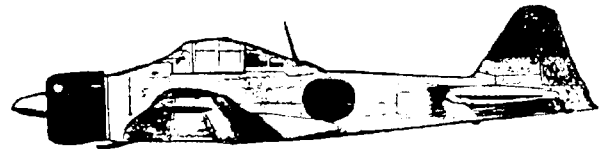


2nd/3rd AUSTRALIAN LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT
REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER
If undelivered return to:
C.J.E. RAE
Tal Tal, Tucks Road,
Shoreham, Vic. 3916

“TAKE POST!”

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



RE-UNION NOTICE

The Re-union will be held on Friday 24th April, 1992 from 12 noon until 5 p.m., lunch and drinks provided. The subscription this year is \$20 (being subsidised by the Association).

The venue is the same as last year, namely the Air Force Convention Centre, 4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra. (Vehicle access through Howitt St.)

Cec. Rae, Hon. Secretary.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the A.F. Convention Centre, 4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra at 11.45 a.m. on 24th April 1992, (just prior to the Re-union).

Nominations for the Committee must be lodged with Secretary 7 days before the meeting.

Cec. Rae, Hon. Secretary.

2nd/3rd AUSTRALIAN LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ASSOCIATION.

President
JIM PATON

Hon. Secretary
CEC.RAE
Tal Tal, Tucks Road, Shoreham, Vic. 3916.

Hon. Treasurer
JOHN HEPWORTH

Newsletter Editor
RON BRYANT
6 Blanche Avenue, Parkdale, Vic. 3195.

Committee
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CLIVE ROSE, DICK HAWTING, BRUCE TULLOCH,
DAVE THOMSON, ROY THOMSON,
JACK CRITTENDEN

W.A. President
GORDON CONNOR
6 Exton Place, Spearwood, W.A. 6163.

A few copies of our history, “On Target”, remain.
Obtain your copy at the Re-union, for \$29.00

**PLEASE ADVISE OF YOUR
CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

24th April 1991 saw another successful re-union with some 125 in attendance. You may now take it that the 12 noon to 5pm timing and the sit-down smorgasbord meal will be permanent features of future gatherings.

1992 marks 50 years since 9 Battery faced up to the Japanese at Port Moresby and Milne Bay. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find reference to arrangements to commemorate in August next, the 50th anniversary of the Milne Bay action.

As you will have appreciated, a colossal amount of effort went into the production of "On Target". "Take Post" is designed to "keep the pot boiling" from year to year and demands considerable effort by our worthy editor, Ron Bryant, in particular.

Production of "On Target" not only enabled members of the Regiment to learn of previously unknown experiences of mates in the various areas where the 2/3rd served, but also encouraged many to record their personal experiences with the hindsight of fifty years.

VALE JOHN WILLIAM RHODEN VX13726

The Commanding Officer of the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment from 1940 to 1943, and Patron of the Regiment's Association, Lt Col. J. W. Rhoden, E.D., died on 21st December 1991.

John Rhoden was born in 1903 in Melbourne, the son of John P. Rhoden, solicitor. He was educated at Melbourne Grammar School, being captain of the school in 1922, in the school eighteen and eights in that year, and Cadet Lieutenant in 1921.

He was admitted as a barrister and solicitor for Victoria in 1931 and joined the firm of John P. Rhoden. He played "A" Pennant Squash, 1935-39 and was president of the Squash Racquets Association of Victoria 1937-48 and for Australia 1937-49. He was a member of the Freemason's Lodge No 317, Victoria.

In July of 1922 John Rhoden enlisted as a gunner in the 8th Field Artillery Brigade, rising through the ranks until commissioned in 1924, promoted captain in 1927, and major in 1930 to command 6th Medium Artillery Battery.

In April 1940 he was appointed second in command 2/2nd Medium Artillery Regiment, 2nd AIF., and in July promoted Lieutenant-Colonel to form and command 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in which he became known as "The Boomer". The Regiment was disbanded in July 1943 when he was appointed to the command of 102 Higher Establishment A.A. Artillery Regiment until disbanded in 1945. In 1944 he was awarded the Efficiency Decoration (E.D.).

Many diaries and items of memorabilia have been forwarded to the War Memorial Museum in Canberra. Jack Henry's model of the "Blower" (pictured in 1990 "Take Post") has been gratefully acknowledged and added to the POW display. Les Harris's Ensign miniature Camera is in the camera cabinet of the photographic section. About 25 of Ron Bryant's photographs taken in Tobruk and New Guinea have been added to their collection.

Many years ago, articles appeared in newspapers and the Reader's Digest relating experiences of members of the Regiment which would make interesting reading if they could be tracked down. The unwritten history of the 2/3rd must provide plenty of material for future reference in "Take Post" and any contribution you can make will be gratefully received.

Looking forward to seeing as many as possible of you on 24th April. With best wishes to all.

Jim Paton

He returned to the practice of John P. Rhoden and was the senior partner on his retirement in 1974. He was a member of the Dandenong sub-branch of the Returned Services League and past president. In retirement John Rhoden lived at Morningside and latterly at Mount Martha. The Association extends its sympathy to his family and particularly his daughter Mrs Diana Veel.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

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

J. W. RHODEN	C.O. & Patron.	
R. C. (Bert) COCKS		8
W. E. (Bill) WESTON		8
N. W. (Bill) KENNEDY		8
IAN TAMBLYN GRIEVE		7
HARRY HARPER		8
JACK DELAHUNTY		9
CHARLIE FUTCHER		9
TOM HILL		
CYRIL MASON		7
DICK ROWAN		9
ROY PEACE		RHQ
DR. GAVIN HAYES	Medical Officer	
R. G. (Bob) CAMPBELL		8
J. G. HEATHCOTE		8

BY THE WAY

Alex Barnett (8) came to Melbourne with his wife Lois, from Port Macquarie, NSW last year to attend our re-union. Unfortunately he became ill and didn't get to it. Last report is that he is O.K.

