



Take Post

April 2009

Newsletter of the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association



Big Guns Stand Down

We are not quite sure who was actually "conducting the orchestra", but former President Ron Bryant and former Secretary John Campbell presided over their final Annual General Meeting at the Naval & Military Club on 24 April 2008.

Ron, a member of the Committee since 1988, was elected President of the Association in 2002, a position he held until his resignation in 2008. He not only initiated the introduction of "Take Post" in 1988, but also was its Editor until his retirement in 2008.

John became a member of the Committee in 1993 and assumed the Secretary's role in 1995, which he discharged with aplomb until his resignation in 2008.

Ron and John were instrumental in the establishment of the Remembrance Group in 2008, and along with John Hepworth and Cec Rae have ensured a smooth transition of their functions and responsibilities to the new Committee.

Whilst Ron and John are both happy, in the tradition of all gunners, to "stand down", there is no doubt they will continue to keep a watchful eye on the Association as they did on the skies during the World War Two conflict.

We thank them for their leadership, support and guidance and wish them both a very happy and contented retirement.

2/3rd Remembrance Group

The Remembrance Group established in 2008 now has in excess of 40 members, and the Committee is anxious to increase the existing membership.

If you are the son or daughter of an original member and/or have children who would like to participate in the activities of the Remembrance Group, please contact Colin Bragg, the Honorary Secretary on 03 5821 9150.

It is not an onerous role and costs only \$15.00 per year to participate. Your support is important if the men and the deeds of the 2/3rd are to continue to be remembered and promoted into the future.



We Will Remember Them

It is with sincere regret that we report the passing of these former comrades:

VALE	BATTERY
Leonard Arthur Dowell	
Darcy Edwards	8
Alan Girdwood	7
Ralph Hawkey	8
David Hodge	9
Harry Sauerberg	9
Jim Silver	9
William Waller	7
Keith Walton	
Leonard Woolcock	7

They shall grow not old,
As we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun,
And in the morning,
We will remember them.

Lest we forget!

2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association

Take Post is published by the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association for the benefit of members and friends of the association.

The 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment was raised in Melbourne in 1940 and served with distinction in World War II, with Battle Honours from Tobruk, Crete, the Western Desert, Syria, Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Lae, Buna and Borneo. The Regiment experienced a high number of battle casualties through deaths, wounded and PoWs.

The Regiment Association was formed in 1945 and has been active in commemorating and celebrating the history of the 2/3rd ever since.

In 2008, a Remembrance Group was formed to provide for the future prosperity of our organisation in the hands of the children and grandchildren of our original members.

The 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment is an unincorporated association run by a voluntary Committee of Management.

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Water



Western Desert, Egypt
by Cec Rae (9)

On the 23rd April 1941, 9th Battery moved from the Nile Delta into the Western Desert of Egypt, which mostly consisted of sand with some small scrubby plants.

We were now going to experience a severe lack of water, rationed to a water bottle per man, with a little more for making tea and a bit more in which to shave (no getting out of that), cleaning teeth and washing the body.

Washing the Body

Half a petrol can measuring at the base (at a guess) 200 cm by 300 cm perhaps with a depth of 200 cm in which we took it in turns to wash the body, first in best served—there were six in the gun crew.

Fresh Water

At one stage there was a water point not far from us and our gun crew happened to acquire a water tank trailer, known as a Furphy in Australia, but this one was South African.

One of our crew would take this tanker to the water point, which was rather a hazard as the Germans delighted to see a group around the water point and give them a burst.

At another site we discovered an unused well, which we investigated only to find it occupied by a huge dinner plate-sized spider. We didn't investigate further.

Sadly, various retreating armies had salted many of the wells, some of which dated back to Roman times.

Swimming

Yes, we did have a swim in the Mediterranean at times, but again that could be hazardous with passing German aircraft returning from a raid.

Medicinal Aids

And yes, we were issued with a bottle of beer, but it was a long time between drinks.

Some chaps with desert sores were prescribed beer as being helpful. Imagine how popular a non-drinker in the crew was. There were too few unfortunately.

Heading Out

The Battery moved out of the Western Desert on 21 July 1941 after three months and headed for Beirut. The code for our move was "Wine, Women, and Song".

Cec Rae (9)

PS: The women were just to look at!

