



A.G. Gibbs and colleagues explain the 2 pounder barrel gun to Lord Gowrie and his Aide-de-Campe.

Post Script – ANZAC Day in Dakar ***Some reflections and Holden connections***

by Louisa Gibbs

It's a long way from Fisherman's Bend to Senegal on the westernmost tip of Africa, so it was humbling to hear that so many people were interested in the report that my father, Roger Gibbs, prepared following the first ANZAC Day Service in Dakar in 2015 (HRC Newsletter 104, September 2015).

For this year's service we decided to gather personal stories from our ex-pat community. We number about 40, including kids, but even within that small group we had relatives who had fought in the battles of Tobruk and El Alamein, navigated bomber planes with silk handkerchief maps hidden in jacket pockets, were army doctors on the battlefields of the Somme, buoyed the troops' spirits as army chaplains, served in the jungles of Burma, piloted Catalinas searching for German submarines, volunteered with the Women's Air Training Corps, pioneered radar technology and even landed on the shores of Gallipoli with the Light Horse Brigade.

We collected photos of these ANZACS and projected them as the Last Post played. There wasn't a dry eye as the photos appeared – as if turning the pages of a family album – whilst the noble bugle call filled the African dawn air.

My contribution to this collage included photos of my grandfather – A.G. (Bill) Gibbs.

Right through the 1930s, Granddad was in the Army Reserves and very interested in what the Army Engineers did. As World War II unfolded, Holden performed the very important role of producing munitions for the war effort. I have gathered from reading the "General Motors Holden Australia War Record" that there were 2,786 employees who served in the armed forces as well as 500 separate projects that Holden undertook to support the war effort! So, I felt that by contributing photos of Granddad and colleagues demonstrating to Governor-General Lord Gowrie some of the items being manufactured, it would be a way to recognize the service of those at Holden whose dedication and innovation was so crucial to the Australian armed forces' success. He may be wearing his civvies rather than in his Reservist's uniform in these photos, but, knowing Granddad, I'm sure it would have been the work of the Holden employees that made him most proud. What a display of ingenuity and skill to arm and equip the Australian troops, despite the challenges of geography, limited years of experience in manufacturing and small population!



L-R: Gathering for the Dakar ANZAC Dawn Service; We marched to the beat of the drum from the ceremony to the gunfire breakfast; Australian artist Loman Pawlitschek created a metal "Slouch Hat Sculpture"; Military Attachés salute during the Last Post; the US Ambassador and Deputy US Ambassador lay their wreath.

I'm pleased to share that we continued to receive enthusiastic participation from the diplomatic community for our 2016 Service, boosting our numbers to 70 for the ceremony. Wonderfully, two representatives from the closest Australian Embassy in Ghana – including the Deputy High Commissioner – flew in specially to join us.

And with them they brought some news – that they believed some ANZACS are, in fact, buried in Senegal.

Following the Service, I chased this information. Sure enough, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission reports that at the Bel-Air Cemetery in Dakar, there is a special memorial erected to John Donald Campbell, 2nd Class Stoker on the HMAT Barambah, who died of meningitis aged 21. Born in Launceston, at some stage he must have moved to Melbourne: he enlisted in Middle Park and his parents resided in Toorak. On the 15th of August this year, it will be 100 years since he died, so we plan to make a trip to the cemetery that day to visit John Campbell's grave.

For us in 2016, Senegal feels a long, long way from home. We can only imagine what it must have been like for his parents a century ago. We'll take some flowers to lay, which we suspect his family never had the chance to do.

Lest we forget.