

Chapter 3

First District Depot Company AAOC

1939 - 1942

The Ammunition Company was re-organised in 1939 into the First District Depot Company AAOC and the headquarters moved to Enoggera later in the year. The strength of the unit grew to 135 and its role was to supplement the permanent Ordnance Depot at Gaythorne. The unit consisted of a Workshop Section and a Stores Section (general stores and ammunition stores). The Stores Section was responsible for the issue and receipt of all stores and equipment except for food and forage.

In May 1939 the unit camped at Gaythorne in the area which later became the site of 1 BOD Officers Mess. LT A.J. Pixley commanded the Workshop Section and LT H.N. Vidgen commanded the Stores Section.

The Stores Section was given the task by the civilian store holders to clean mountains of tent pegs. This task appeared rather menial and dissatisfaction, bordering on insubordination, was expressed by all troops who came to camp expecting more adventurous activities. After some very serious discussions between LT Vidgen and the Stores Depot commander, other more meaningful tasks were found in the Stores Depot.

The 1st Military District's mobilization stores were held at the Gaythorne stores depot. These were of WW1 vintage and consisted of outdated guns, horse drawn carriages, tentage, and camp equipment of little real use. The British Government at the end of WW1 had given this equipment to the Australian Armed Forces. It consisted of sufficient equipment to service two Divisions. However, the old wood work, harness etc had not withstood the ravages of many years of storage and fell apart when handled and some equipment was ravaged by white ants.



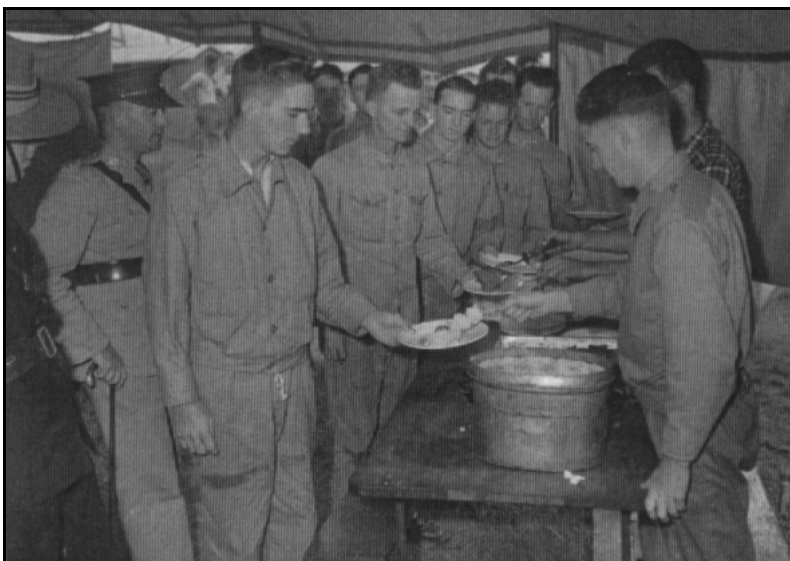
PTE (later COL) I.D. Pettitt at far left, taken at the 1939 camp



*19 year old PTE Pettitt at El
Barbara Palestine, 1941*



(from left to right) P.H. Brown, L.G. Kerr, A McDonald and G.M. McKay at the 1939 campsite. It overlooked the Duncan Oval at Enoggera Barracks (later Gallipoli Barracks).



A Mess Parade at the 1939 camp. Mr S.A. Hall (6th from left) is the father of MAJ R.G. Hall a later OC of the RAAOC ARES Unit in the 1990s.



Mr S.A. Hall 2nd from right.



Troops arriving at the 1939 camp.



Instructions.

Change of Address—Must be at once notified to Unit Headquarters.

Leave of Absence—From any parade of your Unit for any reason whatsoever, must be made in writing to your C.O. prior to date of parade. Liable penalty 10/-.

