



History and Heritage Series

GLASGOW ROOM WAR ARTISTS' PRINTS



Sourced from various websites

These Background Notes have been prepared as 'bite-sized' light reading for our Members. The intention is to broaden understanding of selected aspects of the Club's rich history and heritage and the remarkable people who have contributed to its development over the years. They are based primarily on a number of websites with specific additional information in places. We acknowledge that there are probably errors and omissions. **Please contact the Club if you have additional information or comments that will assist to improve these notes.**

We thank the History Interest Group volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed over time. They are intended as casual reading for private use by Members only, and as they lack the rigor, attributions, and acknowledgements required to be suitable for academic or public use, Members are requested not to reproduce or distribute them outside of our membership.

GLASGOW ROOM

WAR ARTISTS' PRINTS

Introduction

When entering the Glasgow Room our eyes are drawn to two large prints on the eastern wall. They each depict a war-time scene; the left-hand painting dominated by a warship in action, and the one on the right by a World War I aircraft narrowly escaping enemy cavalry.

They reflect the actions of Australia's sailors and airmen in two conflicts, some fifty years apart.



Our pieces are prints from the AWM's art collection, the originals being superb large works painted by two of Australia's leading war artists of their periods.

Whilst their themes reflect the military origins and history of the Club, the scenes depicted are small but significant moments in Australia's history, albeit only snippets in the broader military story. They are glimpses, as the cliché runs, of ordinary people doing extraordinary deeds.

Hopefully, the interest of our broader membership may be piqued by these background notes, as they are intended to provide the background of each of the paintings, so that the scenes can be better understood and their significance can be better appreciated.

This note is structured to provide an overview of both scenes 'in a nutshell' supported by Attachments for those who may be interested further detail.

IN A NUTSHELL

This section provides a brief overview of each painting. More detail is provided in **Attachments 1 and 2**.

The Naval Action

The Naval scene depicts an incident when HMAS Hobart was unsuccessfully shelled by coastal artillery on 22 and 23 April 1968.

The ships shown (HMAS Hobart, together with USS Collett) were operating on the *gunline* off the coast of Vietnam as part of Operation Sea Dragon. The ships then spent the next three days attempting to attract attention from the shore batteries so the enemy's guns could be attacked by aircraft.



For the sailors who came under fire and saw friends killed and wounded, the war was every bit as real as it was for the ground forces in South Vietnam. No one going into an operational area can be sure of what will happen; only with hindsight is it possible to rank the relative danger of one type of service over another.

This is a large print of a large painting created by Ray Honisett in 1985. The original painting, held in the AWM collection, is oil on canvas, 121.6 x 182.5 cm.

Ray Honisett was the leading war artist in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, producing paintings which showed scenes from the Korean War, Malayan Emergency, and Vietnam War, amongst others, usually of ships and/or aircraft. The club holds several smaller prints of his work, from the AWM collection. He later became one of Australia's leading stamp designers.

Further detail of the print, subject, and artist is provided in Attachment 1.

The Aircraft Painting



The scene shows the incident on 20 March 1917 for which Lieutenant F.H. McNamara was awarded the Victoria Cross while supporting the Gaza attacks as part of the Palestine Campaign.

For this brilliant rescue of a fellow pilot, carried out under extremely hazardous conditions and under heavy enemy fire, McNamara received the only VC awarded to an Australian airman in World War I.

The story is more exciting than fiction and is summarised below:

On 20 March an Australian aircraft from No.1 Squadron, piloted by Captain D. Rutherford, was forced to land after being hit by ground fire. Although Rutherford's aircraft, a BE-2C, was a two-seater, he was flying solo at the time. A large body of enemy cavalry which was close by had seen the aircraft land and galloped towards it.

McNamara, who had been on the same raid and had been wounded after encountering heavy anti-aircraft fire, was on his way home. He saw what was happening and despite a severe leg wound decided to attempt a rescue. He was able to make a safe landing beside Rutherford who at once climbed aboard McNamara's aircraft.

However, McNamara's aircraft was a single-seater, and Rutherford could only stand on the wing and hold on to the struts. His weight made the aircraft very lop-sided and his presence in the airstream added extra drag to one side. Owing to his wound, and these extra problems, McNamara was unable to control his machine on the rough ground and crashed it badly on attempting to take off.

The two airmen, who were uninjured, set fire to McNamara's aircraft and returned to Rutherford's machine, which by this time was close to capture by the Turkish cavalry. Also, by then, the enemy had begun firing at the escaping airmen, and with bullets kicking up the sand nearby, McNamara managed to climb into the pilot's seat while Rutherford went to work on the engine.

