

**NOTES ON HISTORIC ARMY BANNER AND COLOUR
HELD BY KALGOORLIE-BOULDER CITY COUNCIL**

PETER SHAW, FMHSA

MAY 2021

INTRODUCTION

During the period 1975-1985 as a member of the Military Historical Society of Australia (WA Branch) I carried out considerable research into the history of the banners, guidons and colours presented to local Army units in Western Australia, including their current locations.

I visited Kalgoorlie in the 1970s and inspected the King's Banner and King's Colour relating to early Army units in the area that were held by Kalgoorlie Council and subsequently provided some historic details relating to these units and the Colours.

I have revisited on other occasions and have completed some further research on these colours, in particular verifying the actual dates of presentation and handing over to the Council. This document provides updated information based on this additional research. It is noted that some of the details engraved on the brass plaques displayed alongside these Colours now on display in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall are not correct when compared to the details included in this document. I have cross-checked the dates with actual digital copies of the local newspapers and cited these for reference. I have summarised these discrepancies in Appendix A.

BRIEF HISTORY OF INFANTRY UNITS IN THE GOLDFIELDS

The earliest unit was The Goldfields Battalion of Infantry which was formed as part of the Western Australian Volunteer Defence Force on 22 June 1900. This battalion had headquarters in Kalgoorlie with companies located in Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, Boulder, Kanowna, and Menzies. A company at Broad Arrow was added in August 1900.

Under restructure of the Volunteer Forces introduced in September 1900, all volunteer infantry units were formed into an infantry brigade consisting of five battalions. The Goldfields Battalion became 5th Battalion of the Infantry Brigade. Several members of this volunteer unit enlisted for service in the latter part of the Boer War in South Africa.

The Volunteer Forces came under control of the Australian Commonwealth in 1901 but it was not until 1903 that units were reorganised under a new Commonwealth Military Forces structure. Under this restructure in 1903, 5th Battalion of the Western Australian Infantry Brigade became The Goldfields Infantry Regiment of Western Australia.

The sub-units as in the pre-Federation volunteer battalion continued as part of the new regiment. The company at Broad Arrow was disbanded in 1904 and the company at Menzies was disbanded the following year. Under Military Order 87/1908 the designation of each infantry regiment was changed to include the prefix "1st Battalion".

With the introduction of Universal Military Training in 1911, Western Australia was divided into seven different battalion training areas numbered 83 through to 89 within the Australia wide numbering scheme. Under this scheme it was proposed that existing militia infantry regiments would provide the nucleus for the new Citizen Force units. As part of this reorganisation, effective from 1 July 1912, 1st Battalion, The Goldfields Infantry Regiment of Western Australia, became 84th Infantry (Goldfields Regiment). With the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 Australia raised a separate Force, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), for service overseas. Many men from the goldfields enlisted for service in the AIF.

This unit continued to 1918, by that time reduced to three companies. Major organisational changes were made within the Citizen Forces in 1918 with the redesignation of existing units made to perpetuate the identity and traditions of the units of the AIF that had been on active service overseas during the Great War. Under these changes the 84th Infantry became redesignated as 2nd Pioneer Regiment, perpetuating 2nd Pioneer Battalion, AIF.

Further changes to Citizen Forces units were made in 1921 with 2nd Pioneer Regiment becoming 16th Battalion, perpetuating the 16th Battalion, AIF. The unit had the full title 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) approved.

With the reduction of universal military training in regional areas during the mid to late 1920s the 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) ceased to be maintained as an active unit. In 1930 it was decided to preserve the identity and traditions of the 16th Battalion by linking the battalion number with the Perth-based 11th Battalion which became 11th/16th Battalion. In 1936 this battalion was unlinked to form separate battalions, with the 16th Battalion becoming a newly formed Scottish style battalion based in Perth, thus breaking its previous geographic link with the goldfields.

