

SILVER SOLDIER

At a general Mess meeting at Holsworthy on 7th November 1960, Maj Eric Smith (PMC) brought to the attention of the Mess the idea of a Centrepiece with suggestions to be forwarded at the next meeting on 13th December 1960.

Suggestions:

- (i) Typify an infantry soldier (similar to the well known official history photograph) of an infantry soldier resting on the side of the Kokoda Trail;
- (ii) To follow, in general, the form of a painting in the National War Museum of a soldier at the alert with an Owen Carbine.

On the 24th April 1961 the Heath Trophy was obtained for display and Maj Allen Power suggested a similar statuette in bronze.

There was no further discussion of a statuette for the mess until the Battalion arrived in Malaya. Lt E.A. (Ted) Chitham, the Mess Secretary Mar-May 1962, was requested to write to a number of Silver-smiths in Australia, Malaya and Great Britain. Quotes and photographs of statuettes were received from Garrard's (Great Britain) and Mohd Salleh and Sons (Malaya) and information was received of the "Jungle Fighter" in bronze which stands in the Australian War Memorial and the Drouidshire War Memorial, Victoria. Finally in October 1962 Mr Ray Ewers of Frankston, Victoria who was commissioned to model the "Jungle Fighter" was commissioned by the Mess to model for £250 a 24 inch figure of photographs taken of 213752 Cpl I. K. Walker, as a table centrepiece for the 2 RAR Officers Mess, and to be symbolic of the Battalion's tour of duty in Malaya.

The model was firstly modelled in clay and then cast into a plaster and metal pattern for the final silver casting.

Garrards of London were requested to cast the model in silver and then finish and mount the figure on an ebonised modern plinth with an inscription for £725 (Stirling).

On 14 Feb 1963, Mr Ray Ewers had completed and delivered to Lt Col Eric Smith in Melbourne the finished model. Lt Col R. J. Jones RAAOC was requested to deliver the model to Maj D.R. Angus, Australian Army Staff, London, who in turn delivered the model on the 21st March 1963 to Garrards.

The completed statuette was desired by the Mess for their final mixed dining in night in



Malaya on the 11th July 1963, but was not available for this occasion.

2 RAR returned to Enoggera and on 16th October 1963 the statuette was completed and was conveyed to Australia by Maj E.J. Milford and arrived in Australia on 14th November 1963. It was presented to the Mess at the Mess Christmas Party on 7th December 1963 by the departing XO (and former CO in Malaya) Lt Col A.B. Stretton, M.B.E.

The statuette, quoting Maj D.R. Angus in a letter from London to the PMC in October 1963 stated, "It is truly a magnificent piece of work. The style is such as to give the artistic impression rather than a shiny smooth mass-produced effect which one might see in Woolworths."

The statuette cost the Mess (for model production and insurance in conveyance) £1200. The value of silver rose by 18/6 per ounce from the date of quote to the date of purchase.