While McNamara provided what covering fire he could with his revolver and with the enemy almost upon them, Rutherford swung the heavy four-bladed propeller. Fortunately the engine fired at the first attempt and Rutherford jumped into the observer's seat as McNamara gave the aircraft full throttle.

Despite some damage to the struts and fuselage, and with McNamara fighting pain and close to unconsciousness from loss of blood, he managed to get them off the ground safely. He then flew them back a distance of some seventy miles (113 km) to their home base at El Arish where he carried out a safe landing but lost consciousness from loss of blood and an allergic reaction to an injection.

For this brilliant rescue, carried out under extremely hazardous conditions and under heavy enemy fire, McNamara received the only VC awarded to an Australian airman in World War I.

The original painting: oil on canvas, 143 x 234.7 cm is by H Septimus Power, and is part of the AWM collection.

In 1917 Harold Septimus Power (1877-1951) was appointed official war artist with the Australian Imperial Force, with the honorary rank of lieutenant.

His skills as an animal painter were apparent in such paintings as *The First Divisional Artillery Goes Into Action Before Ypres July 31st 1917* which was acclaimed at the Royal Academy in 1919. Several of his works feature the artillery and their horses. The Club holds other prints of Power's works from the AWM collection.

Further detail of the print, subject, and artist is provided in **Attachment 2**.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: (HMAS Hobart)

pages 5 - 8

Attachment 2 (LT McNamara's Victoria Cross Action)

pages 9 - 13



HMAS Hobart with the US Seventh Fleet off Vietnam, 1968. Ray Honisett, 1985. Royal Australian Naval Destroyer HMAS Hobart was fired on by North Vietnamese shore batteries during her first and second deployments in Vietnam waters. [Oil on canvas 121.6 x 182.5 cm, AWM ART45009]

The Print

The piece hanging in the Glasgow Room is a large print of a large painting by Ray Honisett in 1985. The original painting is oil on canvas, 121.6 x 182.5 cm, held in the AWM collection.

The scene depicts an incident when HMAS Hobart and USS *Collett* were unsuccessfully shelled by coastal artillery on 22 and 23 April 1968. The ships were operating on the gunline off the coast of Vietnam as part of *Operation Sea Dragon*. The ships then spent the next three days attempting to attract attention from shore batteries so they could be bombed by aircraft

The Subject (HMAS Hobart)

HMAS *Hobart* (DDG 39) was one of three *Perth* class guided missile destroyers built for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Built in the United States of America to a slight variant of the United States Navy (USN) *Charles F. Adams* class, she was commissioned into the RAN in 1965.



The RAN's three DDGs: HMA Ships Brisbane, Hobart and Perth

Hobart was laid down on 26 October 1962, launched on 9 January 1964 and was commissioned into the RAN on 18 December 1965.



The sleek lines of Hobart. By 1974 she was well-known as the 'Green Ghost', a nick-name she earned during the Vietnam War.

HMAS Hobart II (DDG-39) displaced 4,526 tons (full load). Two steam turbines drove the ship at 33 knots. Her complement varied from 310 to 333 and armament included one SAM launcher, two 127 mm (five-inch) guns, one Ikara ASW launcher and two triple ASW torpedo tubes.

In March 1967, *Hobart* became the first RAN combat ship deployed to fight in the Vietnam War. She completed three gunline deployments to Vietnam, in 1967, 1968 and 1970. The Australian vessels engaged in these operations emerged from the gunline largely unscathed but the requirements of operational service placed heavy demands on ships' companies. Gunline destroyers needed to be constantly available to provide support to shore-based forces, and to conduct off-shore patrols.

Hobart was deployed in *Operation Sea Dragon*¹ along the North Vietnamese coast. Ships serving on *Sea Dragon* interdicted enemy attempts at seaborne infiltration and resupply along the North Vietnamese coast from the Demilitarised Zone to the Red River delta near Hanoi.



¹ HMAS *Hobart* was mainly assigned to *Sea Dragon* operations, attacking North Vietnamese targets north of the demilitarised zone (DMZ) on the 17th parallel of latitude. Operations south of the DMZ were code-named *Market Time*. These operations provided gun-fire support to allied forces in their actions against the Vietcong primarily, but also some regular North Vietnamese Army units.

