What's In A Number?
The Personal Numbering System of the Australian Army

by

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The first thing a soldier generally learns, on the very first day of enlistment, is his or her personal number. Those readers with Army service (probably Navy and Air Force as well) will surely remember their first day of service as they, and everyone else around them, spent the day mumbling a string of digits to themselves as they strove to commit that magic number to memory. And woes betide the individual if that number was NOT committed to permanent memory by the end of the day. Readers will doubtless recall the various dodges utilised by those with a less than perfect memory in an effort to avoid the wrath of their instructors. Numbers would be written inside sleeve cuffs, inside the crown of the bush hat, on the back of the wrist, on the palm of the hand. Having your brew mug in your hand when pounced on by a predatory corporal intent on catching you out in the commission of that most unpardonable of military sins, not being able to remember your number, was always a life saver. Since your number was required to be written on your mug in permanent marker, in nice big digits, the mug was always good for a quick desperate glance!

Relevance of Service Numbers

The question that can legitimately be asked, of course, is what is the relevance of service numbers to military historians? Well, first of all, the service number is one way of positively identifying a particular soldier when carrying out research. Secondly, from a purely Australian context, as Australia is one of the few countries in the world to habitually issue service medals with the recipients name and number on them, again the regimental or service number is a critical element in researching medals.

Background – The British Experience

Having said all that, service numbers as we know them have been around since 1830. Not surprisingly, Australian practice has fairly closely followed British practice. It is

therefore appropriate that the British experience be examined in order to place the Australian experience in context.

In 1830 the British Army ordered that every soldier then serving or on enlistment was to be allotted a 'regimental number.' The main reason for the establishment of regimental numbers appears to have been as a tool to counter fraud. With each man now allocated a number unique to him self (if not unique in the Army) it was harder for dishonest officers and senior NCO's to defraud the government by misrepresenting pay accounts.

The numbering system established by the British Army in 1830 was a true 'Regimental Number' system, with numbers being allocated in each regiment and corps starting from '1'. This was definitely a step in the right direction, but was not without shortcomings. The first of these was that officers were not included in the numbering system. Secondly, the numbers were not unique to the man. Given that in 1830 the order of battle of the British Army included 3 regiments of foot guards, 99 regiments of foot and 26 regiments of cavalry, then it can be seen that, even if the various support arms, corps and departments are excluded, there were at least 128 men in the army with the Regimental Number '1'.[ii]

Taking the 46th Regiment of Foot (later the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry) as an example, between 1830 and 2 October 1856, when a new numbering sequence was ordered, Regimental Numbers 1 to 4211 had been issued for the 46th. The new numbering sequence of 1856 again started with 1 but serving members of the regiment kept their old number, the new sequence being applied to new enlistments. The 1856 sequence is known to have gone up as high as 1524.[iii]

In 1874 the 46th was linked with the 32nd Regiment as a result of the first of the Cardwell reforms. Under this reform, newly linked units were in turn linked to a particular Sub-District or Brigade Area, in the case of the 32nd/46th, Sub-District No. 35. From this date Regimental Numbers were issued by the Sub-District, with a new sequence, again starting at '1', and again only applied to new enlistments. New enlistments were differentiated by addition of the suffix '35B/' to their number, thus the first soldier enlisted under the new sequence was allotted the number 35B/1.

Soldiers already serving in the unit had the prefix '32/' or '46/', respectively, added to their existing number. This system remained in force until August 1881 when the amalgamation of the 32nd and 46th was completed and the unit emerged as the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (DCLI). At that time numbers up to 35B/1592 had been allotted.[iv]

Yet another sequence of regimental numbers was ordered in August 1881 and the first new enlistment into the DCLI was allotted the regimental number '1' in this sequence. Once again, already serving soldiers retained their old numbers. From Regimental Number 1 the new sequence is known to have gone up to 48999.[v] This incredibly high number is of course explained by the huge expansion of the DCLI during the First World War, when the 1881 numbering sequence continued.

On 1 March 1919 the DCLI, along with the rest of the British Army, commenced a new numbering sequence, with a zero prefix to one, two, three and four digit numbers. These numbers, which applied to new enlistments and transferees only, commenced at 08, with no record or explanation as to why numbers 01 – 07 were not allotted. When this sequence was rendered obsolete by the introduction of Army Numbers in 1920, DCLI had allotted numbers up to 02491.[vi]

In October 1920, strict 'Regimental Numbers' were abolished and were replaced by 'Army Numbers.' While issued from a central sequence, however, the DCLI and all other regiments and corps of the army were allotted a block of numbers unique to the regiment. In the case of DCLI, the block allotted was 5429001 – 5485000. Thus the 1920 numbers can still be viewed as 'Regimental Numbers'. For the first time these new numbers were made retrospective so every serving member of the DCLI was allotted a new number, with new enlistments being issued numbers from the same block on the date of enlistment.[vii]

Regimental Numbers ceased to be issued in the British Army in October 1950 when the army finally did away with numbers specific to units and introduced a single sequence for all new recruits, both Regular and Territorial Army. While serving soldiers retained their old numbers, from October 1950 all new recruits were allotted numbers from a central sequence, which started at 22000000.[viii]

The Australian Experience – Pre-World War One

Turning now to Australia, prior to 1914 the Australian Military Forces (AMF) followed the British Army system of allotting regimental numbers to its personnel. Under this system, each unit was responsible for issuing numbers to its members, each unit starting its numbering sequence from '1'. Doubtless records exist in the orders of the military forces of the various colonies that gave legal basis to the system. To date it has not been possible to locate such orders. However, a number of rolls held by the Australian War Memorial (AWM) for members of the New South Wales Military Force certainly prove the fact that the British style regimental number system was followed by at least one of the colonies.

The AWM holds a copy of the 'Descriptive Roll Book of the Artillery, New South Wales Military Force', which lists details of every soldier enlisted in the NSWA from 1871 onwards.[ix] The first entry in the book is for Henry Green, who was attested on 7 August 1871 and allotted the regimental number '1'. The last entry in the first part of the book is for No. 3980 George Saville Rogers, who was attested on 17 April 1912. This latter date indicates that the regimental numbering system of the artillery was carried over from colonial times into Commonwealth service. Mistakes did occur. On 19 November 1895, Archibald Henry Donaldson was attested and allotted the regimental number 2465. Just over a month later, on 24 December 1895, the same number was allotted to William John Gilmore, who was attested that day. The roll book shows a pen amendment, hand written in red, withdrawing the number 2465 from Donaldson and allotting him the number 2459.[x] As an aside, the new number did not do Donaldson much good as he was discharged on 13 January 1899 'in consequence of being "Incorrigible & Worthless"'!

Oddly enough, the book was recommenced at Number 1 on 28 July 1915 (according to a pen notation on the top of the first page of the second part). The title heading of this portion of the book has been hand amended to read: 'Descriptive Roll Book of the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery, New South Wales 2nd Military District'. This dating is difficult to understand, however, as the first entry (No. 1) is for Frederick William Woodbridge, who is noted as having been attested on 30 June 1878. The

book goes up to 16 April 1918 when Andrew Kelly is noted as enlisting and being allotted the regimental number 1858. It is possible that the second part of the ledger records the numbers allotted to members of the RAGA when that corps was formed at Federation and men were transferred from the former colonial establishment and allotted new numbers. If this is the case, then presuming that he was originally attested at the age of 18 in 1878, this means that Frederick William Woodridge was 55 years old when allotted his new number. Given that he was most likely a senior NCO or possibly even a warrant officer by that time, this makes sense. Unfortunately, in the absence of any hard evidence, this is just a theory.

The regimental number system for the AMF became regularised in 1908, with the issue of 'Regulations (Provisional) and Standing Orders for the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia.' Regimental numbers are dealt with specifically in Section III, 'Standing Orders.' In this Section it is directed:

Regimental Numbers for Soldiers

190.   *A soldier when posted to a corps on enlistment, or when transferred thereto from another corps, will receive a regimental number in that corps. A separate series of numbers will be kept in each regiment. Soldiers on enlistment will be numbered accordingly, and on transfer to another corps, or on posting to another unit, forming part of the same corps, will receive fresh numbers in the regiment or corps to which they are transferred or posted.*

191.   *The regimental number will be given by the officer in charge of the attestation. When the officer commanding a unit requires a regimental number for a soldier, he should apply to such officer.*

192.   *The regimental series of numbers will commence with 1. Soldiers of the Permanent Forces who form with militia or volunteer units from part of the same corps will be numbered in a separate series. The numbers will be given in sequence, according to the date of application. The series will extend to 9,999 in the Field Artillery, Garrison Artillery, Corps of Engineers, Army Service Corps, Army Medical Corps, and Army Ordnance Corps, of militia and volunteers in each military district, and in regiments of militia and volunteers not named above.*

> *193.   In all documents relating to a soldier, his regimental number will invariably precede his name. This number will not be changed as long as the soldier remains in the corps. If the soldier is transferred or discharged, deserts, or dies, the number will not be given to another soldier. A soldier promoted to warrant rank will retain his regimental number.[xi]*

This system, although somewhat prone to error (as shown above), was fairly manageable in the small pre-World War One establishment. With the outbreak of war, however, the system was very soon revealed as inadequate.[xii] Nevertheless, the system would continue in use for a number of years more.

The Australian Experience – World War One

During the First World War Australia fielded not one army but, as in the Second World War, three armies. These were the small pre-war Permanent Military Force or PMF, the part time Militia, which was both volunteer and, under the Universal Training Scheme of 1912, conscript and the all volunteer Australian Imperial Force or AIF. The AIF was raised as Australia's overseas expeditionary force, an artifice required due to the strictures of the Defence Act, which forbade the deployment of members of the AMF overseas on operational service.

For the duration of the war, both the PMF and the Militia continued to serve, train and recruit and new members of the forces were allotted regimental numbers as required under the existing arrangements. For its part the AIF was required to issue its own regimental numbers, which were allotted to non-commissioned 'other ranks' but not to officers or nurses. AIF officer's names are usually listed in official correspondence (nominal rolls, embarkation rolls, casualty returns, etc) before those names with regimental numbers. Should a soldier be appointed to commissioned rank, then he would cease to use the number previously allotted to him, although the number still remained relevant for recording, reporting and repatriation purposes.

For the legal basis of its regimental numbering system, the AIF of course turned to the existing SO 190-193, referred to above. The provisional nature of the 1908 document had been formalised in 1916 when 'Regulations (Provisional) and Standing Orders'

were superseded by 'The Defence Act 1903-1915 and Regulations for the Military Forces and Senior Cadets of Australia, 1916'. Of specific relevance are Regulations 880-883, which state:

Regimental Numbers for Soldiers

880.   *A soldier when posted to a corps on enlistment, or enrolment, or when transferred thereto from another corps, will receive a regimental number in that corps. A separate series of numbers will be kept in each regiment. Soldiers on enlistment or enrolment will be numbered accordingly, and on transfer to another corps, or on posting to another unit, forming part of the same corps, will, except in the case of the Royal Australian Field Artillery and the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery, receive fresh numbers in the regiment or corps to which they are transferred or posted.*

881.   *The regimental number will be given by the officer in charge of the attestation; in the case of the Royal Australian Field Artillery by the officer commanding Royal Australian Field Artillery, and in the case of the Royal Australia Garrison Artillery by the Adjutant-General. When the officer commanding a unit requires a regimental number for a soldier, he should apply to such officer.*

882.   *The regimental series of numbers will commence with number one.. Soldiers of the Permanent Forces who form with militia or volunteer units from part of the same corps will be numbered in a separate series. The numbers will be given in sequence, according to the date of application. The series will extend to 9,999 in the Field Artillery, Garrison Artillery, Corps of Engineers, Army Service Corps, Army Medical Corps, and Army Ordnance Corps, of militia and volunteers in each military district, and in regiments of militia and volunteers not named above.*

883.   *In all documents relating to a soldier, his regimental number will invariably precede his name. This number will not be changed as long as the soldier remains in the corps. If the soldier is transferred or discharged, deserts, or dies, the number will not be given to another*

soldier. A soldier promoted to warrant rank will retain his regimental number.[xiii]

The actual order directing that members of the AIF were to be issued regimental numbers is 'Australian Imperial Force Order No. 2' (AIFO No.2) dated 26 August 1914. The Order states at paragraph 3(vi):

The following instructions are to be followed in allotting regimental numbers to personnel of the Australian Imperial Force:-

Divisional Head-Quarters	*From 1 upwards*
Brigade Head-Quarters	*Personnel to be allotted numbers with units.*
Light Horse Regiments	*Each regiment to run from 1 upwards.**
Infantry Battalions	*Each battalion to run from 1 upwards.**
Field Artillery Batteries, including Brigade Ammunition Columns	*Numbering will be by brigades. Brigade commanders will arrange and communicate allotment to battery commanders.*
Divisional Ammunition Columns	*From 1 upwards.*
Engineer Field Companies	*Numbering to be by field companies. Officer commanding engineers to allot numbers to 3rd company.*
Signal Troop and Signal Company	*Officer commanding signal units to allot from 1 upwards.*
Divisional Train and Light Horse Train	*Officer commanding Train to allot a suitable series to companies.*

Note: 1. * Head-Quarters of regiments and battalions should respectively be added to the establishment of squadrons and companies as determined by commanding officers.

