

SHOREHAM VIC 3916
Tal Tal Tucks Road
C. J. E. RAE
If undelivered please return to:

2nd/3rd AUSTRALIAN LIGHT ANTI AIRCRAFT
REGIMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

"TAKE POST!"

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



REUNION NOTICE

The Reunion will be held on Saturday April 24, 1993,
from 11.30 am until 4 pm., 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 Street).

Cec Rae, Hon Secretary.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Air Force
Convention Centre, 4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra
at 11.15 am on April 24, 1993 (just prior to the Reunion).

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

Cec Rae, Hon Secretary.

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

Patron: BERT BAGLIN.

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

Hon Treasurer: JOHN HEPWORTH.

Newsletter Editor: RON BRYANT.

Committee:

LES HARRIS, TOM DAWSON, ROY WILLIAMS,
CLIVE ROSE, DICK HAWTING, BRUCE TULLOCH,
DAVE THOMSON, ROY THOMSON,
JACK CRITTENDEN.

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

=====

A few copies of our history "*On Target*" remain.
Obtain your copy at the Reunion, for \$29.00.
Make a gift to your local RSL or library.

PLEASE ADVISE OF YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Another year has flown by as we come near to our 1993 reunion. Over a great number of years we have had wonderful support for our annual get-together from city, country and interstate members and, as the years roll by, your continued interest and attendance assume even greater importance. This will ensure that *we keep the show on the road* for many more years to come.

Our worthy editor of *Take Post* is for ever seeking material to make his annual publication as interesting as is possible. Please contact Ron if you have a contribution that will help the cause. Looking forward to meeting with you on 24th April and marching with you on Anzac Day. Until then - kindest regards and best wishes to all.

Jim Paton.

We regret to report that our President, Jim Paton, died suddenly on Wednesday March 10, 1993. Jim served with distinction as a soldier, officer and as our President for many years.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

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

Geoff WATSON	8 Bty
N. R. BYWATERS	7 Bty
Andy CAMPBELL	7 Bty
Robert GROSS	8 Bty
V. J. RAMSAY	8 Bty
George BATTY	8 Bty
George SIMPSON	9 Bty
Bryan BARKER	8 Bty
Jim GEORGE	7 Bty
John GRIMWADE	8 Bty
Tom GRANT	7 Bty
Harry SWALLOW	7 Bty
Kelth FELSTEAD	7 Bty
Frank NICHOLSON	8 Bty
Ron STUART	8 Bty
Jim PATON	9 Bty
Harry NEWSTEAD	7 Bty

AIR SENTRIES

Our 1992 *Take Post* published a letter from Mr Barney Campbell, Solicitor, to Mufti citing an appeal by a veteran against the decisions of the Repatriation Commission and Veterans' Review Board not to accept his disabilities of anxiety state and "bi-lateral cataracts". Mr Campbell had obtained medical opinion to the effect that "we do not know the cause of cataracts and there is good evidence, that particularly from India, cataracts are caused by excessive light, particularly ultra-violet light". The Commission accepted the "veteran's bi-lateral cataracts" as being related to his war service. (The case:- "F. vs Repat Commission, V90/213 & V90/214").

Barney Campbell advised veterans with operational war service in tropical areas and who have cataracts to apply to DVA for acceptance of their cataracts.

Bennie Anderson, 7 Battery, followed this advice and was successful with his case. Bennie wrote to thank "*Take Post*", Mr Barney Campbell, Mufti and Dr Hugh Ryan who gave the relevant medical opinion.

All AA gunners stared into bright sunny skies searching for aircraft. Cataract sufferers, take note!

TOBRUK AND EL ALAMEIN - 50 YEARS LATER

by Lin Davls, (8th Battery).

Our Middle-East Tour was organised by the Commonwealth Bank Travel Service in conjunction with 9th Division Association.

We numbered 156, mostly ex 9 Div men, 40 ladies, mostly wives, with some widows and ex-service women. There were two medical teams, each one a doctor and a nursing sister. These were supplied by Concord Military Hospital to look after the health of 'we geriatrics' - they were kept busy!

Group 1 of 96 departed from Sydney via Singapore Airlines on 13th October 1992. We were given a grand farewell by a group of soldiers of both sexes from Holsworthy who chatted with us and later formed a Guard of Honour as we boarded the plane. The 2nd Military District Band played rousing and nostalgic tunes. Radio and TV teams were there in force. We flew to Singapore where security was strict, changed planes and flew on to Cairo via Dubai, arriving 5 am (Egypt time) on Wednesday 14th October. Group 2 flew Singapore, Rome to Cairo and arrived much later.

We were delivered to our hotel on Gezira Island after passing painlessly through Customs as a group, although those carrying video cameras all had to have the serial numbers, make and model recorded. These were checked each time we passed through the border.

Our hotel in Cairo was an experience. We were all on the 3rd, 4th and 5th floors. The breakfast room was on the Ground floor and dinner was in the Dining room on the 7th floor. There were 2 lifts, each big enough to hold four people. If there were five on board the lift would not move. Moving people and luggage was absolute chaos; otherwise the hotel was "adequate".

After we had settled in, we were taken in coaches to the "Nile Crystal" cruising restaurant on the Nile for lunch, with entertainment supplied by an Egyptian band, a belly-dancer and a gully-gully man. We had a good view of modern Cairo city.

