

**A History of**

**WALLAROO**  
**RIFLE**  
**CLUB**

**Keith Bailey**  
(S.A.R.A. 51295)

*Other books by the author.....*

Brass amongst the Copper	In Search of Answers
The Wallaroo Mine	KADINA - A Second Look
Men of the Mines	James Boor's Bonanza
Copper City Chronicle	When the Bells Drop
Cornets on the Copper Field	End of the Line
History of Kadina R.S.L.	

## VOLUNTEER DEFENCE FORCE IN WALLAROO.

By the 1850s many of the towns of South Australia, particularly those on the southern coastline, had formed Volunteer Defence Forces to protect their citizens from real or imaginary invaders.

Colonists felt they would be "sitting ducks" for any foreign power (Russia in particular) which wished to sweep in and plunder the rich gold and copper resources that were being mined in great quantities in South Australia and Victoria. It was reasoned that the meagre military forces provided by the Mother Country, England, would be useless in such an attack, if it eventuated, so the establishment of small volunteer units was encouraged by both governments.

Like its neighbouring towns of Kadina and Moonta, Wallaroo had its own VDF by the early 1860s and records show a rifle match having been fired against the Kadina Company in late 1864. However, this force had been disbanded, or members had lost interest, by 1866 and no further references can be found after this date.

The principle reason for the stop and go existence of the unit (a problem encountered in most areas of the State) seems to lie in the inability of its members to find time to take part in the rigorous after-hours and weekend-training schedules because of the demands of their shift work at the local copper mines and smelters.

The real history, as far as Wallaroo is concerned, commences with the formation of the Yorke Peninsula Rifle Association on July 12, 1876, when a group of prominent citizens of the town met at the Cornucopia Hotel to discuss the move, and inaugurate a body which is still in existence in a similar form nearly one hundred and forty years later.

The first practice shoot of the new association was held on Saturday, July 17, 1876 on a rifle range situated midway between the town and a powder magazine at Point Hughes. Seven gentlemen were present on this historic occasion - Mr J.B. Whittington, an accountant with the Kadina and Wallaroo Railway and Pier Company; David Bews, later to become Mayor of Wallaroo and a prominent Member of Parliament; Thomas Godfrey, secretary of the Association; Dr Jay, a local JP; and Messrs Hodges, Johnston (licensee of the Prince of Wales Hotel) and Pengelley. Only three rifles were available - a short breechloader owned by Mr Whittington, a short-barrelled Enfield belonging to Mr Bews, and a sporting rifle of Mr Godfrey's - so only a few rounds were fired over a short range (probably 100 yards). According to the local newspaper's account, "some very good scores were put up" despite the dubiousness of the firearms.

Within a short time stop butts had been erected at the site, danger flags provided, and a marker's hut excavated alongside the target area. However, the range faced the sea and fears were held for the safety of Saturday afternoon strollers who were "absurd enough to walk between the butts and the sea" while shooting was in progress, oblivious to the dangers presented by novice shooters and dangerous rifles.

And dangerous they were, as the newspaper pointed out after Mr Johnston had had a lucky escape from injury when his carbine "burst, with a ringing report, and four inches of the upper portion of his breech was found to be missing."

Apparently the beach walkers cared little about the danger they faced so it was decided to change the location of the range to the sandhills immediately behind the mining company's powder



magazine, where it did not afford as great a threat to public safety. This could very well be the site upon which the range stands today.

Although no details of target construction were published it is logical to assume they were of solid iron, with a painted face on which the hits by ball or bullet could be seen. Each rifleman's shots were observed by a marker concealed in a small hut, and signalled to the firing point by flags. At the completion of each detail the target face was painted over with white paint ready for the next competitor, who fired in rotation and in line. (Two of these iron targets are on display alongside the present clubhouse.)

According to the newspaper, the "Wallaroo Times", "very fair practice was made at the short ranges, but at the longer ranges much practice will be required for wind allowance to be calculated."

As there were no two rifles alike on the range the scores posted were rather poor, therefore it was no surprise that an application was made to the government for better rifles. There would have been great excitement amongst the rifle shooting fraternity when a case of 20 Long Barrel Enfields and two kegs containing 700 rounds of ball cartridges arrived in late September and were being distributed. At least the danger from exploding rifles was over!

With more accurate firearms, and rapidly increasing proficiency amongst its marksmen, the Wallaroo club began looking around for competition other than from among its own members. The result was the first professionally organised match (apart from those, if any, between the former volunteer companies which have not been chronicled) to be held on Yorke Peninsula, between the Wallaroo and Moonta associations.

This historic event took place on Saturday, April 21, 1877, on the Wallaroo range, attracting a large crowd of spectators (including a number of ladies) despite a cool southerly breeze and light rain. There were nine men to each team and Wallaroo won the match by 10 points. David Bews top-scored for Wallaroo and a Mr Nagel for Moonta.

The scores were.....

Wallaroo	D. Bews	62
	W.R. Bristowe	61
	J. Carson	50
	Rev. C.G. Taplin	44
	J.J. Mudge	43
	H. Tonkin	40
	Mr McKenzie	37
	W. Telfer	35
	J. Heath	31
	Total	403
Moonta	H. Nagel	59
	W.J. Phillips	51
	C.J.D. Robjohns	54
	S. Lawrence	49
	J. Jolly	48
	J. Moody	42
	Mr. Leunig	39

