

Recollections – P.O.W., Escape and other stories

The men of "A" Troop who were captured at Maleme were kept busy working on and around the airfield. At first they were accommodated in the nearby villages – in churches, schools and houses. Harry Newstead recalls the religious paintings in a church where he was confined, and Laurie Eager remembers having his head bandaged by Carl Koska in similar surroundings.

As the Germans made progress eastwards, prisoners were also moved in the same direction. On 4th June, a column of prisoners set out for the prison camp at Skines. On the way, they passed through the ruins of the village of Canea, deliberately laid waste as punishment for resistance to the Germans. Where friendly villagers had greeted the soldiers moving to take up their position at the airfield a few weeks previously, instead of neat white-washed cottages there remained only blackened wreckage – and no villagers.

Skines, which had previously accommodated Italian P.O.W., was in a filthy condition. Hygiene had received scant consideration, the sanitary arrangements were extremely primitive even by army standards, and sickness was soon rife among the prisoners as the weather grew warmer and flies spread disease.

An English doctor did his best to assist with vaccinations and antiseptics available for dressing wounds.

Food, as always for the P.O.W., became a major consideration and led to many forays beyond the camp limits, and pilfering from the guards' stores to supplement the meagre rations.

Work parties assisted in establishing a cemetery with shrubs transplanted from local gardens and, as Laurie Eager recalls, chain railings made from ships wrecked in the harbor. Wooden crosses were brought from the mainland.

Shipment of prisoners from Crete separated members of "A" Troop. Harry Newstead left with a group of about 30 shipped by ketch from Suda. On arrival at Piraeus, the twelve escorting paratroops lined up on the wharf where an officer presented each with a medal he produced from a brown paper bag.

The group had to stand for two hours on display for the benefit of the Greek population who resented this humiliating scene and showed their sympathy for the prisoners.

Another group, after departing from the camp on 4th July, marched all night to Suda where a convoy of Greek vessels, escorted by the Italian navy and some aircraft, took prisoners and returning paratroops to Greece.

At Salonika, Army barracks provided accommodation following the customary street parade. The Commandant appeared to delight in making the prisoner's life as miserable as possible - as if fleas, lice, and a starvation diet were not enough! Lengthy parades, standing for hours in the hot sun, sapped the men's strength and engendered bitter resentment.

Those who distributed food, especially if Ps.O.W., were watched closely to see that equal shares were apportioned. Anyone suspected of cheating earned the loathing of his fellows.

Bread assumed a vital role in sustaining life. It was shared with meticulous care amongst the eleven men allotted one loaf. Various techniques were devised for cutting the loaf, and each man had his own method of eating his ration. For some, it was - have it all now and taste it; others ate crumb by crumb; some waited and postponed the pleasure until others had eaten their ration.

Movement by train to Germany added further misery all the way, as recounted in individual stories.

The only bright spot, as on other occasions, was the Red Cross distribution. This was often a very limited issue, both in variety and quantity, but it meant virtual survival for most.

Bill Dellar recorded the details of the contents of the British and Canadian Red Cross Parcels which were the best.

BRITISH	CANADIAN
1 tin service biscuits	1 lb butter
1 8oz tin margarine	1 lb Klm or Cowbell Powd. Milk
1 lb tin Meat & Vegetables	1 lb jam
1 4½ oz Salmon	1 pkt. biscuits
1 lb condensed milk	1 12oz Bully Beef
1 3oz tin cheese	1 10½oz meat loaf
1 small bar sugar	1 5oz Salmon
1 10oz meat loaf	1 7oz raisins
1 2oz pkt. tea	1 6oz prunes
1 ¼lb cocoa	1 4oz tea or coffee
1 2oz egg flakes	1 pkt. salt & pepper
1 cake chocolate	1 tin Sardines
1 cake toilet soap	1 4oz sugar
1 12oz jam	1 4oz cheese
1 ½lb vegetables	1 cake soap
1 tin oats	1 5oz chocolate

1 small jam pudding

(Generally 14 to 16 articles). Sometimes: Bacon, tinned fruit, dried fruit, apple pudding, creamed rice, Yorkshire pud., yeast, marmite cubes, mustard, salt, pepper, 50 cigarettes or 8oz tobacco. 1 parcel per man per week in theory.