On the next two days we had the usual Cairo sight-seeing - the Pyramids, Sphinx, Memphis and Sakkara, with an Egyptian lunch at the Pyramid View Restaurant. After dinner that night we were taken by coach to the Pyramids for the "special sound and light performance" which I thought was a "flop". The interesting part of the night was the drive to the Pyramids and back through crowded streets and dense traffic. Our driver handled the 57 passenger Mercedes Benz coach like a sports car. After he had driven through a few red "stop" lights our Guide said "they are mainly a suggestion that you may stop - it is a very pretty colour - red."

On the second day we went to the Egyptian museum. It was crowded with tourists of all nations. Our guide took us straight to the display of the fabulous gold treasures, coffins and masks, which were in Tutankhamen's tomb. There was not time to see all the treasures in the museum. We had another Egyptian lunch and an interesting drive through old and new Cairo. We visited the Citadel, the Mosque of Mohammed Ali, the place where Anwar Sadat was assassinated and the famous bazaar Khan El Khalli with hundreds of high pressure salesmen all trying to sell us something. Also we drove past the City of the Dead.

Though there was an earthquake in Cairo the night before we left Sydney, we saw no evidence of it. The damage occurred in the older parts of Cairo.

On Saturday morning October 17th our convoy of 4 coaches and two Jeeps, with armed police escort vehicles front and rear of the column set out for Mersa Matrouh, through the densely populated Nile Valley. In addition to the old flat-roofed "arab" town and village scene for miles, there are now thousands of grey

concrete high-rise accommodation blocks, housing Cairo's 15.5 million inhabitants.

After leaving the fertile Nile Valley, we were amazed at the agricultural development in what was desert, now that they have water and the expertise to use it. The road to Mersa Matrouh is a very good divided highway, bitumen all the way. We by-passed Alexandria and stopped for lunch at the 5 star Aido Beach Hotel at El Alamein, a holiday resort on the beautifully blue Mediterranean. Mersa Matrouh is a lot larger than it was, but is still a typical "Egyptian" town, with small boys driving donkey cart taxis, lots of people, cars and trucks, open fronted shops and footpath cafes. The "Hotel Miami" was good.

On Sunday 18th October, we were to have left Mersa Matrouh at 8.30 am but apparently there was some problem relating to our entry into Libya, or even departing from Egypt, despite the fact that it was "all organised" months before. We left about 2 pm. The scene at the border was chaotic. After a long delay we moved off again, just before dark. We now had Libyan armed escort vehicles at front and rear of our convoy, and arrived at our hotel "Al Masira Al Jama'riya" to a warm welcome by the assembled management and staff, despite being 3 hours late (9 pm) for dinner. Here we were, back at Tobruk, but how different!

The hotel is really first class - 5 star, all amenities and service, but no alcohol. It is built on the opposite side of the harbour from the town, close to the de-salination plant, which of course, has been modernised and is still important.

The town of Tobruk with its outlying areas is much larger and spread out. The inhabited area has a population of about 200,000. Oil is their only production, apart from a few donkeys, camels, goats and fat-tailed sheep. There are still date palms at the various oases and wadis, but I would think for their domestic consumption.

On our first morning in Tobruk, dressed in slacks and shirts with ties, wearing our medals, we went to the Tobruk War Cemetery. Led by Major-General John Broadbent, we had a simple service at the Cenotaph with an address by Padre "Tex" Morton, Salvation Army Senior Chaplain to 9 Div. Wreaths were laid from 9 Div, Rats of Tobruk, and Navy Associations. It was a moving and emotional experience.

The Cemetery is impressive, well laid out and very well maintained. Walls and buildings, the Cross of Sacrifice, Cenotaph and Stone of Remembrance are all built of desert colour sandstone. I took photos of headstones over the graves of the four 8 Bty men who were buried there - Gnr. Morrow V., Evans D.D., Cowie J.G., and Hardingham S.I. Finding the graves and seeing them was another emotional experience.

We also visited the Free French Cemetery at the junction of the Bardia and El Adem Roads and later in the day we went to Acroma - Knightsbridge Cemetery - a few kilometres outside the Perimeter, not far from the Derna Road. Gnr. Wilkin L.C. is buried there in what is listed as a "Collective Grave".

We were also taken to the German War Memorial, a massive sandstone fortress-type building on high ground overlooking Tobruk and the harbour from a point near the Bardia Road. It is the burial place (an Ossuary) of 4,500 Germans, plus 30 more unidentified soldiers. It is built in the form of a hollow square or quadrangle with a large four figure sculpture centrepiece. The inner walls have fifteen bays, each with a large (18' x 7'6") bronze plaque on the wall with the names of the 4,500 dead. That too was an emotional experience.

During our time there we were taken out to the old Perimeter Defences at El Adem, Bardia and Derna Roads. The concrete posts and tank traps are still there, still in good order, and some of the wire remains. There are many "No Go" areas. We were told that

still a few camels, donkeys and some humans get blown up by mines. We met and talked with a German team of experts who have so far lifted 30,000 mines and consider that the job will take another three years to complete. They use metal detectors, mark the mine with a small flag, lift it if possible, if not it is exploded. They said they had lost five men this year (Oct 92). All the roads we knew (deep dust) are now good, wide and bitumen. We felt no fleas, no flies and no dust, as in 1941.

On our return trip from Acroma, the coaches were halted near the Perimeter at the Derna Road. We walked up the rising ground to the top of the ridge to the famous "FIG TREE" which is alive and well. Some of the infantry and engineer chaps were determined to visit *The Fig Tree* and walk in "the salient" area. These were areas of heavy casualties, with the Germans very close, active night patrolling, attacks and counter attacks, lots of mines laid, and lifted and re-laid.