Secretary's Note:

My wife (daughter of former President, Jim Paton (9) and I can relate to the Cec's water story as we were regularly regaled by Jim about the lack of water in the desert, and about having to wash his clothes in petrol – obviously petrol wasn't a \$1.50 a litre in those days!

President's Report

At this time of the year when we once again turn our focus to Anzac Day and commemorate qualities such as courage, sacrifice and service, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on the recent tragic events of the Victorian bushfires.

Out of the loss and devastation created by the fires one thing emerged in tact; the human spirit. Dozens of examples surfaced of courage, selflessness and determination by those who faced the horror of the firestorm.

In the aftermath came the overwhelming community response to help the survivors, galvanising the nation in a way rarely seen. The qualities on display were many of those we consider define the Australian character, most notably looking out for a mate.

It is likely that for many young Australians this was their first real exposure to these positive values, certainly on such a scale.

Contemporary society has become so influenced by consumerism, the emphasis on celebrity and the individual that notions and values like community and service are often seen as belonging to another era; not appropriate to the 'me' generation. However, the re-emergence of these 'old' values was never more apparent than in this time of great suffering.

Those of us who have grown up within the 2/3rd 'family' have always known that the best of the Australian character still exists, we don't need to be reminded because we have been exposed to it constantly over the years by a wonderful group of men.

At this very sad time however it is comforting to see that the same character and spirit is still very much alive in the broader Australian community.

On the home front, I am pleased to report that the new Regimental Association administration is well established and functioning effectively. The transition from the old guard was

always going to be challenging given the years of experience and involvement they had amassed and the high standards they had set.

However I believe we have a very willing and capable team comprising the new committee, one that is committed to continuing the excellent work done by the 'originals' over so many years.

It is our intention to keep the membership up to date with committee activities and decisions. In keeping with this aim, members would have received a recent communication outlining these and other matters of relevance.

Included in that report was the appointment of David McDonald to the committee in the capacity of Regimental Historian. David is ideally suited for this role being based in Canberra and with his excellent contacts, obvious ability and his passion for the 2/3rd, he represents a valuable addition to the committee.

A current focus of the committee has been the preparation and submission of two applications for DVA funding; one for the establishment of a website and the other to provide for the digitisation of important material – documents, photographs etc. This latter process being the most effective method of safely preserving material, which would otherwise deteriorate over time.

In respect of these applications I must take this opportunity to congratulate David McDonald and Colin Bragg - David for his very detailed and professional proposals and Colin for his excellent work in submitting the applications.

My thanks to committee members Anne Rae, Ann and Colin Bragg, Graeme and Matthew Heddle, David McDonald and of course John Hepworth for their involvement and contribution over the past year.

Whilst thanking all members of the committee, I do want to single out our secretary Colin Bragg for special mention. Colin has been doing a power

of work behind the scenes in all aspects of Association business and has brought a high degree of enthusiasm and professionalism to the task.

As a "background" task, Colin has recently completed transcribing the original roll, cross-referencing and categorising it and then recording it electronically. The electronic roll will form an important asset for the Association into the future.

Our long serving Treasurer, John Hepworth will be standing down at the AGM, and his role will be assumed by Ann Bragg. Given John's marvellous contribution as Treasurer over so many years they are big shoes to fill, but I know Ann will do a great job.

The Bragg family contribution doesn't end there; son Cameron has very generously offered his time and talent in the production of Take Post on an ongoing basis. We thank him for his willingness to help in such a tangible way.

By now the astute reader will have noticed that the seat of power and influence in the Association is clearly based at 'Bragg Manor' in Shepparton. On a serious note however, it represents a very real commitment on the part of the Bragg family and is the sort of commitment that drives Associations such as ours.

In conclusion, personally and on behalf of the new committee, I want to register my thanks and appreciation to all original 2/3rd members who have shown faith in us and given us their unqualified support.

Particular thanks must go to Ron Bryant, John Campbell, John Hepworth and Cec Rae for their advice, assistance and encouragement over the past year. It has made the transition so much easier and we invite and welcome their input and that of other members in the future. It is a privilege to be involved with men of such high calibre.

Good luck and best wishes to all.

From the Secretary's Desk

In this, my first year as Honorary Secretary, I spent a great deal of time worrying about where I was going to obtain the raw material from which my report and "Take Post" was to be assembled. I need not have worried!

A direct approach to a number of original Regiment members as well as some direct approaches to myself, offers of contributions from Committee members and letters from members and families of members found us struggling to contain both the size of "Take Post" and my report.