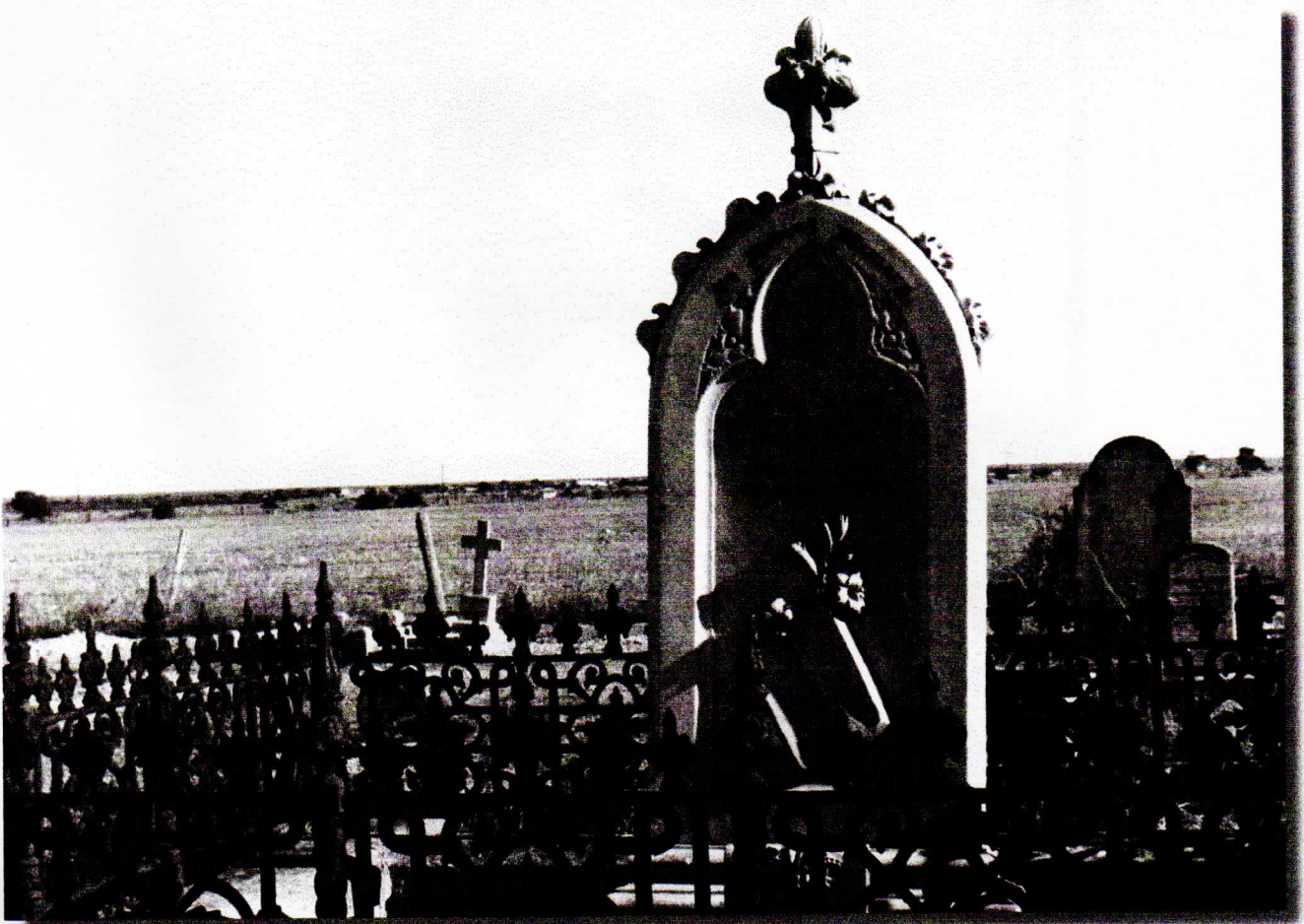


Mr Grimm	27
Mr Horton	21
Total	393

It is perhaps interesting to reflect on some of the men who made up this first Wallaroo team - men who provided the basis for a reputation that soon arose for "a team holding a prominent rank amongst country companies" in those early years. David Bews, no doubt one of the best marksmen to originate from the Peninsula, competed for many years with success in rifle matches, both at Wallaroo and in prize meetings in Adelaide. In 1880 he was a member of the South Australian Rifle Association team which shot against the Western Australian Association at Fulham Range. He was a clerk for the Kadina and Wallaroo Railway and Pier Company until 1878 when he became editor of the Wallaroo Times, then Mayor of Wallaroo from 1881 to 1884. In 1885 he entered Parliament as the Member for Wallaroo, at which time his shooting activities were considerably curtailed. His last



David Bews (photo courtesy of Wallaroo Maritime Museum.)



Bews' grave in the Wallaroo Cemetery overlooks the present rifle range.



notable success was in winning the Parliamentary Match at a Rifle Volunteer Forces prize meeting at Smithfield in August 1885. Six members of parliament contested this match of ten shots over 500 yards. Bews was also selected as a member of a composite "Scottish" team which won the International Match at the same meeting.

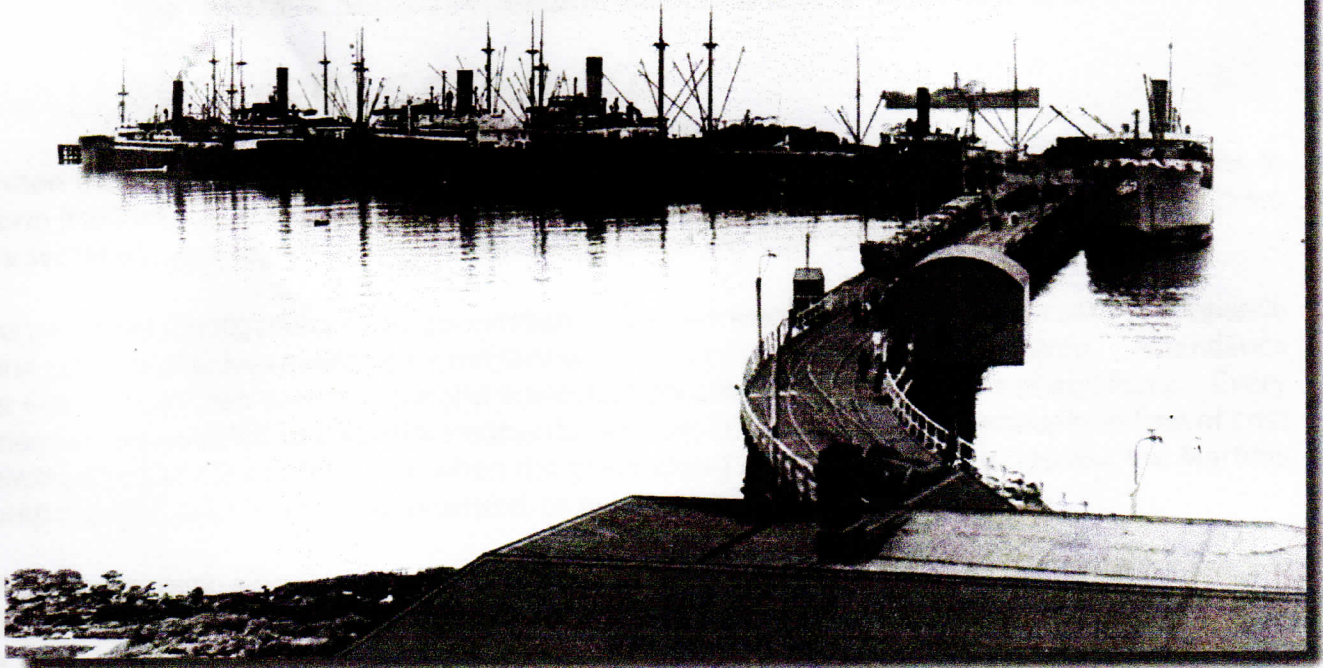
Bews died suddenly in 1891 at the age of 40 and is buried in the Wallaroo cemetery where his grave overlooks the present rifle range.

Mr John Carson, Wallaroo harbour master for 17 years, was a Lieutenant in charge of the Wallaroo Rifle Company. In 1884 a dispute with the Marine and Harbours Board over pilot fees prompted him to resign and move to Tasmania. On leaving he was presented with an inscribed rifle by Wallaroo Company members. Financial problems plagued him to such an extent in Tasmania that he left the job and returned to Wallaroo, re-accepting his commission with the Company. He took part in only one drill, however, before hanging himself, ironically in the Marine Board's boat shed on Price's Jetty, a facility he'd been instrumental in siting after repeated bungling by government surveyors. Their soundings on the depth of water were inaccurate, according to Carson, so he took his own soundings to prove them wrong. Carson's design of the new jetty was then adopted even though work had already begun. Several piles had to be taken up and resited. Carson died on May 27, 1885. He was given a military funeral, complete with firing party, at the Wallaroo cemetery.



John Carson, former Wallaroo Harbourmaster. (photo courtesy of Wallaroo Maritime Museum.)





Price's Jetty, Wallaroo. The boat shed where Carson ended his life is at centre, right.



Church of England Minister,  
the Rev. Charles Goodenough Taplin

The Reverend Charles Goodenough Taplin, Church of England minister of the Wallaroo district from 1872 to 1885, was a sportsman of no mean order, interested in yachting, fishing and rifle shooting. His religious duties prevented him from participating in matches away from Wallaroo but old scores indicate his ability as a marksman. He transferred to Woodville, Adelaide, in 1885, then to Port Lincoln, where he took his own life with an overdose of morphia while in a despondent frame of mind over financial matters.

Mr W. Telfer, a dispensing chemist at the Wallaroo and Adelaide hospitals, then later a chemist on the West Coast, was born in Scotland in 1852. He migrated to Australia in 1874 and worked at his trade in various parts of the State before becoming interested in, and helping establish, the salt industry in South Australia. He was a close friend of David Bews and accompanied him on several trips to compete in Adelaide prize meetings. He retired to Adelaide



and died suddenly on February 15, 1907, of apoplexy.

Bristowe was an employee of the local railway system, as was Mr Whittington, the owner of the defective firearm already mentioned. It is likely that Bews, Bristowe and Whittington were close friends and shooting companions. Whittington, an accountant with the railway, later became its manager after the government purchased it in 1878. He later transferred to the South Eastern Railway System as Traffic Superintendent and died at Naracoorte in January 1893.

## WALLAROO RIFLE COMPANY.

When the Rifle Companies Act of 1878 was proclaimed, Wallaroo was one of the first clubs to form itself into a Company. In January 1879 the Wallaroo Bay Rifle Company, with David Bews as secretary, was registered with Colonel Downes of the Staff Office, Adelaide.

As part of their obligations to the government, members were required to take an oath of allegiance and make themselves available for military service "in cases of invasion or rebellion." Attendance at drills at least ten times a year and inspection parades twice a year were compulsory. Every member was entitled to a Martini Henry rifle on loan, and 100 rounds of ammunition free of cost each year, but the crunch came when the government armoury refused to release the Martinis until the old Enfields had been returned, or members paid for theirs.

The government also stated that it would be prepared to grant 200 pounds for prizemoney if 500 or more members could be recruited, but the men soon found they were required to pay a subscription of 10 shillings per annum towards this amount. This incensed the Wallaroo Company, which promptly forwarded a letter of complaint stating that country members could not afford to compete for any of the money, owing to the expense of travelling to Adelaide and the loss of wages that would be incurred. Besides, they said, they were already required to pay eight pounds per year towards the cost of their uniforms. "To ask us to put our hands deeply into our own pockets to pay for the privilege of being shot at in defending the property of other people is, to say the least, rather unreasonable."

Colonel Downes inspected the Company three months later and instructed Captain I.A. Plummer, the local schoolmaster and officer-in-charge of the Wallaroo soldiers, to take proceedings against those who had not paid their dues. The hostility of the men to these unjust regulations is much in evidence in newspaper reports of the time.