I found it very difficult to identify places and areas that I had known. We were advised not to go into the streets nearest the harbour. I did not see "Admiralty House", or the Italian Naval Barracks, if it is still there. The large Roman Catholic Church is now the National Bank of Libya. We did not get near the escarpment, the caves under which were housed 9 Aust. Division HQ. Fort Pilastrino is now in a very large walled military area containing barracks, stores etc.

We made a visit to "Wadi El Auda" and the beach "Marsa El Auda". That brought back memories of our first night, disembarking from the Polish ship *Warszwar*, walking across the desert to Wadi El Auda and sleeping wherever we could find a bit of flat ground.

We drove through the town to the North Point and then back to the hotel on the first day, but later we were taken in to the town to have a wander around. The Libyans were friendly and cheerful and even encouraged us to take photos of them. We enjoyed seeing their way of life. Some, but not many, spoke English and of course there were no signs in English.

We left Tobruk on the morning of 21st October for El Alamein, as usual, about "an hour later". We drove into Bardia, saw the village, then down to the harbour. We were each presented with a key ring with a medallion as a memento of our visit to Libya.

At the border (Libya-Egypt) we had the usual delay, then on down spectacular Halfaya Pass to Sollum, called at the Sollum War Cemetery where many 6 Div. men are buried.

We lunched at the Miami Hotel at Mersa Matrouh at 5 pm and arrived at Aido Beach Hotel at El Alamein at 9.40 pm. We had five nights there; four days visiting the battlefields, the impressive Commonwealth War Cemetery and the German and Italian Memorials.

It was the German's turn to conduct the International Commemoration Service, held at their massive war memorial - an "Ossuary", similar to the one at Tobruk. A huge crowd attended and from there we went to the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and attended the Commonwealth/Allied Service.

We also had our own small, but impressive ceremony at the Australian Memorial of Participation, just outside the ground of the El Alamein War Cemetery.

At 9.40 pm on the 23rd October we all stepped over the start-line taped on the ground, 50 years to the minute after the start of the infantry advance in the Second Battle of El Alamein!

A book on this journey - "Desert Journey" can be ordered from Australian Defence Journal, B-4-26 Russell Offices, Canberra, ACT 2601. It covers a brief outline of the Desert and Syrian Campaigns, with colour reproductions of the work of an accompanying artist. Cost \$25. Make cheque payable to "Receiver of Public Monies".

AA GUNNER TO WIRELESS AIR-GUNNER

When 8th Battery moved to Queensland to become air-borne troops the Battery had to be pruned down to skeleton size and many men were transferred to other units.

One of these men was Gunner Dick Hawting who decided that if he was going to be air-borne it would be in the RAAF.

Dick had tried to join the RAAF at the beginning of the war but at that particular time a fairly high standard of education was needed. Although he was fairly bright at school, his education was interrupted by his father's illness and he had to leave and help his brother run the family butcher shop in Brighton. By the time war started he was running his own business in Kew. When things got serious overseas he sold his business to his brother-in-law and joined the army, although with butchers being a reserved occupation he could have stayed in business. Eventually he joined 8th Bty and served in the Siege of Tobruk and Western Australia.

When the Regiment arrived home from the Middle East the "powers that be" took the 2 shillings a day specialist pay off him and several other members of the unit. This caused him to have some disenchantment with the Army. When he was home on leave later he complained of it to a relative who had some knowledge of things from the first world war. He told him to see a certain Captain at Victoria Barracks which Dick did and through him he and the other members got the money restored with back pay!

The Battery then moved to Geraldton Aerodrome and the gun crew settled down in the glorious Western sun; but not Dick as it appeared that the RAAF had run out of butchers. Dick and another chap were purloined into filling in the gap. Now Dick and his mate had not done any butchering for 2 years and having to cut up 3 bullocks one day and 30 sheep the next was no joke. But his gun crew were not complaining with fillet steak and other niceties he was bringing back, some of which was really destined for the officers' mess. These events led to the parting of the ways so Dick applied to join the Air Force.

Not long after, however, Dick became seriously ill and spent Christmas and New Year in the RAAF hospital. He was in a lot of pain and one of the Sisters was pumping morphine into him. As Dick was getting no better he was put on the hospital train and sent to Northern Military hospital where the treatment was not quite so personal. However, they did succeed in diagnosing his complaint which was renal colic or stones. It appears it was quite common among the ex-Middle East personnel. Eventually after two months in hospital and two months home leave Dick caught up with the Battery in Helidon in Queensland where work was in progress stripping the Regiment down in size.

At this stage Dick had to make up his mind about the Airforce. He would have liked to have stayed with the Regiment and seen the war through with them but he knew he could improve himself in the RAAF. As it happened Major Purcell put him down as a cook and that decided things. He had always been on a gun crew so he paraded before Major Purcell and told him he had an application to transfer to the Airforce and the Major let him go.

After some arduous motor journeys through North Queensland in very high temperatures on various duties Dick got back to Brisbane where he found a letter from the RAAF telling him to present himself for an aptitude test. After several tests he went before the Board and was told that he was a border-line case but they would approve his application. He would just have to work harder than the others.

So the great day arrived when Dick arrived at Bradfield Park, Sydney, to do three months ITS (Initial Training School). Quite apart from the course, summer in Sydney was not hard to take. The Sydney fellows invited him to their homes at weekends. Most of

the chaps were 18-year-olds called up for service. Dick felt like a father figure at 27 but there was a smattering of chaps his own age including another Army fellow. So he had achieved the first part of his ambition to be a radio operator. He also had to do meteorology, Morse, maths and navigation. He had no trouble passing the tests and was then sent to number two WAGS (Wireless Air Gunner's) at Ballarat to spend the winter. It was so cold they all lived in their padded flying suits.