Italians issued two half parcels weekly, so it became convenient for two men to share (mucking in). Hoarding food as a prelude to

escape was countered by frequent inspections and puncturing tins as they were issued.

Cigarettes became the medium of exchange with items in Red Cross parcels rating such values as –a tin of meat and vegetables (25 cigarettes), tin of condensed milk (20 cigarettes).

The 7th Battery men from the Heraklion sector were captured on 29th May. After a brief time on Rhodes Island (where some realised they really were prisoners of war) they were moved to Corinth. After passing through the Corinth Canal, the next stop was at Bari in Italy, remembered for the huge rats "*the size of possums*" that infected the coal dumps.

Via Capua, north of Naples, a train journey through Rome brought some members of the Battery together at Prato al Isarco 5 km from Bolzano, and 60 km south of the Brenner Pass.

Three months later, in November, 1941, by train the journey took the men through Trent Verona, east to Mestre, by-passing Venice to a camp at Gruppignano No. 57 close to the Yugoslav border. It was here that the incident, involving refusal to have their heads shaved in freezing temperatures, led to Sergeant R. Crawley, Lance-Bombardier K. Robertson and Gunners A Sutherland, G. Schmutzsch, C Bremner, R Thomson, G. Batty, J. Anderson, C. Kaighin, W. Dellar, K. Anchen, G. Phipps, J.-George, J. Henry and eight others being handcuffed and forcibly shaved

Later, handcuffed in pairs for two days, they had to accompany their partners everywhere they went. As the chronicler, Reg Thomson, has recorded: "*It was difficult sleeping together handcuffed, but imagine at some ungodly hour if either of you was taken short; a guard was called to escort the two of you across the frozen ground, the 70 yds. to the latrines! 107 days were spent in jail.*"

The 22 culprits, as a group, went by train across northern Italy to Genoa, thence on foot to Chiavari, until Italy capitulated in September 1943. When the Germans took over, it was train again – to Germany (when many attempted escape), over the Brenner Pass, through Moosburg (where many of "A" Troop spent some time), through Lamsdorf to Ober Silesia, Stalag VI 11 B (later Stalag 344). This huge camp of 22,000 brought together men from 7th Battery and 8th Battery men captured near Tobruk.

As most N.C.O.s were not required to go on work parties, gunners who had no papers filled in details raising their rank to bombardier. One, who thought the Germans would suspect the lack of gunners in a unit with so many bombardiers, raised himself to sergeant and got away with it. Placed in charge of his mates everyone "*went along with it*".

One bombardier received a letter from home commenting on his promotion while a P.O.W. In spite of the censorship, the comment

passed un-noticed.

Countless individual incidents in the many types of labor prisoners performed, reflect the good and bad in all groups. The harsh treatment of Russian prisoners, the unwillingness of French prisoners to accept orderliness, the kindly actions of civilians, and even of guards on occasions, recur over and over again in remembered incidents. Even strict but fair camp commandants were mentioned as preferable to others who were unpredictable.

The retreat before the Russian armies, when thousands of prisoners were force-marched for weeks, led to harrowing experiences for all in the freezing conditions.

If the village had been bombed, you could expect hostility as experienced by one man when "*locals would come and spit on you or kick you*". But the same man, ill with pneumonia and on a rough stretcher, recalls "*lying at the front of the column when an elderly German lady came near and looked down. After going indoors she returned and from her long black skirt dropped a large bread-and-jam sandwich*".

In the P.O.W. camps, many rendered sterling service in getting the mail through, or in organising activities and entertainment that helped maintain morale.

And when the tide finally turned, and small and large groups found themselves free after years of captivity, many were so weak and numb there was no great demonstration – just difficulty in breaking with established routines and bewilderment at adjusting to the change.

Escapes

Bill Waller, during his period in Switzerland as a P.O.W., recorded the events leading up to his escape from the labor camp on a large farm growing rice and wheat in Piedmont, Italy

While they were eating their evening meal on 8th September, 1943, the Italian officer announced that Italy had surrendered. Amidst the jubilation, speculation centred on how long before Allied troops arrived. The stream of German equipment along the road seemed to indicate their retreat, but then German troops began to move in the opposite direction. Time to move!