Two unfortunate incidents during 1879 probably did nothing to further the morale of the troops, or, more importantly, improve their public standing. A wandering horse owned by local fisherman Peter Willis decided to scratch its back against one of the suspended iron targets at the range. Its vigorous movements dislodged the heavy target, which fell on the unfortunate animal and killed it.

The second incident could have had more serious repercussions as it involved a resident - one Lee Ping, Chinaman. Lee was peacefully sunning himself under a verandah of the Commercial Hotel when a bullet from a Martini Henry lodged itself in the wall, narrowly missing him. No culprit was ever traced but a subsequent Times article contained a thinly-veiled hint that someone in the rifle company must have been responsible as they were the only persons in the district possessing this make of rifle.

Although accidents did happen on occasion the history of the Volunteers and civilian rifle clubs is remarkably free of reports of fatalities, not only in South Australia but right throughout the



Commonwealth. Research into local history has revealed only one fatal accident, the death of young marker William James Pryor at the Moonta rifle range in 1892. Ten years before, James Davidson had an encounter with a ricocheting bullet in his marker's hut on the Wallaroo range when he omitted to replace the slide over the lookout hole and suffered the consequences. He was hit just under the left eye but was not seriously hurt.

Pryor was marking targets at the Moonta range. Five members of the Moonta Infantry Company and several Mounted men were firing from different sections of the range - the Infantry at 700 yards and the Mounted men at 800 yards. Two Privates, George Wyatt and Lloyd Paynter, were shooting, while Corporal William Phillips and Private William Schwann were observing through telescopes. The men were under the supervision of Sergeant George Meatherill.



William James Pryor's grave in the Moonta cemetery.



Wyatt fired and scored an inner (4), which was signalled. Paynter then fired and missed the target. This was seen by Phillips to raise dust behind the target (Phillips was "using a good glass and could see all the marks on the target"). The miss, normally signalled by the raising of a white flag, was not acknowledged by the marker. Wyatt fired again and scored an eleven o'clock "magpie" (3), which again elicited no response. The men at this stage were becoming concerned, and proceeding to the firing point Sgt Meatherill fired a shot which, although clanging off the target again failed to arouse a signal from the marker.

Meatherill then directed Schwann and Paynter to proceed by buggy to the hut where, to their horror, they found Pryor lying on his back, dead. A bullet had entered the hut and struck him on the left side of his head.

Schwann said in testimony at an inquest that it could have been possible for a bullet from the Mounted's range to have hit the hut by mistake. He had noticed, he said, that one man was firing from the kneeling position and "was not making good shooting." The jury returned a verdict of accidental death, refusing to blame anyone over the unfortunate incident. This was probably little consolation for George Wyatt and Lloyd Paynter, who must have suffered many sleepless nights thereafter, wondering whether it was, in fact, one of their shots that had hit the young man.

## INTERNATIONAL MATCH.

In their quest to establish themselves as the most efficient of the South Australian RVF companies, Wallaroo were delighted when they received a challenge from No.11 Company, Queens Edinburgh (Scotland) Rifle Volunteer Brigade, to fire two matches, the first to be on July 21, 1884, against eight men of the Scottish company, and the second on August 15 against ten Sergeants of the same brigade. The Y.P. company accepted both, to be fired on each team's home range, with one sighter and seven shots to count at 200, 500 and 600 yards.

When results arrived from Scotland by mail on September 1 the Wallaroo men were pleased to find they had defeated the Scots by 61 points. This was a great boost to their egos, outshooting one of the oldest military units in the world. Admittedly the weather had been more than favourable for the Wallaroo team, while in Edinburgh it had been the exact opposite.

Scores for the July 21 match were.....

Wallaroo No 1 Co. Rifle Volunteer Force (Australia)	Pte. Bews	93
	Pte. Gepp	89
	Pte Hood	87
	Pte. Opie	84
	Surgeon Gosse	80
	Pte. Ward	79
	Cpl. Telfer	75
	Sgt. Chatfield	66
	Total	653

No. 11 Co. Queens Edinburgh Rifle Volunteer Brigade (Scotland)

Cpl. J. Bell	87
Cpl. J. White	85



Pte. McLusky	84
Sgt R. Reid	83
Sgt. G. Cassie	79
Col. Sgt Wishart	74
Cpl. J. Temple	63
Pte. D. Wilson	37
Total	592

More top shooters had been recruited to the Wallaroo RVF line-up, making it one of the strongest military units around. Pte H.J. Hood was in civilian life manager of the National Bank at Wallaroo and later succeeded Capt. Carson as officer-in-charge of the unit until his death in April 1886. He was also accorded a military funeral, with the bands of the Wallaroo and Yorke Peninsula No. 1 companies leading the funeral procession, playing the Dead March. A squad of volunteers fired three volleys over his grave.

Surgeon Gosse was the local doctor. He migrated to Australia from England in 1870, practising first at Moonta then Kadina before being appointed as a surgeon at Wallaroo Hospital, where he remained for 18 years. He died in December 1896 and was buried in the Wallaroo cemetery.

Private Gepp was in civilian life Franz Gepp. a Hamburg (Germany) native who came to South Australia in 1848 and later moved to Wallaroo to work at the smelters. He died at Wallaroo in October 1909, aged 81.

George Chatfield arrived in Wallaroo in 1868 and obtained work as a butcher. He later opened his own shop in Owen Terrace and served two terms as Mayor of Wallaroo. On the occasion of his 84th birthday the local paper reported that he was still working as foreman of the Bag Dept. at Wallaroo Mt Lyell Fertilisers, but whether this is true or not cannot be verified.



George Chatfield was a member of Wallaroo No. 1 Rifle Volunteer Force. He held the rank of Sergeant when he took part in the match against No. 11 Coy., Queens Edinburgh Rifle Volunteer Brigade in 1884. (Photo courtesy of Wallaroo Maritime Museum.)



An interesting sidelight to the match just described was a postal match conducted between Wallaroo Rifle Club and the descendant unit of the QERVB, the present-day Royal Scots Battalion, in November of 1979. The event was intended to be held annually, culminating in a centenary match in 1984, but military duties in Northern Ireland prevented the Scots from participating further. Wallaroo members were pleased to have as their guest on the day their match was fired, a former Royal Scot, Joe Dempsey, who then lived in Adelaide. Joe presented the club with an ice bucket in the form of a Royal Scots drum as a memento of the occasion.

Late in 1884 a match was fired against sailors from the South Australian naval ship "Protector" when it visited the port of Wallaroo on a training cruise. Privates Bews and Hood of the Wallaroo Company headed two teams made up of infantry and sailors combined. The result was a win for Hood's team, with Hood and Quartermaster Argent of the Protector top-scoring with 31 each. Neither Private Warmington of Wallaroo (Bews's team) nor Boatswain Martin (Hood's team) scored a hit in their ten shots. Both teams resolved to battle it out again when the ship returned to Wallaroo.

It does not take a great deal of imagination to picture the colourful scene at this meeting - the grey tunics and dark blue trousers of the infantry and the blue and white of the sailors' rigs, interspersed with the uniformed livery of the officers of both Services and the finery of assembled guests and spectators.

## WAR GAMES

Soon after the visit of the Protector another Russian invasion scare went rippling through South Australia. Concerned townspeople, caught up in the mild hysteria generated by the rumours, held a public meeting to discuss the defence of their port. Plans were made to set fire to the mining company's coal heap at the smelting works in the event of a Russian ship entering the bay, and David Bews, by now the Member for Wallaroo, suggested moves be made for the construction of a fort at Point Hughes and the establishment of a battery of artillery in the town. This led to another rush of young men to join the rifle company but as far as can be ascertained neither proposal was ever acted upon, probably because of the government's lack of interest.

There's no doubt Wallaroo would have offered a good target for a raiding ship - ample supplies of coal for refuelling, rich copper ore and gold for the taking etc - and it could have been accomplished with very little resistance from the local defence force.

War games became an integral part of infantry life at this point. The Kadina and Wallaroo companies both entered enthusiastically into their training exercises, and it was about this time that one of the most humorous (and for the Wallaroo men, most embarrassing) incidents in the saga of the local volunteers took place. Rumour had it that the Kadina Force (A Company) were to "storm" B Coy, Wallaroo, one evening, but although a vigilant watch was kept for several nights nothing transpired and the Wallaroo soldiers relaxed their vigil. After one exhausting day's drill, in which both companies had spent the day digging trenches in extremely hard limestone ground, the Kadina men "presented such a peaceful appearance as they left by train for home, that the local volunteers retired to their respective houses to replenish the inner man or to smoke the pipes of peace."