He was put in charge of 50 Course, probably because of his age and overseas experience. Then started the flying part of the course in *Avro Ansons*. Generally two operators did a four hour flight, mostly up to Albury and back via Echuca. Quite often the operator not working took over the flying of the plane at the pilot's discretion. On one flight, however, Dick remembers they headed for Tasmania but as they got out to sea the cloud cover dropped to 500 feet. As the weather worsened the pilot decided to turn back, they made land but then, with visibility bad, the pilot got lost. Dick took a fix on Ballarat radio station, but then found themselves over the bay going the wrong way - they knew they were going the wrong way when the sound faded. The pilot turned round and eventually landed safely. The only other incident he had there was a near collision with a plane taking off. There were no flight directors; it was Rafferty Rules in those days.

After 6 months Dick passed with flying colours and was ready for the final fortnight doing Pyrotechnics taking with him a recommendation for a commission. A pass-out dinner was traditional. It was also traditional to invite the Commanding Officer, who was a group captain at 28, only a year older than Dick, and he had returned from active service overseas. Dick proposed the toast to the CO and referred to his rank and age and to his fine work overseas. After a fortnight at Sale, Dick was given his officer's uniform and wing, a proud moment indeed after twelve months of hard work. Then it was a fitness course at Wonga Park, then up to Maryborough, Queensland for a course on the latest equipment they were using over Europe. Dick thought they must be the most highly trained W/T (Wireless Telegraphy) operators of the war. Back to Bairnsdale to do more flying, then, at last, back to Ballarat to crew up to go on Liberator Bombers. They were given a couple of days to mingle, pilots, navigators, air gunners etc., and eventually Dick was satisfied he was with a crew he could work with. Then the blow fell. The war in Europe was nearly over and the "powers that be" decided they would need no more Liberators from Tocumal. It was nice to think the war was nearly over, "but at the same time it would have been a thrill to have done at least one bombing mission" said Dick.

That was the end of flying for Dick as he was then posted to No 1, STT, Exhibition Buildings, Melbourne which was a RAAF training station for ground staff where he took the position of Assistant Adjutant. It was at this station that Dick met his future wife, Clarice, who at the beginning of the war had been evacuated from England with her younger sister to avoid the bombing. When she turned 18 she joined the WAAF's (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) and was posted to Melbourne. As the war came to a close there were many parties in the mess and Clarice had the honour of dancing with Air Vice Marshall, Sir George Jones. Dick also met the famous air ace, Killer Caldwell.

So ended the five and a half years in the services of Flying Officer Richard Hawting, who modestly feels that if he had not joined the services, the war would not have lasted one day longer as his part in the downfall of Hitler and Tojo was very small, but he always feels proud that he belonged to the 2nd/3rd Anti-Aircraft.

He made such a lot of life long friends and would not have changed any experiences he had in both services.

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF MILNE BAY, 1942

With great organisational ability Geoff Masters, ex 2/10 Battalion, arranged with the Australian Army to obtain a 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun to be sent to Milne Bay as a memorial to those who served there. The RAAF were asked to provide transport on a Hercules aircraft and this permission was obtained by Geoff, who also arranged transport for thirty-five veterans to attend the ceremony of the presentation of the gun.

Geoff. George of 9th Battery tells the story:

"Veterans of the Battle of Milne Bay assembled at Richmond NSW on September 9, 1942 where they were welcomed by the RAAF. The next day the party left Richmond at 7 am in a Hercules transport for Port Moresby stopping at Brisbane to pick up the remainder of the party.

Arriving at Port Moresby in the afternoon we stepped out of the plane into what felt like an oven, but the swimming pool at our 4 star hotel soon alleviated the heat.

The next morning we were taken by bus, its windows protected by a wire grid, around Port Moresby - the locals not being welcoming. The remains were seen of the bombed and wrecked ship "Macdhui", which brought many 9th Battery men to Port Moresby on its last voyage. Next stop was Parliament House where we were warmly welcomed and given morning tea.

About 3 pm on September 11 we boarded a New Guinea plane and flew to Milne Bay where we were welcomed by the local people in national dress. About 30 of these performed a dance, accompanied by drums.

Milne Bay has completely changed, roads sealed, houses built, shops and supermarkets constructed. All can speak English. Coconut and rubber trees are being removed and replaced by oil palms. On maturity each palm yields from 10 to 20 kilograms of oil which is exported and used in the manufacture of margarine. Schools have been built. Two high schools were glad to receive the "On Target" books which I presented to them. Rabi High School, built on the sight of the Japanese landing, gave us a grand welcome.

On Saturday September 12 a special anniversary service was arranged. The PNG and Australian national anthems were sung by school children and the veterans, then the official guests, spoke to the gathering. Speakers, including the senior surviving commander of Milne Force Air Commodore Bill Garing, the Australian High Commissioner, Mr Alan Taylor, Sir Cecil Aben and Milne Bay Premier, Mr Jeffery Toloube, spoke of the brave deeds during the long war and in particular they paid tribute to the men of Milne Force for their courageous defence of Milne Bay.

Geoff George, in handing over the Australian gift of the Bofors gun to the Premier of the Milne Bay district, made these remarks:

"Today marks a very important time in the history of Milne Bay. Fifty years ago this area was cleared of the enemy. The air-strip was the mainstay in effecting such clearance, for without 75 and 76 Squadrons of the RAAF there could have been no victory.