Gunners Waller, Nicholson, James, Young and Bombardier Tom Russell decided to head south to meet the Allied troops. Waller could converse in Italian by this time. They met other escapees who, having failed to cross the heavily-guarded River Po, had turned back, to await rescue by the Allies.

They showed a friendly Italian a map, and discussed crossing Monte Rosa into Switzerland, but were warned it was too difficult. Helped by the farmer, who told of German threats of punishment for harboring prisoners, they set off north where they met a number of old friends. They were told Italian Alpine troops planned to fight on as guerrillas and agreed to join them – the leader, a tall Communist named Pietro. Numbers rose to 150. Too many. Time to leave.

With guides they moved into foothills dodging patrols but Germans in armoured vehicles surrounded the area and Waller recalls: *"Tom Russell, Ern Preiser and I ran diagonally up hill as Germans opened fire. Called on to surrender, we hid in bushes to be joined by a Tasmanian, Joe Turner. Germans returned seeking us but gave up as rain poured down. From our hiding place we saw them march off our captured mates Jack Nicholson, Alan Young and Tom James. An Italian woman who saw them gave us food. Asked why she helped, she replied, 'I have son in Montenegro (Yugoslavia). He might be hiding from Germans now. When I saw you I thought of him'.*

"In the dark we moved towards the mountains stumbling into creeks and holes. In the morning we met two men gathering mushrooms who took us home and directed us to Oaltanche on the border.

"Local people were friendly. We met Alpine officers who guided us to the Valley of Aosta. We found that identifying ourselves as English was more successful than saying we were Australian – most had never heard of Australia. We usually slept in hay

lofts.

"We hoped to find a guide to take us over Monte Rosa, approximately 13,000 ft. high, which dominates north-west Italy. Warned of the presence of Germans in a village we were approaching, we were befriended by a family whose children had been students in England.

"There we dined well, stocked up with food and made a note of the family's Swiss address on cigarette paper put back in the packet. (Bill Waller and his wife visited them in 1966.) We climbed Col Pteater and travelled through snow for the first time.

"In the mountains, distance is not measured in kilometres, but in hours or days. A man named Bruns agreed to help us to cross by a secret route which he and his father-in-law used for smuggling in peace time. It would be very difficult.

"What had seemed like a dream looked like becoming a reality and I thought of Jack Nicholson who had been captured back at Vermont a couple of weeks before.

"We were joined by seven Australians and two Englishmen, Captain Fred Porter and Captain Sir Julian Hall. We made ourselves puttees, scarves and gloves out of an old blanket in readiness for the climb.

"Departing at night, we reached the snow line roped together in three parties. The officers as P.O.W.s had not been required to work, whereas the Australians had been working on farms for six months and were in better physical condition for the trial ahead.

"We reached the Monte Rosa wooden cabin and used the sticks of wood we each carried to boil water from snow.

"At dawn the peaks of Mont Blanc and Matterhorn alone showed above cloud around us. Our guide said, 'There are a few people who have done this climb by daylight. You are among the very few to do it by night'.

"3,600 metres up, the party was roped together for passage over solid ice in steps cut by our guide with an ice pick.

"At 9.30 a.m. the guide pointed back 'Italia' and forward 'Svizzera' then shocked us by explaining that they could go no further as they would be interned if they crossed the border.

"Warning of ice-bridges over crevasses they showed us through field glasses a hut below us at the end of the glacier.

"Progress down was hazardous, as ropes were joined to lower one at a time over ice cliffs with a twenty-foot drop into snow at the bottom. As problems with ice cliffs and snow blindness reduced our party to despair that we would freeze to death after our hair-raising experiences, Swiss soldiers suddenly appeared below us roped together.

"I could scarcely believe my eyes, but set off after them with Tom Russell, Ern Preiser and Joe Turner who were roped with me.

"The Swiss sergeant who was leading the patrol said quietly in English, 'You are from General Montgomery?'"

"I was reminded of Stanley and Livingstone. They had been watching us from their frontier post.