For the ships of the RAN serving in the waters off Vietnam, these operations were amongst the most dangerous of the war

They often came under heavy and accurate fire from shore-based batteries. The enemy fire never hit *Hobart*, although on occasions their fall of shot was close enough to litter her decks with shrapnel². In one tragic incident two members of *Hobart's* crew were killed when the ship was mistakenly attacked by a US aircraft.



HMAS Hobart's Mount 52 gun firing back on the gunline.
[Image courtesy of the Seapower Centre – Australia]

For the sailors who came under fire and saw friends killed and wounded, the war was every bit as real as it was for the ground forces in South Vietnam. No one going into an operational area can be sure of what will happen; only with hindsight is it possible to rank the relative danger of one type of service over another.

HMAS *Hobart* was modernised in the 1970s and was finally decommissioned in 2000, and sunk as a dive wreck off South Australia³.

The Artist: Ray Honisett (1931-)

Ray Honisett is Australia's premier stamp designer and is an artist of international reputation. The creator of forty Australian stamps, he is a winner of the coveted International Philatelic Gold Medal and is a Fellow of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. A native Australian, Honisett moved to England as a young man but returned to Australia in 1962 and has been busy ever since -- with his teaching, his painting and his extraordinary stamp designs.

Some other examples of his work are shown overleaf.

² The drill on spotting enemy fire was to alert the Operations Room, order full speed ahead and put the wheel hard over to clear the scene as quickly as possible. Fortunately, the enemy's fire control systems were fairly primitive and so the accuracy of their shot rapidly fell away.

³ The wreck site is officially known as the *Fleurieu Artificial Reef*. The scuttled ship is scheduled as a historic shipwreck as per the South Australian *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981* which prohibits boating activity within a protected zone of 550 metre radius, unless the operator has a permit.

An AWM print of another Honisett painting also hangs in the Military Bar.



A painting by Australian aviation artist Ray Honisett depicting No. 1 Squadron Lincolns on a low-level bombing run over the Malayan jungle in 1957. By that stage in the conflict the Commonwealth air campaign consisted largely of attacking suspected guerrilla positions in the remote northern areas of Malaya. [AWM ART27684.]



Above: 'HMAS Sydney in Korean Waters', 1951-52., by Ray Honisett. [AWM ART 28077].

An AWM print of this Honisett painting hangs in the hallway on Level 4, near the Queensland Room.

LT McNAMARA'S VICTORIA CROSS ACTION



*The incident for which Lieutenant F.H. McNamara was awarded the VC (on 20 March 1917).
Original painting: oil on canvas, 143 x 234.7 cm by H Septimus Power. AWM ART08007*

The Subject (The Victoria Cross Feat)

On 20 March 1917, McNamara, flying on a bombing operation, saw a fellow squadron member, Captain D. W. Rutherford, shot down. Although having just suffered a serious leg wound McNamara landed near the stricken Rutherford who climbed aboard, but his wound prevented McNamara from taking off and his aircraft crashed. The two men made it back to Rutherford's plane which they succeeded in starting and, with McNamara at the controls, they took off just as enemy cavalry reached the scene.

Lieutenant McNamara was awarded the Victoria Cross. The citation reads:

For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty during an aerial bomb attack upon a hostile construction train, when one of our pilots was forced to land behind the enemy's lines. Lieutenant McNamara, observing the pilots predicament and the fact that hostile cavalry were approaching, descended to his rescue. He did this under heavy rifle fire and in spite of the fact that he himself had been severely wounded in the thigh. He landed about 200 yards from the damaged machine, the pilot of which climbed on to Lieutenant McNamara's machine, and an attempt was made to rise. Owing, however, to his disabled leg, Lieutenant McNamara was unable to keep his machine straight, and it turned over. The two officers, having extricated themselves, immediately set fire to the machine and made their way across to the damaged machine, which they succeeded in starting. Finally, Lieutenant McNamara, although weak from loss of blood, flew this machine back to the aerodrome, a distance of seventy miles, and thus completed his comrade's rescue.

A more complete (and more vivid) narrative of the incident is:

In March 1917 the allies were planning an attack on Gaza and an important Turkish supply centre known as Junction Station was subjected to repeated air attacks by No.1 Squadron, and No.14 Squadron, R.F.C.

On 20 March an Australian aircraft from No.1 Squadron, piloted by Captain D. Rutherford, was forced to land after being hit by ground fire. Although Rutherford's aircraft, a BE-2C, was a two-seater, he was flying solo at the time. A large body of enemy cavalry which was close by had seen the aircraft land and galloped towards it.

