of the Commonwealth Council...regarding the eligibility of competitors be issued direct ...to State Rifle Associations.'<sup>438</sup> In 1927 it had been the CCRAA which had ducked for cover on the question, now it was Army. Women competitors were right to be disappointed.

At the October 1936 NRA of NSW matches the order was made - women competitors were banned. The blame for this was put on the Army, not the CCRAA: 'By a military regulation women have been debarred from shooting throughout the Commonwealth.' *The Argus* reported:

Rifle clubs are now part of the military reserve of the Commonwealth, and as members of the reserve must be males, women are not eligible to obtain ammunition or to share the privileges of clubs. When the order was announced officially on the ranges on Saturday many riflemen expressed regret at the withdrawal of a 'refining influence.' The chairman of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations (Sir Charles Merrett) said yesterday: "If rifle shooting is to be simply a sport let them all come. If it is to be a matter of defence, in which women cannot share, however, it is better that they should stay out."<sup>439</sup>

However, quietly it was agreed that the ban would not apply to the handful of women who were already members before the ban, so a number continued to shoot at the Association level.<sup>440</sup> The rest were relegated to membership of Miniature rifle clubs. Women were not allowed to become members of large bore rifle clubs again and shoot in mainstream competitions for over 20 years.

Meanwhile the international situation, which had been deteriorating for some time, became even more uncertain. Japan had invaded Manchuria and started a long, but undeclared war against China, in 1932. When criticised for this, Japan responded by withdrawing from the League of Nations in 1933, followed soon after by Germany, now under the control of the Nazi Party of Adolf Hitler. In Australia, there was more

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<sup>438</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1934*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1935, p.12.

<sup>439</sup> *Argus*, 12 October 1936, p.13 and 9 November 1936, p.5. In a letter to the 2<sup>nd</sup> District Base Commandant [the 2<sup>nd</sup> Military District] on 26 September 1936, the NRA of NSW explicitly asked that the Military Board be approached to give permission for women competitors to join the October prize matches, if they obtained ammunition from other than the association. The answer from the Military Board on 7 October was an emphatic 'no'. Correspondence October 1936, *SP/1008*, NAA.

<sup>440</sup> *Mercury*, 21 July 1938, p.3.

concern about the situation but little was done to improve the defence posture, although in 1935 an increase in militia strength was authorised.<sup>441</sup>

By the end of 1937, Abyssinia had been annexed by Italy, Germany had cast off the Versailles Treaty, civil war was underway in Spain, and Japan deepened her incursion into China. It was in this environment that the rifle club movement continued to struggle to revitalise itself against continuing financial restrictions while the defence 'community' struggled to raise the level of alarm that should have been felt by all Australians at the strategic situation. The British commitment to the 'fortress of Singapore' was met with increasing expenditure by Australia in defence, and especially after 1938, which saw a big jump in militia numbers to around 80,000 by mid-1939.

For the rifle club movement, 1934 had ended with some hope that financial restrictions were coming to an end. In 1935, however, this hope was dashed; restrictions continued. The CCRAA was not allowed to meet, or even the Executive Committee, and so most business was carried on by letter. In August, not long after the Government announced a new three year defence program to begin modernisation with increased expenditure, riflemen everywhere were shocked by a Government announcement that as rifle ammunition stocks were low, the issue of free ammunition to riflemen was to be halved, from 200 to 100 rounds. The response was immediate, with numerous letters to the editor decrying what was seen as a short-sighted vision.

One TRA Committee member estimated that while the Government was paying out about £90,000 a year for ammunition, the riflemen were paying out of their own pockets between £150-170,000 a year. The Captain of the Queanbeyan Rifle Club in NSW suggested that the 'red tabs' [military officers] were trying to: '...exterminate the rifle club movement.'<sup>442</sup> J.S. Eastmon, Secretary of the NRA of Western Australia and a CCRAA delegate, saw the bigger picture in a letter to *The West Australian*:

I would like to point out...that it is not wise to stem our voluntary defence when wars seem imminent. Our greatest British statesmen are deeply concerned and if our supplies of ammunition are only bare reserves, then it is high time that the Maribyrnong factory was accelerated to make up any leeway, and take no chance of a public outcry by being caught slumbering. Men are issued with a rifle in the army, and it is, I should say, the duty of the public and the Government to see that nothing is placed in the way of men desiring to learn how to use a rifle with

<sup>441</sup> The Government announced a three year plan with increases in defence expenditure across all forces, but especially for Army. *Argus*, 13 November 1935, p.8.

<sup>442</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for 1935*, Keating-Wood, Melbourne, 1936, pp.30-32, and the *Mercury*, 25 July 1935, p.5, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August 1935, p.8.

accuracy, the rifle itself being built for extreme accuracy... Therefore, let us have the ammunition to carry on in the old way, and should men be asked to risk their lives in their country's defence, it shall not be said that anybody was denied the right of learning to use a rifle.<sup>443</sup>

The beginning of 1936 saw confirmation of the introduction of the single-sling method from July 1936, reductions in free ammunition and to everyone's great disappointment, news that the British team anticipated to join the Australian matches in September 1936, was not able to come out to Australia due to the financial burden. However, several months later, with the announcement of a Royal visit to Australia for its 150<sup>th</sup> year celebrations in 1938, another invitation was issued to the NRA to send a team in *that* year. The annual report of the DRAC for the year ended 30 June, 1936 showed that the total number of riflemen in Australia was 49,180, with 1,175 civilian clubs (efficiency 92 per cent) and 130 regimental clubs (efficiency 88 per cent). The report noted that the Government grant was now £32,250, an increase of £1,770 over the previous year.<sup>444</sup>

In July came the electrifying announcement by the Minister for Defence, Robert Archdale Parkhill, that through a gift of £5,000 from a Sydney businessman, John Woolcott-Forbes, it was now possible to send an Australian team to Bisley in July 1937, a coronation year: 'The belief that a trained rifleman is one of the Empire's greatest assets is the basis of Mr. Woolcott-Forbes' interest in the sport. He considers that rifle shooting is an essential toward building up a defence reserve force for use in a national emergency.'<sup>445</sup> This news was tempered soon after by the news of the death of Brigadier J. J. Paine, one of the great stalwarts of both the NRA of NSW and the CCRAA, who had served on the Commonwealth Council for 30 years. Meanwhile, as the cost of heavy barrels meant loan rifles to rifle clubs could not be converted, it was agreed that the converted (cut-down) long .303 rifles would continue to be used indefinitely.<sup>446</sup>

Meanwhile the NRA accepted the invitation to send out a team in 1938 for a five month tour. Only the most pessimistic rifleman would have thought that the dark, difficult days of the Depression and its aftermath were not coming to an end. The end of

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<sup>443</sup> *West Australian*, 6 August 1935, p.16.

<sup>444</sup> *Mercury*, 9 June, 1937, p.4.

<sup>445</sup> *Argus*, 26 August 1936, p.8. For details of Parkhill of the United Australia Party, see Lloyd, C.J., 'Parkhill, Sir Robert Archdale (1878 - 1947)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp.142-143 and the *Argus*, 30 March 1937, p.8.

<sup>446</sup> The converted rifles were supposed to become redundant on 1 July 1937.

1936 came with the news that the NRA of NSW would offer the fantastic sum of £12,000 for the sesquicentenary meeting in Sydney in 1938, exceeding the prize money at Bisley for the first time. It was a brilliant piece of marketing.

In January 1937 there was a full meeting of the CCRAA in Melbourne. The new DRAC, Major Thomas Edgar Weavers, represented the Minister.<sup>447</sup> The new Adjutant-General, Major-General Sir Carl Jess, also came to the meeting to make an opening address.<sup>448</sup> Bisley arrangements took much time to discuss. After all, it had been more than a decade since an Australian team had been sent to compete at Bisley. For the first time ever, the team members would be issued with Australian team blazers in green and gold. Foremost on the agenda however, was a series of aggressive recommendations put forward by the Department of Defence. The recommendations by the Department to the CCRAA were that:

1. the CCRAA should be replaced by a Board with plenary powers to act given that the full Council had not been able to meet regularly and the Executive Committee was conducting the business of the Council
2. the amount of salary paid to the Secretary was too large and the work could be done by a State secretary at lesser cost
3. given the cost of holding Council meetings, that representation should be reduced to one from each association, except for NSW
4. the State rifle associations should have a standard constitution [this was agreed]
5. the CCRAA constitution should therefore also be re-written: 'with a view to the better functioning of the Council.'
6. uniform match rules and targets should be implemented' [this was agreed, but the Council wanted to replace 'tin hat' targets at 300 yards with a circular aiming mark].<sup>449</sup>

Western Australia was upset by the allocation of £18,000 against the Rifle Club Vote in Parliament 'for the sole purpose of the manufacture of Mark VII ammunition to replace 50 rounds of the present free issue of Mark VI ammunition...This was the first occasion that a charge for ammunition had been made against the rifle clubs vote', and also objected to a report from Parliament which suggested that the Minister wanted to: '...impose a physical fitness regulation affecting rifle club units, and also limit

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<sup>447</sup> Weavers, a Tasmanian militia officer who had been the 22-year old Supervisor of Rifle Clubs there before World War One, was badly wounded in Gallipoli and discharged from the AIF in 1917, but returned to militia service after the war.

<sup>448</sup> For details of Jess' career, see Coulthard-Clark, C.D., 'Jess, Sir Carl Herman (1884 - 1948)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp.485-487.

<sup>449</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for the Year ending 30 June 1937*, W. J. Anderson, Sydney, 1937, pp.11-13.

membership of rifle clubs to 50,000 on aggregate.’ The Council resolved ‘that it viewed with alarm the suggested limitations.’<sup>450</sup>

In May 1937 standard shooting rules and regulations, including target dimensions, were approved by the Military Board. The changes largely affected targets used past 600 yards. The DRA&C report for 30 June 1937 showed that there were 1,173 civilian rifle clubs with membership of 50,241 (of whom 46,908 were deemed to be ‘efficient’). There were 133 regimental clubs with 7,120 members, of whom 6,680 were efficient. The report noted that sales of short rifles with the heavy barrel increased by 2,573 for the year. Of efficient civilian riflemen, 31 per cent purchased their own rifles, with total sales since these rifles were made available being 32,526. Among other details was the remarkable figure of 10,199,760 rounds of ammunition expended (7,627,905 rounds of which were issued free).<sup>451</sup>

By December 1937 a record of over 1,400 entries had been received for the sesquicentenary matches in Sydney. By February 1938 prize money had now risen to over £10,000, and it seemed would meet the expectations projected by the NRA of NSW in late 1936.<sup>452</sup> Excitement was further heightened by announcements that not only would a New Zealand team compete but also for the first time ever, a team from South Africa. The Minister for Defence provided a grant of £1,000 for additional targets; in September the full allowance of 200 Mk.VII ammunition rounds was also restored to riflemen around Australia from the low point of 50 rounds in 1935. So with the arrival of the British team in Fremantle on December 21, it seemed that the rising tide of good news in 1937 would continue on into 1938.

At a civic reception in Fremantle for the British team, the leader of the Opposition, John Curtin, said:

There could be no doubting the fact that the Rifle Club movement was regarded as a valuable adjunct to Australia's defence. The English team's visit came at an opportune time in world affairs, when it was desired to give a demonstration of the solidarity and unity of the Empire. If that were achieved, an immense thing would have been done for world peace.

At the same reception, CCRAA Chairman Sir Charles Merrett said:

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<sup>450</sup> *West Australian*, 7 January 1937, p.6 and *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for the Year ending 30 June 1937*, W. J. Anderson, Sydney, 1937, p.13.

<sup>451</sup> DRAC reports were usually released about nine months after the period of the report. *Mercury*, 30 March 1938, p.12.

<sup>452</sup> The NSW press proudly announced that the prize for the NSW ‘King’s’ was to be 500 guineas while at Bisley the prize was only £250.

Bisley rifle meetings illustrated the unity of the Empire, and the spirit of comradeship exemplified there would stand in times of stress. In Australia rifle clubs taught young men how to shoot, and though there was no suggestion that Australia was looking for or fearing trouble, it was as well to convince outsiders of the country's strength, and so discourage them from making an attack.<sup>453</sup>

This view fitted perfectly with Merrett's oft-mentioned philosophy: 'Rifle shooting was more than a sport, it was a national and Empire necessity.'<sup>454</sup> It was a theme which would be repeated again and again during the visit of the British team, and into the period of an increasingly uncertain international security situation in 1938 and 1939.

Meanwhile, the Council noted Western Australia's desire to increase rifle club membership and it was agreed to approach the Department of Defence accordingly.<sup>455</sup> But the very next month, the Adjutant-General decreed that new memberships of rifle clubs were frozen once again. This was despite a detailed letter containing a direct personal appeal from CCRAA Chairman Merrett extolling the Minister to support increased members in rifle clubs.<sup>456</sup> *The Courier Mail* editorial stated:

It is unfortunate that the military authorities should have deemed it necessary to close the membership of rifle clubs, except for the filling of vacancies...Rifle shooting should be recognised as taking high rank as a national sport, and though rifle clubs cannot be a sufficient substitute for training in national defence they make a valuable contribution to it. They afford an opportunity to men who have passed through the military forces to retain their proficiency as marksmen, and they can make fitter for a fundamental duty of citizenship, men whom age or occupation debars from enlistment in the militia...Apart from the enjoyment and benefit these riflemen derive from a sport which practises eye and nerve, they would be a valuable auxiliary to the country's defence in any emergency.<sup>457</sup>

Protests were made against this decision across Australia. Merrett stated that rifle clubs could have 100,000 men if the facilities were provided, and even now 75 percent of riflemen were of military age.<sup>458</sup> Essentially the lack of funding was behind the military decision, but it could be said that perhaps the military men were not so upset by actions to restrict rifle club membership. After all, military officers had been working

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<sup>453</sup> *Advertiser*, 23 December 1937, p.6.

<sup>454</sup> *Advertiser*, 31 December 1937, p.10.

<sup>455</sup> *Report of the National Rifle Association of New South Wales for the Year ending 30 June 1938*, W.J. Anderson & Co., Sydney, 1938, pp.13-15.

<sup>456</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the Year 1938*, np, Melbourne, 1938, pp.10-12.

<sup>457</sup> *Courier Mail*, 13May 1938, p.4.

<sup>458</sup> In July Merrett was elected as a Vice-President of the NRA, a singular honour. It is not clear whether his figures of military-age riflemen were reliable. Another report suggested 82 percent were *not* of military age.

to do just that since the 1890s, not least because the rifle club movement and *its* leaders had shown in the past that it could become too independent and too influential for the military's liking. This was no less the case now than when Hutton was Commander-in-Chief in 1902-04. The dynamics which had split off the rifle club movement from the Army in 1920 was no less apparent in 1938 as the military chiefs and some politicians tried to rebuild Australia's defences.

Prolific writer of letters to the editor of *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and now president of the Randwick Rifle Club, R.M. Fox, quickly expressed the view that the issue was bigger than the limits on membership; it was military control of the sport which was the issue. He stated: 'Military domination in any respect least of all in sport will not be tolerated by our people and there is no doubt in the minds of riflemen that the sport is unduly hampered in this direction.' Fox went on to complain about the: '...set of almost archaic regulations which applied only to conditions prior to the advent of the civilian club and when the regimental clubs held sway and rifle shooting was the exclusive possession of the volunteer regiments'. He said that: 'The enrolment form in use to-day is manifestly a survival dating back 35 years...In the light of our civilian status the oath which we take and administer to new members involves an anomaly and cannot be applied strictly speaking to civilians. It is purely and simply a military oath.'<sup>459</sup>

Even the venerable Brigadier Dean wrote to the editor of *The Advertiser*:

...That the enrolment in our second line of defence should be in any way curtailed at the present juncture seems a short-sighted policy, especially when our militia units (I speak for this State only) are so much under effective in strength. Out of the £4,000,000 to be expended on defence, it seems reason able to expect that the 50,000 rifle club reservists should be, if possible, increased by an additional grant to at least 80,000; and I feel confident that we could get that number if another £25,000 were available for new rifle ranges. &c. It is to this reserve that we shall have to look to fill up our militia units to their proper strength should the emergency arise. At any rate the rifle clubs are not living entirely unprepared and in a "fool's Paradise!"<sup>460</sup>

There were also representations made against the freeze on membership in the House of Representatives, especially by Josiah Francis, M.P., an AIF veteran. Even in Senate, former Major-General and now Senator Brand, who had set up the CFRAs in

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<sup>459</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 1938, p.12.

<sup>460</sup> *Advertiser*, 24 May 1938, p.22.

NSW and Victoria, joined in the chorus of complaint.<sup>461</sup> The pressure told on the Minister for Defence, Harold Victor Campbell Thorby, who in June 1938 stated that the ban might be lifted again in the 1938/39 estimates.<sup>462</sup> By August, Merrett was looking to find ways to demonstrate that the rifle club movement was indeed pro-defence and pro-military in order to gain a more sympathetic support from the Minister and his military advisers for an increase in membership. In a circular to CCRAA members, Merrett even suggested ways in which the rifle clubs could be better utilised for defence:

From the remarks of ...the Minister...where a rifle club is attached as a reserve to a military unit it should be possible to arrange for voluntary instruction to be given to members of the club attached to it. To put something forward of a practical nature for utilising the services of members of attached Rifle Clubs it is suggested that ...those up to the age of 45 to receive instruction in machine gun work and those over...in (a) First Aid, including gas attacks, and (b) in the duties of guards and sentries at posts such as bridges, waterworks, magazines, etc...in its fulfillment merely the evidence of a desire by members of such rifle clubs to take a necessary part in defence of the country.<sup>463</sup>

Not everyone agreed with Merrett's approach. That this question of over-riding military control of rifle clubs could rankle is not surprising, but in November, even the CCRAA Treasurer, A.S. Spencer, felt that he needed to write to the press. In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in November 1938, he said:

Thus it will be observed that neither State associations nor district unions possess any powers of administrative control when it comes to governing the activities of rifle clubs. That State associations should be clothed with certain administrative powers has long been recognised by the executives of such bodies as a measure that would lead to greater efficiency. This, largely, because of the fact that it will always be impossible to get the trained military man to see eye to eye with the civilian in matters of policy, conduct, and administration, as they affect rifle club activities.<sup>464</sup>

In June 1938, a British Staff officer of Engineers, Lieutenant-General Ernest Ker Squires, CB, DSO, MC and five times Mentioned in Dispatches, was appointed to the

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<sup>461</sup> For background on Francis, see Rees, J., 'Francis, Sir Josiah (1890 - 1964)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.14, Melbourne University Press, 1996, pp. 212-213.

<sup>462</sup> For background on Thorby, see Carnell, I., 'Thorby, Harold Victor Campbell (1888 - 1973)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.12, Melbourne University Press, 1990, pp.216-217.

<sup>463</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the Year 1938*, np, Melbourne, 1938, p.16.

<sup>464</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November 1938, p.9.

reinstated role of Inspector-General of the Australian Military Forces.<sup>465</sup> The Government of the United Australia Party under Prime Minister Joseph Lyons subsequently began to announce a number of defence improvements. In October 1938, the Government announced the raising of the establishment for militia from 35,000 to 70,000. The announcement by the soon-to-be 're-shuffled' Thorby was roundly criticised as an announcement without a plan to implement it.<sup>466</sup> However, Thorby also now rejected the call for greater rifle club numbers.

In fact the Government announced a plan to reduce the numbers even further, by placing a minimum and maximum age for members while increasing military control to form rifle clubs into units. There would be, said the Minister: '...the training of selected rifle club members in the use of machine-guns. Other rifle club members will be enlisted in special guards for the protection of public utilities, oil tanks, bridges, and munition dumps.'<sup>467</sup> In short, rifle clubs were to be integrated fully into the new concept of Home Defence. Thorby rubbed salt in already sensitive riflemen's wounds when he stated that: '...an investigation had shown that many present club members were too old to be of value for military service.'<sup>468</sup> Some supported the moves; a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* said:

Mr. Thorby should be commended on his action in an honest endeavour to place the rifle clubs on a sound and useful footing from a defence angle. As at present organised the average rifleman would be neither use nor ornament if it came to a showdown. Much of the paraphernalia he takes with him to the mound i.e., anti-nicol compound, Chinese white, lamp black etc., even the aperture sight would be of no use whatsoever on active service.<sup>469</sup>

This letter led to a rebuke from the alert Spencer as well as a lively response from Randwick Rifle Club's redoubtable president:

Sir, The proposals regarding civilian rifle clubs outlined by the Minister for Defence... are not new, and give no indication of the leadership which we are looking for in national defence problems to-day. The reorganisation mentioned is, in effect, already provided for by the regulations governing rifle clubs, under the heading "Cable Guards." Insistence on the conditions, as set out by the Minister, would simply bring about a reversion to the regimental rifle club type of formation, even if it does not eventually destroy the rifle club movement, as appears likely.

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<sup>465</sup> Squires died in Australia in 1940.

<sup>466</sup> Thorby became Minister for Public Works and Civil Aviation in November in a Cabinet re-shuffle.

<sup>467</sup> *Mercury*, 2 November 1938, p.11.

<sup>468</sup> *Argus*, 27 October 1938, p.2.

<sup>469</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 November 1938, p.9.

The Regimental Rifle Club, of course, is a necessity as such, but the Civilian Rifle Club has largely superseded it, because of its greater elasticity and freedom from hard and-fast military conditions.

But, if it is difficult now to complete or maintain the complements of militia units even with the most alluring inducements of good pay, bright uniforms, and free technical training, it is much more difficult to expect that men who take up rifle shooting as a recreation and sport will find as much pleasure in it if military drills and training are superimposed. Golf, cricket, bowls, and the racecourse offer many counter-attractions. The most important gain to national defence, and the underlying purpose of civilian rifle shooting is this - it promotes an intimate and practical knowledge and use of the service rifle, by encouraging accurate shooting. What an immense and stimulating consolation it would be to us, if at the inception of a national crisis, we could feel assured that every man, and woman, too, of our small population, could efficiently handle and use the service rifle.

That objective, however, will not be realised under cast-iron military regulations, but only by the free development of rifle shooting as a national recreation and sport. The Minister's statement speaks of "subsidization." Well, for the individual rifleman this "subsidization" consists of an annual monetary grant of two and sixpence and 176 rounds of free ammunition. Against that cost to the Federal Government the rifleman buys from the department a rifle and an additional four or five hundred rounds of ammunition, pays rail fares and markers' fees at award rates, involving in all an outlay of at least £10 a year. It is practically certain, too, that without the civilian rifleman, rifle ranges would not exist in Australia. It is largely his labour and enthusiasm that builds and maintains them.<sup>470</sup>

The annual report of the DRA&C for the year ended 30 June, 1938 noted that actual expenditure under the Rifle Clubs Vote was only £100 more than for 1936/37. However, the restoration of the free grant for small arms ammunition to the original entitlement of 200 rounds of Mark VII ammunition for each efficient member increased expenditure on ammunition by £14,000 to £29,000. Free issues of ammunition also increased by 1,246,384 to 8,874,289 rounds in 1936-7. The number of rifle club members, in 1,152 clubs, had dropped to 46,941, compared with 50,241 in the same period, and the number of rifle ranges had also dropped to 809, 25 less than the previous year. Regimental rifle clubs strength was 6,940. Demand for the short rifle with heavy barrel saw sales of 2,991, a total sale of 15,517 since the rifles were made available. In a sign that the economic times were changing for the better, the aggregate number of competitors at State rifle association prize meetings had increased by 746 and prize-money increased from £17,214 to £22,079.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 October 1938, p.5.

<sup>471</sup> *Mercury*, 3 July 1939, p.12.

By October 1938, Merrett had bowed to the inevitable. There would be no increase in membership of rifle clubs, and the estimates would remain much as they had in 1937/38. A number of other issues were further exacerbating the deteriorating relationship with the Military Board and Department of Defence. The relationship in some respects could be said to be at an all-time low, with general resentment building over the military's in general treatment of and apparent disdain for, the civilian rifle clubs. Merrett was trying desperately to appease the Military Board, which wanted greater and greater control of rifle clubs during re-armament. He was also trying to appease the rifle club movement leaders who were against increased military control and retain the independence of the State associations and the CCRAA itself.<sup>472</sup>

With the continuing deterioration of the international security situation in 1939, the military leadership was even more focused on trying to prepare Australia for what some saw as an inevitable national emergency. Australia was terribly under-prepared to defend itself. It was short of every kind of defence stores, equipment, and weapons. Suddenly, the 50,000 men in rifle clubs became very important to defence planning and the establishment of an Army reserve, whether the rifle clubs wished it to be so or not. But the Government remained confident, in public at least, that the Royal Navy and Singapore could protect Australia if the worst happened and Australia found itself at war again.

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<sup>472</sup> In changes to the Council in late 1938, Colonel Francis Mayfield Best came onto the Council. An engineer by trade, Best had been a member of the East Torrens Rifle Club before World War One and served in France with the 14<sup>th</sup> Field Engineers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division. Major Thomas Neil Gooch also attended, replacing Major J. A. Chapman as the Military Board representative. In 1950, Major-General Chapman was to be found as General Officer Commanding Central Command (South Australia), and once more closely connected with rifle shooting movement. Gooch graduated RMC Duntroon in 1920 and trained in India. In World War Two, he was to see active service in the Middle East, Greece and Crete as well as in the SW Pacific before joining the British Commonwealth Occupation Force Japan to 1948.

**PART FOUR: *THE FULL CIRCLE***  
***1939-1958***

## Chapter 10: Sidelined again

1939 began with business as usual. The time-honoured routine of rifle matches and prize-giving continued, although a prevailing view among riflemen remained:

The view is held by many thousands of the citizens of our Commonwealth that rifle shooting is not only a recreation but a national duty, an art which all men should learn to master in case of some urgent necessity to defend our homes and our country.<sup>473</sup>

For in the meantime, Germany had breached the post-World War One Treaty of Versailles by occupying the Rhineland (1936) and Austria (1938). In March 1939, it also occupied the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. Japan's war in China also continued.

In short, while World War Two was slow in coming, arrive it would, and Australia was waking up to the fact that it needed to prepare and fast. At the Lithgow Small Arms Factory, frenetic activity began to prepare drawings and tool-up for the production of the new Bren Gun. Work force numbers began to rise slowly and rifle and Vickers machine-gun production also began to increase.<sup>474</sup> Overall, however, Australia's defences were woefully inadequate after years of neglect while rifle club membership continued to fall, to under 46,000 by June 1939.<sup>475</sup>

In August 1939, when Germany joined Russia in a Non-Aggression Pact, the Australian Government required all males between 18 and 64 to register with the Manpower Board. On 10 August the Department of Defence asked the CCRAA through the Military Board to survey rifle clubs to determine what the level of cooperation was with militia units. Simultaneously the Military District Headquarters were also requested to make a report. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Military District, for example, the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division asked its sub-units:

1. 'What progress had been made in the review of affiliations [with rifle clubs]?
2. To what extent have Commanding Officers of Militia Units made contact with their affiliated Rifle Clubs in respect of training, demonstrations etc.?
3. To what extent have members of Rifle Clubs attended training demonstrations, Regimental Classes or given assistance during matches or practices of the Militia Rifle Club Union?

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<sup>473</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 January 1933, p.17.

<sup>474</sup> Griffiths, T., *Lithgow's Small Arms Factory and its People, Vol.1, 1907-1950*, Top Tech engineering, Terrey Hills, 2006, pp.246-254.

<sup>475</sup> *Advertiser*, 21 June 1940, p.10.

4. How many members of affiliated Civilian Rifle Clubs joined Militia Units during 1938/39?
5. Have Executive officials been asked to render assistance for recruiting for the Militia and /or whether they will be available to perform similar service in time of war...and if so, what has been the response?' <sup>476</sup>

The answers were illuminating. Typical was the answer from the 24<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment, based at Moree, which told its Brigade Headquarters that:

1. No Rifle Club has to-date been officially affiliated
2. No training demonstrations of interest to Rifle Club members have been held
3. Rifle Clubs have given every assistance asked for by Troop Leaders...[in] the form of loan of targets and in some cases of coaching of recruits in rifle shooting.
4. Nil [rifle club members joining Militia]. Many members of 24 L.H. have, since joining the Militia, become members of Rifle Clubs.
5. No. Matters of this nature... have been vested in Local Defence Committees. <sup>477</sup>

By this time the war had begun. The Government moved quickly to formally order the postponement of all State and District prize meetings and reduce ammunition supply to rifle clubs to 150 rounds per efficient member (no new ammunition to be available until after 30 June 1940). Restrictions on new rifle clubs and new members were likewise extended to regimental rifle clubs as well. <sup>478</sup> By October riflemen were under Defence orders:

...to fire only the musketry course or give instruction to recruits or new members. In several country centres riflemen ... actively engaged with militia units in assisting with the musketry course...rifle clubs will soon have to conduct shooting matches in closer co-operation with the militia, and shooting with open sights in all practices over ranges up to 300 yards may be introduced. Machine gun instruction and shooting at service targets may also be included in the training of the rifleman. When the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations meets in Melbourne this month, many matters of importance will be discussed and some form of military training may be suggested. <sup>479</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division Memorandum 25098 dated 7 August 1939 to divisional units, 'Rifle Clubs - Cooperation with Militia Forces,' *SP/ 1008*, NAA.

<sup>477</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment Memo dated 9 September 1939 to 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Brigade, 'Rifle Clubs - Cooperation with Militia Forces', *SP/ 1008*, NAA.

<sup>478</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Year 1939*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1939, pp.12-13.

<sup>479</sup> *Advertiser*, 13 October 1939, p.7.

The CCRAA's meeting of December 1939 saw the full council come together.<sup>480</sup> CCRAA Secretary Osborne and the DRAC, Lieutenant-Colonel Weavers (recently awarded the OBE), also attended. He also represented Major Gooch, who was fully occupied with intensive courses at the Small Arms School at Randwick. Another military man attending was Major-General Charles George Norman Miles, CMG, DSO, the new Adjutant-General.<sup>481</sup> The war was already affecting the meeting. It had to be held at the VRA office in the City rather than at Victoria Barracks, which was now fully occupied by Defence. The meeting was focused on responding to the Military Board's interest in what the rifle club movement could do, other than straight rifle shooting, for the defence of the country. A lively and productive discussion was held. On behalf of NSW, Spencer declared:

If the Military Board desires riflemen to do certain things which, in its studied judgement, will make them a more efficient reserve unit, let those things be done, let us stand together, let us help each other, let us build on a foundation of mutual co-operation a superstructure which will truly reflect the best that can be done.<sup>482</sup>

A number of practical measures were then put forward. Tasmania's Simpson: '...felt that the Rifle Clubs were now in the period of their test, and unless we do something we may be asked, "What is the use of Rifle Clubs in view of the expense incurred in maintaining them?"'<sup>483</sup> The Council also decided that the anecdotal information it had collected so far about cooperation with Militia units was 'incomplete' and might embarrass it if forwarded to the Military Board – it decided to conduct a more systematic collection of information. The Council recommended the following decisions to the Military Board:

- (1) A uniform rifle association constitution and Commonwealth rules and by-laws [this would affect most State associations – for example the Western Australian State council would be reduced by half].

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<sup>480</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Owen Wynne, DSO attended as a NSW delegate. A prominent citizen of Mount Wilson in the Blue Mountains and member of the Katoomba Rifle Club, Wynne was *aide-de-camp* to the Governor of NSW. At Cambridge when World War One began, he served with the Bedfordshire Regiment on the Western Front, where he won a DSO and bar, was wounded, and Mentioned in Dispatches four times.

<sup>481</sup> Miles had served with distinction in World War One as an artilleryman on the Western Front.

<sup>482</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Year 1939*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1939, pp.34-35.

<sup>483</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Year 1939*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1939, p37.

- (2) The musketry course for rifle clubs, to be as fired in the army, 40 rounds with open sight and no sling, at service targets.
- (3) Service matches in association and union prize meetings, to be fired with the open sight, single sling optional, matches to be approved by the officer commanding the district. That all service matches to be fired at State association and District Union prize meetings be standardised in accordance with conditions to be laid down and approved by the Military Board.
- (4) That the use of the short heavy barrel by rifle club members in any type of service pattern rifle be restricted to those fitted with the standard pattern service backsight and that a foresight of an approved military pattern with a .07 blade be allowed.
- (5) Ammunition limitation of 150 rounds per efficient member per annum to be issued to rifle clubs free, and further purchase ammunition be made available as early as possible.
- (6) That new rifle clubs be formed in order of application and miniature shooting be developed, with such money as many be available from the rifle clubs' vote owing to the postponement of prize meetings.
- (7) Miniature rifle shooting to be encouraged by the issue of 0.22 barrels suitable for use in the service rifle free of cost or for sale to members of rifle clubs, cadets or colleges, together with miniature ammunition at a reasonable concession.
- (8) That riflemen attached to units be given opportunity for training with automatic weapons and that rifle clubs outside unit areas be asked to do 30 minutes elementary squad drill rifle exercises and field signals on rifle practice days.
- (9) That when possible a Bren gun be allotted to the rifle clubs in each State. each club to be allowed one day's ordinary target shooting with it under instruction.
- (10) Any alteration in the age limit or the introduction of a medical test for enrolment in the rifle clubs was not favoured.
- (11) The development of suitable rifle club members as snipers was favoured. The director [DRA&C] pointed out that the department had already arranged for the use of riflemen as snipers.

In addition:

An attempt was made to enforce rifle clubs to use the same height foresight as the army, necessitating all shooting from 100 to 400 yards being fired with the open sight, and it was suggested that these ranges be deleted from the King's and aggregate matches. The proposal was easily defeated. The slightly higher foresight as issued to rifle clubs permits the use of the aperture sight over all distances. There was considerable criticism regarding the open sight and its lack of uniformity in elevation.<sup>484</sup>

Subsequent to the October meeting of the CCRAA, Merrett reported that he supported the idea of telescopic sights for sniper rifles. He also reported, in January 1940, the progressive results of inquiries with rifle clubs with regard to their cooperation with the Militia (and the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF):

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<sup>484</sup> *Argus*, 27 October 1939, p.14; *West Australian*, 9 November 1939, p.7; and *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Year 1939*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1939, pp.46-51.

Associations	No of clubs Replied	Enlistments into militia	Enlistments into 2 <sup>nd</sup> AIF	Assistance to training militia	Attended parades or lectures
NQRA	12	165	26	80	38
NRA of NSW	136	851	90	259	433
VRA	161	1083	173	663	468

<sup>485</sup>

These were hardly reassuring figures that the rifle club movement was enthusiastically embracing the war regime it now found itself in. The measures recommended to the Military Board in October were quickly being overtaken by events. The formation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF in 1940 was to impact in much the same way on the rifle clubs as did the 1<sup>st</sup> AIF in 1914. But in 1940, the full measure of Australia's unpreparedness for war on the long-suffering rifle club movement was yet to be felt; and the outcomes would be more severe than in World War One and its immediate aftermath.

The first full year of the war began quietly; Germany had not yet invaded the Low Countries. Despite much talk about plans for the rifle clubs by Defence, nothing much happened in that direction either. Rifle clubs continued to shoot albeit with dwindling ammunition stocks, some efforts were made by the State Associations to integrate musketry training with militia units and to provide instruction for men eligible to enlist.<sup>486</sup> Membership applications for rifle clubs did not see the rapid build-up as had been experienced in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Boer War or World War One and there did not appear to be much enthusiasm for training in drill. It was the calm before the storm; everyone was watching and waiting to see what would happen.

Riflemen were pleased to learn in February that an extra 50 rounds of free ammunition would be released to 'efficients'; it appeared that the Military Board recognised that if training was to occur, more ammunition was required.<sup>487</sup> However, the Military Board also disagreed with the CCRAA recommendations for an expansion of miniature rifle shooting facilities by issuing service rifles with .22 calibre barrels and ammunition. As a result, this measure dashed the hopes of some who thought it was a critical measure just to hold the rifle clubs together through the war.<sup>488</sup>

<sup>485</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Year 1939*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1939, p.6

<sup>486</sup> Later, the secretary of the NRA of WA, J.S. Eastmon, was to say: 'Training men to shoot is definitely one that must be given attention. Without training, it is appalling how rotten shooting can be, and every good war general wants to see efficiency with the rifle.' *West Australian*, 21 June 1940, p.10

<sup>487</sup> *Advertiser*, 15 February 1940, p.13.

<sup>488</sup> *West Australian*, 16 May 1940, p.6.

By June 1940 the Government still seemed unable to properly mobilise the rifle clubs or use their available manpower or skills to good effect, at least not in an organised way. In fact the scene had become even more complicated by the Government's acceptance of an offer by The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) to form a new reserve for Home Defence.<sup>489</sup> Many riflemen complained that they were not being utilised in the defence of Australia. The CCRAA Treasurer, Spencer, wrote to the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

Sir - ...Rifle club members are definitely reserves to the militia forces... from the Prime Minister's broadcast address on June 16, Mr. Menzies said: "Our local defence so far as land forces are concerned will depend on an aggregation of our permanent forces, our militia, our garrison battalions (entirely made up of returned soldiers), our militia reserves, the new class 'A' reserve being constituted by the Returned Soldiers League, the AIF in Australia and such further drafts of universal trainees or of volunteers as we may create or call for. In using the term our militia reserves the Prime Minister conveyed that use will be made of the rifle club personnel according to mobilisation plans which have not been hastily conceived but actually in existence for years past. When this time arises Commonwealth riflemen will have no cause to complain about not being wanted or that they are now being ignored."<sup>490</sup>

The Government soon recognised that it simply did not have the resources to supply, train and lead all of these forces. The South Australian Rifle Association (SARA) even declared that a Rifle Defence Corps should be formed to complement the proposed Returned Soldiers Defence Corps, which became known as the Volunteer Defence Corps or VDC.<sup>491</sup> Something had to give. On 20 August 1940 the Military Board ordered rifle club members to enlist in either the AIF, the Australian Military Forces (AMF, i.e., the Militia), or the new VDC. If they were unable to do so, they should carry out training as directed by the State rifle associations.

The State [rifle] associations in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and NSW: '...started off with great enthusiasm, but no action was taken in Queensland, whilst the [VRA] was directed to wait until it received orders – which were never issued.' Western Australia and South Australia began actively enrolling men into their clubs. They soon exceeded their quota, while using 'improvised equipment and rifles'

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<sup>489</sup> The RSSILA changed its name in November 1940 to 'The Returned Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial League of Australia' (RSSAILA)

<sup>490</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 June 1940, p.4.

<sup>491</sup> As late as September calls were still being made for a separate Rifle Defence Corps in several States. But the momentum gathering behind training in rifle clubs had been overtaken by events.

and printing their own drill and musketry books.<sup>492</sup> The Government, unable to support this, soon re-issued orders that authorised membership was not to be exceeded.

The remainder of 1940 slipped away from the rifle club movement as no CCRAA meetings were held. Many riflemen joined the AIF, AMF or VDC as the ammunition shortages and cessation of some club, and all union and association, matches began to take full effect. Yet even by December 1940 the new VDC was barely functioning and the rifle clubs continued to compete directly with it. One VDC platoon commander wrote to the *Advertiser*, accusing the VDC of ‘a lack of imagination’:

Sir—It is five months since members of the R.S.L. began training in the Volunteer Defence Corps. Eulogistic statements as to their martial bearing in the Adelaide parade and expressions of pride that 7,500 are enrolled are things doubtless justified; but the organisation leaves much to be desired. No rational programme has been laid down for the guidance of centres. Refresher courses have been held for officers and N.C.O.'s. but it was left to the initiative of the S.A. Rifle Association to print a booklet on squad drill and musketry training. Yet the rifle clubs are only admitted in the Defence Corps as a sort of semi-detached unit. No proper syllabus of training, except of a most elementary character, has been issued. Many centres are having only one parade of 1½ hours a week, doing chocolate soldier stuff -with an occasional lecture.

Thousands of men in the RSL and in the rifle clubs are anxious to become competent and ready to act in an emergency, and their enthusiasm is being damped by lack of imagination at headquarters, where the need for tuition in the tactics of modern warfare does not appear to be sufficiently realised. ...The artificial distinctions made between R.S.L. and rifle club members should be cleared away, every member of the corps being on an equal basis and receiving equipment when available. The corps has great possibilities but unless alterations are made, interest will continue to decline and we shall not even "muddle through" with it.<sup>493</sup>

By 5 June 1941, CCRAA Chairman Merrett had been informed that the intention of the Government was to place the rifle clubs in recess for the duration of the war. In a circular to members of the CCRAA on 9 June 1941, Merrett explained the unfolding situation:

The Government having decided to form a [VDC], many Returned Soldiers...joined up..., but the authorised establishment of that body has not yet been reached, and members of Rifle Clubs are now eligible to become members of it. It is obvious that there cannot be several organisations doing the same work, and to get the best result it is necessary to have one which is duly authorised and under Military control, and available to those who desire to serve.’

<sup>492</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1941, 1942, 1943*, np, Melbourne, 1943, p9.

<sup>493</sup> *Advertiser*, 11December 1940, p.18.

‘When therefore the question of utilising the services of the Rifle Clubs arose, it seemed that if their members could link up with the [VDC] – but still retain their present membership of their Rifle Club – it would be a means of maintaining the rifle club movement, which would spring into activity again when the cessation of the War permitted it, that is to say that the Clubs will remain in existence as such notwithstanding that their members may be employed in garrison battalions on Home Service and will still be members of their several clubs.’<sup>494</sup>

In short, the rifle clubs were to go into recess for the remainder of the war. This must have been a low point indeed for Merrett and the other leaders of the rifle club movement. But the outcome for rifle clubs from the developing situation could not be placed entirely at the Government’s feet. There is no doubt that successive Australian Governments, culminating in the Menzies Government, had failed almost entirely to prepare Australia for possible war. This included starving the rifle club movement of funds and rifles and preventing its expansion. In fact the military might well have recognised early that the rifle clubs were actually incapable of providing it with the trained reserve it sought and would quickly accept the offer of a VDC to provide a military body which it could do something with.

The CCRAA and the State rifle associations, on the other hand, while endlessly stating how important the rifle club movement was a vital component of Australia’s defence system and repeatedly asking for more resources to show that it was, were unable to control their own clubs. The clubs were actually under direct military control (although this was not apparent for many years) and the military, as had always been the case, saw the rifle clubs as a cheap defence asset. Moreover, the rifle club movement was also a victim of perceptions, despite protestations to the contrary that rifle clubs in peacetime were there primarily for sport.

While the leadership of the associations, including that of the CCRAA (dominated as they were by former Volunteer or Militia officers and returned soldiers among its elected councillors and by the military among its appointed councillors), no doubt felt strongly about the need to fit in with military plans, it seems that many ordinary riflemen in clubs did not agree. They had become used to a certain amount of autonomy in running their own affairs since 1920, and did not join rifle clubs to become a quasi-military. In common with volunteer organisations everywhere, when it came to the actual implementation of rifle training as stipulated by the military in 1940 men did

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<sup>494</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1941, 1942, 1943*, np, Melbourne, 1943, pp.10-11.

step forward from among the members to implement it, but the vast majority of those who had not by this time enlisted did not engage.

By mid-1941, between 6,000 and 7,000 members of rifle clubs had joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF, 1,481 were on full-time duty and 3,100 on part-time duty while 5,780 had joined the VDC.<sup>495</sup> This was a bit more than a third of rifle club members at that time, and probably reflected similar recruitment percentages of the day across the wider community. By September 1941 the DRAC, by now Colonel George Francis Murphy, CMG, DSO and bar, was also the Director of the VDC. Captain Ernest William Latchford, MBE, MC, was the new Chief Instructor at the Small Arms School.<sup>496</sup> All rifle association, union and club funds were returned to Government Trust Funds established for the purpose, and rifles on loan to clubs were recalled.

Before the year was out however, most of the 32,000 rifles which were owned by rifle club members were impressed. The Government was critically short of rifles for the Army, especially after it had sent a number to Britain to support it after the evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940, in which the defeated British Army had lost tens of thousands of its rifles. In Australia, rifle club members who had joined the VDC were re-issued rifles, but never their own. When grants to rifle clubs other than rifle range rentals were halted in 1941, Merrett appealed to the Military Board to continue grants to at least the rifle associations, which did not go into recess, and this was given, albeit at a lower rate. The Military Board subsequently attempted to deny payment to association secretaries, but Merrett was able to convince it not to proceed.

Before 1941, the rifle club movement was robust and pleading for approval to increase the number of its clubs and members. When the CCRAA asked for more funds, the opposite happened, ammunition was cut and various restrictions placed on rifle club growth. Although allotted to Militia units, they were largely ignored by the military. When they asked for training in machine-guns, they were told that there was not enough ammunition. At the outbreak of war, their rifles were impressed and rifle club members, or what was left after enlistments into the active forces, were effectively pushed into the VDC. In effect, the rifle clubs with their trained body of men were scrapped ('placed in recess') while a new body, the VDC, came into existence with

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<sup>495</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1941, 1942, 1943*, np, Melbourne, 1943, p.16.

<sup>496</sup> Murphy served as Director of the VDC and DRA&C until November 1942. For details of Murphy's career, see Swifte, L. B. 'Murphy, George Francis (1883 - 1962)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp.635-636.

veterans from World War One at its core. Between 1942 and 1944, the rifle club movement, represented by the leadership in the CCRAA and the State rifle associations, was effectively moribund.<sup>497</sup>

It was only natural that, given this treatment on the one hand, and the character, experience and intelligence of the men in the leadership positions of the rifle club movement at that time, that they finally began to question how to deal with this situation and how to deal with the future. For years, if not decades, the leadership of the rifle club movement had tried to accommodate the military. After the shock of being pushed away from Army to the civilian administration of the Department of Defence as a result of the Military Committee conference of 1920, the rifle club movement had also tried to retain its military links even as the rifle clubs became more autonomous.

By 1931, at the height of the Great Depression, the rifle club movement was able to place itself back under Army's wing again. But despite the individual officers and men who privately and less often, publicly, sided with the aspirations and culture of the rifle club movement, the reality was that the essential contradiction between civilian rifle shooting and military was stronger than ever. The sidelining once again of the rifle club movement in 1940-41 was certainly another shock. It was perhaps made even greater by the fact that this did not occur after a war, but right at the time when Australia's defences were at their weakest point since 1920 and it seemed that Australia itself could actually be invaded.

On 4 April 1944, the CCRAA Chairman responded to calls from club-men and associations to revive the movement in the face of reduced training for the VDC now that the threat of possible invasion had truly receded. He cautiously suggested to the DRAC that those VDC units with reduced training requirements should perhaps be allowed to begin more regular rifle shooting practice as *de facto* rifle clubs in anticipation of the rifle clubs being revived. Two weeks later his note was acknowledged, but nothing more.<sup>498</sup> On 30 April 1944, CCRAA Secretary W. H. Osborne wrote an impassioned memo to the Chairman and members of the CCRAA. In this memo he gave expression to his immense sense of frustration about how the rifle

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<sup>497</sup> A full meeting of the CCRAA would not take place until April, 1947.

