



Take Post

April 2019

Newsletter of the 2nd/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Assoc'n

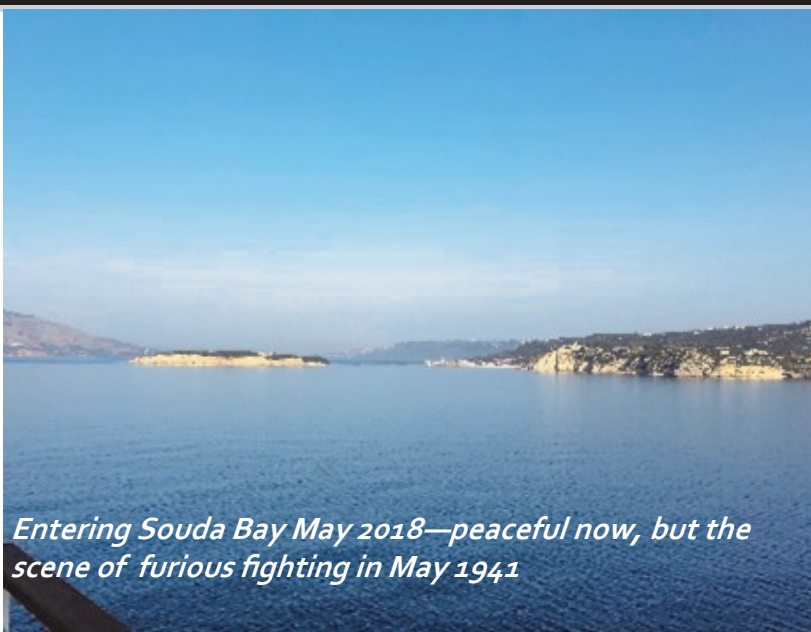
Remembering Crete

Editor's Note: During my conversations with members at the 2018 AGM of the Association, Russell Luckock mentioned he was shortly embarking on a trip to Crete. Always alert for material for Take Post, I asked Russell if would be so kind as to provide an article about his Crete visit for this edition of Take Post. Russell's "article" turned out to be 12 pages of detailed narrative with supporting photos, and by necessity has been reduced to just four pages. Russell's full story is on our web site under Take Post/Full Versions Of Take Post Articles.

Crete, in 1941, was a disaster for the locals, the Australians and their Allies - as well as the Germans. But out of this terrible campaign came Australian stories of fortitude, heroism and loss.

In May, 2018, a group of descendants from Victoria, NSW, WA and UK went to Crete to follow the stories of family members on a trip that took us over much of Crete with its rugged and raw mountains; its ancient towns, cities and structures. But above all, to meet its local people with whom there is a special bond with Australians that was forged over a few extraordinary months 77 years ago. The trip was the work of organiser and military historian Bim Affleck and his wife, Anna.

Our group went to the places and met some of the descendants of the people who were important to three uncles and a father who were variously in the Australian infantry battalions as well as the 2/3rd Light Anti-aircraft regiment in 1941. But their stories and experiences would be similar to many in 7th Battery of the latter regiment who served on Crete. Our group



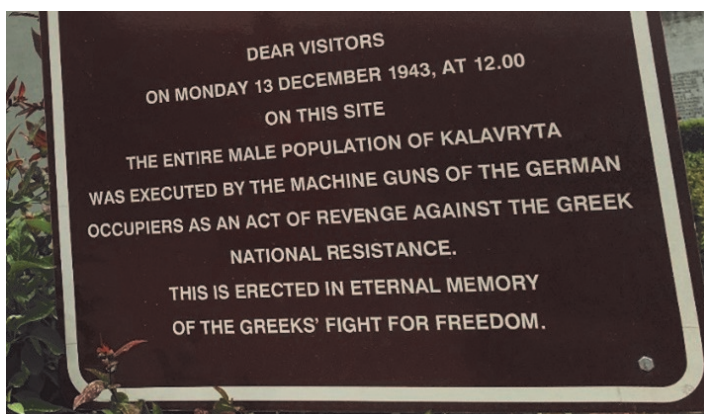
Entering Souda Bay May 2018—peaceful now, but the scene of furious fighting in May 1941

thus represented Doug Craig (senior) and Alec Dawkins who were taken off by the navy to the safety of Egypt, Jim Carstairs (2/7th) who successfully evaded the occupying forces for six months and Max Whiteside who died of wounds sustained at Maleme airfield on the first day of the first - and last - major airborne invasion.

Arriving in Patras, Greece, I drove to Athens via a memorial to the village of Kalavryta where the male population of over 12yo (some 700 souls) was wiped out in Nazi reprisals in 1943. Kalavryta is now on the tourist bus route so the world can remember the horror of what was done and resolve for it never to happen again.



Some things never change—on a back road in the mountains of Peloponnese this shepherd provides a scene reminiscent of biblical times.



Continued on Page 6

2nd / 3rd Remembrance Group

The Remembrance Group, comprised of direct descendants of original members, was formally established in 2008 and today numbers over 100 members.

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 Malcolm Wrigglesworth, Honorary Secretary on 03 9726 0803 or send us a message through the "Contact Us" section of the Association's website: www.antiaircraft.org.au/Contact Us. It is not an onerous role and currently costs only \$25.00 per year to participate. Your support is important if the men and the deeds of the 2nd/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

William Ernest Schack VX25412
Edward James Wellsted VX21937
Allan Grantley Martin VX109471

Sub-Unit

8 Battery
9 Battery
9 Battery

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!

2nd /3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association

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

The 2nd/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment was raised in Melbourne in 1940 and served with distinction in World War II, with Theatre Honours from Crete, Tobruk, 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 prisoners of war.

Formed in 1945, the Regiment Association has been active in commemorating and celebrating the history of the 2nd/3rd ever since.

In 2008, the Association's Constitution was amended to allow descendants of the original 1,935 members of the Regiment to become members of the Association and to provide for the future carriage of the Association.

The 2nd/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association is an Unincorporated Association managed by a voluntary Committee of Management.

Website

www.antiaircraft.org.au

Office Bearers 2017/18

President

Anne Rae
Email: arae26@hotmail.com
10/50 Upper Heidelberg Road
Ivanhoe Vic 3079

Honorary Secretary

Malcolm Wrigglesworth
31 Savanna Drive
Mooroolbark Vic 3138
Telephone: 03 9726 0803
Email: msmtwrigg@hotmail.com

Vice President

Matthew Heddle

Honorary Treasurer

Colin Bragg
Unit 2 / 81 Well Street
Brighton VIC 3186

Committee

Ann Bragg
Graham Heddle
David McDonald
Lynton Rose

Newsletter Editors

Malcolm Wrigglesworth
Colin Bragg

Association Research Officer

David McDonald

Keeper of the Banner

Matthew Heddle

Take Post has been printed by Bizworks Printing & Copy Services, 748 Hampton Street, Brighton, Victoria, 3186. Telephone 03 9592 9093

PRESIDENTS REPORT— 2019 AGM



Peace

In the wake of the devastating Christchurch shootings this year, it is timely to remember what it was that our fathers and grandfathers fought for. They understood that their very way of life was threatened.

My father, Cec Rae VX48132 explained to me that when Britain declared war on Germany following Germany's invasion of Poland, and Australia followed suit, Dad made up his mind that he would be 'in it'. So, after the fall of France, the loss of troops at Dunkirk and the possible invasion of Britain, he and a number of his friends enlisted. From his memoirs: *"in June 1940 came the surrender of France with the desperate evacuation of most of the British forces at Dunkirk. If Britain should fall where would Australia be? We young, fit and able chaps felt we should do something about it."* I can recall on a number of occasions, Cec warning of the danger to democracy and our way of life posed by right wing extremists.



These men believed that it was their duty to fight against fascism, Nazism and (later) Japanese supremacy – ex-

treme right wing ideology that lead to genocide, murder, torture and privation. They witnessed this and many succumbed in the name of war.