We have probably got enough material either in hand or promised for half of next year's "Take Post" already. My sincere thanks goes to all contributors.

I received a letter from **Joan Anderson**, wife of **John Anderson (7)** in which she advised John would not be able to attend any more reunions due to his ill health. However, Joan did want us to know how much John had looked forward to the reunions and thanked the Association for their work.

Pat Delves (7) also advised he was unable to attend but wished us a "nice night".

Elizabeth Goddard, wife of **Jim Goddard (7)** similarly wrote to advise that Jim was unable to make the trip, but that he wishes everyone well and to be remembered to mates that served with him. Elizabeth went on to write: *"His war service means more to him than words can describe and he is sorry not to be with you at this time."*

Betty Spiller advised that **Arthur Spiller (RHQ)** at 95 years is in "Special Care". Betty wished the Association a "great reunion".

Frank Hands (8) apologised for not being at the reunion, but advised he was off on a three-month holiday starting on 1 April!

Committee member **Anne Rae** is also an apology as she will be holidaying in the Galapagos Islands

Call For Material

Unlike my Secretarial predecessors, I do not have that long association with the Regiment going back to its formation in July 1940 or the close connection with the members and families of the Regiment that one develops over a period of more than 60 years.

The Committee is fortunate in that it continues to have close contact with former Committee office bearers in Ron Bryant, John Campbell, Cec Rae and John Hepworth.

While this enables us to resolve administrative and protocol issues as and when they arise, (as well as asking what must seem to be some pretty dumb questions) we cannot substitute the 60+ years of contacts and knowledge enjoyed by the former Committee.

For this reason, I really would appreciate receiving information about former members of the Regiment, anecdotes, stories, extracts of diaries and/or letters and/or photographs that individual families may know of and which we could use as the basis for articles in future issues of "Take Post".

Call For Archival Material

Because of the proposed creation of the website and the digitisation of archival materials, it was agreed the Association needed to appoint a person to co-ordinate the projects, and to assume the role of Association Historian.

To this end, David McDonald, son of Robert McDonald (Signals), accepted the role of Association Historian and was seconded to the Committee. At the same time, Graeme Heddle, son of Charles Heddle (9th Battery) volunteered to assume responsibility for archiving and storing any materials collected and not provided to the War Memorial.

In due course, we will be calling for archival material, but in the meantime, if you have old photographs, souvenirs or written material you would like to provide to the Association for cataloguing and storage, we would be pleased to hear from you.

Regimental Rolls

When I was elected as Honorary Secretary last year, I "inherited" two rather substantial boxes of files and records from my predecessor, John Campbell.

John also passed over the original hand written Roll (which is in poor condition), and a hand written copy of the original Roll (which has some additions to the original Roll).

Because of concerns about the condition of the hand written Roll (its proper name being The Australian Military Forces Name Index and Record), we have created an electronic copy of the original Roll (all 1,935 members) which we plan to place on the proposed 2/3rd website.

Similarly, it is planned to digitize extracts of the original Roll and original photos for subsequent placement on the website.

Proposed 2/3rd Website

In late 2008, the Association prepared and lodged two funding applications with the Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA), each seeking a Grant of \$3,000 to:

- Create its own website with appropriate links to a variety of related sites.
- Digitise old Regiment records and photographs.

Irrespective of the ultimate outcome of these applications, the Committee proposes to pursue the establishment of a website, and is currently exploring a number of alternative options.

Email Addresses

When our website is up and running, the annual "Take Post" publication will be available (in full colour) online to all members of the Association and to the general public.

In the meantime, if you would prefer to receive "Take Post" and other communications electronically, could you please advise me by email.

Colin Bragg

Gunner Fryer (NX10917)

Part One: The Middle East

Militia

Between the "Great" Wars, Australia had a Permanent Army and a voluntary collection of part-time soldiers who paraded mid-week and went on occasional week-end camps. They were known as the Militia.

In late 1936 Keith Fryer and his younger brother Graham joined the 18th Field Regiment of the Militia, because "it was worth a few extra bob, and it was a cavalry unit, and I was good at riding horses after spending some childhood years in Cootamundra".

It is often said that wars are fought by the Generals who survived the previous conflict as soldiers. It is therefore not surprising that even in 1937, the men in the 18th Field Regiment all had horses, and gun carriages with steel-rimmed wheels.

Not until 1938 were trucks and rubber-tyred guns used by the Militia.