John Grimwade (8) has had several sojourns in hospital, at one stage suffering a mild stroke. He is now at Hawthorn Grange, Hawthorn.

Alan Taunton (7) died about 10 years ago. Last year his son Ray, Captain of a Dragon Airline 737 called on Gunner R. C. Vansittart (8). Gunner Vansittart had a beef farm at Margaret River, W.A. for 28 years, where he became Shire President. Some 10 years ago he retired from the farm to live at Como, W.A.

George Young (8) who farmed at Bay near Kyneton lost his wife Vera last year. George has had a stroke and is presently in Kyneton Hospital. He doesn't think he will be able to carry 10 pair of rabbits on one arm while shooting any more. George is reasonably mobile in his electric powered wheel-chair, but fell out while speeding!

Our sincere sympathy to Len Morgan (8) who lost his wife Barbara last year.

Harold (Mutt) Hallett (8), well into his eighties, lives at Mount Eliza with his wife Enid. His nephew Brian Jolly, has drafted up a fictional story with Mutt as the main character and with Mutt's experiences in the 8th Battery as part of the story. If the story is published "Take Post" will inform you on it.

Why the 2/3 A.A. Regiment sailed to the Middle East in December 1940 ("Take Post", 1991). John Rhoden refuted this story.

MILNE BAY STAMP

A postage stamp issued by Australia depicts a Bofors gun crew on No.1 St., who were the crew members?

Dave Humphreys found an old mate last year - Phil Bishop, now aged 82 who was Alan Young's driver at RHQ in early days. Phil became a gunner in 7 Battery in Palestine and was soon promoted to gun sergeant. He was sent to a predictor school at Haifa and was retained at the school as an instructor. After a stint there, he rejoined 7 Battery to return to Australia and eventually went to New Guinea with Lt. Col. John Hipworth, gaining his commission.

Phil was sent to an Australian/United States Combined Operations School in Sydney, where he became an instructor once more, obviously because of demonstrated ability. He was sent as an observer to the U.S. Landing at Hollandia, later was on the planning staff for the Borneo Landing and finally was in the Balikpapan operation, with the rank of Major.

After the war, he returned to his old job at the Herald where he finished up as Manager of the Photographic/Comp. Department. Retired, but still active, Phil still plays a good game of golf.

A CRUISE ON HMS ORION, MAY 1941

Episodes and acknowledgments of the heroism of the Navy were recorded in the Regiment's history - "On Target", in particular regarding the evacuation of many of our men from Crete in May 1941.

Because probably only a few of our men were evacuated on the British cruiser HMS ORION, there was not a great deal of detail of this ship's brave journey from Crete to Alexandria.

Harry Parker was asked to relate how he came to be on the Orion and of his recollections of that time. To understand that, it is necessary to regress to earlier in the Battle for Crete when Harry was a member of a gun-crew sited on the air-strip at Heraklion.

The crew was attacked by enemy aircraft. Jack Hawke was killed and three or four others were wounded. Harry received shrapnel pellets in the leg and hip (many of them still there). With three other men, he was taken to Heraklion Hospital. After treatment for a couple of days, he was attached to another gun-crew in Heraklion.

Harry then developed a skin complaint, which incidentally was urticaria, with frightening swelling in the last place a man would want to get such a problem. Harry was then dumped at a very cosmopolitan Regimental Aid Post in a cave in the hills on the outskirts of Heraklion. Medical Officers and orderlies were all working flat out on whoever appeared next from either side from the fierce battles nearby, which made war seem peculiar. Harry's treatment was to be stripped of clothing, rubbed down with lotion which was probably calomine, then wrapped naked in a British Army Blanket "which didn't feel like silk". These events explain how Harry was separated from 7th Battery and led him to becoming "wounded

and missing".

At approx. 2000 hours on 28th May, orders were given for all "walking wounded" to be prepared to move out immediately and to carry only the barest necessities. By midnight, in pitch darkness, they were assembled on the wharf or mole, in Heraklion and being taken on board by destroyers and transhipped at sea (in Harry's case) to the 6" cruiser H.M.S. ORION.

Harry proceeds with his recollections of the dramatic events:-

"Firstly, the exploits and Battle Honors of H.M.S. ORION have been well documented by the R.N. and I can only relate how I experienced this particular piece of it's history".

"Apparently the ORION took on approx. 1100 troops, so obviously conditions were very cramped. She had recently been involved in the Battle of Matapan, had suffered some damage, and was low in both fuel and ammunition. The troops were told to snatch what ever rest they could, because, come dawn there would be NO rest, - on the contrary, things would be very active due to enemy aircraft.

"From daylight 29th May, there was air raid after air raid. ORION collected at least three direct bomb hits, two of which did tremendous damage, but she managed to dodge many near misses (those hits and misses really made her bounce, I felt certain we bounced off the bottom of the Mediterranean). Damage was extensive and casualties very high. I understand something like 300 were killed and many more than that figure were wounded. The Flag Captain in ORION, Captain G. R. B. Back was amongst those killed. The noise, the fires, the searing heat, the bomb blasts, the sharp

sting of salt water on burns, the smell, the terrific jolts given by the ship, - but above all else, the heroism of the sailors and also those troops still able to function, will never be forgotten by the survivors. Their efforts when recognised later, drew high praise from the Commander of the Mediterranean Fleet, Admiral Cunningham.

"Ultimately, at approx. 2000 hrs on 29th May, ORION listing badly and with little fuel and no ammunition, and I understand with tug assistance, struggled into Alexandria. I cannot record the rest of the day with certainty, but can recall fearing blindness, when being led and assisted by some person.