Whenever people, especially the young are alienated and disengaged, whenever we disregard the circumstances of others and fail to try to walk in their footsteps, whenever we look to simplistic sloganistic ideology to explain our political and social situation, then we allow extremist views to perpetuate. The Christchurch massacre reminds us that we each need to reach out to our neighbours, and follow the example of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, to ensure a peaceful, civil, inclusive and compassionate society for which our fathers and grandfathers fought.

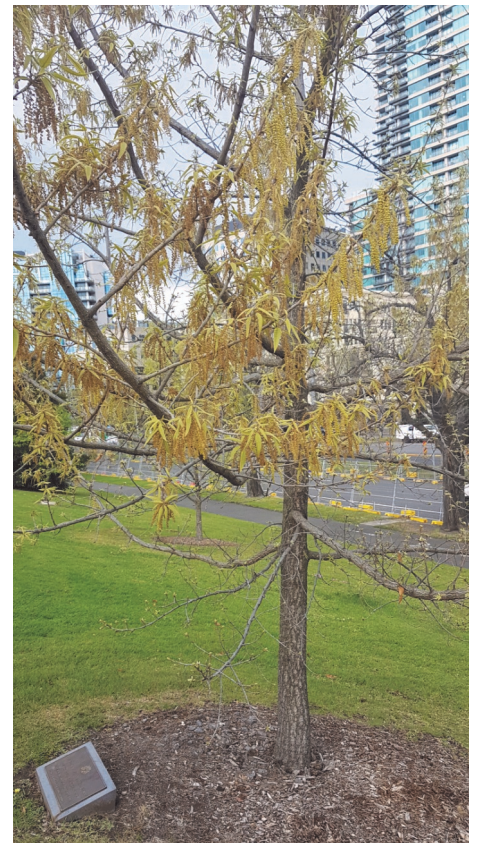
75 years ago the Regiment had disbanded as an entity, with members of the Regimental Headquarters comprising part of the newly-created 102 Composite AA Regiment and based at Corunna Downs, W.A., Camp 319 Australia. 7th Battery were designated 2/7th Light Anti-aircraft Battery of the 2/2nd Composite AA Regiment, providing AA defences at Buna Beach and the nearby Cape Endaiadere in what is now the Oro (Northern) Province of PNG. Over 100 men of the Battery were POWs in Europe. 8th Battery was an independent airborne battery providing AA defences at Buna, Territory of Papua. 9th Battery was designated 2/9th Light Anti-aircraft Battery of the 2/3rd Composite AA Regiment, an independent battery providing AA defences at Milne Bay, Territory of Papua, while the Signals and the Workshop Sections were part of the newly-created 102 Composite AA Regiment supporting the guns in NW WA.

This year's edition of *Take Post* contains a number of fascinating stories ranging from the individual – those of John Campbell VX38276 and Bill Schack VX2541 both of 8th Battery, in *A Tale of Two Rats* who were interviewed by our editor Colin Bragg, also an extract of the memoirs of Cec Donnelly, VX46836 7th Battery, including his time as a POW – to the more general – Remembrance Group member Russell Luckock's recent trip to Crete following

the footsteps of 7th Battery, a reproduction of the *Tobruk Truth* of September 1941, and Paul Keating's speech on the 75th anniversary of Armistice Day. This speech is still as powerful now as it was then.

As mentioned in my mid-term report, Research Officer, David McDonald has recently uploaded information regarding the 2/3rd ALAA Regiment plaque to the Australian War Memorial website, **Places of Pride**, the National Register of War Memorials. This is an Australian War Memorial initiative to record the location and gather images of every publicly accessible war memorial in Australia. You can view the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment memorial plaque entry at <https://placesofpride.awm.gov.au/> and enter *anti-aircraft* in the Search box. The plaque situated under a Simon poplar tree was dedicated to the Regiment in 1997 and can be found on the Shrine Reserve, between the south east corner of the Shrine of Remembrance and St Kilda Road, near the Park Street intersection.

Thanks again to the committee for their hard work throughout the year and particular thanks to Colin Bragg our Treasurer who once again has brought us a fascinating edition of *Take Post*.



From the Secretary's Desk



Welcome and hearty greetings to all members of the 2nd / 3rd LAA Regt Association.

Since January my thoughts have turned to the preparation of this year's AGM, annual reunion arrangements, the Anzac Day March, and sourcing information / articles for Take Post, plus of course collating information for the Secretary's Report.

Committee meetings twice a year generate plenty of ideas and action plans, already in place, or to be implemented for the future of the Association.

Enquiries and correspondence are mostly received from members and relatives electronically through our website or by emails. Association Research Officer David McDonald handles the more detailed responses. Examples of these email enquires are included under the Sentry's Log. This redirecting of enquiries via email, webmail or telephone conversation, has certainly made the Secretary's role a lot easier.

Foster and Katherine Crooke emailed informing me that they are intending to travel to New Guinea in May, seeing Kokoda Track, Gona and Buna. Milne Bay was also intended, but proved too difficult to visit. Foster also asked for assistance in interpreting some army records of his father—referred to David McDonald.

The Year in Review

Throughout the year I have received phone calls requesting identification of former war veterans from descendants of members of other anti-aircraft Regiments. These calls are usually after researching on the website. This most likely is a reflection of the fact that:

- Most WW2 Associations have been wound up, or an Association never existed.
- Very few Associations have a web site, particularly Australian Anti-Aircraft Regiment Associations.
- A Web search entering "Anti-Aircraft" will invariably bring up our 2nd / 3rd web site.

Whilst we are unable to answer all these enquiries, we do endeavour to provide sufficient information for them to be followed up by the enquiree.

Donations

The Association continues to receive donations from members, enabling us to continue to underwrite the cost of the AGM, undertake maintenance of our web site, produce Take Post and to fund any unscheduled technical maintenance of our web site.

Thank you to all members who have made donations throughout the year, and in particular Dot Harris, Foster Crooke, Doreen Bryant and Tish Slattery.

Banner Repairs

The Association was fortunate in having Graeme and Matt Heddle undertake the repair of the Regiment's banner. Materials and labour were sourced from Geelong City businesses to enable repairs to the original 2nd/3rd banner. Fortunately, Matt and Graeme were able to locate the special golden ropes and tassels to be attached to the ropes in a local hardware store, which agreed to supply the materials for a very good price. A local upholsterer undertook the actual repair of the banner. Main repairs related to repairing the holes where the material was wearing thin, and the rod openings where the rods slide through the banner, and re-sewing loose and temporary hand stitching. The original Banner has not been altered in anyway, but is significantly stronger.

2nd/3rd Website

The Association web site is working well. We receive a lot of spam emails on the site, which are dealt with by Treasurer Colin Bragg and Research Officer David McDonald who maintain a regular watch on day to day activities. When necessary, technical issues such as Joomla updates, website / server updates and website security procedures are referred to Malcolm Romano from Designsense Web.

Remembrance Group

The Remembrance Group continues to grow and currently numbers approximately over 90 members, of whom 53 attended

the 2018 AGM / Reunion Luncheon.... very good attendance. Last year we had two original Service members, John Campbell and John Marshall, who thoroughly enjoyed the AGM/ Reunion Luncheon. John Campbell provided the Remembrance Group with an insight into his war action and escapades. His informative talks and discussions always provide the Remembrance Group with a great deal of knowledge as to what the Regiment and the Batteries within the Regiment, withstood during WW2.

Please remember to advise myself or Colin Bragg (Treasurer) of any changes to your address, email and phone numbers.

Opening of a Exhibition at the Shrine

On the 10th August I had the opportunity to represent the Association at the opening of an exhibition at the Shrine of Remembrance titled "Resistance - Australians and the European Underground 1939-45". This exhibition is open from the 3rd August 2018 until the 4th August 2019.

A full report by President Anne Rae was included in our 2018 Mid Term Report emailed to the Remembrance Group in November last year.

Please take this opportunity to visit this exhibition, especially those members whose fathers were POWs who were associated with the partisans.