<sup>498</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1941, 1942, 1943*, np, Melbourne, 1943, pp.30-31.

club movement had been handled, ignored and then sidelined. And he asked some very important, essential questions:

1. Should the rifle club movement continue as at present under military control?
2. If yes, what additional services, if any, should each rifleman perform, such as, machine-gun, or other practices?
3. Should the rifle club movement in Australia revert to civilian control?
4. If yes, in what way should the movement be administered/ controlled?<sup>499</sup>

Osborne wasn't necessarily arguing for the rifle club movement to revert to civilian control, at least not to autonomous civilian control; it was not a plea for self-determination. That would have been too radical. He meant, rather, a reversion back to the civilian side of the Department of Defence as it was between 1921 and 1931. He was actually demanding of the Council members that they essentially make a decision one way or the other. If the movement stayed with the military, then become more military; if civilian, then make a decision on how that would work. Either way, Osborne's memo seemed to imply both criticism of the Chairman's evident appeasement of the military with his latest memo to the DRA&C and frustration that the dual nature and character of the rifle club movement culture had led it on a path to nowhere.

While the rifle club movement claimed, as it did after the Great War, that rifle club men had enlisted in big numbers, the fact is that many of these same men would have enlisted whether or not they were members of rifle clubs.<sup>500</sup> Teachers did not enlist because they were teachers, railway men were no less patriotic than rifle club men when it came to enlistment either. But the rifle club men had always seen themselves as different. They were part of the Defence system, they swore an oath, they accepted they were part of the mobilisation planning in event of war or emergency. Hence the build-up of incredible frustration when in World War One there was no call upon their services to defend Australia, and in World War Two, when it seemed that Australia *was* genuinely under threat, again they were sidelined by the more politically savvy RSSAILA with its VDC initiative.

With the CCRAA Executive and Council both unable to meet, whatever discussion was taking place went slowly, by mail, between Council members. It was not

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<sup>499</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1941, 1942, 1943*, np, Melbourne, 1943, pp.37-38.

<sup>500</sup> Merrett claimed that 8,000 men had enlisted for active service and 24,000 men had enlisted for service in Australia, including in the VDC.

until late April 1945 that CCRAA life started to emerge once again. This was fuelled by rumours that the Military Board intended to impress and use for its own purposes the funds of the rifle clubs placed in the Government Trust Fund for the duration of the war. Another rumour was that the VDC would absorb the old rifle club structure into a new one controlled by the VDC. According to that rumour, rifle club members who had enlisted in the VDC would only be able to join the new (VDC) rifle clubs as honorary members and not, therefore, have any say on their committees.

Needless to say, this was treated with great alarm by the CCRAA and true riflemen everywhere. Merrett hastily sought assurances from the Director of Cadet Services and Reserves that the Department of Defence's Post-War Planning Committee did not intend to do any of these things.<sup>501</sup> Merrett received those assurances, although it was admitted that some move by the VDC to take over rifle club members had in fact occurred.<sup>502</sup> Even as late as September 1945, VDC men were calling for VDC rifle clubs:

Would it not be a grand gesture on the part of the Government to give permission to VDC members to form rifle clubs, present them with their rifles, which they have learnt to use and care for so well, to assist them, where necessary, with materials and equipment, either to improve their rifle ranges, or even construct new ones if needed?

and

Now that it is officially decided to disband the VDC perhaps I might suggest to the Government they show their appreciation of our services by making us a present of our 0.303 rifles or allow us to purchase them at a reasonable price so that we can carry on as rifle clubs. I am sure that thousands of VDC personnel were old rifle club members and are anxious to continue their VDC comradeship in rifle clubs.<sup>503</sup>

Finally, in October 1945, Merrett asked for an individual interview with the Minister, requesting:

1. That the resuscitation of the rifle club movement be allowed from 1 January 1946
2. That it once again be placed under the Civil Administration of the [Defence] Department

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<sup>501</sup> There did not appear to be a DRAC appointment in place since 1944.

<sup>502</sup> As a result, by late June 1945 Merrett postponed the calling for an Executive Council meeting to discuss the situation. For some reason, he later changed his mind and requested authority to hold an Executive meeting; the Minister agreed to meet with a CCRAA deputation accordingly. However, the Minister then proved unavailable and it was also difficult to get a CCRAA Executive meeting together.

<sup>503</sup> *West Australian*, 31 August 1945, p.5, and *West Australian* 4 September 1945, p.8..

3. That money in Trust be returned to the clubs and unions
4. That rifles, ammunition and heavy barrels be issued
5. That members over 60 become Honorary members.<sup>504</sup>

It seemed that Osborne's 1944 plea for decision had reaped a result. The Army Department Secretary, Frank Roy Sinclair, suggested a November meeting with the Minister might be possible. By February 1946, however, no meeting had occurred. Merrett patiently wrote again, moving back the date requested for the revival of the rifle club movement to 1 July 1946. Merrett wrote:

I am unable to deal with the continuous appeals of the Commonwealth Council asking me why the Executive has not had an interview with the Hon. The Minister, seeing that the [1941] Order placed the Clubs and Unions "in recess until such times as their activities can be resumed," and it is urged that "such time" is overdue, more particularly since I am advised that attempts are being made to form Rifle Clubs in opposition to the existing Clubs now in recess... Those who would cause turmoil and strife do not belong to Rifle Clubs... Will the Hon. Minister state what are the intentions of the Government with regard to authorising the Rifle Clubs to resume their normal activity...?<sup>505</sup>

A brief meeting between Merrett and the Minister quickly followed, and soon after Cabinet met and discussed the future of the rifle clubs. Cabinet approved the re-introduction of rifle clubs as a civil organisation responsible to the Permanent Head of the Department of Army. Whether riflemen should be considered part of the 'Reserve' was referred by Cabinet to the Military Board for an opinion. Events moved faster. The Military Board confirmed, after a meeting of 15 May, that rifle clubs should not be part of Army or form part of any 'Reserve'. In its Minute to the Cabinet the Military Board stated:

1. With the development of weapons in general, and in particular automatic weapons, the rifle has assumed a role of a secondary nature in our armament
2. The military value of Rifle Clubs is negligible today, therefore their inclusion in any Army Reserve would not serve any useful military purpose
3. The time and expense involved in creating a Reserve and keeping records of addresses, etc., of personnel up-to-date would not be justified when no use was made of such a Reserve, as in this case

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<sup>504</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1944, 1945, 1946*, The Advertiser Printing Office, Adelaide, 1946, pp.17-22.

<sup>505</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1944, 1945, 1946*, The Advertiser Printing Office, Adelaide, 1946, pp.23-24.

4. Members of Rifle Clubs are available, in like manner, with other members of the community, for “call-up” should the occasion arise.<sup>506</sup>

A letter from Sinclair of 17 May then laid out a range of matters requiring input from the CCRAA and from various Army branches alike, including from Cadet Services and Reserves, before Cabinet could decide on a range of policy matters affecting rifle clubs.<sup>507</sup> Merrett could finally call a meeting of the CCRAA Executive Committee, which met in Melbourne in late May 1946. For all intents and purposes, it was a *de facto* meeting of Council and the first Executive or Council meeting since 1939.<sup>508</sup>

In a follow-up letter to Sinclair on 27 May 1946, Merrett suggested that the decision of the Government to place the rifle clubs under civil control was a decision of the Military Board, to which the CCRAA must acquiesce, unhappily. Remarkably, after the CCRAA had been given exactly what it asked for in October 1945 in that regard, it then said that it also disagreed with the Military Board’s decision not to have rifle clubs as part of the Reserve. In fact the CCRAA felt strongly that the rifle clubs must be part of a Reserve, although not attached to particular units.

In effect Merrett was saying that it was not the fault of the rifle clubs that they were unable to contribute to the war effort as well as they could have if properly employed, but that the reasons of their usefulness had nonetheless not gone away. The letter then went on to describe the recommendations arising from the Executive Committee meeting, which were essentially to return to the *status quo* of 1939 in all respects other than transfer of control to the Secretary Department of Army, with prize meetings underway by July 1947.

It is hard to understand, when at the very moment that the CCRAA was given exactly what it had itself requested, namely civilian control, it seemed to revert ‘to type’ and ask that ties with the military were continued, just as it did in 1920. It was almost as if the contents of the Military Board minute to the cabinet, which were only revealed

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<sup>506</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1944, 1945, 1946*, The Advertiser Printing Office, Adelaide, 1946, p.41.

<sup>507</sup> The Deputy Director of cadet Services and Reserves was Lieutenant-Colonel W.H. Gray, formerly a Tasmanian CCRAA delegate.

<sup>508</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1944, 1945, 1946*, The Advertiser Printing Office, Adelaide, 1946, pp.29-31. The Department of Army Secretary, Sinclair, first addressed the meeting on behalf of the Minister for the Army, noting that he was independent of the military authorities. Rifles and ammunition could not be issued yet, as Cabinet had to consider the full policy implications. The Public Service Board would have to consider the position of Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs. The Deputy of the Secretary in each State could fulfill the role of Supervisor for Rifle Clubs, saving money and a full-time inspector of rifle ranges would be appointed.

days before the Executive meeting, offended the Executive's own view of itself and it felt honour-bound to defend the rifle club movement. The CCRAA once again 'laid it on thick' in its response.

It quoted the opinions of senior foreign military leaders, like Eisenhower, on the importance of the rifle and rifle shooting, described the contribution of the rifle clubs in terms of both World War One and World War Two enlistments, especially as snipers, high ranks achieved and medals awarded, and even stated that the potential for landing of enemy paratroopers now added weight as to why riflemen could act as an effective guerilla force. However, what is clear is that the representatives of the State rifle associations, Tasmania and South Australia especially in this instance, *did* hold heartfelt views that they were part of the Defence system and always had been. *They* were not to blame if the authorities had not recognised this at the start of the war.

But the war was over, and these arguments had proven futile in the past. It seemed that the rifle club movement leadership was simply unable to look forward. At a time when the rifle club movement had a great opportunity to move into a more self-confident future, it tried once more to grasp the receding hand of the very military which had spurned it over so many years. After 60 years, practice and tradition were hard to change. The response from the CCRAA was largely ignored, although a decision on whether rifle clubs were to become part of the Army Reserve or not was deferred. Its detailed submission for Cabinet, however, was carefully considered.

It was not until 29 July 1946 that formal instructions were issued to State Associations for the re-constitution of rifle clubs, under the name of Lieutenant-Colonel Gray, now 'Acting Director of Rifle Clubs'. Essentially the instructions took the rifle club movement back to the *status quo* of 1931, and a ceiling of 50,000 rifle club members was imposed. VDC members who still held rifles had to surrender them unless they joined a rifle club. Those who needed their rifles for pest control could buy them, otherwise they had to be returned to Army.<sup>509</sup> An efficiency grant of 80 per cent of the pre-war grant would be made to re-constituted rifle clubs to help them to get started in 1946/47. On 6 August the Cabinet considered all submissions from the CCRAA and decided that, among other things, that:

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<sup>509</sup> New regulations were introduced at State level after the war to control rifles and firearms more closely; it was the first time that attempts had been made across Australia to regulate firearms. Police fears were not just about criminals acquiring .303 rifles and sub-machine guns, there were other elements to consider, such as those interested in 'overthrowing constitutional government', i.e., Communists. *Mercury* 21 August 1946, p.6.

Cabinet is of the view that provision should be made for the Rifle Club Movement to form part of the Defence Reserve Forces, and that, after the Rifle Club Movement has become properly re-organised the Minister give consideration to the manner in which this can be effected to come into force with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1947.<sup>510</sup>

It subsequently directed the Military Board to advise the Cabinet how this should be done to allow this deadline to be met. The rest of 1946 was taken up with a constant stream of correspondence between Merrett and Sinclair covering a whole range of administrative and operational matters to do with the re-organisation of rifle clubs. Rifle clubs began to reconstitute their committees, and identify which of its members would be either coming home from overseas service or become available as their VDC units disbanded. Inventories of rifle club rifles were underway compared to their state on 1 July 1941.<sup>511</sup> Meanwhile, 21 April 1947 was set as the first full CCRAA meeting since 1939. A new era was about to begin.

In April 1946, the Cabinet authorised the re-establishment of the Australian rifle club movement as a civil organisation responsible to the Permanent Head of the Department of the Army, who in turn was to report to the Minister on the organisation and funds required to implement the decision, with effect 1 July 1946. On 6 August, Cabinet approved of the constitution, organisation and activities of Australian rifle clubs on a similar basis to that obtaining between 1921 and June 1931 - after which the rifle club movement reverted to military control. At the same time, Cabinet asked the Minister to arrange for rifle clubs to form part of the Defence Reserve Forces, from 1 July 1947.<sup>512</sup>

A Treasury rifle club Vote gave the re-established rifle club movement £28,500 over 1946/47, mostly to cover re-establishment costs and to clubs, money in lieu of efficiency grants. About a third, or more than £8,000, went to renovation of rifle ranges, many of which had fallen into disrepair during the war recess. Another £2,000 was placed in a Trust Fund as a deposit towards funding the next team to Bisley. Clubs would now receive two serviceable .303-inch rifles per five members, while all

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<sup>510</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations for the Years 1944, 1945, 1946*, The Advertiser Printing Office, Adelaide, 1946, p.54.

<sup>511</sup> *Advertiser*, 24 August 1945, p.3.

<sup>512</sup> 'Commonwealth of Australia – Australian Rifle Clubs: Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs Report for the Year ended 3 June 1947: Re-establishment', p.1., *SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

members could purchase serviceable rifles at pre-war prices or ‘unconditioned and repairable ‘ even more cheaply once new barrels became available for sale.<sup>513</sup>

The now Director of Rifle Clubs (DRC, formerly DRAC) estimated that up to 30,000 heavy barrels would be required over the next three years from the Lithgow Small Arms Factory.<sup>514</sup> There had been some criticism, or rather frustration, expressed by riflemen that while they had given up their rifles promptly at the beginning of the war, why was it that they could not be given a rifle back just as promptly afterwards? However, by June 1947 the DRC was able to report that over 3,000 rifles had been issued to rifle clubs and over 8,000 sold to members. As well, 1,546, 372 rounds of ammunition had been expended.<sup>515</sup>

It took most of 1946 to inspect the condition of rifle ranges in all states, although NSW lagged behind due to the shortage of qualified inspectors. The inspections revealed ‘considerable dilapidation’ in both construction and equipment, mostly due to their use by Volunteer Defence Corps units during the war. The VDC used the ranges but had no responsibility for them and the rifle club movement and government alike were faced with a ‘vast amount of work and expense’ to restore rifle ranges to pre-war condition.

At a time when civilian housing had priority as ‘demobbed’ servicemen returned and immigration increased, the funds provided were simply inadequate to cover these shortfalls, and the burden fell on rifle clubs themselves to re-establish their ranges. The result was that many new clubs could not be established because there simply wasn’t a working range that could be used. The solution was that in early 1947, 59 ranges were re-classified as purely ‘Military’ (those that had been used by the AMF during the war) and 808 as ‘Non-Military’, which became the sole responsibility of the rifle clubs. Victoria and NSW accounted for over half of the Non-Military ranges.<sup>516</sup>

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<sup>513</sup> Until Lithgow SAF could gear up to re-produce heavy barrels, second-hand barrels from the Disposals Commission were being offered as an interim solution to riflemen’s needs. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 1947, p.8

<sup>514</sup> ‘Commonwealth of Australia – Australian Rifle Clubs: Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs Report for the Year ended 30 June 1947. Re-establishment’, p.2-3, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney. Lithgow SAF ended the war with large quantities of unassembled military weapons parts and an uncertain future, so any orders for heavy barrel production would be welcome. As it was, sporting rifles quickly became a mainstay of production. Griffiths, T, *Lithgow’s Small Arms Factory and its People*, Vol.1: 1907 to 1950, Toptech Engineering, Terry Hills, 2006, p.373 and p.376.

<sup>515</sup> *Courier-Mail*, 24 January 1947, p.4.

<sup>516</sup> ‘Commonwealth of Australia – Australian Rifle Clubs: Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs Report for the Year ended 30 June 1947. Re-establishment’, p.4-5, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney

The move to keep rifle clubs as Reserves took a curious turn when it was left to the rifle clubs themselves to decide at a general meeting of members whether it desired to be associated with a Reserve unit, and had gained the concurrence of the unit's Commanding Officer. The CCRAA wanted rifle clubs to associate with Army, Navy and Air Force units, but legislation would have to be enacted for the latter two services to allow this to happen.

## Chapter 11: Back to an Uncertain Future

The CCRAA held its first full council meeting since 1939 in Melbourne in April 1947.<sup>517</sup> Secretary for the Army Sinclair briefly joined the meeting but promised no immediate succour with regard to rapid 're-arming' with rifles, which had to be re-conditioned, nor rifle range refurbishment as the Government had higher priorities. In an important decision, delegates agreed that for the next two years, riflemen during this period of re-establishment could shoot in matches with either the standard .303-inch service rifle or the .303-inch rifle with heavy barrels.<sup>518</sup> On the other hand, .22-inch ammunition was in critically short supply, affecting the viability of the many Miniature rifle clubs which had sprung up during the war.

The Council made an historic decision, to change the name of the CCRAA to be the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations (ACSRA).<sup>519</sup> This was the fourth title for the council since its inception as the General Council of Rifle Associations of Australasia in 1888. No doubt the motion was put forward with the realisation that the council was entering a new era in the history of the rifle shooting movement; it was fitting that changes be made. Resisting pressure to form new clubs, delegates felt that older clubs should have the chance to re-establish first. In any case, the decision about overall club numbers and which clubs could form was left to the DRC, Lieutenant-Colonel W.H. Gray.<sup>520</sup>

It was with a sense of progress with the re-establishment of rifle shooting activities that the council members discussed the next round of Commonwealth matches scheduled for Tasmania. Unfortunately, the war years had seen a complete dismantling of the old military range at Sandy Bay, and it needed an urgent rebuild by Army. The Council continued with a range of matters; perhaps the most critical among them was

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<sup>517</sup> One new delegate was Leonard Allen Righetti, who was chairman of the VRA. A former Mayor of Malvern, Righetti served with the VDC during World War Two; a brother had been killed on active service.

<sup>518</sup> *CCRAA Minutes of Council Meeting, Melbourne 21 -23 April 1947*, p.12, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>519</sup> The council adopted Bisley target dimensions for use in Australia, but retained the circular bullseye for shooting over 500 and 600 yards; while tin hat targets would be used for shooting over 300 and 400 yards. The following reductions in size were applied - 300 yards aiming mark, one inch; bullseye 1½ inches, inner 3 inches, magpie 6 inches; 600 yards - Bullseye 3 inches. *Advertiser*, 25 April 1947, p.8.

<sup>520</sup> At the meeting, Gray showed the council one of the 1,000 telephone sets authorised by the Secretary of the Army for range use.

the knowledge that the Williamstown Range in Melbourne was under threat. The VRA had the carriage of actions and responses with this critical issue but the Council members were all alarmed.<sup>521</sup> Another matter under consideration concerned the Olympics. The Australian Olympic Committee had requested ACSRA nominate three or four expert shooters for the Olympics. It was finally agreed in September 1947 that a team, including Olympians, would be sent to Bisley the following May.<sup>522</sup> Meanwhile in December 1947, South Australia claimed to hold the first post-war prize meeting of any State rifle association; NSW was not planning their first prize meeting until October 1948.<sup>523</sup>

The war had finished in August 1945, but it took three more long years before the mainstream of the rifle shooting movement finally got underway. Matters were far from a satisfactory state as 1948 began. Food rationing in some form would continue into 1950, and many commodities essential for basic administration, such as ink and printing paper, were in short supply. Many who had been absent for many years during the war lost interest in rifle shooting; the restrictions on new clubs starting up compounded the loss of momentum felt so keenly after nearly a decade without regular rifle shooting activities.

While much of the old energy to return to the way things were remained, this was not matched by the reality on the ground. Ranges everywhere were in disrepair and lacked basic equipment such as telephones, targets, accommodation and stores of all kinds. Qualified inspectors and range officers were hard to find; the military forces themselves were faced with huge administrative burdens as they struggled to continue to demobilise service men and women, and decommission military equipment while still administering captured territories.

During the changeover to civilian control, the rifle club supervisory structure was also in limbo. With a civilian and Assistant Secretary, Department of the Army, Ernest George Williams, replacing Gray as DRC from 1 January 1948, it was nonetheless not until mid-1948 that instructions were issued to General Officers of Commands and State/District Commandants with regard to the positions of Supervisors of Rifle Clubs

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<sup>521</sup> The Williamstown Range remained under threat from the local council and developers until its loss in 1987. See Graham, R., *A Bullseye History of the Merrett Rifle Range*, Benalla Printing, Benalla, [Vic], 1987.

<sup>522</sup> *Advertiser*, 26 September 1947, p.15

<sup>523</sup> *Advertiser*, 5 December 1947, p.13; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 June, 1947, p.10.

and handovers to Command Secretaries from Army commanders.<sup>524</sup> Rifle club men who had given up their beloved personal rifles in 1940 found they would never get those rifles back again. They would have to start all over to refurbish a second-hand rifle with a part-worn barrel before they could return to the old standards; and many chose to drop out altogether instead. There was understandable frustration.

It was not easy to see at the time, but the rifle club movement had suffered one blow to its momentum by the war recess and was now feeling the effects of a second, namely the slow recovery by an Australian economy and society also dislocated and impacted upon by the war. In addition, the formation of the VDC during the war, in effect depriving rifle clubs of the traditional role that they expected as part of the national defence, had also had its effect. Many riflemen who had joined the AIF, AMF or VDC during the war had less inclination to return to rifle clubs after it, even though clubs were placed under civilian control once again.

Expectations of a better life would grow inexorably in the post-war years, including among women who had experienced responsibility and a measure of financial and personal freedom during the war, which had not been as open to them before it. The general population began to see rifle shooting, with its male-imposed restrictions on the participation of women and its 'old fashioned' values, through different eyes. Newspaper reporting of rifle club matters began to slowly decline as rifle shooting became less 'popular'. Despite a rising demand to re-establish rifle clubs, club membership would peak within a few years and slowly but steadily begin to decline thereafter.

For the time being, however, everything appeared to be progressing well. The new DRC reported in mid-1948 that the Minister for the Army, Cyril Chambers, was 'keenly interested in rifle clubs', and expenditure for the normal activities of the rifle club movement saw levels return to those of 1938/39.<sup>525</sup> The ACSRA Executive met in March 1948.<sup>526</sup> One interesting footnote to the Executive meeting was a letter from the editor of *Australian Shooters and Anglers' News*, requesting that the Council adopt

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<sup>524</sup> 'Transfer of Rifle Clubs from Military to Civilian Control', Department of the Army Memorandum 24 June 1948, *Series 507/1/1942*, NAA, Sydney.

<sup>525</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1948', J. J. Gourley, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1948, p.1, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA, Sydney.

<sup>526</sup> A new delegate from South Australia was James Alexander Heaslip, the new Chairman of SARA. He had served with the VDC during World War Two and was a farmer from Appila in South Australia's mid-north, Heaslip was also vice-president of the South Australia Wheat and Wool Growers Association and an MP in the South Australian Parliament.

the journal as ‘the official organ’ of the Council. The Council deferred the request to a ‘more opportune time’. Perhaps the Council still could not see the rifle shooting movement as a pure sport or pastime.<sup>527</sup>

That did not stop riflemen everywhere from congratulating the first Australian rifle team to Bisley since before the war for its success. Under Major Righetti, with the honorary rank bestowed for the trip, the Australians had immediate and significant success. Victoria’s Percy Pavey won the King’s Prize and Grand Aggregate, the first Australian to do so since Lieutenant Walter Addison in 1907, and there were other individual successes. In the team matches, the Australians won both the McKinnon Cup and the Empire Match, and came close behind England and Canada in the Kolopore Cup.<sup>528</sup> Considering the long recession since Australia had competed internationally, it was an outstanding result.

With the Summer Olympics held in England that year however, those chosen to shoot from the rifle-shooting team to Bisley did not fare so well, coming well down in the lists of a challenging new style of competition. The poor results were immediately blamed on the British ‘Free’ rifle, ‘proving its failure’ as a rifle, which, although designed with the object of ‘super-accuracy’, was almost twice as heavy as the standard .303-inch service rifle. The Australians had scrambled to understand the ‘Free’ rifle standard in this competition; the standard had evolved without regard to military or sporting requirements. Free rifle competition was almost the very antipathy of the usual service rifle shooting used by the British and Australians at Bisley.<sup>529</sup> The outcome probably reinforced a natural suspicion that Olympic events competed with the traditional Bisley competition that the Australians were familiar and comfortable with, even if in 1948 the competitions were fired at the ranges that they knew so well. The fact that Pavey had won the King’s Prize at Bisley simply added more weight to the idea that ‘fancy’ European-style shooting with exotic weapons was not for them.

In Australia, Cabinet agreed that rifle clubs could be re-established and authorised the re-establishment of 1,200 rifle clubs with membership of 50,000 men. Due to the evident enthusiasm to restore and create rifle clubs both old and new, by 1948 Cabinet agreed to increase the number to 1,320 clubs and 60,000 members. In the DRC’s annual report for June 1948, he was able to report the following establishment:

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<sup>527</sup> ACSRA: *Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting on 6 March 1948*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld], p.4.

<sup>528</sup> *The NRA of NSW: Annual Report 1948-49*, Aerial Press, Mosman [NSW], 1949, p.17-18.

<sup>529</sup> *Advertiser*, 13 August 1948, p.6; *The Times*, 17 December 1947, p. 3.

Military District	Number of Clubs			Membership and Efficiency				
	Efficient	Non-efficient	Total	Authorised	Members	Efficient	Non-efficient	%
1 <sup>st</sup> (NSW)	172	10	182	8,000	7,093	6,456	637	91
2 <sup>nd</sup> (Qld)	229	30	259	14,250	12,098	10,091	2,007	83
3 <sup>rd</sup> (Vic)	212	60	272	12,098	9,451	8,697	754	92
4 <sup>th</sup> (SA)	132	-	132	6,550	5,962	5,626	336	94
5 <sup>th</sup> (WA)	117	27	144	5,500	5,087	4,433	654	87
6 <sup>th</sup> (Tas)	48	2	50	3,000	1,882	1,615	267	86
<b>Totals</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>1,039</b>	<b>49,300</b>	<b>41,573</b>	<b>36,918</b>	<b>4,655</b>	<b>89</b>

By this time, over 16,400 rifles had been purchased by riflemen, and with more than 8,000,000 more rounds expended by June 1948 than in 1947, it was clear that the revival of the rifle club movement was proceeding apace.<sup>530</sup>

An interesting feature of 1948 was support by rifle clubs to the Food for Britain program. In January 1948 the ACSRA suggested to State rifle associations that individual rifle clubs could pair up with rifle clubs in England and send food parcels which could be used as prizes. This showed fraternal solidarity with riflemen in England whose families were still suffering much privation from the shortages experienced in post-war Britain. Many consumer goods, including food, remained in short supply as agriculture and industry re-tooled and re-organised for peacetime. The program had mixed success, as inevitably some clubs were exceedingly generous while others struggled to achieve a good result. Australians too, were short of basic commodities.

Two deaths among prominent rifle club stalwarts occurred in 1948. The first was that of Lieutenant Colonel W. H. Osborne MBE, VD, who passed away at Warragul, Victoria in March 1948. He had served for 12 years as Director of Rifle Associations and Clubs and a further 24 years as Secretary of the CCRAA. Yet, despite a number of family notices in the newspaper, not a single memorial column or obituary was published, other than a mention in the DRC's report for 1948.<sup>531</sup> It was if he had

<sup>530</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1948', J. J. Gourley, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1948, pp.5-6, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

<sup>531</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1948', J. J. Gourley, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1948, p.4, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

resigned and vanished into thin air, with the war years and age erasing public memories of his achievements and service.

Not so in the case of another Victorian in Sir Charles Merrett, CBE, VD, whose death in November 1948 merited extensive press coverage by comparison with Osborne. Merrett was undoubtedly, like Templeton before him, an exemplary leader and manager, both in the commercial and public worlds. Merrett's long association with the sport of rifle-shooting began in 1878. In 1914, 1928 and 1937 he took the Bisley team to England and in 1941 was also elected a vice-president of the National Rifle Association in England. In the field of rifle shooting, his 46 years of service in the Council of the VRA, which included over 30 years as Chairman from 1907, and 26 years as concurrent Chairman of the CCRAA, made him 'one of the great pioneers of the rifle club movement' in Australia.<sup>532</sup>

The ACSRA met again in Melbourne [in] February 1948.<sup>533</sup> Cyril Chambers, the Minister for the Army, addressed the meeting and in part devoted that address to an appeal to have young rifle club members join the Australian Military Forces:

...I felt all along that rifle clubs can be a nucleus of a defence force. One of my reasons... it is not party politics as far as I am concerned, but, in giving the clubs the support which I have tried to give them under the present Government's policy, I have felt that we can get something in return...

I visited most of the states at the annual shoots, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. I was impressed with the number of younger men who had joined the Clubs and had taken an interest in these shoots, and was hoping that a great number of them would become members of the A.M.F. I tried to check up just to see whether they are joining, I believe that is not so, and unfortunately a good many of the boys who shoot on Saturdays are not members of the forces. I was hoping that would take place. General Montgomery says the rifle still may play a very big part in any war that may take place.\* That has been my reason for fostering Rifle Clubs. I don't want to disregard the very large part that the Rifle

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<sup>532</sup> Vines, M., 'Merrett, Sir Charles Edward (1863 - 1948)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.10, Melbourne University Press, 1986, pp. 486-487; *Argus*, 12 November 1948, p.6.

<sup>533</sup> Attending the meeting was the new DRC, E.G. Williams. The new Officer Commanding the Small Arms School, Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Robert Jackson, DSO, was an apology like his predecessor the previous year. O'Brien, M., 'Jackson, Donald Robert (1915-1986)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.17, Melbourne University Press, 2007, pp. 580-581. New delegates included Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Owen Wynne, DSO and bar, was also Mentioned in Dispatches four times and wounded while serving with the Bedfordshire Regiment on the Western Front during World War One. He was aide-de-camp to the Governor of NSW 1937-1945, and was a keen rifleman both locally and in support of the NRA of NSW. Captain Raymond Arthur Clarke, MC from Western Australia was a farmer from the Bunbury district who fired with the Roelands Rifle Club and a Gallipoli veteran. He had been Mentioned in Dispatches, wounded and won his MC on the Western Front. Remaining in the CMF between the wars, Clarke won the Western Australia 'King's' in 1923 and represented Western Australia at Bisley. Regarded as a crack rifle shot, Clarke served as a sniper during part of his time in the trenches. *Western Mail*, 10 February 1938, p.9.

Clubs played in the Volunteer Defence Force of Australia throughout the war period, and I do know and feel confident that had the occasion arisen, that the Rifle Clubs would have then come into their own as a real defence force, and I am sure that the numbers who joined the Volunteer Defence Force must be a very high percentage of the Rifle Clubs, so therefore it is quite right to say that Rifle Club members are a nucleus of the Defence Force of Australia...

...And I would make one more special appeal to all you older men here this morning who are past the years when you might become active members of the Defence Force, that you encourage those younger men to join up with the A.M.F., and by their joining up I feel it will have a very far-reaching affect on the younger boys of Australia whom we are so desirous of getting into the Volunteer Defence Forces'. I ask that as a special appeal this morning that you do all in your power to encourage your boys who shoot every Saturday to join up with the A.M.F.<sup>534</sup>

\*This was a reference to a speech by Field Marshal Montgomery at the Bisley prize-giving in July 1948.

Exhortations like this, carefully pitched to play on latent sentiment within the members of Council for continuing close associations with the military forces, no doubt encouraged ACSRA in the view that the rifle clubs were still a potent and influential part of the defence structure. Meanwhile, it seemed very convenient that Gray, the former DRC and rifle club veteran, and new ACSRA Secretary, had just retired from the Army and that the Council had moments before approved an increase in salary for the Secretary to £312 per year. The changeover went smoothly, another sign of the maturity of the Council and the like-minded co-operation among its members.

The Council meeting of 1948 spent considerable time on 'house-keeping' matters. These included dealing with hangovers from earlier wartime exigencies in procedures and council structure, along with amendments to constitutional procedures and rules, open prize meetings and the value of the SMLE .303-inch used by the Australian forces vs. the No.4 .303-inch used by the British forces. There was a shortage of 3,000 rifle sights, but Lithgow only wanted to manufacture in bulk. A motion was passed to raise the efficiency grant to 5/- per member per year along with an extra 100 rounds per year for each efficient member, and another to increase from 100 to 300 free rounds for each new member joining. Williamstown Range, Port Adelaide Range and Sandy Bay Range became the Merrett, Dean and Simpson Ranges respectively, to popular acclaim.

Perhaps the most significant motion of the two-day meeting for Sinclair, the Secretary, Department of the Army, to present to the Military Board, was the following:

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<sup>534</sup> ACSRA: *Minutes of Council Meeting Melbourne, 7-8 February 1948*, pp.2-3, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

That the riflemen of Australia feel that in the event of another war the organisation should not go into recess as in 1939; they consider that they should be allocated definite duties in the scheme of defence of Australia and be advised of the proposed duties in due course.

The next day there were two further motions:

That it be a recommendation...that the Australian Rifle Club Regulations be amended to provide that all active members of rifle clubs be members of the Military Reserve Forces.

That it is a recommendation from this Council that all State Rifle Associations do their utmost to assist with recruiting for the Militia Forces.<sup>535</sup>

The military was doing its bit to help the rifle club movement get back on its feet as well. For example, in January 1949 the Eastern Command Headquarters had encouraged its Citizen Military Force units (or CMF, the new Militia), to form unit rifle clubs, 'both as a training aid and a very interesting form of recreation.'<sup>536</sup> The DARC's annual report for 1948/49 stated:

The assistance of the Army in the conduct of State Association Prize Meetings in providing Range and Butt officers, etc., however, is still required and we greatly appreciate the friendly co-operation that is given in this matter.<sup>537</sup>

Meanwhile the DARC noted that an order for 7,000 heavy barrels had been placed at Lithgow in June 1948. Some discussion of ranges also ensued, focused on the difficulty of 'hard to get' Range Inspectors. The meeting closed with the announcement of the pending retirement of Brigadier G.H. Dean, after 62 years of service to the national council. Dean stated that he was sure the rifle club movement would continue to be a useful and essential part of the Home Defence of Australia.

At an earlier meeting, the DARC had asked whether the Commonwealth matches needed to be continued, based on a concern over the cost of sending large teams interstate each year. In December 1949 the Executive considered this. There was no

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<sup>535</sup> Sinclair had accompanied the Bisley team to England by ship in 1948 and no doubt these and other related matters were discussed with him en route. *ACSRA: Minutes of Council Meeting Melbourne, 7-8 February 1948*, pp.12-13 and p.20, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld]. The DRC became the DARC – Director of Australian Rifle Clubs - in 1949.

<sup>536</sup> 'Unit Rifle Clubs, HQ Eastern Command Minute to CMF units, February 1949', *Series SP/1008 411/4/1678*, NAA Sydney.

<sup>537</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1949', J. J. Gourley, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1948, p.1, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

question in anyone's mind that the matches were 'an important and invaluable activity of the movement. However, it was considered a reasonable compromise if the teams were reduced in size from ten to eight, 'as a gesture' to the Department.<sup>538</sup>

As the new decade began, the rifle shooting movement had made a remarkable recovery since the end of World War Two. On the surface at least, it seemed that the move of control to the civilian Secretary of the Department of Army had been a success, but a closer examination of the structure and organisation of State Rifle Associations shows that in fact, some changes were in name only. For example, even though the presidency of the rifle associations moved from the District Commandant to the 'Command Secretary', military officers remained on the rifle association councils. In South Australia in 1950, for example, the rifle association council had the following structure:

- President : The Command Secretary
- Army, Navy and RAAF 'Representatives' (one each)
- Chairman: elected by the rifle association
- Elected members of council (5)
- Military members appointed by the Command Secretary (7, including Brigadier Dean)
- District Rifle Club Union Representatives (7)  
Executive Committee consisting of five elected members, two military members, and two District Rifle Club Union members<sup>539</sup>

This was a similar situation to that of other State rifle associations. In Tasmania, even as late as December 1950, the Commander, Tasmanian Command was still the President. The 'Command Secretary' seemed to be a supernumerary to the Council, which was chaired by a military officer appointed by the Commander, who also appointed the other seven unelected officers, although not all were military men.<sup>540</sup> An especially bright spot for the rifle club movement and ACSRA in particular was the elevation to Minister for the Army of Josiah Francis following the Federal election of December 1949. Francis had served on the Western Front with the AIF in World War

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<sup>538</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Executive Committee of the [ACRSA] held at Brighton Camp, Tasmania on 28 December, 1949*, pp.1-3, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>539</sup> *South Australian Rifle Association 1950: Jubilee Prize Meeting – Official Programme Scoring Book and Annual Report*, Quality Press, Woodville [SA], 1950, pp.39-41.

<sup>540</sup> *Programme of the 54<sup>th</sup> Annual Prize Meeting of the [TRA], December 1950*, Examiner Press, Launceston, 1950, pp.2-3.

One, but perhaps more important to the riflemen, he was also a vice-president in the Queensland Rifle Association.<sup>541</sup>

By June 1950, rifle club membership had climbed to over 45,000. The estimates provided for over £53,000. Of this, over £39,000 directly supported the movement, the balance being for administrative staff salaries. There was an allocation of more than £10,000 for rifle range repair. Meanwhile, 62 rifle clubs disbanded over the previous year, but 49 of these were pre-war regimental rifle clubs. By comparison, 45 new clubs formed, of which 33 were service rifle clubs. From 1946 to 30 June 1950, rifle club members purchased over 24,000 rifles. More than 820 rifle ranges were now in operation throughout the Commonwealth. However, in the seven State rifle associations, including Northern Queensland, only 3,239 competitors had joined the annual prize meetings.<sup>542</sup> It would seem that most preferred to stay within their district rifle club unions, which kept 'closed' competitions in which outside and interstate 'cracks' could not compete.

June 1950 also saw Australia at war once more, this time in Korea when the Korean People's Army of North Korea invaded South Korea, instigating an armed response by the United Nations under the leadership of the USA. However, this was not quite on the scale of World War Two. Australia's forces were involved in active service from September through November 1951, followed by a more static kind of warfare, which continued along the cease-fire line until July 1953. Only a small force battalion group, armed with World War Two-era weapons, was engaged on the ground, along with limited air and naval units.<sup>543</sup> Losses also were relatively small; only 287 Australian soldiers and 42 aviators lost their lives. Against this backdrop the ACSRA Council met in Melbourne.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Rees, J., 'Francis, Sir Josiah (1890 - 1964)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.14, Melbourne University Press, 1996, pp. 212-213.

<sup>542</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1950', L.F. Johnston, Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1950, pp.1-8, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

<sup>543</sup> A second battalion joined the first in 1952.

<sup>544</sup> The DARC attended along with Lieutenant-Colonel Kenneth Murdoch Mackenzie, Chief Instructor at the Army's School of Infantry. Mackenzie was a veteran of Libya, Syria, Greece, Crete and Kokoda. He was Chief Instructor of the School of Infantry between April 1949 and September 1952. He retired from the Regular Army as a Colonel in 1963. New delegates included Major William ('Bill') Henry Hackfath, DCM, for Western Australia. As a Warrant Officer Grade 1, W.H. Hackfath became the first Army shooter to win the "King's Double", the 1929 West Australia King's Prize and the 1930 King's Medal. He had won his DCM at the battle of Passchendale in France during World War One. Colonel Royden Arthur Milledge, ED appeared for Tasmania. Milledge, who served with the CMF and then the AIF in World War Two (he was a veteran of Tobruk) and in the post-war Army, started shooting with the

As was becoming a tradition, invited to lunch with the Council were the Prime Minister, Minister for the Army, Secretary, Department of the Army, the Chief of the General Staff, the DARC and Major-General C.H. Brand (retired).<sup>545</sup> The Minister for Supply and National Development, Richard Gavin Gardiner Casey, represented the Prime Minister. The Minister for the Army was ill. All others accepted, and the fact that the ACSRA was able to both invite and have acceptances from such a senior group of civil and military leaders was testament to the influence and standing still held by the rifle club movement in Australia.<sup>546</sup>

After lunch, the meeting got down to business, considering in turn payment of markers and compensation for injured club members detailed as markers, the DARC suggested that if all rifle club members were part of the Defence Force Reserve, then compensation would be automatic. Each State (and in the case of the Northcote and Gordon Highlander match, ACSRA), had a service match for individuals included in their annual prize meetings. The Council decided to make this match compulsory for all participants, in part because of the possibility of rifle clubs becoming ‘the nucleus of a Home Guard.’<sup>547</sup> Righetti noted that he had petitioned the Minister that rifle clubs be the nucleus of a Home Guard if a national emergency occurred. The Minister had taken the recommendation for consideration and the Military Board was also considering the idea.

Meanwhile, more mundane matters intruded. The Australian hut at Bisley needed constant maintenance. The Department of Army had provided £2,000 to reconstruct and renovate the interior of the hut, but fittings and furniture still needed funding. Again, delegates hoped for help from the Department.<sup>548</sup> The Council then considered the status of Miniature Rifle Club Unions and Clubs. With large-bore shooting effectively prohibited during the recess of World War Two, Miniature rifle clubs (that is, firing .22-inch rifles, or ‘small bore’) had gained in popularity. By June 1950, there were 104

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Melbourne Cricket Club rifle team in 1921. A civil engineer with the Hydro-Electric Commission he was also Chairman of the TRA.

<sup>545</sup> Brand had set up the Citizen Force Rifle Associations in NSW and Victoria and was later a Victorian Senator to 1947. See Sweeting, A. J., ‘Brand, Charles Henry (1873 - 1961)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.7, Melbourne University Press, 1979, pp. 390-391.

<sup>546</sup> At the elections in December 1949 Casey entered the Menzies ministry as Minister for Supply and Development (National Development from March 1950) and for Works and Housing. See Hudson, W. J., ‘Casey, Richard Gavin Gardiner [Baron Casey] (1890 - 1976)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 13, Melbourne University Press, 1993, pp. 381-385.

<sup>547</sup> ACSRA: *Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Council Meeting held at the CTA Club, Melbourne, 27-28 November, 1950*, pp.3-4, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>548</sup> ACSRA: *Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Council Meeting held at the CTA Club, Melbourne, 27-28 November, 1950*, pp.4-5, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

clubs, over 4,000 participants firing on 85 ranges around Australia, with the most participants in NSW followed by Victoria.<sup>549</sup> Yet the rifle club movement disregarded the miniature clubs. The ACSRA agreed to designate these clubs as ‘Small Bore’ clubs and amend the Australian Rifle Club Regulations to allow them to affiliate with the State rifle associations accordingly.<sup>550</sup>

Once more, the question of whether to admit more women as honorary members of rifle clubs was raised, and put down, in short order. Despite the fact that rifle clubs were or not Defence Reserves in some way, the original 1937 regulations forbidding female members of rifle clubs were unchanged and there was no interest in changing them. With the passage of time, this resistance to change regulations seemed less based on reason and more on a pure ‘boy’s own’ form of insularity. This was reflective of the male dominated Australian society of the day. In a similar vein, the Council considered applications to join rifle clubs by ‘New Australians’. Applications by ‘these persons’ were to be sent to the Command Secretary in each State for a decision, even if the applicant was a naturalised British subject. In effect, the Council and its State rifle associations tried to restrict membership to ‘true Australians’.<sup>551</sup>

The Jubilee Year of 1951 was a very quiet year for ACSRA. There was no meeting of Council nor did the Executive meet either. A major topic of conversation however was whether the British Army would adopt a new .280-inch calibre automatic rifle and if it did, whether Australia would follow suit. The new rifle question was of major importance to cross-Atlantic forces inter-operability, and the Americans put forward their own rifle for consideration. In the end, NATO and US forces chose neither, let alone the Australians. In late 1952, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) announced that a 7.62mm calibre rifle would become its new standard. Australia, this time, would follow suit.

The introduction of National Service was also a big issue in 1951. Announced in November 1950 by the Menzies government, the program got underway in March 1951. CMF numbers eventually rose to 87,000 men, but the Defence Department steadfastly refused to entertain rifle clubs becoming part of the structure as a Home Defence Force,

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<sup>549</sup> ‘Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1950’, L.F. Johnston, Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1950, p.8, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

<sup>550</sup> In NSW, a Small Bore Association had been formed and subsequently was represented on the NRA of NSW Council.

<sup>551</sup> *ACSRA: Minutes of the Meeting of the Full Council Meeting held at the CTA Club, Melbourne, 27-28 November, 1950*, p.9, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

arguing that it would divert resources from the Permanent Army and CMF.<sup>552</sup> In fact, rifle club members were even about to be deleted altogether from the Defence Act as potential members of the Military Reserve Forces. In the national Parliament, rifle clubs rarely came up in discussion, although in November 1951 the MP for the Mallee district of north-western Victoria, ex-Japanese prisoner of war Winton George Turnbull, did ask the Minister something he clearly knew was under consideration, coming as he did from the same Liberal-Country Party coalition as the Minister:

As at least 50 per cent, of the members of rifle clubs are of military age, and as the correct use of the rifle is all-important in the defence scheme of Australia, will the Minister give consideration to recommending to Cabinet that the government grant be increased per member?<sup>553</sup>

In June 1951, the DARC had reported 46,710 members of rifle clubs in 1,065 clubs. Not all members were 'efficient' despite the expenditure of over 12 million rounds of ammunition in practice and competitions, but only Western Australia and NSW saw an increase in numbers at their annual prize shoots.<sup>554</sup> As foreshadowed by Turnbull's question in Parliament, however, the rifle clubs vote increased in 1951/52 to almost £61,000. However, this was to be the high point. The Secretary, Department the Army, Sinclair told the ACSRA in July 1952 of a 'tightening financial position' and for the necessity for 'the movement itself to be prepared to be more self-supporting.'<sup>555</sup> By June 1952, the DARC, E. G. Williams, reported that the number of clubs had increased to 1,085 but members had dropped to just over 43,800. It may have been that without national servicemen joining rifle clubs the number may have dropped even further. The Director noted:

I have noticed a friendliness amongst riflemen, which is rarely found in other groups of men. All have one thing in common and that is the desire to find ways and means whereby they can 'hit the bull' more often. Generally speaking they are becoming more successful in that direction. I have also noticed that there are many young ex-servicemen who have joined Rifle Clubs taking part in the competitions.

<sup>552</sup> *West Australian*, 22 March 1951, p.5.

<sup>553</sup> Commonwealth of Australia: *Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives*, Hansard, 1 November 1951. See also Boadle, D., 'Turnbull, Sir Winton George (1899 - 1980)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 16, Melbourne University Press, 2002, pp. 423-424.

