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C.J.E. RAE
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2nd/3rd AUSTRALIAN LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT
REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



“TAKE POST!”

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

RE-UNION NOTICE

The re-union will be held on Saturday 23rd April 1988 from 12 noon until 5 p.m., lunch provided. The subscription this year is \$15.00.

The venue is the same as last year, namely the Air Force Convention Centre, 4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra. (Melway reference 58 F5; see map printed later).

There are copies of "On Target" still available at the bargain price of \$29.00 each. Copies will be on sale at the Re-union.

Cec. Rae, Hon. Secretary.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the RACV, 123 Queen Street, Melbourne, on Thursday, 6th October, 1988, at 12.30 p.m.

C.J.E. Rae, Hon. Secretary.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT, JIM PATON

Publication of "On Target" stimulated many observations and responses. It recorded the deeds of ordinary boys and men who did their best when extraordinary demands were made upon them. Incidentally we learned of what became of many our mates in other Batteries or Sections over the years, and a little of those men who were captured.

Widows of our men who have passed on are better informed about their men. There is a proud record to leave for descendants who may become interested

We have outreached to regain contact with old comrades, some of whom are interstate or overseas. In our remaining years, it is surely important to retain the contact between men who have a strong bond of service with our old Regiment, the first Light Anti-aircraft Regiment to be formed in Australia for overseas service.

So we are resuming, after many years, a Newsletter. It will pass on stories which missed "On Target" but which should be recorded. It will rely on the readers for news items - of yourself and of your old mates.

Please send your information to the following Battery representatives :-

7th. Les Harris. 17 Clifton Road, Hawthorn East, 3123.

8th. Ron Bryant, 6 Blanche Avenue, Parkdale, 3195.

9th. Signals, Workshop and RHQ., Cec. Rae, Tal Tal, Tucks Road, Shoreham, 3196.

There is now a computer printout of members' names and addresses. If you wish to know the address of any of your old mates, write to the Hon. Secretary, Cec. Rae, Tal Tal, Tucks Road, 3196, Vic. Also, please advise him of any changes of address.

We look forward to seeing you at the Re-union and also at the March on Anzac Day.

THE FINANCIAL COLUMN

The publishing expenses of "On Target", some \$15,000.00, were met by loans and donations from members of the Regiment and from Association funds. The authors were not remunerated, but received a refund of their expenses.

Sales after the book was launched soon enabled all loans and expenses to be paid.

From the proceeds of sales, it was agreed at the 1987 Annual General Meeting to donate \$500 to RSL Welfare, and \$500 to Legacy for the benefit of widows and children of deceased servicemen. These donations have been made. Any further proceeds will be used as the Committee deems fit.

ON TARGET

The President and Committee of the Association, on behalf of the members, honored the authors of our book, "On Target", namely Cec. Rae, Les Harris and Ron Bryant, by awarding them Life Membership of the Association.

"WE WILL REMEMBER THEM"

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

W.A.Wrigglesworth (of Stratford) 7 Battery.

L.G.Nichols (Red Cliffs) 8 Battery.

J.B.Stephen (Coburg) 9 Battery.

BOFORS AT BEAUMARIS

On 24th June, several members of the 2nd/3rd Aust. Light Anti-aircraft Regiment Association gathered at the Beaumaris Sub-branch of the RSL to "take post" at a Bofors 40mm anti-aircraft gun which had been acquired and sited in the attractive grounds of the RSL in Balcombe Road, Beaumaris. Jim Paton, President of the Association presented Kevin Harris with a plaque showing the Regiment's color patch and also with a copy of the Regiment's history, "On Target". The gunners appreciated the hospitality and were pleased to see the Bofors with its splendid field of fire in its magnificent setting.

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR WILL? IF YOU HAVE HAD THE GOOD SENSE TO DO SO, ALSO CONSIDER THIS -

On the death of an ex-serviceman, it is the policy of Melbourne Legacy and the RSL to encourage widows to apply for the War Widows' Pension. The W.W. Pension has certain advantages over the Social Security Pensions, one being that there is no means test.

Sadly, on the death of an ex-serviceman, the widow often has little or no knowledge of illnesses or medical conditions during the war service of the deceased husband and which may have had some vital link with the cause of his death.

This makes it almost impossible to lodge the full facts in the application for pension.

You can obtain from the Department of Veterans' Affairs 444 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, postal address GPO Box 87A, Melbourne, 3001, Telephone 267 4000, a set of application forms for War Widows' Pension. These should be left with your other important papers.

Full details of your Medical History should be recorded in the Form D2055. Who is better able to trace this information back to war-time days than you?

WAR VETERANS ILLEGALLY INTERNED IN NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

A recent News Release from the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Ben Humphreys, announced that the Federal Government has begun a nation-wide search for War Veterans who were illegally interned in Nazi Concentration Camps during World War II, as they could be entitled to a special once-off \$10,000 compensation payment.