For me personally this was a very emotional and proud occasion and I am amazed at these brave veterans' survival skills. The stories of the survival of our fathers during this horrendous period of WW2 in Europe, being shared between the families of the veterans who were on the run with the Resistance in the northern provinces of Italy, were truly astounding.

Take Post

At its mid-year meeting, the Committee discussed producing some or all of Take Post in colour, and have elected to produce the 2019 issue of the Take Post newsletter with a colour cover - a first since Take Post was first produced in 1988.

Regards to all.

Malcolm Wrigglesworth, Hon Secretary.

.....and the Sentry's Log

Sentry's Log By David McDonald

As the Association's Research Officer I have the pleasure of responding to requests for information about the Regiment and its members. Many of these are quite straightforward, with descendants seeking information about relatives who served in the Regiment or in other anti-aircraft units. I am usually able to provide them with information about how to find out what they are looking for, particularly through accessing the person's service record at the Australian Archives.

<http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/BasicSearch.aspx>

Another option is to review the relevant sections of the Regiment's history, "*On Target*"

<http://www.antiaircraft.org.au/about-us/on-target/on-target>.

Pleasingly, a number of the enquirers have already accessed these resources before contacting the Association, and write seeking further details.

If you have accessed online service records at the National Archives website you will have seen that most of the contents are handwritten—and sometimes close to illegible—and all contain abbreviations.

A useful source for interpreting the service record abbreviations is the National Archives web page 'Common abbreviations found on service records' at <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/Explore/defence/abbreviations.aspx>.

Another is the Australian War Memorial's online 'Search for abbreviation or acronym':

<https://www.awm.gov.au/glossary/>

Their encyclopedia also helps:

<https://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia>

Please contact me at:

info@antiaircraft.org.au if you need further assistance in understanding the service records.

The following are examples of the enquiries received from members and interested persons through our web site:

Brian Scholes

"Hi. Some while ago now I was contacted by someone who I think was connected with this Association in relation to the

date of death of my father, John William Scholes. I think his name was Owen Carlton looking at the Rats Of Tobruk FB page?

I am not sure if he asked for any other information. I apologise for taking so long to get this done, but my father died on 1 December 1985 in Orbost Victoria." Replied, and copied to Owen Carlton.

Christopher Smith

Requests info on his grandfather Maj. Robert Rennie Smith, incorrectly thinking that he was in the 2/3rd LAA Regt. I ascertained that he was in the 2/2nd Aust Heavy AA Regt. Information provided.

Jan McNeill

Planning to trace her father's movements as a POW in Crete/Europe: Roy E L East VX45822. Requested advice on researching the topic. Provided the little information that we have.

Geoff & Christine Exton

Requested information on Christine's grandfather VX20920 Gnr GJ Potter, 7 Battery, POW Italy, released in a prisoner exchange, injured. Info provided.

Mark Fitzhardinge

'Great website, congratulations. I am President of the 2/7 Aust Field Regiment Association and we are looking to maintain interest of the families of the veterans - the last known West Australian passing away recently.

We have a strong group and have recently, on the passing of our last local veteran been given permission by the RSLWA to continue to march under the 2/7 banner.

We have our regimental 25pdr and about 80 persons gather around it for an ANZAC Day service. We also hold an annual luncheon to remember the Battle of El Alamein where the regiment sustained losses in that significant event.

I was hoping you may be able to give some guidance on the setting up of similar website for the 2/7AFR Association.

(My father Theo Fitzhardinge and Uncles Bill Fitzhardinge and Gavin Hayes (RMO) served in the 2/3 LAA). Colin responded.

Rob Andrews

Asked for information re his father,

N161175 Gnr William Robert Essington Andrews. He was in 2/3 Bty, 1 AA Regiment. Link to his service record at Aust Archives provided. Follow-up correspondence.

Peter Clift

'Would you please pass on to Anne and her fellow committee members our heartfelt thanks for a wonderful time at the annual luncheon/AGM.

We had a wonderful time and really felt part of the "family" – everyone was very generous in making us feel welcome. We even met the sister and brother of a very close pal of Janine's only to realise both fathers were in the same Regiment – we would never have known otherwise!

It was slightly unfortunate that friends we were staying with in Melbourne came early to the RACV to collect us, so we had little time to chat after formalities or to say thanks.

Would love to attend next year if at all possible.

All the very best,

Alistair Dowling

'I am Alastair Dowling, son of Robert (Bob) Graeme Dowling VX32345, a member of 9 Battery from the Regiment's inception through to the end of the war. After discharge Dad suffered from TB and spent lengthy periods in Repat Heidelberg until his death in 1949.

I have been going through a collection of photos from dad's time in the Middle East and Milne Bay with 9 Battery. I have chosen some of the best to scan and send to you - see attached document.' Colin following up with him to get the photos onto our website.

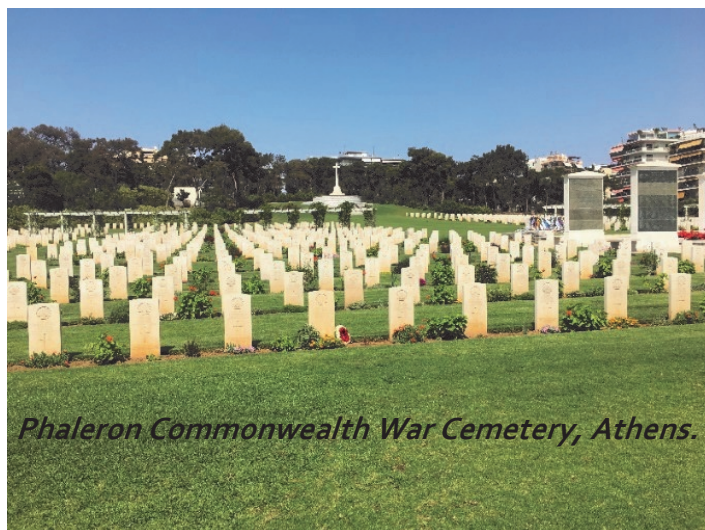
Matthew Langley

"My dad was Bert Langley and I would like to try and continue to connect with his service history. I marched with dad and our great mate Tom Dusting on many Anzac days and with a blink of an eye I lost them both. I miss picking them up on Anzac and spending the great day with them". Refers to VX148044 LANGLEY, HC, and VX147399 DUSTING, TD, both members of the Regt. Malcolm responded re membership of the Association, etc.

REMEMBERING CRETE (continued)

Then south east to Nafplion where in 1941 this harbour was the scene of many hurried escapes via naval ships bound for Crete after the Germans overtook Greece.

My final destination on the mainland was Athens and its Phaleron Commonwealth War Cemetery where Sergeant Max Whiteside is buried. Max was in charge of a Bofors anti-aircraft gun and these were the first targets in the initial airborne attack on Crete on 20/5/1941. He was seriously wounded and was hidden by his mates in the foothills for a couple of days and then flown back to hospital in Athens by the Germans before he died of wounds on 25/5/1941 aged 22.



Phaleron Commonwealth War Cemetery, Athens.

He was in the 7th Battery of the Australian 2/3rd LAA Regiment while my father Charles Luckock and uncle Griff Weatherly were in the 9th Battery of the same Regiment. 9th Battery were also ear-marked for Crete before it fell but stayed in North Africa to be "well chased by Rommel" in what they jokingly called 'the Benghazi Handicap'! 8th Battery were proudly 'Rats of Tobruk'.

Then the ferry from Piraeus to Chania in Crete on a beautiful moonlit night ...to arrive the following morning into Souda Bay – peaceful now, but the scene of furious fighting in 1941.

Our group then visited the nearby Commonwealth War Cemetery and established our base in the delightful Doma Hotel in Chania.

The Doma is owned by two elderly sisters and was once the British Consul and subsequently the German Headquarters during the occupation.