"Next day, upon enquiring I learnt I was in a R.N. hospital in Alexandria. I was tremendously relieved when I could open my eyes and see reasonably well, (albeit with some degree of pain). What I saw I shall never forget, - rows of very black faces showing above the sheets - burn cases. We were urged, - nay ordered, NOT to get out of bed under any circumstances. Some, thinking they felt O.K., did and some of those died of latent shock. We were told bodies were still being taken from the ship for some days.

"I spent about ten days there during which time Admiral Cunningham and his staff paid a visit. Being the only Australian soldier in the ward, he graciously stopped and spoke with me for a few minutes. Incidentally I understand before being converted to a navy hospital this place had been a University at which Rudolph Hesse had attended. I was discharged after 10 days or so, but had no idea if 7th Battery still existed, and if so where. After a week at an A.G.H. at El Kantara and then various Staging Camps, I had a very lucky break - a real fluke. This was in meeting W.O. Don Hooper who was a civvy friend, at one Staging Camp. (Footy buffs, - remember Don, - he played for Melbourne in the 1930's?) Don was on the Camp Staff and by some magical means was able to provide me with the necessary documents which led me back to my war-time home, the re-formed 7th Battery."

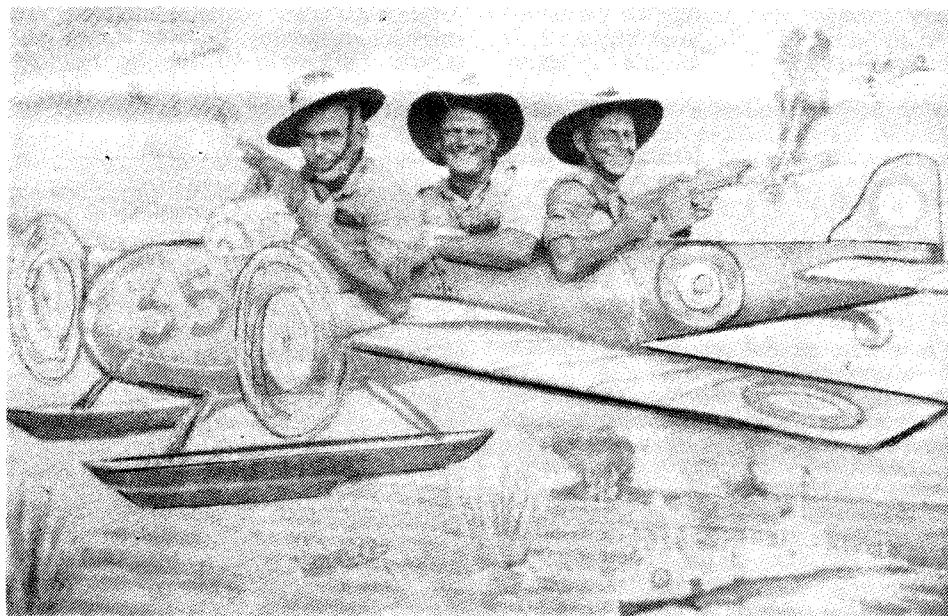
BOOK REVIEWS

"The Dirty Thirteen" comprises letters home to friends and loved ones of thirteen members of the Regiment, all from Central Victoria. Reading the book brings back many memories of the war years. Recommended reading at \$20 per copy, available from Keith Gregory, Robinson Street, Murchison, 3160. (A suggestion for the next edition: that a connecting narrative be included to clarify where the letter is written.)

C.J.E. RAE

"Milne Bay 1942" Researched by Clive Baker and Greg Knight.

This book is recommended as a good buy for those who are interested in the first



Gunners Jim Bourke, Mac Phillips and Bert Cocks, returning from Tel Aviv in 1941 after a successful sortie.

weeks at Milne Bay from the setting of the scene January-May 1942 to September 1942. It covers all units RAN, RAAF, AIF, Militia, Angau and U.S. Forces. There are close on 500 pages of description, photographs and maps.

In the next edition, perhaps in an addendum, it could be stated that although the Japanese withdrew in September 1942, they continued to bomb and strafe the area for many months afterwards.

The book is available from the authors at 13 Veronica Place, Loftus, NSW 2232. Price \$32 plus \$7 postage.

"Handy Tips for Pruning"

If you are reticent about pruning, a new book written by Laurie Eager (7 Battery) "Pruning Ornamental Shrubs and Trees" will set you up. The book is based on Laurie's fifty years of experience.

Laurie trained at Burnley Horticultural College and worked at Melbourne Botanic Gardens, later in charge of the Horticultural Research Station at Mildura, as an instructor at Burnley, and as superintendent of gardens for the Housing Commission and Public Works Department. He describes the book as an ABC for gardeners. He explains that there is no great mystery to pruning; but advocates working with nature and following simple rules.

The book is illustrated with colour and black and white pictures. Laurie assisted in the setting up of Conjara Nursery for unemployed young people when it was established in South Blackburn on the former Mission of St James and St John site, "Pruning Ornamental Shrubs and Trees" is available from Collins and other selected book stores. RRP \$14.95.

This book might save you getting into trouble with your wife for over-pruning. It would also make a good gift.

DRs' REPORTING!

Two of the DRs of the 9th B.H.Q. were Ray Evelyn and Arthur Block, who enlisted in 1940 at the age of 17 and 18 respectively, but put their ages up to 21 so as to be available for overseas service. Both have remained firm friends for almost 52 years and have constantly kept in touch. The other two DRs were R. Karlson and C. Mitchell. Arthur resides in Blackwood in the Adelaide hills and has lived in the house he built for 38 years. Ray has lived in Spotswood, Melbourne for 39 years. They trained at Geelong, Royal Park, and Werribee and upon arrival in the Middle East, at Khasa in Palestine. They were issued with new Norton 250cc side-valve motor bikes on arrival in Egypt en route to the desert, through Mersa Matruh, Sidi Barrani and Bug Bug up Mussolini's road to victory. When the unit was on the move, two DRs were up front and two were following behind. One of their many duties was to relay messages up and down the column and to report to O C convoy of anything wrong.