<sup>554</sup> Western Australia was host to the Commonwealth series of matches that year as well. However by June 1952 the number of competitors was on the rise once again. *South Australian Rifle Association: 1952 Prize Meeting and Commonwealth Interstate Teams Matches: Official Programme and Scoring Book and Annual Report*, n.p., Adelaide, 1952, pp.53-54.

<sup>555</sup> *Minutes of the Meeting of ACSRA held at Melbourne, 26 -27 July 1952*, n.p., 1952, p.4, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.].

National servicemen too are joining up with rifle clubs adding strength to the movement.<sup>556</sup>

When the ACSRA met in Melbourne once again in late July 1952, among other matters the Council also discussed the deletion from the Defence Act of the provision for allotment of rifle club members to the Military Reserve Forces.<sup>557</sup> Apart from urging the Minister for an amendment to the Act to reverse this, the Council also urged the State associations to:

...assist in formulating a plan for submission to the Government whereby rifle clubs can perform a definite and useful role in a time of national emergency and to consider and give effect to ways and means of offering in the meantime the maximum encouragement of service rifle shooting competition amongst the active units and clubs of the Defence Forces.<sup>558</sup>

Interestingly, in a press article comparing sports in Australia at that time, rifle shooting was placed last on its list. The article notes that football (all codes), horseracing and cricket are by far the most popular sports, but lamented that until a country managed to challenge Australia's supremacy at cricket, it was a dying spectator sport. Golf was the fastest growing participant sport, with 100,000 men and 60,000 women in the sport, while tennis was the new spectator sport. Even bowls placed ahead of last mentioned rifle shooting. But the rifle associations kept up with media efforts to convince the public – and the Government – deserved more funding and a higher status:

Riflemen and their organisation are deserving of the strongest support, financial and otherwise, because of the indisputable fact that, while they keep themselves fit in the full enjoyment of the art of rifle shooting, they are constantly training to assist materially in the defence of Australia, should the need arise.<sup>559</sup>

Rifle shooting is almost an afterthought: 'Rifle shooting, a sport little known to the general public, has the surprisingly high total of 50,000 active participants.'<sup>560</sup> The

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<sup>556</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1952', L.F. Johnston, Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1952, p.2, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

<sup>557</sup> New delegates included Victorian born Leslie William Stewart, Secretary of SARA. A railway man, after service with the 9<sup>th</sup> Light Horse Regiment in World War One, Stewart joined the Railways Institute Rifle Club, and was club champion for several years. James Albert Pike, an AIF veteran of Bougainville in World War Two, was a building contractor and carpenter from Kalgoorlie. An active rifleman with the Kalgoorlie Citizens Rifle Club, Pike represented Western Australia in the Commonwealth matches in 1949 and would again later in 1952.

<sup>558</sup> *Minutes of the Meeting of ACSRA held at Melbourne, 26 -27 July 1952*, n.p., 1952, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.4.

<sup>559</sup> *Advertiser*, 29 December 1952, p.16.

<sup>560</sup> *Mail*, 22 November 1952, p.30.

rifle club movement had an opportunity to embrace women competitors immediately after the war, in line with its new civilian status and the opportunity to transition away from the Defence paradigm towards a community sport. If it had, it may not have been as popular as golf, but it would certainly have placed itself on a more sustainable basis. Later, small-bore shooting also provided the rifle shooting movement with a growth opportunity but essentially ACSRA didn't recognise it as such and ignored it.

## Chapter 12: False Assurances

Soon after the advent of the New Year, on 12 February 1953, came the death of Brigadier G. H. Dean, CBE, VD, at the age of 93.<sup>561</sup> Described as ‘the grand old man of rifle shooting’, Dean organised the SARA, of which he was secretary for many years and chairman for 25, under Major-General Owen in 1887. He was also a founding member of the original General Council in 1888, in which he served continuously until his death, both as chairman from 1903 to 1921, and as a South Australian representative. Commander of the highly successful Bisley team in 1913, he saw World War One service at Gallipoli and later oversaw the development of the Australian Hut at Bisley. In 1932, he was appointed CBE in recognition of his contribution to rifle shooting. In 1948, the Port Adelaide rifle range was renamed the Dean Range in his honour.<sup>562</sup>

Exciting news followed when the DARC was able to announce in his mid-year report that the Governor-General of Australia, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, GCB, GCMG, GBE, DSO, MC, K.St.J., had agreed to become patron of the rifle club movement. This was important news indeed, as Slim was a household word, famous for his wartime generalship and victories in the Far East.<sup>563</sup> Slim was also positively inclined towards rifle clubs, saying, when he was Chief of the Imperial General Staff, ‘I have found that in units which have a high reputation for shooting one can always trace some connection with civilian rifle clubs.’<sup>564</sup>

However, the DARC’s annual report on rifle club activities also noted a decline in competitors at State rifle association prize meetings of several hundred. Yet there was a further notable increase in small-bore membership, to 151 clubs (up from 130) with over 6,000 members (up from 5,200) firing on 95 small-bore ranges (up from 85). Unfortunately, the report did not qualify the members as male or female, but it was

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<sup>561</sup> Dean had celebrated his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday on the rifle range named after him.

<sup>562</sup> *Advertiser*, 13 February 1953, p.3; Zwillenberg, H. J., ‘Dean, George Henry (1859 - 1953)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.8, Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp 258-259; *South Australian Rifle Association: 1953 Annual Prize Meeting – Official Programme Scoring Book and Annual Report*, Quality Press, Adelaide, 1953, p.40.

<sup>563</sup> ‘Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1953’, L.F. Johnston, Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1953, p.2, *SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

<sup>564</sup> *Commonwealth of Australia: Estimates 1953/54 – Speech by L.J. Failes, MP (Lawson)*, Hansard, House of Representatives, 1 October 1953.

significant that such an increase occurred coincidentally with the ACSRA's 1952 decision that women be allowed as members of small-bore clubs.<sup>565</sup>

In 1953, the rifle club movement was still strong, although membership had dropped to below 45,000. It certainly did not occupy the place of importance or influence it once did in Australian public life, including in Parliament. However, it was not without its supporters. The Minister for the Army, Francis, remained a strong supporter, attending prize shoots, giving speeches and according to one report, even belonging to several rifle clubs. In Parliament in October 1953, World War Two veteran and Country Party MP Laurence John Failes, representing the NSW seat of Lawson, made statements of support of the rifle club movement. Invoking positive speeches about the importance of rifle shooting by Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, Field Marshal Earl Alexander, Minister of Defence in Great Britain, Field Marshal Lord Wilson of Libya, and the Governor-General, Field Marshal Sir William Slim, Failes asked that the Government give greater encouragement to rifle shooting in Australia. In a long but important speech in support of the rifle club movement, Failes remarked:

...Although the financial provision made in this respect has been increased slightly during the last few years, the expenditure does not represent a reasonable proportion of the amount that is expended in other branches of the armed services. The proposed vote for pay and allowances in the nature of pay for the Citizen Military Forces is £6,675,000, but no provision has been made for pay and allowances to members of rifle clubs. The proposed vote for camps of training, schools and courses of instruction, regimental exercises and bivouacs for the Citizen Military Forces is £2,641,000, but the amount to be provided for grants for ranges, efficiency, prize meetings, &c, for rifle clubs and associations is only £30,900. Thus, more than £2,500,000 is to be spent on one branch of the service but only approximately £31,000 on the other. For the Citizen Military Forces the proposed vote for compensation for death or illness on duty is £25,000. No provision has been made for the payment of similar compensation to members of rifle clubs and associations.

The funds provided for rifle clubs and associations is insignificant by comparison with those provided for the several branches of the armed forces. A total provision of £65,000 for rifle clubs and associations out of the huge amount of £200,000,000 to be made available for defence, of which £73,742,000 will be expended on the Army, is very niggardly. Riflemen render excellent service to their country...The establishment figure for rifle clubs is 50,000 – the same as it was in 1938, but rifle

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<sup>565</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1953', L.F. Johnston, Govt. Printer, Canberra, 1953, p.8, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney. It is likely that women alone were not providing the increase in membership, but rather that more women felt welcome at small-bore meets and were more willing to accompany their husbands to the venues, hence encouraging more male members by default.

clubs and associations now have a strength of 64,000. The organizations are unable to increase their membership because of the limited establishment figure set by the Government.

The clubs are unable to admit to membership the large number of young men who, having completed their period of national service training, seek admission to the clubs with the object of improving their efficiency in the use of the rifle. In years gone by rifle shooting may have been regarded as an old man's sport. It is not so regarded today. One has only to visit a rifle range when shooting is in progress to observe the large numbers of young ex-servicemen, and young lads who have completed national service training, and are endeavouring to increase their proficiency in the use of the rifle, which is so desirable in the view of the military authorities...I strongly appeal to the Minister for the Army to increase the grant to rifle clubs and associations. If it is not possible for him to do so this year, I urge him to consider increasing the grant next year. Rifle clubs and associations are well worthy of support and their claims for assistance should receive the approbation of every member ...<sup>566</sup>

The ACSRA met again in Melbourne in early November 1953, for the first time since July 1952.<sup>567</sup> The Council, noting and accepting the Governor-General as Patron then decided to ask the Secretary of the Army and the three service Chiefs-of-Staff to become vice-patrons of the Council (with an amendment if necessary to the ACSRA Constitution to allow it). This apparent contradiction in the strategic considerations of the now civilianised ACSRA was emphasised further when the Council rescinded its previous motion of concern over the loss of Reserve Force status. What brought about this remarkable turnaround was a speech by the Secretary Department of the Army at the prize meeting of the 'Subsidiary Rifle Association' [NQRA], in which he pointed out that, with the amendment to the Defence Act, rifle clubs were no longer part of the Military Reserve Forces. This open declaration appeared to have shocked the Council

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<sup>566</sup> Laurence John Failes (1899–1976) held Lawson from 1949 until its abolition in 1969, at which time he retired. [http://wn.com/Laurence\\_Failes](http://wn.com/Laurence_Failes), accessed 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011. *Commonwealth of Australia: Estimates 1953/54 – Speech by L.J. Failes, MP (Lawson)*, Hansard, House of Representatives, 1st October 1953.

<sup>567</sup> The DARC, Williams, also attended along with Sinclair, Secretary of the Department of Army. There was an apology by the new Chief Instructor Army School of Infantry, Lieutenant-Colonel Joseph Lawrence Andrew Kelly, DSO, a tough veteran of the Middle East and New Guinea campaigns in World War Two. Hill, A. J., 'Kelly, Joseph Lawrence Andrew (1907 - 1970)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.14, Melbourne University Press, 1996, pp.612-613. Some new faces made an appearance. Ernest 'Ernie' Hedley Cornish, a member of the Parramatta Rifle Club, was an artilleryman during World War One but embarked too late to participate in the fighting. He was a baker and pastry cook by profession and Secretary of the NRA of NSW. The Hon. A. L. McEwin, MLC (Chairman of SARA) came for South Australia. A farmer by background, McEwin was a Liberal Country League, later Country Party member of South Australia's Legislative Council. He served in the State Parliament between 1934 and 1975 and knighted in 1954. During that time, he occupied several ministerial positions and was at one time Secretary for South Australia. Ralph William Exton, for Tasmania, who had seen Australian service in World War Two, was a postal assistant and the Supervisor of Rifle Clubs in Tasmania. He won the Tasmanian King's Prize in 1932 and was a member of the Australian Natives Association Rifle Club in Hobart.

delegates, deflating any expectation of a possible retraction of the Defence Act amendment.

The NQRA now agreed to retain the civilian constitution of the ACSRA after all, and, in event of another war, proposed that the rifle clubs should form the nucleus of a Home Guard. One delegate opined that rifle clubs ‘could usefully function without being given reserve status’, and noted the cooperation at a working level between rifle clubs and military units around musketry and ranges.<sup>568</sup> The ACSRA still relied on the Army for assistance in a number of ways, and so requested the Minister consider State rifle associations as a CMF unit for the purposes of helping to organise State rifle association prize meetings with stores and staff. The Council also hoped that Army officers would still promote State rifle association prize meetings but especially, that international teams would be afforded temporary ‘Reserve’ status to allow them to wear the uniform and comply with the usually ‘military’ conditions of those matches.<sup>569</sup>

The Secretary, Department of the Army himself arrived to address the meeting. Sinclair immediately noted ‘that the rifle club organisation would be well advised to retain its present civilian set-up, as it was now on a firm basis and functioning to the satisfaction of all concerned.’ He went on to put the delegates at ease that Army support would not be withdrawn from State rifle association prize meetings but reminded them also that harmonious relations with the States’ General Officers Commanding and their staff was the key to this support continuing. In the meantime, the Council encouraged State rifle associations to start ‘Linked Teams’ matches with Militia CMF units as well as ensure that the special service matches on the annual prize shoots continued.<sup>570</sup>

If the ACSRA was penny-pinching, so was the Department for Army. The Secretary, Department of the Army, had asked the ACSRA Chairman to visit States holding annual prize shoots only once each two years, instead of each year, to save money.<sup>571</sup> The meeting came to a close, but not before a vote of thanks for L. J. Failes, MP, for his supportive speech in the House of Representatives.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, 7-8 November 1953*, p.3, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>569</sup> For example, Righetti was an Honorary Major while captaining the 1948 Bisley team; the team all wore military uniforms.

<sup>570</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 7-8 November 1953*, pp.3-5, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>571</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 7-8 November 1953*, pp.9-11, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>572</sup> Failes was also a Vice-President of the NRA of NSW

The new Queen, HRH Elizabeth II was to visit Australia in 1954 and there was much excitement about this Royal visit throughout the country. However, riflemen everywhere were perhaps more interested to learn from the press in January 1954 that the British Armed Forces were to finally adopt a new general service rifle, ending the 50 year reign of the .303-inch Lee Enfield.<sup>573</sup> The new rifle was the FN30, manufactured in Belgium by the *Fabrique Nationale d'Armes de Guerre* of a .30-inch calibre (or 7.62 mm). The new semi-automatic weapon was heavier than the .303 calibre SMLE but shorter, and could fire the standard NATO rounds on semi-automatic. Canada also ordered the same rifle and in October 1954, Australia followed suit, with a small quantity ordered for trials.<sup>574</sup> It was not until 1956 that the Small Arms Factory at Lithgow finally received an order for 110,000 of the new rifle, which became known in Australia as the 'L1A1', or 'SLR' (Self-Loading Rifle).<sup>575</sup>

The VRA was especially pleased when the Governor-General Field Marshal Slim made his first visit as patron of the rifle club movement to present prizes immediately following the VRA's annual matches. In the DARC's annual report for the period ending 30 June 1954, he noted that total membership had dropped to 43,035, although the number of clubs had increased somewhat. Noting the decision not to have rifle clubs as part of the Military Reserve Forces, the DARC nonetheless continued to include service rifle clubs and members in the total for the rifle clubs overall. The DARC's report fails to quantify the percentage of service members within the total membership or the number of service clubs.

In a happy announcement for the rifle club movement, the Queen's Birthday Honours List announced that the Chairman of SARA and ACSRA delegate, A. L. McEwin, was awarded the KBE for his services to rifle shooting.<sup>576</sup> In Queensland, veteran ACSRA delegate W.G. Duncan had the Enoggera rifle range named after him in recognition of his many years of service to Queensland rifle shooting and to the rifle club movement in general.

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<sup>573</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 1954, p.2.

<sup>574</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 October 1954, p.6.

<sup>575</sup> Griffiths, T., *Lithgow's Small Arms Factory and its People, Vol.2: 1950 to 1990*, Toptech Engineering, Terry Hills, [NSW], 2008, p.71. The first factory-made SLR was not produced until October 1958.

<sup>576</sup> *South Australian Rifle Association: Annual Prize Meeting – Official Programme, Scoring Book and Annual Report 1954*, n.p., Adelaide, 1954, p.42.

The ACSRA meeting in early November 1954 saw the arrival of a new salaried Secretary, Colonel Edgar Ernest Grant, OBE.<sup>577</sup> The question arose once again whether women could be members of rifle clubs. It seemed that women in the defence forces were applying to join military rifle clubs (without success thanks to military regulations). Delegates rejected a suggestion by some State delegates to allow women to join civilian rifle clubs, even as honorary members. South Australian Secretary of SARA, Carl Mutton said: 'rifle-shooting is training for defence of the country and there is, therefore, no justification or purpose in training women to use the rifle.'<sup>578</sup>

The Director, E. G. Williams, said that 'if women were allowed now, it would be hard to ban them again in the future; and it might prejudice receiving future grants from the government.' He confirmed that Army would not be training nurses or Women's Army Corps members in rifle shooting and said that ACSRA could be criticised for contradicting Army policy if it changed the rules. Mutton spoke again, saying that if women were let in, 'the situation could get out of control', and the extra numbers joining clubs could 'prejudice the supply of ammunition.' Associations would have to consider lavatory accommodation at rifle ranges. Without age limits, young girls might be admitted. The 'possibility of undesirable incidents occurring could not be overlooked.' He declared that he was not against women, but the rifle range was not the place for them.

The Council deferred a final decision until 1955 after heated exchanges between Mutton and Righetti over the issue.<sup>579</sup> In 1955 however, Mutton again supported the ongoing ban on new women members. Queensland's delegate Alexander Christmas Ball supported him, saying that in Queensland, 'very young women were shooting with

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<sup>577</sup> Grant had been Supervisor of Rifle Clubs in Tasmania before the war when he had represented the Army there in the King's medal competition as well as Tasmania for the TRA (he was an all-round sportsman). He won an OBE on active service in the Middle East in 1942, and had been most recently Director of Cadets. Grant's predecessor in the role, the late Colonel W. H. Gray, VD, had served as national secretary for almost 10 years in addition to his time as VRA Secretary, Director of Rifle Clubs and 25 years of military service spanning two world wars. *Mercury*, 13 September 1954, p.6. Another new person on Council was Arthur Snowden Laidley Hay was a new delegate from Tasmania. Hay was a veteran of both world wars. He had established a successful carrier business after World War One but later became an electrical engineer. A long-standing member of the Australian Natives Association (ANA) Rifle Club, he captained Tasmanian rifle teams in 1952 and 1954. Major A. Jordan had also passed away, only days before the meeting took place. Jordan served for 17 years on the national council and almost 50 years on the VRA council, a remarkable record. Soon after the meeting, news also came of the death of J. R. Wallace, a former NSW delegate to the national council in 1911 and 1921 and who had been a member of the NSW Contingent sent to the Boxer Rebellion in 1901.

<sup>578</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 6-7 November 1954*, p.12, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>579</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 6-7 November 1954*, pp.18-19, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

rifle clubs and competing in prize meetings.’ Two competed in the 1955 QRA prize meeting and local press photographers were ‘interested in them only. It was bad publicity.’ The outcome was predictable; it remained ‘illegal’ to accept new women members in clubs or allow them to shoot in prize meetings.<sup>580</sup>

The ACSRA determined to send a team to Bisley in 1956 and elected Colonel Richard Owen Wynne, the Chairman of the NRA of NSW and NSW delegate to ACSRA, as team commandant. Meanwhile, the Secretary of the Department of the Army, Sinclair, retired due to ill health. Allan Douglas McKnight, a Public Service officer of the Prime Minister’s Department, replaced him.<sup>581</sup> Later in March, Colonel Lawrence Herbert (‘Bert’) Story, who had represented three different States on the national council, passed away.

By June 1955, membership in the movement had dropped below 43,000 for the first time along with club numbers, which saw a slight decline to 1,046, although this picture was not uniform across all States. NSW continued to lead the other States in members, clubs, ranges, prize-money and competitors at prize shoots, followed closely by Victoria. Around 7,000 members were Militia or National Servicemen in unit clubs. Small-bore clubs, members and ranges continued to increase in numbers as .22-calibre shooting remained popular, with well over 7,000 members.<sup>582</sup>

Ever since 1885, the NQRA had been a separate rifle association in Queensland; the downgrading of the NQRA to a ‘Subsidiary’ rifle association in 1949 rankled. The ACSRA meeting in Melbourne in early November 1955 decided to recommend to the Secretary, Department of the Army, to re-establish the NQRA as a separate rifle association, but leaving the QRA as the State representative association. For the third year in a row, the Chief Instructor, School of Infantry (in 1955 this was Lieutenant-Colonel Norman Paterson Maddern, MBE) and *ex-officio* member of ACSRA, offered apologies.<sup>583</sup>

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<sup>580</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 5<sup>th</sup> November 1955*, p. 5, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>581</sup> Hyslop, R., ‘Sinclair, Frank Roy (1892 - 1965)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 16, Melbourne University Press, 2002, pp. 250-251.

<sup>582</sup> ‘Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1955’, W.M. Houston, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1955, pp.1-8, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney. Military clubs also participated in their own military rifle club unions, their members competing in the annual Army rifle shooting championship for the King’s medal (awarded since 1923). In effect, the military club members should not have been included in the rifle club figures, or they should at least have merited a separate line in the DARC report.

<sup>583</sup> It was the last time that the CI was invited, ending a long tradition.

In January 1956, the Minister for the Army, Josiah Francis, took up an appointment as Australian Consul-General in New York. With his departure from the scene the movement lost an especially sympathetic supporter; Francis was a World War One veteran. His successor as Minister was Eric John Harrison, also a World War One veteran who had been Minister for Defence Supply before becoming Minister for the Army in 1956.<sup>584</sup> In fact, since the accession to power of the United Australia Party and Liberal and Country Party Coalition in late 1949, a succession of Ministers for the Army right through until 1972 inclined to support the rifle club movement. However, as will be seen, this would not be enough to save the movement from significant threats to its existence and sustainability in the years ahead.

In other changes, E.G. Williams, who had been the DARC for seven years, retired in April 1956. William Leo Larkin, the acting 'Command Secretary' for NSW, replaced him, pending a new appointment to the position.<sup>585</sup> Larkin's first annual report to June 1956 showed that the rifle club movement remained relatively static in NSW at least. Once again the report noted further increases in the popularity of small-bore shooting – to 219 clubs, over 8,000 members and 148 ranges.<sup>586</sup>

Mainstream television came to Sydney in September 1956. Although experimental television had been around for many years, this was the advent of popular television, and it was a sensation. Some leaders of the rifle club movement saw television as one of the main reasons for a significant decline in membership over time and a major contributory factor in the failure to attract new younger members. The October series of Commonwealth matches in Sydney came too soon to be televised. However, many hoped that this would happen in the future, not yet understanding the medium and its need for the action images which would keep viewers 'glued to their sets'.

Just prior to the Olympic Games which began in Melbourne in late November 1956, ACSRA held its annual meeting in Melbourne. As usual, the Council discussed a wide range of matters. 'New Australians' were a subject once again. It was agreed that while 'New Australians' were required to register for National Service and could even join the Army voluntarily they could not join rifle clubs. The new delegate from

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<sup>584</sup> Macintyre, S., 'Harrison, Sir Eric John (1892 - 1974)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 14, Melbourne University Press, 1996, pp. 398-399.

<sup>585</sup> The State equivalent of the Secretary, Department of the Army.

<sup>586</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1956', W.M. Houston, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1956, p.8, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

Western Australia, William Frederick Samson, struck a tolerant note when he said: ‘we want to encourage assimilation and not the formation of separate communities.’<sup>587</sup>

Rapid growth in the small-bore rifle clubs saw recognition of the need to procure .22-inch match rifles for target shooting only. In a detailed proposal submitted in the October agenda papers of the meeting from the No.1 Victorian Small-Bore Clubs Union, ACSRA delegates learned that in the 35 clubs in Victoria, with 1,500 members, there were only 331 rifles. Of these, 84 belonged to the clubs and 247 to the members, and the club rifles only included nine modern .22-inch match rifles. Some of the remainder dated back to 1914 or even earlier, with inevitable and evident wear and tear. Of the 247 privately owned rifles, only 40 were top-quality match rifles, along with 60 aged and worn match rifles, with the balance being ‘a miscellany of extempore match rifles, including a large variety of the rabbit shooting variety.’ ACSRA agreed to pursue match rifles for the small-bore clubs, purchased through the Government.<sup>588</sup>

The 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne was a major event in Australia, and being right on its own doorstep, ACSRA could not help but be deeply engaged in the rifle shooting activities. The rifle and pistol shooting events were held at the Merrett Range in Williamstown, while the trap (‘clay’) shooting event occurred at the RAAF base at Laverton. Australia had representation in every shooting event. The four rifle shooting events consisted of:

1. Men’s Free Rifle, Three Positions, 300 metres
2. Men’s Small-Bore Rifle, Three Positions , 50 metres
3. Men’s Small Bore Rifle, Prone, 50 metres
4. Men’s Running Target (‘Running Deer’), Single and Double, 50 metres

True to its word, the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) had supported the costs of the elimination trials for the final team. Ammunition costs were borne by a special grant from the Minister’s Rifle Club Vote. In the 300-metre ‘Free Rifle’ shoot, both representatives (Lieutenant-Commanders Ian Hamilton ‘Peter’ Wrigley and Norman ‘Norrie’ Goff) were members of the RAN Reserve. In the Running Deer Target match, both representatives were military officers, one in the regular Army (Colin

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<sup>587</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 10 November 1956*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>588</sup> ‘Proposal for Improvement in the Supply of .22 Match Rifles in Australia’, *ACSRA: Agenda for Meeting of the Council, 24 October 1956*, attached letter, pp.1-2, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

Anderson), and the other (Noel William Hall) in the CMF.<sup>589</sup> Only the two representatives firing in the dual small-bore events were civilian riflemen (Norman Rule and Donald Cecil Tolhurst). ACSRA delegates Mutton and Hackfath acted as officials along with VRA officers, the Australian Amateur Pistol Union and Victorian Small-Bore Clubs' Union.<sup>590</sup> None of the Australians won a medal, but they made credible performances nonetheless. As in 1948, the rifles used for the large bore matches were adaptations of the .303-inch P14 British rifles. In fact, for these events the NRA actually lent Australia six of its rifles for the competitions.

The following year, preparations were put in train for the visit in March 1958 of a British Rifle Team, twenty years after the last visit by a NRA team in 1938. The British team captain in 1958 had been a member of its 1938 team. The rifle club movement remained reasonably static once more, but yet again, the small-bore shooting phenomenon continued, with member numbers approaching 9,500 by June 1957.<sup>591</sup> In May 1957, the Government changed the provisions of National Service, introducing ballot by birthday but reducing the annual intake by nearly 20,000 men a year. Inevitably, this would reduce membership of rifle clubs in turn.

Moreover, in another change the Defence Force Headquarters finalised the transfer to Canberra from Victoria Barracks in Melbourne, although ACSRA continued to meet in Melbourne. Against this backdrop of routine developments and activities, a new ammunition factory was announced for Footscray in Melbourne while the Lithgow Small Arms Factory geared up to support FN production. Few people outside the Factory, and possibly not all inside, appreciated the magnitude of the change that was taking place. 'The old technology, customs and methods were going...The factory was effectively being rebuilt: the FN would require 20,000 drawings, 25,000 pieces of tooling (including spares), 1300 machining operations, and 900 others...'<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> The CMF officer and Kokoda veteran from World War two, Major Noel Hall, ED, who shot with the Victorian Hawthorne Small Bore Club, was also the oldest competitor at 43 years of age. He won the Army's Championship King's Medal in 1939. He died, aged 95, in 2011.

<sup>590</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 10 November 1956*, p. 10, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>591</sup> 'Department of the Army: Australian Rifle Clubs – Report by the Director of Rifle Clubs for the Year Ended 30 June 1957', W.M. Houston, Govt. Printer, Melbourne, 1956, p.9, *Series SP 459/1*, NAA Sydney.

<sup>592</sup> Griffiths, T., *Lithgow's Small Arms Factory and its People, Vol.2: 1950 to 1990*, Toptech Engineering, , Terry Hills, [NSW], 2008, pp.96-97.

In October 1957, the annual interstate Commonwealth match series ran in Perth. John Oscar Cramer, the new Minister for the Army, presented the prizes.<sup>593</sup> Rifle club newsletters later cited his speech at the prize-giving ceremony as the speech that presaged the huge changes to come two years later for the movement and as proof that the Government was planning these changes well before the rifle club movement ever came to be aware of them. His speech noted, *inter alia*:

You know, there's a lot that the Australian people can be proud of in the Rifle Club Movement. (applause) I believe it is true to say that is the oldest and most honoured Movement we have in Australia. (applause) ...so there is something you just can't wipe out in relation to the Rifle Club Movement in Australia, and I hope it goes on, and continues to serve and provide great enjoyment to the many men throughout this country. It's a big movement, it's a widespread movement. I believe it makes contact with the public in almost every part of Australia, in all the little highways and byways, as well as being in the big cities, and so it is a national movement in every sense of the term, right through Australia and I am very glad and honoured indeed to be associated with it, because it comes under the administration of my department...

You know – I really think the idea of bringing me here to-day, and having a two hour conference with Mr. Righetti before I got here, was something in the nature of a little treatment I'm getting. (applause) But I do want to say to you and particularly, if I may, to those who are Rifle Club members, that there is no intention at all of the Federal Government doing anything to destroy the Rifle Club Movement. (applause) There may be some little adjustments that we'll have to make (murmurs)...I really think that when the determination is made, every fair-minded man and woman in this country and indeed, I am sure that Riflemen themselves, who I believe are very fair minded people and can look at things in a logical fashion, I am sure that they won't be so disappointed as some of them think they might be...<sup>594</sup>

The ACSRA met the following month, in Melbourne.<sup>595</sup> The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, delegated Robert William Ludovic Lindsay, MP for Flinders, to represent him.<sup>596</sup> A. D. McKnight, the Secretary Department of the Army, also

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<sup>593</sup> Cramer was Minister for the Army from 1956 to 1963.

<sup>594</sup> 'Presentation of Prizes', *Marksman*, Vol.9, No.11, November 1957, pp.9-10.

<sup>595</sup> At this meeting there was one new delegate, the newly elected Chairman of the NRA of NSW, Stanley William Kanaar. A jeweller from Coogee in Sydney, Kanaar was a veteran of the Parramatta Rifle Club. Kanaar was the third member of Parramatta Rifle Club to become chairman of the NRA of NSW. He won the New Zealand King's in 1949 and represented NSW three times. As there was still no permanent appointment to the role of Director Australian Rifle Clubs, and with the internal promotion of W.L. Larkin, another Acting DARC was appointed to attend the meeting – Alan Brett, accompanied by the Thomas Kingston Fisher, the Administrative Officer for Rifle Clubs.

<sup>596</sup> Lindsay (1905-2000) was an English-born Australian soldier, farmer and politician. He graduated from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst and served in the military from 1925-37 and 1939-52. In 1954, he was elected to the Australian House of Representatives as the Liberal member for Flinders and held the seat until his retirement in 1966. See Carr, A., 'Australian Election Archive' *Psephos, Adam Carr's Election Archive*, <http://psephos.adam-carr.net/countries/a/australia> retrieved 7 June 2011

attended the meeting, and in a brief address, perhaps with some foreknowledge of changes to come, stated: 'this was a difficult time, not just for rifle clubs, but for the Army as a whole, as all defence expenditure is being closely examined.'<sup>597</sup> In contrast, Lindsay, a member of the Mornington Peninsula Rifle Club in his Victorian electorate, was more positive.

In addition, the Council spent a considerable amount of time discussing and reacting to developments in the small-bore clubs, such as the use of metric ranges. Somewhat oddly, it did not attempt to analyse just why the small-bore rifle club movement had expanded so rapidly since the early 1950s, in direct contrast with the large-bore rifle clubs that were declining in membership and numbers or were static at best. Such an analysis may have given the ACSRA delegates some insights into how they could refresh the rifle club movement.

While it was recognising that international competition was generating great interest, even though it was an elitist level of the sport, the ACSRA also seemed uninterested in the appearance on the shooting scene in Australia of a number of new or resurgent shooting organisations. For example, the Sporting Shooters Association started in NSW in 1948 and spread to Victoria and Queensland in the 1950s. Although small in number, it expanded rapidly.<sup>598</sup> Meanwhile, South Australian ACSRA delegate Mutton, perceptive to the need to build rifle club numbers, proposed to allow school cadets aged 14 and above into rifle clubs, on the basis that young men, frustrated by the restriction on joining rifle clubs, were joining other sporting bodies instead.

At the beginning of 1958, a new DARC, John Macdonald Aitken made an appearance, continuing the run of senior public servants appointed to the role.<sup>599</sup> His appointment coincided with the visit of a NRA rifle team to New Zealand and Australia in February 1958, the first in twenty years. Air transport was used exclusively for the first time to allow a six-week whirlwind tour of Australia across all six States. Captained by Major N. W. McCaw, who had been a member of the 1938 touring NRA side, the rifle team competed for the Empire Match in Melbourne in early March 1958, with Australia coming out on top. Later that year, in August an Australian team of nine rifle and pistol shooters under the captaincy of Ken Gilham, went to Moscow for the

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<sup>597</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 9 -10 November 1957*, p. 9, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>598</sup> In 1959 it claimed only 250 members. In 2011 it claimed 120,000 around Australia.

<sup>599</sup> Aitken would be the last DARC.

37<sup>th</sup> UIT World Shooting Championships.<sup>600</sup> The rifle club team members had received little encouragement and no money from ACSRA, and mostly self-funded their rifles, ammunition and travel costs to Moscow.<sup>601</sup>

The ACSRA meeting of November 1958 in Melbourne was notable on a number of counts and was a harbinger of major changes approaching which would change the rifle club movement in fundamental ways.<sup>602</sup> One thing that stood out was the increasing diversity of issues being faced by the Council. These included international shooting, both Olympics and World Shooting Championships to Bisley, new codes and disciplines like pistol shooting and clay shooting, the huge growth in small-bore shooting and that sport's pressing need for new rules and the establishment of State and national championships. With the diversion of the Council's attention in many directions, it seemed as if the Commonwealth match series was becoming less important in the overall scheme of things. Remarkably, the DARC's annual report of 1959 did not even mention the scores for the 1958 matches. Indeed, it did not mention them at all.

Overshadowing all of this however, was the introduction of the SLR (L1A1 or FN30) into service. This was to have far-reaching consequences for the rifle club movement. By mid-1958, the first batch of 200 rifles was nearing production at Lithgow.<sup>603</sup> Well-advanced plans were in hand for the introduction of the new rifle and the application of new training for soldiers with it. Concurrently, in recognition that potential threats to Australia had mostly gone, the Government moved ammunition production from the Department of Defence production to the Department of Supply,

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<sup>600</sup> Diverse national rifle shooting traditions began to converge in 1896 when two rifle events were on the program of the first modern Olympic Games in Athens and in 1897 when five European nations held the first World Shooting Championship in Lyon, France. Those international contests led to the formation, in 1907, of the International Shooting Union, also known as the Union Internationale de Tir (UIT), the world governing body of shooting. <http://rifleshootingclub.wix.com/bullseye#!rifle-shooting-guide>

<sup>601</sup> *Marksmanship*, Vol.10, No.5, May 1958, Glebe Press, Sydney, p.10. A rifle built by I.H. Wrigley for these matches is exhibited in the National Sports Museum in Melbourne.

<sup>602</sup> The new DARC, Aitken, attended his first meeting, accompanied by the Rifle Clubs Administrative Officer, Fisher, while the meeting was also attended by Bruce White, the new Secretary for the Department of Army and Philip William Clifford Stokes, ED, MP, Member for Maribyrnong representing the Prime Minister. Stokes was a World War Two veteran, having served at Tobruk and Dutch New Guinea. New ACSRA delegates with military service included Jack Edward Dean. J. E. Dean, the town clerk of Glenorchy had served with the RAAF in World War Two. He was the son of well-known Tasmanian rifleman, Bisley representative and ACSRA Councillor, Edward Dean, and shot with the ANA Rifle Club.

<sup>603</sup> The first factory-made FN rifle was proof-fired at the Lithgow factory on 15 October 1958. It was the start of a new era.

and began to cut back on non-essential munitions. Inevitably, these two trends were to converge in the case of the rifle club movement.

A year before, the then Secretary of the Department of Army had foreshadowed to ACSRA that all expenditure was being closely examined. The Minister had hinted to Righetti that there may be curtailment of ammunition supplies. ACSRA certainly had some intimation that things were going to change, but dithered about what to do about it, trusting, perhaps, that the long record of the rifle club movement and traditional ties to Defence would keep it going once again in the face of change.

At the November 1958 meeting, the new Secretary for the Army, B. White, attended the meeting for the first time. Addressing the meeting, White, after a certain amount of flattery, left the delegates with a cryptic statement of assurance, 'that whatever is being done and whatever dealings we may have in the future they will be characterised, on his part, with a fervent desire to act.'<sup>604</sup> The Prime Minister's representative, Philip William Clifford Stokes, MP, then made a complimentary speech about rifle clubs but, less obliquely than Secretary White, noted how rifles had become obsolete in the face of change and atomic weapons. He added that he knew 'there were thoughts of curtailment of certain of rifle club activities in view of [these matters], but hoped that the rifle clubs could continue'. Righetti's reply was revealing:

We are a bit worried about the future... Whatever happens we can adapt ourselves: you will not get a more patriotic body of men anywhere in Australia and we feel we should play some part as we are entitled to in the defence of this country. Give us a job and we shall do it.

Sir Lyell McEwin added:

It has been suggested ... that changes have taken place in the conditions of Rifle Clubs and that their place in the general sphere of defence has altered. I express the feelings of the Council that we too can alter the pattern, and want to alter the pattern to fit into a youthful unit if it means continuing our ideas, and it is the desire of everyone here to do it...<sup>605</sup>

It was clear that from these somewhat indirect exchanges that the Government was preparing the rifle club movement for change. It appeared that the delegates to ACSRA were equally aware that something was afoot. Although less sure about the

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<sup>604</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 8 – 9 November 1958*, p. 5, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>605</sup> *ibid.*

possible outcomes, the Council was equally keen to show that it was willing to make changes as needed to remain contemporary with Army requirements, even though it was no longer a part of Defence.<sup>606</sup> Later in the meeting the DARC addressed the delegates on the Army's new training regime for the new service rifle and the necessity for the rifle clubs to consider what changes they would have to make to fit in with the new weapon. Somewhat ominously, the item was discussed under the heading '*The Future of Rifle Clubs*'.

The new Army training system, called 'Trainfire', was an adaptation of American training methods using 'pop-up' mechanical targets. The Rifle Clubs Administrative Officer explained this in some detail to the meeting. In a Minute to the DARC only days before the ACSRA meeting, entitled '*Future Rifle Club Activities Consequent upon the Introduction into the Army of the FN30 rifle and Trainfire ranges*', Fisher provided a detailed proposal as to how the rifle clubs would have to adapt to the new system. In his exposition, Fisher noted:

Basically it requires an old dog to learn new tricks and would therefore doubtless lead to many confirmed rifle club shooters giving the game away. However, the movement attracts some 6,000 new enrolments annually and these would all be required to qualify by the new standards...in about 4 years the movement could be expected to produce at least 20,000 proficient battle shots...<sup>607</sup>

At the subsequent ACSRA meeting, the Department essentially told delegates how to make changes to their service shooting matches to fit in. While there would still be shooting up to 600 yards, disconcertingly for the delegates, Fisher said that over time, long range shooting would be 'contracted as time goes on', and that 'long range facilities may eventually disappear.' The Council agreed to draft a letter to the Secretary, Department of the Army to indicate its willingness to change their shooting methods to conform to these changes and to convey its readiness to make changes. The letter, couched in agreeable and cooperative yet highly tentative language, did state

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<sup>606</sup> News of changes to service rifle shooting was becoming known before that meeting; the NRA of NSW in October 1958 had even wanted to include a full day of service matches, compulsory to 'efficient' members, into its annual programmes to accommodate the Army. In a circular to NRA of NSW Council members from the Secretary, Ernest Hedley Cornish, and copied to ACSRA delegates for their own State Associations to consider, however, this concession to Army was tempered by a demand that rifle clubs members be restored as reservists, and that rifle clubs be given a definite place in the defence system. See 'Service Shooting: Status of [Australian Rifle Clubs], NRA of NSW Circular dated 27 October 1958', *Series MT1131*, NAA, Melbourne.

<sup>607</sup> 'Future Rifle Club Activities Consequent upon the Introduction into the Army of the FN30 rifle and Trainfire ranges, Minute AORC to DARC dated 3 November 1958', p.4, *Series MT1131*, NAA, Melbourne.

however, that ACSRA felt that only about 8,000 'battle proficient shots' could be developed every four years'.<sup>608</sup>

Almost since organised rifle associations began in Australia in the 1860s, there had been a basic divergence between the rifleman marksman and the military shot. The rifle club member competed for prizes using deliberate grouped shooting over long distances assisted by various aids to help achieve that aim. The rifleman soldier trained to become a battle proficient shot, shooting under service conditions from various positions and in different situations, to achieve hits on an enemy at relatively close ranges of 300 yards or less. The two disciplines rested uneasily with each other, at times in open conflict and at others as bed mates, but never reached a happy compromise. Yet, even when by 1958 the rifle club movement was no longer controlled by the military, at least in theory, and without any guarantee that it would even be allowed to use the new service rifle about to be introduced, it was perhaps remarkable that the movement apparently still yearned to be accepted by the military.

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<sup>608</sup> 'Future Activities of Rifle Clubs, ACSRA letter to Secretary Department of the Army, dated 25 November 1958', *Series MT1131*, NAA, Melbourne. This view was at odds with Fisher's, who felt that up to 6,000 trained shots *a year* could be produced. In the meantime, NSW took to the new system with gusto, despite the shortage of mechanical targets planned for introduction to ranges.

**PART FIVE: *SEVERING THE TIES***  
***1959-1988***

## Chapter 13: Dire Challenges

In 1959 tumultuous events were to turn the rifle shooting movement upside down and threaten, as in 1920, its very existence. Rumours had persisted since the previous meeting of ACSRA that the Government was preparing to make changes to the administration of the rifle club movement, but the exact nature of the changes could not have been imagined at the beginning of 1959. More prosaic matters intervened. A number of former delegates to the national council passed away in the period between the ACSRA meetings, including its Chairman, Righetti, who died suddenly in May 1959.<sup>609</sup>

The ACSRA gathered in Melbourne in early November 1959. It was to be one of the most important meetings of the national council for rifle shooting since 1888. ACSRA Chairman-designate McEwin had met B. White, Secretary, Department of the Army in a series of highly confidential meetings earlier in August in Canberra. White apprised McEwin of the Government plans for the rifle clubs to which McEwin responded with a formal letter in September. When the ACSRA delegates saw the letter and began to understand the implications in it for their associations, unions and clubs, their world turned upside down.<sup>610</sup> McEwin had brought back from Canberra shocking information, that the Government now wanted to cut the rifle club movement loose from not just Army, but from Defence as a whole. From 1960, the ACSRA and the rifle club movement would have to fend for itself.<sup>611</sup>

The Government intended to maintain the supply of .303-inch ammunition for a further five years from 1960, depleting its stocks until exhaustion, and would provide limited administrative support over that period. However, the removal of the

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<sup>609</sup> The roll-call of past delegates also included O. S. Stanton and Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. Beardsmore, DSO, MBE, VD from NSW and Major R. A. ('Ray') Clark, MC from Western Australia, who collapsed on the range during a match after firing a 'possible'.

<sup>610</sup> The meetings in Canberra were confidential because White was not at liberty to discuss openly the final submission to Cabinet on the issue. A formal Government position was finally announced in 1960. McEwin, who was also a senior Government Minister in the fraternal South Australia Government, attended both Military Board and cabinet meetings in Canberra. Detailed proposals were later given to McEwin to consider, which included a price of £36 per 1,000 rounds. McEwin's responses ensured a review and subsequent drop in price. *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 20-21 October, 1962*, p.22, p. 3, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>611</sup> These revelations must have shocked the new delegates to the Council, including William Frederick Mitchell from Victoria. Mitchell, a manager at Melbourne's Flemington racetrack, began shooting in 1931 and eventually joined Caulfield Rifle Club. He had seen active World War Two service in England during the Blitz and later in New Guinea and New Britain.

ammunition subsidy meant it would now cost more to acquire ammunition. In the meantime, however, the sale of ammunition at £10 per 1,000 rounds should help rifle clubs to become self-sufficient. Furthermore, there was no guarantee of provision to rifle clubs of either 7.62mm ammunition or L1A1 SLR service rifles. It was unclear if a successful conversion could be made of SMLE No.4 rifles to 7.62 mm ammunition. In any event, 7.62mm ammunition did not appear to be forthcoming, at least in the short term.

While the finite supply of ammunition and the price of it to come was a shock to the delegates, even more shocking to some was the loss of administrative support and connection to Defence. How could the rifle club movement survive without the umbrella provided by Army and Defence? It affected rifle ranges, leases, equipment and even discipline. As the delegates digested and considered the bitter pill that McEwin had brought back from Canberra, they spent much of their meeting in seemingly endless internal discussion. Almost unanimously, they agreed that strangulation of the rifle clubs would be the only outcome of the changes to come; pessimism reigned.

Kenneth William Major, the Assistant Secretary General, Department of the Army and T. K. Fisher, the Rifle Clubs Administrative Officer, joined the meeting. The anxious delegates grilled them as to the meaning of the various proposals made to ACSRA. Major explained that the Government was considering future Defence policy:

The Services feel that the Government has not allotted enough for Defence. In recent years there has been a fixed fate under increasing costs and each Service has had to investigate every possible means of reduction and Rifle Clubs cannot be considered of high priority when Army opinion is that they are no longer of great military value. Efforts have therefore been directed to trying to develop some scheme to allow Rifle Clubs to gradually become self-supporting, and this is considered to be a reasonable suggestion.<sup>612</sup>

Naturally, some Council members met the assertion that rifle clubs were not seen as holding any military value with disbelief, by others with resigned incredulity. However, it was equally clear that the need to economise in Defence expenditure was also driving the changes. The changes would mean an estimated fall from £35,000 a year to £13,000 a year in Defence administrative costs alone. With departure from the

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<sup>612</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 6 November 1959*, p. 3, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

meeting of Major and Fisher, emotions boiled over. It was 1920 all over again, but this time there was to be no reprieve.

With emotions still running high, the delegates agreed that the proposals put by the Department of the Army were ‘completely unacceptable’. However, the delegates also reluctantly agreed that they should keep the door open to further discussion. Accordingly, Aitken and Fisher joined the meeting, followed later by the Secretary of the Department of the Army, B. White. White conceded that because of McEwin’s representation on their behalf, a more acceptable, lower price for ammunition was possible for rifle clubs. He went on to say:

...the Rifle Club movement must get on to a basis to meet whatever the future might hold ...ultimately rifle shooting will cost more...there was no desire to force Rifle Clubs out of existence but circumstances were such that something must be done to adjust the relationship of Rifle Clubs to the Army.