Maleme airfield and German War Cemetery

In 1941 Maleme airfield (pronounced Mal-em-ma) was the centre of the early German airborne attack using fighter and transport planes, towed gliders, and paratroops. On the beach side of the airfield, a concrete gun-emplacement may be the remains of the base for the light anti-aircraft Bofors 40mm guns that were concreted in much to the dismay of the 2/3rd when they arrived. The Regiment's usual practice in North Africa was to move the Bofors on their 4 wheels at night when expecting an attack - so that the Germans did not know where these effective anti-aircraft guns would be situated the following morning. (The concrete might also be subsequent German construction during their occupation.)

Max Whiteside's letters home in early May 1941 said he 'was 400 yards from the beach' – so swims were part of their day in the Australian tradition. So I decided to have a swim for Max. Walking along the beach at the north side of the airfield, I was half-expecting to be followed by a military drone or some-such! However, when driving beside the airfield on my return trip, I just happened to stop for a few minutes - only to look up to see two heavily armed and helmeted Greek soldiers taking a great interest in why I had stopped opposite a military airfield..... needless to say, my stop was particularly brief!

While I was in the WW2 section of Chania's Nautical Museum I was approached by a young man who had heard me speaking English and wanted to know why I was there. I explained. It turned out that he was a young German, born in East Germany now living outside Heidelberg, and he and his girlfriend Cathleen were very concerned about what had been done in the past in their country's name.



This 1941 photo of Maleme airfield was on display in the museum in Chania and shows the dust and carnage of the initial airborne attack. The high ground at right is probably Hill 107 that was strategically important with its commanding view of the surrounding territory, including the Maleme airfield defended by 2/3rd LAA Bofors guns. Allied command headquarters were sited on the Hill, until its capture by the Germans. Max Whiteside would be somewhere in this photo.

The battle for Crete lasted only a short time as the Germans managed to out-maneuvre the ill-equipped Allied forces many of whom had only recently escaped from Greece with little equipment – especially for communications. It was touch and go until the Germans captured Maleme airfield, after which the Allied troops had to fight rear-guard actions and head south to a small fishing port on the south coast that faced across the Mediterranean to Egypt.

But first they had to scramble over the 2,450m high White Mountains with its gorges that were the walking tracks in these seriously steep ranges.

Imbros Gorge

The intrepid walkers in our group set out to walk DOWN the Imbros Gorge - and reached the bottom after some two hours twenty minutes.

It's a different story from walking back UP as Jim Carstairs and his mates had to do after the navy ships departed Chora Sfakien without this rear-guard group. Back in 1941, boots were

continually falling apart in the very rough, rocky terrain so that troops' feet sometimes were wrapped in anything they could find or, worse still, in bare feet.



CHORA SFAKIEN

Many Allied troops were evacuated by various naval ships and transported to Alexandria in Egypt. Jim Carstairs's Battalion, the Australian 2/7th however, formed the rear-guard that allowed the time to load the ships with escaping troop formations. They were eventually ordered to evacuate so scrambled down the steep slopes to the beach – but the ships had gone for good.

The Battalion was then lined up on the beach in formal order by their Commanding Officer, Colonel Theo Walker. He addressed his troops by saying that he considered it his duty to surrender to the Germans and to look after all who came with him. However, anyone who wanted to take his chances and escape was welcome to do so.

Many decided to try their luck (and skill) in evading the Germans until things quietened down and escape to Egypt could be organised. Jim Carstairs and his mates set off to scramble back up the mountains – this time with the extra threat from the ever-present German patrols.

Those who decided not to surrender now faced the hell of climbing back up those blasted mountains – with their boots in tatters and short of food and particularly water – but also having to avoid enemy troops. They were now on their own and had to rely on their Australian-learned wits and skills.

On our group's drive back up these steep mountain switchback roads, I was privileged to have Doug Craig as my passenger. The Peugeot purred ... and Doug broke into the best recital of *The Man From Snowy River* – that iconic Australian poem by Banjo Paterson – that I have ever heard. His spirited rendition and colouration were most memorable!

Together, we rode those 'horses' up, up ever upwards until we

reached the top of that terrible ascent. For Doug sent the poetic flint stones flying in this rough and broken ground where many mountain gullies meet among the torn and rugged battlements on high – a masterful recitation of an Australian masterpiece.



Tour group member Sophie investigates some of the local flora in the gorge.

The Cretans during the occupation proved a formidable force working with the Allies – and on their own – against the German occupation of their island.

We stayed a night in Patsos where a small rock shelter outside the village was important during the German occupation. Our guide, Vasilis explained the 1941 situation when, Evangelos Vandoulakis, and other locals hid Jim Carstairs at great risk to themselves and their village. They became great friends and this was the pattern between many Cretans and the Australians and New Zealanders in particular.

(in 1984, on a previous visit to Crete, I met an old man who wanted to know where I was from. When we worked out 'Australia' he became most animatedly excited. "Australia gut: Germans nicht gut" he said in the language of the occupation that he had obviously witnessed).

PATSOS and the CRETAN NETWORK of AN-DARTES.

In a separate 1944 operation conducted by British Special Operations Executive officers Paddy Leigh Fermor and W.S. 'Billy' Moss with some locals, the German General Kreipe, in charge of Crete, was abducted and hidden in this same Patsos 'cave' before being walked over the mountains and thence to Egypt and captivity.

(Continued on Page 8)

REMEMBERING CRETE (continued)

In a famous literary incident while on the slopes of Mt Ida, the General quoted the first verse of Horace's Ode 1.9 in Latin then stopped. Upon which Patrick Leigh Fermor finished it off – both from memory - learned during their pre-war years!

An Escape and a Capture

After visiting the Preveli Monastery – the scene of many Allied escapes organised by these very brave church leaders - I departed the group as I had to head to Heraklion and home in a couple of days.

Tris Ekklesies and Safety

A beach at the very small village of Tris Ekklesies (three churches) on the coast due south of Heraklion is where Jim Carstairs and a group of 78+ Allied troops escaped to Alexandria and freedom on the caique affectionately referred to as 'HMS' Hedgehog.

The beach is at the foot of a number of very steep mountainous ranges that now have a glorious newly-tarred road which descends in a series of serious switchbacks. No doubt, European Union funds at work.

The new, wide tar, however, ends abruptly at the entrance to the village – so you then encounter pot-holed, stony, narrow streets!

Just imagine in 1941, though, descending these steep, rocky, mountains with your boots in tatters ... but finally ... they had escaped!

Postscript:

But from all this comes hope. Hope epitomised by the busloads of tourists now stopping to witness the civilian massacre sites in Greece – and the young German couple who openly expressed their dismay to me at what had been done in the past in their country's name.

Lest we forget.



Tour group at the rock shelter in Patras

Reading:

Carstairs, James de Mole, *Escape from Crete: War Diary 1941*, Society of Cretan Historical Studies, Heraklion, 2016. (Available from Historical Museum of Crete, Heraklion, €10 + p & p)

Rae, C J E, Harris, A L and Bryant, R K: *On Target: The Story of the 2/3rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment*. Enterprise Press, 1987.

2/3rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment website article on 2/4th LAA Bofors in the North Africa desert: <https://www.anti-aircraft.org.au/take-post/take-post-articles/days-in-the-desert>



L to R Norm Craig, Bim Affleck (organiser), Julie Hope, Janet Gordon, Lachie Gordon, Pin Affleck, Anna Affleck, Russell Luckcock, Jules Craig, Joy Craig, Sophie Holloway, Doug Craig



Peristere Beach

Just a few hundred metres from Rodakino is Peristere Beach, from which General Kreipe was evacuated to Egypt and captivity by the British.

Upon asking the local café owner about tourism, he said there are now many German tourists coming to enjoy the south coast beaches as an escape from their northern winter.

Askifou Museum:

There is a private military museum at Askifou near the Imbros Gorge with an old Bofors anti-aircraft gun outside - this one unusually equipped with a shield - and a good supply of raki for sale.

Paul Keating Armistice Day 75th Anniversary Speech November 11, 1993

Editor's Note: It's more than 25 years since then Prime Minister Paul Keating gave one of his most rousing speeches, in a career known for its masterful oratory. He gave it at the burial service for an unknown Australian soldier, exhumed from a First World War cemetery in France, and now entombed in the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial.