"When we eventually arrived there the hut turned out to be a three-storey army barracks. Soup cubes and tea helped quench our terrible thirst

"We arrived in Zermatt to be greeted by the whole village. A young girl advanced and said, 'Welcome to Switzerland'. They were, I think, the most welcome words I had ever heard.

"Taken later to the town of Brig, we were fitted with clothing by the Red Cross before moving to Wald in Zurich Canton. After a quarantine period we were granted the freedom of the village and two miles around it.

"Under international law, an escaped P.O.W. reaching a neutral country must be given all facilities to reach his own lines; but Switzerland was surrounded by German occupied territory until the Allies reached the French-Swiss border in September 1944. Repatriation to Australia via Geneva, Marseilles and the Middle East followed, with happy recollections of the generous help given by Italian people and the hospitality of the Swiss."

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Harry Newstead, while working in the locomotive maintenance shop on the outskirts of Munich, decided to escape. His story continues:

"Outfitted in a purloined pair of mechanic's trousers plus a civvy jacket, I set off at midday intending to walk through the country to French unoccupied territory.

"I had a pack of rations (Red Cross), a roll of malthoid, some pieces of sawn timber, and a carpenter's saw intending to give the impression that I was a foreign worker going to a job."

On second thoughts he decided to try to "jump" a goods train by hiding in shrubs near a railway signal. On the third day he was awakened by barking dogs to find himself surrounded by six children and a railway official who escorted him to the local gaol. Feigning an urgent need for the toilet he disposed of a compass and map in the cistern.

Within the fortress-like building, he was questioned on his plans.

Newstead continues, *"Back at Moosburg I was sentenced to thirty days in confinement on bread and water."*

Later returned to his old job in the maintenance shop, he worked alongside a Russian and after much effort mastered some of the elements of the language.

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Roy East's recollections of events prior to his escape include: capture at Maleme; working in the kitchen at Skines P.O.W. Camp; "mucking-in" (sharing) with Jack Walsh and Tom Hill; starvation diet in Salonika; fleas; lice; parades in hot sun as punishment; travelling by cattle truck to Belgrade; Stalag Moosburg; delousing, fumigating, and disinfecting with a yellow solution; Red Cross parcels (life savers); cigarettes as coinage; work – on building projects, shovelling snow with wooden shovels; repairing tram lines, coal-mines; recreational activities – Padre Dakers' boxing group and the tough match against Len Rose champion welter-weight of 6th Division; rugby full-back for the Australian team.

"I escaped on 3rd June, 1944 and was on the loose for two months. I tried to cross the Danube into Austria but it was too wide because of heavy rain.

"I was eventually caught on the border of Hungary and was taken to a political prison in Brno in Czechoslovakia and subjected to being finger-printed, photographed, and interrogated daily. For two months, the Gestapo questioned me over and over again as to the source of my civilian clothes, where I stayed while on the run, and how I got into the country. Of course my answers were always the same.

"Most of those in the gaol were civilians; political prisoners whose future from there was generally the gas chamber.

"Eventually I returned to Stalag VIIIB and in December we began marching in mobs of 1,600 from Poland through Germany, to the French border, a journey of 1,200 miles in winter, finishing near Essen at Hagen.

"Food, apart from a very small issue of bread, was taken from garbage bins or farm houses. Illness took heavy toll with only about half finishing the journey."

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Tom Chadwick still vividly remembers an incident that occurred early in 1945, following the collapse on the Russian front, as German forces withdrew in disorder and prisoners were force-marched back towards Germany.

"We left Poland in a hurry; Russian guns could be heard quite clearly. With thousands of others we commenced the long march back through Czechoslovakia into Germany.

"We had marched for five or six weeks covering about 20 km. a day, sleeping in barns when we could as it was bitterly cold. In the morning our boots were frozen solid.

"Of the 200 in our party, only Jack Gummow and I belonged to our unit. Deep in the Czechoslovakian woods, snow up to our knees, head down, arse up we trudged along.

"As a party of horsemen approached our column from the opposite direction, we lifted our heads. Their dark brown

uniforms showed no markings; our German guards ignored them and they ignored the guards.

"One of them suddenly trotted out and walked his horse alongside our column. As he approached Jack Gummow and myself, in perfect English he said, 'Cheer up lads, it won't be long now'.