Keith Fryer, then known as N50563, rapidly rose to the rank of Sergeant and, as his civilian job was as a clothing salesman at Lowes in Sydney, was naturally responsible for clothing issue and other stores at mid-week parades.

On the bivouacs, often on long week-ends held at Ingleburn Army Camp near Liverpool, he became the 'Captain's horse-holder'. This involved preparing two horses each day, feeding, watering, grooming and stable-cleaning, but also had the odd benefit.

For example, when Captain Trouson would decide after a parade that he just had to visit a hostelry in Liverpool, the horse-holder had to



Gunner Fryer on Guard Duty—18th Field Regiment

accompany him and hold the horses outside the bar. After a while he was also allowed to have a quick schooner before the ride back to camp.

With war clouds looming in Europe, several men in the militia joined the permanent army, then known as the Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) or the Australian Military Forces (AMF).

"There was a fair bit of confusion, we seemed to have several armies", Keith said in 2005.

Permanent Army

With Allied progress in the Second World War steadily deteriorating, Keith transferred to the Permanent Army on 12 August 1940, number N107691.

Members of the Permanent Army couldn't be sent away

to fight overseas and so rather than "stick out the cushy job of issuing stores", he transferred again on 27 March 1941 to the Australian Imperial Forces, reverting back to the rank of Gunner.

"Grunners actually received a 3 shillings per day extra allowance, so this just about made up for the difference in rank", he said.

So, Gunner Fryer NX10917 began his active service in Unit 2/1 of the Anti-Aircraft (AA) Regiment. It was the Bofors gun with its 40 mm diameter projectile on which NX10917 trained and used throughout the war.

On 27 May 1941 Keith married his wife of 65 years, Trix, at the family home at Hurlstone Park.

Three months later, 28 June 1941, he embarked from Sydney on the Queen Mary bound for the Middle East.



Keith and brother Graham ready for the horses.

The story of Gunner Fryer (Part One)...



Gunner Fryer (top left) in Palestine, where everyone smoked a pipe.

The voyage of about 6 weeks went south around Australia, "way south, nearly to the pole". Transformed from elegant ocean liner to wartime troopship, the Queen Mary became better known as "The Grey Ghost".

The journey had a rough crossing of the Great Australian Bight, so rough in fact that on one memorable evening in the 'wet canteen', Gunner Fryer managed to spill the entire contents of his 2-pint prune tin (about 1.3 litres), which was being used as a large beer jug, down the inside of the rubber gum boots worn by the ship's Master-at-Arms. All was forgiven for the war effort as the Master-at-Arms said it was the roughest water he had seen.

Different tasks had to be undertaken on this voyage. Keith worked on kitchen duty and was particularly well-fed as many didn't, or couldn't, manage to face up to meals. There were 3 meals per day of 3 settings per meal to cope with the 19,000 men on board.

Middle East

Eventually the Queen Mary made it up through the

Indian Ocean and into the Red Sea. The soldiers then went by barges to Suez and then trucks from camp to camp, and onto El Kantara. Progress was slow with priority given to other troop movements, but eventually they caught a train to Gaza (Palestine). A night air raid attack on the train caused them to hurriedly seek shelter. This was followed by a long walk back to the train which had been moved away from the troops.

At these intermediate camps on the way to Palestine, there were often groups of happy, singing, Italian prisoners, usually guarded by Indian soldiers.

At one such large camp, Gunner Fryer and his group arrived late in the day to set up their tent on the outskirts. There was a canteen shop located in the middle of camp, and straws were drawn as to who would go and buy whatever was available.

Setting off in daylight, NX10917 had no trouble finding the shop, but by the time he was laden up for the return trip, night had fallen. Stumbling back in the dark

he became a trifle perturbed when a strange sounding voice from behind, accompanied by a bayonet, asked him to identify himself.

He was recognized as Australian and escorted back to a tent full of Indian soldiers who had a large stewing pot full of curry as the centre-piece. Claiming to have already eaten, he accepted their friendship, but little of the curry, and was returned safely to his own tent, never to draw the short straw for shopping again.

Transfer to 2/3rd

In Palestine, each artillery unit had its own camp. Keith was with the 1st AA 3rd Battery for only 2 weeks when volunteers were required to help relieve some of the soldiers in Tobruk. Several of the injured at Tobruk had been evacuated early on in that conflict and were recovering in nearby hospitals.