This Order would be further amplified by AIFO No. 10 and No. 15.

Paragraph 41 of AIFO No. 10 stated that:

With reference to Australian Imperial Force Orders No.2, paragraph 3 (iv), regimental numbers of Army Medical Corps units will be allotted as follows:-

Light Horse Field Ambulance	*2nd Military District, 1-55.*
	3rd Military District, 56-111.
1st Field Ambulance	*1-243.*

2nd Field Ambulance	*1-243.*

3rd Field Ambulance   *1st Military District, 1-87.*
4th Military District, 88-165.
5th Military District, 166-216.
6th Military District, 217-243.

An excellent example of the application of regimental numbers is Private John Simpson (Kirkpatrick), the so-called 'Man With the Donkey'. Simpson enlisted in the 3rd Field Ambulance in Western Australia (5th Military District). On enlistment he was allotted the regimental number '202' which, as can be seen, is included in the block '166'-216' allotted to members of the 3rd FD AMB enlisted in 5 MD.

A few days later, paragraph 72 of AIFO No. 15 directed:

> *In continuation of A.I.F. Orders No. 10, para. 41, regimental numbers as follows will be allotted to A.M.C. details attached to units:-*

A.M.C. details attached to:-	
Div. Head-Qrs.	*301 to 307*
Light Horse Brigade-	
1st Regiment	*308 to 310*
2nd "	*311 to 313*
3rd "	*314 to 316*
4th (Div.) Light Horse	*317 to 319*
Artillery-	
1st F.A. Brigade	*320 to 323*
2nd "	*324 to 327*
3rd "	*328 to 331*
Div. Ammn. Column	*332 to 335*
Engineers-	
1st Field Coy.	*336 to 337*
2nd "	*338 to 339*
3rd "	*340 to 341*
Div. Signal Coy.	*342 to 343*
1st Infantry Brigade-	
1st Battalion	*344 to 348*
2nd "	*349 to 353*
3rd "	*354 to 358*
4th "	*359 to 363*
2nd Infantry Brigade-	
5th Battalion	*364 to 368*

6th	*"*	*369 to 373*
7th	*"*	*374 to 378*
8th	*"*	*379 to 383*
3rd Infantry Brigade-		
9th Battalion		*384 to 388*
10th	*"*	*389 to 393*
11th	*"*	*394 to 398*
12th	*"*	*399 to 403*
Army Service Corps-		
L.H. Brigade Train		*404 to 405*
Divisional Train		*406 to 409*

Regimental numbers, while sequential were not unique, that is to say, as with the British Army the same number could be shared by a number of people. Infantry units, pioneer battalions, light horse regiments and machine gun companies (later battalions) issued their own ranges of regimental numbers, which resulted in many men being allocated the same number. Other major formations such as artillery, engineers, signal, medical and service corps allotted unique numbers within their corps; however, these numbers often duplicated those issued by other formations. For example, in 1914, when the AIF was first raised, the first man allotted a number in every infantry battalion and light horse regiment raised was allotted the regimental number '1'. Thus, from the very outset there was, theoretically, a minimum of 20 men with the regimental number '1' – one for each of the first 16 infantry battalions raised and one for each of the first four light regiments raised. I have, in fact, identified approximately 100 members of the AIF with the regimental number '1' (see Appendix 1).

An examination of 1914 Nominal Rolls for infantry and light horse units reveals that while the practice was not universal, certainly it was not uncommon practice for the Regimental Number 1 to be allotted to the RSM of the unit. As stated, however, it was not universal. For example, the RSM of the 1st Infantry Battalion, WO David Thompson, was attested to the AIF on 17 August 1914 and allotted the regimental number '31'. One Army reference source referred to during the research for this booklet indicated that it was also common practice to re-allot the number 1 to an incoming RSM when the old RSM was replaced.[xiv] In this case, it was stated that an

alphabetic suffix ('A', 'B' etc) would be added to the number. It has not proved possible to confirm this information.

Numbers could, however, be re-allotted. A very good example of this can be found in the 1st Light Horse Regiment. Private James Frederick Dawes was enlisted into the regiment on 4 September 1914, allotted the regimental number '1', and departed overseas with the regiment on 20 October 1914. In Egypt, however, Dawes quickly fell foul of the military authorities, was tried by court martial and returned to Australia on 11 February 1915, discharged as 'Services No Longer Required'.[xv] Confusingly, however, Frederick William Lindsell had enlisted in the regiment on 19 August 1914 and been immediately appointed RSM. He was allotted the regimental number '1A' but his record shows that he later reverted to '1', doubtless concurrent with the demise of Private Dawes.[xvi]

The addition of an alphabetic suffix was also resorted to in the case of duplicate numbers. Duplicate numbers were in fact the bane of the regimental number system. In the early days of the AIF, the confusion that reigned as units were formed quite often saw the same number allotted more than once within the same unit. If this was discovered in time, that is before the man's name and number was entered into the pay records, then it was easily rectified by cancelling the duplicate number and re-issuing a new number. If this was too late, however, then an alphabetic suffix would be added.

A problem encountered in the early days was units arbitrarily changing the numbers of men who arrived as reinforcements. This practice forced the Military Secretary of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps to minute every unit the corps, requesting the practice to stop. Specifically, Griffiths wrote on 24 November 1915:

> *Units at Anzac are still in many cases changing the numbers of reinforcements joining their units. Please issue strict orders that the number allotted to any man in Australia must be retained in every case otherwise the work in Records Section (is) impossible. Where such changes have been made the change should be cancelled and the original number reallotted. Duplication of numbers in Units causes less confusion than is caused by alteration.[xvii]*

As well as these sorts of errors, it was not uncommon for men being transferred into a new unit to find that their numbers had already been allotted and again alphabetic suffixes were resorted to. A good example of this is the VC winner John Leak who was allotted the Regimental Number 2053 when he enlisted into the 9th Battalion in 1915. When he transferred to the newly raised 69th Battalion in March 1917, however, it was discovered that there was already a man with the number 2053 serving in the unit. Leak was therefore allotted the suffix 'A' for his number and kept this number for the rest of his military career.[xviii]

Finally, some alphabetical prefixes were added to signify differing categories of enlistment.[xix] Two of the most common of these were:

- R - indicating a re-enlistment.
- N – indicating previous service with the RAN Bridging Train.

Examples of the re-enlistment prefix can be found in the embarkation roll for the 8th Reinforcements of 60th Battalion.[xx] R552 Sergeant Harold Edward Abbott had previously served with the 21st Battalion; R1063 Private William John Thornburgh had previously served with the 8th Battalion; and R1362 Private Harold James Hand had previously served with the 14th Battalion. These men had all been discharged for various reasons but then re-enlisted in the 60th Battalion.

Staying with the 60th Battalion, the last Regimental Number allotted for the unit was 3512, allotted to Private James Edward Hogarth of the 9th Reinforcements (embarked 16 July 1917). In 1917-1918, with the flow of enlistments of the earlier years of the war slowed to a trickle, the AIF commenced a more centralised management of recruitment. From late 1917, while some lower numbered units, for example the infantry battalions of the 1st Division, continued to receive drafts of specifically allotted reinforcements, as a general rule "General Reinforcements" were raised and despatched overseas, there to be allocated to units. General Reinforcements were allotted unique numbers in the range of 50000-80000.[xxi] While these were still referred to as 'Regimental Numbers', and while officers and nurses still were not

allotted numbers, these 'General Reinforcement Numbers' are the genesis of the Australian Army's service numbers.

Post World War One

The AIF ceased to exist on 1 April 1921 and thus, of course, AIF regimental numbers ceased to be issued, although they still remained relevant for record purposes. The AIF aside, while the Army sorted itself out post-war, regimental numbers continued to be issued to the AMF for a short period. Military Order No. 183 of 1921 (MO 183/1921) directed that:

> *All men allotted to or enlisted in a unit, whether they are to be later allotted to a non-divisional unit or otherwise, will receive Regimental numbers in the units with which they are serving in accordance with the present system, as set out in A.M.R. 880-883.*

This was followed shortly after by MO 311/1921, which stated:

> *With reference to Military Order 183/1921, the series of Regimental umbers for the Citizen Forces set out in A.M.R. 882 will now be extended for those Arms of the Service concerned in each Division or Mixed Brigade instead of in each Military District except in the case of units not allotted to a Division, or Mixed Brigade, such as Coast Defence Units for which the series of Regimental numbers in each Arm will extend in the Military District as at present.*

> *2.   Regimental numbers for all Arms of the Permanent Forces will be allotted by the Adjutant-General's Branch, Army Head-Quarters.*

> *3.   Regimental numbers for the Army Veterinary Corps (Citizen Forces) will be allotted by the Q.M.G's Branch, Army Head-Quarters.*

> *4.   Amendment of A.M.R. 882 may be anticipated.*

The war, however, had shown quite clearly that the 'Regimental Number' system was inadequate and in fact a move away from this system had occurred with the issue of 'General Reinforcement' numbers discussed above. Paragraph 3 of MO 311/1921 (above) in fact points the way as it directs that regimental numbers for one of the Army's corps would be centrally issued by AHQ. In November 1921, the Army took the plunge and abolished regimental numbers.

MO 524/1921, published on 19 November 1921, abolished regimental numbers and laid down the rules for the use of 'Army Numbers.' These rules were:

- Every soldier on enlistment, whether in the PMF or CMF, or allotted to the CMF by virtue of the Defence Act Section 125 (DA125)[xxii] was to be issued with and to retain throughout his army service a unique Army Number allotted to him.

- An ex-serviceman who re-enlisted was to be reissued with his previous Army Number.

- The number of an ex-member of the army was not to be re-issued (except to that ex-member in the case of re-enlistment).

- Notwithstanding any other instruction, a person called up under DA60 was to be issued with a number from a current block, irrespective of any number issued under any previous service.[xxiii]

- The numbers of soldiers who enlisted under DA125 were to be prefixed with the last two digits of the year of birth, for example, 01/100,123, indicating a soldier who was born in the year 1901.

- The numbers of soldiers who enlisted voluntarily, after completing their commitment under DA125, were to be retained, but with the prefix 'VE' added.[xxiv]

From 1921 to 1940 Army Numbers were issued to formations in blocks of 1000 or multiples of 1000. Formations were permitted to sub-allot blocks of 100 numbers as required. Blocks of numbers were issued by MO 488/1922; Australian Army Order (AAO) 371/1927; AAO 301/1931; AAO 102/1934; AAO 285/1935; AAO 167/1938; AAO's 44, 104, 139, 169, 199, 264 and 354/1939; and AAO's 25, 57, 69, 84, 98 and 117/1940.

The allocation of blocks of numbers for the period 1921-1940 is shown in the table below.