However, much to their consternation, a short while later a volley of shots rang out and those of the defenders who rushed to the scene found that the Kadina men had quietly returned, taken



possession of the bank and the Cornucopia Hotel and captured several "prisoners", including bank manager Hood, the Wallaroo Company's senior officer.

Also amongst the prisoners was Major Hunt, officer-in-charge of the afternoon's training, who had gone visiting his lady friend when the Kadina men left and was arrested by two of the "enemy" soldiers in her presence.

A poetical correspondent (obviously from Kadina) was so delighted with the outcome of the "war" that he penned the following classic lines in honour of their victory.....

*"The Battle of Wallaroo, May 6, 1885."*

As it fell upon a day  
In the merry month of May  
(That's the way the glee commences, as you know)  
There was fought a battle rare  
In which many had a share  
Who would hardly care to meet a Russian foe.

It is not, I would imply  
That as soldiers they would fly  
Though as citizens they couldn't see the fun  
But to make my meaning plain  
And that you may catch the strain  
Of my story, I'll tell you how 'twas done.

In a township by the sea  
Not a hundred miles from me  
As I'm sitting down to write this little rhyme  
They can boast of warriors bold  
Fully thirty men I'm told  
Who can turn out all equipped at any time.

Well, to prove the strength of these  
And perhaps also to appease  
The excitement of his sturdy volunteers  
Captain Piper forms a plan  
And he musters every man  
He can get to set this township by the ears.

Opportunity is found  
When they've left the drilling ground  
Where with Moonta and Kadina men they've toiled  
And night closed upon the scene  
Not a thought was there I wean  
Of surprise to come, or well-earned dinner spoiled.

The Kadina tram has gone  
And defenders every one  
Seek to satisfy the wants of inner man  
When a sudden shot is heard



Up they start with naughty word  
But too late to foil the well concerted plan.

For the enemy has come  
Without sound of fife or drum  
And has taken full possession of the town  
Short and sharp the struggle there  
Flash the bayonets in the air  
And first one, then another man is down.

See a prisoner, gallant Bews  
Hood and others whom the ruse  
Had been too much, for they march to durance vile  
And the doughty Warmington  
With his armour buckled on  
Tried very hard to swallow down his bile.

And Dame Rumour tells a tale  
Of an officer in mail  
(Whom to name is not a portion of my song)  
Who to see a lady fair  
Cast aside his wonted share  
Of that caution which to Scotsmen does belong.

And while chatting at his ease  
With a frank desire to please  
Was arrested by two gentlemen in blue  
And to his extreme disgust  
(For he felt that go he must)  
Found himself the victim of an artful "do".

But the tumult now has ceased  
And the prisoners are released  
For the ransoms asked have honestly been paid  
Healths are drunk, toasts go round  
And with heads and bodies sound  
All can laugh at such a jolly nightly raid.

Interest in the infantry continued to wax and wane over the next decade. The company was hit by a number of deaths amongst its more prominent officers during that time, including its commanding officer, Lieut. Hood. Hood was replaced by Mr. F. Clare, whose rapid rise from Private to Lieutenant in one jump is unusual in military circles. The deaths of Capt. Carson and Rev. Taplin have already been recorded, while others whose services were greatly missed in military matters on the Peninsula were J.B. Whittington, Mr. J.B. Austin, and the much-respected Dr. Gosse. Austin was yet another of the tramway employees of Wallaroo who followed the sport of rifle shooting. His death occurred in Adelaide in September 1896 and he was interred in Mitcham cemetery.

The formation of a company of Mounted Rifles in March 1897 was a shot in the arm for the district. The man appointed to lead the new unit, Capt. James A. Watt, was to become one of South Australia's most distinguished soldiers. Originally from Scotland, Watt joined the



S.A. Infantry Volunteer Corps in 1864 as a Corporal. With the rank of Colour Sergeant he was instrumental in forming the Burra Rifle Corps and the Kadina and Wallaroo Mounted Rifles, and established a reputation as an efficient and well-liked officer with the men of the local companies.

Promoted to Captain he left Wallaroo in mid-1900 for the Boer War and was appointed Commander of "D" Squadron of the Fifth Contingent, South Australian Imperial Bushmen. His service in South Africa was such that he eventually became commanding officer of the "Fighting Fifth" and was awarded a DSO on his return home. He was one of the first to engage in combat with the Boers and was lucky to escape with his life on one occasion when a Boer soldier fired at him at close range. The weapon misfired however, due to the extremely cold weather.

Watt was appointed to the Staff Office at the completion of the war. He later retired from the military and purchased a business in Quorn. On the establishment of a new Defence Act in 1911 he returned to the ranks and was commissioned as Area Officer of his old district of Wallaroo.

The Mounted Rifles, forerunner of the famed Light Horse, attracted a great deal of interest in Wallaroo, resulting in yet another rush by the district's young men to enlist. Horses were purchased, the rifle range placed in order, and the company began its military career. The first appearance of the men in their new uniforms, to participate in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in Adelaide, elicited much favourable comment on their smart turnout. There is no doubt that this particular uniform, with its slouch hat turned up at the side, bandolier slung over the shoulder, and riding breeches and leather leggings was admired by all.

## SHOOTING INTEREST

There began from this point, the late 1890s, probably the greatest period of local interest in competitive rifle shooting ever in the history of the sport. Both civilian and military marksmen at Wallaroo arranged matches against a number of Defence rifle clubs which were beginning to spring up around the country. Reports show that the Mounteds fired a match against the Commercial Travellers Club on June 7, 1899, and the new .303 rifle was used for the first time.

Using the "flowery" prose of the day newspaper journalists wrote of the presence of lady spectators on the range, whom, they said, "displayed the results of their skill in the culinary art in a booth erected for the occasion", and provided "a subduing and soothing effect on a rifleman disappointed with his score - for which, of course, the rifle is blamed - when they tendered their sympathetic expressions of "better luck next time." The fair sex, it was said, also helped to "brighten the scowling countenance into radiant hope and compelled the shooter to swallow the language hovering on the tip of his tongue ready to belch forth as soon as the opportunity affords." Ah...the power of women!

With the introduction of the Commonwealth Defence Act (1903-1910) came the passing of volunteer forces in South Australia and an end to part of the State's constitutional history. While military training was to continue (it was, in fact, upgraded) the volunteers who had been part of the scene, if only spasmodically during "periods of aggression" from other countries, were now to be phased out as defenders of the State and replaced by trainees paid by the Commonwealth of Australia.

By January 1, 1911, the date of commencement of the new Act, it is interesting to note that there were 90,000 rifle club members in Australia who were placed on a Reserve list. Those who had already experienced marksmanship as part-time soldiers were keen to continue their interest in learning to shoot accurately, and well-supported civilian rifle clubs began to spring up all over the



Yorke Peninsula district. The dangerous cap and ball muzzle loaders were gradually giving way to more sophisticated breech-loading rifles, which were accurate over longer distances. The old 100 and 200 yard short-range matches soon extended to contests over 500 and 600 yards, and paper targets were developed to replace the old steel "clangers."

Besides the established clubs at Kadina and Moonta others were formed at Port Broughton and Port Wakefield, in 1899, and at Tickera in 1905. This enabled the enthusiastic Wallaroo shooters to venture further afield for their competition.

A report of a match fired against Port Broughton at their range on the beach near Kanaka in March 1903 surprisingly reveals that a number of women took part. While the gentle sex had long been interested spectators at Wallaroo matches it had not been considered "ladylike" to be actual competitors, and, in fact, women did not enter the sport on a regular basis until the late 1970s - that is, apart from one or two "emancipationists" like Vi Stanyer (daughter of club captain and Wallaroo Mayor, Jack Stanyer), and Leta Watts of Kadina, both of whom competed regularly in the 1930s.

At the Kanaka range the Wallaroo men were defeated by their Broughton opponents but their ladies (wives and girlfriends) turned the tables on the home club in a smallbore match. Some of the ladies were reported to have "closed the wrong eye, or both eyes" in taking aim at the targets. "It was expected," said the newspaper report of their efforts, "that the outcome would be an appalling waste of ammunition, or perhaps a fatal accident, but red were the faces when it was found that five of the ten ladies had scored higher than some of their male counterparts."

To encourage women to participate further a smallbore club was formed in Wallaroo three months later, with no less a personage than Henry Lipson Hancock, the almost legendary manager of the Wallaroo and Moonta Mining and Smelting Company as its patron.

It appears the club made a mistake in siting the smallbore range (as it did with the fullbore range earlier) by locating it in an east-west direction, which, in late afternoon caused shooting to be carried out into a setting sun. The Times reported that scoring for the inaugural shoot on June 8, 1903, was "not nearly as good as was anticipated because the glare of the sun on the foresight was too strong and dazzling to the eye." The same situation applies to the present range which faces almost due west and presents a challenge to those unfortunate enough to draw the final detail of the day.