While the unit was on the move in complete darkness, Ray stopped his bike to look for a kilo post and in a flash saw this great shadow bearing down on him. It was one of our own trucks and, although Ray leapt clear to safety, the bike was a complete wipe-off. The C O was furious and severely castigated Ray for damaging equipment. Ray sustained a fractured small finger and the C O (although contemplating disciplinary action) never reported it and let it heal itself.

Ray goes on with the story:-

"After we had been in the desert a couple of months, we found the Nortons to be more manoeuvrable if we lightened them, so we discarded the battery as no lights were allowed anyway. Half the back mudguard was discarded to allow easy access to the back wheel in case of tyre puncture and half the exhaust pipe and tool box went too. In case of danger from strafing, we decided to roll off the bike and play dead, because daily we were on our own delivering messages and letters to the guns. At Sidi Barrani we came across a German bike. It was a B.M.W. with twin opposed cylinders and

telescopic suspension. We took it all the way to up to Syria, back to Egypt, then to Australia and up to New Guinea and back. Eventually it found its way into the possession of an officer after the war.

"After six months in the desert, it was up to Syria and when the Vichy French surrendered, there were huge dumps of captured vehicles. The DRs used to help themselves to French bikes, all against army approval of course. Arthur favoured a Nomo Rhone, a bike which would make the modern bikie drool with its high front and handlebars. Another was a Rene Gillette with side car which we were able to retain until we left Suez for home in 1942. As there were no spare parts, when the throttle cable broke in half, one DR would operate the bike and the other, the throttle from the side car; quite an effort in co-operation!

"One night we were coming from Tewfik to Suez and passed an English staff car about 80mph. The car passed us then an officer who was O.C. Provosts alighted, stopped us and said:- "I don't care if you are New Zealanders or Australians, you don't pass us at 80mph. He turned to his driver and said:- "Put your topee on Dobson". Arthur said "Ta Ta" and we took off like a rocket giving the old thumbs up sign. We left them for dead and arrived back at B.H.Q. with a case of White Horse Canadian beer in the side car and never saw the poms again"

Back in Australia in 1942 it was Nortons again; but they were seldom used in New Guinea or Borneo due to difficult terrain and conditions. Arthur and Ray were posted to truck driving. There is one of the Nortons at the War Memorial in Canberra. The army used to buy them for 7 pounds each.

Later, Ray did a rehabilitation course in painting and signwriting and had the same job for 27 years as a foreman painter. He is married with four children and ten grandchildren. He retired in 1980 and did part-time work for many years. Arthur did a rehab. course in bricklaying and structural engineering. He had his own construction company in Adelaide. He is married with five children and twelve grandchildren and still does building plans and drawings part time.

"Without doubt, it would have been brought within flying distance of Perth by an I-class submarine, as these were the only ones capable of carrying seaplanes behind enemy lines."

"I understand that the plane landed briefly, probably to either drop off or pick up something or someone."

WHAT A LIFE

The preacher came to call the other day. He said that at my age I should be thinking about the here after. I told him, Oh I do, all the time. No matter where I am, in the parlour, upstairs, in the kitchen or down in the basement, I ask myself; Now what am I here after.

WELL DONE

Thanks to Carry On, for the following:-

The inscription on a headstone in a Christian cemetery in India reads:-

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF CAPTAIN MAURICE JAMES BUTLER, ROYAL IRISH RIFLES ACCIDENTALLY SHOT DEAD BY HIS BATMAN ON THE FOURTH DAY OF APRIL, 1882. "WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT"

JAP PLANE AT CANNING DAM, W.A. in 1942.

There were several reports of a Japanese floatplane know as Pete landing on Canning Dam in 1942, the year that 7th and 8th Batteries were saving Western Australia from a fate worse than death.

Jack Sue, a member of the famous "Z" Force that was engaged in operations behind enemy lines, gave details last year of the daring touch-down in the hills just east of Perth.

Mr. Sue said "It was only on Canning Dam for a short time, probably early in the morning."

AUTO FLUSHING TOILETS

After disembarking in New Guinea in December 1943 near Buna and awaiting dispersal orders to gun sites, many opportunists visited the nearby toilet. This amenity was different from usual in that the seats were over the open sea (see *On Target*, page 221) and in this case was a very make-shift affair in full view of everyone on the beach. While the seats were well occupied, a big wave arrived demolishing the entire structure, much to the entertainment of all on shore.

Ever one for quick comment, George Howat called out in stentorian voice - "shilling for the man who comes up with a cigar!"

AIR SENTRIES

A.A. gunners stared into bright sunny skies watching for aircraft. Keep this copy letter in case you develop cataracts, or if you have had them. (published with acknowledgements to Mufti and Mr. Barney Campbell.)

WAITING FOR A WINNER

SIR, It may be a very trite saying, but it is also sometimes a very true saying that "all comes to him who waits, and we have waited long".

This is well and truly illustrated by a recent appeal at the AAT in the matter of "F - vs Repatriation Commission (No's V90/213 and V90/214)", where the veteran involved was appealing against the decisions of the Repatriation Commission and the Veterans' Review Board, to accept his disabilities of "anxiety state" and "bilateral cataracts".