Three months' leave of absence may be granted by your C.O. should the circumstances warrant it.

Uniform & Equipment—Must be worn on all parades by those in the possession of arms with the exception of N.C.O.'s' classes, when Dress is optional. Those in possession of rifles must bring them to all parades set out for Victoria Barracks, Monastery, Enoggera and Camp of Continuous Training.

Members in possession of rifles are also advised to take every care of their rifle while on issue to them, any damage to rifle (corroded barrel, broken or lost parts), through neglect on their part, must be paid for by the individual. Only underarm and oil issued by your unit must be used in care and cleaning of service rifle. Any damage to rifle, broken parts, broken palitthroughs, etc., must be reported to this office immediately and no attempt must be made to rectify damage by individuals.

Discharge—Members finding it impossible to attend the parade of the unit as set out, should immediately make application for their discharge, setting out the reasons for same, and at same time return all articles of Uniform, Equipment, Books, etc., on issue to them from the Unit to this office.

General—Proficiency in the Unit and individual is the object aimed at, this can only be obtained by the regular attendance of every member at all parades. Members are requested to bear this in mind, and by your regular attendance and interest, assist your officers, N.C.O.s, other members of your unit, including yourself, to carry out the duties entrusted to, and expected of them.

(Sgd) Lieut. H. N. VIDGEN,
Officer Commanding,
1st District Depot Company,
Australian Army Ordnance Corps.

Date	Time	Place	Duration in hrs.
* 4.7.30	8 p.m.	Victoria Barracks	2
* 18.7.30	"	"	2
* 25.7.30	"	"	2
* 8.8.30	8 p.m.	Stores Enoggera	2
* 15.8.30	8 p.m.	W/Shops Via, Bks.	2
* 22.8.30	8 p.m.	Victoria Barracks	2
* 29.8.30	8 p.m.	Bluff Range, Enoggera	2
* 5.9.30	8 p.m.	Victoria Barracks	2
* 12.9.30	"	"	2
* 19.9.30	8 p.m.	Monastery R.R. Edog.	2
* 26.9.30	8 p.m.	Victoria Barracks	2
* 3.10.30	"	"	2
* 10.10.30	"	"	2
* 17.10.30	"	"	2
* 24.10.30	"	"	2
* 31.10.30	"	"	2
* 7.11.30	"	"	2
* 14.11.30	"	"	2
* 21.11.30	"	"	2
* 28.11.30	"	"	2
* 5.12.30	"	"	2

NOTE—Parades shown thus * are Commanding Officers Parades, and must be attended unless leave of absence has been obtained. Shown thus ! are alternative parades, and must be attended for each parade for which leave of absence has been granted.

EFFICIENCY—Can only be obtained by attending 6 days Home Training, 12 days Camp of Continuous Training in addition to completing the Annual Courses for Small Arms laid down for the year, i.e., Rifle, Revolver.

Second part of the First District Depot Company's Programme of Drills for the half-year ended 31 December, 1939.



The Outbreak of WW2

At the outbreak of WW2, an Ordnance Enlistment Centre was established in St Paul's Terrace, Brisbane to process the enlistment of volunteers. A progressive call-up of Militia personnel also commenced. They were required to undertake twelve weeks training and then return to their civilian jobs.



Enlistment Centre

After enlistment the new members moved to the First District Depot Company at Gaythorne for their initial training. The Ordnance Company now occupied quite a large part of the Gaythorne area. The Headquarters now was in a building at Gaythorne which would later become the duty room of 1 Base Ordnance Depot and subsequently 11 Supply Battalion.

LT Vidgen was dispatched immediately with a section of troops to Cowan Cowan on Moreton Island to provide Ordnance services - clothing, reserve stores and issue of ammunition for the guns of the Artillery Battery stationed there. The Artillery Battery consisted only of two old 6 inch Naval guns. The Ordnance detachment spent two weeks there. While they were there, two large unidentified war ships unexpectedly appeared on the scene. This caused the Battery commander a great deal of consternation, as he had to choose between



firing on them or waiting until they could be identified. Fortunately, he opted to wait and to everyone's relief, they turned out to be British.