The smallbore range, situated near the old flour mill at the east end of town, consisted of 50, 100, 150, and 200 yard ranges, with the 50 yard being fired in a sitting position and the others prone. Smallbore shooting has always been a good means of keeping an eye in for longer range shooters, and various clubs in the district have been well-supported by fullbore enthusiasts. One started at Wallaroo just after the end of the Second World War and thrived for many years at the Army Drill Hall, then later on an outdoor range which still operates near the football oval.

A Wallaroo rifleman of note in the team which was defeated at Port Broughton was Mr George Parrott, a local businessman and engineer who ran a bicycle shop, the "Engineering and Cycle Works" in Wallaroo. The invention and manufacture of a wind gauge for the .303 rifle is credited to Parrott, although little is known of this. Parrott shot with Wallaroo Rifle Club until 1909 when he moved to Adelaide to work at the Islington railway workshops. At the age of 57, while competing in the 1921 Kings Prize at Port Adelaide, he became the first Australian to score a triple possible (105) over the 300, 500 and 600 yard ranges. Only once before had this been achieved - by English shooter Private Sutlette competing for Guernsey against the London and



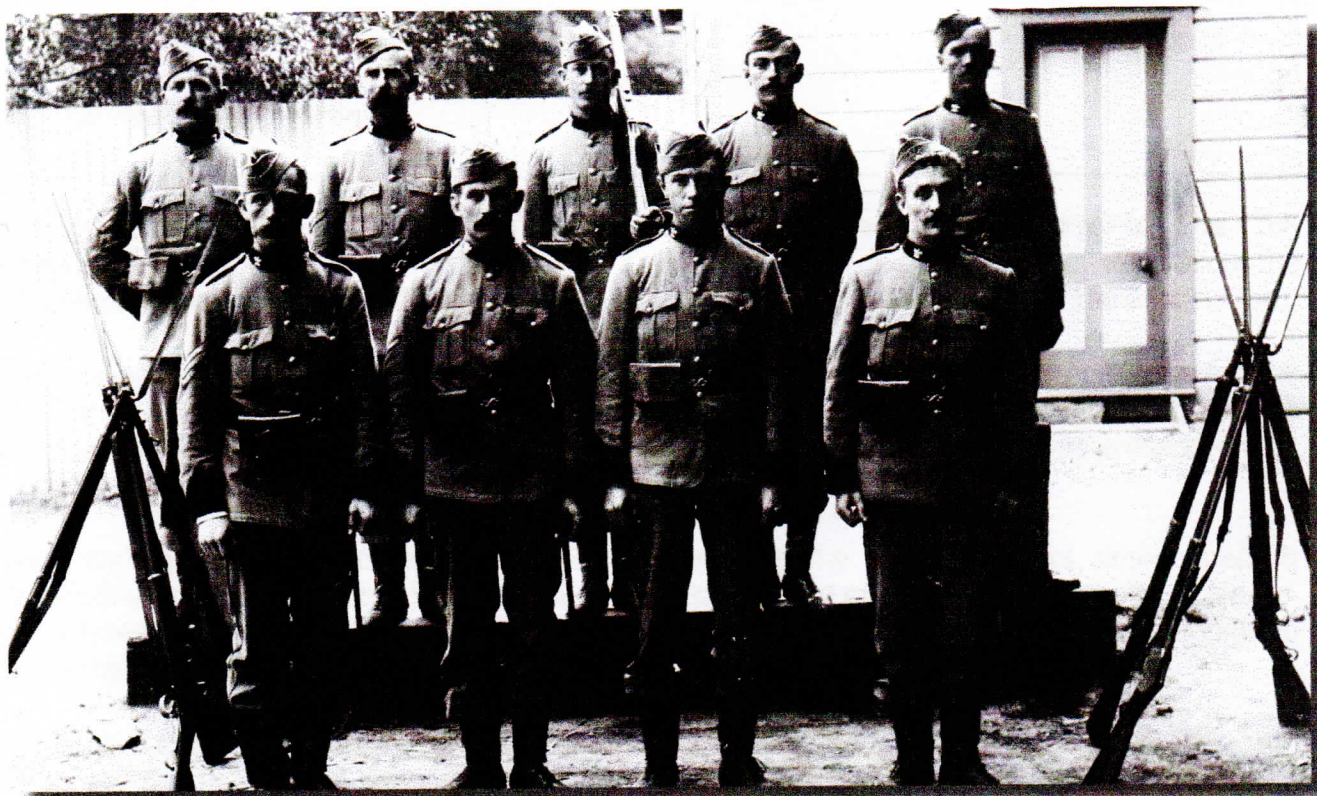
Middlesex clubs in 1914. What made Parrott's feat all the more commendable was the fact that he accomplished it with a secondhand barrel which had been in use continuously since 1917. Parrott was lucky in the 600 yard match, fired late in the day when conditions became difficult. With a quick changing 10-14 degree left wind running he shot early and encountered a good patch of weather to record his possible. By the end of the first stage of the Kings, Parrott was marginally ahead of Tom Roberts of the Blyth club, eventual winner of that year's Kings. He finished the three-day event in 10th place.

While shooting with the Railways club in 1919 George won an elaborate silver cup for the Vice-President's Trophy. This cup later became the Wallaroo club's B Grade Handicap Championship trophy and bears the names of members who have won it since 1962.

## PENINSULA DISTRICT RIFLE ASSOCIATION

Military and civilian riflemen on Yorke Peninsula met together in June of 1909 to form their own association. The outcome was the formation of the Peninsula District Rifle Association, comprising military units at Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta, and rifle clubs of Port Wakefield, Kulpara, Brinkworth, Tickera, Port Broughton and Munderoo.

The senior military officer, Lieut. W.L. Raws, was elected President and Wallaroo Area Officer Sgt. E.G. Brittain Secretary. The committee immediately set about organising a prize meeting in keeping with the association's objectives of encouraging efficient rifle shooting as a necessary element of national defence. It also sought to arrange interclub matches and hold an annual prize meeting, the first of which took place over two days - Thursday and Friday, August 26 and 27, 1909 - on the Wallaroo range. This event could very well be the forerunner of an Open Prize Meeting (now known as Rifle Shooting Championships) which had been run annually at Wallaroo until recent years, firstly by the association and then by the Wallaroo club.



Kadina's "A" Coy, SA Infantry Regiment c1901.



The two-day program of matches makes interesting reading.....

Peninsula District Rifle Association

Program of matches to be fired Thursday and Friday, 26-27 August, 1909. To commence at 8.30 a.m. each day.

"The Broughton" Teams of five, 7 shots at 500 and 600 yards. Three prizes 10 pounds

"The Wakefield" Handicap. 7 shots at 200 and 500 yards. Open only to those who have never won a prize at any Association meeting. 13 prizes 5 pounds 10 shillings.

"The Moonta" 10 shots at disappearing head and shoulders targets exposed for 3 seconds, 200 yards.  
12 prizes 6 pound 10 shillings.

"The Kulpara" Handicap. 7 shots at 200 and 300 yards. 13 prizes 5 pounds 10 shillings

"The Kadina" Handicap. 7 shots at 500 and 600 yards. 13 prizes 5 pounds 10 shillings.

"The Y.P. Championship" Aggregate of scores in the "Moonta", "Kulpara" and "Kadina" No handicaps. 12 prizes  
10 pounds

"The Wallaroo". Teams of four. 10 shots at disappearing head and shoulders targets exposed for 3 seconds,  
200 yards.

"The Continuous". 5 shots at 500 yards.

"The Pool". 500 yards.

The event attracted entries from 200 individuals and 25 teams. Port Wakefield Rifle Club dominated the two teams matches on the first day, while Kadina doctor Henry Powell took out the Wakefield Match over 200 and 500 yards then donated his prize money back to the association.

The mayor of Wallaroo, Mr J. Brenton, presided that night at an official civic reception for the visiting riflemen. The following day, Port Wakefield again figured prominently when their club member, A.H. Bogisch, won the principal event, the Y.P. Championship, and was presented with a gold medal by Mr. W. Ogilvie of Wallaroo.

Wind and rain marred the second day and smoke from the smelting works almost made it impossible to see the targets. Shooting was forced to cease at one stage until the smoke cleared. It is interesting to read that civilian shooters won all but one of the seven matches, the exception being the Kulpara, which went to Sgt. Brittain.

Aside from the inclement weather the meeting was considered a success. Local interest was sustained throughout the two days, with cabs and traps providing transportation between the town and the range for the many spectators.



