

RW

at the archives

The 1st Battle of Wagga, August 18, 1888

Willans Hill

UNDER ATTACK

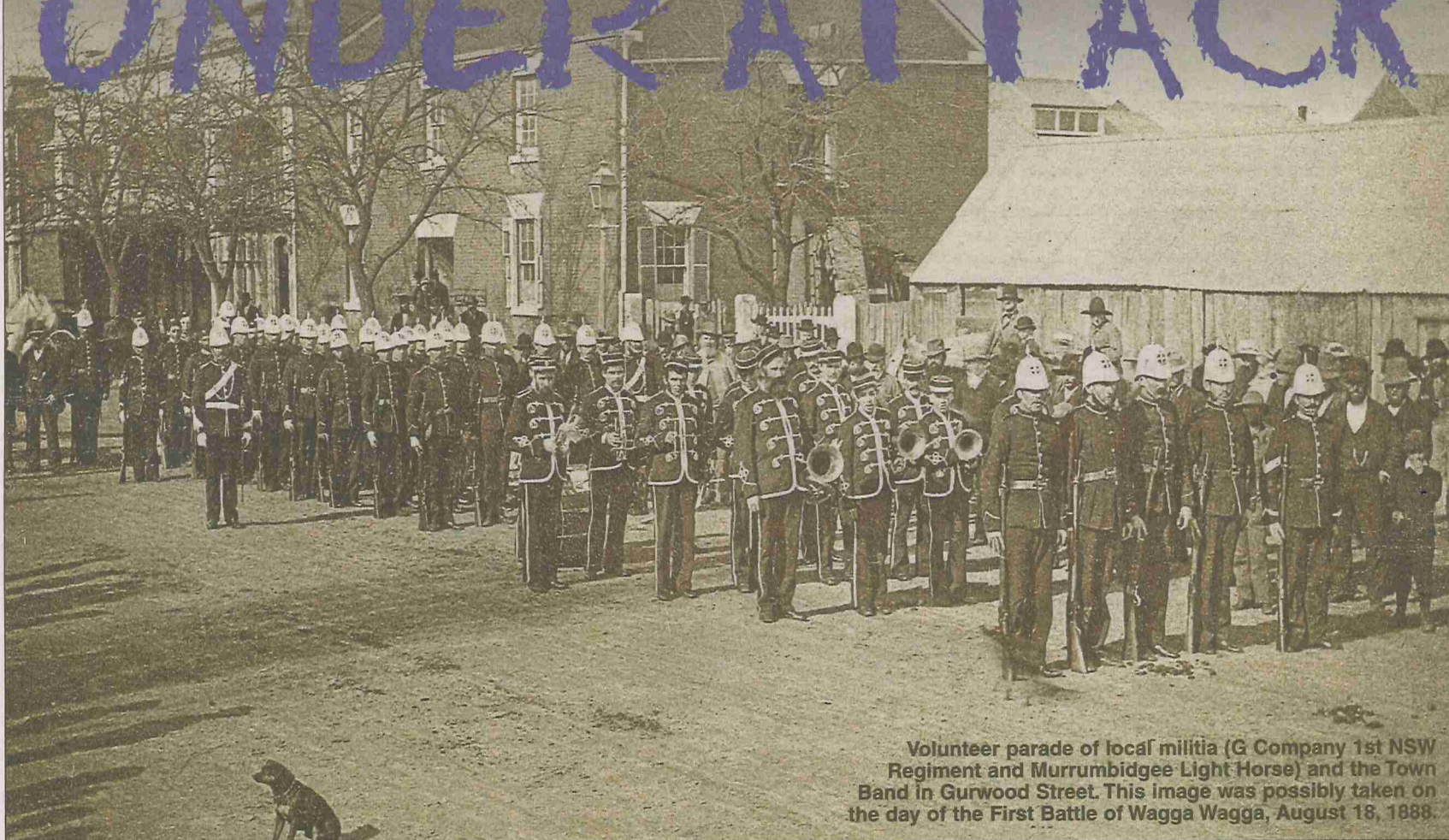
Saturday openings

The CSU Regional Archives is currently extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of the month. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours.

The next Saturday opening will be on July 6, 2013, from 10am to 3pm.

what you need to know

The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 02 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au, or visit our website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.