In respect of the appeal for the veteran's bilateral cataracts, I had obtained a supporting specialist medical opinion, from Hugh Ryan, part of which read as follows:

"I have put many cases up for consideration but without exception they have all been rejected. I think that this is unfair because we do not know the cause of the cataracts, and there is good evidence that particularly from India, that cataracts are caused by excessive light particularly ultraviolet light. However, I have never been able to convince the Repatriation Commission or the Veterans' Review Board of the validity of these claims, and I would not be optimistic about the result."

The moral of this story is that the Repatriation Commission conceded and accepted the veteran's "bilateral cataracts" as being related to his war service, without even challenging Dr Hugh Ryan's opinion before the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Accordingly, all veterans with significant operational war service in tropical areas, where they were subjected to bright sunlight and have had their claims refused or have never bothered to claim, should immediately make a formal application to the Department of Veterans, for the acceptance of their "cataracts", quoting in supporting of their

claims, the decision of the Repatriation Commission in the AAT Appeal of "F vs Repatriation Commission - AAT Ref: V90/213 and 214.

Incidentally, the AAT also accepted the Veteran's claim for "anxiety state", on the basis of the strong supporting psychiatric opinion given by Dr David Barnes, Consultant Psychiatrist.

Yours Barney Campbell, Honorary Legal Advisor to the RSL.

FROM BOFORS TO BEAUFIGHTER

The history of the Regiment has shown just how widely units were scattered during overseas service. The same process continued after our return to Australia with postings to newly-formed AA units but some members joined other branches of the service. On page 330 of "On Target" the Signal section history records that Reg Farrant became a navigator with the Beaufighter Squadron.

After returning from the Middle East Reg. served with the Sigs section at Onslow with the Troop covering Bluey Truscott's 76 Squadron of Kittyhawks. Reg as a Hawthorn player encountered Bluey on the football field and the experience at Onslow may have stimulated his long-felt interest in flying as a more fulfilling activity. On return to Perth from the submarine base at "Potshot" and with the dismemberment of the 7th and 8th Batteries in progress, Reg enlisted in the R.A.A.F.

"Whispering Death" the official history of the R.A.A.F. Beaufighter Squadron provides interesting details of Reg's experiences just prior to the end of the Pacific War. As a member of No.93 "The Green Ghost Squadron", Reg participated as navigator with Ft. Lt. Sims with a flight of eight Beaufighters in a low level rocket attack on shipping in the Labuan River on 7th August 1945. Ground-fire damage to an engine resulted in forced landing amongst native palm trees in a swampy jungle. Both Sims and Reg survived but severe injuries to Reg's leg and head caused him considerable difficulty in the days before they reached an AIF post. Knowing that Japs would be searching for survivors they moved from the site taking what they could salvage to help them escape. After nerve-wracking experiences with swamp and jungle conditions and locals of doubtful loyalty, they were helped by a Malay youth with food and a trip to safety in a native "prahu". The three hundred and fifty mile journey in seven days, assisted by a crude sail and vine ropes, avoiding detection under grass mats when challenged by searching Japs, brought them to Mirir on 21st Aug. to meet Australian troops and learn that the Pacific War had just ended. Reg still treasures the walking stick with carved head given to him that day by an old Chinese. In 1980 Reg returned to meet the folk in Sarawak who had befriended him and helped him escape.

PREVELLY MONASTERY

During a recent visit to W.A., Ron Stewart took a photo of the Greek Monastery erected at the Prevelly village near Margaret River. Gordon Connor has provided interesting information on the origin of this building, told in a book "The Road to Prevelly" by Geoff Edwards, as a mark of appreciation of the wonderful part played by Cretan people and especially the monks of Preveli in organizing escapes of Allied Servicemen. Geoff Edwards served with the 2/11 Btn and was one of those rescued by the British submarine "Phoenix" (Ref. "Flowers of Rethymon" and Dick Plant's experiences p. 143 "On Target").

Geoff Edwards and his wife worked to have the replica of the Preveli Greek Monastery built on land in their holiday village.

The plaque at the chapel reads:

"This symbolic Greek Orthodox Chapel was given to the Greek people by Geoff and Beryl Edwards who founded the adjoining village and named it Prevelly as a token of gratitude to the Preveli monastery and surrounding villages on Crete. After the battle of Crete in 1941, the founder and hundreds of Australian, New Zealand and British soldiers were sheltered, hidden and helped to escape to the free world. May all who pause here remember with gratitude the courage of the Greek people who fought and died for the freedom of their land and ours".

FIFTIETH COMMEMORATION OF BATTLE OF CRETE

During the recent celebrations in various parts of Crete, Dick Plant represented the 2/3rd Regiment at numerous functions. Although disappointed at being unable to locate the Unit Banner, paid for by our association and which he was to present at one ceremony, Dick renewed friendships with many of those and their relatives who had befriended him during his efforts to escape. At the hotel where he stayed, he met an Englishman, Edward Howell, who had been Wing-Commander with the RAF at Maleme airfield. When the last serviceable Hurricane, which he had flown, was ordered back to Egypt on the evening before the landing, Howell chose to remain and sent a Flight-Sergeant. The story of Howell's subsequent wounding during the attack, discovery by Germans days later and experiences as a P.O.W. before his remarkable escape, is recorded in his biography "Escape to Live" published by Grosvenor Books, 21 Dorcas St. Sth Melbourne. Convinced that he had not been meant to die he decided to devote post-war endeavours to the Moral Rearmament movement's aims. The book makes fascinating reading for everyone who was in Crete, a P.O.W. or served during the war.

FROM A.A. TO Z

Gordon Connor, our Association's W.A. President, volunteered for "Z" Force after the 102nd Composite A.A. Regiment was disbanded at Narellan Camp, NSW in 1944.

The war with Japan ended just before Gordon was required to go in to action with "Z" Force, but the story of his training for this elite unit is absorbing.