Numbers	Allotted To	Authority	Remarks
1 – 2,250	PMF	AAO 488/1922	Allotted to PMF members already serving
2,251 – 2,450	PMF QLD	AAO 371/1927	
2,451 – 3,450	PMF NSW	"	
3,451 – 4,450	PMF VIC	"	
4,451 – 4,550	PMF SA	"	
4,551 – 4,750	PMF WA	"	
4,751 – 4,850	PMF TAS	"	
4,851 – 4,900	Not allotted		
4,901 – 5,900	PMF NSW	AAO 167/1938	
5,901 – 6,400	PMF WA	AAO 44/1939	
6,401 – 6,600	PMF SA	"	
6,601 – 6,700	PMF TAS	"	
6,701 – 7,700	PMF VIC	"	
7,701 – 7,800	PMF RMC	AAO 104/1939	
7,801 – 8,300	PMF NT	AAO 169/1939	
8,301 – 8,700	PMF QLD	AAO 199/1939	
8,701 – 10,700	PMF NSW	AAO 25/1940	
10,701 – 11,000	PMF TAS	AAO 69/1940	
11,001 – 15,000	PMF NSW	AAO 98/1940	
15,001 – 20,000	PMF VIC	"	
20,001 – 22,000	PMF QLD	"	
22,001 – 24,000	PMF WA	"	
24,001 – 40,000	Reserved		
40,001 – 41,000	CMF QLD	AAO 235/1935	
41,001 – 44,000	CMF NSW	"	
44,001 – 47,000	CMF VIC	"	
47,001 – 48,000	CMF SA	"	
48,001 – 49,000	CMF WA	"	
49,001 – 50,000	CMF TAS	"	
50,001 – 70,000	CMF 1st Cavalry Division NSW	"	
70,001 – 80,000	CMF 1st Cavalry Division QLD	"	
80,001 – 100,000	CMF 2nd Cavalry Division	"	
100,000 – 120,000	CMF 1st Division NSW	"	
120,001 – 130,000	CMF 1st Division QLD	"	
130,001 – 160,000	CMF 2nd Division	"	
160,001 – 190,000	CMF 3rd Division	"	
190,001 – 220,000	CMF 4th Division	"	
220,001 – 230,000	CMF 11th Mixed Brigade	"	
230,001 – 240,000	CMF 12th Mixed Brigade	"	12th Mixed Brigade and Field Troops 6 MD identical
240,001 – 250,000	CMF 13th Mixed Brigade	"	13th Mixed Brigade and Field Troops 5 MD identical
250,001 – 270,000	CMF 1st Division NSW	"	
270,001 – 280,000	CMF Field Troops 5 MD	"	Field Troops 5 MD and 13th Mixed Brigade identical
280,001 – 290,000	CMF 2nd Division	"	
290,001 – 300,000	CMF 4 th Division	"	
300,001 – 310,000	CMF Field Troops 4 MD	"	
310,001 – 314,000	CMF NSW	"	
314,001 – 400,000	CMF 3rd Division DIV	"	
400,001 – 401,000	CMF WA	"	
401,001 – 411,000	CMF 1st Division QLD	"	
411,001 – 421,000	CMF 11th Mixed Brigade	"	
421,001 – 422,000	CMF QLD	"	
422,001 – 442,000	CMF 2nd Division DIV	AAO 285/1935	
442,001 – 445,000	CMF VIC	"	
445,001 – 455,000	CMF 4th Division	"	
455,001 – 490,000	Reserved	"	
490,001 – 500,000	CMF Field Troops 6 MD	AAO 44/1939	Field Troops 6 MD and 12th Mixed Bde identical
500,001 – 501,000	CMF TAS	"	
501,001 – 521,000	CMF 1st Cavalry Division	"	
521,001 – 541,000	CMF 2nd Cavalry Division	"	
541,001 – 551,000	CMF Field Troops 4 MD	"	
551,001 – 561,000	CMF 11th Mixed Brigade	"	
561,001 – 562,000	CMF NT	AAO 104/1939	
562,001 – 567,000	CMF VIC	AAO 139/1939	
567,001 – 568,000	CMF WA	AAO 264/1939	
568,001 – 578,000	CMF QLD	AAO 354/1939	
578,001 – 588,000	CMF 1st Division NSW	AAO 57/1940	
588,001 – 598,000	CMF 4th Division	AAO 84/1940	
598,001 – 698,000	CMF NSW	AAO 117/1940	
698,001 – 798,000	CMF VIC	"	
798,001 – 848,000	CMF QLD	"	
848,001 – 898,000	CMF TAS	"	
898,001 – 999,999	Reserved		

Table 1 – Army Numbers 1921 to 1940

The first detailed instructions issued covered allotment of Army numbers to members of the Permanent Military Forces (PMF). MO 488/1922 allotted numbers to those members of the PMF actually serving at the time. Numbers were issued from the block 1 – 2250. AAO 371/1927, published on 23 July 1927, was the next Order issued and is worth quoting in full as it lays down specifically how numbers would be allotted to members of the PMF. The Order states:

ARMY NUMBERS.

AUSTRALIAN PERMANENT MILITARY FORCES.

Sub-para. III., para. 4, of M.O. 524/1921 is cancelled.

2. *Army numbers for all members of the Australian Permanent Military Forces will in future be allotted by District Bases.*

3. *Each member enlisted in the Australian Permanent Military Forces will be allotted an army number, which will be entered on A.M. Form A.6 (particulars of soldier and application for Army Number on attestation, or enlistment, in the Permanent Forces), when that form is prepared for submission to Army Head-Quarters.*

4. *The army number originally allotted will be retained by a member throughout his service, irrespective of transfer from one unit or corps, to another.*

5. *An ex-member who re-enlists will resume the army number previously allotted to him.*

6. *The army number of a member who dies, is discharged, or becomes non-effective for any other reason, will not be allotted to another member.*

7. *Blocks of army numbers, as shown hereunder, are allotted to District Bases.*

_____	*From.*	*To.*
1st *District Base*	2251	2450
2nd *District Base*	2451	3450
3rd *District Base*	3451	4450
4th *District Base*	4451	4550
5th *District Base*	4551	4750
6th *District Base*	4751	4850

AAO 37/1937, published on 28 February 1937, issued a small block of numbers (470001 – 470020) for allotment to members of the Military Detachment of the Australian Coronation Contingent. A month later AAO 59/1937, published on 31 March 1937, issued another small block of numbers (4851 – 4900) for use by the Royal Military College. Presumably these numbers were for issue to Staff Cadets on graduation. This is the first actual mention of numbers for cadets or officers and it would appear on the face of it that officers still did not receive numbers. However, various references show that officers did in fact receive numbers, but referred to as 'personal numbers' rather than Army numbers. In addition, it would not be until the Second World War that officer's numbers would begin to be published along with their names and ranks.

In 1941, with no record of an authority, PMF personnel began to prefix their numbers with a letter to denote the state of enlistment, plus the letter 'P' to denote PMF (e.g. WP5999 to indicated enlistment in Western Australia – see below).[xxv]

World War Two on Full-Time Duty

During the Second World War two separate sets of numbers were issued, one for members of the AIF and one for members of the CMF on full-time duty. Theoretically (but see comments below), both sets of numbers started at 1 and continued on indefinitely. The method of distinguishing between AIF and CMF was by use of alphabetical prefixes. The prefixes consisted of a letter to identify the state of enlistment to which was added the letter 'X' in the case of enlistments into the AIF.[xxvi] The first mention of the use of state prefixes is in Military Board Instruction (MBI) No. 59 of 18 Oct 1939. MBI 59/1939 deals with the raising of the Second AIF and the 6th Australian Division, and states:

> (ii)   *ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS*
> *Army Numbers:*
> 23.   *Each District will commence from Number 1 upwards – each number being prefixed with the Index Letter of the District and the letter 'X' to denote enlistment in the Force – i.e.,*

1st Military District	*..*		*QX1- upwards*	
2nd	"	"	*..*	*NX1 -* "
3rd	"	"	*..*	*VX1 -* "
4th	"	"	*..*	*SX1 -* "
5th	"	"	*..*	*WX1 -* "
6th	"	"	*..*	*TX1 -* "
7th	"	"	*..*	*DX1 -* "

Blocks of Army numbers will be sub-allotted to each enlisting officer.

Army numbers will be allotted by the enlisting officer **at the time of attestation only.**

The emphasis in the last sentence, referring to when numbers would be allotted, appears in the original MBI. This directive was obviously designed to ensure that numbers were not 'wasted' by being allotted to a person who might fail the enlistment process for some reason.

Although it is not mentioned anywhere in either AAO or in MBI, the use of the so-called 'Index Letters' was also extended to the Militia, although without the use of the 'X' (for AIF) prefix letter. This, however, did not occur until sometime in 1940. As late as April 1940, blocks of pre-war numbers were still being allotted to CMF formations in NSW, VIC, QLD and WA (vide AAO 117/1940 – see Table 1 above). In addition to this continued issue of pre-war numbers, members with pre-war numbers who did not enlist in either the AIF or in the CMF for full time duty appear to have continued to use their pre-existing numbers. In the case of the CMF/Militia, this entailed the use of numbers without any State prefix letter. The use of pre-war numbers was particularly evident in members of the PMF, which is examined in more detail below.

The nearest date that can be confirmed for the introduction of index letter numbers for the CMF is 31 July 1940, when AAG HQ Northern Command issued a memorandum to all CMF units in Queensland concerning allocation of numbers.[xxvii] The memorandum states:

1.   All present allocation of Army Numbers to Units of the Militia Forces are cancelled.

2.   Army Numbers will be allotted to all personnel on the Active and Reserve Lists of Units of the A.M.F. except Permanent Forces and A.I.F. from block allocated to Units as shown in the attached List.

3.   "Q" numbers at present allotted from Mobilization Blocks to members of Militia Units which have been called up for full time duty for the duration of theWar will stand, and, in future, all personnel called up for full time duties will be allotted numbers from the appropriate block in the attached list.

4.   Numbers will be allotted (sic) as follows:-

OFFICERS:

The personal number and index letter will be shown in brackets after the name whenever the name of the officer is referred to in documents or correspondence, i.e.

Major S.A. Evans (Q.30751), 26 Bn.

OTHER RANKS:

The army number and index letter will be shown before the rank of the soldier when the name of the soldier is referred to in documents or correspondence, i.e.

Q.32751 Sgt. T.A. Reid, 31 Bn.

Attached to the memorandum was a table listing all CMF units in Northern Command and showing the blocks of numbers allotted to each unit and the actual quantity of numbers involved for each unit. This large list is reproduced below as it both gives an idea of the CMF Order of Battle in Queensland in 1940, but also specifies the army numbers allotted to each unit.

