

# *Gunner of Renown*



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

## **Second Lieutenant (Quartermaster) Henry Green, MSM (1830-1918)**

Green was born at Seaford, Sussex, England on 24 January 1830. He enlisted in the Royal Artillery (RA) in 1846 and is believed to have stated his age as 18 years. In 1854, he went with his unit to the Crimea but was too late to serve in operations as a peace treaty had been signed before he arrived.

He saw service in India between 1857-60 being present at the siege and capture of Delhi and the relief of Lucknow. His son's notes of his career stated 'WO Green was at the relief of Lucknow under General Grant. General Havelock just beat Grant to Lucknow. They could hear bagpipes in the distance as Havelock's men were entering the city. He was also at Cawnpore and was amongst those who knelt down beside the well and swore to avenge the Indians who piled the massacred bodies down the well'.

After 25 years of service with the RA he took his discharge. With his wife and young family he migrated to New South Wales as a settler. On arrival in Australia he learned that the Permanent NSW Military Forces were being raised and was the first enlistee. His enlistment form showed that he was 40 years old, 6 feet 3 inches tall, with blue eyes, brown hair, fresh complexion and his religion was Church of England and his trade was 'Instructor of Artillery'. The day following his enlistment he was appointed Battery Sergeant Major (BSM) of the new artillery unit (including coast and field artillery) and faced the challenge of training it for there was no senior member who had served as a Gunner other than BSM Green.

He was also involved in other tasks such as mounting and moving ordnance to arm the many forts and batteries in the Sydney area, most notably at Middle Head. Here it is likely he took part in installing two 10 inch 25 ton RML Armstrong guns in the period 1882 to 1884. To make way for them it was necessary to remove two 10 inch 18 ton RMLs and four SB 68 pounders. This considerable work fell to Gunners of the NSW Artillery. Green's knowledge and experience would have been much in demand and he was promoted Warrant Officer in 1884.

In 1885, Green went with the field battery of the NSW Artillery to the Sudan and was in charge of the horses for the voyage. He was to return home after the battery disembarked to train replacements but that proved unnecessary so he remained for the duration of the tour. In the Sudan Green acquired the nicknames of 'Sandy Green' and 'King Sandy' when his efforts to remove sand from his generous beard resulted in localised sand storms.

Green returned to the appointment of Brigade Sergeant Major at the Headquarters of the NSW Military Forces and to his family and quarters alongside the clock over the archway at Victoria Barracks. His duties encompassed a routine of training, ceremonial occasions, the administration of a not inconsiderable permanent and militia force and no doubt from time to

time in matters artillery. In 1896, Green had completed 25 years as a member of the Permanent NSW Military Forces, as indeed he had in the RA. This must be counted as a unique achievement, 25 years in two armies and a pension from both. He was discharged on 30 September 1896 with the rank of Second Lieutenant (Quartermaster), admired, respected and held in affectionate remembrance by his comrades.

While Green may have retired at the respectable age of 66, his interest in military affairs apparently did not wane. He is reported to have served temporarily as Riding Master in 1900-01, training Bushmen's Contingents for the Anglo-Boer War. Henry Green died on 29 May 1918, at the age of 89. Sydney newspapers stated that he 'held the record of being the oldest soldier in Australia'. He rests at Waverley Cemetery, Sydney. During his long service Green was awarded the India General Service Medal (bar North West Frontier), Egypt Medal (bar Suakin), Khedive's Star and both the Imperial and Australian Long Service and Good Conduct Medals. The Army Museum at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, includes a photo of Green, his 'Account Book', his 'pill box' cap and other records in its collection.

There are two Norfolk Island pine trees on the high ground south of the Flag Station at Victoria Barracks, Sydney. They commemorate two soldiers who made their mark on the forces they so devotedly served. The taller tree, the 'Tall One' is in memory of Major General William Holmes, CMG, DSO, VD, the son in law of Henry Green, who is commemorated by the 'Other One'. These two trees were planted in a ceremony on 17 July 1952 attended by relatives of Green and Holmes.

General Holmes' father was Captain William Holmes of the 11th Regiment of Foot (British Army), who later became the Chief Clerk of the NSW Military Forces on its formation in 1871. He and his family lived in the married quarters in the Barracks on the opposite side of the archway to the Green family. Holmes (junior) married Miss Susan Green, the girl next door. He started his distinguished military career as a bugler and went on to serve in South Africa, command the Army component of the AN&MEF which captured German New Guinea in 1914, command the 5th Infantry Brigade at Gallipoli and the 4th Division in France, where he was killed at Messines in September 1917.

Sources: John F. Kreckler, *Story of Victoria Barracks* (Comp); R. M. C. Cubis, *A History of A Battery*; D. Horner, *The Gunners; A History of Australian Artillery*; Frank Hutchinson and Francis Meyers, *The Australian Contingent*; P Stanley (Ed) *But Little Glory*; Keith Coleman and John Knight, *A Short History of Military Forces of New South Wales from 1788 to 1953*; F. H. Berryman, *Notes on Address by GOC 17 July 1952*; R. Grebert (Compiler), *NSW Sudan 1885: Some Biographical Details (Statistics)*, NSW Military History Society Inc.p.51; Notes made by Mr H. J. Green (son) of 1 August 1952; John Whitelaw.