"The Bofors gun you see here was the main defence of the air-strip. These guns managed to keep the enemy aircraft high in the sky preventing accurate bombing. My crew and I were privileged to operate one of these guns, almost on this very site and I am proud to have been one of those who contributed to the eventual victory.

"Mr Premier, in this your 17th year of independence, it is with great pleasure that on behalf of my unit, the 2/3 Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment (whose colour patch is depicted on the gun), on behalf of the people of Australia, Geoff Masters and

others too numerous to mention, I officially hand this gun over to you as a 50th Anniversary gift. It would now be deemed a privilege if you would officially unveil the plaque".

Wreaths were laid at the foot of the memorial in memory of Squadron Leader Charles Gurney by the official guests. Visits were made to the Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull and the Corporal John French, VC memorials. Miss Gwen French, a sister of John French, was in the group.

On September 13 a boat trip was made across Milne Bay to Waga Waga and return. The next day the party left for home.

Geoff Masters is organising a visit to Nadzab and Lae this year.

THE ANZAC SPIRIT IS WILLING BUT TIME TAKES ITS TOLL

by Peter McGeorge in the *Southern Cross Newspaper*

There's nothing like another Anzac Day to emphasise the passage of time and change. On my 46th trek with the 3rd Light Anti-aircraft Regiment along St Kilda Road to the Shrine on Saturday, I recalled a remark one of us made during the 1965 march.

It was that the World War I units, stepping it out a short distance ahead, were getting pretty thin in their ranks. It made their show seem a far-off affair, way back in history.

But on Saturday the time lapse since the end of our own show, World War II, was almost exactly the same, and our ranks were getting thin too. It was all rather thought-provoking.

Saturday's next jolt occurred when, after our regiment had reached the dispersal point, I was standing in the crowd and saw a much younger present-day serving unit, go past with arms swinging high.

It reminded me of the 3rd Light Ack Ack in its training days until I noticed some of the marchers were women, uniformed and equipped the same as the men. I had to look twice before I was convinced. *Girls in Army units?* Times certainly have changed. It was hard to take it in.

Silhouetted by a soft mist in Saturday's sunshine, the City of Melbourne's high-rise buildings stood like a gigantic cardboard cut-out, and were therefore much more noticeable than on previous Anzac Days. This caused another memory shock-wave because it symbolised the changes which have occurred since those more energetic marches of the late 1940s, when there was hardly a city building to be seen from the Shrine.

But the biggest reminder of the passing years occurred the day before Anzac Day when I attended the 3rd Light Ack Ack's annual midday reunion dinner at the Air Forces Memorial Centre in Cromwell Road. It is so close to the Prahran Court, which I cover for the *Southern Cross*, that I had hardly finished putting the notebook back in my pocket before I was stepping into the reunion room - and a time warp.

One of the main problems with annual reunions is the way faces seem to change more rapidly as the years gather. I did not realise until near the end of Friday's three-hour function that one of the people at our table was, 51 years earlier, the young soldier who ran the two-up school on our outward-bound troop ship.

Also present was the one who, when some of us found ourselves prisoners-of-war after the Battle of Crete, made a set of false teeth for himself by melting down silver paper from Red Cross slabs of chocolate, and then ingeniously moulding the denture. He also I could not recognise at first. Faces change. Heads get balder, hair greyer.

Some of the men I served with of course, never came back. And now, of those who did return, our ranks too are thinning. But those who can, still answer the call. For one day of the year at least.

PARTISAN SERVICE

Accounts of experiences of our members who became Prisoners-of-War were limited by available space in our unit history "ON TARGET". (pp.132-147; 227-230), but many others have recorded their recollections and some have forwarded them to the National War Memorial in Canberra.

Malcolm Webster of 7 Bty and a survivor of the "Hereward" sinking during the evacuation from Crete, has been compiling a record of his experiences as a member of a Partisan group in northern Italy.

Following his rescue by an Italian MTB he shared the recorded experiences of a number of our men at Scarpento, Rhodes, Leros and sea travel to Bari, arriving on June 22, 1941 - the day Russia entered the war. The train trip to Bolzano was followed by the march to Prato Al' Isarco, Camp PG No 57 near the Yugoslav border.

Work party drafting in April 1943 led Malcolm to a work camp near Vercelli to help in the wheat and rice fields. The local community had become disillusioned by the alliance with Germany as the Nazi withdrawal in Africa was followed by Allied landings at Salerno and Anzio. Marshall Badoglio's peace declaration on April 8, 1943 led to remarkable scenes of rejoicing amongst POWs, guards and the farm people. It appeared that at last the Fascist yoke had been broken. But German activity in the area and the rumored transfer of prison camps to German control was the signal for the hurried departure of many Australians hoping to reach Switzerland or to remain in hiding until the Allied forces arrived.

Malcolm and those hoping to cross the mountain barrier into Switzerland were frustrated by the bitter wintry conditions and so, dressed as civilians, he with mates made towards the warmer lowlands intent on acquiring a boat to reach Sardinia or Corsica.

The increasing presence of German troops near Genoa, in anticipation of the expected Allied attack, naturally made the local populace fearful of the surveillance and threat of dire punishment for those who gave help to or harbored escaped POWs for whom bounties were offered. Four of the Australians in the group decided they would have a better chance of obtaining food and shelter if they moved in pairs. Accordingly, on November 24, 1943, Malcolm Webster with William Wigglesworth and Roger Wettenhall with Bert Ridgway went their separate ways.