UNIT	BLOCK ALLOTTED	NUMBER
Headquarters Northern Command	Q351 – Q650	300
Northern Command Intelligence Section	Q651 – Q700	150
7th Mobile Laundry and Decontamination Unit	Q701 – Q800	100
2nd Light Aid Detachment	Q801 – Q850	50
Northern Command Area Signals	Q851 – Q950	100

Headquarters 1st Cavalry Brigade	Q2951 – Q3050	100
1st Cavalry Brigade Band	Q3051 – Q3100	50
39th Light Aid Detachment	Q3101 – Q3150	50
2/14th Light Horse Regiment	Q3151 – Q5150	2000
5th Light Horse Regiment	Q5151 – Q 7150	2000
11th Light Horse Regiment	Q7151 – Q 9150	2000
Headquarters Artillery Northern Command	Q9151 – Q9200	50
Headquarters 5th Field Brigade	Q9201 – Q11200	2000
3rd Light Aid Detachment	Q11202 – Q11250	50
Headquarters 11th Field Brigade	Q11251 – Q13250	2000
1st Light Aid Detachment	Q13251 – Q13300	50
Headquarters Engineers Northern Command	Q13301 – Q13400	100
Field Troops (Engineers)	Q13401 – Q13600	200
7th Field Company	Q13601 – Q14100	500
11th Field Company	Q14101 – Q14600	500
16th Anti-Tank Company	Q14601 – Q15100	500
1st Field Survey Company	Q15101 – Q15400	300
43rd Light Aid Detachment	Q15401 – Q15450	50
Northern Command Signals	Q951 – Q2950	2000
Headquarters 7th Infantry Brigade	Q15451 – Q15550	100
41st Light Aid Detachment	Q15551 – Q15600	50
9th Battalion	Q15601 – Q18600	3000
15th Battalion	Q18601 – Q21600	3000
25th Battalion	Q21601 – Q24600	3000
47th Battalion	Q24601 – Q27600	3000
61st Battalion	Q27601 – Q30600	3000
Headquarters 11th Infantry Brigade	Q30601 – Q30700	100
42nd Light Aid Detachment	Q30701 – Q30750	50
26th Battalion	Q30751 – Q32750	2000
31st Battalion	Q32751 – Q35750	3000
42nd Battalion	Q35751 – Q38750	3000
51st Battalion	Q38751 – Q42750	3000
49th Battalion	Q41751 – Q44750	3000
Headquarters Australian Army Service Corps	Q44751 – Q47750	3000
1st Cavalry Field Ambulance	Q47751 – Q48150	400
7th Field Ambulance	Q48151 – Q48550	400
11th Field Ambulance	Q48551 – Q48950	400
11th Field Hygiene Section	Q48951 – Q49050	100
1st Cavalry Mobile Veterinary Section	Q49051 – Q49150	100
Headquarters Brisbane Fortress	Q49151 – Q49200	50
122nd Heavy Battery	Q49201 – Q49600	400
126th Heavy Battery	Q49601 – Q49800	200
128th Heavy Battery	Q49801 – Q50100	300
40th Fortress Company	Q50101 – Q50300	200
32nd Fortress Company	Q50301 – Q50500	200
1st Garrison Brigade Administrative Headquarters	Q50501 – Q50550	50
1st Garrison Battalion	Q50551 – Q52550	2000
14th Garrison Battalion	Q52551 – Q54550	2000

15th Garrison Battalion	Q54551 – Q56550	2000
1st Fortress Company Australian Army Medical Corps	Q56551 – Q56650	100
Headquarters Northern Command Training Depots	Q56651 – Q56750	100
1st Light Horse Training Regiment	Q56751 – Q57150	400
5th/11th Field Training Brigade	Q57151 – Q57550	400
1st Heavy Training Battery	Q57551 – Q57600	50
Northern Command Engineer Training Depot	Q57601 – Q57800	200
Northern Command Signals Training Depot	Q57801 – Q57850	50
7th Training Battalion	Q57851 – Q58450	600
11th Training Battalion	Q58451 – Q59050	600
Northern Command Training Depot Australian Army Service Corps	Q59051 – Q59150	100
Northern Command Training Depot Australian Army Medical Corps	Q59151 – Q59250	100
Headquarters 1st Lines of Communications Area	Q59251 – Q59350	100
Headquarters Northern Command 2nd Echelon	Q59351 – Q59450	100
1st Lines of Communications Signals	Q59451 – Q59550	100
Headquarters 1st (Toowoomba) Sub-Area	Q59551 – Q59600	50
3rd Workshop and Park Company	Q59601 – Q59900	300
Northern Command Motor Transport Depot	Q59901 – Q60100	200
5th Reserve Motor Transport Company	Q60101 – Q60400	300
15th Reserve Motor Transport Company	Q60401 – Q60700	300
1st Veterinary Control Centre	Q60701 – Q60900	200
A Section 2nd Veterinary Control Centre	Q60901 – Q60950	50
B Section 2nd Veterinary Control Centre	Q60951 – Q61000	50
C Section 3rd Veterinary Control Centre	Q61001 – Q61050	50
1st Auxiliary Horse Transport Company	Q61051 – Q61350	300
2nd Auxiliary Horse Transport Company	Q61351 – Q61700	350
4th Supply Personnel Company	Q61701 – Q61900	200
10th Supply Personnel Company	Q61901 – Q62100	200
Transport Wing Northern Command Section MAC (?)	Q62101 – Q62200	100
5th Hygiene Section	Q62201 – Q62300	100
6th Casualty Clearing Station	Q62301 – Q62500	200
Northern Command Medical Section MAC	Q62501 – Q62550	50
Northern Command Depot of Medical and Veterinary Stores	Q62551 – Q62600	50
12th General Hospital	Q62601 – Q62900	300
17th General Hospital	Q62901 – Q23200	300
1st Convalescent Depot	Q63201 – Q63300	100
1st Ambulance Train	Q63301 – Q63350	50
1st Dental Unit	Q63351 – Q63370	20
2nd Dental Unit	Q63371 – Q63390	20
3rd Dental Unit	Q63391 – Q63410	20
4th Dental Unit	Q63411 – Q63430	20
5th Dental Unit	Q63431 – Q63450	20
6th Dental Unit	Q63451 – Q63470	20
7th Dental Unit	Q63471 – Q63490	20
8th Dental Unit	Q63491 – Q63510	20
9th Dental Unit	Q63511 – Q63530	20
10th Dental Unit	Q63531 – Q63550	20
11th Dental Unit	Q63551 – Q63570	20

12th Dental Unit	Q63571 – Q63590	20
13th Dental Unit	Q63591 – Q63610	20
Northern Command Ordnance Depot	Q63611 -	300
Northern Command Ordnance Depot Company	- Q 63900	
Northern Command Ordnance Workshop	Q63901 -	300
Northern Command Ordnance Workshop Company	- Q64200	
Northern Command Accounts Office	Q64201 – Q64450	250
1st Depot Cash Office	Q64451 – Q64500	50
1st Veterinary Hospital	Q64501 – Q65000	500
1st Remount Squadron	Q65001 – Q65500	500
8th Provost Company	Q65501 – Q65700	200
Northern Command Detention Barrack	Q65701 – Q65750	50
Northern Command Internment Camp	Q65751 – Q65800	50
Northern Command Base Postal Unit	Q65801 – Q65900	100
Northern Command Stationery Depot	Q65901 – Q65930	30
1st Labour Company	Q65931 – Q64430	500
1st General Registration and Enquiry Unit	Q64431 – Q66500	70
Northern Command Staging Rest Camp	Q66501 – Q66600	100
Northern Command Reception Camp	Q66601 – Q66800	200
7th Brigade Area Headquarters	Q66801 – Q66820	20
9th Battalion Area	Q66821 – Q66840	20
15th Battalion Area	Q66841 – Q66860	20
25th Battalion Area	Q66861 – Q66880	20
25th A Battalion Area	Q66881 – Q66900	20
47th Battalion Area	Q66901 – Q66920	20
49th Battalion Area	Q66921 – Q66940	20
Special Recruiting Depot	Q66941 – Q66960	20
11th Brigade Area	Q66961 – Q66980	20
26th Battalion Area	Q66981 – Q67000	20
31st Battalion Area	Q67001 – Q67020	20
42nd Battalion Area	Q67021 – Q67040	20
51st Battalion Area	Q67041 – Q67060	20
District Records Office	Q67061 – Q67200	140
Northern Command Training School	Q67201 – Q67300	100
Administration Area Redbank	Q67301 – Q63500	50
Administration Area Enoggera	Q67351 – Q67400	50
Northern Command AIF Reception Depot	Q67401 – Q67600	200
Northern Command Training Depot Enoggera	Q67601 – Q67800	200
Northern Command Training Depot Grovelly	Q67801 – Q68000	200
Northern Command Training Depot Caloundra	Q68001 – Q68200	200
Northern Command Training Depot Miowera	Q68201 – Q68400	200
Northern Command Training Depot Yeppoon	Q68401 – Q68600	200
Northern Command Training Depot Lytton	Q68601 – Q68800	200

Presumably, similar instructions emanated from the other Command and Military District headquarters.

The table clearly indicates that the command authorities in Queensland, for the CMF anyway, had still not totally abandoned the concept of 'regimental' numbers. The table quite clearly shows that every CMF unit in Queensland was allotted its own block of numbers, which seems to be at odds with instructions on the allocation of numbers. However, it cannot be forgotten that recruitment at that stage of the war was still very much at the unit level and thus the allocation of number blocks to units does make some sense. This practice would soon be overtaken by events.

Known prefixes used are:

Q	Queensland (Citizen Military Forces – CMF)
QP	Queensland (Permanent Military Forces – PMF)
QX	Queensland AIF
QF	Queensland (CMF - Female)
QFX	Queensland AIF (Female)
N	New South Wales (CMF)
NP	New South Wales (PMF)
NX	New South Wales AIF
NF	New South Wales (CMF - Female)
NFX	New South Wales AIF (Female)
V	Victoria (CMF)
VP	Victoria (PMF)
VX	Victoria AIF
VF	Victoria Militia (CMF - Female)
VFX	Victoria AIF (Female)
S	South Australia (CMF)
SP	South Australia (PMF)
SX	South Australia AIF
SF	South Australia (CMF - Female)
SFX	South Australia AIF (Female)
W	Western Australia (CMF)
WP	Western Australia (PMF)
WX	Western Australia AIF
WF	Western Australia (CMF - Female)
WFX	Western Australia AIF (Female)
T	Tasmania (CMF)
TP	Tasmania (PMF)
TX	Tasmania AIF
TF	Tasmania (CMF - Female)
TFX	Tasmania AIF (Female)
D	Northern Territory (CMF)
DP	Northern Territory (PMF – from 1944)
DX	Northern Territory AIF
P	Papua Militia
PX	Papua AIF
PN	Papua Native

NG	New Guinea Militia
NGX	New Guinea AIF
NGN	New Guinea Native
R	Papua and New Guinea Police (armed constabulary)
UKX	United Kingdom AIF

P and PX for enlistments in the Territory of Papua were used early in the war but discontinued in about 1942. From that date the term 'New Guinea' was used to indicate both Papua and New Guinea and the prefixes 'NG' and 'NGX' were used exclusively (and see below). In the case of 'NG' numbers, most men called up on mobilization were allotted numbers from the '2000' block and taken on strength of the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles.[xxviii]

Although covered by AIFO, which in turn were covered by amendments to *The Defence Act*, technically speaking the issue of AIF numbers was illegal, as this action was not covered by either legislation or regulation. This oversight was corrected in 1942 with the issue of *Regulations and Orders for the Australian Military Forces and Senior Cadets 1927* (as amended 1942). Division 5 of R&O's dealt specifically with army numbers and stated:

DIVISION 5. – ARMY NUMBERS

1271. Every soldier of the Permanent Forces and of the Citizen Forces will be assigned an army number

1272. (1) A single series of numbers will be used for the whole of the Military Forces neither mobilized for active service nor forming part of an expeditionary force.

(2) Army number will be allotted to units moblilized for active service in a separate series in accordance with the instructions contained in the Standing Orders for Mobilization.

1273. The next succeeding paragraphs in this division apply only to the Military Forces when neither mobilized for active service nor forming part of an expeditionary force.

1274. (1) A soldier whether originally enlisted in the Permanent Forces or in the Citizen Forces, or allotted to the Citizen Forces under Part XII. of the D.A., will retain the army number originally assigned

to him under this division throughout the whole of his service, irrespective of whether he is subsequently transferred to another corps or branch of the Military Forces.

(2) An ex-soldier who re-enlists or re-engages or resumes service on the expiration of his exemption under Part XII. of the D.A., will resume the army number previously assigned to him.

(3) A soldier convicted by court-martial on a charge of fraudulent enlistment or whose trial for that offence has been dispensed with, will assume the army number originally assigned to him.

(4) A soldier promoted to warrant rank will retain his army number.

(5) The army number of a soldier who dies, or is discharged, or becomes non-effective for any reason, will not be assigned to another soldier.

1275. (1) A block of army numbers will be allotted in A.A.Os. to each formation, &c., for distribution to units and corps.

(2) Army numbers from the numbers so distributed to units or corps will be assigned to soldiers as required on their enlistment or allotment for service under Part XII. of the D.A. The numbers will be assigned in sequence.

(3) Army numbers for all soldiers of the Permanent Forces in a military district will be assigned at District Base Head-Quarters.