"Some Australians who escaped from prisoner-of-war camps were then imprisoned in concentration camps where they suffered brutal treatment" - Mr. Humphreys said.

To be eligible, a person must be an Australian Veteran, have been interned in a Nazi concentration camp for a protracted period, have been subjected to brutal treatment and should lodge a written claim before Anzac Day, 25th April, 1988.

Veterans interned in Oflag (POW camps for officers) or Stalags (camps for other ranks) or military prison and disciplinary centres are not eligible for the compensation payment.

A concentration camp is described as "a camp under the control of a 'Nazi criminal organisation' as defined by the Nuremburg War Crimes Tribunal."

Any former Australian prisoner-of-war who believes he or she is eligible for compensation should contact the Deputy Commissioner, Department of Veterans' Affairs, in their State as soon as possible or The Chairman, Concentration Camps Committee, Department of Veterans' Affairs, P.O. Box 21, Woden, A.C.T. 2606 or for further information contact Mr. Hendrik Gout Tel:(062) 72 6774

FROM GUN TO CANON

No, there's not a spelling mistake here. We caught up with Phil Roberts, who was a Bombardier at Tobruk with 8th Battery and who is now a Canon with the Church of England.

Some of the experiences of Phil's crew are related in the 8th Battery's story in the book "On Target". After the Siege, Phil's life continued as a great adventure. He left 8th Battery after it was withdrawn from New Guinea to join a small group of Australian officers who went to India to serve with the British Army. Plans were well advanced for the re-capture of Singapore and the ultimate invasion of Japan. The casualty rate in the British Army had left a gap of experienced officers and as the Pacific War was contained at home, our contribution of officers was greatly appreciated. Phil went to Calcutta in an American troop ship, a voyage remarkable only for the bread being coloured red, white and blue for Thanksgiving Day and the 16 different ways the cook contrived to serve eggs and bacon. The Aussie group was confined below decks for 10 days for overstaying leave by one hour at Fremantle and for introducing liquor on to a strictly "dry" ship. The group were thankful to be joining the British Army and not the U.S Navy!

Some 100 miles North of Calcutta, Phil was "hardened up" by an 8 weeks intensive physical course and then posted to his new regiment - "The Buffs," otherwise the Royal East Kent Regiment. However, at this time the bombs were dropped and Japan surrendered. The Buffs were ordered home to England. Phil rather than help with the demobilisation of English soldiers looked for other adventures. He discovered that the Dorsetshire Regiment was going to Japan as part of the occupying force, together with a regiment each from Wales and Scotland. He took leave from The Buffs and travelled by train from the East coast of India right over to the West, where he sought out the C.O. of the Dorsets and asked if he could go to Japan with them. Without hesitation the Colonel agreed, on the grounds that for sheer cheek and doing a 2,000 mile journey to ask, Phil was worth a try! Within a week Phil was a Company Commander and on his way to Japan. Once there, he saw what the atom bombs had done and he says that his first impression remains with him still. The bombs had done in a minute what would normally have taken a month by saturation conventional bombing, and he has no regrets about it. About one million dead was the Allied estimate for the conventional surrender of Japan. Phil admits that as he might have been one of the dead, he had a vested interest.

It was thought to be important to demonstrate to the Japanese that they were defeated and so Phil found himself commanding a company when the Regiment "Trooped the Colours" on the Emperor's Square in Tokyo, with the Emperor between two British detectives, together with the population watching. It was pageantry with a great depth of meaning, followed by a march through the main streets of Tokyo with fixed bayonets. Even such emotional events have their humour. The Colonel led the march, mounted on a horse, but the 2 i/c could not keep his place. Every so often the Colonel found to his intense irritation, the 2 i/c riding next to him. The reason was that the Japanese had supplied a pair of horses who for years had pulled the same cart together! The Colonel, known as "Knocker" White remained one of Phil's close friends. Years later, Phil visited him when he was dying in hospital. He grinned, saluted - and died. Phil buried him and lives now only 3 miles from "Knocker's" home and his widow.

From Japan, Phil went with the Dorsets to Malaya, where the pressing task was to restrain the Chinese Communists who were

trying to do a take-over. So it was back to the jungle, similar to New Guinea and with an enemy just as cunning. When things settled down, Phil was asked if he would like to stay on with the British Army as a career, which he did. It was agreed that he should go to the Royal Artillery in view of his "Gunner" background. Before joining a Regiment he had an unusual interlude. A six nation Commission was set up by the U.N. to try to decide who was responsible for the fighting in Indonesia. Phil was sent to Batavia as the British Military Observer, representing the United Kingdom. As if this wasn't curious enough for an Aussie, Phil was asked by the British Ambassador to become a temporary Vice-Consul representing the British Government at Jakarta. Phil regarded that as comic; but in fact trained secretaries did most of the work and steered him through his interviews with the President Soekarno and the members of his new Government. Of course it was early days for Indonesian self-rule, but Phil found it an incredible experience as a very young Major to land from an R.A.F. plane in Jakarta to a red carpet and a band playing the National Anthem, followed by a drive into the city in an open car flying the Union Jack! However, his reports written, 6 weeks later saw Phil back in his new Regiment, based in Malaya. From there he was sent "Home" to England and after seeing the sights of London for the first time, found the War Office and reported to the Military Secretary to get his next job.