"Who was he? I'm never likely to know, but we thanked him for a little boost when our spirits were so low. He was right; we were liberated by a tank spearhead of Patton's Third Army near Landshut Bavaria on 29th April, 1945 – a date I am not likely to forget."

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Cec Donnelly, a survivor from the "Hereward", was picked up by an Italian M.T.B. and like so many of the others spent time on Rhodes before moving to Capuano, Bolzano, and P.G. 49 in Italy.

He gives an account of the following events: "When Italy capitulated I was loose for 16 days, then recaptured by the S.S. and spent the night in Turin gaol; to Germany by cattle truck, then to Lager 741 at Gwittaw, near the Czech-old Sudetenland border. When the war ended 18 months later, we tried to reach the Americans at Pilsen about 500 miles away. We met the Russians on 9th May, 1945 at Gahlene on the Czech border, and were caught in a fight between three S.S. armies, who refused to surrender, and the Russians. The S.S. wanted to reach the Americans at Pilsen.

"I was in Prague for the Russian victory parade celebrations. After five days, I finally reached the Americans who took us by truck to Regensburg on 14th May; by plane to Rheims and then to England."

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George Batty of "C" Troop gives the following account of his experiences after the "Hereward" was bombed:

"I was picked up by an Italian cruiser some time after the M.T.B. got a scare and took off, leaving a lot of us there in the water. D. Fothergill and H. Fay who were with me did not survive. To my knowledge there was only one other person picked up by the cruiser.

"We were split up in the latter part of our P.O.W. lives. I finished up in Poland at Breslau about 50 km from Crackow and 3 km from the Austwich Concentration Camp from where we got the smell of human flesh being incinerated.

"When the Russians started to push through Poland we moved to a camp near Hanover in Germany. As the British Army advanced we saw as many as 1,000 bombers and 500 fighters in the air at one time. They would break up over our camp and bomb Bremen, Brunswick, Berlin, and Hamburg. It was a sight

worth seeing!

"Later, we were marched for approximately six weeks, finishing near the Baltic Sea where we were liberated by one English officer and one sergeant in a jeep! We had to make our own way to Frankfurt where we camped outside an airfield until 42 of us were put into a Dakota, plus a crew of 5. In England we were well cared for by the Red Cross."

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Alf Sutherland's story tells of the circumstances that left him prisoner:

"On the way to the mole (evacuation of Heraklion), Toby Maher carried the tommy-gun I had acquired; I took the rifle and the breech block from the Bofors; the latter, I dumped in the water off the Mole. We sat and waited to board the destroyer." They both boarded the "Hereward" but the friends were separated when Toby transferred to the cruiser "Dido". Alf Sutherland remained on the "Hereward" which was sunk a short time later. Following the order to "abandon ship" Alf continues:

"Among the sailors' gear I found five life jackets which I gave to my brother Arthur, Cyril Kaighan, Geoff Potter and Keith Robertson, keeping one myself." (A life buoy supported six of them before breaking up. They reached a Carley float and were picked up.)

"Sergeant Ossie Bossence died after we were picked up and is buried in Rhodes War Cemetery.

"'The Hair Raid' incident at Camp 52 Udine. While on parade we were ordered to get our towels (pieces of unbleached calico) and have our hair cut to scalp level. I stood there rolling a cigarette (per favor of the Red Cross) when the Camp Commandant started yelling in Italian, 'You, You' and sent a couple of Carabinieri guards with those needle-bayonets on board the short little rifles to bring me forward. I was marched to the punishment hut. My hands were handcuffed around a post behind my back and the barber removed my wool.

"Twenty more were brought in from the camp in handcuffs; then I think the supply of handcuffs ran out.

"We were to be court-martialled for disobeying an order, but then America came into the war and there was no neutral power to appear at the trial so it fell through. (I have the charge sheet.)

"The temperature was down to about -20° , 60% cut in rations overnight, survival on 13 ounces of food per day; walls of the hut moving in and out like the ribcage of a broken-winded horse, caused by the wind off the Alps; sleeping with handcuffs on for two days. After 108 days spanning the coldest winter in ninety years we moved to Camp 57 near Geneva."