Following the fall of Singapore, it was decided to set up an organization akin to the Special Operations Units used in Europe. This became known as the Services Reconnaissance Department. Within this Department, "Z" was created as a Commando type unit to operate behind enemy lines to gather information, whilst also hitting the Japanese where they least expected Allied action. After lengthy interviews and an examination by a "Z" Doctor, Gordon was transferred to the unit. He was asked to recount some of his experiences.

"From Narellan, three of us travelled by train to Brisbane where we were staged for several days at what was normally the headquarters of the Queensland Lawn Tennis Association. After the numbers had built up from all sorts of units, we moved on to Maryborough, bound for Fraser Island, which was one of the main training centres for "Z" Unit.

"To get to the island we went by M.T. to Piabla on the coast and from there by L.S.T. to Fraser Island.

"Here it was back to the usual army routine, but with no Roll Call, as each instructor had a list of his charges and it was his job to see they were present. Routine orders were brief and to the point, no guards or fire picquets and no spud bashing, as all these things were done by the Camp Staff. We were marched up to the Rec. Hall to be addressed by the Chief Instructor. He gave the impression that "Z" Unit had come into being for the express purpose of making life as unpleasant as it could be made for the Japanese Army, and in pursuit of this objective, the size of "Z" had been increased.

"He touched on the matter of secrecy. Not only should we be careful about not leaking information, but also not to ask too many questions of other members in the unit. Once we started training we had no rank, we were just students; if for any reason we wished to drop out, or if we got into any trouble, either in training or at any other time, we would just be returned to our original units of a General Details Depot, without any fuss or bother. We were then marched up to the Q Store to get our Jungle Greens and equipment such as the Fighting Knife, Jungle Boots and a nice American Pattern Wind Cheater. When we got back to the tent lines we were given a copy of the training program for the week, told to get into new gear and to report to one of the Instructors on the Parade Ground at 0930.

"We were marched off to one of the training areas and the course began. We found we had the following things to master - Small Boat Sailing, Folboat (Folding Boat), Navigation, Unarmed Combat, Demolition, Weapons Training from hand guns to 2 inch Mortar Grenades (H.E., Smoke and Phosphorous), how to load and fire Japanese small arms, Identification of Jap Aircraft, Naval and Merchant Vessels, to learn enough bazaar Malay or pigeon English to carry on a simple conversation. Those who could not swim had to learn, and those who could had to improve. There was also Map Reading and Compass Work of an advanced standard.

"We trained on and in water, by day and by night. By the end of the first month I realised the instructors were pairing us off. My mate was an A.B. from the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve named Vic Sharp, who of course became "Kiwi". Although it didn't really mean much in Folboat Training I was the No.1 and Kiwi was the No. 2. This was fine as Kiwi was short and lightly built whereas I was rather heavier. No. 1 sat aft so my weight lifted the bows up so that our Folboat rode over the waves instead of going through them and shipping a lot of water.

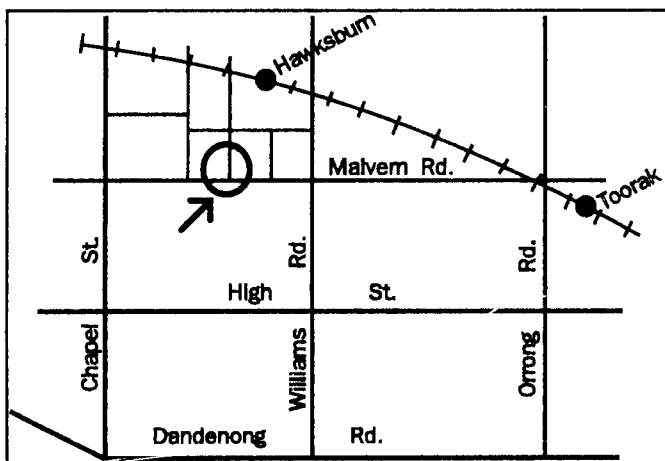
"The Folboats were about 9 Feet long with a beam of 2 ft. 6 in. at the widest point - a cross between a canoe and an Eskimo Kayak. The frames were made of spruce or birch, the skin of rubberised canvas. They could be dismantled or assembled in a matter of minutes.

The skin and the frame went into separate packs each weighing about 100lbs. Each Folboat could carry two men, rations for several days, plus weapons, ammunition and explosives.

"We also had advanced Weapons Training with Thompsons, Owens, Stens and Side arms. A working knowledge of Japanese small arms was also required.

"From time to time we had to go through an assault course in a thick part of the rain forest. At the end of the course was a mock-up native village. As you went through the course, the Instructors made figures of plywood jump up from behind logs or pop out from behind tree trunks, these figures being painted like Jap soldiers. When you got to the village you might get Jap, a friendly native or an allied soldier. Woe betide you if you hit the wrong target. Every now and then, just to keep you on your toes, a very loud "bang" would go off along-side. This was a small charge of explosive to add a touch of reality. Just as you settled after a "bang", a burst of live bullets went whistling overhead and you had to hit the ground. The number of targets was such as to require that you had to reload at least once with the burp guns, and twice with side arms. A very big black mark if didn't count the rounds fired and a target popped up while you had an empty gun.

"We learned to harness a mule with a pack saddle, and then to load the pack saddle with such things as tins of K Rations, boxes of ammunition, water tins, explosives, blanket rolls and butts of chaff and grain for the mules. The stores had to be roped to the pack saddles. In our first attempt to load up, we worked two to a mule. Having got our loads on, the Muleteer said we were go - two out along a jungle trail then turning on another trail to come back a different way. We only got about fifty yards when the first load started to fall off, and there was a post-mortem as to why the load fell. This happened less frequently as we moved along the trail. By the time we turned for home, the loads were staying on fairly well. Some time later we did a night stunt using the mules. Things went pretty well until we turned in, then every now and then a sentry woke us up to say one or another of the mules had pulled up its picket stake and was heading back to camp, in spite of the brute being hobbled. Finding a black coated mule on a dark night in rain forest with a light rain falling isn't fun.