There was a short spell behind a desk in London, then for nearly four years to Larkhill, near Salisbury in Wiltshire, to the School of Artillery and the home of all Gunners. There, Phil saw to the gunnery training of the young officers fresh from Sandhurst. They spent a year learning field and anti-aircraft gunnery before being posted to their Regiments. One of Phil's incidental duties was to help in teaching them to ride a horse. He enjoyed having a horse supplied, free of charge, for a gallop each day around Salisbury Plain. At one stage, Phil served with the 1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, which brought back vivid memories of the superb R.H.A. gunners in Tobruk. Little did Phil ever dream that one day he would be one of them. From Larkhill, Phil was posted to a Regiment and as Adjutant went with it to Hong Kong. Two years later found him in the Middle East as a Staff Officer with 1st Infantry Division, which was guarding the Suez Canal. On leave from there to England, he married Mearn Buchanan, an Adelaide girl whom he had known since childhood. Both families were close friends before either of them was born. They started married life in an improvised flat on the banks of the Suez Canal, with two army beds, a few chairs, an old bath from a scrap heap, two Primus stoves and precious little else. However, in true Australian style Mearn improvised and with an empty kerosene tin for an oven, produced delicious scones for their hungry friends.

From Suez they went to Cyprus for a blissful year in spite of the mounting trouble there; then back to England. One night in front of a blazing fire in a rented thatched cottage in Essex, with the snow and ice packed around it, Phil came out with his next great adventure. He wanted to see the powers-that-be to see if he should leave the Army to become a priest. To this day, Phil says he cannot say precisely why. He enjoyed Army life. Maybe it crept up on him during the War years. He thinks that going to Salisbury Cathedral during his time at Larkhill had its effect; but really, all Phil can say is that the Almighty was saying to him "fall in, Roberts." So he "fell in"! He was ordained, after rigorous training, in Salisbury Cathedral by a great Bishop who understood him. The Bishop won a decoration for bravery in each

of the three Services during the War. During his ordination, Phil had watched the Canons of Salisbury proceeding to their Stalls in the Cathedral and had thought how old and venerable they looked. Ultimately Phil became a Canon himself and has joined their elderly ranks! Phil served as a curate in Salisbury, then back home to Australia after their two sons were born, for a three year contract as Vicar, first of Beaumaris and then Mont Albert. He was recalled to England to the Wiltshire country town of Westbury, then as Rector of Dorchester, the "capital" of Dorset, where he met up again with many of his friends from the Dorsetshire Regiment and for the last six years of his career to Sloane Square in London. This last job Phil describes as by far the hardest and the most rewarding. His huge and beautiful Church was a headache to look after. The congregation ranged from the rich and titled to the poor and unknown. Phil enjoyed a happy friendship with John Betjeman who adored Australians and took part in his memorial service in Westminster Abbey. London was a place of surprises. He tried to help the kids on drugs from the King's Road and hardly a day passed without someone needing a helping hand - not all of them poor. He soon discovered that everyone has problems.

Meeting people was fascinating. There were so many familiar faces from the newspapers and television - Enoch Powell in the Tube train; Princess Diana shopping just over the road. Phil became so used to surprises that he just accepted it when he looked at his congregation one Sunday morning and thought "Gosh - the Queen's in the Church". In fact, it was Princess Margaret. Phil says that in the "real" they sometimes do look very alike. In London Phil kept up a happy association with Westminster Abbey, where he would spend a week on duty, welcoming overseas visitors and calling the vast crowds to silence for Prayers every hour. He still goes up to Westminster from Salisbury to carry on this work.

Phil retired last April. He is still a Canon of Salisbury Cathedral, reminded of his "gunner" days by a small brass cannon, complete with cannon balls given to him as a joke by friendly young people in Dorchester where he was made a Canon in 1973. He finds plenty to do in the Cathedral and is grateful to the staff there who reserve the Stall next to his for Mearn, so that they can sit together during the services. Their older son is a Chartered Surveyor and their younger a Doctor, doing his course to become a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons.

Phil says that retirement for them is like leaving school for the second time. A new life has started with unlimited horizons and the scope for new adventures. He says he thinks that the last one will be the most fascinating of all.