For the next 6 weeks, every morning at 6am, Keith and his new mates of the 2/3rd AA Battery would parade ready for dispatch to Tobruk, presumably by ship.

Unknown to them, Rommel and the 'Rats of Tobruk' had other activities planned at

that time, so the rest of these days were spent on marches to the sea for swims.

Sporting carnivals were occasionally held amongst the Allied troops. Gunner Fryer distinguished himself in several running races, often getting a good price off the bookies. The 100 yards sprint was his best event, coming first amongst Australian troops, and second against all-comers in the larger camps.

He had one success in a 440 yard event but a month later he "overtrained" with mate Bobby Grosse when collecting half-emptied rum glasses from an Officer's mess toast to the Queen just before the race, and tripped and fell tearing leg muscles. A few weeks were spent on in his tent recovering.

Finally the 8th Battery escaped from Tobruk, having severely dented Field-Marshal Rommel's grand scheme.

With Japan entering the War with an attack on Pearl Harbour in late 1941, the Australian government controversially decided to bring some troops home for local defence.

John Fryer



Gunner Fryer recovering after a "sporting" injury.

A Sister's Experience

by Betty Davis

Provided by Malcolm Webster, the following is an article written by Malcolm's sister, Betty Davis, for the Waverley Historical Society some years ago. It recounts Betty's personal feelings and experiences in Glen Waverley during World War II.

My elder brother Malcolm joined the AIF on his 19th birthday in May 1940, and I can remember all the family trying on his army gear just for laughs.

By some strange coincidence, the uniform issued to Malcolm fitted him very well, although he weighed only 120 lbs. at the time.

Originally he was a member of the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion and was billeted at Caulfield Racecourse, where he slept in the Caulfield Guineas Stand.

Unfortunately, Malcolm's pay book was lost in the Army Pay Office, and he was kept at Caulfield for some weeks until the pay book was eventually located behind someone's desk.

Due to being too late to rejoin the 2/2 Pioneer Battalion, Malcolm was invited to become a gunner in a new Unit – the 3rd Light AA Regiment, which did all its training with Vickers Machine Guns at Werribee Racecourse and surrounding countryside.

He came home on leave some weekends, so we usually went as a family to a dance at the local Mechanics Hall in Springvale Road. We had a wonderful time dancing to many wartime tunes and songs.

Afterwards, we would come home and play cards until morning. Next day Malcolm would demand breakfast in bed, and being soft hearted, it was always me who looked after him.

Sundays were always days of rest and Mum's lunchtime roasts. Also it was a day when a few friends would drop in to say hello. Often we would go for a walk up to Foster's Hill in Waverley Road, which commands a magnificent view of the Dandenongs.

Sunday night was church time at St. Pauls Church of England in Waverley Road. We needed to maintain our faith during those terrible days of wartime and to pray for loved ones and all those who were suffering because of the war.

We knew the time was approaching fast when Malcolm would be posted overseas. It came late in 1940, and I remember well how we all walked together to the Glen Waverley Railway Station singing, "Wish me luck as you wave me goodbye". Also, Mum sang "Stand Up For Jesus".

Everyone was determined to be brave and cheerful as we were always a happy family and we were no different when we were seeing Malcolm off. He kissed us all, and then with a brisk wave from the window of the moving train, he was on his way to war.

Mother was very sad on the return home from the station. We all felt sorry for her and wished that the horrible war would end soon and Malcolm would be home with us again. Little did we realise then that nearly five years would pass before we were reunited again.

When Mal was in the Middle East he wrote regularly. We thoroughly enjoyed his letters, which were full of interesting places visited; all seemed well and we felt all right and carried on.

Pat, our youngest sister, was still at school finishing her education and our brother Nigel was working in the City at Drummonds The Jewellers in Collins Street.

Jean, our oldest sister worked with me at Radio Corporation, making wireless transmitter parts, etc. for use in the war. We felt it very necessary to make our contribution to the "War Effort".

Dear Mother joined the Red Cross and was continually knitting socks, jumpers and scarves for service personnel. Also those wonderful Red Cross ladies of the Glen Waverley organisation made fruit cake and packed food parcels for the "boys"; it was a very busy time for us all.

The war continued on. It was mostly bad news. Then suddenly Malcolm's letters stopped coming, but mail was frequently delayed so we hoped this was all that had happened.

Honour rolls were appearing in the daily papers with names of those killed or wounded in action. Also, lists of those who became prisoners of war were increasing, so we started to wonder when it would be our turn.