White explained that Cabinet was considering most serious changes to the Defence Forces of the country, that it faced a very serious curtailment of Defence activity, and that it was therefore unrealistic to expect the rifle club movement to go on unaffected. The military advisers could not assure the Government that rifle clubs had military significance and value in the defence needs of Australia. The Cabinet respected and accepted the advice of the military advisers and accordingly must review the position of the rifle clubs. White added:

...the Australian Army was contemplating and preparing for jungle warfare in which shots would be exchanged at 300 yards and under and the introduction of the FN rifle was producing revolutionary changes in training for combat conditions. Current ideas based on experience in jungle warfare are that the rifle will not be used for individual shots, but for bursts of fire....the FN rifle was a weapon vastly different from former rifles and that as a result of changes in ideas on methods of combat fighting the Army does not share the feeling of the value of the skilled, trained and expert rifle shot in modern warfare.<sup>613</sup>

The meeting with White continued for several hours with him patiently answering the dozens of questions put to him by the delegates as they tried to come to grips with the implications and impacts of the change about to fall on the rifle club movement. Delegates were dismayed, incredulous, pessimistic, angry, sceptical, disappointed, even feeling betrayed. To the end, White remained adamant:

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<sup>613</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 6, 7, 9 November 1959*, pp. 4-7, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

I do not think you can hope to get the movement administered by the Commonwealth for all time; for your own interests you must provide your own administration, manage your own destinies. You must not welcome outside control if it dictates. Provided we give you sufficient support and assistance in letting you crawl administratively before we asked you to walk, I would have thought you could have made a real go of it.<sup>614</sup>

White recognised that there would be challenges facing rifle clubs over retention of suitable ranges, leases, rifle conversions, ammunition supplies in the longer term, rifle club regulations and increasingly, application of new State laws controlling weapons and the possible role of rifle club members in an emergency. He offered to help where he could, but essentially, this was the end of administrative and certainly financial control of the rifle club movement. With White's departure, the meeting tried to focus on completing the agenda, but it must have been supremely difficult. The delegates' minds were racing. What would be the effects on their own associations, their own clubs back in their home States? The Member for Mallee, Winton Turnbull addressed Parliament:

I urge the Government and the Minister for the Army to do nothing that will restrict the activities of rifle clubs. They include some of the finest men in our community. They are fine sportsmen and their sport is essential to this country...I urge the Government, therefore, at this late hour, not to bring anything before the Parliament or to contemplate any action that would stop the activities of rifle clubs.<sup>615</sup>

Despite rear guard actions by Parliamentary supporters such as Turnbull, there was no turning back.

With the despatch of an Australian team to Bisley for the NRA Centenary matches, Mutton was elected Captain and Hackfath as Adjutant (at his own expense), with A.R. Duncan and P.A. Pavey as coaches. This time Pavey would select all the rifles himself. Military style uniforms for the teams were out, other than a slouch hat; green blazers and grey slacks were in. Later, 'Akubra' provided hats. Inevitably, the meeting ended with a return to discussion of the momentous revelations of the past two days. For now, the delegates would keep their discussions to themselves at the Council level. How long this agreement would last once the delegates returned home was

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<sup>614</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>615</sup> Winton Turnbull MP (Mallee), *Speech in House of Representatives, 26 November 1959*, Commonwealth of Australia Parliamentary Debates, Hansard.

another question altogether. Not surprisingly, it was not long before the reaction set in and a Special Meeting of the full Council called for in January 1960 to discuss the issues further.

All delegates were present.<sup>616</sup> It seemed that since the last meeting in November 1959, there had been some move to raise a petition against the changes proposed for the rifle club movement by Government. But time was against the idea and opinion divided on whether it would be productive. For example, Victoria accepted the change and wanted to move forward while NSW wanted to alert politicians to the changes and try to get change deferred through political lobbying. Mutton wanted the Army to continue with the movement; others disagreed and thought the petition was a waste of time. On a vote, 7 to 5, the majority agreed. In the following discussion, it was determined to take the approach of agreeing to accept the changes while asking individual riflemen to pressure politicians to bring pressure to bear on the Government with the aim of having the changes, at a bare minimum, deferred.

Fisher and White then joined the meeting. Long discussions then ensued on the practical considerations of the changes to come:

1. Could 'administration' be carried on from sale of ammunition?
2. Could administration carry on until the end of 1960?
3. What would happen to rifle club staff after June 1960?
4. Would Army supervision of safety at ranges be charged to rifle clubs?
5. Could the Army give ACSRA a set of rules for State Associations to work to?
6. Could Rifle Club Regulations be retained?
7. How can State laws effectively recognise rifle clubs?
8. Would ACSRA be responsible for ammunition issues?
9. What would happen to rifle club ranges when Army moved to 'Trainfire only' ranges?
10. What about free delivery of ammunition – would that continue?
11. What about the cost of purchased ammunition?
12. Would ammunition still be distributed at headquarter ranges?
13. Who would employ the range supervisor and pay overtime for the duty person to open the magazine?
14. What about payment of staff engaged in target maintenance?
15. Were non-military ranges to become the property of State rifle associations?
16. What about compensation to markers?
17. Were No.4 rifles being held for riflemen?<sup>617</sup>
18. Could the Department of Supply continue to produce .303 inch ammunition?
19. Were any Pattern 14 rifles available?<sup>618</sup>

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<sup>616</sup> These included Arthur Charles Penwarn, deputy chairman of the QRA. Penwarn, a clerk from Coorparoo in Brisbane, had been a Navy Reserve telegraphist during World War Two.

<sup>617</sup> No.4 rifles were later released to riflemen at £4 each.

<sup>618</sup> The Pattern 1914 rifles were a modified version of the SMLE, mostly produced in the United States for Britain in World War One, made to high peacetime standards of workmanship, and issued during war

1. Would Ordnance facilities continue to operate for rifle purchases?
2. Would camp stores and Army personnel continue to be available for rifle prize meetings? <sup>619</sup>

After discussion on how the State rifle associations would collect and secure funds raised from the sale of ammunition, it was agreed that ACSRA would be the authority to deal with the Army re ammunition supplies; the State rifle associations the authority to sell to clubs and retain the profits. ACSRA would 'live off' its affiliation fees. The Secretary, Department of the Army then left the meeting, with a final remark:

You have something that is worthwhile and I believe that you will be far better off without the dead hand of a Commonwealth Department resting on you. You should be able to make this a worthwhile show...Anything you ask for, short of cash, we will endeavour to give you. <sup>620</sup>

It would be some time before the changes worked their way through the system, but from 30 June 1960 the rifle club movement was basically on its own, the umbilical cord had finally been cut. Immediately, reality set in. State rifle associations were asked to place on each efficient member an annual capitation fee of 1/- to be paid to the ACSRA. No ammunition would be issued to any State which had not paid the annual fee. The very idea of an 'efficient member' was no longer a requirement, for the whole basis of the term was tied to Army musketry practices; but ACSRA could think of no better way to decide on how to equitably distribute ammunition allowances.

Quickly, it was put forward that all members of rifle clubs had to be a financial member of the State rifle association, and that membership fees should be set at 5/- a head. The new regime meant simply, no money, no ammunition. One delegate stated: 'Ammunition is the life blood of the show. It is the means of shooting and the source of revenue.' <sup>621</sup> A discussion proceeded then about the cost of ammunition. The price of ammunition was confirmed at £10 per 1,000 rounds.

In addition, ACSRA requested Army that it release all No.4 SMLE rifles in store (8,000) to sell to riflemen at £3 each and supply 7.62mm ammunition to allow tests in

for sniping rather than general issue. They were the rifle of choice for the 1948 and 1956 Olympic teams. Sweet, J., 'The P-14 Rifle (Enfield pattern 14)', *Marksmen*, Vol.13, No.1, January 1961, p.16.

<sup>619</sup> *Minutes of Special Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 9 and 10 January 1960*, pp. 1-5, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>620</sup> *Minutes of Special Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 9 and 10 January 1960*, p.7, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>621</sup> *ibid.*

the transition period for rifles converted for 7.62mm rounds. Delegates also agreed on a draft circular letter for riflemen to use with their local members of Parliament. Turning to the Commonwealth Matches, delegates asked how these matches could continue with the withdrawal of the annual grant? To *not* hold the matches would be evidence of a declining movement, and ACSRA was ‘determined to be a live movement.’ An agreement to levy 1/- a financial member through the State rifle associations and paid to ACSRA was agreed. This was later raised to 2/-.<sup>622</sup>

Somewhat oddly, in the face of this determined pragmatism on behalf of the ACSRA members, they also agreed, at Mutton’s suggestion, to keep the current enrolment form to allow new members to subscribe to the Oath of Allegiance. Realistically, the Oath had become an anachronism, but it would persist into the 1970s as the old guard of the movement continued to hope against all evidence that a reversal of the situation could be achieved. Finally, the meeting turned its attention to the important questions of Small Bore Rifle Clubs Unions and Pistol Clubs.

Army had made no provision for these two disciplines under the changes to come. ACSRA wrote to both, explaining what was to transpire, and offered to accept them both as affiliates if only to ensure Olympic representation - unless of course they wished to form entirely separate organisations. Not long after, in late November 1959 and following the rise of Parliament for the summer break, the Minister for the Army announced the curtailment of assistance to rifle clubs. The talk had become reality. Financial responsibility would change hands as of 1 July 1960. So, the tumultuous events of the past three months drew to a temporary conclusion, with the next annual meeting of the Council scheduled as usual for November 1960.<sup>623</sup>

The administrative and operational consequences of the Government decision to cut assistance to the rifle club movement continued to ripple through the State rifle associations and clubs. Matters discussed included: the transfer of ammunition entitlements of a rifleman if he moved between clubs or interstate, the entitlement to draw upon ACSRA ammunition by cadet rifle clubs in schools as well as Defence

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<sup>622</sup> *Minutes of Special Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 9 and 10 January 1960*, pp.12-13, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>623</sup> *Minutes of Special Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 9 and 10 January 1960*, p.13, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld]. By late July 1960, a pamphlet ‘*Instructions for Rifle Clubs 1960 (Provisional)*’ had been distributed to ACSRA by the Department. The instructions would cease to have effect from 30 June 1965.

Services Rifle Clubs, allotments of ammunition to members and whether the now 8,600 rifles ex-factory could be purchased by riflemen.<sup>624</sup>

State rifle associations still appeared to see Olympic shooting and World Championship shooting as ‘funny shooting’. The ACSRA discussed Australian Olympic Council representation at its next meeting in November 1960.<sup>625</sup> The Council nominated Mutton to represent it on the AOC. He refused, saying that there were only a few riflemen in three States interested in Olympic shooting. He said that if Olympic Shooting under existing conditions was rationalised ‘by elimination of fancy rifles and substitution of basic military weapons’, a considerable amount of men would have a chance to take part in Olympic matches. The ACSRA, of course, had other important issues to discuss.

The Chairman, Sir Lyell McEwin opened proceedings by saying that ‘it has been a most interesting period and although we are not completely out of the woods yet we have cushioned the bump very well.’<sup>626</sup> However, the earlier request to Army for 7.62mm ammunition to test out conversions was met with a price for test ammunition set at £65/11/- per 1,000 rounds. This was met with incredulity and the matter was shelved. There was considerable confusion about whether No.4 SMLE rifles could even be converted to 7.62mm ammunition, and again the Council deferred the issue. The Council started to consider where it could obtain rifles that *were* suitable for conversion, including the American M17. In any case, the Department of Supply had undertaken to continue production of .303-inch (Heavy) barrels for another 12-18 months, so there seemed to be little urgency.

Discussion of changes and amendments to the Constitution and Rules dominated this meeting of the ACSRA. The Council was working through the consequences of the Government’s actions towards it and trying to set up a solid basis for future operations and the continued success of the movement. At least the Council agreed to set up a

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<sup>624</sup> The Department of Supply had tendered for the disposal of 100,000 .303-inch rifles which included 41,000 repairable rifles and 8,600 ex-factory. The Executive Committee was concerned that the lot would be bought commercially and disposed overseas before the movement had a chance to obtain some for their members, even though this had been discussed in the 1959 discussions with White. *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA Executive Committee on Merrett Rifle Range 10 March 1960*, pp.2-3, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>625</sup> New delegates included Neil Norman Campbell Scott, a World War Two veteran and bank officer stationed in the wheat belt town and railway hub of Narrogin, about 190 km. southeast of Perth in Western Australia. Scott was also the Chairman of the NRA of WA.

<sup>626</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 5 and 6 November 1960*, p.2, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

conference with the small-bore clubs to determine how best the two organisations could work together. However, many uncertainties remained.

State rifle teams competed for Commonwealth series of matches in January 1961, at Brighton Camp in Hobart, Tasmania.<sup>627</sup> Availability of the camp to the TRA in future years was just one of many questions unanswered in the new era of independence. Talk of 'Trainfire' matches faded quietly away as it sunk in that it was highly unlikely that there would be any issue, if ever, to rifle clubs of FN rifles or 7.62mm ammunition. In December 1960, S.W. Kanaar, the Chairman of the NRA of NSW, made his report to the association members for the year. In an eloquent summary of the situation faced not just by his association, but also by riflemen everywhere, he wrote the following:

In concluding this Report, the reverses and triumphs over the 100 years of the Association's being come to mind, but we have endured, and shall. Your Council in the year just ended experienced a period of shock and anxiety for the future of rifle clubs, due to the Federal cabinet's decision to adopt the plan put to it for curtailment of assistance to rifle clubs.

On reflection, it comes to our minds that if the Government really believes that continued assistance to rifle clubs in the measure extended over many years is no longer justified on an assumption that rifle clubs "have lost their military significance" through the development of modern weapons, then perhaps we may be thankful for what assistance the rifle clubs movement is promised by the Government over the next five years in the provision of ammunition.

Whilst by no means conceding to the view that rifle clubs have "negligible military value", credit for sincerity in their view must be given to a responsible Government. We firmly believe in the National value of our rifle clubs, but no good can accrue to our great movement by bewailing our losses, so it is best we now think positively of what we have and turn our faces and our energies to what is ahead. Rifle shooting is not running to a dead-end, it is a movement with hope and a future. It will cost more, but what is there that is not costing more!

For so long as we have ammunition to shoot with and ranges to shoot upon, we shall continue. We believe that from the multi-millions of rounds there will be in store that no Government of the People will deny supply to rifle clubs in the future.

We are proud of our 100 years of history, and as the [NRA of NSW] emerges into its second century, we look back and remember with gratitude the many fine men who founded it and those who have guided its destinies. We look forward as good Australians to a virile and active continuation of the NRA for the mutual enjoyment of our members as a worthwhile community activity serving the best National interests.<sup>628</sup>

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<sup>627</sup> The matches should have been held in December 1960, but scheduling and public holidays pushed them into the New Year.

<sup>628</sup> *National Rifle Association of New South Wales: Annual Report and Balance Sheet 1959-1960*, Burwood Press, Sydney, 1961, p.38.

The riflemen firing in New Zealand and in Brisbane, indeed throughout Australia in 1961 did not appreciate that the decade they were entering was the start of a decade of great changes in popular culture, attitudes, lifestyles and technology. The rifle club movement apparently did not even officially notice that conflict had started in South Vietnam, let alone see how quickly western societies worldwide were changing, including in Australia.<sup>629</sup> With the advent of the FN rifle and the curtailment of assistance from the Government a fact in motion, the movement was almost entirely absorbed with its own issues and the decade was to sweep by it.

The old conservatism would not die easily and some of the veterans of the movement would rail in newsletters or rifle range speeches against the inability of the Government or the public at large to understand that the movement was just as important to the nation as always. However, it was in this decade more than any other that membership started to decline. Some blamed the cost of ammunition, others the advent of TV. Most of all it was a change in public attitudes towards the sport combined with the failure of the movement's leadership to predict and prepare for the changes that began in late 1959. Could anyone have predicted or prepared for the Sixties?

In accordance with its annual ritual, the ACSRA met again in Melbourne in November 1961.<sup>630</sup> Both B. White, the Secretary, Department of the Army and his administrative representative T.K. Fisher, attended. Among the correspondence received was a letter from the Secretary, Army dated March 1961. It gave approval for the change of the name of the ACSRA to the National Rifle Association of Australia (NRAA). A second letter dated 28 June 1961 from the Minister for the Army noted that the name-change had been made to *Australian Rifle Club Regulations*. Later delegates considered a revised *Constitution, Rules and By-laws for the National Rifle Association*

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<sup>629</sup> Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War was to justify the Army's stance on rifle shooting. National Service ended in Australia in June 1960, but it would start up again to meet the demands of Vietnam service on the Australian defence forces. The 1960s saw a more mobile population with higher levels of car ownership, a decline in amateurism in sport and the rise of television among other factors which had a detrimental effect on the rifle shooting past-time.

<sup>630</sup> Two new delegates made their appearance at the 1961 ACSRA meeting. John ('Jack') Edmund Ryan, was a clerk from Sydney and a member of the NRA of NSW Council. A veteran of 'Z' Special Force in World War Two, Ryan had represented NSW and Australia at Bisley in 1960. Clarendon Floyd Hallam, a librarian from Hobart and Secretary of the TRA, had served in the Volunteer Defence Corps during World War Two.

of Australia. While ACSRA did not formally change its name for several more years, nonetheless, the use of the term 'NRAA' began to enter common use among riflemen.

As well, the Department of Supply had ordered 4,000 heavy barrels from Lithgow while the Council confirmed that .303-inch ammunition was the ammunition of choice for the near future. Among the many matters discussed concerning matches, targets, ranges, flags, etc., it was proposed that a uniform system of grading riflemen be introduced from June 1962, replacing the now redundant 'efficiency' grading. Ammunition was a central question affecting most matters. Looming over the future was a probable cost of £30 per 1,000 if Footscray ammunition factory was to continue production of .303-inch ammunition for the movement after 1965.<sup>631</sup>

A delegate proposed that the Council draw the attention of the Government to the change of attitude of the American Government towards rifle shooting. This was the first of several belated efforts to reverse the Government decisions of 1959/60. The motion insisted:

That the Government be urged to recognise the importance of the classification range in teaching the basic principles of shooting with a consequent re-introduction of support in maintaining rifle ranges and supply of ammunition, and that every encouragement be given to teach civilians the use of the rifle to enable them to defend themselves if necessary. That State associations do everything in their power to bring this to the attention of all political aspirants in their State.<sup>632</sup>

Some, if not most ACSRA delegates had a sincere concern that the withdrawal of Government support was denying citizens the right to prepare to defend themselves and their country. However, such motions were symbolic at best; the Government did not intend to change its mind. White's reaction to this motion (which was carried), can only be guessed at.<sup>633</sup> Nonetheless, it was the start of a delayed reaction to the change imposed on the movement by the Government. An influential number tried to return to the *status quo* in a repeat of 1920, 1931 and 1946.

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<sup>631</sup> Footscray did not appear to manufacture .303-inch ammunition specifically for rifle clubs after 1959, although ammunition produced in 1960-61, for example, for the RAAF and cadet units did make it into rifle club use.

<sup>632</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of the Australian Council of State Rifle Associations held at Melbourne, on 11 and 12 November 1961*, p.16, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>633</sup> Attitudes were changing in the US towards rifle shooting as the threat of worldwide Communism to democracy seemed omnipotent.

The Small-Bore Conference in late November 1961 was notable for several outcomes.<sup>634</sup> The small-bore clubs were still under the administration of the Department of the Army. There were small-bore delegates from each State, including the Victorian rifle shooting Olympian from 1956, Norman Goff, RANR.<sup>635</sup> It quickly became obvious that the small-bore clubs wanted their own independent association. This desire saw the formation of the Australian Small-Bore Rifle Association (ASBRA). The delegates, in a strange reversal of the mood of the time, agreed that the Objects of the association were:

The coordination of the activities of small-bore rifle shooting organisations within Australia and its Territories and the promotion of competitions so as to encourage shooting proficiency *as a necessary element of National defence* [emphasis added].<sup>636</sup>

This last phrase, added unnecessarily at the end of the statement, presumably gave comfort to those who continued to look to a day in the future when the movement, in any of its forms, would be welcomed back into the Army circle. Yet T.K. Fisher had made it very clear to the meeting beforehand that the Department of Army was looking to a new organisation to control Small-Bore shooting, without the Department's involvement, post-1965.

Anxiety levels continued to rise as challenges facing the ACSRA and State rifle associations and concerns about the future viability of the rifle clubs movement gained traction among the more conservative leaders of the rifle club movement. This reached a peak in April 1962 when a Special Meeting of ACSRA was called in Melbourne. Once again, the Secretary Department of the Army, and T.K. Fisher, now at Army Headquarters, attended. It was a remarkable meeting, punctuated by some degree of panic, confusion and fear of the future. It was, however, a necessary one, for among other things it allowed delegates to let off some steam. Perhaps riflemen at club and union level had been asking why the State associations and ACSRA had not done more to deflect the new Government policies in the first place.

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<sup>634</sup> The conference was held at Southern Command's Army Club in Melbourne and the Chair was the Command Secretary for Southern Command, Garry Armstrong, LLB.

<sup>635</sup> The other delegates were: John Charles Tunstall (Queensland), G.E. Green and L. Summerhaye (NSW), J.F. Storey (Western Australia), Walter Odard Lees (Tasmania), and C. H. Mutton, representing South Australia and ACSRA.

<sup>636</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of Delegates from Small-Bore Rifle Club Unions in all States held at Melbourne 25–26 November 1961*, p.6, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

Primarily the aim of the meeting was to discuss making representation to Defence to have aid to rifle clubs re-instated. In hindsight and given the fact that Defence, through Secretary Army, had been clear on the Government's reasoning and that aid had ceased in most areas two years before, with regulations amended, it seems a backward step. Driving most of the nervousness and anxiety among delegates was the continuing drop in membership numbers, the rising cost of ammunition and an uncertain future for ammunition supplies after 1965.

Actual figures for overall rifle club membership in this period are hard to establish in the absence of the now discontinued annual reports by the former DARC, but by 1962, the membership appears to have dropped from 43,000 to 35,000.<sup>637</sup> A large amount of this drop was because Defence Force Rifle Clubs left the official count, but there was still a steady exit of other members too. Ammunition price rises, uncertainty as to future ammunition supplies as well as rifle range availability would inevitably disturb these numbers further downwards.

The meeting considered how to make representations to all relevant Government authorities to have aid to rifle clubs restored to the Defence Vote. While the Council had rejected a political approach in 1959, it now wanted to consider one. White told the Council, once again, that the defence value of the rifle club movement did not rate it for expenditure of Defence funds. The Military Board, he said, was of the opinion that there was no justification to spend money on rifle clubs and despite an approach to the Prime Minister by the ACSRA chairman, their view to Government would not change. All three Services would oppose any request for diversion of limited funds from the Defence Vote to rifle clubs.

In short, White could see no case for either an immediate capital sum or a continuing subsidy. This initiated a warm debate on everything from defence policy to insurance. The delegates focused in on ammunition as the key issue for them and some agreed that trying to get an across-the-board reversal of current policy might not be possible. As a vehicle for preparing a case for the Government to consider continuation of aid, the delegates considered a case prepared earlier by the VRA. Undeterred by anything that White had to say, delegates ploughed on. The VRA argument even mentioned the increased value of rifle clubs since the Government had ended National Service. White reminded delegates that it was the intention of Government in allowing

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<sup>637</sup> *Minutes of a Special meeting of ACSRA in Melbourne, 14 April 1962*, p4, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

continued access to ammunition for sale that the associations build up a capital fund accordingly. Delegates did not want to hear this, and ignored this unwelcome reminder.

A draft was produced, and an alternative. White dismissed the first – ‘it would have no chance of success’ – and was ‘doomed to failure’. The alternative, said White, was ‘not a winner on the ammunition side’. The Council had not established a case for hardship and that a price of £15 per 1,000 rounds of ammunition could not be argued as ‘intolerable’.<sup>638</sup> Sir Lyell McEwin in turn read out a letter he had sent to the Prime Minister putting the rifle clubs’ case for support with ammunition and other matters. Confusion reigned with conflicting opinions and views on how to proceed and on what matters. They finally decided that all would be kept on hold pending a reply from the Prime Minister, and meanwhile the price of ammunition would stay at £15 per 1,000.<sup>639</sup>

By October 1962, when the ACSRA met again in Melbourne, the delegates appear to have calmed down somewhat, perhaps because a coup was in the making.<sup>640</sup> In a contest for the Chair, W.F. Mitchell from Victoria replaced Sir Lyell McEwin. It appeared that delegates were dissatisfied with the way Sir Lyell had managed the process so far. As had become the norm through this transition period Secretary Army B. White and T.K. Fisher joined the meeting. One item in the order of business noted that Secretary Army had approved the new Constitution of the NRAA. However important this was, of even greater import was receipt of a detailed reply from the Minister for the Army to the representations made to the Prime Minister by letter in mid-year.

While clarifying some concessions to the rifle clubs with regard to additional free ammunition allocations, inspection of rifle ranges past 1965, and addressing other aspects of the use of rifle ranges, the letter also re-affirmed the Government policy announced in 1959 ‘that the Australian Rifle Club Movement should become entirely

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<sup>638</sup> *Minutes of a Special meeting of ACSRA in Melbourne, 14 April 1962*, p7, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>639</sup> When, in October 1962, McEwin was ousted as Chairman, he complained that he had been unanimously elected Chairman then the Council rejected the submission he had prepared. A drafting committee could not produce anything worthwhile and they rejected his suggested political approach. Then the council raised the price of ammunition to £15 and subsequently a special meeting to consider political action was called. They then agreed to let him deal with it personally with the Prime Minister and he had, pulling the irons out of the fire. The Council put the ammunition price back to £10 and then raised it again. He was ‘pleased he would now have more time to attend to personal business.’ It was a serious indictment of the Council’s state of mind during the transition. *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA at Melbourne, 20-21 October 1962*, p.22, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>640</sup> New delegates included Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest Alfred Green, Green, who had been a member of the NRA of NSW Council since 1956, was a regular Army officer with a first class record in both military and rifle club shooting. He also had an interest in Olympic shooting.

independent of the Commonwealth as from 30 June 1965.’ The Minister added that in reaching these decisions the Government stressed that rifle clubs must clearly understand that they are expected to put themselves in a position to meet their commitments from their own resources after June 1965.’ White confirmed that ‘Cabinet was not inclined to go any further or to in any way review its decision ...’<sup>641</sup> In a later discussion over the possible introduction of black and white targets, White added, ‘...give your members what interests them. Don’t try to tie-up with the Army or to other countries with different defence problems. Don’t pattern your activities on the Army with the idea of getting Government support.’<sup>642</sup>

Other matters that occupied the time of the ACSRA at their October meeting included future ammunition supply. White was trying very hard to activate a production line in .303-inch ammunition in order to secure an ongoing supply for the rifle clubs past 1965. The Department of Supply would need about 12 months notice to implement this, and pre-orders. The problem was that many clubs had been stockpiling and would not commit to ordering the quantities required to ensure supply. With the Minister for Army’s final word in their hands, delegates discussed next steps. The Council raised the price of ammunition from 1 July 1963 to £15 per 1,000 rounds, in order to generate income needed against future ammunition purchases.

The committee also agreed to allow ‘aliens’ (non-naturalised migrants) to become probationary members of rifle clubs for up to four years but who must enrol within three months of being naturalised and taking the Oath of Allegiance. This was perhaps a response to falling numbers. White, who noted that the CMF was not yet fully trained on the rifle, gently rebuffed a suggestion that rifle club members be allowed to train on the L1A1 and that Army instructors conduct that training.

The ACSRA held a lengthy and productive meeting in November 1963, as usual in Melbourne.<sup>643</sup> This meeting was notable, not so much for what it discussed, but for what it did not. It was the first meeting where the Council, since 1959, did not seem pre-occupied with the transition from Army support. It returned to basics, focusing on

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<sup>641</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA at Melbourne, 20-21 October 1962*, pp.5-6., NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>642</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA at Melbourne, 20-21 October 1962*, p.13, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>643</sup> New delegates with military experience attending the meeting included Christopher John George, a farm worker and World War Two veteran from Mirani, west of Mackay, Queensland; Wilfred Owen McGlew Connell, a Perth builder and member of Bellevue Rifle Club who had seen Australian service during World War Two and Malcom Sidney Herbert, a farmer and member of the Nungarin Rifle Club, about 250 km. north-east from Perth, who had been a commando in Timor in World War Two.

the details of its responsibilities for overseeing rifle shooting in Australia.<sup>644</sup> Put forward for the first time was the idea of a central rifle range in the ACT along with the idea of a single, Australian-wide Queen's prize.

Discussion *did* occur regarding .303-inch ammunition supplies, sources and prices but the discussion did not seem to have a great deal of urgency behind it. The Council and State rifle associations seemed as confused as ever about what to do about continuing supply past December 1965, and seemed to be following different options in that regard. It was almost as if the events of 1962, which led to the ousting of the then Chairman, McEwin at the November 1962 meeting, had exhausted everyone. Delegates seemed to want to deal mainly with questions they knew the answers to, and few apparently had an appetite to tackle the more complex challenges still facing the Council and rifle shooting in Australia. Yet tensions still simmered under the surface and these would come to the fore once again in 1964.<sup>645</sup>

The ACSRA meeting of November 1964 considered the pressing matter of the supply of ammunition, which was now uppermost on everyone's minds. It was becoming obvious that as the rifle clubs in England and Canada converted to 7.62 mm ammunition, this would have an impact on their teams coming to Australia (where .303-inch ammunition was used), and upon Australian teams going to England or Canada. NSW and Victoria had stocks of .303-inch ammunition sufficient for three years, but then what would happen? Lengthy debate on the pros and cons of ammunition resupply after 1965 ensued. It was clear that Army could not spare 7.62mm ammunition. The Department of Supply could re-start .303-inch ammunition production, but needed to use new nitro-cellulose propellant; price per 1,000 rounds was likely to be £34. Finally, the Council agreed to ask the Department of Supply for a firm price for 2,000,000 rounds for delivery in 1966-67.<sup>646</sup>

The Council also considered amendments to *Australian Rifle Club Regulations 1948*. White noted the importance of having them completed and agreed by 1 July 1965. Illegal re-sales of ammunition and in some cases, rifles, from rifle clubs or rifle club members was noted with concern following Police raids on gunsmiths etc.<sup>647</sup> A

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<sup>644</sup> The Council noted the deaths over the past year of two senior members of the Council, namely Major-General J.M.A. Durrant, and W.G. Duncan.

<sup>645</sup> August 1964 was notable for the QRA held its first prize-shoot on the new Belmont range.

<sup>646</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA at Melbourne, 7 November 1964*, pp.4-7, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>647</sup> An instruction to all rifle clubs was subsequently in late 1965 urging the clubs to improve security of rifles and ammunition in their care.

letter from the Chairman to the Secretary of the Department of the Army in August 1964 had received a reply but only to defer a full reply until 1965. These underlying internal divisions within ACSRA would come to a head in 1965. A major change introduced to rifle ranges everywhere was the introduction, from 1 July 1965, of black and white targets, as shown below:

Range (yards)	Aiming Mark	Bulls	Inners	Mags	Outers
200	12"	5"	12"	24"	48"
300	18" (later 15")	7½"	15"	30"	48"
400	18"	10"	15" (later 18")	30"	48"
500	24"	15"	36"	48"	72"
600	24"	15"	36"	48"	72"
700	24"	24"	36"	48"	72"
800, 900 1,000	30"	30"	54"	72" square	Remainder of target 8' X 6'

<sup>648</sup>

At the November meeting, it was Mutton who moved to amend the Objects of the Constitution for all rifle associations to read: 'The objects of the Association shall be the encouragement of proficiency in rifle shooting among members of the Defence Forces, Australian Rifle Clubs, and Senior Cadets, and the promotion of rifle shooting generally as a necessary element of National Defence...' No one objected to the reference to members of the Defence Forces, even though the Defence Force Rifle Clubs were in theory no longer part of the NRAA.

In April 1965, the Minister for the Army the Hon. Alexander James 'Jim' Forbes, MC, published a letter with regard to the rifle club movement.<sup>649</sup> Responding to questions in Parliament, at the behest of die-hard rifle club members, the Minister clearly laid out the chain of events that had occurred since 1959 and laid the current problems of the movement, especially with regard to ammunition, right at ACSRA's feet. The letter ended:

After careful review of all the matters raised in various representations and in the light of the Military Board's opinion that there is no military role which might be allotted to Rifle Clubs, it is my decision that very generous and sympathetic consideration has been given to the Rifle Clubs and there are no reasonable

<sup>648</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA at Melbourne, 7 November 1964*, pp.13-14, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

<sup>649</sup> Forbes, a former soldier, was Minister for the Army from 1963-1966.

grounds for them to anticipate further assistance beyond the responsibilities my department will continue to discharge in respect of rifle ranges.

I would add that regulations now in course of preparation to give effect to the Government's decision concerning Rifle Club ranges after 30<sup>th</sup> June 1965, will afford the clubs the status of a Commonwealth organisation and, if it is felt that this status coupled with the availability of ranges should enable such members of Rifle Clubs, who are willing to accept the new level of cost, to carry on their activities.<sup>650</sup>

As late as September 1965, rifle club members were still writing letters to the editor expressing shock at what the Minister had to say. Here a letter from a member of the Concord Rifle Club in Sydney:

It was with a slight sense of shock and disbelief that I read the [Minister's] letter published in your July edition concerning the future of the rifle club movement. It would now appear that some serious thought and action is now required by members to ensure the continued existence of the shooting movement. The first problem seems to be to ascertain an aim or purpose for the existence of the shooting fraternity.

The National Rifle Association of America has lately done more to advance the movement in the United States by its aim...This aim is sufficiently broad to include all forms of shooting, the sole purpose being to advance the movement.

Are we, therefore, limiting both the membership and scope of the movement here by not encouraging affiliation with all shooting movements with the unified purpose of advancing our cause through the unified purpose of such a large membership such as affiliation could bring? ....Other advantages would be additional income from both membership and combined activities.

...one thing must now be clear to anyone who gives serious thought to the matter, and that is that it will not only be virtually impossible for the movement to exist in its present form at the end of this century, but it is already doubtful whether the movement will continue for any length of time at all if the natural course of events are now permitted to eventuate.<sup>651</sup>

In this atmosphere, the November 1965 meeting of the ACSRA was one of the most important meetings for some time.

A new Chairman was elected. This time it was an 'independent' Chairman, Major-General Sir Denzil MacArthur-Onslow, CBE, DSO, ED, who had recently accepted the role of Honorary President of the NRA of NSW. As one biography of the new Chairman put it, he was the 'scion of an old established family with a long tradition of military service'. Macarthur-Onslow had joined the Army in 1924, saw

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<sup>650</sup> *SA Rifle News*, Vol.2, No.3, June 1965, pp.3-8

<sup>651</sup> 'Future of the Rifle Movement', *The Marksman*, Vol.17, No.9, September 1965, p.3.

distinguished service in World War Two and after the war had remained in the CMF. Promoted to major general in 1955, between 1958 and 1960 he was the CMF Member of the Military Board. He was knighted in 1964.<sup>652</sup>

Ammunition and rifle conversions to 7.62mm calibre were again a major topic of discussion. White reconfirmed that there would be no 7.62mm ammunition for years to come. The Army would not be changing again despite the advent of the use of the American M-16 'Armalite' 5.56mm infantry weapon being introduced into limited use in Australian Army units. Meanwhile, the Riverbrand Company, which had taken over the Hendon Ammunition Factory in the UK, would re-supply .303-inch ammunition at a price of about \$38 per 1,000 rounds, and £24 per 1,000 for reloads.<sup>653</sup> Essentially, it was up to State rifle associations to make their own arrangements for supply of ammunition after current stocks had expired.

Importantly, the Council agreed that it would need to change over to 7.62mm ammunition by 1969 or 1970. This immediately raised the equally important issue of whether to convert .303-inch No.4 rifles with new 7.62mm barrels or to look for a completely new 7.62mm rifle. Lithgow was offering a 7.62mm FN single-shot variant; while both Lithgow and Sportco were keen to conduct conversions of No.4 rifles. Costs of each pathway and costs to individuals were a major issue. After a keen exchange of views on these complex questions, the Council decided to continue discussions with the Department of Supply with a view to production of a new 7.62mm rifle.

Other consequences of being independent came to the fore. Treasury had withdrawn Workers' Compensation cover, which affected compensation for injuries to markers. It was now up to rifle clubs to ensure that they had proper public liability insurance. This was just one example of how the withdrawal of routine defence administrative support for the rifle club movement was affecting rifle club costs and interests. Reality was striking home in other ways too. For example, delegates agreed that States needed to carry the costs of ammunition for practice and the matches in the annual Commonwealth series.

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<sup>652</sup> Dennis, P. and Grey, J. (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., South Melbourne, 2008.

<sup>653</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA at Melbourne, 13 November 1964*, pp.5-6, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld]. Riverbrand (UK) did not, finally, produce ammunition for Australian rifle clubs. It did supply ammunition of Korea war vintage produced by Kynoch, Radway Green, and Greenwood & Batley. Rifle clubs also occasionally received Australian war-time .303-inch ammunition packed 48 rounds tip to toe in a flat oblong box, with nickel jackets.

Another major change considered at this November 1965 meeting was whether the ACSRA should remain part of the Australian Joint Shooting Council (AJSC).<sup>654</sup> The ACSRA delegates voted to withdraw from the AJSC 'for our own domestic reasons', yet also elected two delegates as usual to the next AJSC meeting to see the motion through.<sup>655</sup> It was an opportunity lost to stay at the table and be part of the shooting community at large.

The period 1959 to 1965 had been tumultuous for the ACSRA and the rifle club movement in general. The 'shock of the new' had reverberated throughout the movement and unsettled many; membership began to decline rapidly from about 1961. It wasn't just the severance of ties with the 'Mother' Army that had nurtured and protected the rifle club movement for so long, which upset riflemen. It was the feeling of irrelevance. For more than 100 years, rifle clubs, for better or for worse, had felt part of the defence system and part of Australia's defensive shield, if ever called upon. Yet twice, in the two world wars, the military establishment had essentially ignored them. Now, in the closing days of 1965, many veterans of the rifle club movement felt abandoned once again.

Allied to this period of rapid and painful change was a broader change in Australian society itself, which the growing war in Vietnam would further exacerbate. Rifle shooting, as practised by the big-bore proponents in rifle clubs, was becoming unpopular. New popular sports – and new forms of rifle shooting - were springing up. Small-bore grew rapidly from the 1950s, Olympic and ISU standard shooting was slowly growing in popularity and interest, while sports shooters were knocking at the doors, wanting recognition.

Meanwhile, with a new 7.62mm calibre service rifle and ammunition, the military forces rapidly tracked away from the rifle club movement. The military were finally able to focus exclusively on its 300-metre shooting in the finale of a 100-year battle with the long-range marksmen in rifle clubs over military vs. long-range shooting. Until 1960, rifle shooting was an 'everyman's sport', where men could indulge a rifle shooting pastime at virtually no cost to themselves. Membership now began to decline as costs began to escalate.

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<sup>654</sup> After the stimulus of the 1956 Olympics an Association was formed to deal with the varied and demanding disciplines of shooting - the AJSC. This Council defined fields of interest - one of them being small-bore and air rifle shooting. [http://www.tra.org.au/e\\_magazine/june11/JUN2011.pdf](http://www.tra.org.au/e_magazine/june11/JUN2011.pdf)

<sup>655</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA at Melbourne, 13 November 1964*, pp.18-19, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld].

In severing its ties, nonetheless, the Department of Army gave the ACSRA good advice: sell what stocks of .303-inch ammunition were available at gradually increasing prices to build up funds for the post-1965 'rainy day'. Within ACSRA, the period since 1948, when shooting finally got underway again after World War Two, was also characterised by change. Gradually, the old guard of leadership, which had seen active service in the Boer War and World War One, began to fade away. Conservatism remained, and the resistance to participation of women was one example of this, as well as an inability to accept the major changes imposed by the Government from 1959-60.<sup>656</sup> The failure of the ACSRA to take Government advice on sale of ammunition, as well as keeping ammunition prices low at £15 per 1,000, did the movement a disservice. This was as symptomatic of its inability to face up to the new operating environment, as was the ousting of its politically capable Chairman, Sir Lyell McEwin, in late 1962.

However, new leaders emerged over time. Some of these had seen active service in World War Two, but many had not. They recognised that times had changed and that the rifle club movement needed to adapt. These men pushed for the involvement of women in clubs, encouraged the adoption of new standards, targets and styles of shooting and looked for ways to keep the rifle club movement alive. The new leaders would face new challenges in the years ahead. These challenges about to face the movement were of a wholly different order and dimension to those to 1965 and included the loss of metropolitan rifle ranges, the increasing regulation of rifle shooting by State and Commonwealth gun laws, changeover to 7.62mm rifles and ammunition, and most of all, the perception that the rifle clubs were an anachronism in modern Australia.

Although not recognised at the time, as rifle associations and their delegates to the NRAA council anguished over the loss of members and at times, argued internally about how to approach the future, the rifle club movement slowly but surely metamorphosed into a true sporting organisation.<sup>657</sup> The catalyst for this was prosperity. Opportunities to participate in a wide variety of new matches, both home

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<sup>656</sup> Women shooting was soon to take off with an interstate teams match – Medlands – from 1968, and international ladies Match from 1972 with a trophy donated by John Collison, and, from 1984, a perpetual trophy was donated by the Women's President, Geraldine Davies, OAM, for a teams match, 15 shots to count at 900 yards or 800 metres. Women's shooting was administered by the NRAA at first but soon handed over in its entirety.

<sup>657</sup> By June 1965 membership of Australian rifle clubs had dropped to just 17, 848. *Marksman*, January-February 1969, p.22.

and abroad, began to appear. Conservatism remained. Issues between the State rifle associations and the NRAA occasionally reached acrimonious levels. However, in the period leading up to its 100<sup>th</sup> year, the NRAA and the rifle club movement, battered and bruised at times by the winds of politics and societal mores, showed once again that it could survive against all odds.

## Chapter 14: Old Habits, New Beginnings

At the beginning of 1966 membership of rifle clubs around Australia had dropped to below 17,000 and a year later had dropped further to only 14,905.<sup>658</sup> Despite this decline, the ACSRA was quickly recovering from the massive blow delivered to the morale and optimism of the rifle club movement with the withdrawal of Government grants and Army ammunition subsidies over 1960-1965. The Council was determined to move forward once again, and the experience of the stalwarts of the movement, represented in the ACSRA, began to once again steady the movement and focus it on the future.

Although the Army had cut its direct ties with the rifle shooting movement and the Government no longer subsidised rifle shooting with grants for its operations and ammunition, the Department of the Army remained linked with the movement in a range of matters and by the ACSRA's statutory status as a Commonwealth organisation under the Defence Act. The Army's Departmental Secretary, Bruce White, continued to attend meetings of ACSRA or, in his absence, Tom Fisher did. Rifle ranges, rifle club regulations, incorporation, rifle modifications and ammunition supplies and so on, all exercised the ongoing relationship with the Department. This situation was to continue for at least another ten years.

Supplies of .303-inch ammunition did indeed run out as predicted, and the ACSRA authorised conversions of SMLE No.4 rifles to 7.62mm ammunition.<sup>659</sup> This, along with the gradual loss of rifle ranges in this period, created their own issues and consequences for the Council to consider. Much of their deliberations in the decade to 1975 concerned adjusting rifle shooting rules and targets, while other challenges arose around managing a range of official and 'goodwill' Australian teams, including women teams, in the increasingly complex round of international and national competitions. The ACSRA's residual prejudice towards Olympic and Commonwealth shooting remained, and it stayed out of the Australian Shooting Association (ASA - the former AJSC) until 1976.

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<sup>658</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 18-19 November 1967*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.7. The area figures were: Queensland, 2,096 with North Queensland 550, NSW 5,532, Victoria, 2,363, South Australia 1,684, Western Australia 2,244 and Tasmania 436.

<sup>659</sup> The conversions of No.4 rifles were seen as a stop-gap only. Both the NRA and the DCRA (Canada) began introducing 7.62mm ammunition to its annual matches from 1966. *The Marksman*, Vol.18, No.1, January-February 1966, p.24.

Rifle association and individual criticism of the Council remained as communications to membership was never a strong suite of the Council. But it continued to adapt its organisation and governance to respond to national political and societal matters affecting its operations. These included the impact of the various State gun laws, pressure on so-called 'HQ ranges' from communities and developers alike, and general and increasing antipathy from society at large to rifle shooting, even as a sport. Meanwhile, Harold Holt succeeded Sir Robert Menzies as Prime Minister. ACSRA regarded Holt as a friend of the rifle club movement, but on the flimsiest of reasoning. He had charmed the Council once when attending a luncheon as a Government Minister during an annual meeting of ACSRA in the 1950s, and had promised that 'if he could ever do anything in the interests of rifle clubs, he would do it.'<sup>660</sup>

Meanwhile, ACSRA approved in principle conversion of SMLE No.4 rifles and the Department of Supply confirmed that it would be able to release 25,200 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition for the conversion trials at a price of \$57.50 per thousand rounds.<sup>661</sup> The Department of Army expected that all .303-inch ammunition would be exhausted by 1968, but in any case, arrangements for State rifle association .303-inch ammunition to be stored in Army Ordnance Ammunition Depots would continue until June 1968. The price of ammunition, whether .303-inch or 7.62mm, remained the dominant issue for the rifle club movement; falling membership was attributed directly to the rising cost of ammunition.

Testing of two No.4 rifles converted to 7.62mm by the South Australian small arms manufacturing firm, SportCo, showed the viability of the rifle type, and the Council agreed to allow the use of converted rifles in open competition. The Small Arms Factory at Lithgow also tried to put forward a variant of its L1A1 rifle as a possible longer-term replacement for the SMLE No.4.:

A small batch of experimental 7.62mm calibre, single-shot target rifles, built around L1A1 parts, was produced in 1966 to test the market. Despite extensive demonstrations by Factory and Rifle Club shooters, the rifle did not find a market....Its grouping accuracy, even with a heavy barrel, was limited by other aspects of the design, illustrating again the different requirements of target and military rifles.<sup>662</sup>

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<sup>660</sup> *The Marksman*, Vol.18, No.1, January-February 1966, p.27.

<sup>661</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 12-13 November 1966*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld], p.4.

<sup>662</sup> Griffiths, T., *Lithgow's Small Arms Factory and its People, Vol.2: 1950-to 1990*, Toptech Engineering, Terrey Hills [NSW], 2008, p.202. An ACSRA delegation had visited the Factory, but

At the Council meeting in Melbourne in mid-November 1966, the new Chairman, Major-General Sir Denzil Macarthur-Onslow, opened the meeting. T.K. Fisher, representing the Department of the Army also attended.<sup>663</sup> Immediately, and in a remarkable turnaround given that Sir Denzil was only new to the role since the previous year, the Council asked the new 'independent' Chairman to step outside while the Council debated what having an 'independent' chair meant.<sup>664</sup> It appeared that there was little confidence in Sir Denzil to attend to matters of detail.<sup>665</sup> In quick order, the Council requested Sir Denzil to accept the position of president, to preside at all meetings of the Council and to help look after the 'upper strata' contacts of the Council.