Various tales have been told of the fate of the said Camp Commandant – all wishfully bringing him to an unhappy end, either at the hands of a War Trials Commission, Yugoslav partisans, or his own people.

Among Gunner Sutherland's other claims to notoriety was his interest in making things – buckets for washing clothes or carting water (wooden bottoms), billies for brewing photo frames, mouse traps, the "Blower" – a marvellous invention for maximising the heat generated by a minimum amount of fuel. Charges for various items ranged from – friends, gratis, others (labor only) one tin condensed milk (Red Cross issue).

"I have yet to see in print or on film a true portrayal of this life, the depressing atmosphere being impossible to reproduce."

After nearly three years in captivity, Gunners Cyril Kaighin and Alf Sutherland moved with a work party (Kommando) of 28 into Sudetenland to assist in a factory making string from sisal and hemp.

In that mountain area their thoughts turned towards escape. Others of like mind considered plans. A tunnel ended against a rock seam, but a hole in a three-foot-thick wall proceeded. Spoil was distributed widely – some of it upstairs, where Alf Sutherland made a key to gain entry.

Another key allowed entry to the office and clandestine sessions of B.B.C. news. One gunner recalls, *"It was terrific to hear Big Ben strike the hour"*. Gunner Kaighin and two others caught listening were sent back to Lamsdorf.

News of Allied landings in Normandy led to reconsideration of escape plans but several tried. Gunner Sutherland returned to the Kommando following capture by one of the "People's Army", after a Czech failed to keep a rendezvous. On his second attempt, he joined a train load of French forced-laborers returning to France. A Czech befriended him en route and took him home. The arrival of Russian tanks was cheered by jubilant villagers.

After riding with others on the tanks, Sutherland joined the celebrations in Prague before entraining for the west.

"From Prague the train was frequently stopped by Russians who removed individuals at each stop." Eventually the train came to a halt in open country so it was 'per boot down the track' until Yanks appeared. Then it was air travel to Rheims in France with a view of W.W.I trench lines still visible below. Then Eastbourne and an ever-present thought – *'Freedom must surely be the most precious thing on this planet; guard it well.'*

Dick Plant of "A" Troop H.Q. at Maleme only joined the unit three days before the departure for Crete.

After being wounded, and deciding that he would have a better chance of being rescued from Crete eventually, instead of Greece,

where the wounded were going, he shook hands with his mates in the hospital and took to the hills.

Partisans cared for him and guided him to a village where his wounds were treated using the methods common in these areas where little qualified medical help was normally available.

Along with other Allied soldiers also sheltering in the mountains after the evacuation, Plant joined in the constant struggle to harass the German invader. In one such incident the guerrillas ambushed a German patrol killing its leader "Hans" and capturing the rest of them.

"Forty days later," a Cretan Grigoris Katsabaskis who shared the experience writes, *"one morning we found ourselves surrounded by Germans. Then the Germans over-ran the village and we killed one of them. Some others and I went up into the mountains – Tony, Manuel, Stan, Harry, John and Dick Plant who was very sick still.*

"The Germans chased us with those big cannon-type guns for about 1 km. We found a cave to hide in for four days. When the Germans left, the women of the village came and told us so we left the cave. But Dick had to stay there he was so sick with a high temperature.

"The women took care of him and gave him food every day."

Restored to health, Dick Plant joined up with a gunner from the 2/3rd Field Regiment, who shared his hopes for final escape, as it was known that secret agents had established escape routes.

Dick Plant was eventually trapped on a south coast beach, along with a number of other soldiers who were betrayed to the Germans when they mustered at night, waiting for the submarine which had planned to rendezvous with them, according to the information they had been given.

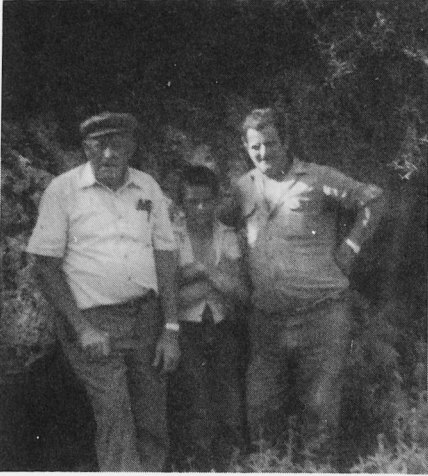
Eventually a P.O.W. in Germany, Plant made several attempts to escape and eventually reached England in an American uniform to return to Australia on the "Dominion Monarch" in July, 1945 at the ripe old age of 21 years and 6 months.