Prior to August 1942, while the system of allotment of Army numbers seemed to work reasonably well, there were problems created by the lack of a centralised recruiting system. This was rectified with the creation of Recruit Reception Depots (RRD) vide AMF General Routine Order (GRO) No. A.334 of 24 August 1942. This Order, titled 'Formation of Recruit Reception Depots and Leave and Transit Depots and Reorganisation of General Details Depots' established the RRD and authorised these organisations to take over from the General Details Depots (GDD) the functions of reception and enlistment of recruits, previously the function of the GDD. GRO A.334 authorised the establishment of a RRD in each Lines of Communications Area (L. of C.), except for the Northern Territory and the territories Papua and New

Guinea. Northern Territory recruits were handled by the South Australian L. of C. RRD and recruits for the Territories of Papua and New Guinea were the responsibility of the Queensland L. of C. RRD. The various RRD were located at:

Northern Command RRD   Moorooka, QLD

Eastern Command RRD   Addison Road, Marrickville, NSW

3rd Military District RRD   Royal Park, Melbourne, VIC

Western Command RRD   Karrakatta, WA

4th Military District RRD   Keswick Barracks, Keswick, SA

6th Military District RRD   Brighton Camp, Brighton, TAS.

GRO A.334 dealt quite specifically with the subject of Army numbers. Paragraph (A) 7 of the Order states:

> *Army Numbers:-*
>
> *7 (1)   Each army recruit received at the R.R.D. will be allotted an army number.*
>
> *(2) The army number will appear on all records and official documents relating to the soldier.*
>
> *(3) Numbers to be issued to personnel enlisted direct into the A.I.F. will be allotted to the R.R.D. by L. of C. Area Records.*
>
> *(4) Numbers to be issued to enlistments in C.M.F. for full time duty (including V.D.C., A.A.N.S., A.W.A.S. and V.A.Ds.) will be allotted by R.R.D., which will maintain a register for this purpose. The commencement of this series of numbers will be determined by H.Q. L. of C. Area and notified to R.R.D. Numbers will be deleted from the register as allotted to individuals.*
>
> *(5) Army numbers will be preceded by the initial letter of the Area of enlistment.*
>
> *(6) Enlistments in A.I.F. will be distinguished by the addition of the letter "X" following the initial letter of the L. of C. Area of enlistment.*
>
> *(7) If C.M.F. personnel volunteer for A.I.F. subsequent to attestation, they will be allotted a new number by L. of C. Area Records Officer, as a recruit enlisted direct into A.I.F.*

This order finally regularised the use of State initial letters to distinguish the area of enlistment. Note that AIF numbers were handled centrally by the superior headquarters (L. of C. Area Records Office), while responsibility for management of numbers for members of the part time forces was delegated to the CO of the RRD.

For Part Time Duty (PTD) personnel, numbers were still allocated by blocks to Brigade and Unit Recruiting Areas.[xxix] Individual Recruiting Areas were eventually brought together under a single command system, as shown by NSW L of C UT Instruction No. 6/43 of 11 August 1943. The instruction stated:

> 36.   *NSW L o f C Area Recruiting Staff.*
> (a)   *As from 11 July 1943, Bde Areas and Areas will be grouped to form one unit, to be known as NSW L OF C AREA RECRUITING STAFF.*
> (b)   *This unit will come under the direct control of DAAG (R&M2), who will be responsible for its administration.[xxx]*

Although this instruction applies specifically to NSW L of C Area, presumably the change affected the other L of C Areas as well, since the instruction directs that the new unit would come under the command of an AHQ staff officer.

Officer's Numbers.   Prior to July 1942, although AIF Orders always listed the number, with other avenues, particularly AMF Orders, the pre-war practice of not providing an officer's number in reports and recommendations was apparently still prevalent. To counter this LHQ issued GRO A.227 of 24 July 1942, 'Recommendations Regarding Officers – Inclusion of Personal Numbers.' The Order directed:

> 1.   *Recommendations regarding officers are frequently received at L.H.Q. without any reference to the personal number of the officer concerned, particularly in the case of first appointment direct from civil life and of appointment from the Reserve of Officers or the Retired List.*
> 2.   *In future, all correspondence affecting members of the forces the personal number of the officer in question is to be included.*

3.   Recommendations initiated more than seven days after the publication of this order which do not contain the personal number of the officer concerned will be referred back to the subordinate command concerned for completion. This may result in delay in implementing such recommendations and cause resultant loss of seniority.

Note that the Order refers to officer's numbers as 'personal numbers' rather than 'Army numbers.' Note also that Paragraph 1 refers to officers appointed from the Reserve of Officers and the Retired List. As these officers would have had pre-war service, this again confirms the fact that officers were indeed issued with numbers pre-war. Despite this order, however, the practice of not publishing officer's numbers in orders remained prevalent for the PMF for the remainder of the war (although, presumably, the personal number was provided at the time of the submission of the officer's names for publication!).

The Magic Number '1'.   In theory there should have been 20 persons enlisted into the AMF (AIF and CMF) with the number '1'.[xxxi] Records show, however, that the total was actually only 17, these being:

DX1	McNulty, John Albert
N1	Campbell, Peter John
NX1	Irving, Ronald Godfrey Howy
NGN1	Tomari
NGX1	Burke, Francis Luckman
P1	Spence, Robert Allan
PN1	Samai
PX1	Simpson, William Hooper
Q1	Hartnett, Colin Bruce
QX1	Archer, John William
SX1	Gully, Richard Alan
T1	Westwood, John William
TX1	Portwin, Donald Edward
VX1	Blamey, Thomas Albert
W1	Tweedie, John Martin
WX1	Hobbs, Athol Joseph

To that total of 16 can be added James George Beaton (UKX1 – AIF enlisted in Britain, see below), for a grand total of 17 (out of a putative total of 21). There is no

one recorded with the number V1, S1, D1 or NG1. For these military districts, the earliest numbers recorded are:

V1001   Stevenson, James Hamilton (later VX128064)
S2   Lott, Andrew Walter (later SX11834)
D3   Fothergill, William Lewis
NG2001   Emery, Robert Eustace

For 3MD/Victoria, it is obvious that the decision was made to commence numbering from the '1000' block. Why this decision was made is unknown. The decision to allocate numbers from the '2000' block for CMF enlistments in 8MD/New Guinea has already been mentioned. It appears that in the case of 4MD/South Australia and 7 MD/Northern Territory, the magic number was either not used or may have been used and then replaced by an AIF number, but the earlier CMF number not recorded. Hopefully further research will solve this small mystery.

Females. Prior to 1942**,** numbers for females enlisting in both the AIF and CMF, which were taken from the same blocks as males, were indistinguishable from male numbers. In August of that year it was ordered that all female numbers were to be prefixed with the letter 'F' to distinguish them from male numbers.[xxxii]

GRO No. 290 of 7 August 1942 advised:

> *Distinctive Army Numbers – A.W.A.S.*
> *1. It has been decided to provide distinctive numbers for members of the A.W.A.S. by including the letter "F" in the prefix, inserted after the letter denoting the district of enlistment. Thus, V numbers will become VF, N numbers NF, and so on.*
>
> *2. Action will be taken forthwith by L. of C. Area Records Officers to amend basic documents; by L. of C. Area Finance Officers to amend Pay records, and all units concerned to amend rolls, pay books, driving licences, records of issues, etc., accordingly.*

The distinguishing letter "F" will henceforth be included in the prefix to the numbers allotted to all such newly enlisted members and in quoting numbers of such serving members.

Thus a female member of the AIF enlisted in Queensland with the number 1234 would have her number changed from QX1234 to QFX1234. Similarly a female CMF soldier from Queensland with the number 2345 would have her number changed from Q2345 to QF2345.

There are no female enlistments recorded for 7MD/Northern Territory or 8MD/Papua and New Guinea. This makes sense when it is realised that the white female populations of these territories were evacuated to the southern states of mainland Australia quite early in the war. Although there are a number of female enlistments recorded that give either 7MD or 8MD as place of birth or place of residence at time of enlistment, all of these enlistments were in southern states and use the prefixes for those states. In addition, there were no enlistments of 'native' females in either 7 MD or 8 MD. Thus the prefixes DF, DFX, PF, PFX, NGF, NGXF, NGNF, and PNF do not exist.

GRO A.290/1942 referred specifically to the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS), not mentioning the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) or the Australian Medical Women's Army Service (AMWAS). This was addressed in January 1943 with the issue of GRO A.77/1943 (published on 22 January 1943), which stated:

A.77   FEMALE MEMBERS OF THE A.M.F. – DISTINCTIVE ARMY NUMBERS
1.   The letter "F" will be included in the prefix to the army numbers of all female members of the A.M.F. This letter will be inserted immediately after the letter denoting the district of enlistment. Thus, V numbers will become VF or (if the member concerned belongs to the A.I.F.) VFX, etc.

2.   GRO A.290/1942 is cancelled.

Following the end of the war, GRO A.77 was republished as GRO G.5/1946 of 4 January 1946, to cater, it seems, for post-hostilities enlistments into the AMF.

Papua and New Guinea Natives.   During the war native inhabitants of both territories, Papua and New Guinea, were enlisted into the AMF. Native troops enlisted in Papua were originally issued with numbers without prefixes.[xxxiii] Later in the war, some time in 1941, these numbers were prefixed with 'PN'.[xxxiv] The following PN numbers were issued:

1 – 999	-	to original members of Papuan Infantry Battalion
1000 – 1499	-	to RAA Moresby Fixed Defences (last number issued PN1098)
1500 – 1999	-	to RAE Fortress Engineers (last number issued PN1521)
2000 – 2499	-	to AASC (last number issued PN2069)
2500 – 2999	-	to AAMC (last number issued PN2522 plus PN2601, PN2606, PN2628 and PN2638)
3000 – 3500	-	HQ 8MD (later HQ NGF) – the only numbers in this block known to have been issued are PN3006, PN3011, PN3027, PN3033 and PN3034.
3501	-	-	Issued to PIB allotted 29 April 1944. Last number issued PN4187.

Later in the war some native inhabitants from the Mandated Territory of New Guinea were also enlisted. These personnel were issued with numbers with an 'NGN' prefix. The highest number identified is NGN1613.

Permanent Military Forces.   As can be seen, the numbering system adopted separated the AMF into two separate armies, the AIF and the CMF. In addition, members of the PMF, as noted above and apparently without authority, began from 1941 to prefix their numbers with the State identifying letter of state of enlistment, plus the letter 'P' for PMF after the state letter. For example, a PMF member enlisted in Victoria with the official number 5999 would add the letter prefix 'V' for Victoria and later add 'P' for PMF to give the number VP5999.[xxxv] The first instance of this usage that has been found occurs in AAO 152/1941, dated 31 December 1941, titled 'Temporary Promotions A.I.C.'

In July 1942 it was decided that members of the PMF (and the CMF) who volunteered for the AIF should keep their original numbers, but modified with the addition of the prefix letter 'X', as was usual for normal AIF enlistment.[xxxvi] GRO A.168/1942, published 10 July 1942, states, at sub-paragraph 1 (e):

> *Army Numbers –*
>
> On enlistment in A.I.F. a new number will be allotted. The new number for P.M.F. personnel will be arrived at by adding the letter "X" to the present prefix letters – thus WP459 becomes WXP459.
>
> The new number for C.M.F. personnel will be arrived at by adding the letters "XM" to the present prefix letter – thus V1459 becomes VXM1459.

Thus the hypothetical Victorian enlisted PMF member noted above, if he transferred to the AIF, would have the number VPX5999. One of the problems with this system was that a CMF member would end up with an AIF number that could be identical to an already serving member of that force. For example, a CMF member enlisted in Victoria with the number V1000 who transferred to the AIF would have the number VX1000, which was possibly already being used. To circumvent this problem, the Army directed that the prefix letter 'M' would also be added, which would give the hypothetical CMF transferee the number VXM1000![xxxvii]

This clumsy system did not last long, being abolished in August 1942 following the establishment of RRD noted above. GRO A.345 ('P.M.F. and C.M.F. Enlistment is A.I.F.') of 28 August 1942 directed (in line with GRO A.334/1942) that all persons enlisting in the AIF would be given a new AIF number, irrespective of prior service or any other numbers previously held.[xxxviii] Specifically, the Order stated:

> *Army Numbers:*
>
> *1.   Members of the P.M.F. and C.M.F. enlisting in the A.I.F. will be allotted normal A.I.F. numbers as set out below.*
>
> *2.   (a)   All instructions relative to the allotment of XP, XM and X plus one million numbers are cancelled.*
>
> *(b)   L. of C. Area Records Officers will prepare unit rolls of members numbered XP, XM or X plus one million, and issue special Unit*

Routine Orders, Part II, allotting new numbers to these members. Fresh casualty returns in respect of such personnel are not required.