After a few weeks, ill-health forced Bert to give himself up but Roger carried on until the January 17, 1944 when he was stopped by Italian police. Interrogated first at Fascist HQ in Virelle, he was then taken by Germans to Moosburg where he again met up with others from the unit.

Malcolm and William were taken by an anti-Fascist to a mountain camp where they stayed until a narrow escape from capture forced them, with two British soldiers who had been captured in Tunisia, to move to safer shelter in a mountain hide-out. Here, courageous friendly locals from the village of Mezzano supplied them with food.

The Western Front attack, expected on the 15th - the Ides of March, did not eventuate until June, but immediately the Partisans, consisting of members of the Anti-Fascist/Nazi Resistance and men who had avoided the call-up for the Republican forces, became active. Malcolm and William, known respectively by their 'battle names' of "Sydney" and "Melbourne", participated in skirmishes with the enemy but were always hindered by lack of weapons and accordingly were often forced to retreat to the slopes of Mt Barona following "cat and mouse" activities.

When Major Alistair McDonald parachuted in with members of the British Military Mission to Northern Piedmont, radio contact

was soon established with Allied Forces to be followed by arms drops of mortars, machine-guns, light automatic weapons, grenades and explosives. The Resistance became a real force but the reprisals against civilians meant atrocities, homes burned, defenceless villages bombed by the Luftwaffe, and hostages taken and punished for aiding the Partisans.

General Mark Clark, commander of the Allied forces which crossed the River Po, called on the populace to revolt and frustrate the enemy withdrawal. The Resistance became ferociously aggressive. Republican forces began to surrender and German forces were trapped in northern Italy. Two Brigades of Partisans on May 1, 1945, staged their own victory march through the streets of Vercelli. Just after midnight on May 2, German forces surrendered as the mechanised units of the 5th American Army entered Vercelli.

Suddenly, the war was over, but sadness and scars were to last for a long time. Malcolm and William were discharged from the Resistance to become members of the British Military Mission to North Piedmont. After farewelling friends they flew from Naples in a Liberator on June 22, 1945. William Wigglesworth died on May 25, 1987.

MEMORIES OF GOR, MILNE BAY

(by Alec Hepburn)

On arrival at Milne Bay I was housed in the copra factory and drove a 3-tonner carting stores from the wharf to wherever on a 12 hours on, 12 hours off basis. Dress was shorts, sometimes shirts, when driving or loading and unloading except when it rained, when the clothing was rolled up and stowed in the cabin to keep it dry. I was given a gun tractor later and operated as a DR, officers' driver and tow vehicle operator towing coconut palm trunks for gunpits at No 1 strip.

During this phase, I gave a lift to an infantryman who was, I discovered, crying. (I was told that the average age of men in his battalion, including officers, was 18 years 6 months; average service was 4 months, major training activity - kitchen fatigue.) On enquiring about his distress, I was told, "I've broken my rifle and my officer will be very cross". I said he didn't look strong enough to bust his rifle, explained the "half cocked position" to him and left him at his unit much happier. I wasn't too happy at the state of training of our infantry defence against the Japs.

At the time of the Milne Bay battle, the only phones in the area that worked were the AA phones and this was because of the self-sacrificary service of the AA Sigs. The only way Force HQ could talk to RAAF HQ was via GOR switch and even this was so poor that the switch operator had to relay sentences in different alternate directions. The RAAF in Milne Bay had to obtain permission from RAAF Melbourne via Army Melbourne before they were able to mount strikes against Jap troops on the ground.

RAAF kept phoning Force HQ asking if permission had been received and being told "Not yet". Our operator at last thought this was not good enough and instead of repeating "Not yet", said "Yes, Yes" and off went the Kittyhawks, we hoped to good effect.

AAHQ and GOR had a Comforts Fund radio which achieved some remarkable feats - we often received 3SR Shepparton. With some help from Bdr Dick Davies, a radio actor in civil life, the gunner on duty at GOR would take notes of the ABC News and at appointed times read these notes at dictation speed to all gun sites where the duty telephonist would take them down and display the result on the notice board.

After an unusually long bulletin, all the gunsites acknowledged except M1 at 23 HAA Regt section. When queried the telephonist said:- "the hurricane lamp blew out as soon as

you started and when someone got the lamp going again, I found I had written all the news with a pencil with no point".

I've always been interested in food. I recall that a Troop cook at 9 Bty at a time when the rations consisted of mostly bully-beef, biscuits, tinned goldfish and canned asparagus, used to wash the goldfish in the creek then fry them in batter -hey presto - fresh fish! At AAHQ we had 4 mission boys, average age 12 years, who kept all the HQ and GOR people supplied with bread cooked in the kitchen stove, using yeast initially made by putting lime juice into not quite ripe coconuts. Later we got some yeast from a ship's cook. Fuel for the stove was a problem; eventually packets of army biscuits proved the best.

GREEK GENERAL VISITS MELBOURNE 51st BATTLE FOR CRETE ANNIVERSARY

In recognition of the hospitality shown to Australian veterans during the 50th Anniversary tour of Greece and Crete in 1991, General Peter Gratton, Chief of the Australian Defence Force, invited the Hellenic Defence Force Chief, General Veryvakis, to visit Australia for the 1992 anniversary.