TCAPT Lawson's HQ which was later the Duty Room of 1 Base Ordnance Depot and 11 Supply Battalion.

On 3 October 1939 the First District Depot Company OC, CAPT Vidgen, was appointed the DADOS in 1ST Military District, with the Company 2IC, LT J.W. Lawson, promoted as temporary CAPT.

WO1 W. Ogle, an Australian Instructional Corps member, was attached to this unit at this time. He was later to be commissioned when posted to 2/1 Ord Stores Coy when that unit was raised and served with distinction in the Middle East and New Guinea. Service in the Middle East was under British command and when decorations were awarded only two awards were made available for Australian personnel - one MBE and one Citation (Mentioned in Despatches).



Two Australians, LT Adams and LT Ogle tossed a coin to see who would get the MBE. LT Ogle lost the toss and received the Mentioned in Despatches.

In August 1940 CAPT Vidgen was seconded to the Second AIF and went to the Middle East as OO1 Sub Depot Stock, 2/1 Ord Stores Coy. At the same time, TCAPT J.W. Lawson was appointed OC of the AAOC Depot. Having enlisted in May 1935 as a PTE, no one at the time could imagine the honour and distinction that would be his in later years as Director Ordnance Services at AHQ. He became Honorary Colonel of the Corps, was awarded the OBE and on retirement was granted the rank of BRIG.

Two members of the First District Depot Company had sons who later became OCs of the major Citizens Force Ordnance units in Queensland, and one PTE also attained that prominent position; CPL T.C. Lovejoy's son, LTCOL D.W. Lovejoy in 1973, PTE S.A. Hall's son, MAJ R.G. Hall in 1997, and PTE I.D. Petitt as a LTCOL in 1967.

Also of interest in 1939 was the arrest of a unit member, SGT G.H. Gray (in civilian life, an accountant). He was with a group of 38 members of the League for Social Justice who raided the Labour Party's Caucus Room at Queensland Parliament House on 4 August 1939 with the following list of demands -

- A stabilized price for all primary producers
- A 40 hour week
- Full time work for the unemployed
- Removal of all bridge and road tolls
- Reduction in taxation and rates
- No reduction in hotel trading hours without a referendum
- Co-operative control by farmers of all primary industries

The group comprised farmers, labourers, tradesmen and businessmen and arrived armed with batons, staples, hammers and 10 rolls of barbed wire, intending to put a fence around the railings of the Caucus Room to keep the police out and the politicians in. The raiders were eventually surrounded, arrested and charged with disturbing the peace. At a later hearing the men were granted bail and TCAPT Lawson was called upon to give a character reference for SGT Gray, whereupon SGT Gray was released.



SGT Gray in later years was reported to have said that, while they did not achieve their main aim of a parliamentary hearing, they did achieve the public attention which they also sought. SGT Gray remained in the Militia, later enlisted in the AIF and finished the war as a Captain. He became a Federal Member of Parliament.

The closure of Militia Ordnance units

In September 1942, Militia Ordnance units in 1st Military District ceased to exist and members transferred to the AIF. Members of the Ordnance units served with distinction in the Middle East and later in New Guinea as well as Malaya and Singapore. A number of these former Militia members achieved higher rank. LTs H.N. Vidgen and J.B. Duncan were promoted to LTCOL while W. Ogle, A.M.E. Davies and G.M. McKay were promoted to MAJ.

Following cessation of WW2 in 1945 the Australian Armed Forces were disbanded and service personnel were allocated to the Interim Army until 1948 when the Australian Regular Army and the Citizen Military Forces came into existence.

This was effectively the end of the Militia, and all members volunteered for overseas service for the duration of the War and one year beyond.

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