We do not know this Australian's name, and we never will.

We do not know his rank or his Battalion.

We do not know when he was born, or precisely how and when he died.

We do not know where in Australia he had made his home, or when he left it for the battlefields of Europe.

We do not know his age or his circumstances, whether he was from the city or the bush, what occupation he left to become a soldier, what religion, if he had a religion, if he was married or single.

We do not know who loved him, or whom he loved - if he had children, we do not know who they are.

His family is lost to us, as he was lost to them.

We will never know who this Australian was.

Yet he has always been among those we have honoured.

We do know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western front - one of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in the First World War - one of the 324,000 Australians who served overseas in that war and one of the 60,000 Australians who died on foreign soil - one of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century.

HE IS ALL OF THEM, AND HE IS ONE OF US.

This Australia, and the Australia he knew, are like foreign countries.

The tide of events since he died have been so dramatic, so vast and all consuming, a world has been created beyond the reach of his imagination.

He may have been of those who believed the Great War would have been an adventure too grand to miss.

He may have felt that he would never have lived down the shame of not going.

But the chances are that he went for no other reason that he believed it was his duty - the duty he owed his country and his King.

Because the Great War was a mad, awful brutal struggle, distinguished more often than not by military and political incompetence, because the waste of human life was so terrible that

some said that victory was scarcely discernible from defeat, and because the war which was supposed to end all wars in fact sowed the seeds of a second even more terrible war, we might think that this unknown soldier died in vain.

But in honouring our war dead, as we always have, it's clear that this is not true.

For out of the war came a lesson which transcended the horror and tragedy and the inexcusable folly.

It was a lesson about ordinary people - and the lesson was they were not ordinary.

On all sides, they were the heroes of that war - not the Generals and the politicians, but the soldiers and sailors and nurses - those who taught us to endure hardship, show courage, to be bold as well as resilient, to believe in ourselves and to stick together.

The unknown Australian soldier we inter today was one of those, who by his deeds, proved that real nobility and grandeur belongs not to Empires and to Nations, but to the people on whom they, in the last resort, always depend.

That is surely at the heart of the Anzac story - the Australian legend which emerged from the war. It is not a legend of sweeping military victories so much as triumphs against the odds - of courage and ingenuity in adversity - it is a legend of free and independent spirits whose discipline derived less from military formalities and customs than from the bonds of mateship and the demands of necessity.

It is a democratic tradition - the tradition in which Australians have gone to war ever since.

This unknown Australian is not interred here to glorify war over peace or to assert a soldier's character above a civilians, or one race or one nation or one religion above another, or men above women, or the war in which he fought and died above any other war, or of one generation above that has or will come later.

The Unknown Soldier honours the memories of all those men and women who laid down their lives for Australia.

His tomb is a reminder of what we have lost in war, and what we have gained.

We've lost more than 100,000 lives, and with them all their love of this country, and all their hope and energy.

But we've gained a legend - a story of bravery and sacrifice, and with it, a deeper faith in ourselves - our democracy and a deeper understanding of what it means to be Australian.

It's not too much to hope therefore that this unknown Australian soldier might continue to serve his country - he might enshrine a nation's love of peace and remind us that in the sacrifice in the men and women whose names are recorded here there is faith enough for all of us.

A Tale Of Two Rats

Editor's Note: For the third consecutive year I have had the pleasure of engaging with two of the original members of the 2/3 ALAAR and gathering an insight into their lives before, during and after their time as members of the Regiment. John Campbell and Bill Schack were both members of 8 Battery, both came from north-western Victoria and both have lived long and eventful lives. Whilst I have known John for over ten years and had access to his self published autobiography "To Cut A Long Story Short", I only had one meeting with Bill of some two hours, which explains the relative imbalance of their individual stories.

Sadly, Bill passed away on 20 January 2019, aged 100 years. This is but a brief glimpse into their very full lives.

JOHN SELBY CAMPBELL, 8 Battery, D Troop, VX38276

Early Days

Although his Army Service Record states he was born on 21 April 1920, John Selby Campbell was actually born in Mildura on 21 April 1921, like so many young men who put their age up to ensure they were able to enlist.

John's father (also John) had undertaken and completed a tailoring apprenticeship when he left school and worked in the trade until ill health led him to move to the country. He spent some two years at Dookie Agricultural College and then moved to Orange where he worked as a wool classer before moving to Mildura where he was employed by the State Rivers Department maintaining irrigation channels.

In 1920, John's father purchased a ten-acre fruit block in Mildura where he grew grapes and had a selection of apple and pear trees.

John senior and John's mother, Edith, were married in August 1920 - Edith was a trained dressmaker.

John senior's tailoring and wool classing background was to be the basis of his own tailoring business several years later, when he took over an existing tailoring shop in Cheltenham in 1936.

John attended Mildura Primary School and Mildura High School but left school in his 14th year to help on the family

fruit block until the severity of the Depression obliged the family to move to Melbourne in 1934. John attended Bradshaw and Everitt's Business College in Melbourne (studying English, shorthand, Typing, some Maths and Book Keeping) and in 1936 commenced work as an office boy at Griffith's Teas. He continued studying at the College in the evenings and working at Griffith's Teas until he enlisted at Royal Park on 30 July 1940.

WILLIAM ERNEST SCHACK, 8 Battery, E Troop, VX25412

Early Days

Born on 10 September 1918, Bill grew up on a 640 acre (260 hectare or one square mile) mixed wheat and sheep property at Lascelles, near Swan Hill in the north west of Victoria. One of seven children, Bill had five sisters and a brother.

He attended the Gama East School until the 8th Grade and proudly stated he achieved his Merit Certificate.

Being one of only two boys in the family, Bill began working on the family property as soon as he finished school and by the time he assumed ownership of the property, his father had acquired a second block of 640 acres.

In the dry years brought on by drought, Bill spent his time either clearing existing irrigation channels or excavating new channels. He did this initially with a team of 14 horses until he purchased one of the first "Bulldog" tractors in the region.

Many of the channels cleared or constructed by Bill are now closed and have been replaced by large pipe systems to conserve water for irrigated crops and pasture.

One of Bill's sisters, Lillian, married Vern Maxwell, whose family also farmed in the area. Another friend was Alan "Bushy" Read, also from a farm close to the Schack property.

Bill, Vern and "Bushy" all went on to enlist in the 2nd/3rd when it was formed in July 1940 - Bill and Vern in the 8th Battery and "Bushy" in the 9th Battery until his transfer to the 2nd/4th in January 1942.

Editor's Note: In the 2012 edition of Take Post we included excerpts from Vern Maxwell's diary relating to his time in the Middle East from 12 March 1941 to 23 August 1941. The full version of

Vern's diary may be accessed on the Association's web site. The diary included many hand written comments added by Vern's son Eric, former Secretary John Campbell, Dick Hawting and Bill Schack.

In February 2019, Eric Maxwell advised me by letter of Bill's passing.

The Regiment

John - Because John was only 19 when he sought to enlist, and put his age up by a year, his parents consented on the condition that his cousin Robert (Bob) (VX38262), who was four years older than John, and who had already decided to join up, promised to 'look after



Sergeant Campbell, home on leave

him'.

For the next six to eight weeks John and Bob undertook initial training at Royal Park (known as Camp Pell), before volunteering to join the newly formed 2nd/3rd Australian Anti-Aircraft Regiment, and being transferred to Werribee Racecourse where the Regiment was being formed.

John became a member D Troop of the 8th Battery under the command of Major Phil Stokes, and after some more basic training and practice with Lewis machine guns (there were no anti-aircraft guns to train with), John was given two stripes and promoted to bombardier, a non-commissioned officer.

Bill - Bill enlisted on 18 June 1940 at Lascelles, and with many others from the Wimmera / Mallee area of Victoria, was sent to Werribee Race Course for basic training.



Bill Schack enlistment photo

Bill became a member of E Troop of the 8th Battery.