The recently-made film *"Flowers of Rethymnon"*, a documentary using archive German film of the Crete campaign, centres around the efforts at escape by Plant, and his mate who did in fact successfully rendezvous with the submarine organised by Commander Poole, the brains behind the escape organisation, so nobly assisted by monks and Cretan peasants.⁽⁶⁹⁾

The German film included Rol Tonkin and Reg Thomson among the prisoners in one clip.

The donor of the plot of land at Rethymnon (Retimo) which *"remains for ever untilled, in sacred memory of those whose blood stains its soil,"* was a boy of ten when the 2/1st and 2/11th

(69) Lind L J Escape from Crete



Dick Plant returns to meet Cretan (left) who helped save his life.



Sign points to "Dick Plant's Cave" where he was nursed back to health by Cretan villagers, 1941.



Typical Cretan shepherds.

Australian Battalions came to fight for his town. The red poppy flowers which bloom there, as another Flanders Field, are a symbol of that sacrifice. They provide the appropriate introduction and conclusion to the film, and serve as a reminder of the terrible price paid by the local Cretans in death as reprisal, and in the destruction of their homes and property for aiding and sheltering soldiers.

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The scene: Alexandria June, 1941. (Related Gunner J. Anderson). The evacuation of Crete. Reinforcements heading for 8th Battery in Tobruk; but those for Crete now left disgruntled in camp. A few of them hit the 'turps' and staged a blue with some South Africans. One of our big chaps beaten up a bit heads for the R.A.P. — all bloodied. Sister, taking a look at him, "*You poor man, just out of Crete?*" "*No Sister, just out of Top Hat.*" (A cafe in Alexandria).

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When "C" Troop travelled to Beirut to relieve 9th Battery, one of the guns taken over was located on a sand hill above the airport office.

Rations came in hot boxes from Troop H.Q. per 15cwt. delivery vehicle.

News spread of a big Free French parade to honor a V.I.P. That evening a smart eight-seater Scion monoplane flew in and taxied down near the gun site. The crew alighted and left for the night.

The ration truck arrived on its usual route, swung around, failed to notice the plane in time and clipped the wing-tip with the canopy. A foot of the wing had been crushed.

Came the dawn, but no one inspected the plane until after 0830 when troops had assembled on the airfield, and with fanfare of trumpets and motorcycle escort the V.I.P. arrived in an enormous open-top car. The tall man presented medals while the pilots moved to the plane inspecting wheels, prop, etc., until all hell broke loose at sight of the crumpled wing tip.

Finally, they wheeled out an ancient Potez biplane with under-slung engines. Much back-firing and smoke. The party boarded, the plane started, and stopped. The pilot alighted, spoke to ground-staff; much gesticulating, then finally climbed in again.

Evidently General de Gaulle reached Cairo safely but 'Jacko' could have changed the destiny of France!

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Members of 7th L.A.A. Battery and other servicemen who have visited Crete since the war have been greatly impressed by the warmth of the welcome extended to Australians.

The same sentiments are expressed in the certificate of honorary life membership awarded by the Cretan Association in Australia to the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association in 1972.

The visitor finds that every village in Crete has families who suffered as a result of the deaths of 22,000 civilians during the German occupation.

In 1974, the West German War Memorial Association purchased Hill 107 overlooking Maleme airfield.

The remains of 4465 German paratroopers who did not return from Crete now lie buried in the cemetery established on the hill top surmounted by a twenty-five feet high cross.