B Coy, the Wallaroo volunteers, continued to operate after the Defence Act re-organisation. In a rifle shooting competition between all companies of the South Australian Infantry Regiment in 1912, for the Le Hunte Trophy, Wallaroo won, but it appears the soldiers (and presumably the rifle club) foundered not long after, when Capt. Watt and Lieut. Col. Raws both transferred to the city.

## REFORMATION

Little has been documented of rifle shooting over the next four years, but with the First World War in full swing, and a call being made for civilian shooters to enlist en masse, a meeting was held on February 10, 1916, to plan the club's reformation.

Mayor T.E. Ashton (one of at least four Wallaroo mayors who took up the sport) presided over the meeting, which elected C.W. Witham as captain of the new club, and W.C. McNeice as its secretary. Fifty-five members enrolled. Nineteen months after becoming established the club held its first Shooting Carnival, attracting 70 shooters from several Peninsula clubs.

A minute book which survives records that several prominent Peninsula shooters had met together in Kadina in 1917 to revive this event. Under the chairmanship of George Dodd a committee consisting of E.C. Wall, C.W. Witham, E.R. Medlin, R.J. Hughes, H.F. March, W. Wilkins, L.W. Robertson (captain of Kadina club) and W.R. Hedger was formed as the Wallaroo District Combined Match Committee.

The event was to be a two-grade teams match (teams of five) and an individual competition, scheduled for October 27, 1917.

The teams matches were fired in atrocious conditions and the "Championships" (presumably the individual contest) scheduled for the day were cancelled owing to the weather. Port Broughton club captain, Mr. Storr, acted as range supervisor. The Wallaroo branch of the Red Cross Society dispensed refreshments from a specially erected booth. Six markers were engaged at 12 shillings each (they had to supply their own paste and brushes!) and two boys were hired to act as telephone boys at five shillings for the day.

The Moonta team of E.R. Medlin, G. Langdon, F. Hall, Robertson and B. Jones won the A grade from Willamulka and Kadina, while B grade went to H. March, F.L. Olsen, W.J. Wilkins, J. Hore and R.C. Hore, shooting for Willamulka's No. 2 team.

A glance at the list of shooters in the two Wallaroo teams reveals the names of several who were just starting on their competitive careers - men who sprang into prominence in rifle shooting circles about that time and continued to hold their own over the next 30 years or so. In No. 1 team Witham fired "a good captain's knock", with support from the Suttons - father Harold (Toby) and son Bill. In the B grade team were two names which became synonymous with rifle shooting at Wallaroo in the period between the two world wars - A.J. (Bert) Moore and Harry ("Oppus") Bradley. Both excellent shots, Moore and Bradley were to be two of the mainstays of the Wallaroo team until well into the 1950s. Bert replaced Witham as captain in the early 1920s and continued in this role for nearly 30 years.

Harry worked as a wharfie and later at Cresco Fertilisers. It is believed he suffered damage to one leg on the wharf and was forced to use crutches to get about for the rest of his life. He and Bert were inseparable and represented Wallaroo club at numerous Kings Shoots at Port Adelaide, and No. 5 District Rifle Association in inter-association events. The two are instantly



recognisable in team photographs of the 1920s and 30s, Bert in his old battered military hat and Harry in his black homburg.

Bert, a blacksmith with the Wallaroo Mt Lyell Company, twice set a couple of interesting club records during this period. The pre-war practice of continuing a shoot after scoring a possible (40 out of 40), to see how many consecutive bullseyes you could fire, was encouraged. In the final stage of the club championship, fired at 500 yards on May 19, 1923, Bert shot 26 consecutive bullseyes. Six years later, on November 12, 1929, again at 500 yards, he equalled the performance. (According to now-deceased Life Member, Alf Edwards, club member S. Stephens eclipsed Bert's feat with 32 in a row)

As far as is known this practice was discontinued after the Second World War and is hardly likely to ever be reintroduced because of the high cost of ammunition today. This is unfortunate as it would provide an interesting sidelight to today's club competitions, and an insight into an individual's talents.

When the club resumed shooting after WW2 Bert was again elected captain and held this office almost until his death on June 12, 1955. His mate Harry also passed away in the early 1950s.

## WALLAROO DISTRICT RIFLE ASSOCIATION

To place the Wallaroo District Match Committee on a better constitutional and financial basis representatives from all the district's clubs met again in the Wilson Memorial Hall at Kadina on April 15, 1919, and reformed the association as the Wallaroo District Rifle Association, with the approval of all Peninsula clubs. President of the association was Mr R.J. Hughes, editor of the Moonta newspaper "People's Weekly", and a former mayor of the town, of whom more later.

The principle aim of the Wallaroo DRA was the organisation of an annual Easter Prize Meeting, the first of which took place on the Wallaroo range only 14 days later. Again the event attracted a good following of riflemen from all over the Peninsula, with more than 100 competing in a teams' event over 200, 300, 500 and 600 yards, and an individual championship. Nineteen teams of five from Kadina, Moonta, Willamulka, Crystal Brook, Bute, Pine Forest, Wallaroo, Port Victoria, Mundoorra and Kulpara participated, with honours going to the Kadina No. 1 team of A.H. Koch, W. Walton, L.W. Robertson, J. Tobin and W. Hedger.

Robertson, who was the officer-in-charge of Kadina Fire Brigade, and E. Medlin and F.G. Hall (both of Moonta) were all potential winners of the championship as the day drew to a close. Both Robertson and Medlin, however, succumbed to the range's notorious late afternoon light (haven't we all at some stage!) at the 600 yards, leaving Hall as the winner, from R. Huxtable of Mundoorra and A.H. Koch of Kadina. These three contestants all shot possibles during the day, along with J. McLeod of Port Victoria.

It is interesting to note that the Wallaroo No. 2 team of A. Moore, E. Deer, R. Campbell, H. Bradley and A. Watt defeated their No. 1 team (S. Stephens, C. Witham, E. Wall, H. Sutton and R. Fisher) on handicap.

When approval was finally given to the new association in September 1920 it was officially known as No.5 District Rifle Club Union, with headquarters at Wallaroo and comprising the clubs at Edithburgh, Yorketown, Minlaton, Curramulka, Muloowurtie, Port Victoria, Ardrossan, Wallaroo, Pine Forest, Kadina, Willamulka, Bute, Snowtown, Kulpara and Moonta. It is a sad fact that only three of these - Wallaroo, Ardrossan and Maitland (formed about 1939) now survive on Yorke



Peninsula, with Ardrossan on shaky ground as this update is being written.

No.5 DRCU continued to represent Peninsula clubs until well after the Second World War, when falling interest caused a dramatic decrease in the number of clubs. In mid-1966, No.4 District (Mid-North, Barossa Valley etc) combined with No. 5 to become No.4 and 5 District Rifle Association.. While it was operating, however, No. 5 was one of the strongest in the State. With president T.H. Marshall of Moonta at the helm for a considerable period (1934-1954) it was held in high regard by shooters all over South Australia.

When Gus Spurling of Ardrossan took over as president in 1954 because of Marshall's ill-health, he was chiefly responsible for introducing a series for local teams known as the Simmons Shield, after its donors the family of the late M. Simmons. Ardrossan club organised the series which was an annual one-day match for Yorke Peninsula teams, fired over 600 yards just prior to the Inter-Union teams at Port Adelaide each September. The event ran for 10 years, with Kadina winning it in 1955, 1956 and 1962, Wallaroo in 1957, Moonta in 1958, Ardrossan in 1959, 1960 and 1965, and Maitland in 1961 and 1964. Although the number of clubs on the Peninsula was diminishing all the time a total of 19 clubs are known to have participated, including Wallaroo, Kadina, Ardrossan, Willamulka, Price, Maitland, Minlaton, Port Wakefield and Yorketown.

An individual aggregate was part of the event and the winners were: 1958 E. Commons (Willamulka); 1959 R. Jolly (Moonta); 1960 P. Hill (Maitland); 1961 R. Jolly (Moonta); 1962 V. Brown (Ardrossan); 1963 event washed out; 1964 J. Southwood (Maitland); 1965 C. Barker (Kadina).

The Easter carnivals at Wallaroo continued to draw tremendous support from local shooters until well into the 1960s. The shoots were confined to No. 5 member clubs only and became the pinnacle of their competition year. To win an aggregate on Easter Monday was considered a great honour, and one the writer of this history was fortunate enough to experience in 1948 as a youngster of 17.