KING'S BANNER, THE GOLDFIELDS INFANTRY REGIMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Goldfields Infantry Regiment of Western Australia was awarded an Honorary Distinction in recognition of services of its predecessor unit in the South African war and at a special parade held on the Recreation Reserve at Boulder on 23 August 1911, 1st Battalion, The Goldfields Infantry Regiment of Western Australia received an Honorary King's Banner in recognition of South African service. This was presented by HE the Governor of Western Australia, Sir Gerald Strickland, KCMG. (Reported in the 'Kalgoorlie Miner', 24 August 1911, Page 8 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article91318392>)).

These Banners, authorised in 1909, were in the form of a plain silk Union flag with a silver inscribed plate attached to the lower part of the banner pike. The pike head being the Royal Crest. The inscription on the plate for the above banner was:

"Presented by His Most Gracious Majesty The King Emperor to 1st Battalion The Goldfields Infantry Regiment of Western Australia formerly 5th Battalion Western Australian Infantry in recognition of services rendered to the Empire in South Africa 1902"

Defence instructions relating to these banners were that these banners were not King's Colours, but honourable insignia presented by the King in special recognition of services rendered in South Africa 1899-1902, and Honorary Distinctions and centre pieces are not to be borne on these banners. Further instructions were that these banners should not be consecrated as is the case for normal Colours.



King's Banner, Goldfields Infantry Regiment of Western Australia. Presented 23 August 1911 and laid up in Kalgoorlie Council Chambers 26 April 1926. Shows unofficial centre piece added. Refer to details in the main document below

This banner was taken into custody by successor units 84th Infantry (Goldfields Regiment) and later 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment).

It was finally laid up by 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) in the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council Chambers on 26 April 1926. The handing over of this banner was reported in the "Kalgoorlie Miner" 29 April 1926, page 1, which included the following: *Major Fairley asked the Mayor, Mr. F.W. Allsop, and council to accept the old 16th Battalion colours, which had been presented by King Edward after the conclusion of the Boer War. The battalion had now new colours, presented by King George in acknowledgement of the services of the 16th Battalion A.I.F.*

(<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93886210>).

This banner, now in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall, was sighted during a visit to Kalgoorlie in the 1970s and it was noted at the time that it was the plain Union flag as originally presented, with no centre device. It appears that a centre piece on a separate cloth backing has been subsequently added, albeit unofficially. This defaces the original historic banner and is not in keeping with the original Defence instructions for these banners as mentioned above.

KING'S COLOUR, 16TH BATTALION (THE GOLDFIELDS REGIMENT)

In 1919 His Majesty King George V approved of the presentation of a King's Colour to each infantry battalion of overseas troops which had served abroad during the war of 1914-18. These were presented to Western Australian units by the Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson at a parade held in Kings Park on 2 October 1920. The colour presented for each AIF battalion was handed over to its Citizen Force counterpart.

At this time, the Citizen Force unit with the designation "16th" was not the Goldfields based unit but was the Perth-based 16th Infantry Regiment that had been formed in 1918 and this colour would have been passed on that unit. However, following the 1921 changes to the Citizen Forces, the Citizen Force unit in Kalgoorlie had been designated as 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) and took custody of the King's Colour presented for 16th Battalion AIF.

At the above 1920 ceremony these colours were not consecrated. At a parade of the 13th Mixed Brigade held on the Esplanade, Perth, 15 November 1924, all the Perth-based units of the Brigade that had received these King's Colours had their colours consecrated by the Chaplain General, Archbishop COL Riley, OBE, VD, DD. 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment), although part of the brigade, did not attend this parade and arrangements were made for its King's Colour to be consecrated at a later date in Kalgoorlie.

At the time of presentation these colours were plain union flags with no central devices or other distinctions included on them. Following Military Board approval given in 1925 the centre circle and Crown were later added, in accordance with the approved design for a King's Colour.

The King's Colour of 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) was formally consecrated by the battalion chaplain the Right Reverend E Elsey, DD, Bishop of Kalgoorlie, at a special ceremony held in Kalgoorlie on Anzac Day 1926. This was reported in several of the local papers, including the 'Kalgoorlie Miner', 24 April 1926, page 4 (<https://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93885469>).

