

# *Gunner of Renown*



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

## **Major General Sir Alan Hollick RAMSAY, CB, DSO, MSM**

**(1895-1973)**

Alan Ramsay was a primary teacher and on 1 October 1915 enlisted in the AIF and was allotted to the 4th Australian Field Artillery Brigade (FAB) and sailed for the Middle East the following month. He served in Egypt before being sent to the Western Front in March 1916. Promoted corporal in March 1917 and sergeant in October, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in 1918 for his bravery and devotion to duty. He entered the Officer Cadet School in June 1918 and was commissioned on 1 January 1919 and promoted lieutenant in April. His AIF appointment was terminated on 2 August in Melbourne.

After the war Ramsay returned to teaching and retained his interest in soldiering. On 31 March 1930, he was given command of the 10th Field Brigade. When World War II began he was CRA 4th Division as a colonel. He dropped rank to join the 2nd AIF on 13 October 1939 and became commanding officer of the 2/2nd Field Regiment. Six months later he took over the medium artillery of I Australian Corps as a brigadier. In October 1940, he was appointed CRA 9th Division.

The division embarked for the Middle East in November, trained in Palestine and moved forward into North Africa. One of the 9th Division artillery units became part of the force besieged in Tobruk, Libya. For his enthusiasm and judgment there, and at Mersa Matruh, Egypt, Ramsay was appointed CBE in 1942. In the Battle of El Alamein (23 October - 5 November) he established his name. Planning artillery support for the major attack on 23 October suited his temperament. It required meticulous attention to detail to co-ordinate the fire of the 360 guns in the fifteen regiments under his control. The result was outstanding, and the British Eighth Army's artillery commander subsequently distributed Ramsay's plan as a model. Further recognition followed, with the award of the DSO (1943) and a mention in dispatches. He was held in such regard that his commander, Sir Leslie Morshead, recommended him to take over the division, but the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Thomas Blamey, demurred at the proposal because Ramsay's experience had been restricted to the artillery.

Ramsay returned to Australian in February 1943 and commanded II Australian Corps' artillery from June. With Blamey's confidence finally obtained, he was appointed GOC 5th Division and promoted major general in January 1944. In November, the division was deployed to New Britain, where Ramsay used deep patrols and gradually established an ascendancy over the much larger Japanese force. He was appointed CB (1946) and twice mentioned in dispatches. In April 1945, he was transferred to 11th Division on Bougainville, but reverted to his previous command in July. His AIF appointment ended on 26 September and he was placed on the Reserve of Officers in the following month.

Back home, Ramsay became a leading light in the teaching profession and was made Knight Bachelor in 1960. He also devoted himself to the ex-service community.

Survived by his wife, and their daughter and son, he died on 19 September 1973 at Armadale and was cremated. His portrait (in military uniform) by Donald Cameron is held by Melbourne High School.

S. N. Gower, ADB, M.U.P., Vol. 16, pp 51-52. D.McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area – First Year*; D. Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*; B. Maughan, *Tobruk and El Alamein*; Education Department, (Victoria) *Vision and Realisation*, L.J. Blake ed (Melbourne, 1973); A. Inch, *Honour the Work* (Melbourne, 1977: Melbourne High School, *Unicorn*, December 1944, July 1946; *Education Gazette* (Victoria), May 1960; A.H. Ramsay to G. Long, 11 Apr 1951, AWM 76, item B409 (Australian War Memorial); private information from Alan Smith.

For more information follow this link: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ramsay-sir-alan-hollick-11481>