Then along came the postman in June 1941 with the telegram that Malcolm was missing.

"We regret to inform you that VX23397 MR Webster has been reported missing. Minister for the Army and the Military Board extend sincere sympathy – signed Minister for the Army."

This was awful and worrying to us all. Wondering and hoping that he was all right, however not accepting that he could be dead. We tried every avenue possible to find out what had happened to him. We even went to "fortune tellers". They were the best as they all said Malcolm was alive.

No doubt they convinced us, as it was what we wanted to hear anyway. Mother never gave up hope. Many other mothers with sons posted "missing" would contact us to talk about and discuss their boys – it was their way of comforting each other. People were so united and caring and were drawn much closer together during the adversity of the war.

Glen Waverley in those days was a country place with everybody knowing each other and usually all getting together on a Saturday night at the local dance. These dances were always represented by members of all services, who were billeted for weekends by local families.

In appreciation, many families gave the "boys" a nice homely time, as some were a long way from their own kin.

Time moved on with many weeks passing by without news of Malcolm. Then along came another telegram informing our mother that Malcolm is now reported as a prisoner of war.

"I have to inform you that VX13397 M Webster previously reported missing is now reported prisoner of war – signed Minister for the Army."

We were so excited and started writing letters but these were returned.

More than six months would pass before we knew that Malcolm was a PoW in Italy. He had been rescued from the sea by the Italian navy, after his ship was sunk on 29 May 1941 during the evacuation of Australian soldiers from Crete. Sadly, several of those posted "missing" had lost their lives – Malcolm was very fortunate to survive.

His first communication dated November 1941 was sent via the Vatican City in Rome and was restricted to twenty-five words.

"Am looking forward to hearing from you all. I am in good health and spirits and hope you all are also. Lots of love. Malcolm."

You can imagine our joy and sudden happiness that we were able to communicate again. A very worrying aspect of the war was the news that the prison camps were bad, especially the Japanese, with much ill treatment being meted out to PoWs. However, despite all this despair and personal worry, we wrote many letters and sent food and clothing parcels to Malcolm. Many of these we learnt after the war were never received.

In the meantime, our brother Nigel, like Malcolm and their father before them, also went off to war. He joined the Australian navy, so we now had another worry and concern for a loved one operating in the Pacific area.

We all continued to help the war effort with Mother working hard for the Red Cross raising money, etc. She was



A recent photo of Betty Davis with brother Malcolm Webster.

ultimately honoured as a "Victory Mother", a well earned reward for her untiring personal effort.

Then came a further worry with Malcolm suddenly disappearing again during 1943. There was absolutely no news for nearly three years. Such are the real anxieties of wartime for those who wait at home.

Mother, despite the misgivings of her friends and relatives, still maintained her faith that Malcolm would come home again.

On June 22nd 1945 the English Red Cross advised her by cable that Malcolm had arrived at the AIF Reception GP Eastbourne, England. Eventually, that wonderful day, (8th September, 1945) came when he finally arrived back.

With the exception of our brother Nigel, who was still on active duty, we all went together to meet and welcome him home at GDD, Royal Park. It was a memorable and wonderful day for our family. How he had changed. He was taller, bigger and more mature. I guess we had all changed over the five years.

We realised the difficulty Malcolm had in settling back into civilian life away from the cruelty and rigours of war. Many a night when sleep evaded him,

we would listen as he recounted his experiences as a PoW and of those wonderful and courageous Italian families of Northern Piedmonte who helped him to survive after he escaped from the PoW work camp.

Sometimes he would talk of a few Aussies who continued their war with the Italian Resistance Forces against the Fascist and Nazi regimes.

It all seems so long ago. But the memories of those momentous war years are still quite vivid. I thank God Malcolm was spared and able to come home despite his unique experiences. Otherwise, we would never have known what a remarkable man my brother was and still is.

Nigel's service with the RAN finally ended in April 1946, and he too, thank God, returned to us in good health.

Although our father and mother are no longer with us today, we are still a very closely knit family who enjoy each other's company.

Secretary's Note:

Betty is now 87 years young and in good health. Malcolm returned to Italy in 1989 & 1994 to renew his acquaintance with the Italian families who befriended and assisted him and his fellow 2/3rd escapee Bill Wrigglesworth, survive.