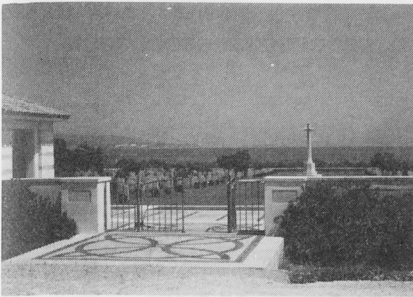
Among the remains gathered there, are those of Colonel Brauer who commanded the parachute regiment that landed at Heraklion. Later he commanded the occupation forces and was held responsible at the War Crime Trials for the mass executions of civilians by S.S. troops during that period. He was executed on 20th May, 1947, the anniversary of the invasion. His remains were moved to the cemetery on Hill 107 in 1974.

Many of 7th Battery who died, do not have known graves, but the War Cemetery at Phaeleron in Athens has the graves of Sergeant Max Whiteside and Gunner Clarrie Helmore. A large memorial lists names of other of our men on the Australian Artillery Honor Roll.

On Crete, a central granite cross overlooks the British cemetery near Suda docks, where our troops first landed. Here, the graves of Australian, New Zealand and British troops are carefully maintained.

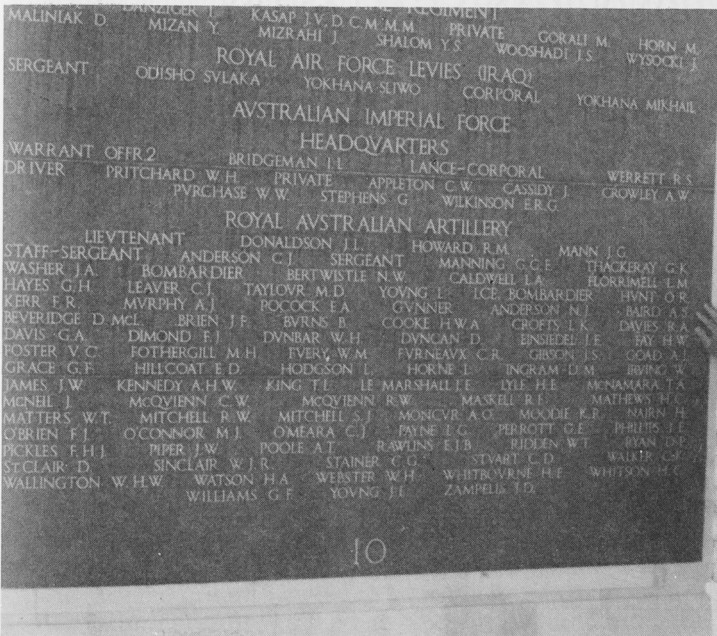
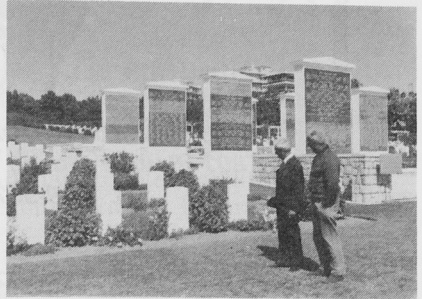
The inscription on the gate strikes a responsive note for every Australian:

*"AS THE SUN SETS OVER SUDA BAY
WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM."*



ALLIED WAR CEMETERY overlooking Suda Bay, Crete.
(Photo M. Takasuka, 1978)

Hal Dickinson and Tom Evely stand before the graves of Sgt. Max Whiteside and Gnr. Clarrie Helmore the only two from 7 Lt.A.A. Bty. buried in Phaeleron War Cemetery, Athens.



Tom Evely points to the list of names of other 7 Lt.A.A. Bty. men on the Memorial Honor Roll, Phaeleron Cemetery, Greece.



Cretan Association of Sydney, N.S.W.
807 Bourke Street, Redfern, N.S.W. 2016
Tel. 699-9674 - Australia

**FOR
HONOUR AND GALLANTRY
IN CRETE ALONGSIDE OURSELVES**

*This is to Certify that
The President, 27th Light Helicopter Association
has been awarded Honorary Life Membership.*

*of the Cretan Association of New South Wales,
in Brotherly Comradeship and appreciation of
his close bonds with Greece and particularly Crete and
with the Cretan Association*

Under our Hand and Seal this 16th day of May, 1976

PRESIDENT,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stylianos Kotsifakis'.

STYLIANOS KOTSIFAKIS



GEN SECRETARY,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ulysses Platyrachos'.

ULYSSES PLATYRRACHOS