The reference to 'X plus one million numbers' is curious and unexplained. A diligent search through AAO, GRO and MBI for the period 1939 to 1942 has not revealed any prior mention of this practice.

As noted above, PMF numbers continued to be published in AAO and GRO for the duration of the war. From the beginning of 1943 onwards, however, when the names of members of the PMF who had enlisted in the AIF were published in AAO, the order would include both the AIF number and the PMF number (in brackets), a very clumsy and confusing practice.

GRO A.168/1942 was amended by the publication of GRO A.494, 'P.M.F. and C.M.F. Enlistments in A.I.F.', published on 23 October 1942. This Order dealt with the subject of Identity Discs and directed:

> *(1)   Identity Discs. –*
> *In order to prevent obliteration and confusion in Army numbers on identity discs, those issued to members of P.M.F. and C.M.F. prior to enlistment in A.I.F., in accordance with G.R.O. A.345/1942, will be withdrawn and new discs issued.*

This was a quite sensible move and the practice was probably already in place when the Order was published. However, given the extremely parsimonious nature of contemporary military financial accounting practices, it is almost certain the Order was issued to provide legal cover for units expending Commonwealth funds issuing replacement Identity Discs.

United Kingdom Enlistments.   A total of 13 enlistments into the AIF are known to have been made in the United Kingdom, and these soldiers were issued 'UKX' numbers. For obvious reasons there were no CMF enlistments in the UK and thus no 'UK' numbers exist, only 'UKX'. The majority (10) were Australians living in the UK who either preferred to join the Australian Army or, perhaps, were asked to join.

The latter possibility is supported by the fact that in a number of cases the men recruited were technical specialists or professionals. Of the 13 known UK enlistments, nine were enlisted or appointed into the Pay Corps, two were appointed to the Staff Corps, one was an engineer and the last was appointed to the Ordnance Corps. The enlistments and their numbers were:

UKX1	Beatton, James George
UKX2	Beatton, Jack Fletcher
UKX5	Fox, Stephenson
UKX6	Robson, Neil
UKX7	Fox, Andrew
UKX8	Lewis, Brian Bannatyne
UKX25	Ferris, Richard Dyason
UKX27	Scrivener, Francis Linden
UKX28	Stoodley, Stanley
UKX30	Sutton, Kenneth Henry
UKX31	Zwar, Charles Joseph
UKX32	Coton, Kenneth William
UKX33	Piddington, Ralph O'Reilly

The gaps in the numbers are puzzling. The only explanation that fits is that the vacant numbers were actually issued but later cancelled on the issue of another number. This seems to indicate that there were at least 33 UK enlistments into the AIF, rather than the 13 that are known. However, to date it has proved impossible to locate any record of numbers UKX3, UKX4, UKX9 – UKX24, UKX26 or UKX29, or any UKX number higher than 33.

Posthumous Transfers to the AIF. In 1947 it was decided that all personnel of both the PMF and CMF who had not already enlisted into the AIF and who had been killed or captured before 1 July 1942 at Rabaul, Darwin, Papua and North East New Guinea were to be transferred retrospectively to the AIF.[xxxix] Blocks of numbers were taken for this purpose from the same numbers issued to normal AIF enlistees. Numbers used were:[xl]

1 MD	QX64901 – QX64944	(45 numbers)
2 MD	NX191431 – NX191489	(58 numbers)
3 MD	VX129333 - VX129416	(84 numbers)
4 MD	SX11442 – SX11467	(26 numbers)
6 MD	TX4419 – TX4423	(5 numbers)
8 MD	NGX460 – NGX513	(54 numbers)

There were no numbers allocated for 5 MD (Western Australia) or 7 MD (Northern Territory) - see Appendix 2 for list of names.

Post World War Two

Following the end of the Second World War the Australian Army went through a traumatic period of both rapid contraction and violent upheaval. The first was the result of the rapid demobilisation of the war time army. The second was the result of the army trying to find its place in a post-war world that was markedly different to the world before September 1939. The army was to go through a number of reorganisations, all of which would be reflected in its numbering system.

The Interim Army.   On 1 October 1945 the Interim Army was formed, alongside the AIF, which was to remain in existence for another two years. Newly enlisted volunteers for service with the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) in Japan were issued with AIF numbers from the following blocks:

QX500000 – QX501696
NX500000 – NX506387
VX500000 – VX504321
SX500000 – SX500734
WX500000 – WX501345
TX500000 – TX500417[xli]

The last of these Interim Army/BCOF numbers was issued in June 1947.[xlii]

By late 1946, early 1947, the form of the post-war Army was beginning to emerge and plans were being made to disband the AIF and reconstitute the PMF and CMF as a standing army. Nevertheless, although greatly reduced in size the AIF remained force in being well into 1947 and continued to recruit. On 31 January 1947 MBI 41/1947 was released, titled 'ENLISTMENT IN OR SECONDMENT, TRANSFER OR RELEASE TO THE AIF.' In relation to Army numbers, the MBI stated, at sub-paragraph 3(b):

> *A volunteer will complete AAF A200 (Attestation Form) and will be allotted an AIF number at the RR&GDD at which he or she is enlisted.*

For enlistments and appointments where an AIF number was already held, that number was to be retained.[xliii]

In July 1947 another block of numbers was issued. Unfortunately, the type of enlistment is not known. Some enlistments are shown as Interim Army and some are shown as Regular Army Special Reserve (RASR).[xliv] The numbers were:

QX700000 – QX700220	(221 enlistments)
NX700000 – NX700508	(509 enlistments)
VX700000 – VX700404	(405 enlistments)
SX700000 – SX700122	(123 enlistments)
WX700000 – WX700182	(183 enlistments)
TX700000 – TX700057	(58 enlistments)

Incredibly, some of these numbers (minus the letter prefix) were issued as late as 1960.[xlv]

The authority given in MBI 41/1947 became moot on 1 October 1947 when it was announced that:

> *His Excellency the Governor-General in Council has approved of the Military Force designated "Australian Imperial Force" being disbanded on 30th June, 1947, and that all members of the Australian Military Forces serving on continuous full-time duty on or after 1st July 1947, being deemed to be members of a Military Force designated "Interim Army".[xlvi]*

In August 1947 the PMF was reinstituted and a new system of numbering was introduced in November 1947. Blocks of numbers were issued to formations and when allotted numbers were prefixed with the state letter for the original state of enlistment, plus the letter 'P' for Permanent. Numbers issued are shown in the table below.

	PMF Serving	PMF New Enlistments	RASR
RMC Graduates	25001 – 25003		
Serving Officers	26001 – 26002		

HQ 34 Inf Bde BCOF	27001 – 27815		80001 – 80894
N Comd (1 MD)	30001 – 30140	35001 – 35318	83001 – 83500 & 89501 - 89714
E Comd (2 MD)	30301 – 30045	35501 – 36497	83501 – 85268
S Comd (3 MD)	31801 – 32275	36501 – 37000 & 38001 - 38150	86501 – 87945
W Comd (5 MD)	32301 – 32393	37001 – 37250 & 37701 – 37930	88501 – 88835
4 MD	32501 – 32577	37251 – 37499	88901 – 89165
6 MD	32601 – 32617	37501 – 37678	89301 – 89373
7 MD	32651 – 32668		89401 – 89425
8 MD	32701 – 32708		
UK & Overseas	32751		
Totals Issued	*2,424*	*2,872*	*5,519*
TOTAL: 10,615			

Table 2 – PMF Numbers 1947

The Modern Army

On 30 September 1947 the PMF became the Australian Regular Army (ARA). This momentous occasion in the Army's history was marked by the publication of MBI No. 191/1947, dated 7 November 1947, which stated:

> 191.   *INTRODUCTION OF THE TERM "AUSTRALIAN REGULAR ARMY"*
>
> 1.   *The designation "Australian Regular Army" will be adopted forthwith in place of "Permanent Military Forces", except where, for legal reasons, it is necessary to comply with the existing designation "Permanent Military Forces."*
>
> 2.   *The authorized abbreviation for "Australian Regular Army" will be "ARA".*

The creation of a new army saw also the creation of a new numbering system. Under this system, each Military District was responsible for issuing numbers, starting from 1, and prefixed by the MD number, followed by an oblique stroke, to denote the state of enlistment, the letter 'P' for PMF no longer being used.[xlvii] Thus, for example, the three hundred and fourth soldier enlisted in the 2nd Military District (New South Wales) would have been issued the number 2/304. In 1960 the oblique stroke was abolished and the number thus became 2304.[xlviii]

The names of the first persons issued with the new numbers were:

1/1	R.H.	Nimmo
2/1	J.S.	Whitelaw
3/1	E.H.	Cahill
4/1	C.E.	Prior
5/1	T.N.	Gooch
6/1	C.A.	Clowes
7/1	Not issued	

Later, when recruiting re-commenced in PNG, Army Number 8/1 was issued to J. Davey.

The first use of the new numbering system noted in published orders examined occurs in AAO No. 86/1948, published on 31 October 1948. Despite the new number system being introduced, this order and subsequent ones, continued to use AIF, PMF and CMF numbers alongside the new army numbers. For example, under "Appointments" in AAO 86/1948 we can find in the same list:

3/50048	CAPT (T/LTCOL)	W.M. Phillips
NX700155	CAPT	J. Herrick
QP2303	LT (T/CAPT)	D.L. Sullivan
NX179857 (NP10195)	LT (T/CAPT)	I.K. Wren
N92125	MAJ	P. de C. O'Grady

By the end of 1949 the new army numbers predominate in published orders but AAO still showed a mix of numbers. AIF numbers continue to appear in AAO in fact until well into the 1950's. Former PMF numbers continued to be published for some time as well, shown in brackets after the new number. For example, AAO No. 16 of 31 March 1949, lists members of the Australian Instructional Corps with their new numbers plus their old PMF number in brackets, prefixed with 'ex-'. Examples taken from this Order are:

5/148   (ex WP4551)   SSGT   J.T.   Waghorn

2/826   (ex NP2507)   WO1   J.D.   Gapps.

The fact that this new numbering system was not made retrospective is clearly shown by an examination of the nominal roll of the members of the 3rd Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment who were present at the Battle of Kapyong (Korea 23-24 April 1951). The roll shows at least five different types of number being used and, as examples, the following five names are extracted:[xlix]

```
3/4000125   PTE    D.W.  Abell       (ARA (Korea Force) number)
4/427       PTE    I.J.  Allen       (1947 ARA number)
NX105094    PTE    J.A.  Bassett     (AIF number)
SX700032    CAPT   D.D.  Beard       (1947 Interim Army/RASR number)
NX506146    PTE    J.R.  Beresford   (Interim Army number)
```

In addition to the new State number prefixes, the Army command authorities in each state were issued blocks of numbers that were reserved for the identification of specific types of service.[1] The blocks of numbers are shown in Table 3.