## THE 1930s

The 1930s were to be another interesting era for fullbore rifle shooting at Wallaroo. As the decade dawned an unusual match was arranged between members of the club, local returned soldiers, and men from No. 3 Troop, 23rd Light Horse Squadron, a Kadina-based company. The match, fired in April 1930, was what could be termed "one-sided", as the horse soldiers opted to use their .303 service rifle, with open sights and no slings, thus putting them at a distinct disadvantage. Rifle club members provided match rifles for the RSL men and the result of the contest was exactly what may have been expected - Rifle Club 658, RSL 573, Light Horse 526.

The event was shot over a double 300 yards, with two sighters and eight to count. A locally manufactured silver cup was presented to the rifle club but recent attempts to trace this have been unsuccessful.

At the conclusion of the match the Lighthorsemen gave a demonstration of the firepower of their Vickers machine gun, blasting a kerosene tin along the range with a hail of bullets.

The year 1933 saw the inauguration of a series of shoots between the three Copper Coast clubs - Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta. Proposed by Moonta mayor Robert J. Hughes, a long-time supporter of, and participant in, rifle shooting, the matches were to be shot on alternate ranges four times a year by teams of 10, with the best eight to count. Hughes donated a fine shield for competition and this still hangs in the Wallaroo clubhouse.



This series was popular (and very competitive) amongst members of the three clubs. It continued to operate until 1961 (with a break for the war years), when the Moonta club disbanded and forced an end to the Shield shoots. Kadina club was the most successful in the 27 year history of the series, winning it in 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1948, 1954 and 1961. Wallaroo were victors in 1939, 1949, 1955, 1957 and 1960.

Wallaroo club participated enthusiastically, even applying to enter two teams in 1936. The request was denied, however, in the interests of fairness to the other two clubs. Lady shooter Violet Stanyer was an established member of the Wallaroo team at that time - probably the first, and only, female representative of a Wallaroo team to that time. This was all to change in the enlightened 1980s!

Shield mentor Bob Hughes, as befitted his profession as editor of the People's Weekly, was a follower of all sporting activities in the district. One suspects that an association with David Bews, which began when Hughes joined the staff of the Wallaroo Times as a boy of 14, could very well have sparked his interest in rifle shooting. As stated already, he took prominent roles in the establishment of the Y.P. District Rifle Union, and as secretary of Moonta Rifle Club.



Violet "Girly" Stanyer was one of the first females to enter rifle shooting on Yorke Peninsula as a member of the Wallaroo Rifle Club.





Violet, by then Mrs. Tippins, took part in the club's Centenary Shoot in 1976. She is coached here by club captain Colin Cope.

In mid-1935 the Federal Government dropped a bombshell in the form of a proposed withdrawal of free ammunition to civilian rifle clubs. Each registered member in Australia at that time received 200 free rounds of ammo per year and was given the opportunity to purchase a further 200 rounds if they were active members. Ten million rounds were distributed each year by the Defence Dept., at a cost of 90,000 pounds.

The proposal eventually fell through and rifle shooters continued to benefit from the free issue until the 1960s, when the government finally realised it could no longer afford to subsidise civilian rifle shooting. To begin with only a small charge was imposed but this escalated over the years to more than five shillings (50 cents) a shot. Then in 1989 a 20% sales tax was slapped on 7.62mm ammunition. This was subsequently negated to a certain degree when a decision by the South Australian Rifle Association allowed self-loading, thereby reducing costs quite substantially.

When the Royal Australian Navy's battle cruiser HMAS Sydney visited Wallaroo on March 21, 1939, and a team from the ship fired a match against Wallaroo Rifle Club, the clocks turned back 55 years to the 1884 match against the crew of the Protector. Unfortunately, time and the pressure of deadlines had caught up with newspaper proprietors, resulting in the elaborate reports of those early days giving way to sketchy, hastily written details of local events, and the match scarcely drew a mention. It is logical to suppose that the local marksmen were good enough to outshoot the sailors but we'll never know as 32 months later all hands aboard the Sydney were lost when the ship was sunk by the German raider Kormoran.

The year 1939, and halfway into 1940, were black periods for the local club, and indeed for rifle shooters all over Australia. The war in Europe had been under way for nine months, when, in June 1940, the three clubs fired their last Hughes Shield match before the suspension of shooting was ordered by the government. The occasion was made worse by the fact that popular Kadina shooter Gilbert ("Gilly") Baker had passed away suddenly just a few days before, at the age of 43. Baker, a fine shot, had been individual aggregate winner of the Hughes Shield matches for three



of the seven years it had been in existence. Shooters from the three clubs wore black armbands and stood for a minute's silence in respect to their mate before the match commenced.

The war, of course, spelt an end to competition for the duration. To prevent subversive activities, regulations were introduced for the registration of all firearms, ammunition and explosives and the sale of guns or the expending of ammunition without permission first having been obtained from authorities. Seven hundred rifles and pistols were registered at Kadina Police Station alone! Rifle clubs were not exempt from the new law, so that in June 1940 all club activities came to a halt.

The SA Rifle Association, with the cooperation of the Army, then encouraged its clubs to form reserve rifle clubs to supplement the "soldiers" of the Home Defence Corps. Members were required to undertake the equivalent of ten six-hour day parades and four weekend bivouacs a year for the period of the war. A full musketry course was provided and this suited members down to the ground - at least it meant an occasional issue of ammo to keep their eyes in! As the war drew on, however, the need for home defence diminished, just like the supply of bullets, and rifle shooting ceased altogether.

Following the end of the war, club stalwarts re-organised in August 1946, with Bert Moore as captain and Steve Kempster secretary. It was April 1947, however, before sufficient supplies of guns and ammo became available to recommence activities after the seven year break. The Times reported that "it was just like the good old days to see the cars lined up on the range again."

The post-war era of fullbore rifle shooting was never to regain its pre-war greatness, however. Many clubs folded and others began with only small followings. Port Broughton was one to succumb, in early 1952. Wallaroo club was able to purchase Broughton's target frames for use at the Wallaroo range, where some are still in use sixty years later.

Conversely, the 1960s proved much more successful, with those clubs which had weathered the depressed 1950s continuing to function. Wallaroo club prospered, having perhaps its best decade since the halcyon days of its best shots - men like Bews, Carson, Taplin, Telfer, Gepp, Gosse and Chatfield.

In 1965 Wallaroo club won the annual Country Teams Handicap Shield at Port Adelaide and followed this up with a win by club member Lance Carter in the 1966 Champion of Champions event, following the Queens of that year. Lance shot a 39 out of 40 over 900 yards to defeat R. Nutt of the Jamestown club. Another of Wallaroo's finest shots, he was captain of Wallaroo Rifle Club from 1967 to 1969, and again in 1973, and its A grade champion in 1965, 1966 and 1968. Lance is now the club's Patron.

## RIFLE RANGE

Presumably the Wallaroo rifle range was crown land and only leased by the club in its very early stages. In March of 1929 moves were made to purchase the land and this was obviously successful, although there are no newspaper reports to confirm this. The land then remained in the club's hands until it was sold in 1964 to an American developer.

Anyone who has visited the range will know of the huge industrial complex established alongside in the latter stages of the Second World War. It was known locally as the "power alcohol works", a facility intended to counter a feared shortage of petrol if the war happened to continue for any length of time, but it was never occupied and became a 450,000 pound white elephant after the war ended in 1945. Despite some energetic sales promotion by the government it was unable





The Power Alcohol Works can be seen in the background.  
The shooter is Colin Jones.

to sell the plant or find a long-term tenant who could help alleviate severe unemployment in the district.

On the discovery of natural gas at Gidgealpa in 1964 the much sought-after buyer materialised in the form of W. Parham Bridges, of Jackson, Mississippi, USA, who proposed to establish a petrochemical plant at the site. Bridges needed an additional parcel of land in the area for his project, and this included the adjacent rifle range. Though some members felt reluctant to sell, public pressure forced their hand and the 69 acre range was sold for \$17,000, along with almost 900 acres of adjoining land.

Mr Bridges was generous enough to offer the club free use of the range until such time as he needed it. Through various factors (not the least of which was the cost of putting down a pipeline to bring natural gas to Wallaroo) the project founder and the club held a tenuous occupation of the range for more than 25 years. It did appear that the Bridges family had abandoned their Wallaroo holdings but eventually their South Australian solicitor advised that the family (Parham had long since passed away) desired to sell the land. It was well into the nineties before a buyer came forward in the form of wheat agents Co-operative Bulk Handling (CBH), who desired to expand their bunker system to cater for larger harvests. The company constructed new bunkers on the back section of the range (600 to 1,000 yards) but allowed the club rent-free use of the front portion (from the target pits to the 600 yard mound). This arrangement still stands, thanks to current owners Viterra.



## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

Since the resumption of shooting following the Second World War a number of significant events have occurred. Varying degrees of interest have resulted in membership fluctuations over the 60 odd years, from the six or seven active shooters of immediate post-war years to a high of 20-25 during the late 1970s. The number remained static at about 10-12 regulars in the 1980s but has again declined to a half dozen enthusiasts as this is being written.

The amalgamation of Kadina and Wallaroo clubs in 1974, after the Kadina range was sold, resulted in the transfer to Wallaroo of five or six of the most interested shooters, including two former members of Moonta Rifle Club, which had amalgamated with Kadina in 1964. Moonta members Ron Jolly and Gordon Cavanagh have therefore had the distinction of having been members of each of the three Copper Coast clubs at one time or another.

Another of the Kadina members to transfer was former captain and club mainstay Morrie Petherick, who had commenced shooting with Port Wakefield Rifle Club in 1920-21. Not long after amalgamation Morrie suffered a stroke which effectively ended his shooting career. In recognition of his services to the sport, however, he was awarded Life Membership of the Wallaroo club in 1975, joining, as far as is known, only five others -Harry Bradley, Bert Moore, Bob Morgan, Jack Lander and Alf Edwards - to have been accorded the honour to that time.

Harry, Bert, Bob and Jack were all long-time club stalwarts, as was the fifth mentioned, Alf Edwards, who was recognised in 1962 for his then 28 years of membership (he joined in 1934) and for his service to the club. Alf was at the peak of his shooting career in the 1960s, winning both off-rifle and handicap championships in 1962 then following it up with club championships



Wallaroo team members on a trip to Clare c1960. Back L-R: Bert Moore, Alf Edwards, Jim Bowron, Rex Goodier, bus driver Len Trenwith, Bill Chambers, Dean Curtis, Bob Morgan, Cliff Penney.  
Front L-R: George Williams, Bill Williams, Don Rees, Charlie Barker.





Shooters from all over South Australia on the 600 yard mound during one of the club's successful annual prize meetings.

in 1963, 1964 and 1965. In subsequent years Alf took it upon himself to undertake ongoing maintenance to the range, a job that entailed hours and hours of unpaid work. In recognition of this the Wallaroo rifle range was officially re-named "Edwards Rifle Range" in 1984. By 1991, when this history was first written, Alf had completed 57 years as a member of the club. His death in 1996 was a blow to the club and its members. According to his wishes his ashes were scattered on the range that he did so much for.

Two other members - Don Rees and H.A. (Bert) Tieste - also received life membership in recent years, Don for his long membership and Bert for his efforts in building and maintenance work (with Alf), as the club's official armourer, and in club administration. Since this history was first compiled another seven have been awarded the ultimate honour - Herb Samuel (1983), Rodger Monks (1984), Colin Cope (1991), Laurie Lehmann (1994), Pam Henderson (2005) and Gordon Cavanagh (2005).

The club's centenary year was celebrated in 1976 with a weekend of activity which included a Centenary Shoot on Saturday, July 16, and a special shoot involving invited ex-NYP riflemen on the Sunday. Eighteen took part, amongst these being 91 years old Mr Harold McBeath of Kadina, who began shooting at Mount Gambier in 1903; lady shooter Mrs Violet Tippins (nee Stanyer) of Wallaroo; and the Reverend F.R. Norcock, son of former club secretary Fred Norcock, one-time keeper of the town's gaol before it closed in 1931.

Captains of the club since the long reign of Bert Moore have been: Colin Cope (1955-57 and 1974-79); Rodger Monks (1957-60 and 1972-73); Alf Menz (1960-62); Herb Samuel (1962-68); Lance Carter (1968-70 and 1973-74); A.(Bert) Polkinghorne (1970-72); H. (Bert) Tieste (1979-82); Amonte Henderson (1982-84); Gordon Cavanagh (1984-88); and Pamela Henderson (1988-91 and





Another popular teams series is the Ladner Shield, fired between the Wallaroo, Ardrossan and Maitland clubs.

1993 to the present). Pam has made history as the only female to captain a rifle club on Yorke Peninsula, while her and Gordon have both been members of State rifle teams and Wallaroo Sportspersons of the Year.

Other State Team representatives from within the club have been Lena Francis, and more recently (2010), Dale Wilson.

Captain Pam was also the 1994 South Australian Club Champion of Champions, beating a field of male riflemen for the honour with a 75.8 over 900 yards. Her son Michael won the 1984 Under 25 Junior Champion of Champions.

South Australia's most prestigious shooting event, the annual Queens Shoot, formerly held at the Dean Range, Port Adelaide, fell to a Wallaroo member, Gordon Cavanagh, in 1990. In doing so Gordon set two firsts, becoming the first Yorke Peninsula shooter to ever win a Queens, and the first South Australian to record a win since the 1983 event. He came close to a Queens win in 1980, finishing as high as third, and again in 1989 when he finished second to Canberra rifleman Henk Vreekamp. At the beginning of 1990 he also took out a third placing in the Tasmanian Queens, fired at Hobart. Since 1975, when he transferred to Wallaroo from Kadina, Gordon has won the club A grade championship a record 18 times. His most memorable (and spectacular) shoot would have to be his 50.10 (all vee bulls!) at 300 yards during a club trophy match on June 6, 1998.

Perhaps the most credentialled member of Wallaroo Rifle Club is present team coach Bill Jenkins. Bill has represented South Australia nine times as a shooter, and three times as captain of the





Gordon Cavanagh stands alongside the scoreboard featuring his outstanding 50.10 score. Note that his first round was also a possible, but with "only" five Vs!

State Team. He was a member of teams which won the Merrett series of interstate matches in Brisbane in 1994, Adelaide in 1998 and Perth in 2001. During his fullbore shooting career he won 18 open prize meetings and ten prestigious Queens Badges.

As a smallbore shooter he represented SA sixteen times and Australia twice (1979 and 1980) He won the State championships in 1979 and was Champion of Champions in both 1979 and 1980.

Bill began shooting with Clare Rifle Club in 1961. He moved to Moonta in 2002 and joined Wallaroo Rifle Club that same year. Ill health has restricted his participation in recent years but he still coaches Wallaroo teams and uses his extensive experience to assist new (and older) members.

Another of the experienced members of the present-day Wallaroo club is Kevin Hadden, who began his shooting career with Booleroo Centre Rifle Club in 1958. His list of successes at prize meetings throughout the State is impressive. As a tyro entrant at the 1974 Queens he was successful in winning the C grade aggregate, an excellent effort for a relative novice. When Booleroo Centre closed down Kevin moved to Orreroo Rifle Club, where he won both their club championship and snipers' awards in 1979. That same year he took out B grade at the Yunta OPM.

Kevin's championship win at Orreroo entitled him to compete in the 1980 Champion of State Champions event at the Dean Range, where he finished second, beaten for the title by one central bullseye.



He now divides his time between target shooting (winter) and lawn bowls (summer). His list of wins includes....

- 1974: 1st in C grade at the SARA Queens
- 1979: Orroroo Rifle Club Championship  
Orroroo Rifle Club Snipers' Award
- 1979: B grade winner Yunta OPM
- 1980: 2nd SARA Champion of Champions
- 1981: 3rd A grade, Jamestown Centenary Shoot
- 1982: 3rd Port Campbell (Vic) OPM
- 1983: Heaslip Aggregate Spoon for 30th place
- 1984: B grade Grand Aggregate Port Augusta OPM
- 1985: 2nd B grade Agg. Whyalla OPM
- 1985: 2nd A grade Agg. Port Augusta OPM
- 1985: 10th placing Port Campbell OPM
- 1987: Winner A grade Agg. Wallaroo OPM.

The club had its first ever representative in international competition when the writer of this history, at the time officer-in-charge of the SA Metropolitan Fire Service station at Kadina, attended the first World Police and Fire Games in San Jose, California, in August 1985. The Games, open only to members of police and fire departments from all over the world, attracted more than 4,000 entries to compete in 40 different sports. The fullbore shooting events were fired under National Rifle Association of America rules and involved rapid and slow-fire matches in standing, sitting and prone positions. The author, one of only two Australian fullbore shooters to take part, won a Bronze Medal in the Open class.

## NEW ERA AT WALLAROO

While the future of fullbore shooting looks bleak due to police, public and media pressure to restrict firearms access, the continuing spiral of ammunition costs, and the disinterest of young people in taking up the sport, dedicated followers at Wallaroo look forward to a new era of competitive rifle shooting, with more sophisticated rifles, electronic targets, computer scoring, and other revolutionary ideas coming to light. The sport has been part of the lives of South Australians almost since the State began and every effort should be made to ensure its survival for future generations.

*Keith Bailey*  
*Kadina, December 2010*