Organisers of the Melbourne functions to mark the occasion invited our Regiment, as one of those involved in the campaign, to parade with the Regiment's banner at a Commemorative Ceremony attended by the Generals at the Shrine of Remembrance on Sunday, May 17, 1992. As well as a large gathering of the Greek community and their many organisations, representatives of 1 Aust Corps, 6 Aust Division units and HMA ships that fought in the Mediterranean in 1941, also attended.

Those who had travelled to Crete for the 50th Anniversary were asked to wear the ribbon and collar medallion given to them at Rethymnon. Dick Plant, now living in Sydney, had returned in 1991 and again met with Cretans who had helped him; but was unable to join the group of twenty-four members of the 2/3 LAA Regt who mustered with Bert Baglin behind the unit banner.

The crowd, packed around us in the forecourt at the Shrine, made us feel very welcome. When General Veryvakis arrived, accompanied by the ceremonial guard of Evzones brought from Greece, he was welcomed by the guard provided by the Fifth/Sixth Royal Victorian Regiment - the only Infantry Battalion in the Melbourne metropolitan area at the time. Following the inspection of the Guard of Honor, General Veryvakis, with his escort guard performing their spectacular drill routine, moved past our assembled units saluting our banner in passing.

Following a brief service, Greek and Australian veterans marched past the saluting base before the Eternal Flame and the 2nd WW memorial where wreaths had been laid. Veterans were invited to attend at the Cretan Village at Wantirna South where refreshments and entertainment were provided.

Mal Webster and Phil Bannister, who represented our unit at the social function were most impressed by the warm welcome and hospitality shown to them. Stirring speeches by the Greek welcoming party extolled the courage of the Australian soldiers during the Greek and Crete campaigns. A replica of a proposed memorial to be erected at the village, the Headquarters of the Pan Cretan Brotherhood in Victoria, was on display. It depicts the battle-sharing of the two nations with a Cretan soldier standing holding the Australian flag and an Australian kneeling holding the Greek flag. The artist no doubt included symbolism in his design.

General Veryvakis is a Cretan by birth. He exchanged commemorative plaques with General Gratton who represented the hosting nation - Australia.

The elite guard of twenty soldiers accompanying the General were resplendent in their national costume and made a most impressive contribution to the proceedings - each man being two hundred centimetres in height.

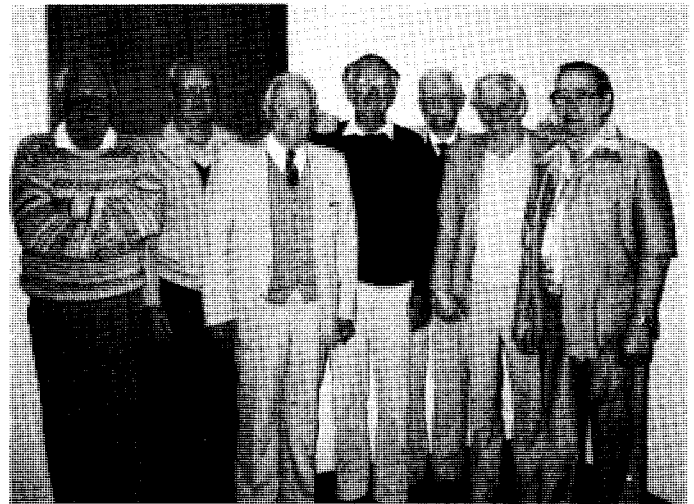
Mal and Phil thoroughly enjoyed the evening high-lighted by traditional dancing and hospitality.

W.A. STYLE HOSPITALITY

Ron Bryant (8) and wife Doreen called in to Perth on a recent 17,000 km caravan journey from Melbourne to Darwin, into the Kimberley Region and down the West coast, eventually returning home across the Nullarbor.

Gordon Connor, our WA President, on learning of their imminent arrival in Perth, at short notice rallied several of our Perth members to take the Bryants to lunch and a very pleasant afternoon at Anzac House. Amongst those present were George Howat, Jim Moyes, K Walton, Nap Croft, Bob Vansittart, Theo Fitzhardinge and of course Gordon Connor and several of their ladies.

Gordon Connor presented Ron with a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of his efforts with "Take Post". Ron and Doreen appreciated the traditional WA hospitality, particularly being at such short notice, and enjoyed meeting old friends and their ladies who join in on many of their social occasions.



Reunion at Perth RSL Club, 18/8/92.
(L-R): George Howat, K Walton, Jim Moyes, Gordon Connor,
Ron Bryant, Nap Croft, Bob Vansittart.

A PILOT'S RECOLLECTION OF AA AT MILNE BAY AND MORESBY.

Reg Farrant (ref. story in 1992 "Take Post") met up again after many years with the pilot (Sims) who shared experiences with him when their Beaufighter was shot down in 1945.

With fifty years passed the conversation got around to the New Guinea campaign. Sims did not know that Reg had been with AA prior to joining the RAAF but Reg knew that Sims had served with 75 Squadron at Port Moresby and Milne Bay where 9 Bty served.

Discussion led to comparison between the capabilities of the Kittyhawk planes then and the Jap planes opposing them. Sims believed that the Kittyhawk was not able to compete on even terms because of many factors apart from the maximum performance of the aircraft itself, but he believed that it served well as a defence force for ground troops. On one point he was certain - that the AA units acquitted themselves well. "The AA were always ready and on the job," he said.

BY THE WAY.

Dave Humphreys reports on a few old Gunners:-

Bill Dellar (7) has been living in Rochester for a couple of years after moving from Lilydale, and had a recent "do you remember" session with Dave.

Alec Hough (7) calls in occasionally when visiting Bendigo. Alec who is approaching 80, lives with his wife at Moama.