Military District	1 (QLD)	2 (NSW)	3 (VIC)	4 (SA)	5 (WA)	6 (TAS)	7 (NT)	Remarks
Prefix	1/	2/	3/	4/	5/	6/	7/	Allocations to UK enlistment: 2/10000 – 2/12499 3/10000 – 3/12499
ARA serving on 31 Dec 48, except for former members of PMF listed below	1 - 6999	1 - 34999	1 – 34999	1 – 6999	1 – 34999	1 – 34999	1 - 1399	
PMF	1 – 204	1 – 876	1 – 740	1 – 149	1 – 97	1 – 97	1 - 22	
RMC (Corps of Staff Cadets)	7000 - 74999	35000 – 37499	35000 – 37499	7000 – 7499	7000 – 7499	3500 – 3749	1400 – 1499	
ARA (Long Service Commissions not ex-RMC)	7500 – 7999	37500 – 39999	37500 – 39999	7500 – 7999	7500 – 7999	3750 – 3999	1500 – 1599	
ARA Short Service Commissions	8000 -8499	40000 - 42499	40000 - 42499	8000 - 8499	8000 - 8499	4000 - 4249	1600 - 1699	Allocations to Medical Officers enlisted in the UK 3/40053 – 3/40062
ARA Apprentices, Bandboys, etc	8500 - 8999	42500 - 44999	42500 - 44999	8500 - 8999	8500 - 8999	4250 - 4499	1700 - 1799	
RASR	9000 - 9999	45000 - 49999	45000 - 49999	9000 - 9999	9000 - 9999	4500 - 4999	1800 - 1999	
CMF	10000 - 399999	50000 - 399999	50000 - 399999	10000 - 399999	10000 - 399999	5000 - 399999	2000 - 399999	
AIF	400000 - 699999	400000 - 699999	400000 - 699999	400000 - 699999	400000 - 699999	400000 - 699999	40000 - 699999	
RESERVED	700000 - 899999	700000 - 899999	700000 - 899999	700000 - 899999	700000 - 899999	700000 - 899999	700000 - 899999	
RASR Special Enlistments	900000 - 949999	900000 - 949999	900000 - 949999	900000 - 949999	900000 - 949999	900000 - 949999	900000 - 949999	

Table 3 – Army Numbers 1948[li]

The last category in Table 3, 'RASR Special Enlistments', is of interest. The Regular Army Special Reserve (RASR) was established in 1947 to allow the enlistment of men who overage or medically below standard, the plan being to employ these men in sedentary type postings, e.g. batmen, groundsmen, postal orderlies, etc., in order to release younger men for training and employment. MBI No. 165/1949, 'REGULAR ARMY SPECIAL RESERVE – SPECIAL ENLISTMENTS', issued 14 Octover 1949, outlined the enlistment procedure and conditions of service for members of the RASR. Army numbers were dealt with in paragraph 14 of the MBI:

> 14.   _Army numbers._- *Special blocks of army numbers, commencing with the number 900,000 in each state, will be issued, e.g. 1/900,000.*

At this stage, the military administration of the Territories of Papua and New Guinea was the responsibility of 1 MD/Northern Command (Queensland) and thus all persons enlisting from those territories were allotted a '1/' prefix number in whatever category of enlistment entered into.[lii] Originally, this affected only the very small number of ARA enlistments from the Territory, plus the (European) part-time soldiers of the locally enlisted Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles (PNGVR), which was established in January 1950.[liii] The later raising of the Pacific Islands Regiment would see an alteration to this procedure.

Examination of Army Orders shows that for the CMF at least, the allocation of new Army numbers was done on a unit basis for those serving at the time. Thus, in AAO 96/1949 dated 31 July 1939, lists of the names of officers of various CMF units that were re-designated with new unit titles show clearly identifiable sequences of numbers. For example, for 3rd Reconnaissance Regiment (re-designated 3rd/9th South Australia Mounted Rifles), the numbers 4/10031, 4/10032, 4/10033, 4/10034, 4/10035, 4/10036, 4/10037, 4/10038, 4/10039 and 4/10040 are shown, with the lower numbers being allotted to higher ranking officers.

The introduction of the first National Service (NS) Scheme saw the requirement to issue Army numbers to NS enlistments. As NS recruits were members of the CMF,

they were issued numbers from the CMF block allocated to their state of enlistment, as follows:

- QLD/1 MD (prefix '1/'):   10000 - 399999
- NSW/2 MD (prefix '2/'):   5000 - 399999
- VIC/3 MD (prefix '3/'):   5000 - 399999
- SA/4 MD (prefix '4/'):   10000 - 399999
- WA/5 MD (prefix '5/'):   10000 - 3999999
- TAS/6 MD (prefix '6/'):   5000 - 399999
- NT/7 MD (prefix '7/'):   2000 - 399999

Certain specific categories of persons had their numbers modified by alphabetic prefixes.[liv] These were:

- PMF Reserve and CMF on Full-Time Duty   -   'A'
- Regular Army Emergency Reserve (RAER)   -   'E'
- Regular Army Reserve (RAR)   -   'R'
- Philanthropic Representatives, Correspondents, Photographers -   'B' or 'C'
- Members of foreign armies attached or seconded to the AMF used their own 'national number' prefixed with a particular prefix, as follows:
  - 'VB' -   United Kingdom
  - 'VC' -   Canada
  - 'VNZ' -   New Zealand
  - 'US' -   United States
  - 'VN' -   India

In 1950, female enlistments and appointment to the Army were re-introduced and allotments of number blocks were issued for this category of service.[lv] These numbers, which were allotted the prefix 'F' are shown in Table 4.

Military District	1 (QLD)	2 (NSW)	3 (VIC)	4 (SA)	5 (WA)	6 (TAS)
Prefix	F1/	F2/	F3/	F4/	F5/	F/6
ARA	1 – 999	1 - 999	1 – 999	1 – 999	1 – 999	1 – 999
CMF	1000 - 69999	1000 - 69999	1000 - 69999	1000 - 69999	1000 - 69999	1000 - 69999
AIF	7000 - 16999	7000 - 16999	7000 - 16999	7000 - 16999	7000 - 16999	7000 - 16999

Table 4 – Army Numbers 1950 (Female)[lvi]

Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No. 29/1951, dated 3 May 1951 and issued as Supplement No. 5/1951 with AAO 30/1951 noted the appointment of Lieutenant Colonel K.A. Best, RRC, as Director Australian Women's Army Corps with effect 12 February 1951. Colonel Best's number is shown as VFX700147, an Interim Army number. This was Colonel Best's fourth Army number, her previous three numbers having been:

V148401   (Militia 3 MD)
VX102728   (AIF 3 MD)
NFX12617   (AIF Female 2 MD)

It would not be her last number. New MD specific numbers commenced being issued to the members of the RAANC and WRAAC at the beginning of 1951, those with number '1' being:

F1/1   B.M.   Guilfoyle
F2/1   M.R.   Dillon
F3/1   K.E.   Knight
F4/1   J.A.   Irvine
F5/1   T.A.   Kinnane
F6/1
F7/1

Colonel Best would eventually be issued with Army number F3/91, her fifth Army number!

In May 1951, the Pacific Islands Regiment, white officered but recruited from local 'native' residents of the two territories, was re-raised to serve as the permanent military force in the 8th Military District (8 MD/TP&NG).[lvii] To accommodate the local enlistments, the new prefix '8/' was added to the existing table.[lviii] In addition to 'native' enlistments, European residents of the Territories enlisting into either the

ARA or the CMF were no longer to be issued '1/' prefixed numbers. The relevant number blocks allotted for 8MD use were:[lix]

- ARA (Pacific Islanders):   1 – 399999
- ARA (European):   40000 – 59156
- CMF (European):   59157 – 69999
- CMF (Pacific Islander):   70000 – 79999
- Philanthropic Representatives, etc: 950000 - 950999

Unfortunately, while the decision to change the 8MD prefix from '1/' to '8/' was given wide distribution within the Army on the mainland, AHQ apparently neglected to advise HQ PNGVR! As a consequence, PNGVR, continued to issue '1/' (and then later '1' – see below) prefixed numbers right up until the late 1960's. This was partially rectified in 1970 when PNGVR records held by CARO were amended by replacing the '1/' (or '1' prefix) with the '8' prefix. This, however, was only done for persons no longer serving. Those PNGVR or former PNGVR members originally issued with '1/' prefixed numbers who were still serving retained their number. This resulted in some duplication of numbers.[lx]

In 1961 the Army reviewed the numbering system and a number of changes were made. The first of these was that the oblique stroke between the 'state number' and the first digit of the Army Number was abolished. Thus a person with the number '1/3450' would now have the number '13450'. Secondly, from this date all categories of male enlistments, both ARA and CMF, would be issued numbers from the same number blocks. The only exceptions to this were RMC graduates and Army Apprentices, who continued to be issued numbers from their own unique blocks.[lxi] The revised number blocks are shown in Table 5.

Area of Enlistment	1MD/QLD	2MD/NSW	3MD/VIC	4MD/SA	5MD/WA	6MD/TAS	7MD/NT	8MD/PNG
Prefix	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
ARA (Male)	1- 6999	1-34999	1-34999	1-6999	1-6999	1-3499	1-1399	1-59156
RMC Graduates	7000-7499	35000-37499	35000-37499	7000-7499	7000-7499	3500-3749	1400-1499	
Apprentices	8500-8999	42500-44999	42500-44999	8500-8999	8500-8999	4250-4499	1700-1799	
RASR(O)	41000-41999	41000-41999	41000-41999	41000-41999	41000-41999	41000-41999	41000-41999	
RASR(A)	900000-904999	900000-904999	900000-904999	900000-904999	900000-904999	900000-904999	900000-904999	
RASR(B)	905000-949999	905000-949999	905000-949999	905000-949999	905000-949999	905000-949999	905000-949999	
ARA (Female)	F15000-F17999	F25000-F27999	F35000-F37999	F45000-F47999	F55000-F57999	F65000-F67999	F75000-F77999	
RASR(O) (Female)	F18000-F19999	F28000-F29999	F38000-F39999	F48000-F49999	F58000-F59999	F68000-F69999	F78000-F79999	
CMF (Male)	10000-299999	50000-299999	50000-299999	10000-299999	10000-299999	5000-299999	2000-299999	59157-79999
CMF (Female)	F11000-F14999	F21000-F24999	F31000-F34999	F41000-F44999	F51000-F54999	F61000-F64999	F71000-F74999	

Table 5 – AMF Numbers 1961

The next major change to the Army Number system occurred in 1965, brought about by the re-institution of National Service. To cater for the new intakes of conscript soldiers, AHQ directed that the 700000 block, previously reserved, be allocated to the Command/MD authorities for issue to NS enlistees.[lxii] Thus, theoretically, the first NS soldier enlisted in NSW (Eastern Command/2MD) would have been issued the number '2700000', while the one thousandth soldier enlisted would have been issued the number 2701000'. AHQ directed that in the event a number was unused at intake – for example, a failure to report – then such numbers were to be used initially for the subsequent intake.[lxiii] The actual allocation of numbers by MD was:

- 1MD   -   730742 - 799999
- 2 MD   -   781287 - 799999
- 3 MD   -   786608 - 799999
- 4 MD   -   717378 - 799999
- 5 MD   -   713603 - 799999
- 6 MD   -   708211 - 799999
- 7 MD   -   700000 - 799999
- 8 MD   -   700000 – 799999

NS numbers for MD's 1-6 all started higher than 700000 as numbers from this block had previously been issued to members of the Interim Army and the RAS(B) and, for MD's 1, 4 and 5, to RMC graduates.

1967 – The Final Changes

The last major changes to the Army Number system, prior to its abolition, occurred in 1967.[lxiv] These changes included:

Letter Prefixes. Letter prefixes for RAER ('E') and RAR ('R'); PMF Reservists and CMF on Full-Time Duty ('A'); and philanthropic representatives, war correspondents and war photographers ('B' and 'C') were abolished.

Members of Foreign Armies. The letter prefixes for the 'national army numbers' of members of various foreign armies attached or seconded to the AMF (see above) were abolished.

RMC Cadets. When a Cadet is appointed to the Corps of Staff Cadets at RMC, he or she is issued with an 'RMC Number'. These numbers started from '1', issued to Staff Cadet W.J. Urquhardt in 1911, and have continued as a straight sequence since that time.[lxv] Prior to 1921, when a Cadet graduated he was not issued with a Regimental Number but after October of that year, every graduating cadet was issued with an army number (referred to in the case of officers as a 'personal number') on graduation. This practice caused problems for the record keeping organisation if a cadet was discharged prior to graduation as, without an Army Number, it was difficult to track and account for the ex-cadet's service. To solve this problem, from 1 January 1967 every RMC cadet was issued with an army number on enlistment, in addition to the RMC number. The latter number ceases to have relevance on graduation, except for alumni and 'old boy' purposes.