A photo of this consecration ceremony, previously sighted in the Kalgoorlie Town Hall historic collection, shows the King's Colour without any centre circle and Crown. Centre devices for King's Colours had been approved in 1925 as mentioned above. The more recent photo of this Colour on display in the Town Hall is shown below. This shows the centre circle with the battalion title and numeral "16", surmounted by the Crown. This appears to have been correctly embroidered directly to the centre of the Colour in accordance with approved design for King's Colours.



King's Colour, 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment). Originally presented in 1920 for services of 16th Battalion AIF. Consecrated in Kalgoorlie 25 April 1926. Handed over to Kalgoorlie Council for safe keeping 11 November 1933 with official approved centre device.

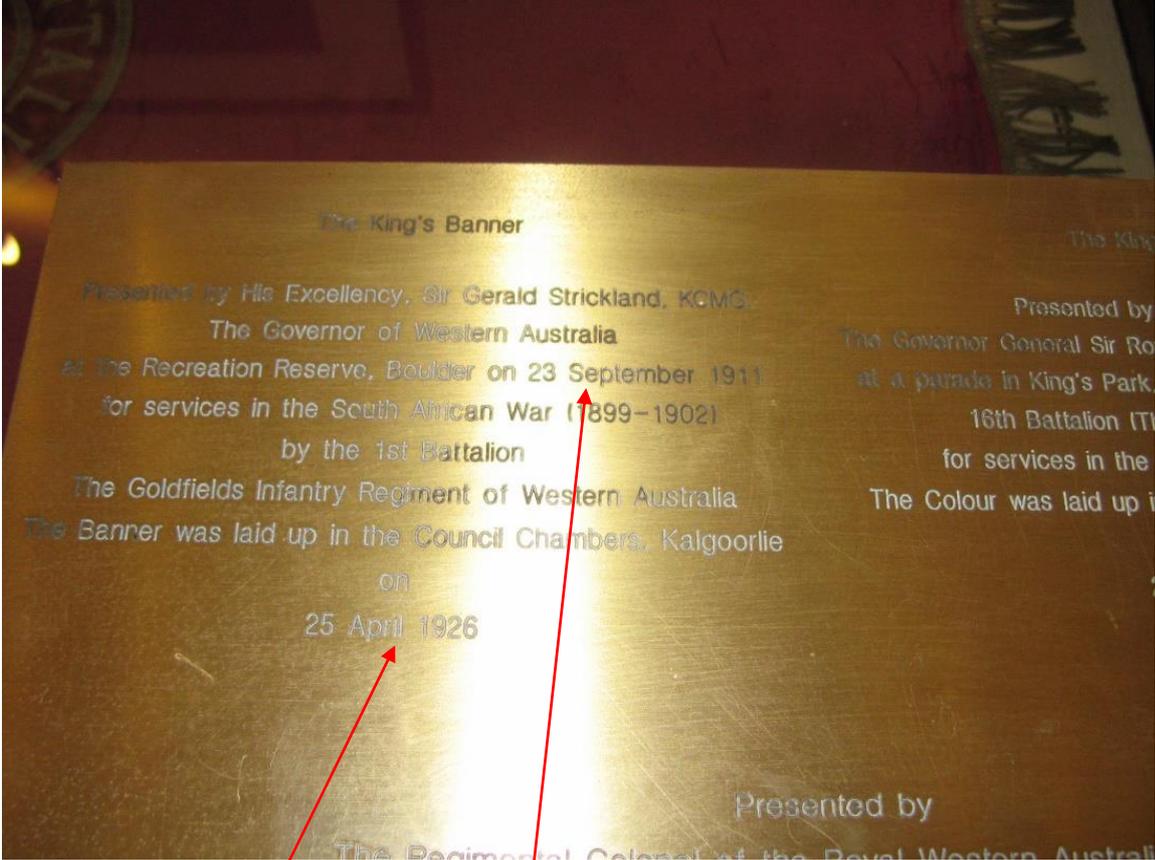
As outlined in the section relating to the history of the units in Kalgoorlie, 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) ceased to be maintained as an active unit in the latter part of the 1920s. It was decided that the King's Colour would be handed over to the Kalgoorlie Council for safe keeping at a ceremony held on Armistice Day, 11 November 1933. (Reported in the 'Kalgoorlie Miner', 13 November 1933, page 4 (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article94891582>)).