Sir Denzil graciously accepted these new arrangements and John Henry Collinson was then appointed as the new 'independent' chairman, to direct the activities of the movement in matters of administrative detail throughout the year. Collinson's meteoric rise to the top of rifle shooting administration as the youngest ever Chairman of the NRAA at 38, surprised no-one who knew of his managerial experience and expertise.<sup>666</sup> Meanwhile in April 1967, news came of the death of Lieutenant-Colonel R.O. Wynne, DSO and bar, who had served on the Council between 1948 and 1957.

The ammunition question remained the over-riding question to be resolved. In March 1967, a delegation from the ACSRA had met with the Minister for the Army, Denis James ('Jim') Killen, to discuss this vital question but left with price and supply guarantees unresolved.<sup>667</sup> In July, ACSRA wrote to the Minister requesting financial assistance to purchase ammunition. At the ACSRA meeting in Melbourne that November, B. White (now CBE), Secretary Department of the Army, noted that spare

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considered the offered price of \$92 per rifle prohibitive while others thought a special Australian rifle might not be acceptable in international competitions. The SMLE No.4 rifle received a new lease of life. In 1967, at the insistence of the NRA of NSW, the L1A1 variant was accepted as an 'approved rifle', but it never achieved popular demand.

<sup>663</sup> A new delegate was Douglas William Cadden, from Queensland and a member of the well-known rifle shooting family, was a pharmaceutical chemist and a RAAF veteran of World War Two. Another was Robert George Rose, from Western Australia, a hairdresser and also a RAAF veteran of World War Two, had started shooting in 1951.

<sup>664</sup> This 'palace coup' was initiated by no other than the outgoing Chairman, 'Bill' Mitchell, with the support of C.H. Mutton.

<sup>665</sup> One reason for this was that Macarthur-Onslow was a member of no less than 27 other Boards and committees.

<sup>666</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 12-13 November 1966*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld], p.2.

<sup>667</sup> Later Sir Denis James Killen, KCMG, AC.

parts for .303-inch rifles were no longer being manufactured and nor was .303-inch ammunition.<sup>668</sup>

With Australian commitments on the ground to the conflict in Vietnam ramping up, there was also no guarantee of a supply of 7.62mm ammunition to the rifle club movement on an ongoing basis. White thought that 3-5,000,000 rounds at a few months notice was possible, but the price might be as high as \$65 per 1,000 given the rising price of world copper. Importation of ammunition, for example from Japan, was possible but the Government preferred manufacture of ammunition took place in Australia. For that matter, the Government preferred not to allow foreign nationals into rifle clubs either.<sup>669</sup>

The ACSRA meeting of November 1967 saw delegates attending a detailed and intensive Council meeting.<sup>670</sup> They may have thought it business as usual to hear the ACSRA president inquire of White whether the Army would object to the rifle clubs adopting a rifle without a magazine. Deferring to the Department of the Army in this way was polite, but also perhaps a case of ‘old habits die hard’. There were many matters still entwining Army and the Department of Supply with rifle clubs. While the rifle clubs were still part of the Regulations under the Defence Act, this situation was not due to change in the short term. The Government was looking for less dependency from ACSRA, not more, as time went on, but some on the Council did not seem to recognise this.

A later recommendation by William Frederick Mitchell from Victoria that ACSRA should look to ways to improve its image at first seemed reasonable. His emphasis was to re-establish the image of the movement with the Army, investigate a scheme to encourage members of rifle clubs to join the Militia Forces, and re-organise the Commonwealth matches ‘to give them greater service value’. These suggestions perhaps typified the conservative thinking still prevalent among some members of the Council. Mitchell suggested a Committee to examine the questions. The Council agreed in principle, but it never really got underway.

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<sup>668</sup> Some State rifle associations, such as NSW, had stocks of .303-inch ammunition sufficient to June 1969, but after that it was 7.62mm or nothing.

<sup>669</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 18-19 November 1967*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.2-4. “Aliens were later admitted to rifle clubs in early 1969, but under a whole range of conditions which made the prospect of joining quite daunting. *South Australian Rifle News*, March 1969, p.11.

<sup>670</sup> Delegates included Lawrence Darcy Raymond (‘Larry’) Gorman from Western Australia, a veteran of the rifle club movement in that State who began shooting in 1923 with the Bunbury Rifle Club. He was a carpenter and World War Two veteran.

The year of 1968 proved to be one of those in the decade where everything seemed to happen at once. It was notable for a number of occurrences. Approval for the change of ACSRA's title to the National Rifle Association of Australia (NRAA) finally occurred in late 1967, but the formal change of name did not occur as expected on 1 January 1968. That month the re-named NSW Rifle Association (NSWRA) began operations at its new headquarters rifle range at Long Bay after moving from Malabar.

Tests with both SportCo's 7.62mm conversion and the SAF Lithgow's L1A1 variant continued through the early part of 1967, both with good results. Deliveries of the first supplies of 7.62mm ammunition also began to State rifle associations at an indicative price of \$60 per 1,000, but in smaller quantities than desired. The exciting news was however, that SportCo had designed and released a prototype, purpose-made 7.62mm target rifle called the Omark Model 44.<sup>671</sup> By May 1968, the NRAA had approved the No.4 rifle conversion, the L1A1 variant and the Omark M44 as approved rifles.

Manufacturers and distributors of other rifles such as the American M-17 and SMLE P14 conversions as well as the Swedish Carl Gustav 7.62mm rifle were also knocking at the gates for approval. The NRAA Council's cautious approach to approving rifles did not endear it to some riflemen who appreciated that there were already a number of proven [but non-British] 7.62mm target rifles available. One rifle clubman wrote, in a letter directed at C.H. Mutton and published in December 1967:

The National Council must face up to its responsibilities with full consideration of the rifleman. Provision must be made for liberalised, more accurate equipment for the future. The Council must tear itself away from Great Britain's apron strings and lace and cease to live in 'the glorious past'. This is Australia, and very nearly 1968.<sup>672</sup>

The same writer went on to say, in April 1968:

If all the nonsense and rot could be eliminated, get rid of too much tie-up with military ideas (they abandoned us years ago), then give us really good modern equipment to use for the purpose of our sport, along with the introduction of some good modern logical thinking by the "top brass", the rifle shooting movement would leap ahead once more.<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Omark, an American manufacturing company, acquired SportCo. SportCo in turn eventually closed its doors in 1980.

<sup>672</sup> *Marksman*, December 1967, pp.12-13.

<sup>673</sup> *Marksman*, April 1968, p.18.

The question of future target rifles elicited many letters on the subject in 1968. There was frustration, uncertainty and dissatisfaction on all sides. Uncertainty about ammunition supplies and what rifles might be used compounded the decline in membership. The correspondence also showed a gap between expectations and delivery by the NRAA and the State rifle associations in these matters, many riflemen not realising that the NRAA itself was also frustrated with and by Government.

Nonetheless, there were still views held by some that to adopt the L1A1 variant was a way to reinstate the rifle shooting movement as a useful reserve for the military, being disdainful of the 'fancy target rifles' on offer. The Omark Model 44, however, became the rifleman's choice over the next few years, although the No.4 conversion was by virtue of its proven pedigree and availability, and remained common on the rifle ranges for years to come.

In a big year for international competition, a British and Canadian team visited Australia in early 1968. The visitors shot against a range of State and district union teams around Australia and fired against Australia in the Empire Match in March 1969 at Williamstown. Australia was successful in winning that match, followed by Great Britain and Canada. As a sign of the times perhaps, the visit of the Canadian team in particular, the first ever to Australia, and let alone alongside a British team visit at the same time, elicited little public interest or excitement. This was a very different environment for the rifle club movement compared to that experienced during the first ever visit by a British team in 1907, when newspapers carried detailed reports of the team's progress through the States and treated the team members like celebrities.

Soon after the Australian rifle team, under the captaincy of S.W. Kanaar, travelled to Bisley and won a repeat of the Empire Cup, the McKinnon Cup and was runner-up in the Kolapore Cup. In Canada, the team shot in the teams matches of the Canada Cup and the Commonwealth Match. Once again, the matches received muted newspaper coverage and even in Australia. Team results were restricted to internal newsletters and magazines, sometimes publicised months after the event.<sup>674</sup> Soon after, in November 1968, the NRAA Council met as usual in Melbourne. With the resignation of Brigadier E.E. Grant as Secretary after many years of service in that role, Bruce Alfred Heath became Secretary.<sup>675</sup> This was the first time, following a change in the NRAA

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<sup>674</sup> *Marksman*, September 1969, p.22-23.

<sup>675</sup> Concurrently Secretary of the VRA and an Army veteran of World War Two, Heath was a Post Office worker who started shooting in 1954.

constitution, that vice-presidents were elected, or rather, nominated, pending their agreement. The first vice-presidents of the NRAA were Sir A. Lyell McEwin, Sir William *Frederick* Samson, and former Council members E.G. Williams, A.S.L. Hay, S.W. Kanaar and H. Withnall.<sup>676</sup>

ACSRA, stung by some of the persistent and trenchant criticism of its perceived ineffectiveness, began to disseminate more information to riflemen and re-organise itself. One rifleman writing to *Marksman* magazine had described the rifle movement as ‘a pachyderm, with the administrators sitting on its head and a myriad of clubs and shooters hanging precariously to its tail’, with no communication between head and tail.<sup>677</sup> ACSRA appointed a publicity officer, State rifle associations did the same and urged the clubs to emulate them.

The Council gave approvals for the M17 and P14 rifles for conversion. Supplies of 7.62mm ammunition were appearing, with State rifle associations buying back .303-inch ammunition from clubs as the transition to entirely 7.62mm began. By June 1969, deliveries had also begun of the first Omark M44 target rifles. The future looked brighter for rifle clubs, despite the membership figures showing otherwise.

With the introduction of the ‘five year plan’ in June 1960 to bring to an end to Government ammunition subsidies and grants, about 6,000 members dropped out of the movement. The view at the time was that these men were the ‘dead wood’, that only the truly dedicated men remained. The biggest drop was in NSW, where the Treasurer, E. Cornish, in order to build up ammunition stocks while ammunition was still basically free issue, had pushed clubs hard to build up members, even members who did not actually shoot.

But in a table of membership provided by the ACSRA Treasurer to the *Marksman* magazine in early 1969, it was clear that other factors were at work, for another large drop of 8,000 occurred as the five year plan came to an end in 1964/65. There is little doubt, societal factors aside, that when the Government announced that its support for the Movement would end and riflemen would start to pay for their own ammunition, a large number exited the movement (the so-called ‘dead wood’). When the end of

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<sup>676</sup> Brown, P., ‘Samson, Sir William Frederick (1892–1974)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/samson-sir-william-frederick-11607/text20725>, accessed 8 August 2011. Of the nominees only E.G. Williams declined.

<sup>677</sup> *Marksman*, September 1968, p.20.

support became a reality, another large exodus occurred.<sup>678</sup> It probably was more accurate to see the second group as ‘dead wood’ rather than the collapsed padded memberships in rifle clubs in 1960, but the reality is that rising costs drove many out of the movement forever.

	1961/62	1962/63	1963/64	1964/65	1965/66	1966/67	1967/68
<b>Nth. Qld.</b>	1475	1290	1208	1041	956	550	513
<b>Qld.</b>	6040	5046	4932	2204	2659	2096	2005
<b>NSW</b>	10758	9070	9091	7700	6531	5532	4971
<b>Vic.</b>	6015	6033	4013	2607	2512	2363	2386
<b>SA</b>	3102	2763	2460	1746	1777	1684	1530
<b>WA</b>	3562	3166	3131	2050	2140	2244	2005
<b>Tas.</b>	1190	1154	1100	500	427	436	414
<b>Total</b>	32,232	28,882	25,935	17,848	17,002	14,905	13,844
<b>Loss (round figures)</b>	2400	4300	2900	8100	840	2100	1100

Costs were the tangible factors at work, but the intangible factors, which continued to affect membership numbers, included innate conservatism and a failure of leadership as the ACSRA and State associations dithered over ammunition supplies and prices and failed to give a clear vision for the movement as to what the future state looked like. Compounding this was the lack of communication within the rifle club movement. At essence was the failure, mostly, of the ACSRA leadership to come to grips with the changed status of the rifle club movement vis-a-vis Government.

The ACSRA had difficulties understanding that it no longer had the access to the highest levels of Government it once enjoyed and found itself ill-equipped to develop new access accordingly. While some delegates clung to the defence connection as an article of faith, it was misplaced hope that restoration of the old *status quo* remained a possibility. Meanwhile, other more popular forms of rifle shooting were gathering momentum but ACSRA, almost ‘cutting off its nose to spite itself’, procrastinated over rejoining the ASA and remained in splendid isolation from Olympic, sports, and even small bore shooting. As the rifle club movement entered 1969, however, there were some signs that ACSRA had taken heed of the criticism which had been directed at it,

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<sup>678</sup> *Marksman*, January-February 1969, p.22.

leading to better communication at a time when the transition to new 7.62mm ammunition and rifles began to gain momentum.

The first Australian Teams Championships (the former Commonwealth series of matches), held in Perth at Swanbourne rifle range in October 1969 was also the last teams series of matches to use .303-inch ammunition. It was the end of an era. Henceforth, only 7.62mm ammunition would be used. A number of articles appeared, mourning the end of the SMLE .303-inch rifle.<sup>679</sup> By late 1969, ACSRA had ordered 6,000,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition at \$66 per thousand.<sup>680</sup>

In November 1969, the ACSRA met as usual in Melbourne for its annual meeting.<sup>681</sup> In attendance, as usual, were Fisher and White, representing the Department of the Army. Meanwhile the International Arms Company requested formal approval of the Carl Gustav 63E 7.62mm Target Rifle for use in ACSRA matches. The ACSRA denied the application, and even added that there would be no approvals for new rifles for a further 12 months. This decision was made despite a number of calls to make more types of rifles available to riflemen. Even by March 1970, it was still necessary to explain the ACSRA's reasoning.

The decision to prevent these and other rifles from Australia was based on the perceived need to keep a level playing field for all riflemen. That is, skill should be the issue, not the rifle. Essentially the ACSRA wanted to keep matters as they had always been, or as close to it as possible, i.e., to conduct long range shooting with a standard issued rifle for all.<sup>682</sup> It was close to the heart of the rifle club movement that it was an egalitarian, everyman's sport. However, times were changing, fast. The national council no longer had to consider 100,000 riflemen, or even 50,000, or even 25,000. It was responsible for closer to 12,000 in a fragmenting rifle shooting community and in an age of increasing prosperity.

In another sign of possible change, Victoria's W.F. Mitchell put forward a thoughtful paper and proposals to establish a national headquarters in Canberra and have a professional, salaried Director-General manage the affairs of the national association. The proposed Director-General would investigate, among other things, 'the relationship between ACSRA and the State rifle associations, and other sporting

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<sup>679</sup> Hackfath, W., 'The Passing of the .303 Rifle', *West Australian Rifle News*, October 1969, pp.2-3.

<sup>680</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 21-23 November 1969*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.13.

<sup>681</sup> New delegates included James William Fletcher ('Jim') Sweet for NSW. He began shooting in 1925 and served in the VDC during World War Two.

<sup>682</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, Vol.7, No.2, March 1970, p.1.

organisations’, and report ‘on what steps should be taken to increase membership, decrease costs and put open range rifle shooting on a firm basis.’ Mitchell stressed the need for the candidate to have personal contacts in the Navy, Army and Air Force and ‘who can meet Federal politicians on a personal basis’.<sup>683</sup> The Council sent Mitchell’s proposals to State rifle associations for discussion.

It was nonetheless revealing that Mitchell still saw contacts with the Services to be important. Mitchell, like Mutton and some others on Council, still hoped that somehow, the rifle club movement might still, even at this late stage, be re-integrated with defence. At this meeting, Mutton even put forward a motion suggesting that headquarter ranges for the State rifle associations be restricted to 600 yards to be more compatible with Army range requirements.<sup>684</sup> The Secretary Department of Army, White, quickly noted that even if the rifle associations did this no change could be expected from the Government. He also doubted whether the shorter range would have any bearing on recruiting younger members. It was a telling exchange, and indicative of the wishful thinking in some respects by some of the more conservative members of the Council.<sup>685</sup>

White, before leaving the meeting made the following statement:

...the Department did not make the ACSRA’s task an easy one owing to the numerous regulations which were necessary...it was necessary for the Department to impress upon clubs the importance of safety regulations. The Council had a much better understanding than it had a few years ago in regards to security risks, etc., and eventually the ACSRA would be totally responsible.

When this occurs, he would always be happy to advise and consult. He said that the ACSRA was nearly at the stage to be fully competent to handle its own affairs...he expected to be available to help for several years and hoped to be able to assist with the Canberra project.<sup>686</sup>

Nearly five years after the end of the five-year plan, the sociable White (and loquacious Fisher) was still central to the ACSRA’s sense of self-confidence. On one hand, White had proven to be a good friend of the rifle club movement, providing it

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<sup>683</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 21-23 November 1969*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.9-10.

<sup>684</sup> Despite decimalisation in 1966, ranges were still being expressed in yards in 1969 and only changed in 1972. The NRA of Great Britain stayed with ‘yards’ well into the 1970s.

<sup>685</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 21-23 November 1969*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.11. Mitchell admitted that his ‘image committee’, set up in November 1967, had not really worked and in his thinking, he replaced it with the Director-General idea. The Council disbanded the committee on Mitchell’s recommendation.

<sup>686</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 21-22 November 1969*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.13.

with seasoned advice and dampening down expectations of a return to the *status quo* that existed before 1960. On the other, a certain amount of dependency had inevitably crept in to the relationship. Whatever the original intentions of Government, White and Fisher still attended meetings of the ACSRA many years after it may have been necessary. The Department of the Army remained entwined with the rifle club movement, and White and Fisher still had many years to play out.

As the transition to 7.62mm continued into 1970, criticisms of the ACSRA continued. One irate rifleman even suggested that the ACSRA was engaged in bribery and corruption to be promoting the Omark 44 for approval at the expense of other contenders. The Council demanded, and received, an apology.<sup>687</sup> By March 1970, when the ACSRA held the first of a number of additional meetings with fewer delegates, it had approved six rifles for use, namely the No.4 heavy barrel; the No.4 light barrel 'Stubbie', the SAF's L1A1 variant, the Omark's SportCo M44, the P14 and the American M17.<sup>688</sup> ACSRA had also approved ring foresights and was actively discussing proposed innovations in targets. By June 1970, for example, the chairman of SARA reported that nearly half of South Australia's riflemen were equipped with the new Omark M44 target rifle and the rest with conversions of No.4 rifle.<sup>689</sup> Membership losses slowed.

The March 1970 meeting was held in Canberra for the first time and focused primarily on the 'Canberra Project'. This project was the preparation of the Canberra Range for national and international matches. The meeting was joined by a new Assistant Secretary (General), Department of Army, namely Lieutenant-Colonel George Adamson, formerly the Northern Command – Queensland, Command Secretary.<sup>690</sup> The ACSRA was excited about its new project and saw this as a definite opportunity to put the rifle club movement 'back on the map.' It was already considering a National Championship (a National Queen's) in Canberra every year, a suggestion not well received by all State rifle associations, which saw revenue opportunities disappearing. ACSRA also sought Royal patronage.<sup>691</sup> The ACSRA even released its very first press

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<sup>687</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 21-22 March 1970*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.

<sup>688</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, Vol.7, No.2, March 1970, p.12. Later, news came that production would cease of the SAF L1A1 7.62mm variant (only 11 were on order). *Marksman*, December 1971, p.10.

<sup>689</sup> *1970 Programme of Matches and Record Sheet for the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Prize Meeting*, Burwood Press, Adelaide, 1970, p.40.

<sup>690</sup> Adamson had served with the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Armoured Regiment in World War Two, and had remained in service with the Armoured Corps after the war, being commissioned in 1952. He was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in 1961 and thereafter served as a staff officer.

<sup>691</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 21-22 March 1970*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.2

release, through the Director of Public Relations at Army HQ, which announced the development of its 'national shooting complex'.<sup>692</sup>

The Council also agreed to prepare a letter for national servicemen to invite them to join the ACSRA at the completion of their service. In July the Council resolved to print 10,000 pamphlets for distribution through the Army. The July meeting discussed a wide range of issues and items but perhaps the most important involved ACSRA's response to the possibility of uniform firearm laws for Australia. This possibility had been building for some time, and Chief Secretaries from the State governments would discuss the issue at a national conference later that year (they did not invite the Department of the Army). The ACSRA met yet again in late November for its annual meeting, finishing off one of its busiest years for some time.<sup>693</sup> This time Fisher was there in a new capacity, as Executive Officer (Rifle Clubs), for the Department of the Army.<sup>694</sup>

The Department of Supply had promised 7,000,000 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition in 1971 at a price of \$66 per thousand, which began the meeting on a good note. Riflemen had purchased over 5,000 Omark M44 rifles along with over 1,300 conversions. The Secretary reported on membership numbers, still trending down, despite the introduction of new rifles:<sup>695</sup>

	<b>1968/69</b>	<b>1969/70</b>	<b>1970/71</b>
<b>North Queensland</b>	513	498	404
<b>Queensland</b>	2005	1566	1483
<b>New South Wales</b>	4971	3849	3201
<b>Victoria</b>	2386	2598	2511
<b>South Australia</b>	1530	1533	1345
<b>Western Australia</b>	2005	1828	1593
<b>Tasmania</b>	414	349	293
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,844</b>	<b>12,221</b>	<b>10,830</b>

<sup>692</sup> The range was named in honour of well-known rifleman J.G. McIntosh, 'whose family...were among the earliest settlers on the land where the Federal capital was established.'

<sup>693</sup> The Council elected Air Commodore William Henry 'Bull' Garing, CBE, DFC, as a Vice-President. Stephens, A., 'Brilliant leader who knew no fear - Air Commodore W.H. Garing, Military pilot, officer, 1910-2004', <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/01/18/1074360629352.html>.

<sup>694</sup> This was reversion to a role similar to that of the former DRAC, and a recognition of the continuing relationship with the Department of the Army.

<sup>695</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of ACSRA 27-28 November 1970*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.3-5.

The International Arms Company renewed its application for approval of its Carl Gustav 63E target rifle; again, the ACSRA rejected the application. An initial order of 500 rifles was to be imported, but the ACSRA dug in, it would not approve any further rifle variants. Discussion roamed over a wide variety of matters including proposed legislation for uniform firearms regulations and the need to recover .303-inch rifles when they became obsolete.

In March 1971, the Council once again met in Canberra to inspect the Canberra rifle range and consider arrangements for the first National Queen's competition, planned for March 1972, complete with new gold-embroidered badge. A change to the Army's No.12 black figure (head and shoulders) target for the Gordon Highlanders' Match would be another change for the Australian Teams Championships. The ACSRA also decided to sell the old Colonial Ammunition Company cups, which had been valued at \$6,000.<sup>696</sup> In July 1971, the Council meeting in Melbourne was the first held under the formal title of the National Rifle Association of Australia (NRAA), even though the name had been in alternate use for a number of years.<sup>697</sup>

In March 1972, the first National Teams Championships took place in Canberra. Almost 250 riflemen, including in teams from New Zealand and Canada, competed in the series.<sup>698</sup> The Governor-General and later the Minister for the Army, the Hon. Robert Cummin ('Bob') Katter, presented the trophies.<sup>699</sup> The events and the setting were well-deserved triumphs for the NRAA. In addition, a new match was hastily organised on the first day of the National Teams Championships, set for three days later - the CAC Trophy and Pan Pacific Trophy Teams Match.<sup>700</sup> The match conditions were for teams of 12 shooters, to fire two optional sighters and 10 shots over each of 800 and 900 yards (not metres). This match, referred to as a 'modified version of the C.A.C. Match', appeared to have been organised following the CAC Silver Tray

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<sup>696</sup> It was a measure of the speed at which the national council moved that these cups, which had been discovered in 1952, finally appeared to have a fate decided for them. However, only an offer of \$500 was received.

<sup>697</sup> Two new Vice-Presidents were later added to Council, including Major W. Hackfath, DCM from Western Australia, a former councillor of the national council. News that production would cease of the SAF L1A1 7.62mm variant (only 11 were on order) was the least of the Council's concerns.

<sup>698</sup> The Royal Military College, Duntroon provided the College Band, the public address system, the dais, chairs and marquees and much other support for the event and trophy.

<sup>699</sup> *NRAA Chairman's Report for the year Ended 30 June 1972*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1. See also Williams, P. D., 'Katter, Robert Cummin (Bob) (1918–1990)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/katter-robert-cummin-bob-12716/text22929>, accessed 11 October 2011.

<sup>700</sup> The match 'was the brainchild of T.K. Fisher.' *NRAA Chairman's Report for the year Ended 30 June 1972*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.

Trophy match recently won by New Zealand at the January 1972 meeting at Trentham. In any event, Australia won the new match in Canberra over New Zealand and Canada. It remains unclear whether the CAC Trophy was the trophy given to the winning team in this Pan Pacific match.<sup>701</sup>

The annual meeting in November 1972 saw several changes on the Council.<sup>702</sup> A returning face from the Department of Army, J. M. Aitken, attended along with Fisher

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<sup>701</sup> The CAC Trophy in the Pan Pacific Match remains an enigma. This CAC Trophy does not appear to be the same trio of CAC silver cups discovered in a Melbourne vault in 1952 and put up for sale by the NRAA in 1970, but may have been one the larger cup of that trio. The Trophy awarded at the Pan-Pacific Match was described in the *Marksman* as ‘a trophy for perpetual competition...a silver cup which has been in the possession of the Australian Rifle Club Movement since Federation. It was originally presented for international competition by the Colonial Ammunition Company.’ However, the New Zealand team captain said that ‘he had hoped to take the \$3,000 trophy back to N.Z. because it was there that the trophy was made and presented for international competition late last century. Competition had lapsed and the trophy had not been presented for 40 years.’ *Marksman*, April 1972, p.5. The Colonial Ammunition Company, established in New Zealand in 1885, later established a factory in Footscray, Melbourne in 1889, becoming Australia’s first ordnance manufacturer. In 1903 the CAC presented a trophy – the Commonwealth Challenge Cup - for an event for teams of seven from the Commonwealth military forces, including ships, or rifle clubs – and the same from New Zealand. The trophy consisted of one large, and two small silver cups on ebony bases, valued at £100. The trophy was awarded to the winner of the annual match, fired under service conditions at a moving object, at each Commonwealth Match in Australia. *Mercury*, 29 July, 1903, p.4. The CAC Match was described in 1913, when it was shot in Brisbane (the Gympie Light Horse won the match): ‘The morning’s programme commenced with the Colonial Ammunition Co. trophy, the prize for which was a silver Challenge Cup (to be held for one year by the captain of the winning team) and seven prizes (replicas of the Challenge Cup) valued at £5 each, or £5 in cash, at the option of each member of the winning team. *Brisbane Courier*, 6 October 1913, p.10. However, the 1912 report of the Commonwealth Council describes the match as competing for silver Challenge ‘Cups’; there is little doubt that two or three cups are being described. *25<sup>th</sup> Report of the CCRAA for 1913*, F. Clark Printing, Sydney, 1914, pp.23-24. The last report of the competition was in 1920, when the Sturt Rifle Club won the match in Adelaide. In the CCRAA’s annual report of 1924, a single unexplained line under the heading *Colonial Ammunition Company’s Trophy*, said, ‘The Executive to consider this matter’ – the match did not appear in that year’s report. *Report of the CCRAA for 1924*, Keating-Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1925, p.23. In 1925, the SQRA moved that the CAC Trophy be allotted for a match in each State holding the Commonwealth match series and this was agreed. However, the match does not appear again as it was not, apparently, supported any longer by the CCRAA (for unknown reasons) and no subsequent matches were ever held. If the trophies then went ‘into the vault’, only to be re-discovered in 1952, why was it that the re-discovered trophies did not appear to have been used – there was no comment about them being inscribed in any way at that time or subsequently. The mystery deepens when the Pan-Pacific Match and new CAC Trophy match is conducted in 1972. The description of the match as a ‘modified CAC match’ might imply a modification from the original 1903-1924 matches, although they are very dissimilar and competed for between nations, not units or clubs. The CAC Trophy, then, probably was the large silver cup of the original trio of cups from 1903. But after 1972, what happened to the CAC Trophy? Meanwhile the NRAA used the two smaller cups for the new Bruce White and Macarthur-Onslow service matches. With the discontinuation of those matches in the 1980s, what then became of those two cups as well? The CAC Trophy remains an enigma.

<sup>702</sup> Mervyn Alfred Concanen came from Western Australia. An electrician and TV technician by trade had been a National Serviceman in the early 1950s and subsequently joined Subiaco Rifle Club in 1958. Another new delegate, Neville Stanley Holt from NSW had commenced shooting in militia rifle clubs before World War Two and was a member of the 1948 and 1953 Australian teams to Bisley. An electrician by trade, he represented Australia in shooting at the 1948 Olympics; he shot with the Parramatta Rifle Club. He also had a distinguished administrative career, rising to Chairman and then president of the NSWRA.

as usual.<sup>703</sup> It would be Fisher's last meeting before retirement in January 1973. The Council subsequently elected him to be a Vice-President, to be the NRAA's liaison officer in Canberra. The Council postponed Fisher's appointment however, when the Council met again in May 1973, as the Army kept Fisher on as a part-time consultant for the time being.

Matters of substance addressed by this Council meeting included agreement on new 'alternative' targets, for use in the 1973 Australian Teams Championships. These replaced the old 'alternative' targets, which had been under trial for some time already. However, the Council put aside the contentious issue of decimalisation and target dimensions remained resolutely expressed in feet and inches. The Army, through Fisher, strongly urged the Council to appoint a Technical Committee, composed of independent experts that the Army could rely upon with regard to recommending modifications to rifles and the concomitant safety aspects.<sup>704</sup>

The NRAA Chairman concluded his report for 1972 by saying:

...the rifle shooting movement after a few years of crisis is now stabilising itself on a solid membership. Increased costs that unfortunately cannot be avoided are making less impact on members than they did a few years ago. So long as members can adapt themselves in this world of changes, and we the Council can recognise when changes should be made, and be bold enough to make them, then the future of the movement is assured.<sup>705</sup>

Importantly, in May the Council also agreed to add two new service-style matches to future Australian Teams Championships, for competition after the Gordon Highlanders and the Northcote. These were to be team matches with two teams of five shooters plus a coach, and firing fifteen shots, with one team firing at 300 yards and the other at 900 yards. The matches were to be called the Bruce White Short Range Trophy and the Denzil Macarthur Onslow Long Range Trophy, with the Jim Sweet Trophy for the aggregate of the two established service matches, to be extended to include the additional new matches as well. The trophies for each of these matches was none other than two of the three CAC silver cups which the Council had failed to sell after valuation in 1971.<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> Aitken had been the last Director of Rifle Clubs, in 1958, so had some knowledge of the movement and its issues.

<sup>704</sup> *Minutes of Annual Meeting of NRAA 24–25 November 1972*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.5.

<sup>705</sup> *NRAA Chairman's Report for the year Ended 30 June 1972*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.2.

<sup>706</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of NRAA 18–19 May 1973*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.5.

In September 1973, in a hard-hitting editorial direction in *South Australian Rifle News*, the editor questioned the ‘ways and means’ of the NRAA:

The aims, objectives and goals of the movement seem to be ill-defined and widely mis-understood. The administration seems to be inward looking and narrow visioned. We seem to have top heavy, unwieldy, and fragmented State Administrations but little National organisation to give National leadership and direction.

We call ourselves the National Rifle Association of Australia, yet we concentrate exclusively on one form of rifle shooting only – a misnomer surely under these circumstances. While we congratulate ourselves that we have stopped losing members and that our membership has “stabilised”, other and newer forms of rifle shooting are progressing rapidly. Our administration seems to spend endless hours debating relatively unimportant minutiae but no time at all considering the important matters of the future growth, development and expansion of the movement.

We are becoming more and more isolated and out of line with the world shooting movement generally. We can spend years bickering over minor changes to target dimensions or count out rules but cannot give time to formulate policies for broad long term growth and development.<sup>707</sup>

The editorial saw two interesting letters in response. The first, by ASA President G. Armstrong, who regarded it as ‘unfortunate’ that NRAA members had been ‘denied the opportunity to participate in international events’, also suggested that ‘perhaps a new generation will rise which will take the NRAA to its rightful place’.<sup>708</sup> By this time, the ASA already represented more than twice the number of shooters than the NRAA. Mutton could not resist weighing in as well, noting that the movement had been run for 100 years on a shoestring, but to get more members fees had to rise as well as professional help paid for to help advertise, promote and encourage rifle shooting.<sup>709</sup>

This exchange was symptomatic of the frustration felt by riflemen both inside and outside the NRAA. Yet at the November 1973 annual meeting of the Council in Melbourne, little was to change.<sup>710</sup> Perhaps somewhat oddly in hindsight, given that World War Two had ended almost 30 years before, the NRAA had asked the Prime Minister whether Japan could participate in the Pan-Pacific Match. The appropriate reply was received. The NRAA should simply discuss the invitation directly with the

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<sup>707</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, September 1973, p.1. The editor at that time was William F. (‘Bill’) Langman, also Managing Director of Omark.

<sup>708</sup> Armstrong was the former Southern Command Secretary [Victoria].

<sup>709</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, November 1973, p.5.

<sup>710</sup> Delegates joined again by Fisher and Aitken from the Department of the Army, as well as by W.F. Langman, in his capacity as Managing Director of Omark (Australia).

Japanese association.<sup>711</sup> The perennial topic of affiliation with the ASA inevitably arose, but the Council once again deferred a decision. The meeting also looked carefully at Mitchell's proposal for a Director-General and began to consider the ramifications of the retirement of NRAA Secretary, B. A. Heath, who had already indicated that he wanted to step down. The Council agreed that it was time to appoint a full-time Secretary for the 'good of the Movement'. In another, important but unrelated matter, the Council also agreed to the transfer of the Darwin Rifle Club (a so-called 'remote club') from WARA to SARA.

In January 1974, the Commonwealth Games also took place in Christchurch, New Zealand. To the dismay of many riflemen, no Australian competed in the full-bore Queen's Prize (pair) competition, an opportunity lost. The NRAA was nowhere to be seen; it blamed the State rifle associations for not organising competitors. The NRAA simply did not consider that there was any national kudos to be accrued in such international competition. If the NRA had embraced Olympic and Commonwealth Games shooting from 1948, then by 1975 it could well have been at the forefront of medal wins. Membership would have benefited from the accrued positive publicity and promotion of the sport.

By the next meeting in Melbourne over 31 May - 1 June 1974, Aitken was now Assistant Secretary (Planning) in the new Department of Defence (Army Office).<sup>712</sup> In other business of note, Aitken reported that there was to be a conference between the Department of Defence and the Department of Tourism and Sport. If the NRAA wanted Tourism and Sports grants for its matches, it should not look to Defence. Aitken also noted that the Minister for Defence, Lance Barnard, had visited Williamstown and could not understand why there was a need for such a large area.<sup>713</sup> These comments did not auger well for the future of Williamstown, nor reflect positively on the Minister's attitude to the rifle club movement. There is a hint in these early contacts with Tourism and Sport of the future for the NRAA, and a final cut of the remaining, tenuous threads binding Defence (Army) and the rifle shooting movement.

The NRAA Council met for its annual meeting in November 1974, for the first time at the relatively new Tullamarine airport in Melbourne.<sup>714</sup> The outgoing Chairman

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<sup>711</sup> *Minutes of Annual Meeting of NRAA 23-24 November 1973*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-3.

<sup>712</sup> Aitken attended in place of Tom Fisher, who had suffered a stroke.

<sup>713</sup> For more on Barnard, see

<http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/KeyPeopleEnlargement.aspx?id=tcm:13-21581>

<sup>714</sup> The NRAA was not officially represented in Switzerland for the World Championships in 1974.

and Secretary gave their respective reports for the year. Collinson noted a jump in the price of ammunition by a massive \$21.75 per 1,000 rounds. While the Ammunition factory at Footscray in Melbourne claimed that the NRAA was the beneficiary of a subsidy of \$12 per 1,000 rounds, the rise was nonetheless a shock and a further threat to new membership.<sup>715</sup> According to the Secretary, membership had dropped further, from 10,360 around Australia in 1973/74 to only 8,714 by mid-1974.<sup>716</sup>

In February 1975, the now National Teams Championships conducted at the McIntosh Range in Canberra were notable for the participation of an Army team for the first time. Drawn from 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR) in Brisbane, it was no match for the target rifles. The results for the Army were a re-run of results from the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries: the ‘pot-hunters’ triumphed in ‘service conditions’. The rifle clubmen benefited from many more hours of practice on the range than the Army men, who were also competing against the very best of the State teams, while its team of eleven men came from a much smaller pool.

Nonetheless, the appearance of this Army battalion team at the National Teams Championships was an indicator of interest by the Army Directorate of Training in developing marksmanship. Prompting this apparent turn-about was, in part, reports of poor marksmanship by Australian soldiers in Vietnam up to 1972. An Australian Army team competed at Bisley in 1975 in the Army championships there; NRAA riflemen coached the team before departure. Army also showed renewed interest in sniper, and therefore long-range target shooting, capabilities.<sup>717</sup>

In August 1975, Belmont rifle range hosted the National Rifle Teams Championships, for the second time that year. The 6 RAR team entered in all matches again, but came last on the aggregates overall. The Army’s regional commander, Brigadier Stuart Paul (‘Blackjack’) Weir, MC, DSO, made the trophy presentations in another sign of a revived relationship with the military. However, this was more sentimental than practical for Defence had no interest in re-engaging with the NRAA in a more substantial way than it already was.<sup>718</sup>

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<sup>715</sup> The NRAA at this time was relatively well off, about \$165,000 ‘in the black’, and this income mostly generated from sales of ammunition, so perhaps it was not that much of a shock after all.

<sup>716</sup> *NRAA Secretary’s Report for the Year ended 30 June 1974*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.3.

<sup>717</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, September 1975, p.5.

<sup>718</sup> *Minutes of Council Meeting of the NRAA 17 May 1975*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-8. Western Australia’s Libby Fenton, who had already won a WARA Queen’s, also won the QRA Queen’s at Belmont in August. Three women small-bore shooters, Yvonne Gowland, Yvonne Hill, and Helga Hoericke also qualified in late 1975 for the 1976 Montreal Olympics. *South Australian Rifle News*, December 1975, p.8.

The annual general meeting of the NRAA followed in early November. The redoubtable South Australian rifle movement veteran, Mutton, announced his retirement at the end of the year from the Council, on which he had served since 1946. Another retirement, in this case from the public service, was that of White, now Permanent Head Assisting the Secretary of the Department of Defence. Re-establishment of relations with the Army had progressed in a minor way but contact with the Defence Department had lessened with the retirement of Fisher, recently awarded the MBE. Both Fisher and White had, since the end of World War Two, had a major influence on and had worked unstintingly for, the rifle club movement. Their retirement was as profound a loss to the movement as had been the loss of Templeton, Merrett and Dean before them. Allied to Mutton's retirement from Council, and 1975 was indeed a watershed year.

Carl Mutton, with his retirement from the NRAA Council in December 1975, had given 30 years of dedicated service to the cause of rifle shooting in Australia at its highest administrative level, as well as to the SARA. He had been involved in rifle shooting for 66 years in total and even after his retirement, continued to be influential behind the scenes. He had always been a force to be reckoned with. A formidable administrator, his encyclopaedic legal mind also forgot little, backed up by meticulous record keeping which would have done any Canberra mandarin proud. But he was also, until failing eyesight forced him to stand aside from active rifle shooting, an accomplished rifle shot and expert on all manner of technical issues.

Mutton could argue equally passionately about changes to targets as he could about the future of the rifle club movement. He was an ultra-conservative, arguing for the retention of the rifle clubs as reserve units well past the Defence Department's and many riflemen's, patience for the viewpoint. Mutton was at times so dominant in the Council that riflemen often believed that he ran the Council. On the other hand, he was also willing to change his positions on issues, in the face of well-argued facts.<sup>719</sup> Most of all, he fought to keep rifle shooting an 'everyman's sport', accessible to all. He held the deeply felt conviction that rifle shooting would never recover its former energy and membership numbers unless it was kept simple, affordable and standardised. While it was not a fight he could win, nonetheless he stands out as a stalwart of the rifle club movement, with a place of honour alongside Templeton, Dean and Merrett.

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<sup>719</sup> *Letter from C.H. Mutton to J.S. Richardson, 9 February 1982, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.*

The new General Secretary reported that memberships of rifle clubs continued to fall and were just over 10,000.<sup>720</sup> On the other hand, the NRAA was establishing new connections with the now Department of Tourism and Recreation, which had supported the NRAA over the previous year with grants in excess of \$21,000. The Parker Hale 1200 TX was approved by Council, further broadening the choice of rifles available to Australian riflemen, but news also came that the price of ammunition had risen yet again, now to between \$111.50 to \$117 per 1,000 depending on the packaging format. As a result, both capitation fee and the ammunition freight levy increased in turn.

During 1976, the NRAA Council held three meetings. With the highly experienced pair of Penwarn as Chairman and Collinson as General Secretary, the national council had a new start and appeared to progress quite quickly across a range of areas.<sup>721</sup> However, by November 1976 Collinson reported that membership continued to fall, albeit slowly, to 9,930 (including 111 high school students in NSW). Riflemen purchased over five million rounds of ammunition up to November 1976. This was very different from the halcyon days when the rifle clubs would purchase more than 12 million rounds in a single year.

At the same time, yet another price rise in the cost of ammunition to \$131 per 1,000 rounds for a carton pack made it even more difficult to encourage membership.<sup>722</sup> C.H. Mutton, by then editor of the *South Australian Rifle News*, also commented on the rising price of rifles and barrels:

There appears to be no end to the inflationary spiral and when one sees “match” rifles quoted at \$298.00 and top quality barrels at \$78.00 the question arises “How

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<sup>720</sup> In further organisational changes, the Council agreed to appoint two Vice-Patrons and nominated Commodore J.M. Ramsay, CBE, DSC; Major-General W.G. Henderson and B. White. Henderson, Director-General of Army Training, later declined the offer. In 1976 Major-General Sir Charles Willoughby Moke Norrie, GCMG, GCVO, CB, MC (and bar), DSO, became a Vice-Patron, joining White and Ramsay. Howell, P. A., 'Norrie, Sir Charles Willoughby Moke (1893–1977)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/norrie-sir-charles-willoughby-moke-11254/text20073>, accessed 7 October 2011.

<sup>721</sup> In one interesting item in the May meeting, the Royal Australian Engineers Citizen Military Forces Rifle Club in Sydney sought the council's approval of the US M1 Garand rifle as an approved weapon for club use – the council readily gave it, subject to approval of the Inspector of Rifle Clubs and the Range Superintendent. This was interesting because the NRAA had no jurisdiction over a CMF rifle club, but on the other hand the club felt it needed the approval of the NRAA. Perhaps it was a courtesy all round, as the NRAA had no angst over the decision in direct contrast with finalising approvals for a range of new target rifles. The Garand was not, of course, a target rifle. *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council at Belmont, 8-9 May 1976*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.2. Later it transpired that the NSW Inspector of Rifle Clubs had not approved the Garand after all.

<sup>722</sup> *Minutes of the AGM of the NRAA Canberra, 1 November 1976*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.4-5.

long will the rifleman who shoots for pleasure be able to absorb these prices and remain in his beloved pastime? ...if these special rifles and barrels are not freely available an Executive Committee in the case of a protest may well be faced with the unenviable task of deciding whether a shooter using them as a Prize meeting is gaining an "UNFAIR ADVANTAGE"...

By 1980 the improved Omark Model 44D rifle became available but by that time, a whole range of other target rifles, many of them emulating the design features of the Omark, were competing successfully in the target rifle shooter market. In an apparent blow to the NRAA's attempts to secure grants for international teams, the Commonwealth Government abolished the Department of Tourism and Recreation in a re-organisation.<sup>724</sup> This also threw into some disarray the objectives of the Inter-Departmental Committee of Enquiry into Rifle Clubs, which was trying to decide on a recommendation as to whether rifle clubs should remain under Defence Department or move to the now abolished Department of Sport and Recreation.

At the same time, the Government promulgated some amendments to the Defence Act-Australian Rifle Club Regulations (Statutory Rules No.37 of 1976). The amendments did not upset the *status quo*.<sup>725</sup> Meanwhile, the new Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development announced an inquiry into future Commonwealth involvement in sports development.<sup>726</sup> The Council agreed to join the new Confederation of Australian Sport. In December 1976, the NRAA sent two delegates to attend the annual meeting of the ASA, and affiliate the NRAA with it, ending many years of frustration by many riflemen. There were still those who remained loyal to the old forms of the movement, including to the Oath of Affirmation, which remarkably was still applied to rifle club members in 1976:

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<sup>723</sup> *South Australian News*, September 1976, Vol.13, No.3, p.6. It appears that the NRAA took the concerns about price and the implication that an expensive rifle gives advantage to the shooter seriously enough to reject an application in 1977 to approve the Schultz & Larsen target rifle. Another target rifle, the Musgrave RSA 7.62mm, was also rejected because of possible trade embargoes with South Africa due to the apartheid policies being pursued by its government. *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council at Canberra 30 October & 3 November 1977*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1. In 1978 it was agreed that Musgrave barrels only could be approved as a trial for six months.

<sup>724</sup> The Department of Manufacturing Industry also restructured to become the Department of Industry and Commerce.

<sup>725</sup> *Minutes of the AGM of the NRAA Canberra, 1 November 1976*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.2. The Council considered forming Army Rifle Associations to allow military men to compete in State annual prize meetings – the main obstacle, it seems, was to equip the soldiers with a rifle that could compete with the clubmen. A 'paired' rifle district association match with the 34<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron (Engineers) was conducted in Broken Hill in 1976. An Army Marksman's Club formed in Canberra in 1977.

<sup>726</sup> *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council at Canberra, 1 November 1976*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.3.

...the Oath of Affirmation, now in modified form, is still in force and must be taken or made before an officer of the defence Force, a Justice of the Peace, or the captain of a Club BEFORE a person may be enrolled as a member. The old Oath to resist Her Majesty's enemies and cause H.M.'s peace to be kept and maintained remained in force until 1<sup>st</sup> July 1960. The present form is – “That I will be faithful and bear a true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second her Heirs and Successors according to law and that I will faithfully observe the rules of the rifle club for the time being in force and that I will carry out the lawful instructions of the duly appointed Captain of the Club”. Worth thinking about! No other “sporting body” requires the taking of such an oath before being admitted to membership either...<sup>727</sup>

Demonstrating the pace of activity in the rifle shooting sector, there were another three meetings of the Council in 1977, but the president, MacArthur-Onslow, was absent. Ammunition prices rose yet again in March 1977, climbing to \$144 for packets of 40 per 1,000 rounds.<sup>728</sup> New metric target dimensions, approved from July 1977, were amended later to include the 400-metre range. Meanwhile, the Inter-Departmental Committee on rifle shooting had reported to the Minister for Defence, Denis James (‘Jim’) Killen. In September, NRAA delegates met with the Minister to argue for the retention of the *status quo*, that is, that the NRAA should remain under the auspices of the Department of Defence.<sup>729</sup> The Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development (DEHCD) advised that it had restored subsidies to national sporting bodies for visits of teams to other countries plus for administrative costs of the national association.<sup>730</sup>

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<sup>727</sup> Letter from C.H. Mutton to West Australian Rifle News, August 1976, p.7.