Changeovers and Re-Enlistments. Prior to 1 January 1967 soldiers moving from one type of service to another (e.g. from ARA to CMF) or discharged soldiers re-enlisting were issued with a new number, taken from the appropriate block of numbers. With effect 1 January 1967, it was ordered that from this date members of the Army were to retain their army number, irrespective of changes in category of service. In addition, soldiers who discharged on or after that date and subsequently re-enlisted were to be allocated their former army number. In the case of soldiers who had discharged before 1 January 1967 and who re-enlisted on and after that date, these

men were to be issued with a new number from the appropriate number block. The only exception to this rule was that former soldiers who were appointed as philanthropic representatives were to be issued with a new number from the block for representatives of these organisations.

These changes, in particular the decision to issue a single number to accompany a soldier throughout his or her period of military service, regardless of category of service or breaks in service, went a long way to achieving the ideal of 'one man, one number.' There were still problems and anomalies, for example the problem with PNGVR numbers being duplicated in 1MD numbers, but by 1 January 1967 the Army Number system had been refined to its ultimate point. The system would serve the Army for almost another 40 years.

The End of Army Numbers

The Army numbering system, in its various forms, served the AMF well for almost a century. Similarly, the numbering systems of the RAN and RAAF served those services well also. However, by 1997 Defence, as an outcome of the Defence Efficiency Review, had recognised the requirement for an integrated personnel management system. The project implemented to enable this shift is known as 'Personnel Management Key Solution (PMKeyS)'. The PMKeys Project was a significant and complex human resource business process change in Defence. It involved moving military and civilian staff off purpose-built, long running human resource legacy systems to a common platform. Implemented between September 1997 and December 2002, the PMKeyS system has become Defence's core information management system for personnel administration. PMKeyS is the authoritative management record for all Defence personnel in the areas of:

- administration and leave
- development and training
- career management
- organisational structure
- workforce planning
- recruitment.

PMKeyS also manages payments to Defence's 19000+ civilian staff.[lxvi]

One of the key elements of the PMKeys systems is the 'PMKeys Number' or 'Employee ID Number.' As part of the PMKeys Project, every serving member of the ADF was allocated a PMKeys/Employee ID Number, which effectively replaced the service number and progressively abolished the service number systems. The 'roll out' of PMKeys numbers was a phased operation, with the RAN, the smallest of the services, being converted to PMKeys first, in October 2001. The RAAF, the second largest service, followed suit in February 2002. For the ADF the process was completed with the 'roll out' to Army in July 2002.[lxvii]

The overall history of PMKeys numbers is fairly simple, but the final system was only arrived at 'after much gnashing of teeth, frustration, many workshops, bloodletting, remorse, and loss of original identify crises.'[lxviii]

The possibility of retaining former ID systems was entertained but was dismissed as unworkable. It was recognized that as there was no standard methodology employed in the allocation of numbers then there was the possibility of multiple duplication if one or all of the existing systems were adopted.

Taking into consideration the existing number formats, usage and size, the decision was taken to institute a seven-digit number, starting with the numeral "8". The "start at 8" decision permitted up to 2 million people to be registered before the actual number size (i.e. the number of digits) would change. It is envisaged that PMKeys will continue to progress with numbers being allotted in sequence until such as time as numbers reach eight, nine or even higher digits. However, at the start of the process a seven-digit number was decided on as it was felt that a number of this size would be easier to remember – an important consideration in view of the probable emotive effect of this change.[lxix]

In general, the allocation was based upon block migration of members from the various legacy systems - to both Production (PRD1) and Archive (ARC1).

There was no specific decision as who got number '1'. The magic number was allocated to the first person to appear in the migration data for civilians, ordered alphabetically.

Migrations followed various rules, and not all members of a given legacy system were numbered at the same time. Civilians were numbered in two blocks, as were Army and Navy Cadets. The second block for the latter group has not yet been listed, but the number range has been determined.

Even as bulk migrations were underway, automatic numbering was "switched on", meaning that anyone who joined / enlisted / hired, was allotted the next number in sequence. To date, numbers have passed the 8500000 mark.

Bulk migrations occasionally had some people out of sequence. For example, all military colonel equivalents (Captain RAN/colonel Army/group captain RAAF) and above were entered early as Executive Succession Planning (ESP). Therefore the initial group of these officers is not within their normal military groups.

Known major allocation blocks are below. The "DD" groups were those archived numbers loaded to ARC1.

Component	Number Block	Remarks	Numbers Issued
Civilian	8000001 - 8019817	Includes Military Compensation clients	19817
Officers of Cadets	8019818 - 8022500	Cadet Officers and Instructors of Cadets	2683
ESP	8022501 - 8022860		360
RAN & RAN DD	8032337 - 8119142	Also included NAVYMEDAL but this not loaded – archived to HONSYS	25934 NAVY 48418 NAVY DD
RAAF & RAAF DD	8122363 - 8210607		28009 AIRFORCE 59180 AIRFORCE DD
Army	8212571 - 8295906		82580
Navy Cadet	8298687 - 8298995		589
Army DD	8299590 - 8434053		134463
Civilian DD	8444071 - 8482700	Includes terminated Military Compensation clients	38630
Navy Cadet Block 2	8482701 - 8484000	To be finalized	

While there have been severe technical problems with the PMKeys system itself, problems that the ADO is still struggling to cope with at the time of writing of this paper, those problems are with the system itself, rather than with the new numbers, which work just as well as the old style numbers as a unique form of personal

identification. On the other hand, philosophically there have been huge problems caused by the abolition of service numbers and their replacement with 'employee ID numbers.' Many long serving members of the ADF were outraged that their cherished personal numbers had been replaced with numbers drawn from a system shared not only by all three services, but by the civilian work force of the Department of Defence as well. However, these complaints and problems will eventually fade away as the succeeding generations of service personnel enter an environment that knows no other numbering system than PMKeys.

[i] Graham Wilson – member ACT Branch MHSA.

[ii] Farmer, J.S., 1901 (reprinted 1984) *The Regimental Records of the British Army 1660-1901*, Crécy Books, Bristol.

[iii] Mawson, Michael Hargreaves, 1998 'Regimental Numbers of the 46th (South Devonshire) Regiment of Foot, the 35th Brigade, and the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry', http://www.hargreaves-mawson.demon.co.uk/DCLINos.html

[iv] Mawson, op cit.

[v] Ibid.

[vi] Ibid.

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] Pallas, Stephen and Leigh Day, 'Post Second World War British Army Serial Numbers', *Journal of Orders and Medals Research Society, Vol. XXXIX, No. 1.*

[ix] AWM 1 9/1, 'Descriptive Roll Book of the Artillery, New South Wales Military Force', no date.

[x] Ibid.

[xi] Kemp, J. (by authority), 1910 (?) *The Defence Acts 1903-1904; Regulations (Provisional) and Standing Orders for the Military Forces of the Commonwealth of Australia 1908,* Government Printer, Melbourne, pp. 198-199.

[xii] Anonymous, 1967(?) *Army Numbers – Method of Allotment*, Army HQ.

[xiii] Mullett, Anthony J. (by authority), 1916 *The Defence Act 1903-1915 and Regulations for the Military Forces and Senior Cadets of Australia 1916,* Government Printer, Melbourne, pp. 251-252.

[xiv] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[xv] National Archives of Australia (NAA) File No. B2445/1 3492543 DAWES JF.

[xvi] NAA File No. B2445/1 8193999 LINDSEL FREDERICK WILLIAM.

[xvii] AWM37 74/142, 'AMS 857 of 27 Nov 1915'.

[xviii] National Archives of Australia, 2053A Leak, John, VC, *Service Record.*

[xix] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[xx] AWM8 22/77/4 *Australian Imperial Force 60th Infantry Battalion - 6th to 9th Reinforcements Nominal Roll.*

[xxi] AWM8 23/111/1 *Australian Imperial Force – 1st to 8th (Queensland) Reinforcements Nominal Roll.* See also AWM8 23/111/2-6.

[xxii] DA125.   All male inhabitants of Australia (excepting those who are exempted by this Act), who have resided therein for six months, and are British subjects, shall be liable to be trained, as prescribed, as follows:-

> (a)   From twelve years to fourteen years of age, in the Junior Cadets; and
> (b)   From fourteen to eighteen years of age, in the Senior Cadets; and
> (c)   From eighteen to twenty-five years of age, in the Citizen Forces; and
> (d)   From twenty-five to twenty-six years of age, in the Citizen Forces.

[xxiii] DA60.   In time of war it shall be lawful for the Governor-General, by proclamation, to call upon all persons liable to serve in the Citizen Forces to enlist and serve as prescribed.

[xxiv] MO 524/21 of 19 November 1921.

[xxv] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[xxvi] Ibid.

[xxvii] AWM 60/975, 'Headquarters Northern Command O.C.R. 174/2/416 Memorandum No. 216 "ARMY NUMBERS".

[xxviii] *Army Numbers,* op cit.

[xxix] AWM 61 431/1/1135 "Instructions to Area Officers. Recruiting Instruction No. 1/44."

[xxx] AWM 54 834/3/11 "Headquarters NSW L of C Areas Recruiting Instructions February 1943 to February 1946."

[xxxi] The respective members of the navy and air force were:

RAN: HV1   Bean,   James John
        W/V1 Crawford,   James
        S1   Grimmond,   George Richard
        S/V1 Harris,   Eric Warren
        W/1   Kite,   William Thomas
        S/P1 Mitchell,   Stanley Cyril
        B/V1 Nagel,   Kenneth George
        WR/1 Provan,   Frances Betty

RAAF: 1   Williams,   Richard

[xxxii] GRO 290/42 of July 1942.

[xxxiii] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[xxxiv] Ibid.

[xxxv] Ibid.

[xxxvi] General Routine Order (GRO) 168 of July 1942.

[xxxvii] Ibid.

[xxxviii] GRO 345/42 of August 1942.

[xxxix] Military Board Agendum No.15/47.

[xl] Ibid. Also *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[xli] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[xlii] Ibid.

[xliii] MBI 41/1947 Sub-paragraph 9(a)

[xliv] Ibid.

[xlv] Ibid.

[xlvi] *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* No. 198 of 16th October, 1947 (published with *Australian Army Orders* as *Gazette Notices Supplement* No. 9/1947.).

[xlvii] Ibid.

[xlviii] Ibid.

[xlix] Atkinson, James J., 1977 *The Kapyong Battalion Medal Roll of Third Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment Battle of Kapyong, 23-24 April, 1951,* New South Wales Military Historical Society, Sydney.

[l] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[li] CARO 06729 of 11 July 1950

[lii] Murphy, J.E., 1955 *History of the Post War Army*, AHQ, Melbourne.

[liii] Ibid.

[liv] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[lv] Beaumont, Joan, 2001 *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume V1 Australian Defence: Sources and Statistics,* Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

[lvi] CARO 06729, op cit.

[lvii] Grey, Jeffrey, 2001 *The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume 1 The Australian Army*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne. See also Beaumont.

[lviii] *Army Numbers*, op cit.

[lix] Ibid.

[lx] ibid.

[lxi] AHQ (DAR) R156/1/22:015648 of 8 November 1961.

[lxii] AHQ (DAR) R150/1/22:08768 of 4 May 1965.

[lxiii] Ibid.

[lxiv] *Army Numbers*, op cit, and AHQ (DAR) 564/R2/3 15 January 1967.

[lxv] Walter James Urquhardt was specially graduated in August 1914 for service in the First World War, survived the war, served in the Second World War as a staff officer and went on to reach the rank of Brigadier, deceasing in 1986. At the time of the writing of this paper (November 2005) the current Senior Class at RMC included Cadets with RMC Numbers 9999, 10000 and 10001.

[lxvi] Commonwealth of Australia, 2005 *Management of the Personnel Management Key Solutions (PMKeys) Implementation Project,* Australian National Audit Office, Canberra.

[lxvii] Ibid.

[lxviii] Mr John van Waterschoot, Director E?A?D?, email to author, 21 February 2006.

[lxix] Ibid.