On 29 December 1940, John and Bill departed Werribee to board the *Mauretania* for the Middle East, and arrived in Haifa via Colombo, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. From Haifa, they boarded a train and travelled through Palestine to El Majdal near Jaffa and from here by civilian trucks to Khassa.

In late January 1941 Major Stokes announced that 8th Battery had "drawn the plum" and was going to the North Africa and the Western Desert. 8th Battery departed Khassa by train to Alexandria, where they boarded a decrepit Polish vessel, the *Warszaw*, for Tobruk, where they arrived on 13 February 1941. From here they were ordered to Wadi Auda, some three miles from Tobruk.

As the Battery had no Bofors guns, they practiced on captured Italian Breda 20mm anti-aircraft guns for the two weeks they were in Wadi Auda before being moved to Benghazi. After a further two weeks in Benghazi, John's Troop of four guns and crew were ordered to El Adem airfield about 25 miles from Tobruk. On 7 April 1941, John and the other gun crew at El Adem airfield were ordered to evacuate and to return to Tobruk.

Bill never got to be "up close and personal" to a Bofors gun, or in fact, to any of the captured Italian Breda anti-aircraft guns - Bill (and Vern Maxwell) was one of the drivers responsible for moving men and supplies between the three Troops of 8 Battery and between the various areas of operation, including Derna, Barce, Benghazi and Tobruk. Bill and Vern were also the designated driv-

ers for the OIC of the Battery, Major Philip Stokes.

Bill recalled the heat and the cold at night, the sand, the noise of aircraft and guns and bombs, the flies and a myriad of other insects, and the lack of water and food during his time during the Siege of Tobruk and was proud to be a Rat of Tobruk.

John spent some six months in Tobruk until he was evacuated to Alexandria on 28 September 1941 on *HMS Jackal*. From Alex, the 8th were entrained back to Hill 95 in Palestine. Whilst in Hill 95, John and cousin Robert were granted a week's leave in Cairo, where they saw the Sphinx and climbed to the top of King Cheop's pyramid. They were also able to spend some time in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, just being tourists.

Early in 1942 the Regiment, together with 1st Aust. Corps and 7th Division, were ordered to embark for the Far East - subsequently overturned by Prime Minister Curtin, who ordered that the Regiment be brought back to Australia.

Again the Regiment was split up, having 36 of its guns, together with their gun detachments and transports, placed on the 33 ships comprising the convoy, in order to provide anti-aircraft defence for the ships.

On arrival in Adelaide, 9th Battery was ordered to New Guinea where it took part in the defence of Milne Bay. RHQ and the 7th and 8th Batteries were ordered to Western Australia to provide anti aircraft defence for RAAF and American airfields and submarine installations. In August 1943, 8th Battery was moved to Helidon, some 60 miles west of Brisbane.

The Battery was equipped with new Canadian built Bofors and in December 1943 embarked on the *Katoomba* for Buna in New Guinea - for some six months before being transferred back to Queensland, where it was disbanded and the men transferred to other anti-aircraft Regiments.

Bill did not go to Buna, as he was discharged from the Army in December 1943. Two of his sisters (Patricia and Lorna) had joined the Army as transport drivers ferrying men and materials between Seymour and Melbourne and as an experienced farmer,

Bill was granted permission to return to the farm to oversee its operation and production.

John had a period of leave in Melbourne, during which time he was promoted Troop Sergeant responsible for all four guns in the Troop, before being ordered to Nedlands on the Swan River to provide anti-aircraft protection for American long-range Catalina flying boats.

John spent six months at Nedlands before being transferred to the RAAF base at Geraldton, where he spent a further three months before again being transferred to Pearce air base near Perth. In July 1943, John's troop entrained for the long trip to Helidon in Queensland, and then in November 1943 entrained again for Townsville prior to boarding the *Katoomba* for Buna in New Guinea.

John spent only 3 months in Buna before being nominated (with Mario Takasuka) to undertake an 'airborne' training course in Sydney.

John spent the last twelve months of the war in a transit camp at Kalinga, Greta near Newcastle and finally at Strathpine and Burleigh in Queensland. Whilst in Strathpine, 8th Battery was disbanded and merged with the 7th Battery, and John was given his warrant as a fully credited Warrant Officer Class 2.

Post War

John was discharged on 20 November 1945, but in June 1945, whilst stationed at Burleigh, he had met Valmai (Val) Spiddy at the Binnaburra Lodge in the Lamington National Park. John and Val were married in Brisbane on 30 September 1945, and moved to Melbourne in December 1945.

They were to have four children - Peter, Ian, Bruce and Alison, and ten grandchildren.

In January 1946, John was granted an apprenticeship under the Re-establishment and Employment Act and was apprenticed to *Norm Sole, Tailor*, in Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. Having finished his apprenticeship, and because the *Sole* business was having difficulties, John joined his father in his tailoring business in Cheltenham in 1949, and so began the firm of *John S. Campbell and Son*.

Bill - After the war, Bill settled down to farming, family and his community.

He and Jean had married and subse

Continued on Page 12

Tale Of Two Rats (con)

quently had three children - Greg, Ross and Margaret - and seven grand children.

Bill played football for Lascelles and Woomelang-Lascelles for many years, despite being told by one of his early coaches that he "wouldn't get a kick".

He was a life long supporter of the Geelong Football Club.

He also played tennis for Gama and Lascelles, and in later life was a champion bowls player - sons Greg and Ross continue to play competition bowls.

Bill continued to purchase additional land and was farming a total of more than 6,000 acres when he "retired" in 1978 at age 60 and passed on the running of the properties to his sons Greg and Ross.

Many of the channels cleared or constructed by Bill in his younger days are now closed and have been replaced by large pipe systems to conserve water for irrigated crops and pasture.

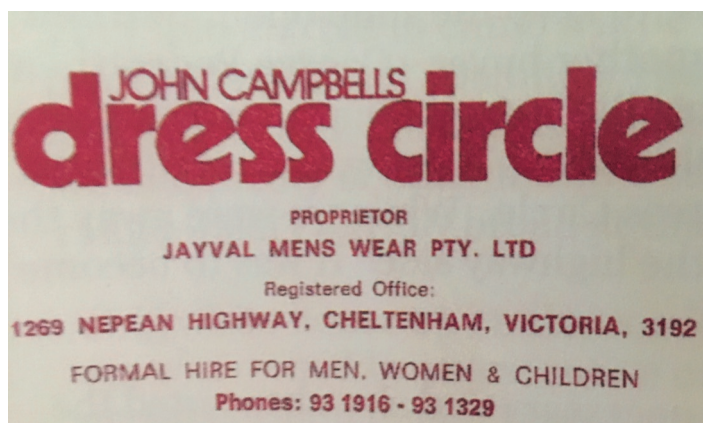
Sadly, Jean passed away in July 2003.

John - In the mid 1960's, John introduced dinner suit hire to the business, starting with only 40 suits.



Partly due to competition from the newly opened Southland Shopping Centre, John decided to close the tailoring business in 1972 and in 1973, he opened *Dress Circle*, specialising in formal wear hire for men.

Joyce Curnow, who originally met John through their local church, and who worked for John at the Cheltenham tailoring business, convinced John to introduce ladies wear hire at *Dress Circle*. At the same time, John expanded the business into



country and regional areas, ultimately having about 400 country agents. In the late 1970's, Joyce was appointed a Director of the company

By the time John sold the business and retired in 1989, *Dress Circle* employed over 100 staff and was the largest formal wear hire business in Australia with branches in Cheltenham, Melbourne, Sunshine and Parramatta.

Sadly, Val died from lymphoma in 1983, aged only 61 years, and in 1988, John and Joyce cemented their long friendship and have been partners for over 30 years.

Cheltenham Cemetery Trust

In 1966, John was nominated by the Methodist Church to be a member of the local Cemetery Trust. In time John became Chairman of the Trust, subsequently renamed the Cheltenham and Regional Cemeteries Trust, and was its Chairman for over 30 years until the State Government wound up metropolitan cemetery trusts in 2008.

