

# *Gunner of Renown*



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

## **Colonel Grahame Yorke Dalley SCARLETT, MBE, ED**

**(1910-1979)**

Grahame Scarlett was born in Ashfield, NSW, on 8 July 1910, elder son of musician and composer, Robert Dalley Scarlett and Gertude Alice (nee Peir). He completed the Intermediate Certificate at Grafton High School in 1925 before moving to Greenwich, NSW, and joining the Rural Bank. He married Joyce Melville in Sydney on 16 December 1939.

He initially joined the RANR in Sydney as a Seaman Gunner but in 1930 joined the militia 9th Field Brigade. Here he enjoyed the camaraderie and challenges of learning artillery skills in the days of transition from horse to motor, with mentors and teachers, often former members of the AIF. He was commissioned in 1937 and volunteered for the 2nd AIF on 26 October 1939. He was six feet tall, dark and good looking, a 'straight shooter', principled, loyal to his men, but above all keen, intelligent and decisive.

Promoted captain in September 1940, as OC A Troop, 1st Battery, 2/1st Field Regiment, Scarlett fought in the first Libyan campaign and was mentioned in dispatches for his coolness under fire during the battle of Bardia. He showed the same strength of character during the desperate rear-guard actions of the Greek campaign.

From November 1941, training appointments (Battery Commander, Australian Artillery Training Regiment (Middle East) and, on return to Australia, 16th Field Regiment (1<sup>st</sup> Australian Armoured Division) followed before promotion in September 1942 to Brigade Major in the 6th and later 11th Divisions. During this time he experimented with parachute dropping of guns and field tested and negatively reported on the first four short 25 pounders in New Guinea. Although this report was not accepted with grace by his superiors he did not alter his conclusions. In July 1943, he took operational control of an Australian/US HQ formed to coordinate artillery at Salamaua, responding to the challenges of reconciling differing artillery methods.

A posting as Instructor, LHQ Tactical School, Beenleigh, in 1944 was followed in 1945 by attachments to the British 21st Army Group, XIII Corps, and HQRA 5th and 43rd Divisions. As Counter Mortar Officer, Scarlett advanced with the Group to the Kiel Canal, carrying out the duties of Assistant Counter Mortar Officer and additionally serving on the posted strength of 43rd Division. Secondment to HQ AIF Reception Group UK preceded his discharge on 15 September 1945 after six years of soldiering, characterised by coolness under pressure and a capacity to engender loyalty and get things done.

Post-war he rejoined the Rural Bank and after successfully applying for War Service Matriculation, completed a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree at the University of Sydney as

an evening student 1948-51. In 1953, Scarlett became student adviser first at the University of WA and, in 1955, at Sydney University and later Secretary of the University Appointments Board. During this time he became Deputy Chairman of the Soldiers' Children's Education Board as Sydney University's representative.

In 1954, he joined the CMF and as second-in-command and later, as lieutenant colonel, commanded first 20th Corps Locating and later 9th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiments until July 1960. The former was highly regarded and had a strength of 350 when it was disbanded in 1960. He was awarded the Efficiency Decoration and served as president, RAA Association NSW from 13 June 1961 for two years before handing over to Brigadier Ken Fullford (qv). He transferred to the Reserve of Officers List in 1962 from the position of Colonel HQ Communications Zone.

Scarlett retired from the University in 1970 but not from the Soldiers' Children's Education Board and, in 1974, was appointed MBE for 'valuable community service'. His main interests continued to be his family and his lifelong love of boats and sailing, maintaining and sailing his wooden sloop (while his health allowed) and reading widely, including on military matters.

In 1974, he and his family moved from Turrumurra to Palm Beach, NSW. He died at home on 1 October 1979 and was cremated with Anglican rites. He was survived by three daughters and his wife Joyce, whose support sustained him in war and peace.

Sources: Grahame Scarlett: *Collected Papers* held by P. A. Scarlett; National Archives of Australia: B883, Second Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1939-1947; Scarlett, Grahame Yorke Dalley ; NX134; David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*, p.158, p.193; David Horner, *The Gunners*, p.358; Alan H. Smith.