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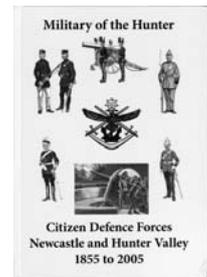
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BOOK REVIEW

Military of the Hunter: citizen defence forces of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley – a history: 1855 to 2005

edited by Lieutenant Colonel L. B. Kelly, AM, RFD, ED (Retd)

*Reserve Forces Day Hunter Region Council, Inc.: Newcastle, New South Wales, 2008, 421 pp., ISBN 978 0 646 46237 0, RRP \$45.00 (hard cover)*¹



Military of the Hunter records the important contribution made by the citizen naval, military and air force units of Newcastle and the Hunter Valley of New South Wales to the defence of Australia over the past 150 years. Well researched, drawing on many primary sources never published before, and beautifully presented, this book is a valuable contribution to the military and social history of both the Colony of New South Wales and the later Commonwealth of Australia.

The editor-in-chief, Laurie Kelly, is a former commanding officer of 2nd Battalion, Royal New South Wales Regiment, which, at the relevant time, had its headquarters in Newcastle. He is assisted by six contributing editors, one of whom, Major Roland Millbank (a member of our Institute), is a professional historian. The editors have had excellent research assistance and received primary material and memorabilia on which to base their history from former service people and their families and friends from throughout the Hunter region and beyond.

The history is presented in three parts. Part One, in nine chapters, provides a concise summary of the 150-year period dealing successively with the origins of the citizen forces (1854-55), the colonial times (1855-1900), the early federation period (1901-14), World War One (1914-18), the between-war years (1919-39), World War Two (1939-45), the early post-war period (1946-50), national service and overseas deployments (1951-73), and finally the Army Reserve of the post Vietnam War era (1973-2005).

Part Two, in 14 chapters, provides detailed unit histories covering the naval reserves, artillery, infantry, military bands, light horse, armour, medical, transport, engineers (field, construction, fortress, electrical and mechanical), signals, military police, University of Newcastle Company, air force reserves, and women's defence services.

Part Three, in 15 chapters, provides additional information on issues such as conscription, cadets, military heritage, military-civilian community relations, Victoria Cross awards, military support associations, rifle clubs, and military infrastructure, including Fort Scratchley, Singleton, Port Stephens, army camps and air bases.

Part Three is followed by 22 appendices containing data and other information which informed many of the statements made in the first three parts, a list of

abbreviations, a bibliography, two indices, and detailed end notes, which enable access to the evidence upon which the historians have drawn.

Had the book not been presented in this sensible way, it would have been daunting for the average reader. Rather, I found it to be highly readable. I read Part One first, which gave me a concise overview of the history, and then delved into those sections of Parts Two and Three and the supporting detail in the appendices for which the overview had whetted my appetite. There are excellent photographs in both black-and-white and colour, but unfortunately no maps. This may not matter to persons familiar with the places described, particularly those who served in the units at the relevant times, but maps providing relevant detail would have assisted general readers, as the average atlas generally does not provide the detail needed for a proper understanding of the text.

Of particular interest to our Institute members, the book is dedicated to the late Major General P. A. Cullen, AC, CBE, DSO*, ED, who was one of our honorary life members². Paul, a citizen soldier, was born in Newcastle. In World War Two, he was initially a company commander in 2/2nd Australian Infantry Battalion which had strong links to Newcastle and, after the war, commanded 14th Infantry Brigade which had its headquarters in Newcastle. The book contains a summary of General Cullen's impressive career and its dedication to him concludes: "There is probably no other citizen or soldier who has done more to further the interests of the Citizen Military Forces over the past sustained period of 60 years than Major General Cullen. Newcastle is proud to claim him as perhaps our greatest Citizen Soldier. It is appropriate therefore that this book, acknowledging the contribution of the Volunteer Citizen Defence Forces over a period of 150 years, should be dedicated to him."

There have been several books published recently which focus on the contribution of citizen forces to Australia's defence in the 20th century. This book makes its own unique contribution to that opus, complementing rather than duplicating the earlier works. It is a magnificent record of the valuable service that many fine men and women have given to Australia. It will be not only of interest to their friends and relatives, but also to a more general audience interested in the culture and ethos of the times, as well as being a valuable resource for future military and social historians.

David Leece

¹Available from: Reserve Forces Day Hunter Region Council, Inc., 30 Seaview Close, Eleebana NSW 2282, Australia, at \$45.00 per copy (packing and postage included).

²David Leece (2007). Obituary – Major General P. A. Cullen, AC, CBE, DSO*, ED (Retd). *United Service* 58 (4), 11 (December 2007).