Victorian Decentralisation League

For many years Bill was a member of the Victorian Decentralisation League with the primary objective of retaining and/or attracting industry to regional and country areas.

Bill was also a Councillor on the Karkarook Shire (proclaimed in 1896) for 25 years and Shire President for a number of years.

In between his community activities, Bill and Jean travelled the length and breadth of Australia by caravan for some 50 years - he ceased his caravanning days in his 80's—Bill's son Greg advised me that Bill was still driving and gardening at age 98 when as a consequence of his slow driving, the local police gently suggested he should hand in his licence and concentrate on his gardening.

Added to all of the above, Bill was an active lay preacher and was a Justice of the Peace for many years.

He was also actively involved in the Woomelang Senior Citizen's Group, serving time as its President.

John and his family and cousin Robert's family also enjoyed many family caravan holidays together - to Queensland, Adelaide, Inverloch, Bingara, Perth (via the Nullabor Plain), Esperance, Albany and Tasmania.

To this day, John and Joyce winter in Queensland during June and July.

2nd/3rd ALAARA

John didn't have much involvement with the Association in its early years - he was too busy establishing his business and he wasn't "*much of a drinker*". However, after his retirement, he became actively involved with the Association, becoming Secretary of the Association in 1996, a post he held with distinction until 2008 when the current Remembrance Group assumed responsibility for the future carriage of the Association. John's knowledge, together with that of former Presidents Ron Bryant and Cec Rae and Treasurer John Hepworth, was invaluable during the transition to the new Committee.

Bill did not attend many of the Association Reunions, choosing to participate in ceremonies in his home town. However, he did attend the 1996 Reunion, as evidenced by his photo on the front page of the 1997 issue of *Take Post*.

Australians At War Film Archive

In 2004, John was one of over 2,000 former service men and women who were interviewed for the Australians at War Film Archive, involving some six hours being interviewed on film. The Archive web site states: *'[The archive] includes the battle-front, the home front. media and entertainment, children, wives, workers and clerics. From Signaler to Spitfire pilot, from SAS trooper to stoker, even those who fought with us and against us; they are all represented in this collection'*

Editor's Note: John Campbell, Author - Much of the above material has been sourced from the self published "To Cut A Long Story Short" and I thank John for letting me borrow his personal copy for this article. "To Cut A Long Story Short" is John's life story as told by John, and recorded by his daughter Alison who spent many hours recording, transcribing, writing and assembling the book. Sons Bruce, Peter and Ian also contributed to the final product. John's cousin Robert Campbell also wrote his own story, having written "The Flight Of The Pelican" (ISBN 0 646 12797 7) which was published by Tugiri Books in 1993.



John Campbell and children Alison, Ian, Peter and Bruce at the 2018 AGM and Reunion Lunch.



Former President, the late Ron Bryant and former Secretary John Campbell at their final AGM as President and Secretary of the Association.



Bill Schack taken in August 2018 at son Greg's home in Swan Hill.



Bill and Jean Schack on their wedding day.

THE TOBRUK TRUTH

Editor's Note: In Late 2014, Mrs. Val Date posted some photographs of her uncle Adam John "Digger" Gregson (VX 45271) and other documents to Secretary Malcolm Wrigglesworth. "Digger" enrolled on 22 July 1940, was a driver with AASC 6 DIV, was captured and spent some four years as a POW in Stalag 13A and Stalag 13B. Included amongst the documents Val posted to Malcolm was a copy of the "Tobruk Truth" (Vol. 3, No. 17), dated Friday 19 September 1941. We are pleased to reproduce the "Tobruk Truth" for your perusal - but as you read it, bear in mind the date of its production and the subsequent outcome of WW2 in Africa and in Europe.

TOBRUK TRUTH

Vol. 3 No. 17 Friday 19 September 1941
"THE DINKUM OIL"

Daily Summary Of BBC Broadcasts
Notes from BBC Broadcast at 0815
Hours (Local Time)

Reception from our "bomb happy" wireless set was particularly poor.

GERMAN PEOPLE BEING TOLD OF HEAVY LOSSES AT LENINGRAD

German newspapers are now telling the German people something of the terrible losses, at Leningrad, of the price of the advance to the city. The papers admit that victory is not in sight. Russian resistance was tougher and more stubborn than expected, demanding greater German sacrifices than ever before. Further big battles would be necessary before Leningrad was taken. There has been a surprise Russian attack on German supply lines south of Leningrad. The Germans are using all possible dive-bombers against Leningrad, where the Russians are reported at one point to have advanced nine miles. No important change has been reported in the Leningrad Battle Zone. The Germans are reported to be making progress toward Murmansk in the far north. In the South, the enemy claims to be cutting off the Crimean Peninsula from the mainland.

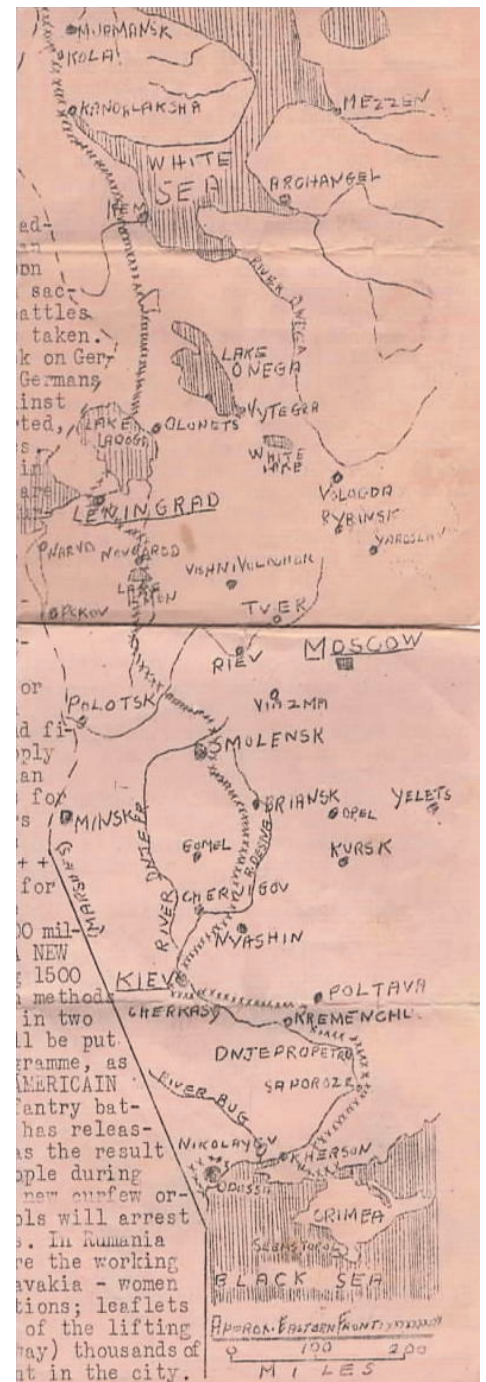
++ The President of Poland will shortly visit the thousands of Polish soldiers in Russia. ++ RAF fighters yesterday "bagged" six enemy ships and 16 enemy aircraft. Four of the six ships were sunk or put out of action, that swept them with cannon and machine gun fire.

Bombers and fighters attacked a strongly escorted supply ship off the Belgian coast. An Australian squadron accounted for four Ms and NZ for three. From these operations two bombers and nine fighters were lost; two pilots saved. Sicily has again been attacked. ++ President Roosevelt has asked Congress for a further 6,000 million dollars for the Lease Lend Program; the original 7,000 million dollars has been allocated. ++ A new type of cargo ship, capable of carrying 1,500 tons, is to be built by mass production methods in the U.S. The ships can each be built in two months, at a reasonable price; they will be put into service under the Lease Lend Program, as fast as they can be produced. ++ The American Army is to form its first airborne infantry battalion. ++ The U.S. Maritime Commission has released three ships, tied up in New Jersey as the result of a strike. ++ Movements of Paris people during darkness drastically curtailed under a new curfew order (from 9.00 PM to 5.00 AM). German patrols will arrest offenders, who will be held as hostages. In Romania military action has been taken to ensure the working of factories. More trouble in Czechoslovakia - women are demonstrating against food restrictions; leaflets are being widely distributed. In spite of the lifting of the state of emergency in Oslo (Norway) thousands of German and "Quisling" police are present in the city.