<sup>728</sup> Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council at Adelaide, 16 July 1977, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.2.

<sup>729</sup> Jim Killen served as Defence Minister in the Fraser Government from 1975-1982.

<sup>730</sup> Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the NRAA Council at Canberra, 30 October 1977, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.2.

## Chapter 15: Embracing the future

In early 1977, the Inter-Departmental Committee inquiring into rifle clubs delivered its recommendations to the Minister for Defence, D. J. Killen. The recommendations were to sell off unused rifle ranges, phase out Rifle Club regulations (and therefore any residual Defence connections) over the coming year and in the short term, move the rifle clubs over to the jurisdiction of the Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development and Department of Administrative Services. In June, the Minister wrote to the NRAA seeking its views on the recommendations.

The NRAA sought internal legal opinion. It stated:

The aim of the plan is to excise any residual responsibilities for rifle clubs from the Defence powers, transfer them *pro tem* to the [DEHCD], then ultimately, if the clubs survive, to hand them over to the States...ultimate closure is probably inevitable.<sup>731</sup>

The basic instinct of the NRAA was to use the defence value argument. However, even Mutton, long the proponent of this argument, had to admit:

Where we have succeeded in the past is no longer a tenable proposition. Instead of drawing closer to Army by following proposals...put forward, e.g., figure targets; three positional shooting; being attached under Reg.14 as Reserves to the Defence Forces; inter Army/Rifle Club contests etc., ...99 per cent. of our members are totally committed to acquiring the best rifle, the best barrel, and tinkering with the rules to secure the utmost number of bullseyes for the highest possible prize money. What I am, perhaps bluntly, trying to show is that we have “burnt our bridges” and, therefore, how do we set about repairing them? In other words, what can we offer in order to justify continued financial and administrative support for our organisation?<sup>732</sup>

In response to this opinion, Herbert, writing to the Council from Western Australia on 24 August 1977, said that he thought it right that the rifle shooting movement should pursue marksmanship, and not three positional shooting, grenade practice etc.: ‘I don’t think it would get us anywhere [with Defence] if we did.’ Herbert noted that the NRAA had always had service shooting ‘without impressing anybody’,

<sup>731</sup> Mason, R., ‘Interdepartmental Committee on Rifle Clubs’, *unpub. Paper*, dated 26 June 1977, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.

<sup>732</sup> Mutton, C.H., ‘Future of Rifle Clubs’, *unpub. MS*, c.July 1977, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.

while an Armed Forces district association in Western Australia shot ‘without any encouragement from our service chiefs’. He went on to note that overseas NRAs had tried to get closer to defence forces yet they were not ‘in any better political position than we are’:

I do not believe that our salvation rests with any dramatic change in our present policies or practices but rather to getting recognition of our present worth as we are at present. The present situation is a very difficult one, it may be too late to change the course of events.<sup>733</sup>

Herbert also said, as an aside: ‘...most successful ventures are the end result of lots of little decisions made over a long period rather than any single dramatic decision. It’s too late to worry about past events.’

Before meeting the Minister to discuss the IDC’s recommendations, in August 1977 NRAA General Secretary Collinson met with K. W. Major and D. Savage of the Defence Department to develop points for a submission to the Minister.<sup>734</sup> The NRAA then sent a delegation of Penwarn, Richardson and Collinson, along with two representatives of ASBRA, to discuss the recommendations with the Minister in September 1977. One NRAA opinion of Killen stated:

The Minister is a lawyer AND one of the shrewdest men in cabinet blessed with an acuity neither I nor any of you can hope to match. He will not come ...merely to listen AND will have the sought the opinion of his advisers, to wit, the Military Board and, of course, the Treasury which is required to implement the new Govt. policy of “the user pays”.<sup>735</sup>

The Minister, in a meeting lasting only 25 minutes, gave short shrift to any defence value argument by NRAA delegates, focusing instead on the rifle ranges and the situation facing rifle clubs and associations if placed under State government jurisdictions. The NRAA Chairman, Penwarn, wrote afterwards:

...based on the opinion that Mr. Killen has a reputation for being honest in his approach ...your representatives left the meeting with a greater feeling of optimism

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<sup>733</sup> Letter, M. Herbert to NRAA 24 August 1977, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.].

<sup>734</sup> Major was an IDC member and Savage was the IDC Secretary. Both were regarded sympathetic to the NRAA.

<sup>735</sup> Mutton, C.H., ‘Future of Rifle Clubs’, *unpub. MS*, c.July 1977, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.

than when they entered...[he] is at least not antagonistic to the Rifle movement. The degree of support he is prepared to offer will, of course, remain to be seen.<sup>736</sup>

As the NRAA legal opinion noted:

...it matters little if at all that rifle clubs are now of virtually no military value. The [Inter Departmental Committee] was well aware of this...The fact is that the States handed them over as such at Federation as part and parcel of the defence machinery of the day and seemingly if the Commonwealth does not want them its only course is to close them down itself.<sup>737</sup>

The NRAA submitted a measured response to the IDC recommendations but the outcome was inconclusive. For now, the *status quo* remained. However, the NRAA did need to draft a new Constitution and update and align Rifle Club Regulations. It was not the first, nor would it be the last, challenge to the NRAA and the existence of rifle clubs. In August 1979, the NRAA wrote again to the Minister asking him for a decision on the future relationships between the civilian rifle clubs and the Commonwealth. The Minister finally replied on 7 December 1979.

At the annual general meeting that year, NRAA chairman Arthur Penwarn noted one matter of growing importance - firearms legislation. Although it had faded away as an issue after some interest in uniform legislation years before, Penwarn believed that with crimes using firearms receiving publicity that the idea of uniform firearms laws could now become a major issue that the NRAA Council would have to consider. He noted that until then, State rifle associations had been left to develop their own policies in response to State laws, but that the time might be approaching when the NRAA to develop a national policy. Meanwhile, membership continued its slow decline.

The Army announced in August 1978 that it would replace its obsolete sniper rifles with the Parker-Hale Model 82 from the UK, with the addition of a Kahles-Helia ZF69 telescopic sight manufactured in Austria. Some riflemen believed that this was a sign that the Army would become interested in long-range shooting once again.<sup>738</sup> The Army, which was not given approval to send its own team to Bisley, but remained a regular competitor in the NRAA's National Teams events, requested instead that Army

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<sup>736</sup> Penwarn, A.C., 'Reference recommendations to the Minister for Defence by IDC on Future Arrangements for Rifle Clubs', *undated letter to G.J. Mustow*, VRA Counsel, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p2.

<sup>737</sup> Mason, R., 'Interdepartmental Committee on Rifle Clubs', *unpub. MS*, dated 26 June 1977, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.4.

<sup>738</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, December 1978, Vol.15, No.4, p.9. The Army's Lee-Enfield .303 No.1 Mark 3 HT (Aust.) rifle with a Pattern 18 (Aust.) telescopic sight, which the Parker-Hale would replace, had been in service since 1945.

representation be granted in Australian rifle teams for Bisley. This was not possible under the NRAA Constitution.<sup>739</sup>

By September 1978, the new Firearms Act had also passed through the Commonwealth Parliament. It did not restrict rifle club firearms holders any further than what was already the case. They could still carry their rifles to authorised ranges as long as they were financial members and carried their member card with them. They also had to register, voluntarily, all firearms in their possession with the Police.<sup>740</sup> As usual, in 1979 the NRAA Council met several times, in Sydney in May, and twice in Adelaide in October. The NRAA president, Macarthur-Onslow, who had missed several meetings up to October 1979, was once again absent with serious illness. It was probable that he would not return but in deference, the Council left his position in abeyance and elected him as a Life Member.

Targets remained controversial with State associations persisting in trying to have amendments made to dimensions. The failure of the NRAA Council to consult about the changes to dimensions exasperated most associations. However, the Council agreed to several changes after quibbles over metric vs. Imperial conversions. Several target rifles were put up for approval in 1979, including the Black Mountain-Lithgow rifle of J. Tomlyn; the ATR target rifle action and rifle system of M. Nankervis, and a proposed new rifle by G. Ayling, C. Richardson, and R. Lawson and W. Angel of G.B. Rifles.<sup>741</sup> The NRAA reiterated that it supported the introduction of Australian made firearms but noted its criteria as follows:

- Before approval the manufacturer will supply on loan to the NRAA at no cost seven rifles for appraisal by State rifle associations and one rifle for submission to the Department of Defence for approval.
- Once approved, the rifles/actions shall be freely available in quantity with a guaranteed adequate supply of spare parts, replacements and service facilities.
- The price of the rifles/actions shall be competitive with that of others already approved.
- The manufacturer will guarantee that after approval no material changes will be made without prior consent of the NRAA.<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>739</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of Council at Malabar, 12 May 1979*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p3.

<sup>740</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, September 1978, Vol.15, No.3, p.11.

<sup>741</sup> Black Mountain was a firm producing M44 barrels manufactured at the SAF Lithgow, but was developing rifle prototypes. Jack Tomlyn was the Sydney distributor. The unauthorised publication of the NRAA assessment of the Angel M80 rifle in *Australian Rifleman* in 1980 led to some acrimony between the NRAA and the editor of the magazine, Jack Bensley.

<sup>742</sup> *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council at Dean Rifle Range, 16 October 1979*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p. 3.

Compared to the relatively slow pace of the Council a decade before, now there seemed to be plenty of new initiatives. While this did not mean that State associations were not following their own interests, at least there was a sense of progress.<sup>743</sup> Not everyone agreed. The influential Mutton and Sweet both wrote that there was too much choice for new riflemen in rifles and accessories and that the sport was becoming a 'rich man's game' where money prizes was everything.

Sweet also felt that the reduction of the NRAA Council members in the 1970s meant States were not properly represented and views not broad enough. Mutton put it more bluntly. In effect, he complained, the NQRA with a membership of only about 250 and the effective size of a District rifle Association, gave Queensland a second vote.<sup>744</sup> Others complained of constant tinkering with target dimensions. One summed up the frustrations by saying:

Perhaps when the 900 yard bullseye is down to six inches and you need a \$1,000 rifle to get anywhere near it, and the N.R.A. membership consists of about 250 wealthy, crash hot shots, then the administrators will be happy!<sup>745</sup>

As the 1980s began, the NRAA Council faced a very different kind of environment from that faced by the ACSRA from 1948. In the period between 1980 and 1988, when Australia would celebrate its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 'national' council of the rifle shooting movement its 100<sup>th</sup> year of existence, the NRAA Council would face its most complex challenges. It was faced with a veritable plethora of rifle competitions both national and international to arrange and manage, while under pressure to conform to an increasingly complex Governmental and sporting body environment, all at a time of continuing membership decline.

Although figures for the state of the NRAA finances are not readily available, in an apparent reversal to previous days of Government defence subsidies, it found itself increasingly reliant upon Government (sports) grants to assist in meeting the costs of its own administration and to send teams overseas. At the beginning of this period, the NRAA tried to bring its organisation into line with Governmental expectations by

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<sup>743</sup> At the same time, an event by the Wallaroo Rifle Club in South Australia brought a piece of history back to the limelight when it organised a 'postal match' against a Scottish army battalion in commemoration of a postal match fired between the ancestor units of both, in 1884.

<sup>744</sup> Mutton, C.H., 'Is the Sport of Rifle Shooting being Desecrated?', *South Australian Rifle News*, March 1979, Vol.16, No.1, p.4 and Sweet, J., 'Shooting Policies and the Future', *South Australian Rifle News*, March 1979, Vol.16, No.1, p.17, and *Australian Rifleman*, July 1979, Vol.1, No.5, p.7.

<sup>745</sup> *Australian Rifleman*, April 1979, Vol.1, No.2, p.11.

drafting a new Constitution and Rifle Club Regulations.<sup>746</sup> At the same time, the Australian Army itself was seeking closer relations with the NRAA through its military rifle association and participation by Army teams in NRAA competitions.

At the front end of the NRAA, the riflemen in clubs, the simplicity of the rifle club movement had all but disappeared. The continuous rises in the price of ammunition and freight costs, the broadening range of target rifles and accessories open to those riflemen, and the opportunities open to them to compete in a wider array of competitions at all levels meant that the sport was evolving fast. There were strong Masonic Lodge connections among many on the NRAA Councils over many years. This would continue for years to come, a positive but highly conservative force in the well-recognised strength of character evident in many NRAA councils. However, the implied influence was not enough to protect the club levels of the movement from closures or the declining popularity of full-bore shooting, at least under the NRAA.<sup>747</sup>

In December 1979, the Minister for Defence finally wrote to the NRAA and gave his views on the question of future relationships between civilian rifle clubs and the Commonwealth. First, he reiterated that he ‘did not support the contention that Australian Rifle Clubs make a unique contribution to the defence capability of the country.’ However, he balanced that by stating that ‘the nexus between the type of ammunition used by rifle shooters in both the Australian rifle club movement and the Australian Defence Force should remain as long as it is mutually advantageous.’ The Minister’s second point was that he was ‘happy to remain the authority under which Australian Rifle Clubs were formed or disbanded’, as this brought certain advantages in that it ‘ensured uniformity throughout Australia in many matters which would otherwise become subject to differing State requirements.’

Next, the Minister noted that current Australian Rifle Club Regulations were untenable, as the rifle associations ‘adhere to those which suit them and ignore the others.’ In asking for updated Regulations, the Minister noted that they were currently defective in aspects such as:

They do not allow women to become members  
By implication people over 60 and under 16 are also ineligible for membership

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<sup>746</sup> The drafts were being prepared primarily by Mutton in late 1979.

<sup>747</sup> In direct contrast to the NRAA, the Sports Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) continued to grow in strength from 1948.

The oath of affirmation required of an active member would appear to be anachronistic

The eyesight provisions apply on joining but not for continuing membership

The Minister assured the NRAA of the continued service by Regional Secretaries and [Defence] Inspectors of Rifle Ranges. Matters to do with Rifle Clubs were now vested in the Minister's Assistant Secretary, Administrative Services Branch. As to rifle ranges, the Minister was sympathetic to the situation facing club ranges by the encroachment of urban development, and offered to assist clubs with a land-lease if alternative range areas could be found, at the clubs' expense. However, he was not sympathetic to rifle clubs or associations making proposals 'for stop-gap arrangements which merely serve to postpone the eventual decision to give up a range on which it is no longer safe to shoot'.

This was a seminal advisory letter from the Minister for Defence. It gave the NRAA some comfort that they could continue, with some modernisation of the regulations, under the umbrella of the Defence Department. It also finally laid to rest the old argument that rifle clubs were an aid to national defence and forced the rifle club movement to face up to the inevitable shifts to rifle ranges forced upon the clubs by urban encroachment and safety issues.<sup>748</sup>

No doubt alerted by their friends within the Department of the Minister's intentions, the NRAA wasted no time in starting to revise Rifle Club Regulations even before the Minister's letter arrived. The Council asked the Chairman, Penwarn, and Mutton as Honorary Solicitor, to develop a draft. However, by March 1980, the process had caused disquiet in the rifle associations. WARA in particular wrote to the NRAA Council in March 1980 complaining about 'the almost total lack of communication from the NRAA particularly in relation to the proposed revision of the Regulations. Written communication has been nil, while verbal advice has been limited...'<sup>749</sup> With a meeting of the NRAA due in April, WARA was concerned that neither the draft nor any correspondence from the Department of Defence circulated to State rifle

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<sup>748</sup> *Letter from Minister for Defence D.J. Killen to J.H. Collinson, NRAA, dated 7 December 1979, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-3.*

<sup>749</sup> *Letter from M.A. Concanen, WARA, to J.H. Collinson, NRAA, dated 25 March 1980, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.].*

associations for study. WARA was especially critical of the fact that there were no guidelines, let alone draft undertaken, before a full discussion of council.<sup>750</sup>

A few days before the April 1980 meeting of the NRAA Council in Melbourne, a letter was received from Trevor John Parker, Assistant Secretary, Administrative Service Branch – the Minister’s rifle club *major domo*. Obviously aware of the criticism from the WARA regarding the new draft of regulations, Parker said:

...from our preliminary examination of the Mutton draft there is simply no point in anyone becoming excited about it. ...It is of no value to anyone to be looking at this draft or that draft until we are all quite clear what it is we are trying to do. The Mutton draft attempts to enshrine a situation which existed in 1962 or thereabouts and to codify some arrangements which were understood between ...Mutton and ...B.White.

Parker made it clear: ‘We would not wish for any officers of Defence, including the Defence Force, to have any part in the administration of the rifle club movement....[or] to be seen making Regulations which conferred upon the rifle club movement any role for its members in the defence of Australia...’ He went on to lay down what he saw were the important criteria for new regulations, and ended by stating:

I do hope that this letter will head off any problems which may have been raised by your States people, who will have to realise that times have changed and that the Minister for Defence is not prepared to adjudicate on disputes within the rifle club movement. ...it would be better for the States to preserve their good working relationship with the local Defence people rather than try and enshrine these relationships in Regulations to be made under the Defence Act.<sup>751</sup>

When the NRAA met a few days later, there was much to discuss.<sup>752</sup> Despite all the correspondence between NRAA and Defence over responsibilities, the NRAA asked Defence for approval to remove safety catches on approved rifles. Defence merely responded by asking the NRAA not to involve it in decisions of that nature.<sup>753</sup>

In January 1980, an inaugural shooting event took place in Canberra, managed by the Canberra Rifle Club. Called the Australian Champion of Champions Match, it was an aggregate competition to find the best Australian shot. Shooters’ gradings over the

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<sup>750</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>751</sup> Letter from T.J. Parker to J.H. Collinson, NRAA, dated 14 April 1980, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-3.

<sup>752</sup> A new draft was called for, with State rifle associations to report back by 30 June 1980, to Penwarn and Collinson.

<sup>753</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of Council at Footscray*, 19 April 1980, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.2.

past year based on a variety of matches, including Queen's competitions, determined entrance.<sup>754</sup> The NRAA was supportive of the shoot given that it attracted VIPs and publicity and even suggested to the Canberra Club that it introduce a 300-metre Olympic style event as well. In other matters there was discussion of the proposed boycott by Australia of the Olympic Games as part of a Western protest against the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, and the ASA inquired whether full-bore rifle shooting might return to Olympic competition. WARA had other 'bones of contention' with the NRAA Council, not least that it felt that the NRAA Council was illegally constituted and that States should have two delegates, not one, at the Council. This matter had to wait until the AGM in November 1980, held in the Melbourne suburb of Footscray.

Given the state of NRAA president Sir Denzil Macarthur-Onslow's health, the council resolved to elect a new president, Bruce White CBE. Geoff M. Ayling was nominated to the Confederation of Australian Sport for a Sport Australia Award as 'Male Athlete of the Year' and for 'Best Single Australian Sporting Performance'. It was another indication that the NRAA was engaging more and more with the sporting community at large, and looking for opportunities to do so as the Australian Institute of Sport was being conceptualised.

In welcome news, the Department of Home Affairs once again provided grants to the NRAA of for administration and for international competition. For 1980-81 moreover, the grants totalled \$3,000 for administration, \$1,000 for coaching projects and \$6,000 for overseas competition compared to only \$1,000 for administration and \$2,500 for international competition in the previous financial year. The Council also approved the Parker-Hale TX1200 (aka the M84) and the Musgrave Rifle as approved rifles.<sup>755</sup> Meanwhile, the Council conducted the first-ever (and only) National Teams match series at the Stevens-Griffiths range at Mackay in North Queensland. In another

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<sup>754</sup> Twenty riflemen competed over 300, 400, 500, 600 and 700 metres. *Marksmanship*, February 1980, Vol.32, No.1, p.5. The event was marred in 1981 by an unusual accident when a rifleman who had been a competitor, accidentally shot his 16-year-old boy in the leg. The injuries sustained were not serious, and although the accident occurred off-range, it was directly caused by poor safety procedures on-range, to the embarrassment of all concerned, and especially the NRAA itself. *Marksmanship*, April 1981, Vol.33, No.2, p.4.

<sup>755</sup> It also approved SLR rifles for use by the Military Rifle Clubs Association of Sydney and Military Rifle Clubs affiliated with State rifle associations. A Tri-Service series of matches were also to get underway in 1982.

first, Army finally won the Gordon Highlanders match after a shoot-off decided a tie in its favour against Western Australia.<sup>756</sup>

At the very next meeting of the NRAA at Malabar in Sydney in May 1981, the Western Australia delegate wasted no time in bringing up again WARA's objection to the constitution of the NRAA Council. However, the WARA concerns were pushed aside by the chairman, Penwarn (recently awarded the MBE for services to shooting), who essentially stated that until the new Regulations and Constitution were aligned there could be variances; and as far as he was concerned, North Queensland was given a place at the table by the Minister for the Army in 1956. The matter lapsed once again.<sup>757</sup>

However, the big news was the winning of the Bisley Queen's Prize in July 1981 by Geoff Ayling, by one point, which followed a year after winning the World Target Rifle Championships at Bisley. Ayling was only the fourth Australian to win the Queen's at Bisley, yet remarkably, these achievements gained no mention in the proceedings of the NRAA's Council that October. Perhaps it was because the Council was under pressure from other quarters, not just WARA. A scathing article in the *South Australian Rifle News* (not by Mutton but no doubt inspired by him) directly attacked the Council:

The make-up of the administration appears to be inward looking and narrow visioned and involves itself in endless hours debating target dimensions, shooting rules, and relatively unimportant minutiae but little time considering important matters relating to future growth, development, and expansion of the movement...As has been pointed out previously the national body is neither equipped administratively nor financially to pursue a vigorous recruiting policy to build up our membership.

Admittedly there has been some progress in establishing a closer liaison with the Regular Army and the promotion of shooting in the senior schools. On the other hand the Small-bore shooters, a prime source to advance full-bore membership, received scant support and followed an independent nod to form an Australian Small Bore Association. The reasons are too plain to need reiteration.<sup>758</sup>

The article complained bitterly about the establishment of the ASA, implying that the NRAA had failed to anticipate that, let alone manage to supplant it. The article

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<sup>756</sup> *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council at Footscray, 1-2 November 1980*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-6.

<sup>757</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of NRAA Council at Malabar, 9-10 May 1981*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.

<sup>758</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, September 1981, Vol.18, No.3, p.5.

went on to complain about the failure to produce a national magazine, the failure to emulate the previous NRAA Bulletins (known as the ‘yellow perils’ and produced by Mutton), the failure to impose a suitable levy on ammunition to raise funds – ‘if the rank and file shooter considers that the organisation is worth saving from a slow death or becoming the tool for a rich man’s sport for a privileged few then he must face up to paying the price’ - and the failure to promote the movement and inject rifle shooting news into mainstream media.

The Annual General Meeting of October 1981 was the first meeting attended by the new NRAA president, B. White. There was a spirited discussion of WARA’s contention that the makeup of the Council should reflect the situation in 1969, namely that each State should have two delegates with Queensland and North Queensland making up the two from that State. White called for commonsense and calm or matters would end in legal proceedings. The councillors agreed to defer any final decisions until the release of new regulations. Each rifle association should have two votes and North Queensland one, as it was, according to WARA, a subsidiary association. At the ordinary meeting that followed the AGM there were several items of importance. The Minister of Administrative Services released its policy concerning the disposal of rifle ranges to rifle clubs.<sup>759</sup> Among the correspondence in was a letter from Major Frank Walter Le Maitre of the NSWRA, requesting the addition of the Swing, Grunig and Elmiger target rifles to the list of approved rifles by the NRAA.

The unhappiness with the NRAA Council by this time had picked up by Bensley, the bluntly spoken editor of *Australian Rifleman*. He wrote: ‘A lot of members are of the opinion that the NRAA is some sort of secret society that gives orders to State Associations from time to time, but refuses to have anything to do with the ordinary shooter.’<sup>760</sup> This possible veiled reference to the Masonic connections among the Council could have caused offence enough, but Bensley went further, revealing the full recommendations of the NRAA’s Finance Committee with regard to the imposition of a financial levy on the purchase of ammunition on all members. Bensley wrote that he could not believe that a surcharge would be imposed on all shooters to finance team shooters and ‘hangers on’, ... ‘for the benefit of a selected few’. He complained:

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<sup>759</sup> In a letter dated 15 October, 1981, the Minister for Administrative Services (Minister assisting the Minister for Defence), Kevin Newman, wrote to NRAA General Secretary Collinson, and noted that ‘because of the long association between Defence and the rifle clubs, the Government has decided to vary its usual procedures. Priority offers at market value of surplus rifle ranges will be made to civilian rifle clubs in occupation.’ NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-2.

<sup>760</sup> *Australian Rifleman*, October 1981, Vol.3, No.8, p.13.

In putting forward [its] recommendations the Finance Committee is showing a blatant disregard for what one would consider the NRAA was established for...that is the advancement of the shooting movement for the benefit of ALL members.<sup>761</sup>

Bensley then analysed NRAA finances, adding up the \$10,000 in grants from the government, the \$45,570 in capitation fees, plus accumulated funds of about \$18,000 plus profit on the ammunition freight levy which had been raised to \$3 per 1,000 rounds shipped. After accusing the NRAA Finance Committee of 'acting greedily', Bensley then made some suggestions. He recommended that States be allowed to buy ammunition direct from the manufacturers, dispense with the NRAA General Secretary and the associated costs there, eliminate capitation fees, focus the Council therefore on solving problems brought by the States, and meeting twice per year in different States with the State providing a secretary and sharing meeting costs. Rifle team costs would be subsidised by the States in accordance with the members' wishes. The NRAA Council was disinclined to entertain any of Bensley's ideas, even if they had merit.<sup>762</sup>

By December 1981, J. R. Richardson, Chairman of the NSWRA and Deputy Chairman of the NRAA, was reporting to his association in *Marksmanship*:

A new approach to funding of the Australian Teams Championships and overseas teams has been introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> November. The NRAA is to collect a levy or surcharge of one cent per round of ammunition purchased to build up a fund to finance State Teams, Under 25 Teams and International Teams both in Australia and overseas.

Over a period of time as funds accumulate the NRAA will be placed on a better financial footing and the immediate benefit to members is that it has allowed for the capitation fees to remain at last year's level, i.e., \$5 per member. The fund will allow additional funds from general income to be utilised to cover increased insurance premiums and greater allocations to recruiting and promotional programmes which have been severely restricted for lack of finance in the past.<sup>763</sup>

The imposition of the surcharge, without adequate consultation with the State rifle associations, brought a howl of protest, led by none other than Mutton. Writing in the

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<sup>761</sup> *Australian Rifleman*, October 1981, Vol.3, No.8, pp.13-14.

<sup>762</sup> In any case Benchley's analysis of finances was inaccurate. By the end of the 1981 FY, the NRAA only had \$17,000 on hand. *Australian Rifleman*, March 1982, Vol.4, No.1, pp.22-23. Later, in the mid-1980s, NRAA finances began to improve considerably when as Executive Secretary, an astute J.H. Collinson saw an opportunity to exploit the time between payments from State rifle associations for ammunition and the trade terms provided by the Ammunition Factory in Footscray, to build rapid interest on bank deposits. This, more than anything else, would turn around the NRAA financial situation.

<sup>763</sup> *Marksmanship*, December 1981, Vol.33, No.6, p.3.

*South Australian Rifle News* in December 1981, Mutton noted that this meant that associations with smaller member numbers would be in effect subsidised by larger associations. He calculated that to most average shooters, based on the amount of ammunition they fired in a year, the surcharge would add up to an equivalent increase of an additional \$5 capitation charge, and for some, even more. Mutton noted that the surcharge also meant that it was the top-flight shooters who would now be able to travel around the State prize shoots at very little cost to themselves. Meanwhile the NRAA was asking the State rifle associations to collect the money for the NRAA. Mutton argued, convincingly, that membership would actually continue to decrease because of the surcharge.<sup>764</sup>

*Australian Rifleman's* Bensley returned to the subject as well, with another highly critical article about the levy in the December 1981 edition, mainly through the device of publishing an exchange of correspondence between the president of Victoria's Metropolitan District Rifle Association and the General Secretary. The result was that the MDRA president, the respected Norrie Goff, stated clearly his club captains' opposition to the ammunition levy. He said that the MDRA would ... 'deplore and do all it can to have the motion [for the levy] deferred, altered, or amended, now or in the future, and will resist it in its present form by whatever means are available to my association.'<sup>765</sup>

Bensley continued to rail against the 1c Levy and the new safety rules as well in the March edition of *Australian Rifleman*. In an editorial titled 'We are not School children!', Bensley said '...register your protest immediately...we need changes alright...not to our rules, but to our rulemakers!'. Following articles attacked the 1c Levy, published letters from WARA and NSWRA that were also critical of the levy, and criticised the conduct of the Champion of Champions match in Canberra run co-jointly by the Canberra Rifle Club and the NRAA. Other issues, such as the screening of new rifle club members, raised with the Department of Defence by the Victoria Police concerned at the apparently easy entry procedures to access firearms by applicants to rifle clubs, were not getting the exposure that perhaps they should have.<sup>766</sup>

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<sup>764</sup> *South Australian Rifle News*, December 1981, Vol.18, No.4, pp.7-8. In another note in the same edition, there was even a call for the NRAA to consider changing its name to the 'Target Shooters of Australia Association'.

<sup>765</sup> *Australian Rifleman*, December 1981, Vol.3, No.10, pp.13-14.

<sup>766</sup> *Department of Defence letter* from T.J. Parker, Assistant Secretary Administrative Services Branch to NRAA General Secretary J. Collinson, covering Victoria Police letter dated 8 September 1981, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.].

The NRAA Council did not meet again until May 1982, at the Anzac Range at Malabar in Sydney. In the main business of the meeting, SARA objected to the 1c levy on ammunition purchases, declaring it unconstitutional, while NSWRA essentially said the same thing. Both objections were ruled out of order based on advice from the Department of Defence and the Minister. WARA also objected in a letter to Council saying that the NRAA Constitution required all State rifle associations to agree. Again, legal advice received invalidated the objection. The NRAA released a press statement confirming the 'surcharge' from 1 November 1981, and, to put the matter beyond doubt, the Council decided to take legal advice and amend the Constitution accordingly.<sup>767</sup> The whole exercise had caused an unnecessary and serious rift between the NRAA Council and its State rifle association members.

It was not just the 1c 'surcharge' that continued to exercise some States, but the constitution of the Council itself. Immediately the October 1982 AGM, held in Footscray, opened, SARA called for a proper resolution of the issue, not being satisfied with the compromise reached the previous year around votes while awaiting the promulgation of the new NRAA Constitution and Rifle Club Regulations. Not only did it want the 'proper State rifle association representation' (this was rejected by the Council) but also to elect a Chairman only from delegates present at the AGM and not from past Councillors as well. Again, the Council rejected this. Later motions by SARA concerning the 1c surcharge, North Queensland's status and incorporation were also defeated.<sup>768</sup>

In this heated atmosphere, a timely turnover of NRAA councillors provided a circuit breaker.<sup>769</sup> As usual with the ordinary meeting, there were almost 40 pieces of official correspondence to deal with. The complexity of the NRAA's operating environment and the pace of the communications had increased exponentially since the Army had stepped back from active involvement with the rifle club movement. Paradoxically, this occurred in almost direct inverse proportion to the declining membership. Many critics of the NRAA Council at that time failed to recognise the

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<sup>767</sup> *Minutes of the Council Meeting at Malabar, 8-9 May 1982*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.5-8.

<sup>768</sup> *Minutes of the AGM of the NRAA at Footscray, 30 October 1982*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-2.

<sup>769</sup> One new delegate was Colin Douglas Kuchel, a long-serving member of the SARA Council and SARA chairman from 1983. Originally an electrician, Kuchel underwent national service training in 1956 followed by three years in the Regular Army. He became a contractor and began shooting with the Murray Bridge Rifle Club in 1968, and was to represent South Australia and Australia many times from 1978. Kuchel remains the SARA Chairman (2011) and continued as active shooter until 1992. He was awarded the OAM for services to rifle shooting in 1999.

increased workload on the Council especially when all of its members, other than the General Secretary, were unpaid. As well, a periodic national recession placed extra pressure on membership and costs.

The Army Rifle Association came into being in 1982 and sought affiliation with the NRAA, being accorded the status of a District rifle association.<sup>770</sup> Black Mountain Rifles were pursuing its prototype rifle developments. It was early days for the practice of public relations in organisations such as the NRAA; few in the rifle club movement appreciated the importance of effective ‘issues management’ in a public relations context. However, the failure of the NRAA and other target shooting organisations to develop early and effective defensive and offensive strategies to counter the proponents of firearms restrictions meant they were ill prepared when the attacks became more direct and widespread.

The NRAA Council did not meet again until March 1983 in Melbourne. The new Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen, accepted the position of Patron. Correspondence included a letter from the Army rifle team captain wrote requesting that the Chief Instructor of the Infantry Training School should attend NRAA meetings. An Army Chief Instructor had not attended since 1955, but with the revised regulations still not completed, the issue could not be resolved. Membership numbers continued to fall, to 8,555 by the beginning of 1983. *Australian Rifleman* took up the topic in its March 1983 editorial. Quoting from the NRAA General Secretary’s report for 1982-83, which stated that ‘a super-optimist would look at the membership figures and rejoice in the fact that we lost five more members than ...in 1980-81. The hard, cold facts, however, is that we are down 277 members from last year’s figures,’ the editor asked - yes, but what is being done about it?<sup>771</sup>

Letters to the editor of the magazine, as well as the *South Australian Rifle News*, expressed the same concerns and many suggestions were made. In common with volunteer organisations everywhere, the efforts of a few to obtain publicity and to enlist new members met apathy from the majority. As the NRAA and State rifle associations would not, or rather could not, afford to employ professional public relations or media representatives, membership continued to be an issue but one that could not be easily addressed.

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<sup>771</sup> *Australian Rifleman*, Vol.5, No.2, April 1983, p.3.

In bad news for the Council soon after, the NRAA president, White, suffered a heart attack and died on 9 August 1984. Among the substantial matters awaiting discussion in the annual meeting that year was approval for the new Constitution. Just prior to his death, White had stated:

The Minister has given the N.R.A.A. the opportunity to display its administrative capabilities and prove that it is a National body and not just a collection of States all doing their own thing. All too frequently I have attended N.R.A.A. Council meetings as the representative of the Department of Defence and witnessed the spectacle of progress in reverse with delegates unable to cast aside their own State's blinkered views when the logic of the argument demanded a reappraisal. Do not let this opportunity pass as there may not be many more with the Department of Defence.<sup>772</sup>

At the Annual General Meeting of the NRAA in November, the Chairman paid tribute to the contribution made by the former president, B. White, from when he was Secretary, Department of the Army and then as Assistant Secretary, Department of Defence. More recently, he had acted as adviser on the drafting of the new Constitution, expected to come into force in 1985.<sup>773</sup> At this meeting, the General Secretary's report opened with further declines in membership numbers; they were down to 8,392. Tasmania had the smallest number, only 196. Collinson wrote 'we must face the fact that an all out effort must be produced to arrest this trend'.<sup>774</sup> Meanwhile, the Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism advised that it had granted \$9,000 to the NRAA for 1983-84. This included \$2,000 to bring an international coach to Australia to advise on international shooting. As had been the case with Defence before 1960, grants from the now DSRT were becoming an expected ritual each year, and an important part of NRAA finances.<sup>775</sup>

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<sup>772</sup> 'Letter to the Editor from J.H. Collinson', *Victorian Bullseye*, April 1985, No.8, p.16.

<sup>773</sup> *Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Council at Tullamarine, 2 November 1984*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1. The State rifle associations, under the new Constitution, would not operate under their own State constitutions but as Divisions of the NRAA. Introduction of the Constitution was dependent on when the new Australian Rifle Club Regulations were approved by Parliament. Meanwhile, Kenneth William Major (formerly of the Defence Department), had been elected as a Vice-President of the NRAA in October 1983 to fill the vacancy left by the death of Hackfath. *Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the NRAA at Footscray, 29 October, 1983*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-3.

<sup>774</sup> *NRAA General Secretary's Report 1983/84*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1.

<sup>775</sup> *Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Council after NRAA AGM, 29 October 1983*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-8. 1984 saw the official adoption of the green and gold colours for Australia as well as 'Advance Australia Fair' as the national anthem.

The Council duly approved the draft Constitution, with some outstanding minor amendments for further consideration.<sup>776</sup> Planning also began for the NSW Bi-Centenary Full-bore Shooting Championships in 1988; it would be a huge affair. NSW was planning for 1,400 competitors and the events would include team and individual events for the Defence Forces, 7.62mm long-range and 300m ISU events. The Bi-Centenary would also include the Empire and Palma matches.

The Chairman was still educating riflemen about the current situation with regard to funding and membership, writing articles for various magazines such as the new *Victorian Bullseye*, which debuted for the VRA in February 1984:

There are many of us who remember ‘the good old days’ – ‘.303 days’ when shooting was relatively cheap to the membership. Those days are gone forever and what we all should realise is that shooting was *never* cheap, someone, somewhere was footing the bill. So let us all make the best of what we have.

We can all do something to preserve our existence by making sure that our presence is felt in the community by proving that we are vitally interested in teaching our fellow citizens the fundamentals of *safe and efficient and responsible use of firearms* and encourage them to join us in our sport. With a friendly and positive approach I am sure some will enrol with your Club and stay on, if they are made welcome, to become dedicated members.<sup>777</sup>

A range of matters affecting rifle shooting and the NRAA occurred in quick succession. The Swedish M.96 Mauser 6.5mm target rifle was added to the list of approved rifles.<sup>778</sup> In a home-grown takeover in early 1985, W. Angel, respected rifle shooter and Technical Director of the M.A.B. Engineering firm in Queensland advised the NRAA that the company had taken over Omark’s Rifle Manufacturing Division.<sup>779</sup> Then in January 1985, news came of the death of the former Chairman, President and Vice-President of the NRAA, Sir Denzil Macarthur-Onslow. And for the first time, the

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<sup>776</sup> The completion of a new Constitution coincided with the retirement of Mutton and McEwin in South Australia, both of whom had been intimately engaged with constitutional and regulatory matters over many years.

<sup>777</sup> *Victorian Bullseye*, June 1984, No.3, p.20.

<sup>778</sup> *Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of Council at Tullamarine, 3 November 1984*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.7.

<sup>779</sup> *Minutes of Meeting of Executive Committee of the Council at Tullamarine, 19 April 1984*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.1. Omark ceased production in 1984. MAB was Margaret Anne Bugden whose company had decided to manufacture barrels only. With the subsequent withdrawal of W. Angel from the arrangements, MAB decided to move to full production of rifles. This caused a further delay as the new enterprise re-tooled.

NRA of Great Britain also gave approval for an Australian Army team to compete in the same matches as the Australian team.<sup>780</sup>

The fact that Government processes were delaying the approval of the new NRAA Constitution, because the Australian Rifle Club Regulations were held up in the Government bureaucracy, did not mean that the draft was not being criticised by a variety of clubs, district unions and to some degree by State rifle associations. In several letters to the *Victorian Bullseye* magazine's July edition, for example, several writers criticised the powers given to the NRAA and the fact that State associations would not have their own constitution under the new regime, along with a number of other issues affecting the smooth operation of rifle shooting organisation.

Another letter in August noted that 'Unfortunately, while considerable effort has been put into making the NRAA more powerful, little has been done to modernise the archaic, military-style, governing structure of the rifle movement.'<sup>781</sup> The writers of these various letters had little insight into the many months, sometimes years of work, which went behind these new developments, work completed by their very own and experienced State representatives.

At the annual meeting on 1 November 1985, the Chairman noted a number of issues in his report. Despite assurances to the contrary from M.A.B. Engineering, it had not been able to supply Omark M.44 model target rifles to State rifle associations.<sup>782</sup> On a more positive note, as part of a five-year development plan, the NRAA Council approved a Level One Coaching Accreditation Scheme drafted by the National Coaching Council. The Executive Director, in his report for the year, noted once again a further drop in membership, although the losses appeared to be slowing, with membership throughout Australia at 8,279 and the amount of ammunition purchased falling below 4.5 million rounds for the first time.<sup>783</sup> In the follow-on meeting, the Council approved no less than four new rifles, namely: the US M1 Garand, the Ruger Model 14, the Belgian SAFN FN 1949, and the Steyr Model SSG from Austria.

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<sup>780</sup> The Captain of the Army team, WO2 Phillip Oakford, had competed as an individual at Bisley several times previously. He was best known for having won the Army's Queen's Medal five times in 1972, 1974, 1976, 1981 and 1984, besting the previous record of wins by WO1 Jim Shearim's record set in the 1930s.

<sup>781</sup> *Victorian Bullseye*, August 1985, No.10, p13.

<sup>782</sup> Delays had been caused by the re-location of the manufacturing equipment to Brisbane from Adelaide, electricity strikes and damage to the equipment during transit. 'Letter to the Editor from M.A. Bugden, MAB Engineering', *Victorian Bullseye*, April 1985, No.8, p.19.

<sup>783</sup> Perhaps the decline in numbers began to slow as the Australian economy started to pick up after the mild recession of the early 1980s.

The Council expressed confidence that moves by the Government to take over the Anzac Range in Sydney, which had cost the NSWRA \$30,000 so far in action to defend against loss of its range, had been postponed. On the other hand, a Government move against the Merrett Range in Melbourne might be successful.<sup>784</sup> Later in December, the Minister for Defence, without warning, issued a statement to the effect that the Government would be disposing of both ranges in order to raise revenue. It was the end of an era, especially for the Victorian headquarters range, occupied by the VRA for over 100 years. In the short term, the loss of Anzac Range would immediately impact upon planning for the international Bi-centenary events in 1988.

Disputes about targets and decimalisation and approved rifles seemed largely to be over. The level of criticism of the Council and its operations and activities seemed to have declined markedly as State rifle associations began to incorporate and gather more certainty. The very large Bi-Centenary matches planned for Sydney were developing well and there was a growing sense of purpose and achievement about those events as part of the greater Sydney and Australian celebrations.

On the other hand, the Australian Rifle Club Regulations, held up for many months in Government, now seemed like they would not be approved at all. On the contrary, the Government was now talking about repealing them altogether and placing State rifle associations under State law. The NRAA itself suddenly needed to investigate the need for incorporation in every State in order to conduct shoots in each jurisdiction. The probable repeal of the Regulations also threw up another range of uncertainties with regard to the Constitution. In the meantime, the threat to the Anzac Range in Sydney and the Merrett Range in Melbourne intensified, with the Merrett Range seeing its last matches there in March 1987.<sup>785</sup> In 1987, these issues became the primary concerns of the NRAA Council.

Although it was not, apparently, a topic of major concern, at least as expressed in the official minutes, the anti-gun lobby in Australia was gaining in strength, especially after a series of shocking incidents with mass casualties perpetrated by lone gunmen. There were shocking incidents in August 1987 in both England (at Hungerford) and Australia (Hoddle Street, Melbourne). These incidents gave further impetus, after a similar incident in Milperra, Sydney in September 1984, and again in Queen Street in

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<sup>784</sup> *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council at Tullamarine, 8 November 1986*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-7.

<sup>785</sup> The legendary P. Pavey fired the last shot at the Merrett rifle range; it would be some time before the VRA re-established a headquarters at the Wellsford Range in Bendigo.

Melbourne in December 1987, to growing calls for further restrictions on firearms. State governments declared ‘crack-downs’ on firearms, much to the concern of riflemen everywhere, who saw the responses to the tragic incidents as ‘knee-jerk’.

Rifle associations and members were conflicted by these developments, but often found themselves on the wrong side of public opinion in the often-emotional public debates that followed. For the NRAA, as long as rifle club members were exempt from restrictions under the Defence Act, the *status quo* could remain, but for how long? At the mid-year meeting of the Council in April 1987, held as usual at Tullamarine, the business of rifle shooting went on despite the gloom over the disposal of the Merrett Range. The repeal of the old Rifle Club Regulations to make way for new regulations continued to be delayed over various small matters, but it was hoped that this could be resolved by the end of 1987.

In June 1987, the (recently re-named) *SA Rifle News* editor, Brian Brittain, came out with a highly controversial statement:

With the recent rise in the cost of ammunition, I really wonder whether the ‘top-weights’ of the N.R.A. are interested in increasing membership or just their own personal gain in the short term, particularly after the big scream about the Government selling off rifle ranges in Victoria and New South Wales. Why do we keep buying our ammunition from Government when they are not helping our sport? <sup>786</sup>

The NRAA Council did not seem to react to this provocation. Whether they dealt with it privately or just simply ignored it, it was a reminder nonetheless that it remained vulnerable to criticism, even when matters were outside of its direct control. At the meeting following the AGM, the Council discussed several matters of interest. The Council also leapt to the defence of the Army after Bensley of *Australian Target Rifle* cast doubts on the ability of the Army to defend Australia, demanding an apology of him. <sup>787</sup>

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<sup>786</sup> *SA Rifle News*, June 1987, Vol.24, No.2, p.3. It wasn’t just ammunition prices on the rise. The MAB Engineering Omark M44D model was now retailing for \$1,200. *Victorian Bullseye*, June 1987, No.21, p.13.

<sup>787</sup> *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council at Tullamarine, 31 October 1987*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-5. Why the NRAA should take umbrage on Army’s behalf is curious but no doubt, Bensley had antagonised the Council in many articles and editorials sufficiently for them to be looking for an excuse to retaliate over any suitable issue.

Incorporation also remained a pressing matter, albeit an unresolved one, for the NRAA.<sup>788</sup> Some State rifle associations, such as the VRA which had incorporated in June 1987, had already begun the process, but the NRAA itself found itself unable to obtain an incorporation status that applied across all States and territories. By the end of 1987, the Government had still not acted with regard to Rifle Club Regulations except that it was becoming clear that the Government was still considering repeal of the Rifle Club Regulations altogether.

This issue was to continue to develop past the end of the NRAA's centenary year, with various submissions made to the Minister for consideration. At a Special Meeting of the Executive Committee in February 1988 in Adelaide, the subjects for discussion were more than simply NRAA administration. Issues such as range safety templates, reciprocal use of ranges by defence and civilian shooters, and range leasing were affected as well as ammunition and carriage of registered firearms in public were all important matters to be settled, along with other related issues.<sup>789</sup>

Soon after however, attention shifted to the April 1988 Australian Bi-Centenary prize meeting in Sydney. These were, of course, part of the wider celebrations in Sydney and around Australia. The programme was full and varied. There were the NSWRA matches, the National Teams Matches and visits from a wide variety of international teams such as Scotland, and individual competitors. A RAAF/Navy team competed in the team service matches for the first time, taking out the Macarthur-Onslow, no doubt much to the surprise of the more experienced teams. There was even a Japan vs. US Secret Service match.