In the newspaper the 'Kalgoorlie Miner', 4 November 1933, Page 3, the following was reported under 'Kalgoorlie Municipal Council – Finance Committee-Excerpts from Report: *“General- King's Colours: The King's Colours, 16th Battalion, were received from David Jones Ltd., embroidered as required.”* This was most likely the adding of the official central device referred to above. (<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article94893610>)

Reference Sources

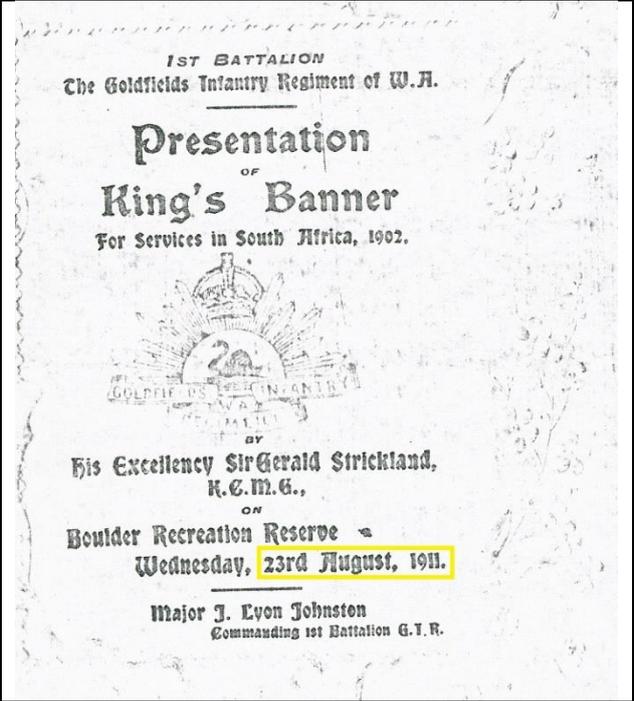
- (1) 1st Battalion, The Goldfields Infantry Regiment of W.A. – programme for Presentation of King's Banner for Services in South Africa, 1902
- (2) 13th Infantry Brigade, *Infantry Colours* – (Issued with 13th Inf. Bde. 23/1/4), 15 April 1925 [original copy of old Brigade Orders-15 pages containing 2 main sections – Part I -covering historical facts on colours including a summary of Colours presented to WA units to date; Part II- Outlining Regulations, Ceremonial, Honours and Salutes associated with Colours]
- (3) Festberg, Alfred N., *Australian Army Guidons and Colours*, Allara Publishing Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1972
- (4) Festberg, Alfred N., *The Lineage of the Australian Army*, Allara Publishing Pty. Ltd., Melbourne, 1972
- (5) Various digitised newspaper articles relating to Colour presentations and laying up available on-line from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/>
- (6) Wieck, Geo. F., *The Volunteer Movement in Western Australia 1861-1903*, Paterson Brokensha Pty. Ltd., Perth, 1961