Notes from BBC Broadcast at 2000
Hours (Local Time):

GERMANS CLAIM TO HAVE CAPTURED KIEV, CAPITAL OF THE UKRAINE & LENINGRAD POSITION

ACCORDING TO A NAZI ANNOUNCEMENT, GERMAN TROOPS HAVE ENTERED KIEV, CAPITAL OF THE UKRAINE. A late message stated that the following communiqué was issued by the German High Command: "In the course of encircling operations announced today, the attack against Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, was begun after the penetration through strong fortifications on the west bank of the Dnjepr. Our troops have entered the town. The Reich Flag has been flying from the Citadel since this morning." The Germans, in another announcement, also claimed to have taken the HQ's of another Ukrainian province, but neither this claim, nor the claim to have taken Kiev, has been confirmed. It is 10 weeks since



the Germans said the fall of Kiev was imminent. On the eastern side of the Dnjepr, the Germans claim, that by bringing troops from the south and from the north, to have encircled a large area around Kiev. Successful actions by guerrilla fighters have been reported - it will be remembered that in 1918 Russian guerrilla fighters made life miserable and almost impossible for the victorious German army of occupation.

In the Battle for Leningrad the Germans have not been able to claim any progress, since their "propagandists" advanced them three miles backwards yesterday!! A thrust southeast of Leningrad by the 12th German Tank Division has been smashed by our ally, and Russians also report the smashing of the

THE TOBRUK TRUTH (continued)

63rd Motorised Regiment. The Leningrad Home Guard claims the advance of three miles with the capture of as many villages. An Italian correspondent states that the fighting at Leningrad has been terrible. The Germans had to make 14 attacks to take one trench. Goebbels' own newspaper again refers to the unexpected toughness of the Russians, and again states that greater German sacrifices than ever will be required.

Repeated comments like these in the German press give an obvious answer to a "Hitler Announcement" today that the German losses in the whole of the Eastern campaign amounted to only 400,000 including 84,000 killed. German losses must have been far heavier than these. In the same announcement it was said that the Germans had lost only 725 planes, and it was also stated (apparently inadvertently) that 7,000 airmen had been lost. This would mean an average of 10 men to every plane!! Nearly 200 American fighters, destined for Britain, have been diverted to Russia.

++ The First Lord of the Admiralty (Mr. A. V. Alexander) today expressed admiration for Russia's resistance. He said that our ally was fighting the most terrible, fierce and bloody battles ever witnessed. He added: "Britain's willingness and determination to help Russia are conditioned only by physical difficulties. We are with Russia to the end." ++ American Ambassador to Britain (Mr. John Wynatt) said American industrialists in Britain were there to see how the U.S. could best help Britain. ++ A Netherlands submarine has sunk a 1,200 ton Italian sailing vessel, and a 6,000 ton supply ship, both laden in the Mediterranean. ++ Dust storms have held up patrol activity at Tobruk. Advanced mechanised units are active in the Egyptian frontier area ++ Italian fishermen and civilians waved to RAF pilots who raided Sicily this week. A pilot said: "They know we don't attack civilians". ++ Three persons injured in a raid on the Suez Canal Area this morning; alert in Cairo. ++ A British armoured column occupied the inner suburbs of Teheran (Iran) today. German and Italian "fifth columnists" are being cleared out. ++ Le Havre docks attacked last night. 17 enemy machines destroyed yesterday; we lost two bombers, nine fighters. ++ Mr.

Duff Cooper has arrived in the Netherlands East Indies. ++ Tokyo: No explanation for the sudden leaving of 50 members of the Russian Embassy staff. ++ More French executed. ++ Syria is to have an independent Government as soon as possible.

Cec Donelly VX46836 In His Own Words

Editor's Note: In the 2014 Take Post we published Kaye Huggins' (Cec Donelly's daughter) story of her visit to Gruppignano where Cec was a PoW after his capture on Crete. Cec's son Alan Donelly contacted me recently and offered me access to Cec's recollections which were recorded over 40 years ago. The following is a brief extract of Cec's own words.

I enlisted on the 29/7/1940 and was drafted into the 2/3 Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery. I was stationed firstly at Caulfield and from there sent to Werribee. At both places we were stationed at the racecourse where we slept on straw palliasses in the concrete stands. Our training was done at Werribee and in December 1940 we sailed for Palestine on the 'Mauretania'. After some time in the desert we were then shipped to the island of Crete in the Mediterranean.

The German intention was to invade Crete by sea but the British Fleet sank all the invading boats and barges. The Island was then bombed solidly for two weeks, then Paratroopers were flown in of which hundreds were shot down and killed before the Germans finally made a landing at Maleme. Here they set up a landing strip and finally overran the Island. The British ships 'Imperial', 'Dido', 'Orion' and 'Hereward' sailed in to evacuate the troops who boarded the ships during the night of May 28th. 1941. At 5.30 am. on May 29th, under heavy Stuka attack, the 'Hereward', the ship I was on, received a direct bomb which went straight down the funnel. Quite a number of our soldiers and British naval men were killed when the ship was hit, others went down with the ship but the majority jumped overboard and were picked up some hours later by Italian torpedo boats. We were then shipped to Italy and sent to a camp at Capura and from there to Bolzano in the north of Italy near the Brenner Pass. After some time we were moved to camp 57 at Gruppignano near Udine close to the Yugoslavian border.

This infamous camp was under the command of Colonel Calcaterra. Details of this camp can be read in Malcolm Webster's book, 'An Italian Experience' and Alex Barnett's book, 'Hitler's Digger Slaves'.

We spent about twelve months at this camp and were then sent to work in the rice fields on the Lombardy Plains for the next twelve months.

Macaroni, beans and vegetables- possibly stale cabbage leaves- were made into soup in the camp kitchen and when cooked it was very thin and we were each issued one ladle at 11am. each day. In the afternoon we were issued with a bread roll. These rations were 7% above starvation point and this was our daily menu for twelve months.

Three hundred and eighty cases of beri beri went out of the camp in one day to the local hospitals.

The camp was crawling with lice and rats and we were allowed one shower a week.

At one stage I was imprisoned for a month in solitary confinement as some of us protested over the lack of food. I was handcuffed for ten hours a day for this period. My daily food consisted of two slices of dry bread and a drink of water. Bed was the floor with no blankets. It was impossible to walk after a month so I had to crawl back to the huts.

When Italy capitulated I was loose for sixteen days before being captured by German SS (Secret Service) troops. During this time I lived on what food I could find, mainly maize in the field and a few grapes if I was lucky. Some days I didn't have any food at all. Once captured, I spent the night in the Turin gaol before being sent to Germany in cattle trucks.

These trucks were so crowded it was impossible to lie down so we all had to take lying down in turns. This trip took three days and three nights. We were put into camp 344 then sent to a working camp, Lager 741, which was situated in Zwittaw near the Czechoslovakian and Old Sudatenland border.

We arrived home in Australia in July 1945 on the 'Stirling Castle' after being away 1669 days.

The full version of Cec Donelly's recollections is available on our web site.

Candid Camera at the 2018 AGM And Anzac Day March



John Campbell (8 battery), Joyce Curnow and Peter Campbell enjoying the Annual Reunion luncheon.



John Marshall (8th) reminiscing with Matt Heddle, grandson of Charles Heddle (9th).



Association Research Officer David McDonald (son of Robert McDonald (Signals)) with Bill Stokes (son of Phil Stokes, OIC, 8 Battery)



Jill McKenzie and Jenny Welsh (daughters of Jack Curry, 7th) with Stephen Welsh.



John Campbell and John Marshall, both of 8 Battery.



Above: Daniel Wanders and son Lucas, grandson and great grandson of Alan Young (7th).



Left: Preparing for the annual Anzac Day march.