Volunteer parade of local militia (G Company 1st NSW Regiment and Murrumbidgee Light Horse) and the Town Band in Gurwood Street. This image was possibly taken on the day of the First Battle of Wagga Wagga, August 18, 1888.

at the archives

Wayne Doubleday



On Saturday, August 18, 1888, 50 members of G Company answered the roll call and were inspected in the hall in Traill (now Trail) Street by Major Charles Henry Bartlett, the Adjutant of the 1st New South Wales Regiment, who had arrived in Wagga the day before and promoted the new recruits.

Every man and piece of equipment was scrutinised, before they were marched off to the racecourse and put through various exercises by Lieutenants Sheppard and Bennett.

At midday, it was the turn of the Murrumbidgee Light Horse (MLH) to be inspected.

The corps had only formed the year before, yet was able to provide strength of 32, including a detachment that had travelled from Junee that morning by train, accompanied by the Junee army cadets. They soon joined the infantry at the race course before the call to assemble was sounded on the bugle at 2.15pm, and the troops moved off for battle.

The infantry formed an advanced guard and marched via Beckwith and Thorne streets, across the railway line and through Mr Copland's Hillside paddock.

The accompanying half cavalry was sent ahead as scouts, and almost immediately came under fire from 50 cadets from Wagga and Junee and the other half of the MLH, who were determined to defend the Rifle Reserve (at the site of the

current Botanic Gardens).

The infantry/cavalry returned fire and managed to chase the defenders to the top of the hill before Major Bartlett ordered a "cease fire", enabling both sides to regain their breath.

Each side was then repositioned and the battle began again in earnest.

The bugler sounded the "charge", and the infantry raced down the hill towards the rifle butts and into the defenders' line, breaking the rules by continuing after the "cease fire" was sounded, announcing the end of the First Battle of Wagga.

Wagga's Militia Unit

G COMPANY 1st NSW Regiment was formed in Wagga in 1884-5 under the command of Captain Henry B Fitzhardinge (the former mayor, after whom Fitzhardinge Street was named) and Lieutenant George Sheppard (architect and town surveyor).

This was this first militia unit to be formed after approval for payment of part-time volunteers was granted in 1878, with some members immediately volunteering for service in the Sudan War (1885), including Lieutenant Grantley B Fitzhardinge (son of the commander) and Alfred Joshua Bennett, who both served with distinction in Sudan and again in the Boer War (1899-1902).

Other members of G Company and the MLH also volunteered for the Boer War, with two members, Joe Palazzi and Charles Wilson, being killed and listed among the 98 names on the Wagga Boer War Honour Roll in the Victory Memorial Gardens.

Many of the veterans returned to their militia units to serve in commanding roles either at home or with the Australian Imperial Forces during WWI.

Already a highly decorated veteran, Alfred J Bennett went on to command troops in Gallipoli and France in WWI, retiring in 1925 with the rank of colonel.

Tomorrow these men (and later women) who served in the local militia units and those who volunteered for overseas service will be commemorated with a service in the Victory Memorial Gardens at 11am for Reserve Forces Day.

The Records

THE CSU Regional Archives, on behalf of the Wagga and District Historical Society, holds a precious original 1890 squad book with enlistment and attendance details of G Company for March/April 1900, which includes many familiar names from the town, and has been transcribed by the Historical Society.

It is interesting to note how within the squad book the enlisted officers (Egan and Lorrimer) were listed as "gentlemen" in their profession, while those in the lower ranks included labourers, farmers, grocers and drovers.

Thanks to a joint project between the Wagga and District Historical Society, Wagga City Council, CSU Regional Archives and supported in kind by *The Daily Advertiser*, the account of the First Battle of Wagga Wagga can now be read online.

The early years of the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* and *Wagga Wagga Express* have now been digitised and can be viewed for free at the National Library of Australia's digitised newspaper site TROVE (trove.nla.gov.au).

This project is ongoing, with plans to have the local newspapers up to 1954 online within the next three years.

Public donations for this project can be made at the Wagga City Library.

Compiled by Leonie Moore
References: *Wagga Wagga Advertiser*, August 21, 1888, Page 2; Sherry Morris (1999), *Wagga Wagga: A History* John Bowman (2010), *A Brief Insight into Citizen Forces in Wagga Wagga before 1911*; Australian National University, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, adb.anu.edu.au; Coolamon RSL Museum; Squad book - CSU Regional Archives [RW2893/151 box 5].

SEARCH HISTORIC NEWSPAPERS ON LINE

Trove ... then visit www.trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper for your Treasure Trove of Riverina history

The Daily Advertiser Wagga Wagga City Council

Charles Sturt University

Wagga and District Historical Society