RE-UNION LOCATION
A.F. Convention centre
4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra
(See Melways)
Vehicle access via Howitt Street.

"The last week of the course was spent on a mock raid on several targets in Maryborough on the mainland - the Powerhouse, the Railway Yard and the Shipyard. We left the island late in the afternoon in eight Folboats, keeping in diamond formation, two in front, two on the Port side, two to Starboard, Party Leader in the middle and Kiwi and I bringing up the rear. Halfway across the bay Kiwi stopped paddling and said there was something in the boat biting his toes. It turned out to be a small flying fish. By the time he grabbed it and tossed it out, we had dropped behind and had to paddle like mad to catch up.

"We should have arrived at the mouth of the Mary River at slack water but when we got to the bar the tide was still running out strongly, so over the side up to our thighs to half float and half lift the boats over sand bank and rocks. It took two nights to reach base camp.

"On the third night we carried out reconnaissance of the targets. The following night, six of the party made the raid and everything went wrong. Kiwi and I found the Powerhouse shut up like Fort Knox, whereas the previous night we had been able to sneak inside, and by good luck were not spotted by the Nightwatchman or by the Operator in the Switch Room.

"The pair who had the Marshalling Yard did a good job, but were spotted on the way back to the boats by an Umpire.

"At the Shipyard all went well at first. This team found a big dead branch up river from the frigate that was being fitted out. They lugged the branch up river and floated down under the stern of the frigate. They used their Magnetic Holdfasts to work along the hull to a spot where they put dummy Limpet Mines onto the hull. Having completed the attack they took the Holdfasts off and tried to swim clear underwater; however, a searchlight came on and a very loud voice ordered them to swim to the bank or they would be fired on, so they gave up.

"It turned out that a party of 2 officers and 40 ratings had boarded the ship that day, as it was just about ready for its sea trials. The senior officer must have been through the drill before. He told our chaps he knew where they came from and would be in touch with their C.O. Meanwhile if they indicated just where the dummy Limpets were he would put a diver over the side to remove them, otherwise he would ring the local police to come and collect our mates. So they agreed that was a fair deal.

"The rest of us had returned to our base. We waited for some time for the other two to turn up, then our Party Leader decided to pack up and get out of the area in case someone came looking for us. Early next morning we pulled into a good spot on the riverbank, hid the Folboats, had a meal and turned in for a decent sleep. About mid-afternoon we all woke and packed up. We had just got going when we heard someone yelling and looked back up the river to see the missing pair paddling like mad. The navy had looked after them, but they had been paddling hard all day to

and catch up with us.

"We arrived back just before sunset. Our leader reported to the Chief Instructor, who advised that we were to go to the Rec. Room. He went over every part of our raid, and handed out fair criticism on what each of the raiding party had done wrong. He had the reports of the Umpires, the report of the Naval Officer from the frigate, plus a report from the Supervisor from the Powerhouse. I had got in by crawling through a tunnel that carried the big pipe from the bulk fuel tanks outside the Powerhouse. While doing this I trod in a pool of fuel oil, so that when I came up inside the plant I left an oily foot print here and there. The Supervisor followed my footprints and when he saw the leak in the fuel line all hell broke loose. They had to put in a by-pass line, then get all the oil out of the main line, clean out the tunnel, and put in a new flange gasket where the old one had been leaking. So although I did myself a bad turn by treading in the leaking oil, I also did the Powerhouse people a good turn. Had the pipe gone on leaking, a lot of oil would have been wasted and it would have been a very serious fire hazard. But I still got ticked off for not having checked my clothing when I got inside, to see that I hadn't brought in any twigs, leaves, mud or in this case fuel oil, which would have indicated that someone had gained entry via the tunnel.

Having given us all a blister, the C.I. then told us we had all made the grade, and would now go to an operational station for further training. He also told us that we would have a weeks leave in our home state before we were sent to wherever we were needed.

"The next day we were on our way back to Brisbane. I sent a telegram to my wife and she was lucky enough to get a seat on a train from the West, so we had about twelve days together in Melbourne.

"With several other troops, we went by train to Adelaide, and eventually boarded a Douglas aircraft for Darwin. Our base at Darwin was large, as apart from "Z" there was a group from the Netherlands Indies and a few other odds and ends.

"We started training again as soon as our party was formed. This time we had to cope with things like crocodiles, water snakes and the chance of coming across an unexploded bomb. From time to time we were on 24 hours warning for action. They even collected things like our wrist watches, pay books, photos and letters, but nothing happened.

"Shortly after, the announcement came over the public address system that the Japanese had surrendered, and as from a certain time all fighting would cease. Everyone of course was happy, but some felt cheated as they were looking for the final show-down with the Japs.

"Within a day or so our numbers started to decline. Kiwi went off to the Navy Depot to join a New Zealand ship, the Netherlanders moved out and finally we were told that three Liberators would pick up the remaining operational personnel. The Libs

took us to Parafield. From there we went by Douglas to Essendon, from there by truck down to Mount Martha. I had indicated that I might stay on as a regular soldier, so I bided my time to see what was going to happen to "Z", but the axe fell and "Z" was finished, so I decided to go. I received my discharge on the 9th of November, 1945, my birthday.

SOME EXPLOITS OF "Z" FORCE

"An early operation by Z was "Lizard" in which a party of four under the command of Captain I.S. Wylie landed in Timor on 17th July, 1942, returned to Darwin on 18th August, 1942, re-inserted at Beasso 2 September 1942 and remained in Timor until 10th February.