McNamara, who had been on the same raid and had been wounded after encountering heavy anti-aircraft fire, was on his way home. He saw what was happening and despite a severe leg wound decided to attempt a rescue. He was able to make a safe landing beside Rutherford who at once climbed aboard McNamara's aircraft.

However, McNamara's aircraft was a Martinsyde, a single-seater, and Rutherford could only stand on the wing and hold on to the struts. His weight made the aircraft very lop-sided and his presence in the airstream added extra drag to one side. Owing to his wound, and these extra problems, McNamara was unable to control his machine on the rough ground and crashed it badly on attempting to take off.

The two airmen, who were uninjured, set fire to McNamara's aircraft and returned to Rutherford's machine, which by this time was close to capture by the Turkish cavalry. Also, by then, the enemy had begun firing at the escaping airmen, and with bullets kicking up the sand nearby, McNamara managed to climb into the pilot's seat while Rutherford went to work on the engine.

While McNamara provided what covering fire he could with his revolver and with the enemy almost upon them, Rutherford swung the heavy four-bladed propeller. Fortunately the engine fired at the first attempt and Rutherford jumped into the observer's seat as McNamara gave the aircraft full throttle.

Despite some damage to the struts and fuselage, and with McNamara fighting pain and close to unconsciousness from loss of blood, he managed to get them off the ground safely. He then flew them back a distance of some seventy miles (113 km) to their home base at El Arish where he carried out a safe landing but lost consciousness from loss of blood and an allergic reaction to an injection.

For this brilliant rescue, carried out under extremely hazardous conditions and under heavy enemy fire, McNamara received the only VC awarded to an Australian airman in World War I. A painting by Septimus Power, depicting the dramatic escape of the two pilots, is in the Australian War Memorial collection.



Autographed Studio Portrait of Captain Frank McNamara VC of No. 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps. Cairo, Egypt. 21 August 1917. (Original Housed in AWM Archive Store) (Donor J. E. Worth)

Air Vice Marshal Francis Hubert (Frank) McNamara VC, CBE

Frank McNamara was the first Australian airman to be awarded the Victoria Cross. He was born at Rushworth Victoria, on 4 April 1894. Having completed his secondary schooling in Shepparton, McNamara studied teaching at the Teachers Training College and the University of Melbourne

He taught at a number of Victorian Schools and joined the Senior Cadets in 1911. The following year he transferred to the Brighton Rifles and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in July 1913. In the early months of the First World War he served at Queenscliff and then Point Nepean before attending the Officers Training School at Broadmeadows. Between February and May 1915 he instructed at the AIF Training Depot at Broadmeadows.

In August 1915 McNamara was selected to attend the Point Cook Flying School, graduating as a pilot in October that year. He was posted to No 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, as an adjutant in January 1916 and sailed for Egypt. In May 1916 he left for an attachment to No 42 Squadron, Royal Flying Corps to attend the Central Flying School at Upavon, England. Upon completing his course he was attached to No. 22 Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps as an instructor in Egypt before returning to duty with No 1 Squadron.

By March 1917, No 1 Squadron was making regular bombing raids against Gaza. On 20 March McNamara, flying on one such operation, saw a fellow squadron member, Captain D. W. Rutherford, shot down. Although having just suffered a serious leg wound, McNamara landed near the stricken Rutherford who climbed aboard, but his wound prevented McNamara from taking off and his aircraft crashed. The two men made it back to Rutherford's plane which they succeeded in starting and, with McNamara at the controls, they took off just as enemy cavalry reached the scene. For this action McNamara was awarded the Victoria Cross

McNamara was promoted to captain and appointed Flight Commander in April 1917, but his wound prevented further flying and he was invalided to Australia in August that year. His appointment with the Australian Flying Corps ended in January 1918 but he was reappointed in September and became an aviation instructor.

In 1921 McNamara transferred to the newly-established Royal Australian Air Force as a flight lieutenant. He held a number of senior RAAF appointments between the wars, and spent two years on exchange to the RAF in the mid-1920s

In 1937 Group Captain McNamara was sent to the United Kingdom to attend the Imperial Defence College; he was then posted to Australia House as the Australian air liaison officer with the Air Ministry. On the outbreak of World War II he was promoted air commodore and in 1942 was appointed air officer commanding RAAF, London, with the rank of air vice marshal.