Dave sees Tom Williams (7) often as he is in Echuca Group of Legacy. Tom is fit, working hard at his golf handicap.

Len Morgan (7/8) lives with his daughter Penny at Echuca. Herbie Hay is now in Bendigo. Herbie said Les Stephens wanted to get hold of a Bofors gun. Can anyone find one for him?

Dave Humphreys himself is retiring from the Board of Bendigo Hospital after many years service during which time he has seen it become a leader in country base hospitals. Dave and his wife spent August/September 1992 in Canada and the USA. While in New York, they were burgled, losing a camera and some jewellery. On reporting the matter to a policewoman, Dave had to spell "Australia" for her. She didn't have a clue where it was. However Dave did meet some people who had seen Crocodile Dundee.

We heard that Lee Coutts had not been very well, so trust that he is back in good form again.

Phil Blshop (RHQ/7) is a remarkably fit 84 years of age, and divides his time between Surrey Hills and Mornington.

Our Greek Friends:- During the calendar year representatives of the Association attended ceremonies connected with the anniversary of the Battle of Crete and the anniversary of the Greek Heroes.

When visiting Sydney: The Secretary of 2/3 Aust. Composite AA Regiment Association is Kevin Grey, he lives at 5 Dalwood Ave, Seaforth 2092 (907 9101). On Anzac Day the members assemble in Castlereagh Street near Hunter Street about 8.30 am under the banner with the 1st Corps Artillery colour patch displayed. It is suggested that you call Kevin when in Sydney as the Association has several functions during the year and he assures us that you would be very welcome.

Murray Takasuka (7) is still going well at Afterhead SA despite he and his wife having had a few health problems in recent years.

Clive Greenhill (9) now in his 80th year has still been busy with Missions to Seamen Chaplains Conference, Legacy, interstate and overseas travel, despite needing a wheelchair.

George Howat (8) has had a couple of spells in hospital but at the last report is going well.

Col Reilly, probably the Regiment's youngest officer in 1941, again made the journey down from Sydney to our 1992 re-union and march. Col still swims early mornings at Balmoral Beach and in 1000 & 1500 metres swimming races.

We were there! In the excellent TV series "When the War Came to Australia" shown again by the ABC during 1992, one of the commentators said:- "In 1942, Western Australia was left undefended". Undefended? Only until those magnificent 7th and 8th Batteries of our Regiment arrived to protect the girls in Perth, the US Navy's Catalinas and canteen at Crawley Bay, the RAAF with their WAAF's and the Bullsbrook Hotel at Pearce, the Avro Ansons and the Italian tomato growers at Geraldton aerodrome, and the RAAF's 76 Squadron at Onslow. No wonder the enemy didn't come down the West coast!

Nonagenarians! Congratulations to Tom Evely (7) and to Hugh Roger Taylor (8) on reaching their 90th and 91st birthdays respectively. Both have kept remarkably good health. How many other members of the Regiment are in their nineties?

Did you get one of the 75cent stamps bearing a picture of one of 9 Bty guns which co-operated with 6 HAA Bty in the defence of the Moresby, Milne Bay area?

MILNE BAY 1942-1992

On August 26, 1992, the anniversary of the Japanese landing at Milne Bay, ex-members of 2/6th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery and 2/9 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery joined in remembering the defeat of the Japanese. There was a good attendance from both Batteries. The 2/3rd Composite AA Regiment was later formed from these two Batteries.

THE FLIGHT OF THE PELICAN.

Robert Gordon Campbell! 1992

Published by Tugri Books, 74 Kennedy Street, Picnic Point NSW 2213 (available from the Publishers). Paperback, 200 pp. Illustrated, index, RRP \$22.00 post free. ISBN 06461279 7. Dewey No. 940.546194.

This biography summarises the first thirty-one years of Robert Campbell's life, beginning in 1914 in Richmond, an inner suburb of Melbourne. Much of his childhood was spent in Cheltenham, south of Melbourne. His childhood memories paint an accurate first-hand picture of life, as seen through the eyes of a child, and yet provide an in-depth social comment on this period.

During the Great Depression he moved from job to job throughout much of country Victoria, in an attempt to maintain a living. Much of this time was spent as a professional golfer. He enlisted in the 8th Battery of the 2nd/3rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment when it was announced that Australia was at war with Germany. Inadequately trained and poorly equipped, he and many other raw recruits sailed for the Middle East on Boxing Day 1940. His battery and other Allied troops were eventually to be part of the famous siege of Tobruk. The German's derogatory description, the 'Rats of Tobruk' has become part of our folklore. The description of this period of the conflict is the book's strength. His humorous stories describe the daily activities of the soldiers as they survived the hardships of desert life. He describes the Diggers who disapproved of the often senseless regulations of Commanding Officers and the constraints of military discipline. His stories encapsulate the larrikin spirit of the Aussie soldier, a characteristic cherished by all Australians.

It is a biography that will be of particular interest to Australian historians and to anyone who had relatives and friends who fought in the Middle East during World War II.

This story is clearly and concisely written; a delight to read.

WIDOWS OF PRISONERS OF WAR

The Commonwealth Government has advised that legislation is to be introduced to provide that with effect from 1st January 1993 all widows of Australian Servicemen who were prisoners of war will be eligible for a pension equivalent to the War Widows Pension.

Widows of Australian Servicemen who were prisoners of war, should contact Melbourne Legacy (phone 663-3564) if NOT currently receiving the War Widows Pension. Legacy will be prepared to assist with claims.