**APPENDIX A – SUMMARY OF DISCREPANCIES IN INFORMATION ON PLAQUES
KING’S BANNER**

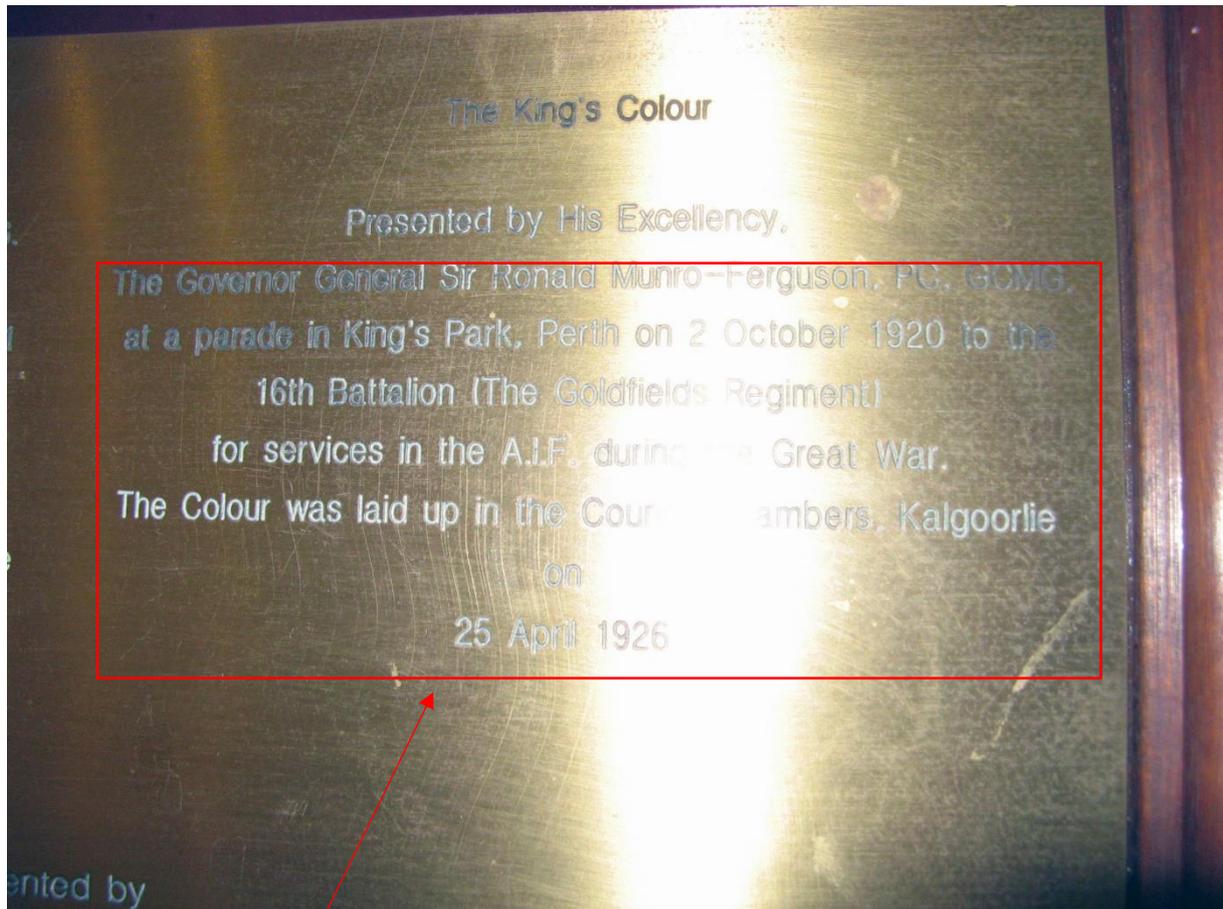


Laid Up: Should be **26** April 1926.

Presentation: Should be **23 August 1911**
(Refer to details in main document. Also see copy of part of original program as shown on right)



KING'S COLOUR



The information shown on this plaque has several incorrect facts. It conveys the impression that 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) actually served in the AIF during the Great War which is not the case. The King's Colour presented in 1920 was in recognition of services of 16th Battalion AIF and was not passed on to the Citizen Force unit 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) until 1921, which is when the Citizen Force unit in Kalgoorlie took on the designation of "16th Battalion" to perpetuate the identity and traditions of 16th Battalion AIF. Also, the laying up of the Colour on 25 April 1926 is incorrect. It was formally consecrated on this date and was not laid up until November 1933. (Refer to details in the main document).

The plaque would therefore be better worded:

"Presented by His Excellency The Governor General Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson, PC, GCMG, at a parade in King's Park, Perth on 2 October 1920 for services of 16th Battalion A.I.F. during the Great War and passed on to 16th Battalion (The Goldfields Regiment) in 1921.

The Colour was consecrated 25 April 1926 and laid up in the Council Chambers, Kalgoorlie on 11 November 1933"