"Operation "Jaywick". A party of 14 under the command of Major Ivor Lyon left Exmouth Gulf, Western Australia on the 2nd of September, 1943 in the "Krait" formerly the "Kofuku Maru". On the 26th of September, 1943, 3 Folboat teams from the Krait placed Limpit Mines on shipping in Singapore Harbour sinking 6 ships. On the 19th of October, 1943, the Krait returned safely to Exmouth Gulf.

"Operation "Agas" 1 and 2. On the 3rd of March, 1945, a party of 7 under the command of Major F.G.L. Chester landed by submarine U.S.S. Tuna in British North Borneo. On the 3rd of May, 1945, Agas 2 consisting of 4 members was dropped by parachute. Further parties of Agas were inserted. All were brought out by the 10th of September, 1945.

"Operation "Semut" 1,2,3 and 4. This lengthy operation began on the 23rd of March, 1945, with the dropping by parachute in Sarawak of a party of 45 under the command of Major T.H. Harrison. Additional parties were dropped later and were there until the end of the Pacific War, by which time they controlled a very big part on the centre of Borneo and had built an Airstrip large enough to take Liberators.

"All the above operations were successful. In contrast, Operation "Rimau" was a tragic failure. The party of 23 under the command of Lt-Col. Ivor Lyon left Fremantle on H.M. Submarine "Porpoise" on the 11th of September, 1944. Later they left their base on Merapas Island in a captured junk for Singapore. They were detected by Japanese forces and in a running fight a number of this party were killed. The remainder were captured and later executed by the Japanese.

"The above is by no means a complete list of operations carried out by Z. It is difficult to estimate the strength at its maximum. About 1700 seems to be the general opinion. The casualties inflicted on the Japanese are estimated to be 1800, at a cost to the unit of 112 members. No exact total has been kept of the number of native auxiliaries killed by the Japanese, but in the operation in Borneo, 36 natives were killed by the Japanese in contact with Z patrols. There were three crews of the RAAF lost on operational missions.



Personnel of RHQ, Workshops and Sigs. formed part of the backbone of the Regiment. It's pleasing to see them represented at Re-unions and the Anzac March. A few of these old soldiers appear with others in this picture taken by Arthur Finney at the 1991 March. Left to Right:- Dave Thompson (holding banner), Terry Gleeson, Ken Davey (with cap), Alf Collins, Les Harris, Roy Peace, Clive Rose (at right of banner).

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS TO PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY

"Darling, you were missing for two months so I married your father - love Mother"

"Darling, I've decided that when we get married life can only be made bearable by the possession of an electric iron, a sewing machine, a hair dryer, a radio and of course - a husband."

"It must be nice for you to be able to sit back and put your feet up, with nothing to remind you there's a war on" - From a fellow in a Civvy job.

"I feel I'd better have another baby soon or it will be too late; what do you suggest?"

"Our date will have to be cancelled because I have made a date for life with the most wonderful man in the world."

(With acknowledgements to Ron Lister)

"Sorry to hear you are a prisoner." (After three years)

"Please do not write to Bill anymore, he has been dead for two years."

"Was out with an American Sergeant last night and had a wonderful time. Sorry I can't send you the clothes you need as I want the coupons for a new evening dress....could you increase my allowance?"

"I hope you are broad-minded, last week I had twins." (To a three year prisoner)

"Sandals are unobtainable here so I am enclosing the necessary "coupons" so that you can buy some in a store in Germany" - Letter from a mother in England.

"Dear I am going to have a baby by an American. Mother has forgiven me and I hope you will too."

"Are the German girls good dancers?"

9th BATTERY

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landing of the Japanese forces at Milne Bay, on the 26th of August, 1942 and their subsequent defeat, members of 9th Battery are invited to join with 6th Battery, 2/2nd Heavy A.A. Requirement on 26th August,

1992 at 12 noon, at the A.F. Convention Centre, 4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra.

Please contact Cec Rae, "Tal Tal", Tucks Road, Shoreham, 3916 by sending the attached slip or by phone on (059) 898404

TRAVEL TO MILNE BAY

RSL Travel, 324 Belmore Road, Balwyn East, 3129, Phone (03) 857 4555, are arranging a cruise to PNG leaving Brisbane 24th of June, visiting Rabaul, Madang, Lae, Milne Bay, Port Moresby and Cairns, arriving in Brisbane on the 11th of July.

The cheapest fare is \$1555 per adult for a four berth inside cabin.

Enquiries should be made direct to the promoters.

Geoff Masters, 11 Brookes Crescent, Woorim, 4507, Bribie Island, Queensland, is arranging a visit to Milne Bay in August. The plan is to travel free of charge on RA Hercules aircraft. Other costs could come to approximately \$800.

Enquires direct to Geoff Masters.

Geoff Masters, ex 2/10th Bn, has obtained a 40mm Bofors gun and is arranging for it to be mounted in the Memorial Park at Milne Bay. It will bear a plaque recording that this type of gun was manned by members of 9th Battery, 2/3 Aust. Lt. AA. Regt. at the Battle. It is to be unveiled on the 27th August, 1992.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY MUSEUM

The Museum has now officially commenced under the Royal Australian Artillery Association (Victoria) Incorporated. The Museum has been offered facilities at a Chapel Street Depot. The Museum Committee would be pleased to receive any item that specifically pertains to artillery units that were raised, or served for any time in Victoria from Pre-Federation to the present time.

Please contact Craig Cook, Honorary Secretary, on (03) 890 2117, after hours or at 33 Haig Street, Box Hill South, Victoria, 3128.

for catering purposes.

It is my intention to attend the 9th Battery/6th Battery Milne Bay reunion on 26th August, 1992.

Name: _____

Address or _____

telephone number: _____