The newly named Australia Match (formerly known as the Empire Match) gave England a win, with Australia a close second. The NRAA was perhaps most proud to host the Palma Match for the first time in Australia, which Australia won. However, such was the anti-firearms feeling in the community by this time that the media gave no publicity to Australia's success in the Palma and very little to the events as a whole. With the onset of winter, it was back to the pressing business of the Council, which met at Tullamarine in June 1988. The Council was alarmed that the Government did not appear to want to replace the repealed Rifle Club Regulations with another new set;

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<sup>788</sup> The NRAA had looked at incorporation as early as the late 1970s, but nothing eventuated – incorporation law was not yet well established. Even by 1982, no incorporation law existed in NSW or other States other than South Australia.

<sup>789</sup> *Minutes of Special Executive Committee Meeting at Adelaide, 6 February 1988*, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], pp.1-4.

intensive lobbying by the NRAA and State rifle associations managed to have the repeal disallowed in the Senate, providing a six month delay for the NRAA to consider its position and policies.

On a brighter note, the president's role, vacant since the demise of White, looked like being filled. The Chairman revealed that Brigadier Anthony William ('Tony') Hammett, AM, who had been responsible for the initiative to establish an Army team from 6 RAR, and which led directly to the establishment of the Australian Army Rifle Association, was positively considering the role. The AGM and last meeting of the NRAA's centenary year, in late November 1988, confirmed Hammett's acceptance as the new president of the NRAA and also elected former NRAA chair Jim Richardson as a Life Member.<sup>790</sup>

In routine business, the Council cautiously moved forward on the question of hand loading of ammunition. While it remained with the Footscray ammunition factory for main supplies of ammunition, it did agree in principle to hand loading for club level competition. It also agreed to a strategic management plan, appointing additional managers for competition, marketing and finance, and coaching to support the Executive Director, who gained extra responsibilities as manager for administration.<sup>791</sup>

As 1988 ended, the routine business of the NRAA Council saw not a single mention in official minutes that it was also the centenary year of the NRAA itself. It was not entirely forgotten; a commemoration booklet - *The Australian Bicentenary Full-bore Rifle Championships* – produced for Sydney that April, contained a not quite two-page potted history of the NRAA written by [N.S.] Holt. It was, however, an anti-climax to a century of effort and no special commemorative activity appears to have taken place other than perhaps a few acknowledgments by councillors in the know at the Malabar, Anzac Range event.

In his annual report for 1982-83, Richardson as Chairman had pointed out to the Council that 1988 would see the centenary of the Council and suggested that it 'give early consideration to returning to Hobart... in December 1988 to celebrate this historic occasion and to conduct the Australian Teams Championships'.<sup>792</sup> This suggestion seems to have, sadly, fallen by the wayside in the rush and pressure of normal business. No doubt, there were just too many uncertainties to be confident about the future.

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<sup>790</sup> Hammett accepted the role, only to be killed in an aircraft accident in Queensland in 1990.

<sup>791</sup> *Victorian Bullseye*, December 1988, No.30, pp.22-23.

<sup>792</sup> *NRAA Chairman's Annual Report, 1982-83*, dated 17 October 1983, NRAA Archives, Belmont [Qld.], p.3.

Perhaps councillors considered it excessive hubris to celebrate the century of effort that the NRAA had passed through when it faced – not for the first time and certainly not for the last time – apparent threats to its well-being. Or perhaps it was simply that the NRAA Council did what it always had done, and just moved on towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, in its usual businesslike and down-to-earth way, understating its own historical contribution to the survival and longevity of the rifle club movement in Australia.

There were many matters of importance still unresolved for the rifle club movement as 1988 ended, some of which, such as Rifle Club Regulations, could have a critical impact on the very viability of the movement. Therefore, there was little time to look back at the achievements of the past 100 years, or reflect on the efforts of the many delegates to the national council who had gone before. Many things had changed, but equally many things had remained the same – the friendships, the shared experiences, and the sense of belonging to a band of like-minded brethren called the rifle club movement. One thing was clear. Despite some legacy regulatory ties with Defence, the rifle club movement was now, finally, a sporting movement only.

## **ANNEXES**

## ANNEX A

### Members of national rifle association councils 1888-1988

Note: Any errors in this listing is that of the author alone. In some years delegates who were nominated to attend were unable to do so and substitutes were provided. Where the names of the substitutes are known, they are shown. In later years when the council moved to financial year reporting, delegates were nominated across two years but may have only attended one meeting. The position of chairman and president also changed over the years as did the date of the Annual General Meeting. No awards or decorations are shown for simplicity.

#### A1: General Council of Rifle Associations of Australasia 1888-1892

**President:**

Colonel John Soame Richardson	Feb.1888
Colonel William Vincent Legge	Dec.1888
Major-General Alexander Bruce Tulloch	1889
No meeting	1890
Major-General Major Francis Downes	1891
Major-General J S Richardson	1892

**Vice-President:**

Major John George Davies	Feb.1888
Lieutenant-Colonel John Montgomery Templeton	Dec.1888 -1889
No meeting	1890
Lieutenant-Colonel Theodore James Jaques (absent)	1891
Major William Frederick Longfield	1892

**Secretary & Treasurer:**

Captain George Henry Dean	Feb.1888 - 1892
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**Delegates:**

*New South Wales*

Major W F Longfield	Feb.1888
Commander Alfred James Lewington	Feb.1888
Major Philip Bingsley Walker	Dec.1888
Lieutenant William Foskett	Dec.1888
No delegates	1889
No meeting	1890
No delegates	1891
Major George Bagot Stack	1892
Lieutenant William James Norman Oldershaw	1892

*Victoria*

Lieutenant Colonel J M Templeton	Feb.1888 - 1889
Captain William Henry Powell	Feb./Dec. 1888
Major Nicholas William Kelly	1889 and 1892
No meeting	1890
Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzroy Somerset Lanyon Penno	1891-1892
Lieutenant Joseph Herbert Eales	1891
Captain John James Hanby – as visitor	1891

Lieutenant J H Eales – as visitor	1892
<i>South Australia</i>	
Captain G H Dean	Feb.1888 -1892
Captain John William Castine	Feb.1888
Captain David Drysdale	Dec.1888
Lieutenant-Colonel Frank Makin	1889 and 1891
No meeting	1890
Captain Heinrich <i>Oscar</i> Esselbach	1892
<i>Queensland</i>	
Major Andrew Joseph Thynne	Feb.1888
Senior Constable George Bain	Feb.1888
Frank Stanley Shepherdson	1889
No meeting	1890
No delegates	1891
Major George Patterson	1892
Captain Kenneth Hutchinson	1892
Thomas William Jeans	1892
<i>Tasmania</i>	
Major J G Davies	Feb./Dec.1888
Captain William Hunt	Dec.1888 and 1891
Major William Martin	1889
Captain Edwin Thomas Watchorn	1889
No meeting	1890
Major J G Davies	1891
Major James Henry Room	1892
Captain George Richardson	1892
<i>Western Australia</i>	
No delegates	1888-1892
<i>New Zealand</i>	
No delegates	1888-1891
Major James Purnell	1892
Lieutenant James Ross	1892

## A2: Federal Council of Rifle Associations 1893-May 1901

### President:

Major-General Alexander Bruce Tulloch	1893
Colonel Aston Henry Warner	1894
Colonel Edward Robert Drury	1895
No President – vice-president held chair	1896
Colonel F Makin	1897
Major-General George Arthur French	1898
Major-General M F Downes	1899
Colonel W Legge	1900

### Vice-President:

Lieutenant-Colonel F S L Penno	1893
Lieutenant-Colonel J G Davies	1894
Lieutenant-Colonel John Sanderson Lyster	1895
Major James Reginald Somerville	1896
Major G H Dean	1897
Lieutenant-Colonel W F Longfield	1898
Lieutenant-Colonel J M Templeton CMG	1899, May 1901
Colonel A H Warner	1900

### Secretary/Treasurer:

Lieutenant W J N Oldershaw	1893
Captain W J N Oldershaw	1894-1895
Sub-Lieutenant Albert Frank Stephens (for Captain Oldershaw)	1896
Captain W J N Oldershaw	1897, (1898)
Lieutenant-Colonel J G Davies	1899
Lieutenant-Colonel J G Davies, CMG	1900-1901

### Delegates

#### *New South Wales*

Captain G B Stack	1893
Lieutenant Maurice James Keating	1894 and 1896
Captain William Alfred Leggatt	1895 and 1898
Henry Vernon	1894, 1896, 1900
No delegates	1897
Lieutenant Bernard James Newmarch	1898
Major W J N Oldershaw	1899
Sub-Lieutenant A F Stephens	1899
Charles William Prott	1900
No delegates	1901

#### *Victoria*

Major Charles Edward Ernest Umphelby	1893 and 1895
Major N W Kelly	1893-1894, 1898
Lieutenant-Colonel F S L Penno	1894
Lieutenant-Colonel J M Templeton	1895
William Sloane	1896
Major John James Hanby	1896
Lieutenant-Colonel C E E Umphelby	1897
Alexander Edward Monsborough	1897
Lieutenant-Colonel J M Templeton	1898

Lieutenant-Colonel N W Kelly	1899
Colonel Robert Robertson	1900
Lieutenant James Michael Semmens	1900
Captain Charles Edward Merrett	May 1901
<i>South Australia</i>	
Captain Malcolm George Hipwell	1893-1894
Captain H O Esselbach	1893
Captain Charles James Reade	1894
Lieutenant Colonel Lewis George Madley	1894
Unknown	1895
Colour-Sergeant William Arnold – as observer	1896
Captain M G Hipwell	1897
Captain M G Hipwell	1898-1899
Captain James Edward Gooden	1898
Major G H Dean	1899
Major A E M Norton	1900
Colonel James Stuart (absent)	1900
Lieutenant-Colonel J.M. Templeton (Vic.) representing	May 1901
Sergeant J A Ross (Vic.) representing	May 1901
<i>Queensland</i>	
Major George Patterson	1893
Captain K Hutchison (absent)	1893
Captain Frederick Gustavus Hamilton	1894-1895
Captain William Gartside	1894 - 1895
George Given Ferguson	1895
Lieutenant-Colonel K Hutchison	1896
Major John Joseph Byron	1896
Lieutenant K Hutchinson	1897- 1898
Mr Alexander Ferguson	1898
Lieutenant Colonel K Hutchison	1899
No delegates	1900
Lieutenant James Richard Sankey	May 1901
Lieutenant Colonel K Hutchison	May 1901
<i>Tasmania</i>	
Lieutenant-Colonel J G Davies	1893 and 1897
Major James Henry Room	1893
Major Ernest Townsend Wallack	1894
Captain George Richardson	1894
Captain Robert Henry	1895 and 1897
Lieutenant Walter Croft	1895
No delegate	1896
Major J H Room	1897
Lieutenant-Colonel J G Davies	1898
Captain G Richardson	1898
Major Robert Henry	1899-1900
Captain Arthur Charles Parker	1900-May 1901
Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas May Evans	May 1901
<i>Western Australia</i>	
Captain Charles Youle (absent)	1893
Captain Robert Henderson Cowan (absent)	1893
No delegates	1894-May 1901

*New Zealand*

Major James Purnell	1893
Lieutenant James Ross	1893
No delegates	1894
Lieutenant Richard Clement Kirk	1895
William Henry Ballinger	1895
Lieutenant R C Kirk	1896
No delegates	1897-May 1901

## A3: Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations 1901-1920

### Presidents/Chairman

Major General E Hutton	1903, GM 1904
Colonel P R Ricardo	1904
None	1905
Major-General J C Hoad	1906-1907
Lieutenant-Colonel J G Davies	1908
Brigadier-General G H Dean	1909-1910, 1912, 1920
Lieutenant-Colonel J W Castine	1911, 1913

### Vice-Presidents

Lieutenant-Colonel K Hutchinson (in the Chair)	1901
Major-General M F Downes	1902
Colonel H Finn	1903
Brigadier-General J M Gordon	1904
Colonel P R Ricardo	1905
Colonel H D MacKenzie	1906
Colonel J S Lyster	1907

### Secretary/Treasurer

Lieutenant-Colonel J G Davies	1901
Major R Henry	1902
Frederick William Thomas (Assistant Secretary)	1902
Alexander Cornish	1903, GM 1904
Lieutenant-Colonel Godfrey George Howey Irving	1905
Captain Alexander Campbell MacDonald	1905
Major J J Paine	1907-1913

### Delegates

#### *New South Wales*

No delegates	1901
Lieutenant-Colonel W J N Oldershaw	1902
Lieutenant-Colonel W Holmes	1903
Edwin John Brown	1903
Captain J J Paine	1902, GM 1904, 1905-1906, 1908
Captain George Lindsay	1904-1905
Colour-Sergeant Edward Abraham Wright	1904
Captain Herbert Dakin	1906
Major J J Paine	1907
Harry Edward Mills	1907-1910, 1912-1913
John Ross Wallace	1911, 1920
Oswald Joseph Stanton	1920

#### *Victoria*

Captain Theophilus Smith Marshall	1901, GM 1904, 1904, 1905
Henry James Guinn	1901
Captain James Michael Semmens	1902, 1907-1909, 1910-1911
Colonel J M. Templeton	1902, 1903, 1905
Philip Fargher	1903
Captain John Lynch	1904
Major C E Merrett	1904, 1906, 1908-1910, 1912-1913

Lieutenant Oliver Lambert Alan Burford, ANF	1906
John Murray	1907
Solomon William Parker	1911
Major J M Semmens	1912
Major T S Marshall	1913
Colonel J E Merrett	1920
Colonel J M Semmens	1920
<i>South Australia</i>	
Lieutenant-Colonel J. M. Templeton (Vic) representing	1901
Sergeant James Alexander Ross (Vic) representing	1901
Lieutenant-Colonel G H Dean	1902, 1903
A Cornish	1903, 1906
Frank Stanley Bleechmore	1904, 1909
Lieutenant-Colonel G H Dean	1904-1909
A Cornish	1902, GM 1904
Lieutenant-Colonel J W Castine	1907-1908, 1910, 1912, 1920
Lawrence Herbert Story	1911
Noel Augustin Webb	1913
<i>Queensland</i>	
Alexander Ferguson	1901, 1903, 1907-09
Lieutenant-Colonel J S Lyster	1901
Captain James Richard Sankey	1902
Lieutenant Ernest Gerald Diddams	1902
Thomas Pye	1903, GM 1904, 1906-1907, 1909-1910
Henry Motton	GM 1904
Ernest William Hearne	1904
William George Willoughby	1904
Not known	1905
George Shaw	1906
Lieutenant William Henry Berry	1908
Andrew Ferguson	1910-13, 1920
Arthur Rupert Cross	1920
<i>North Queensland</i>	
Charles Edward Johnsey	1911
George Pierce Foot	1912
Arthur William Skewes	1913
Philip George Ma(t)thews	1920
Lieutenant-Colonel J. J. Paine (NSW) representing	1920
<i>Tasmania</i>	
Major R. Henry	1901, 1903, 1905
Captain G. Richardson	1901
Captain James Gatty	1902-1903
Captain John Ernest Cecil Lord	GM 1904
George Howitt	1904
Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Davies	1905-1908
Major G. Richardson	1906-1908
Major Philip William Grant Pinnock	1909
No delegates (TS Marshal, Victoria, representing)	1911
Henry Francis Paul	1909-1910, 1912-1913
Justice Herbert Nichols	1910, 1912-13
Thomas Cornelius Simpson	1920

William Joseph McElwee	1920
<i>Western Australia</i>	
No delegates	1901-2
Captain J H Eales	1903, 1904
R. G. Ferguson	1903, 1904
Lieutenant-Colonel N. W. Kelly (Vic.) representing	GM 1904
Senator Alexander Perceval Mathieson	GM 1904
Not known	1905
No delegates	1906
Lieutenant Frederick Charles Curwood	1907
Captain G. Lindsay (NSW for WA)	1907
George Smith	1908
W. Walker	1908
Colonel John Charles Strickland	1909
Ernest Elisha Brimage	1909, 1911, 1913
No Delegates	1910
Captain Leslie Barnard Welch	1911
Robert Reuben Rodgers	1912
Constable John Smith Simpson	1913
Robert Peart	1912, 1920
James Freeman Ryle	1920
Senior Constable J. S. Simpson	1920
<i>New Zealand</i>	
No delegates (final New Zealand membership year of the Council)	1901

## A4: Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations 1921-1946

### Chairman

Colonel Sir C E Merrett 1921-1946

### Secretary

Colonel/ Brigadier J J Paine 1921-1923

Lieutenant-Colonel W H Osborne 1923-1946

Carlyle Herbert Mutton (Acting) 1946-

### Treasurer

Brigadier J J Paine 1923-1933

Aubrey Sherwood Spencer 1934-1946

### Delegates

#### *New South Wales*

Major/Colonel J J Paine 1921-1934

J R Wallace 1921-24

R H Beardsmore 1925, 1927, 1928

Charles Robert Garnham 1926

A S Spencer 1932-1946

Henry Brisbane Jamieson 1937-1946

Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Owen Wynne (for Jamieson) 1939

Thomas Finlay 1946-

#### *Victoria*

Colonel C E Merrett 1921-1946

Colonel J M Semmens 1921-1934

Major Arthur Jordan (for Merrett, in England) 1928

Major A Jordan 1937-1946

#### *South Australia*

Brigadier-General G H Dean 1921-1946

F S Bleechmore 1921-1927

Thomas James Henwood Mitchell (for J W Castine) 1922

Robert Henderson Hall (for G H Dean, in England)

1927

James Murdock Archer Durrant, CMG, DSO (for F S Bleechmore) 1928

Clement Claude Castine 1932-1938

Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Mayfield Best 1938-1946

C H Mutton 1946-

#### *Queensland*

A Ferguson (SQRA) 1921

P G Matthews (NQRA) 1921

Benjamin Cloudsdale (SQRA) 1922-1924

David Hillock Guthrie (NQRA) 1923, 1925

Herbert Walter Hyde (SQRA) 1924

L H Story (SQRA) 1925, 1927

Captain William Edward McIlwaine for D Guthrie - NQRA) 1927

Captain W E McIlwaine (NQRA) 1932

William Gordon Duncan (SQRA) 1928, 1932, 1934, 1937, 1939, 1946

Henry Withnall (NQRA) 1934, 1937, 1939, 1946

Alexander Christmas Ball 1946-

*Tasmania*

Ernest Reuben Goucher 1921  
 Henry Francis Paul 1922-1923  
 Thomas Cookson Simpson 1921-1933, 1937-1939, 1946  
 Lieutenant-Colonel Archibald Clifford Blacklow (for Simpson) 1928  
 Captain William Harold Gray 1924-1927, 1932, 1934  
 Ernest Reuben Goucher (for Simpson) 1934  
 Percy McPherson Gillies 1937-1939  
 Frederick Spencer Hooper 1946-

*Western Australia*

Harry John Simper (for R Peart) 1921, 1932, 1946  
 R Peart 1922, 1923, 1924  
 John Samuel Eastmon 1921-1922, 1924, 1926-1928, 1937-1938, 1946  
 James Freeman Ryle 1923  
 J F Ryle (for R Peart) 1925, 1926  
 Edward Thomas (for J S Eastmon) 1925  
 Edward Thomas 1932  
 Frederick William Allsop 1927-1928  
 Bertram John Richards (nominated but no meeting of CCRAA) 1933  
 Ernest Elisha Brimage 1937  
 Thomas Richards Buddee 1938  
 T R Buddee (for H Marsh) 1939  
 Hugh Marsh 1946-

## A5: Australian Council of State Rifle Associations 1947-1971

### Chairman

Leonard Allen Righetti	1947-1958
Sir Alexander <i>Lyell</i> McEwin	1959-1961
William Frederick Mitchell	1962-1965

### President

Major-General Sir Denzil MacArthur-Onslow	1966-1971
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### Chairman

John Henry Collinson	1966-1971
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### Secretary

C H Mutton (Acting)	1947-1949
Lieutenant-Colonel W H Gray	1950-1953
Brigadier Edgar Ernest Grant	1954-1968
Bruce Alfred Heath	1969-1971

### Treasurer

Major A Jordan	1947
T Finlay	1948-1950
C H Mutton	1951-1961, 1965-1971
Alan Ramsay Duncan	1962-1964

### Delegates

#### *New South Wales*

Henry Brisbane Jamieson	1947
Lieutenant-Colonel R O Wynne	1948, 1950-1956
T Finlay	1947 -1948
Colonel L H Story	1950
Robert Carr Harrison	1952, 1954-1955
Ernest Hedley Cornish (for Harrison 1953)	1953, 1956-1960
Stanley William Kanaar	1957-1967
Jack Edmund Ryan	1961
Lieutenant-Colonel Ernest Alfred Green	1962-1963
Eric David Henderson	1964-1969, 1971
Lieutenant-Colonel E A Green	1968, 1970
James William Fletcher Sweet	1969

#### *Victoria*

Major A Jordan	1947-1953
L A Righetti	1947-1958
Lewis Robert Armstrong	1954-1961
W F Mitchell	1959-1969
Geoffrey John Mustow	1962-1965
J H Collinson	1966-1971
Godfrey William Letts	1967-1971

#### *South Australia*

Brigadier-General G H Dean	1947-1948
C H Mutton	1947-1971

James Alexander Heaslip	1948-1950
Leslie William Stewart (for A L McEwin)	1952
A L McEwin	1953-1962
James <i>Keith</i> Pym	1963-1965
Clarence Melville Forster	1966-1967
Lawrence Joseph McInerney	1969

*Queensland*

William Gordon Duncan (SQRA)	1950
H Withnall (NQRA)	1947-1948, 1950-1960
A C Ball (SQRA)	1947-1948, 1952-1955
James John Cadden (SQRA)	1948
A R Duncan	1956-1964
Arthur Charles Penwarn	1960, 1965, 1967-1971
Stanley James Horton	1961-1962
Christopher John George	1963-1965
Douglas William Cadden	1966
James Lawrence Hills (NQ)	1967-1969
Cyril Ernest Webb (NQ)	Mar. 1970-1971

*Tasmania*

T C Simpson	1947-1948
Frederick Spencer Hooper	1947-1948, 1950-1952
Colonel Royden Arthur Milledge	1950-1953
Ralph William Exton	1953-1954, 1956-1957
Arthur Snowden Laidley Hay	1954-1967
Edward Dean (for R W Exton)	1955
Jack Edward Dean	1958-1960
Clarendon <i>Floyd</i> Hallam	1961-1966
John Richard Ford	1967-1969
Douglas Ayling	1968-Mar 1970
J E Dean	July 1970-1971

*Western Australia*

Harry John Simper (for R Peart)	1947
J S Eastmon	1947-1948
H Marsh	1947
Captain Richard Arthur Clarke	1948-1951, 1953
Major William Henry Hackfath	1950-1962
James Albert Pike	1952-1955
William Frederick Samson	1956-1957
Clayton Clealand Bickley Mitchell	1958-1960
Neil Norman Campbell Scott	1961-1962
Malcom Sidney Herbert	1963-1969
Wilfred Owen McGlew Connell	1963-1965
Robert George Rose	1966
Lawrence Darcy Raymond Gorman	1967-1968
N N C Scott	1969-1971

## A6: National Rifle Association of Australia 1972-1988

### President

Major-General Sir D Macarthur-Onslow	1972-1979
Bruce White	1980-1984
Brigadier Anthony William Hammett	Nov. 1988-

### Chairman

J H Collinson	1972-1974
A C Penwarn	1975-1981
James Stanley Richardson	1982-1986
Alastair Robertson McPherson	1987-1988

### Deputy Chairman

Neville Stanley Holt	1976
Graeme Walton Berman	Nov 1976-1978
J S Richardson	1979-1981
A R McPherson	1983-1986
Colin Douglas Kuchel	1987-1988

### Secretary

B A Heath	1972-1974
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### General Secretary / Executive Director

J H Collinson	1975-1988
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### Treasurer

C H Mutton	1972
Derek Harry Arnold	1973-1974
J E Dean	1975-1982
John Casserly Holt	1983-1987
Gordon Ramsay Duncan	AGM 1987-1988

### Delegates

#### *New South Wales*

Lieutenant-Colonel E A Green	May 1972
N S Holt	Nov.1972-May 1976, Jul.77
G W Berman	Nov.AGM 1976-Oct 1977-1978
J S Richardson	1979-1981
James Gordon McIntosh (for J C Holt)	AGM Oct./Nov.1981
J C Holt	May 1982-1984, Nov.1985, AGM/Nov.1986-1987
J G McIntosh	1983
David _ Redmond	1984-1986
Ann _ Kelly (for J C Holt)	Apr.1985-Apr.1986
Albert <i>John</i> Thurtell	AGM/Nov.1986-1987
Cedric Edwin May	AGM/Oct.1987-1988
Robert N Hutchins	June 1988-

#### *Victoria*

J H Collinson	1972-1974
Derek Henry Arnold	1972-1974

Alfred Marsh Obersby	Nov.1974-1976
J H Collinson (for William Earle Elmslie)	July 1977
W E Elmslie	Oct.1977-1981
John Ernest Jones	1982-1983
Garry_ Kay	Oct.1983-1988
Ray_ Parker	Oct.1983-Apr.1986
Gregory <i>Ross</i> Graham	Nov./AGM 1986-1988

*South Australia*

C H Mutton	1972-1975
L J McInerney	1982-1983
John David Findlay	1976-1981, Oct.1983-1988
Albert _ Tarleton	AGM 1981
C D Kuchel	1982-1988

*Queensland*

A C Penwarn	1972-1974, Oct.1983-Apr.1986
Lloyd William Neilsen (NQ)	1972-1987
Eric William Bubb	1975-May 1976, 1977-1979
A R McPherson [for E Bubb]	Nov./AGM 1976/ AGM/Oct. 1977, May 1979
A R McPherson	1980-1986
G R Duncan	1987-1988
Eric MacNaughton Christie (NQ)	AGM/ Oct.1987-1988

*Tasmania*

J E Dean	1972-1981
Brian Fraser Titcombe	1982-1983, AGM/Nov.1984-Apr.1985
Desmond Charles Flood	Oct.1983-Jul.1984, AGM/Nov.1985-1988

*Western Australia*

M S Herbert	1977-1987
Neil Norman Campbell Scott	1973-1976
Mervyn Alfred Concanen	1972, AGM 1981
Reginald Allan Wagland	1983-1988
Dennis Lionel Marsden	AGM/Oct. 1987-1988

**DRAC/DARC/DRC**

Major William Henry Osborne	1912-13, 1920
Edward Fetherstonhaugh	1927-1930
Major/Lieutenant-Colonel Victor Paul Stantke	1931-1936
Major/Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Edgar Weavers, OBE	1937-1939
Colonel George Francis Murphy	1941-1942
Lieutenant-Colonel William Harold Gray, VD	1945-1947
Ernest <i>George</i> Williams	1948-1956
William Leo Larkin (Acting)	1956-1957
Alan Brett (Acting)	1957
John Macdonald Aitken	1958-1959

## ANNEX B Rifle Matches

### B1: Intercolonial and Federal Matches 1873-1900

Year	Won by	Team	Ranges	Shots at each	Score	HPS	Fired at	Scores of other teams
1873	NSW	20	2,5,600	10	1586	2400	MEL	Vic 1521, NZ 1483 (Hay rifles)
1874	VIC	20	2,5,600	10	1591	2400	SYD	NSW 1581 (Hay)
1875	VIC	20	2,5,600	10	2025	2400	MEL	NSW 1943 (M-H rifles)
1878	VIC	20	5,600	15	4457	6000	SYD	NSW 4291 (Henry and M-H)
1879	NSW	10	5,600	10	709	1000	SYD	Qld 698 (Henry)
1880	NSW	10	5,600	10	780	1000	BNE	Qld 755 (Henry)
1881	NSW	10	3,5,600	10	1091	1500	SYD	Vic 1061; Qld 1007 (M-H)
1882	VIC	15	3,5,600	10	1745	2250	MEL	Tas 1721; NSW 1686 (M-H)
1884	VIC	10	3,5,600	15	1642	2250	SYD	NSW 1634; Qld 1555, Tas 1553
1885	NSW	10	3,5,600	15	1837	2250	MEL	Vic 1769; Tas 1719
1887	NSW	10	3,5,600	15	1825	2250	ADL	Vic 1824; Tas 1775; SA 1749

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Year	Won by	Team	Ranges	Shots at each	Score	HPS	Fired at	Scores of other teams
Feb. 1888	New South Wales	8	3, 5, 600	15	1423	2250	Sydney	SA 1387, Qld.1376, Tas.1346,Vic.1339 (M-H rifles)
Dec. 1888	Tasmania	10	3, 5, 600	15	1787	2250	Hobart	NSW 1766, Vic.1727, SA 1647
1889	Victoria	10	5, 6, 700	15	1792	225	Melb.	Tas.1661, SA

<sup>793</sup> Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia for the year 1928, Keating Wood Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1928, p.39.

						0		1602
1890	No match							
1891	SA	10	5, 6, 700	15	1644	225 0	Adelaide	Vic.1621, Tas.1496
1892	Victoria	10	5,6,700	15	1568	225 0	Sydney	SA1514, NZ 1507, Qld. 1491, Tas. 1490, NSW 1479
1893	Victoria	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1419	200 0	Melb.	NSW 1415, SA 1397,Tas.1332, WA 1328
1894	Victoria	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1569	200 0	Hobart	Qld.1540, NSW 1514, Tas.1502, SA 1467
1895	Queensland	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1553	200 0	Brisbane	Vic.1502, Tas.1471, NSW 1471
1896	Queensland	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1554	200 0	Oamaru, NZ	NZ 1519, NSW 1512, Vic.1490
1897	Queensland	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1538	200 0	Adelaide	Vic.1526, Tas.1512, SA 1314
1898 *	Queensland	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1633	200 0	Sydney	NSW 1632, Vic. 1547, Tas.1539, SA 1476
1899	Queensland	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1593	200 0	Melb.	NSW 1517, Vic.1516, SA 1452, Tas.1413
1900	New South Wales	10	3,5,6,70 0	10	1436	200 0	Hobart	Tas.1408,Vic.137 9

\*McGregor Cup finally won by Queensland 1898<sup>794</sup>

<sup>794</sup> *Report of the Commonwealth Council of Rifle Associations of Australia 1934*, Keating-Wood Pty Ltd, Melbourne, 1934, p.68.

## B2: Commonwealth Match 1901-1988

Formerly styled Intercolonial Matches and Federal Matches. Fired with military (.303") rifles – Lee-Enfield, Lee-Enfield, Martini-Enfield, or other .303" rifles issued by the Government; teams of 10 men.

Year	Won by	Team	Ranges In '00s Yards	Shots at each	Score	HPS	Fired at	Scores of other teams
1901	Queensland	10	300, 500, 600 700	10	1773	2000	Brisbane	Vic. 1772 Tas. 1723
1902	Victoria	"	"	10	1553	2000	Adelaide	SA 1519 Tas. 1498 NSW 1468 Queensland 1463
1903	Victoria	"	300, 600, 700, 900	10	1500	2000	Sydney	SA 1487 Qld. 1460 NSW 1458 WA 1419 Tas. 1417
1904*	Victoria	"	"	10	1511	2000	Perth	WA 1471 NSW 1446 SA 1423
1905	Victoria	"	"	10	1542	2000	Melb.	NSW 1472 Qld. 1450 WA 1401 SA 1400 Tas. 1382
1906	Queensland	"	"	10	1529	2000	Launceston	NSW 1517 SA 1487 Tas. 1486 Vic. 1485
1907	South Australia	"	"	10	1697	2000	Brisbane	Vic. 1692 NSW 1657 Qld. 1656 Tas. 1566
1908	Victoria	"	"	10	1675	2000	Adelaide	SA 1660 Qld. 1612 WA 1610 NSW 1570 Tas. 1508
1909	Victoria	"	"	10	1654	2000	Sydney	Qld. 1646 SA 1643 NSW 1615 Tas. 1615
1910	Queensland	"	3, 7, 9, 1,000	10	1661	2000	Melb.	Tas. 1660 SA 1652 Vic. 1647 WA 1612 NSW 1572
1911	New South Wales	"	"	10	1619	2000	Perth	Vic. 1598 WA 1594 SA 1597 Qld. 1435
1912	Western Australia	"	3, 6, 7, 900	10	1538	2000	Hobart	Qld. 1534 NSW 1530 Tas. 1513 Vic 1500 SA 1428
1913	New South Wales	"	"	10	1646	2000	Brisbane	Qld. 1614 Vic. 1602 WA 1586

								Tas. 1453
1914-1919	<i>World War I</i>	“	-	-	-	-	-	No competition
1920** ‡	Victoria	“	“	10	1684	2000	Adelaide	NSW 1662 WA 1642, Tas. 1640 Qld. 1638 SA 1616

\*Templeton Challenge Trophy competition commenced, won finally by Victoria in 1921

‡ McAlister Trophy competition commences

Year	Won by	Team	Ranges In '00s Yards	Shots at each	Score	HPS	Fired at	Scores of other teams
1921	Victoria	10	300, 600, 700, 900	10	1611	2000	Liverpool	NSW 1604 WA 1587 Qld. 1580 SA 1576 Tas. 1517
1922	South Australia	“	“	10	1751	2000	Perth	WA 1738 Vic. 1735 NSW 1735 Tas. 1731
1923	New South Wales	“	“	10	1741	2000	Melbourne	SA 1719 WA 1712 Tas. 1719 Qld. 1607
1924	New South Wales	“	“	10	1719	“	Launceston	Vic. 1700 WA 1674 Qld. 1659 SA 1652 Tas. 1637
1925	New South Wales	“	“	10	1733	“	Brisbane	SA 1730 Vic. 1716 Qld. 1684 Tas. 1680
1926**	Victoria	“	“	10	1775	“	Adelaide	WA 1767 Tas. 1762 NSW 1725 Qld. 1705 SA 11702
1927	New South Wales	“	“	10	1781	“	Liverpool	Vic. 1769 Qld. 1760 WA 1746 SA 1733 Tas. 1733
1928	Victoria	“	“	10	1654	“	Swanbourne, WA	WA 1631 SA 1613 NSW 1605 Tas. 1594 Qld. 1584
1929-1935	No Competition							

1936	New South Wales	10	3, 6, 7, 900	10	1825	2000	Adelaide	Vic. 1821 SA 1821 WA 1820 Qld.1788 Tas. 1787
1937	No Competition							
Feb 1938	New South Wales	“	“	10	1866	“	Melbourne	Vic. 1836 WA 1821 SA 1820 Qld. 1819 Tas. 1800
1939-1947	WWII - No Competition							
1948 ***	New South Wales	10	3,6,7, 900 yards	10	1598	2000	Brisbane	Vic. 1549 Qld. 1546 Tas. 1542 SA 1541 WA not rep.
1949	New South Wales	“	“	“	1792	“	Hobart	Vic. 1732 SA 1731 Qld. 1728 WA 1718 Tas. 1648
1950	Victoria	“	“	“	1851	“	Sydney	NSW 1847 Qld. 1843 SA 1840 Tas. 1805 [NZ 1801] WA 1794
1951	Queensland	“	“	“	1481	“	Perth	NSW 1478 WA 1464 Vic. 1449 SA 1460 Tas. 1441
1952	Victoria	“	“	“	1819	“	Adelaide	SA 1865, NSW 1865 Qld. 1858 Tas. 1854 WA 1848
1953	No Competition							
1954	Victoria	10	300, 600, 700, 900 yards	10	1861	2000	Melbourne	SA 1861 NSW 1851 Qld. 1845 Tas. 1834 WA 1827
Jan 1955	Queensland	“	“	“	1835	“	Hobart	SA 1824 NSW 1821 Vic. 1812 Tas. 1802

								WA 1770
Aug 1955	New South Wales	“	“	“	1877	“	Brisbane	Vic. 1859, Qld. 1853, Tas. 1851, SA 1847, WA 1833
1956	Victoria	8??	“	10	1865	“	Sydney	NSW 1839 Qld. 1835 Tas. 1819, SA 1814, WA 1802
1957	Western Australia	8	“	10	1866	2,000	Perth	NSW 1858 SA 1857 Vic. 1859 Tas. 1844 Qld. 1812
1958	New South Wales				1843		Adelaide	SA 1837, Qld 1837, Vic 1834, Tas 1834, WA 1805
1959	No Competition							
Mar. 1960	Victoria	“	“	“	1900	“	Melbourne	NSW 1887, SA 1865 Qld. 1839, Tas. 1824, WA 1790
Jan. 1961	South Australia	“	“	“	1780	“	Hobart	Qld. 1771, NSW 1764, Tas. 1763, Vic. 1736, WA 1726.
Aug. 1961	New South Wales				1819		Brisbane	Tas. 1817 Vic. 1801, Qld. 1788, SA 1781, WA 1745
Nov. 1962	New South Wales				1875		Perth	Qld. 1864, Vic. 1856, Tas. 1832, SA 1831, WA 1831
Oct. 1963	Queensland				1880		Liverpool, NSW	NSW 1877, Vic. 1859, Tas. 1852, SA 1831, WA 1813
Aug. 1964	Victoria				1869		Adelaide	NSW 1865, Tas. 1844, Qld. 1843, SA 1838 WA 1783

1965	No Competition						
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\*Templeton Challenge Trophy competition commenced, finally won by Victoria in 1921

‡ McAlister Trophy competition commences, finally won by New South Wales in 1925

\*\*Cheylesmore Memorial Cup competition commences

\*\*\*The Charles Merrett Trophy competition commences

From 1972 – fired with 7.62mm

From 1975 - fired at 300, 600, 700, and 800 metres

Year	Won by	Team	Ranges In '00s Yards	Score	Fired at	Scores of other teams
Mar 1966	Queensland			1805	Melbourne	SA 1798 Vic. 1797 NSW 1770 WA 1765 Tas. 1759
Dec 1966	New South Wales			1808	Hobart	SA 1369 Tas. 1360 Qld. 1352 WA 1350 Vic. 1345
1967	New South Wales			1873	Liverpool	Vic.1867 Tas.1858 SA 1855 Qld.1854 WA 1819
1968	Queensland			1849	Belmont, Brisbane	Vic.1844, NSW 1842 Tas.1835, SA 1813, Nth.Qld.1782, WA1776

### Australian Rifle Teams Championships

Year	Winner	Team	Ranges	Score	Place	Other Scores
1969*	Victoria	8	300, 600, 700, 900 yards	1881	Swanbourne Perth	NSW 1880, WA 1871, Qld. 1856, Tas. 1855, SA 1817
Oct. 1970	Victoria			1899	Adelaide	Qld.1880, SA 1878, WA 1857, NSW 1857, Tas. 1851
1971	No Competition					
March 1972	South Australia	8	300, 600, 700, and 900 yards	1941	Canberra	NSW 1932, Qld.1931, Tas.1925 Vic.1923, NZ 1912‡ WA 1894 NQ 1893 Canada 1847‡
1973	New South Wales			1933	Melbourne	Tas.1925 Vic.1918 SA 1917, WA 1912 Qld.1898

						NQ 1884
Dec 1973	Queensland			1756	Hobart	SA 1750, NSW 1750, Vic.1732, Tas. 1725, WA 1717, NQ 1690
1974	No competition					
<b>National Teams Championships</b>						
Feb. 1975	New South Wales		300, 600 700, 800 metres	1925. 136	Canberra	Qld. 1925.127, Tas.1922.130, Vic.1919.131, SA 1905.123, WA 1902.127, NZ 1888.116, NQ 1885.118
Aug 1975	Queensland			1918. 144	Belmont, Brisbane	Vic.1915.133, NSW 1913.147, Tas.1911.127, WA1908.123, SA 1897.124, NQ 1875.108, Army 1837.101
1976	No competition					
Jan. 1977	New South Wales		300, 600, 700 metres, 900 yards	1919. 149	Belmont, Brisbane	WA 1905.146, Qld.1893.111, SA 1891.119, Tas.1891.114, Vic.1890.111, NQ 1866.118, Army 1838.88
Nov. 1977	Queensland			1896. 121	Canberra	NSW 1890.144, WA 1883.117, SA 1879.115, NQ 1864.108, Vic. 1858.101, Tas. 1835.102, Army 1780.73
1978	South Australia			1889. 137	Swanbourne Perth	WA 1877.118, Qld.1874.116, NSW 1873.118, Tas.1872.110, Vic.1859.104, Army 1841.96, NQ 1839.107
1979	New South Wales			1914. 12	Adelaide	Qld.1911.139, WA 1908.11, Vic.1901.115, Tas.1895.125, SA 1893.101, Army 1880.101, NQ 1850.107
1980	No Competition					
1981	South Australia			1945. 157	Mackay, NQ	NSW 1944.153, Qld.1944.149, WA 1927.160, NQ 1920.131, Vic.1917.132, Tas.1911.137, Army 1905.124.
Mar. 1982	New South Wales			1912. 138	Melbourne	Qld.1903.128, WA 1896.108, SA 1895.109, Vic.1893.104, Tas.1886.124, Army 1865.110, NQ 1854.98
Dec. 1982	Queensland			1853. 114	Hobart	NSW 1839.107, WA 1827.89, Vic.1825.94, Tas.1816.87,

						SA 1805.94, NQ 1800.84, Army 1703.93
1983	No Competition					
1984	New South Wales			1932. 132	Brisbane	Vic.1919.135, Qld.1910.122, SA 1904.113, WA 1892.119 NQ 1890.92, Tas.1887.124, Army 1885.116
1985 **	New South Wales			1937. 143	Perth	WA 1936.142, Army 1920.123, Vic.1919.121, SA 1918.125, Qld.1918.124, NQ 1897.124, NT 18903.128, Tas.1893.122
1986	Victoria			1918. 133	Adelaide	Qld.1910.115, SA 1906.130, NSW 1905.131, WA 1904.119, Tas.1896.135, NQ 1890.124, Army 1887.114, NT 1865.116
1987	No Competition					
1988	New South Wales			1943. 124	Sydney	Vic.1938.136, WA 1931.136, SA 1929.103, Qld.1926.132, ACT 1922.138, NQ 1897.122, Tas.1895.102, Army 1892.115, NT 1879.88, RAAF/Navy 1827.78

\*The first Australian Rifle Teams Championships and the last competitions fired with .303-inch ammunition

‡ New Zealand and Canada not eligible for official trophy.

\*\*\*The Charles Merrett Trophy competition commences

\*\* Northern Territory competes for the first time.

### **B3: Northcote Match (Service Match) 1905-1988**

A Challenge Cup, presented by Lord Northcote, when Governor-General of Australia; to be held by the State Association whose team wins, until the next competition. A gold medal will be presented to the Captain and each member of the winning team. To be fired at the same meeting as the Commonwealth Match.

*Details of Match.*

Teams of ten men and a commander (who will not shoot), from 600 yards to 400 yards, with ten shots per man at five large (6 feet) targets Tin Hat targets, as used in Australian Military Forces. Two firers to each target, 10 shots per man with scoring bull's-eye, 5; inners, 4; magpies, 3; and outers, 2. Teams to advance to 500 and then 400 yards with five shots at each.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Score Hits</b>	<b>Where fired</b>	<b>Other Scores</b>
1905	Western Australia	62	Melbourne	New South Wales 46 Tasmania 46 Victoria 45 Queensland 40 South Australia 39
1906	New South Wales	43	Launceston	South Australia 33 Queensland 33 Victoria 31 Tasmania 26
1907	South Australia	52	Brisbane	Queensland 43 New South Wales 29 Victoria 29
1908	New South Wales	28	Adelaide	Western Australia 27 South Australia 23 Victoria 21 Queensland 16
1909	New South Wales	81	Sydney	Victoria 21 Queensland 17
1910	New South Wales	109	Melbourne	South Australia 103 Queensland 79 Western Australia 71 Victoria 61
1911	New South Wales	17	Perth	Victoria 16 Western Australia 16 Queensland 14 South Australia 8
1912	New South Wales	131	Hobart	South Australia 107 Victoria 106 Queensland 99 Tasmania 99 Western Australia 90
1913	Western Australia	80	Brisbane	New South Wales 70 Victoria 65 Queensland 46
1920	Victoria	19	Adelaide	South Australia 11 Western Australia 12 Queensland 7
1921	South Australia (tied with WA, Qld., but won the shoot-off)	29	Liverpool, N.S.W.	WA 29, Qld. 29, Vic. 4, Tas. 3, NSW 3
1922	Western Australia (tied with Vic. but won the shoot-off)	10	Perth	Vic. 10, NSW 9, Tas. 9, SA 9
1923	New South	50	Melbourne	Qld. 43, Tas. 36, SA 31, Vic. 31,

	Wales			WA 30
1924	New South Wales	55	Launceston	SA 42, Vic. 40, WA 35, Qld. 31, Tas. 31
1925	Victoria	52	Brisbane	NSW 37, SA 32, Qld. 30, Tas. 27
1926	New South Wales	80	Adelaide	WA 74, Vic. 67, Qld. 64, Tas. 55, SA 44
1927	Victoria	73	Liverpool, N.S.W.	NSW 70, Qld. 68, Tas. 55, SA 44, WA 44
1928	Victoria (New Conditions)	417	Swanbourne, W.A.	WA 397, NSW 368, SA 354, Qld. 347, Tas. 335.
1929-1935	No Competition			
1936	South Australia	401	Adelaide	WA 355, Vic. 343, Tas.325, NSW 317, Qld. 271
1938	Victoria	427	Melbourne	WA 408, NSW 408, SA 399, Tas. 386, Qld. 385
1939-1947	No Competition			
1948	Tasmania	390	Brisbane	Qld. 380, NSW 370, SA 366, Vic. 336
1949	New South Wales	444	Hobart	SA 424, Tas. 422, Vic. 415, Qld. 399, WA 368
1950	Queensland	452	Sydney	[NZ 440], Vic. 433, Tas. 423, SA 418, WA 415 NSW 462 (disqualified)
1951	South Australia	360	Perth	WA 357, NSW 354, Tas. 340, Vic. 287, Qld. 370 (disqualified)
1952	South Australia	468	Adelaide	Qld. 465, Vic. 437, NSW 386, Tas. 386, WA 375
1953	No Competition			
1954	New South Wales	462	Melbourne	SA 445, Vic. 432, WA 417, Qld. 397, Tas. 384
Jan. 1955	South Australia	439	Hobart	Tas. 437, Vic. 425, WA 422, Qld 394, NSW Disqualified
Aug. 1955	Victoria	442	Brisbane	SA 419, WA 418, Qld. 410, tas. 410, NSW 385
1956	New South Wales	364	Sydney	Tas. 353, SA 347, Vic. 342, WA 338, Qld. 314
1957	South Australia	373	Perth	Vic. 365, WA 345, NSW 340, Tas. 327, Qld. 311
1958	New South Wales	371	Adelaide	Vic. 361, WA 361, Tas. 360, Qld. 350, SA 323
1959	No Competition			
Mar. 1960	Tasmania	375	Melbourne	NSW 366, Vic. 357, SA 331, WA 321, Qld. disqualified.
Jan. 1961	Western Australia	365	Hobart	SA 340, Tas. 338, Vic. 334, Qld. 333 NSW disqualified
Aug. 1961	Western Australia	371	Brisbane	Vic. 364, NSW 351, SA 350, Qld. 344, Tas. 339
Nov. 1962	Tasmania	391	Perth	NSW 368, Vic. 366, WA 365, SA 363, Qld. 349
Oct. 1963	Tasmania	376	Liverpool, NSW	WA 363, NSW 350, Vic. 349, SA 348, Qld. 336
Aug. 1964	Tasmania	388	Adelaide	Vic. 386, SA 358, NSW 354, Qld. 335, WA not represented (?)
1965	No Competition			

From 1972 – fired with 7.62mm  
From 1975 – fired at 500 metres.