*Portrait of Air Vice Marshal F. H. McNamara VC CBE,
Air Officer Commanding, RAAF Overseas HQ, London, England, circa October 1942*

He was later attached on loan to the RAF where he was air officer commanding British forces at Aden in 1942-45. On returning to London he became RAAF representative at the British Ministry of Defence, and, in 1946, director of education at headquarters, British Occupation Administration, Westphalia, Germany.

He retired from the RAAF that year, and was a member of the National Coal Board, London, in 1947-59.



Field Marshal Lord William Riddell Birdwood (second from left) and Victoria Cross Winners, Air Vice Marshal F.H. McNamara, Colonel W.J. Symons and Lieutenant L. Keysor

Survived by his wife, a son and a daughter, he died of hypertensive heart failure at Amersham, Buckinghamshire, on 2 November 1961. A large congregation attended his funeral at St Joseph's Priory, Austin Wood, Gerrard's Cross

McNamara was a *genial, cheery, unruffled soul, unassuming and perennially courteous*. Air Vice Marshal A T Cole, who had served with him in Egypt, described him as *quiet, scholarly, loyal and beloved by all ... the last Officer for whom that high honour [the V.C.] would have been predicted*. He was appointed C.B.E. in 1938 and C.B. in 1945. In 1928 he had resumed studies interrupted by war service and graduated B.A. from the University of Melbourne in 1933.

The Artist: Harold Septimus Power (1877–1951)

Harold Septimus Power (1877-1951) was born on 31 December 1877 at Dunedin. After some art training in Melbourne he exhibited in 1899 with the Melbourne Art Club winning both animal and landscape sections.

Soon after, he moved to Adelaide where he worked as an illustrator for the *Observer*, the *Register*, the *Critic* and other papers. In 1904 he was commissioned by the trustees of the Art Gallery of South Australia to paint an animal picture (*After the Day's Toil*) for 100 guineas.

On 17 September he married Isabel Laura Butterworth (d.1935)

In 1905-07 Power studied at the Academia Julian, Paris, then settled in London, becoming a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Oils and the Society of Animal Painters and exhibiting at the Royal Academy of Arts. His first one-man exhibition at the Guild Hall, Melbourne in June 1913 displayed oils and watercolours of rural landscapes, used as backdrops for scenes of equine splendour and hunting which were to remain popular with both the local and international public and critics for the next thirty years.

In 1917 Power was appointed official war artist with the Australian Imperial Force with the honorary rank of lieutenant.



Bringing up the guns (Guns of the 101st Australian Battery moving up at the Battle of Passchendaele). 1917, oil on canvas

His skills as an animal painter were apparent in such paintings as *The First Divisional Artillery Goes Into Action Before Ypres July 31st 1917* which was acclaimed at the Royal Academy in 1919.

Between the wars Power lived intermittently in Melbourne and overseas. His departures from and returns to Australia were marked by significant exhibitions, usually featuring a much-praised Royal Academy work as centrepiece. He maintained his selling appeal even through the Depression when prices of five hundred guineas remained not uncommon. In 1927 he was commissioned with WB McInnes to paint the ceremonial opening of the Federal parliament. He executed various other State and Federal commissions including a mural, *War*, for the Public Library of Victoria (1924).

Power's list of overseas achievements reads as impressively as that of any other contemporary Australian or English artist. He exhibited at the Royal Academy, at the Royal Scottish Academy, the Royal Institute of Painters in Oils, the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, the Royal Water Colour Association and the Paris Old Salon.

At the height of his fame he was seen in a line of artistic descent from Landseer to Munnings. After George Lambert's death in 1930 Power was the acknowledged leader in Australia in equine subjects. By the mid-1940s however, his technical skill and subject matter were re-evaluated as unfashionable, as empty facility with the brush wasted on sentimental commonplaces and commercialism.

Power died at Richmond Melbourne on 3 January 1951 and was buried in Brighton cemetery. He was survived by his second wife Margery Isabel (née Desmazures) whom he had married in Adelaide on 5 September 1936 and by a son from each marriage.

An AWM print of a painting completed by Septimus Power in 1917 hangs in the main stairwell between levels 2 and 3. Typical of many of his Great War works, it shows the horse teams redeploying the 18 pounder field guns of an Australian artillery battery in Flanders. It is titled *Third Ypres - Taking the Guns Through*.

Power's biography from:

Robert Holden, 'Power, Harold Septimus (1877–1951)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/power-harold-septimus-8089/text14117>, published in hardcopy 1988, accessed online 4 July 2014. This article was first published in hardcopy in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, (MUP), 1988.