Private Ken Welsh



Gary Welsh, son of the late Ken Welsh, 7th Battery, sent in this photograph of his father shaking hands with Flight Lieutenant R.W. Markham, navigator of the aircraft which flew him and other PoW's previously held in German prison camps, from Juvincourt Airfield in France to England in 1945.

The former PoW's shown in the photo were flown to England by No. 463 (Lancaster) Squadron RAAF.

The Australian Red Cross sent the slouch hats to the AIF men, while the AIF badges were hand cast from the silver paper wrappings of cigarette cartons. Private Welsh was captured at Crete in May 1941.

Gary advised that during a visit to the Ballarat PoW Wall of Remembrance in 2007, he spoke to Liz Heagney from the PoW Office at Dawson House in Ballarat.

During their conversation, Liz excused herself and came back shortly afterwards with the above photo. Gary had not known of the photographs existence prior to that day!

When Harry met Jimmy

Jimmy the donkey was an incongruous, but welcome, sight at the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital this week, bringing a smile to many of the sick and elderly.

Austin Health spokeswoman Tessa Young said the gentle donkey, from the Diamond Creek Donkey Shelter, regularly visited the hospital.

He also represents Simpson's donkey every year at their Anzac Day Observance Ceremony.

"He symbolises the care and compassion of medical staff in war," Ms Young said.

"And, of course, there is also the beneficial effect that animals have on people who are sick or very old. Their faces just light up."

In 1915, Private John Simpson Kirkpatrick and his donkeys rescued wounded and dying Diggers from the shores of Anzac Cove at Gallipoli.

Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital is the major Victorian provider of medical care for veterans and war widows.

Kathy Keating, a volunteer at the Donkey Shelter who takes Jimmy on about seven outings a year, said the patients always reacted positively to him.

"It's amazing how many people said, 'Oh, I had a donkey when I was a lad', or something like that," she said.

"They could relate very well to him. A lot of them have at least worked with horses."



Jimmy reminiscing with our own Harry Goodwin (9). Harry is 101 and a regular visitor to the Repat Hospital.

Ms Keating said Jimmy, who arrived at the shelter about eight years ago after his owners separated, was a remarkable animal.

"He's so placid, he's amazingly good-natured. He'd go anywhere you

wanted him to go, and he doesn't mind if people stand behind him or climb under him," she said.

Jimmy is about 35. Donkeys usually live to about 40.

Article and photo reprinted from the Herald & Weekly Times Ltd.

Roy Edward Lauder East (VX45822)

Concentration Camp Inmate

I was contacted by Bill Rudd, OAM, in November 2008 who enlightened me about the extensive research he has undertaken in establishing a Nominal Roll of almost 3,000 ANZAC escapers and evaders who were not in German prison camps at the end of the war, but who:

- had died whilst in captivity;
- had been repatriated on humanitarian grounds;
- had been transferred to Concentration Camps;
- had escaped to Allied lines or a neutral country such as Sweden, Spain or Switzerland – Bill Rudd was one of these; or
- were fighting with the partisans in Italy of which nine members of the 2/3rd are included (Anchen HA, Brimacombe HB, Crawley RJ, Garrigan WJ, Phipps GA, Waller WFC, Webster MR, Woolcock LA and Wrigglesworth WA).

Bill Rudd has established a comprehensive web site (www.aifpow.com) specific to his specialised field of tracing and recording the details of ANZAC German prisoners of war. I recommend this site to any one with a general interest in the 2/3rd LAA Regiment and with a particular interest in ANZAC PoWs

A total of 134 men from the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment were interned in German PoW camps.

In addition to the nine members of the Regiment who fought with partisans, a further eighteen escaped to Switzerland and two escaped to Allied lines.

One of the 134 2/3rd prisoners of war was Roy East. Roy spent the latter years of the war in a Polish concentration camp. The following is his story, as provided to me by Bill Rudd.

Of the 134 men from the 2/3rd LAA who ended up in various German prison camps, Roy East was one of the 31 men who initially finished up in Stalag 344 at Lamsdorf.

But due to his "fractiousness" rating by German authorities, he was packed off to a "Punishment Camp", located at Brno in Poland.

Brno, or Bruenn in German, was opened on the 1st of October 1943 and was a branch camp of the Auschwitz/Birkenau Extermination Complex—the very centre of the Holocaust. It was evacuated in January 1945, and its remaining inmates were transferred to Bergen-Belsen.