Year	Winner	Score Hits	Where fired	Other scores
March 1966	New South Wales	382	Melbourne	Tas.366, Vic.361, SA 351, WA 344, Qld.338
Dec 1966	South Australia	377	Hobart	Tas.375, NSW 368, WA 361, Vic.329, Qld.328
1967	Western Australia	390	Liverpool	NSW 382, Qld.380, Tas.378, Vic.378, SA 365
1968	New South Wales	388	Brisbane	Tas.384, SA 378, Vic.370, Nth.Qld.367, WA 357, Qld.351
<b>Australian Rifle Teams Championships</b>				
1969	Western Australia	746	Perth	NSW 733, SA 727, Tas.720, Vic.718, Qld.695
Oct 1970	Victoria	379	Adelaide	Qld.375, Tas.374, SA 333, WA 331, NSW 328
1971	No Competition			
1972	Victoria	385	Canberra	Tas.381, Qld.380, NSW 377, NQ 371, NZ 355*, WA 347, SA 340
1973	Victoria	362	Melbourne	WA 354, Tas.349, NSW 336, SA 322, Qld. 317, NQ 294
Jan 1974	Queensland	371	Hobart	Vic.363, NSW 332, SA 320, Tas. 315, WA 311, NQ 254
<b>National Teams Championships</b>				
Feb. 1975	South Australia	373	Canberra	Tas.366, NSW 364, Wa 362, Vic.356, NQ 346, Qld.332, Army 289
August 1975	South Australia	382	Belmont	Tas.376, Qld.372, NQ 367, NSW 367, WA 366, Vic.361, Army 351
1976	No Competition			
Jan. 1977	New South Wales	388	Sydney	Vic.383, Qld.380, SA 378 Tas.375, WA 370, Army 360, NQ 355
Nov. 1977	Western Australia	362	Canberra	Tas.356, Vic.355, NSW 354, SA 342, Qld.340, Army 338, NQ 313
1978	New South Wales	375	Perth	Vic.363, Qld.354, SA 353, Army 351, WA 348, Tas.331, NQ 331
1979	New South Wales	374	Adelaide	Army 370, Qld.365, WA 359, Tas.349, Vic.347,

				NQ 313
1980	No Competition			
1981	New South Wales	384	Mackay	SA 377, Qld.376, Vic.366, Army 364, WA 364, Tas.358, NQ 352
March 1982	Victoria	373	Melbourne	WA 369, NSW 367, Qld.365, Tas.363, Army 355, NQ 343, SA 315
Dec 1982	New South Wales	386	Hobart	WA 377, Qld.369, Tas.367, Vic.365, NQ 355, SA 344, Army 343
1983	No competition			
1984	New South Wales	377	Brisbane	SA 375, WA 371, Vic.371, Qld.365, Tas.365, Army 363, NQ 346
1985	New South Wales	389	Perth	SA 367, Tas.364, Qld.362, Army 355, Vic.355, WA 348, NQ 342, NT 341
1986	Queensland	367	Adelaide	Tas.366, Vic.365, WA 361, SA 360, Army 356, NSW 356, NT 349, NQ 347
1987	No Competition			
1988	New South Wales	377	Sydney	WA 376, NQ 370, Qld.368, SA 368, Tas.367, Army 367, ACT 361

\*New Zealand not eligible for official trophy

## **B4: Gordon Highlanders' Trophy (Service Match) 1906-1988**

A Challenge Trophy, presented to the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia and the Forces of New Zealand by the First Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, in commemoration of their services together in South Africa 1899-1902. A gold medal will also be presented to the captain and each member of the winning team.

### *Details of Match:*

1. To be shot for annually by teams of eight men and a commander (who will not shoot); representatives of each State of the Commonwealth and of New Zealand. Members of rifle clubs, although not a part of the military forces, may represent any State and New Zealand.
2. The trophy is never to become the property of any individual State or of New Zealand, but will be held by the winning team until won by another team.
3. Uniform compulsory
4. At least once in every six years the Competition should be held in new Zealand.
5. The Match to take place in the State in which the Commonwealth Rifle Match is to be fired, and in New Zealand in its turn...

A snap shooting competition, with 10 shots per man with 5 points for a bull's-eye and 4 for an inner against eight snap-shooting targets (22 in.), as used in the Australian Military Forces (invisible bull's-eye 12 in); 10 exposures each of three seconds over two minutes. Prone position.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Score Hits</b>	<b>Where fired</b>	<b>Other scores</b>
1906	New South Wales	42	Launceston	Victoria 35 Tasmania 33 South Australia 25 Queensland 14
1907	New South Wales	109	Brisbane	Victoria 109 South Australia 97 Queensland 84
1908	Victoria	14	Adelaide	New South Wales 13 Western Australia 7 South Australia 6
1909	New Zealand	7	New Zealand	South Australia 3 New South Wales 2 Victoria 2 Queensland 2
1910	New Zealand	7	New Zealand	New South Wales 4
1910	South Australia	166	Melbourne	Victoria 159 New South Wales 147 Queensland 122 New Zealand 105 Western Australia 95
1911	Victoria	86	Perth	New South Wales 80 Queensland 71 South Australia 68 Western Australia 65
1912	New South Wales	42	Hobart	Victoria 35 Western Australia 33 Tasmania 31 South Australia 27 Queensland 18
1913	New South Wales	46	Brisbane	Western Australia 27 Victoria 23 Queensland 21
1920	Western Australia	15	Adelaide	New South Wales 13 South Australia 12 Victoria 11 Queensland 10
1921	Queensland	13	Liverpool, N.S.W.	Vic. 9, Tas. 9, SA 9, WA 7, NSW 6
1922	New South Wales	8	Perth	WA 7, Vic. 7, Tas. 5, SA 5
1923	Western Australia	338	Melbourne	SA 333, Qld. 332, NSW 330, Tas. 328, Vic.285

1924	New South Wales	360	Launceston	WA 354, Vic. 340, SA 313, Qld. 313, Tas. 280
1925	Victoria	307	Brisbane	SA 294, Tas. 279, NSW 265, Qld. 263
1926	New South Wales	347	Adelaide	Tas. 340, SA 317, Vic. 317, WA 305, Qld. 287
1927	Western Australia	320	Liverpool, N.S.W.	NSW 312, Qld. 305, Vic. 303, NZ 300, Tas. 287, SA 282
1928	New Zealand	205	Trentham, N.Z.	NSW 105, Vic. 100
1928	New South Wales	272	Swanbourne, W.A.	Vic. 253, WA 246, Tas. 241, SA 231, Qld. 175
1929-1935	No Competition			
1936	New South Wales	318	Adelaide	WA 298, SA 285, Tas. 276, Vic. 264, Qld. 262
1938	Tasmania	325	Melbourne	NSW 314, Qld. 310, Vic. 307, WA 291, SA 284
1939-1947	No Competition			
1948	South Australia	278	Brisbane	NSW 277, Tas. 276, Qld. 218, Vic. 166, WA not rep.
1949	Victoria	342	Hobart	NSW 328, Qld. 316, SA 315, WA 314, Tas. 280
1950	New Zealand	346	Liverpool, NSW	NSW 343, SA 343, Qld 325, WA 314, Vic 304, Tas. 294
1951	Queensland	370	Perth	SA 368, Vic. 355, Tas. 349, NSW 317, WA 307
1952	New South Wales	353	Adelaide	Vic. 338, SA 311, Qld. 307, Tas. 275, WA 251
1953	No competition			
1954	Tasmania	361	Melbourne	Qld. 352, NSW 351, Vic. 344, SA 335, WA 256
January 1955	Queensland	355	Hobart	Vic.353, SA 347, NSW 335, WA 313, Tas. 303
August 1955	New South Wales	331	Brisbane	Qld. 313, WA 298, Vic.294, SA 277, Tas. 252
1956	Tasmania	367	Sydney	NSW 347, Qld. 345, WA 332, SA 329, NZ 320, Vic. 317.
1957	Western Australia	356	Perth	Qld. 331, SA 318, Tas. 291, Vic. 289, NSW 261
1958	Tasmania	364	Adelaide	Qld. 357, SA 353, Vic. 352, NSW 343, WA 317
1959	No Competition			
Mar. 1960	Tasmania	376	Melbourne	NSW 371, WA 364, Vic. 361, Qld. 356, SA 341
Jan.1961	NSW	381	Hobart	Tas. 359, Qld. 356, WA 350, SA 349, Vic.349
Aug. 1961	Tasmania	374	Brisbane	Vic. 374, WA 367, Qld. 356, NSW 334, SA 221
Nov. 1962	Tasmania	370	Perth	NZ 370, SA 361, NSW 360, WA 350, Qld. 325, Vic. 306
Oct. 1963	Queensland	385	Liverpool, NSW	Tas. 377, Vic. 375, SA 364, NSW 357, WA 352
Aug. 1964	Queensland	359	Adelaide	NSW 350, SA 343, Vic. 321, Tas. 332, WA 378 (disqualified)

1965	No Competition			
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From 1972 – fired with 7.62mm

From 1975 – fired at 300 metres

Year	Winner	Score Hits	Where fired	Other scores
Mar 1966	South Australia	374	Melbourne	WA 357, NSW 354, Qld. 316, Tas. 311, Vic. 306
Dec 1966	New South Wales	370	Hobart	Tas.362,Vic.349, WA 342, SA 333, Qld 280
1967	South Australia	372	Liverpool	NSW 368,Vic.363, Tas.362, WA 358, Qld. 357, South NZ 322
1968	South Australia	383	Brisbane	Nth.Qld.373, Vic.372, Qld.368, NSW 361,WA 360,Tas.357.
<b>Australian Rifle Teams Championships</b>				
1969	Tasmania	373	Perth	WA 370, NSW 366, Qld.366, SA 363, Vic.348
1970	Queensland	373	Adelaide	Tas.370, Vic.364, NSW 360, SA 358, WA 344
1971	No Competition			
1972	Victoria	374	Canberra	NSW 363, Tas.361, Nth.Qld.343, WA 341, Qld.340, NZ 339, SA 288
1973	Queensland	371	Melbourne	Vic.369, NSW 368, WA 366, SA 358, Tas.357, Nth.Qld.337
Jan 1974	Tasmania	366	Hobart	Qld. 363, WA 353, NSW 352, Vic.341, SA 340, Nth.Qld. 327
<b>National Teams Championships</b>				
Feb. 1975	New South Wales	372	Canberra	Qld.371, WA 364, Vic.358, Sa 356, Tas. 356, NZ 340, Army 328, NQ 298
August 1975	Western Australia	390	Belmont	NSW 386, Tas.385, Qld.380, SA 377, Vic.376, Army 364, NQ 347
1976	No competition			
Jan. 1977	New South Wales	395	Sydney	Qld. 384, SA 378, NQ 376 Vic.375, Tas.375, Army 374 WA 353

Nov. 1977	Victoria	378	Canberra	Qld.371, NSW 360, WA 350, SA 349, Tas.333, Army 327, NQ 307
1978	Western Australia	389	Perth	Army 383, NSW 382, Vic.379, Tas.378, SA 373, NQ 372, Qld. 366
1979	New South Wales	391	Adelaide	Qld.383, WA 379, Tas.378, Vic.378, Army 376, SA 375, NQ 338
1980	No Competition			
1981†	Army	390	Mackay	WA 390, NSW 387, SA 387, Qld.381, NQ 377, Tas.375, Vic.364
March 1982	Tasmania	386	Melbourne	NSW 385, SA 385, Qld.383, WA 375, Vic.367, NQ 350, Army 341
Dec. 1982	New South Wales	384	Hobart	Army 374, Tas.371, Vic.367, Qld.366, WA 365, NQ 364, SA 349
1983	No Competition			
1984	North Queensland	380	Brisbane	Qld.379, Tas.379, NSW 377, WA 374, Vic.368, Army 346, SA 324
1985	South Australia	381	Perth	NSW 374, Qld.373, WA 367, Army 364, Vic.362, Tas.356, NQ 355, NT 342
1986	New South Wales	386	Adelaide	WA 386, Army 383, Tas.383, Vic.382, SA 379, Qld.375, NQ 374, NT 372
1987	No Competition			
1988	South Australia	379	Sydney	Tas.376, WA 374, NSW 373, Army 373, Qld. 367, NQ 366, NT 362, RAAF/Navy 345, ACT 337, Vic.335

In addition to the three matches above, additional prizes were provided as follows:

\*The Dewar Trophy – given for the winner of the aggregate of the two service matches

\*\* The Sweet Aggregate – trophy provided by J. W. Sweet of the Daily Telegraph Rifle Club for the team with the highest score across all three Commonwealth series matches.

† WA and Army tied, so shot another stage, Army 385 and WA 374

## **B5: The Empire Match 1907-1988**

(years in which Australia competed)

A Challenge Trophy, to be held by the country winning the same until the next Competition. Bronze medals will also be presented to the Captain, Adjutant, and each member of the winning team

*Details of Match:* Open to teams consisting of eight past or present members of the Naval, and Military Forces of the United Kingdom, Canada, South Africa, India, New Zealand, Australia and other units of the British Empire, and accredited to the Council of the Rifle Association or Associations of such units respectively. Note: The term Naval and Military Forces to include Regulars of the Army and Navy, Local permanent Forces, Militia, Yeomanry, Volunteers, Territorials, and Rifle Clubs established by the various Governments.

Empire Match be fired over 300, 600, 900 and 1000 yards with 15 shots at each range (1953)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Won By</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Where fired</b>	<b>Other Scores</b>
1907	Australia	2104	Sydney	New Zealand 2046 Great Britain 2071
1909	Australia	2088	Sydney	New Zealand 1979
1910	Great Britain	2177	England	Canada 1936 Australia 2040 India 1953 Singapore 1972
1913	Great Britain	2210	England	Australia 2120 Canada 2073 India 1973
1919	Great Britain	2112	England	Australia 2046 New Zealand 1958 Canada 2105
1920	Australia	2094	Melbourne	Great Britain 2071 New Zealand 2046
1924	Australia	2248	England	South Africa 2216 GB 2181 Canada 2174 India 2088
1928	England	2203	England	Australia 2186 India 2174 Canada 2156
1937	Australia	2222	England	Canada 2205 England 2205 India 2150
1938	England	2260	Sydney	Australia 2237 NZ 2226

				South Africa 2208
1948	Australia	2191	Bisley	Britain 2136 Canada 2122
1953	Canada	1826	Bisley	NZ 1793, Australia 1790 Britain 1772 British West Indies 1718
1956*	Great Britain	1450	Bisley	Canada 1424, South Africa 1410, Australia 1402, British West Indies 1366
1958*	Australia	1443	Melbourne	Great Britain 1407
1960	Great Britain	1440	Bisley	NZ 1438, Canada 1424, South Africa 1409, Rhodesia & Nyasaland 1400, West Indies 1397, Australia 1386
1961	New Zealand	1476	Trentham, NZ	Australia 1457
1962	Australia	1503	Perth	NZ 1494
1964	Canada	1460	Bisley	Australia 1453, Great Britain 1437, Northern Rhodesia 1425
1965	Australia	1447	Trentham, NZ	NZ 1431

\*Teams of 8, 600 and 1,000 yards only

Year	Won By	Score	Where fired	Other Scores
March 1968	Australia	1482	Melbourne	GB 1424, Canada 1387
July 1968	Australia	1436	Bisley	Canada 1424, GB 1391, Ch. Isl. 1374, Jamaica 1355, Kenya 1316
Jan. 1972	New Zealand	1483	Trentham, New Zealand	Australia 1474
March 1972	Australia	1529	Melbourne	New Zealand 1514 Canada 1491
Feb. 1974	Great Britain	1468	Canberra	Australia 1450
July 1974	Great Britain	1472	Bisley	Canada 1446, Australia 1428, Ch. Islands (?)
Mar. 1975**	New Zealand	1543.96	Canberra	Australia 1539
Jan. 1976‡	Australia	1475.96	Trentham, New Zealand	New Zealand 1440.75
July 1976†	Australia	1909	Bisley	Great Britain 1907 Canada 1897 Ch. Islands 1882 New Zealand 1865
1978	Australia	1877	Bisley	Great Britain 1871 Canada 1843
Jan. 1979**	Great Britain	1845.107	Canberra	New Zealand 1817.92 Australia 1804.97
1981	New Zealand	2267.194	Trentham, New Zealand	Australia 2230.175

1982	Canada	1894	Bisley	Great Britain 1892 New Zealand 1879 Australia 1860
1984	New Zealand	1938.151	Brisbane	Australia 1937.140 Great Britain 1931.136 Canada 1872.112
1985	Great Britain	1883	Bisley	Australia 1879, Canada 1858, Ch. Islands 1841 USA 1832, West Indies 1812, Zimbabwe 1807 Kenya 1764
1986	Australia	1869.103	Adelaide	New Zealand 1856.102
1987	Great Britain	1939	Ottawa, Canada	Australia 1924 Canada 1907 West Indies 1851
<b>THE AUSTRALIA MATCH</b>				
1988	England	1960.196	Sydney	Australia 1954.180 Canada 1954.123 New Zealand 1945.148 Ch. Islands 1934.141 Scotland 1930.149 USA 1908.128 Wales 1901.128 Kenya 1883.100

\*Teams of 8, 600 and 1,000 yards only

\*\*Fired at 300, 600, 700 and 800 metres.

‡ A Queensland official and Goodwill team, a President's team and a Ladies team also fired in this match

† Teams of 10, 10 shots to count at each 300, 600, 900, 1,000 yards

## **B6: ‘Rajah of Kolapore’s’ Imperial Challenge Cup 1902-1988**

(years in which Australia competed)

The Challenge Cup, presented in 1871, by H.H. the late Rajah of Kolapore, and a Special Commemorative Souvenir, given by the NRA to the Captain, Adjutant, and each member of the winning team.

*Match Details:* A team match of eight men, the aggregate at 300, 500 and 600 yards with service rifles, with ten shots and one sighting shot at each distance per man, with two targets per team and a one hour time limit.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Winner</b>	<b>Distance in yards</b>	<b>No. of shots at each</b>	<b>Scores</b>	<b>HPS</b>
1901	England	200, 500 & 600 yards	7	759	840
1902	Australia	“	“	770	“
1903	Australia	“	“	771	“
1904	New Zealand	“	“	719	“
1905	Canada	“	“	758	“
1906	Canada	“	“	729	“
1907	England	“	“	778	“
1908	England	300, 500 & 600 yards	“	762	“
1909	Canada	200, 500 & 600 yards	“	765	“
1910	England	“	“	798	“
1911	England	“	“	759	“
1912	England	“	“	761	“
1913	England	“	“	790	“
1914	Australia	“	“	776	“
1919	England	“	10	1060	1200
1920	South Africa	“	“	1111	“
1924	South Africa	300, 500 & 600 yards	7	1115	1200
1928	England	“	“	1094	“
1937	Australia	“	“	1121	“

1948	England	“	10	1118	“
1953	Australia	“	“	1121	“
1956	Great Britain	“	“	1130	“
1960	New Zealand	“	“	1130	“
1964	Australia	300, 500 & 600 yards	10	1135	1200
1968	Great Britain			1145	
1974	Great Britain			1151	
1976	Australia			1164	
1978	Australia			1167	
1979*					
1982	England			1172	
1985	Australia			1174	

\*Australian Goodwill Team

**Note:** Victoria competed in 1977, NSW in 1980 and 1983.

## B7: McKinnon Challenge Cup 1901-1920

(years in which Australia competed)

The Challenge Cup, given in 1891 by Colonel McKinnon, and a Special Commemorative Souvenir, given by the NRA to the Captain and Adjutant, and each member of the winning team. 12 man teams. Later called the McKinnon Long Range Match.

*Match details:* An International Team match in uniform with service rifles, the aggregate of 900 and 1000 yards, with ten shots per man and one sighting shot, teams of 12.

Year	Winner	Distance in Yards	No. of shots at each unlimited	Scores	HPS
1901	Scotland	800	5 volleys	50	-
1902	Canada	800, 900 & 1000	10 shots	1375	1800
1903	England	“	“	1408	“
1904	England	“	“	1435	“
1905	Scotland	“	“	1469	“
1906	Scotland	“	“	1445	“
1907	England	“	“	1513	“
1908	England	“	“	1367	“
1909	Canada	“	“	1617	“
1910	Canada	“	“	1567	“
1911	Canada	“	“	1581	“
1912	England	“	“	1582	“
1913	Australia	900 & 1000	15 shots	1534	“
1914	Australia	“	“	1531	“
1919	England	“	“	1497	“
1920	Scotland	“	“	1455	“
1924	South Africa	“	10 shots	1074	
1928	Australia	“	“	1084	
1937	Scotland	“	“	1002	

1948	Australia		10 shots	1050	“
1953	New Zealand	“	“	1005	“
1956	England	“	“	1047	“
1960	New Zealand	“	“	1052	“

Year	Winner	Distance in Yards	No. of shots at each unlimited	Scores	HPS
1964	Canada	900 & 1000	10 shots	1024	1200
1968	Australia			1055	
1974	Scotland			1082	
1976	Australia			1095	
1978	England			1098	
1982	England			1133	
1985	England			1114	

## B8: The Bruce White Match 1974-1988

First match 1974 : 15 shots at 300 yards with teams of five  
From 1975: Fired at 300 metres

Year	Winner	Score Hits	Where fired	Other scores
Jan. 1974	Queensland	359	Hobart	NSW 358, Vic. 354, WA 351, Nth.Qld.351, SA 346, Tas.341
Feb. 1975	Victoria	368.32	Canberra	NSW 367.38, Qld.366.37, WA 365.25, NQ 358.27, Tas. 358.25, SA 355.28, Army 340.20
August 1975	New South Wales	373.37	Belmont	WA 367.37, Qld.365.34, Vic.364.31, NQ 364.29, SA 363.25, Tas.363.29, Army 355.28
1976	No Competition			
Jan.1977	New South Wales	372.41	Sydney	Qld.370.31, WA 368.26, SA 367.25, Vic.366.62, Tas.363.33, NQ 362.28, Army 354.21
Nov. 1977	Western Australia	366.27,	Canberra	NSW 361.21, Army 357.18, Qld. 356.24, NQ 356.26, Vic. 356.24, Tas.352.24, SA 351.25
1978	New South Wales	372.39	Perth	SA 368.23, WA 367.33, Tas.364.32, Vic.361.30, Qld.360.13, Army 360.27, NQ 355.26
1979	Queensland	368.14	Adelaide	Vic.365.37; NSW 362.26, SA 359.24, WA 358.30, NQ 353.27, Army 353.24, Tas.351.16
1980	No Competition			
1981	Victoria	364.28	Mackay,	NSW 364.26, NQ 362.25, WA 362.23, Qld.361.25, Tas.361.25, SA 360.31, Army 351.19
March 1982	New South Wales	371.39	Melbourne	Vic.367.32, Qld.366.31, WA 365.29, SA 365.27, Tas.360.24, Army 359.24, NQ 353.25
Dec. 1982	Western Australia	362.27	Hobart	Tas.361.29, NSW 360.28, NQ 355.21, Qld.353.25, Army 352.19, SA 348.21, Vic. 346.14
1983	No Competition			

1984	New South Wales	366.32	Brisbane	WA 365.34, Qld.364.34, NQ 364.30, Vic.362.24, SA 361.27, Tas.359.26, Army 352.20
1985	South Australia	364.37	Perth	WA 364.26, NQ 363.30, Vic.359.29, NSW 359.29, Army 358.27, Qld.354.24, NT 354.12, Tas.352.23
1986	Queensland	368.33	Adelaide	NSW 365.27, NT 364.30, SA 363.32, NQ 363.32, Vic.362.29, Army 360.22, WA 356.35, Tas.356.28
1987	No Competition			
1988	Victoria	371.32	Sydney	WA 370.42, SA 368.27, NSW 367.32, NT 364.29, Qld.363.32, ACT 363.30, Army 363.27, Tas.361.26, NQ 357.34, RAAF/Navy 332.10

## B9: Denzil Macarthur-Onslow Match 1974-1988

From 1974: fired at 900 yards, 15 shots, with teams of five

From 1975: fired at 800 metres

Year	Winner	Score Hits	Where fired	Other scores
Jan. 1974	Queensland	334	Hobart	NSW 327, SA 324, Tas.324, Vic.321, NQ 317, WA 303
Feb. 1975	Victoria	357.14	Canberra	NSW 356.14, Qld.354.25, SA 350.20, WA 349.18, Tas.348.16, NQ 343.18, Army 308.9*
Aug. 1975	South Australia	362.28	Belmont	Vic.362.23, Tas.361.22, WA 360.27, Qld.359.23, NSW 355.28, NQ 353.25, Army 341.20
1976	No Competition			
Jan. 1977	Western Australia	366.26	Anzac Range, Sydney	Tas.365.26, SA 361.20, Vic.358.19, Qld.355.15, NSW 354.19, Army 353.18, NQ 349.22
Nov.1977	New South Wales	363.32	Canberra	Vic.362.28, WA 358.31, Tas.355.15, Qld.352.13, SA 347.13, NQ 337.18, Army 336.16
1978	New South Wales	340.10	Perth	NQ 336.20, WA 335.15, Vic.333.18, Tas.332.12, Qld.331.17, SA 327.13, Army 319.16
1979	South Australia	347.23	Adelaide	Tas.345.23, NSW 345.18, Army 342.21, Qld.336.13, NQ 334.13, WA 334.13, Vic.333.12
1980	No Competition			
1981	New South Wales	368.41	Mackay	Qld.365.24, SA 363.33, Army 362.27, Tas.362.24, WA 359.26, Vic.359.18, NQ 353.20
March 1982	Western Australia	362.24	Melbourne	NSW 359.31, Qld.358.28, SA 357.19, Army 356.19, Tas.355.27, NQ 353.24, Vic. 344.21
Dec. 1982	Tasmania	338.21	Hobart	WA 333.12, NSW 332.16, Qld.328.17, NQ 325.13, SA 322.15, Army 321.90, Vic.318.10
1983	No competition			

1984	Queensland	363.27	Brisbane	NSW 362.33, WA 361.25, Tas. 361.22, Vic.358.25, SA 357.22, Army 357.26, NQ 346.18
1985	Western Australia	348.17	Perth	Tas.345.19, NSW 345.13, Qld. 339.27, NT 339.13, SA 335.17, NQ 333.15, Army 333.19, Vic.330.12
1986	Tasmania	362.28	Adelaide	WA 361.29, Qld.358.24, NSW 355.26, SA 352.25, Vic.350.21, Army 345.18, NT 345.17, NQ 344.19
1987	No Competition			
1988	RAAF/Navy	247.22	Sydney	Qld.245.28, Vic.245.27, WA 245.26, NSW 245.20, NQ 244.29, Tas.243.24, ACT 243.20, SA 241.22, Army 239.13, NT 231.13

\*Army team from 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR)

## ANNEX C

### Other International Matches

#### C1: Commonwealth Teams Match 1958

C 'wealth Teams Match February 1958	New Zealand	“	300,600 900 yards	“	971	“	Trentham (NZ)	Great Britain 959, Australia 954
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#### C2: Commonwealth, Canada (Canada), Palma (USA), Pan-Pacific, CAC Trophy and International 1968-1988

Match	Winner	Ranges	Score	Place	Other Scores
C 'wealth Match 1968	Great Britain	600, 900 yds	747	Ottawa, Canada	Canada 744 Australia 734
Canada Match 1968	Canada	300, 500, 600	1140	Ottawa, Canada	Great Britain 1117 Australia 1113
Palma 1971	USA	800, 900, 1000	4,004	Ohio, USA	Great Britain 4,392 Canada 4,344 Australia 4,249
C 'wealth Match 1971	Canada	600, 900	1103	Ottawa, Canada	Great Britain 1,093 Australia 1,047 Trinidad & Tobago 1,045
Canada Match 1971	Great Britain	300, 500, 600	1162	Ottawa, Canada	Australia 1147 Canada 1146 Trinidad & Tobago 1139 New Zealand 1117
CAC Silver Tray Jan. 1972	New Zealand	900, 1,000	1291	Trentham, New Zealand	Australia 1255
Pan-Pacific CAC Trophy March 1972	Australia		1149	Canberra	NZ 1134, Canada 1076
C 'wealth Match 1974	Great Britain		1113. 106	Ottawa, Canada	Australia 1102.85 Canada 1081.81
Canada Match 1974	Great Britain		1174. 152	Ottawa, Canada	Australia 1153.134 Jamaica 1161.138 Canada 1164.172 Aust. Goodwill 1148.116, Zambia 1127.119, Reading 1120.95
Pan-Pacific Jan. 1975	Australia		1918	Sydney	Canada 1875, PNG ( ? )
CAC Trophy ‡ Jan. 1976	Australia		1324. 81	Trentham, New Zealand	NZ 1277.61
		300,			

Pan-Pacific Nov. 1976	Australia	600, 700, 800m	1936. 136	Canberra	NZ 1902.128 Japan 1854.101
C'wealth Match* 1976	Australia		533	Ottawa, Canada	Canada ( ?) Others ( ?)
Canada Match* 1976	Great Britain		1141	Ottawa, Canada	Canada 1128, Australia 1127, NZ 1117, Jamaica 1106
100 <sup>th</sup> Palma* 1976	USA		8658. 201	Ohio, USA	South Africa 8495.227, Great Britain 8465.220 NZ 8435.201 Australia 8432.201 Canada 8431.184
Palma Jan.1979	Australia		3206. 192	Trentham, New Zealand	NZ 3168.199, USA 3165.185, Canada 3084.174, Great Britain 3066.144
International Match Jan. 1979	New Zealand		2798. 223	Trentham, New Zealand	Australia 2793.241 England 2766.223 Canada 2751
C'wealth Match* 1982	Australia		1115	Ottawa, Canada	GB 1096, Canada 1093, NZ 1085, USA 1068, W.Indies 1033
Canada Match* 1982	Australia		1143	Ottawa, Canada	Canada 1139, NZ 1136, GB 1135, USA 1118, W. Indies 1067
Palma 1982	Canada		3214	Ottawa, Canada	Australia 3198, NZ 3186
C'wealth Match 1985	Canada		1055	Ottawa, Canada	Aust.1024, GB 1020
Canada Match 1985	Canada		1174	Ottawa, Canada	GB 1168, Aust.1153
Palma 1985	USA		3408	Bisley	GB 3377, Aust.3358, Can.3341, Jersey 3318, Zim.3260, W. Indies 3175, Kenya 3150, France 3134, Germany 3117
Canada Match 1987	Australia		1188	Ottawa, Canada	Canada 1184, GB 1181, West Indies 1165
C'wealth Match 1987	Australia		1154	Ottawa, Canada	Canada 1151, GB 1147, West Indies 1115
Palma 1988	Australia		3374. 211	Sydney	GB 3353.203, NZ 3348.186, USA 3332.183, Canada 3328.170, Channel Islands 3248.146, Kenya 3238.141

‡A President's and Queensland team also fired in this match. It is not known whether this match was for the CAC Silver Tray a la NZ 1972 or the CAC Trophy a la Sydney 1972.

\*Goodwill Team

## ANNEX D National and other Matches

### D1: Australian National Queen's Prize 1972-1988

Match	Winner	State	Score	Place
1972	R. Richards-Mousley	SA	339	Canberra
1973	J.W. Sweet	NSW	347	Canberra
1974	L.J. McInerney	SA	335	Canberra
1975	K.N. Sadler	WA	344.25	Canberra
1976	W Angel	NSW	348.30	Canberra
1977	P.R. Hallett	Victoria	342.21	Canberra
1978	G.M. Ayling	Tasmania	343.23	Canberra
1979	S. J. Golinski	NSW	343.34	Canberra
1980	R.E. Negus	ACT	345.17	Canberra
1981	R. Spillman	SA	346.19	Canberra
1982	R.J. Swindle	NSW	345.21	Canberra
1983	K. Hills	ACT	347.24	Canberra
1984	R.C.H. Courtney	ACT	352.29	Canberra
1985	J. Corbett	Victoria	342.21	Canberra
1986	S.J. Golinski	NSW	343.30	Canberra
1987	G.J. Crowe	NSW	344.29	Canberra
1988	R. Parker	NSW	326.24	Canberra

### D2: Interstate and International Ladies Teams and Veterans Matches 1968-1988

Teams of five firing 10 shots at each 300,600, 700 and 900 yards for the Medland Trophy (interstate) and the John Collinson Shield (vs. New Zealand) – Ladies shot over 300,600,900 and 1,000 yards.

Teams of five, aged 60 plus, firing at each 300,600, 700 and 900 yards for the Don Cook Perpetual Trophy - Veterans

Year	Winner	Ranges	Scores	Place	Other Scores
First Ladies Medland Match 1968	New South Wales	300, 600, 700, 900 yards	880	Melbourne	Qld.872, Vic.850, Tas.848
Medland 1969	New South Wales		920	Brisbane	Qld.899, Vic.871
Medland 1970	New South Wales		954	Sydney	Vic.944, Qld.941, Tas.917

Medland 1971	New South Wales		941	Hobart	Qld.941, Vic.937, Tas.934, SA 930
Collison Match 1 <sup>st</sup> Int'l Ladies Teams Match 1972	Australia	300, 600, 900 yards	862	Adelaide	N.Z. 832
Medland 1972	Queensland		932	Adelaide	SA 925, WA 924, Tas.923 Vic.908, NSW 907
Medland 1973	New South Wales		957	Brisbane	Vic.956, Qld.956, SA 940, Tas.555
Collinson Jan 1974*	New Zealand		??	Trentham New Zealand	Australia 1688.42
Medland Oct 1974	New South Wales		936	Perth	Results not known
Medland March 1975	Victoria	300, 600, 700, 900 yards	946.65	Melbourne	NSW 941.52, SA 930.39, WA 920.50, Tas.919.49, Qld.910.49
Medland Jan.1976	Western Australia		935.59	Sydney	Results not known
Collison Jan 1976	Washed Out			Sydney	
Medland Mar. 1977	New South Wales		954.58	Melbourne	WA 952.73, Qld.946.66, SA 936.54, Tas.923.47, Vic.916.48
Collison 1978	New Zealand		2157.110	Trentham New Zealand	Australia 2141.109
Medland 1978	New South Wales		917.54	Hobart	WA 916.45, Qld.900.41, SA 896.47, Vic.889.39, Tas.864.31
Medland 1979	New South Wales		951.63	Perth	Results not known
Collison 1980	Australia		1920.129	Brisbane	NZ 1909.120
1980	New South Wales		924.48	Brisbane	Vic.917.45, WA 915.49, SA 913.53, Qld.904.45, Tas.895.37
Medland 1981	New South Wales		927.53	Adelaide	Vic.917.45, WA 915.49, SA 913.53, Qld.904.45, Tas.895.37
Medland 1982	New South Wales		951.52	Sydney	Qld.947.64, WA 944.54, SA 931.59, Tas.908.44, Vic.901.48
Collison 1983	New Zealand			Trentham New Zealand	Australia
Medland 1983	New South Wales		935.57	Hobart	WA 910.47, Tas.904.37, Vic.902.34, SA 901.42, Qld 900.34
Medland 1984	New South Wales		942.63	Perth	Results not known

Medland 1985	New South Wales		954.54	Melbourne	WA 938.54, SA 933.49, Vic.923.53, Qld.921.50, Army 911.42, Tas.909.42
Collison 1986	Australia		1877.106	Brisbane	NZ 1845.105
Medland 1986	Queensland		965.63	Brisbane	NSW 949.42, WA 945.54, Vic.937.52, Army 936.59, SA 936.43, Tas.915.40
Medland 1987	New South Wales		942.50	Adelaide	Vic.931.46, Qld.925.36, SA 918.49, Tas.915.44, WA 901.41, Army 900.37
First Veterans Don Cook Trophy 1987	Queensland No.1	300, 600, 700 and 900 yards	933.48	Adelaide	NSW 921.41, Vic. Blue 920.46, SA No.1 916.43, WA 913.38, SA No.2 906.43, Vic. Maroon 906.40, Tas.899.40, Qld. No.2 894.36
Medland 1988	Victoria		940.54	Canberra	NSW 933.60, Qld.933.48, Army 923.51, SA 920.46, WA 908.44, Tas.894.37
Australian Bicentenary Florence Ferguson Match 1988	Australia		972.60	Sydney	Great Britain 967.73, NZ 959.71
Don Cook Veterans 1988	New South Wales		956.59	Canberra	Qld2. 937.52, Vic.Blue 937.51, Qld1. 930.58, SA1. 922.44, Vic.Maroon 920.45, SA2 919.41, WA 911.44, Tas. 894.39

\*Goodwill Team

### D3: Under 25s 1979-1988

**West Australia Match** interstate teams match from 1979: Team of five, 10 shots at 300,600,700, 900 yards (300,600, 700, 800m from 1981) plus service shooting matches

West Australian 1979	South Australia		953.62	Adelaide	Vic.952.48, WA 951.63, NSW 946.67, Qld. 943.67
1980	No Competition				
West Australian	New South		971.73	Mackay	Vic.967.72, SA 967.67,

1981	Wales			Qld. 964.62, WA 963.56, NQ 960.61
Australasian Trophy 1981			New Zealand	
1982	England	580	Bisley	Australia 572, NZ 569
West Australian 1982	Queensland	945.43	Melbourne	Vic.940.43, NSW 933.59, WA 932.61, SA 928.40, Tas.918.40, NQ 888.40
1983	No Competition			
Australasian Match 1984	Australia	1343.93	Brisbane	NZ 1329.77
West Australian 1985	Queensland	956.57	Perth	NSW 955.68, Vic.951.48, WA 940.59, SA 935.44, Army 933.42, NQ 916.55, Tas.901.37
Australasian Match 1986	New Zealand	1292.54	Adelaide	Aust.1277.59
1987	No Competition			
West Australian 1988	South Australia	971.62	Sydney	NSW 960.61, Qld.958.59, NQ 946.50, WA 944.57, Vic.939.60, Army 921.38, tas.908.32

**ANNEX E**  
**Arms in service used by Volunteers, militia and rifle clubs**  
**1855 and 1887**

	<b>Arms in Service Between 1855 and 1887 - Used by Volunteer Forces, Militia and Rifle Clubs</b>	<b>Colonies</b>
	<b>MUZZLE-LOADING RIFLES AND CARBINES</b>	
1	Sea Service Rifle, Calibre .758" <sup>1</sup>	VIC
	Pattern 53 Enfield Rifle .577"	ALL
	Pattern 56 Enfield Short Rifle .577"	ALL
	Pattern 53 Enfield Artillery Carbine .577" <sup>2</sup>	ALL
	Volunteer Pattern Cavalry Carbine .577"	ALL
	Pattern 58 Naval Rifle .577"	VIC, NSW, SA, TAS
	Lancaster Oval Bore Carbine .577" Government Bore	VIC
	Lancaster Oval Bore Carbine .568" Reduced Bore	VIC
	Hay Pattern Rifle .577"	ALL
	<b>CAPPING BREECH-LOADING RIFLES AND CARBINES</b>	
2	Calisher & Terry Rifle .539"	QLD
	Calisher & Terry Carbine .539"	QLD-NSW Matches
	Westley Richards 'Whitworth' Carbine .451"	VIC- NSW Matches
	<b>BREECH-LOADING RIFLES AND CARBINES (FOIL CASE)</b>	
3	Snider Conversion Enfield Long Rifle .577" <sup>3</sup>	QLD, NSW
	Snider Conversion Enfield Short Rifle .577"	TAS
	Snider Conversion Naval Rifle .577"	NSW, TAS, WA
	Snider Conversion Artillery & Cavalry Carbine .577"	NSW, QLD, WA
	Henry Breech-loading Rifle .450" Boxer to 1877, then .577/ .450"	NSW
	Henry Breech-loading Carbine Artillery & Cavalry .450" Short/ .577/ .450"	NSW
	Martini-Henry Rifle Marks I & II .577/ .450" <sup>4</sup>	VIC, WA
	Martini-Henry Carbine Artillery & Cavalry .577/ .450" <sup>5</sup>	See Notes
	<b>MUZZLE-LOADING MATCH AND MILITARY MATCH RIFLES</b>	
4	Rigby Match Rifle, intercolonial and international matches	ALL COLONIES
	Henry Match Rifle	ALL
	Whitworth match Rifle	ALL
	Turner Match Rifle	ALL
	Metford Match Rifle	ALL
	Kerr Match Rifle	ALL

<sup>1</sup> Predominantly used by the Victorian Naval Brigade

<sup>2</sup> Insufficient numbers to be used in competitions between Volunteer forces or rifle clubs - ditto for the Volunteer pattern rifles

<sup>3</sup> Limited use of Snider long and short rifle and carbine conversions prior to 1878, mainly private purchase for matches in 'breech-loading class'; Qld. carbines commercial issue .

<sup>4</sup> Not available in SA until 1879; New South Wales 1886. The Mark III Pattern post-1880 in Australia.

<sup>5</sup> Not available in Australian colonies until mid-1880s, except for a small number privately purchased by Qld. In 1878.

## ANNEX F

### Targets 1860s

By 1860 the targets in use by both the Volunteers and early rifle clubs were of the same dimensions as those used by the British Army. The targets themselves consisted of a cast-iron or “Bessemer Steel” module six feet high by two feet wide (6’x2’), with the face of the target scribed in a grid system of six inch squares.

In the days of the muzzle-loading rifle, the aiming mark (which we will call the ‘Bullseye’), had a value of four points. All strikes within this circle scored four. The next circle was called the ‘Centre’, with a scoring value of three. Any strikes on the rest of the target, outside the centre ring, was an ‘Outer’, with a value of two points. No sighting shots were permitted, which meant that the competitor had to ensure that his rifle shot true to form, or attended a practice shoot prior to the match commencing.

Generally speaking, the 6’x2’ target module used did not contain inscribed circles. There was an exception to this where local Volunteer ranges were limited in distance, and the only target permitted was the 6’x2’ module up to a maximum distance of 300 yards. These short-range targets were generally propped up at any intermediate distance required using a length of timber secured to a projection at the back of the target to support it in the near-vertical position. On completion of practice, the targets were laid flush with the ground.

Target dimensions and scoring values were categorized by classes; first, second and third. As described above, the third-class target dimensions were 6’x2’ with an aiming mark of 8” (the ‘Bullseye’), counting 4 points. The ‘Centre’ ring was a 24” circle counting 3, and the rest of the target counted 2 points. These targets were used up to, and including, 300 yards. There was a variation to the target dimension in Volunteer matches run by the colonial rifle associations whereby two 6’x2’ targets were joined together and the scoring rings being centred over the middle join to create a 6’x4’ target.

The second-class target was used for shooting between 400 and 600 yards. Four 6’x2’ targets were joined together to provide a 6’x8’ target. The aiming mark was increased to two feet, with a scoring value of 4. The centre ring was done away with, and a shot on the balance of the target area scored 3.

The first-class target comprised six targets joined together, providing an overall dimension of 6’x12’ and used for targets beyond 600 yards. The ‘Bullseye’ was three feet in diameter scoring 4, with a hit on the remainder of the target scoring 3.

The circular scoring rings remained in force until 23 September 1862 when in accordance with the NRA of Great Britain the aiming mark, and scoring values were changed to square dimensions. Apparently this was not a popular move as by June 1864 the squares reverted to circles. June also saw the addition of another scoring ring by the subdivision of the rest of target. The values now were: Bullseye - 4, Centre - 3, Outer - 2 and rest of target - 1. It was also at this time canvas targets were experimented with at the VRA matches in Victoria, however gusty wind conditions soon pulled some of the

targets out of their supports and injured several markers, which terminated the use of canvas targets until some 30 years later.

With targets in use between 100 to 200 yards, marking was carried out on cessation of practice by the shooters themselves, however as the distances were extended, markers were necessary to score the individual shots. This necessitated the construction of an earthen mound or 'mantelet' some 15 feet to the front of the target containing a recessed seat for the marker to observe the strike of the bullet and by way of a complicated system of signals using four different coloured flags, signalled the value, and the location of the strike on the target.

Despite the protection of the mound, a number of markers were injured through lead particles or "splashes" coming back from the iron targets. Worse still there were periodic marker deaths, despite the danger flag, as a result of marksmen not realising at long range that the marker had ventured out to wash out the strikes (with lime wash) on completion of the practice. In the 1880s moves were made to change the system of marking whereupon the marker was protected by being enclosed in a shed, with scoring indicated by way of a disc extended on a pole through a slit in the shed wall. It was also the marker's job to keep a duplicate list of participant's scores.

Even with the protection of shed mantelets – and there were still country ranges in particular where iron targets were still in use as well – markers were still being shot or injured from lead 'splashes'. Usually this occurred when the shooter could not clearly see the target that he was assigned to, and shot at the wrong target – in this case, the one that was being marked. More often than not it was a lack of care by the marker himself that resulted in injuries or even a fatality. It was not until the late 1890s that the system still in use today was instituted, with the marker protected by a concrete earth-covered wall mantelet and the target lowered into a pit for marking. This procedure finally eliminated injuries to markers.<sup>795</sup>

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<sup>795</sup> The essay 'Targets' contributed for this history by R. McMahon, April 2010.

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Writing what I thought at first would be relatively straightforward history of rifle shooting, filled with trophies and rifle matches, became a much more demanding but always fascinating task. It perhaps should not come as any surprise that Australia's oldest national sporting organisation had a complex history, made all the more interesting to me as a military historian because of its traditional ties with the Australian Army and Defence.

On all sides I was encouraged and supported to push on by Major-General John Hartley AO, the president of the NRAA, John Fitzgerald, the Chairman, and members of the NRAA Council, especially Gordon Duncan. The former VRA Secretary Chris Gillard was a supporter of the project and gave me unfettered access to the VRA archives, while the WARA also supported a productive visit to WA to research their side of the history.

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**Andrew Kilsby April 2013**

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