On his repatriation to the Eastbourne Reception Camp, he didn't say much about his time at Brno as "it was not the sort of thing one talks about".

On his return to Australia after being

discharged from the AIF, he dropped back into civilian life with his wife and four daughters. He joined the Victoria Police Force, and retired with the rank of Superintendent.

When, in 1985, the then Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, established the Concentration Camps Commission to verify the presence of ANZAC PoWs illegally transferred to Concentration Camps from regular German PoW Camps (still operated under the Geneva Conventions), the Punishment Camps at Brno in Poland and Terezin in Czechoslovakia, had not been included in the list of Concentration Camps published after the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials.

However, Roy East, on his own initiative, managed to convince the CCC that his imprisonment in the Brno Punishment Camp was indeed an imprisonment in a German Concentration Camp. He was subsequently awarded an ex-gratia payment of \$10,000.

The CCC publicity led to Roy East giving the oration at the Shire of Remembrance at the PoW Reunion in February 1986.

Bill Rudd is now 91 years of age, and remains as sharp as a tack.

Colin Bragg



Highlights from ANZAC Day Parade, 2008

Australians At War

The Australians at War Film Archive

The Australian At War Film Archive is a wonderful internet-based resource for anyone interested in hearing first-hand from the men and women who have served in any of the conflicts in which Australia has been involved since World War I, or who have been affected by these conflicts in other ways. It is available online at www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au.

The Archive is an initiative of the Commonwealth Government and has been commissioned through the Department of Veterans' Affairs. It commenced collecting video recording of informants—oral histories—around 2001 and now has available the stories of over 2,000 war veterans and others. Interviews were collected in all of Australia's states and territories. Although interviewing has now been completed, the Archive is still being updated.

At the web site we find transcripts of the interviews, war-time photos and photos of the interviewees taken at the time of the interview. Video recordings of the interviews are available upon request; a fee is charged for this service and certain copyright restrictions apply. The interviews are long, typically 6 to 8 hours each, filmed over a couple of days.

Searching the Online Transcripts

The online transcripts database (which includes the photographs of interviewees), is fully searchable by conflict and, within that, by other categories. You can also search individuals by their real name and/or preferred name (nickname). The third method of searching is to insert a phrase or 'keyword'.

A search on the conflict 'WWII' and keyword '2/3rd Australian Anti-Aircraft Regiment' was productive. As well as identifying comments about ack-ack units and their activities made by various interviewees, it revealed that six members of the Regiment have been interviewed. The transcripts of those interviews are freely available there and video recordings of them can be ordered.

The members included are Alexander Barnett, John Campbell, Vernon McGrath, Cecil Rae, George Rutter and Malcolm Webster. It is wonderful to read their recollections, and to see both WWII and contemporary photographs of these members. (We apologise if we have overlooked any other members of the Regiment whose recollections are in the Archive. Please let the Editor of *Take Post* know and we will advise Association members of the details.)

We are grateful to the contributors to the Australians At War Film Archive. It must have been both emotionally and physically draining to be interviewed over many hours. The results—the transcripts and videos—are permanent memorials to those six men and, especially, to all who served in the Regiment whose contributions are described and acknowledged by the interviewees.

David McDonald



Roll of Honour

The search for Roll of Honour photographs

At the heart of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra is a long series of panels recording the names of Australia's over 102,000 war dead. This is known as the Roll of Honour.

An online database has been compiled from data used to create the Roll of Honour; available online at www.awm.gov.au/roh.

It can be searched for details of members of the Regiment, and others, who died serving their country. You can search on an individual name or click on 'advanced search' where you can search by unit, date, etc.

The way units are indexed is inconsistent: a productive search strategy for the Regiment's entries is to enter "3 Lt AA Regt" (without the quotation marks). This returns details a large proportion of the Regiment's war dead.

At present, over 9,400 of the names on the Roll of Honour have photographs linked to them. The Memorial wants to find as many images of these men and women as possible, and is particularly interested in individual or family portraits.

Original photographs can be either donated or lent to the Memorial. Lent photographs are copied onto archival polyester film, digitised and returned to their owners.

If you have, or know the location of, a photograph of a person on the Roll of Honour, please contact the War Memorial at:

Roll of Honour Photographs Project
Australian War Memorial
GPO Box 345
Canberra ACT 2601

Phone: (02) 6243 4593
Email: photographs@awm.gov.au

The information on this page has been compiled by Regiment Historian David McDonald.