



"TAKE POST!"

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

April 1999



*8 Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (Airborne) – C Troop
at Melville WA — July 1943*

REUNION NOTICE

The Anzac Reunion will be held on **Saturday April 24, 1999**, from 12 noon until 3:30 pm (doors do not open before 11:30 am). The cost of Annual Subscription, lunch and drinks is **\$25**. Please see the enclosed notice regarding lunch arrangements.

The venue is the same as last year — the **Air Force Convention Centre, 4 Cromwell Rd, South Yarra**. (Access to the car park is from Cromwell Road).

John Campbell, Hon Secretary.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the **Air Force Convention Centre, 4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra** at 11:45 am (doors do not open before 11:30 am), April 24, 1999. The AGM is held just prior to the Anzac reunion.

Members are reminded that nominations for Committee must be lodged with the Honorary Secretary 14 days before the meeting.

John Campbell, Hon Secretary.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

*It is with sincere regret
we report the passing of
these former comrades:*

Keith Senior	
J. R. Gleeson	Sigs
George Young	8 Bty
J. R. McIntosh	9 Bty
Alexander Risk	8 Bty
W. L. (John) Knight	7 Bty
Keith Dyer	R.H.Q
R. J. Hayes	7 Bty
W. H. Hansen	R.H.Q
G. M. Storer	9 Bty
H. Parker	7 Bty
Lew Potter	8 Bty
Jim Bourke	8 Bty
Robert M. Lowe	9 Bty
F. C. Jeffs	
W. (Bill) Dellar	

Lest We Forget

2/3 Australian Light Ack-Ack Association**PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

I congratulate our retired President, Cec Rae, who has served 50 years on our Committee – many of these years being as Honorary Secretary of our Association. I must also take the opportunity of congratulating John Hepworth who has set the remarkable record of 51 years as Honorary Treasurer. On behalf of all of us, I thank Cec and John for their wonderful service. We wish them well and look forward to having the continued benefit of their experience.

Our "get-together" on 24th April 1998 was another great reunion to remember. About 80 members attended. This number has remained fairly constant over the past four years in spite of the fact that we have lost many comrades over that period of time. I would like to see more taking part in the Anzac March although I realize many are finding the physical side a little tough.

The very warm reception from the public viewing the march gives one a great feeling of pride and helps to commemorate the memory of those men who served but are no longer with us.

In these last few years, school children seem to have become more aware of the history of the two world wars. I am sure that the special publicity and ceremonies of the 50th Anniversary engendered this and of course Legacy's continuing program of involving children in the planting of pine trees raised from the seed of the original Aleppo pine growing in Anzac Cove in 1914.

It might be appropriate to remind members of the regiment that most of you are eligible to receive the Gold Card from Veteran Affairs. The financial advantages of holding a Gold Card are tremendous as it covers complete health care costs. Consult the Department of Veteran Affairs if you are in doubt.

Before concluding, thanks are due to some particularly helpful people – there is John Campbell our Hon. Secretary who can be relied upon for good support for the President.

Then there is Ron Bryant for the job he cheerfully does to bring this great newsletter to you each year and also my thanks to Max Parsons (from the 2/12 Field Regiment) who finally arranges its printing. Ron Berry keeps our address list up to date.

Lastly to the Committee and Members of the Association thank you for the honour of representing you as President.

I look forward to welcoming as many as can possibly attend our next reunion on the 24th April 1999.

JACK CRITTENDEN

**2/3 AUSTRALIAN
LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT
ASSOCIATION**

President: JACK CRITTENDEN

Patron: BERT BAGLIN

Immediate Past President: CEC RAE.

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Box 205, PO Mentone, Vic.3194.

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Hon Treasurer: JOHN HEPWORTH.

Newsletter Editor: RON BRYANT.

Committee:

LES HARRIS : IAN RUTTER
DAVE THOMSON : ROY THOMSON
FRANK WASHBOURNE : MAL WEBSTER

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

CONGRATULATIONS!

We welcome the new President of our association – **Jack Crittenden**. He was duly elected at our last annual meeting after the resignation of our very well known **Cec Rae**.

Fortunately Cec will remain on the Committee so we will have the continuing benefit of his experience.

At the age of 19 years, our new President, Jack Crittenden, enlisted in the AIF at Caulfield Racecourse in July 1940 and soon after moved to Werribee where he was attached to 9 Battery.

He sailed with the Regiment on the *Mauritania* to Palestine. Later when the Regiment split up, he saw action in the Western Desert with 9 Battery in "Operation Battleaxe" when the attempt was made to relieve Tobruk.

The next move was to Beirut. He had a short spell in the Suez Canal area, then returned to Australia on a small cargo ship, which happened to have a Bofors mounted on the bow.

After very welcome home leave, it was off to Townsville, Port Moresby and Milne Bay where he served with 9 Battery until he transferred to the new 235 Battery.

On discharge from the Army in 1945, Jack and his brother Doug joined their father in the family licensed grocery business. For the next 35 years the two brothers worked together to expand the business and in 1981 sold out completely to Myer Ltd.

Jack is now happily retired in Brighton and always looks forward to hearing from old mates.



Cec Rae congratulates President Jack Crittenden

The Melbourne Anzac March

We will assemble as usual in Flinders Street, on the east side of Swanston Street. It is estimated that our Regiment will move off at about 9.40 am.

"Eyes Right" will be ordered at the Eternal Flame – not when abreast of the official party. The Navy will lead, followed by the Army, then the Air Force.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Greetings to all from your Committee and from myself. Thank you for the letters and phone calls; please keep them coming. Again this year I have been able to help some family members with information of their father's service in the 2/3rd. I am not always able to help a great deal, but will do my best.

Quite a number aren't able to get around much these days and a number of apologies were received for our last Annual Luncheon. They included – **Ted Sands**, **Bob Westall** and **Dave Humphries**.

Frank O'Toole from NSW sends regards to his old mates. **Bill Waddell** and **David Carty** sent messages in appreciation of *Take Post*; keep it going was

the cry! **David Owens** hopefully has recovered from a heart attack. **Alex Barnett** (8) of Port Macquarie has completed a 300-page book, which is to be published this year, and possibly called "Trapped in the Red". Alex was a POW.

Jim Charters (7) met **Dave Thomson** recently and after all these years is now on our members' list; welcome Jim, hope to see you at the reunion! **Kevin Grey** Hon Secretary of the 2/3 Composite Lt AA Regt Association was able to give me a list of former 9th Bty members not on our Unit Association list. I

wrote to them all and had a wonderful response. These "lost" members are – **Hugh Finn** who couldn't believe his eyes when he saw his best mate **Pancho McDonald's** face on the front of the *Take Post* I had sent him. Hugh says "Hi" Pancho. **Dan Hawkes** sent photos for identification. I hope you got them back Dan, with names attached.

Others who contacted me were **Stan Walker**, **Bob Williams**, **Bob McAndrew**, **Bob Sampson**, **Cliff Cullen**, **Perc Hancock** and **Bob Robson**. Thank you all for the newsy letters. I look forward to this year when I hope to get more letters from you.

John Campbell

DOUG'S DIARY

Brian Layton (7 Battery) tells the story of his brother Doug's diary which was returned to Doug's family by the mother of a German soldier:

In May 1941 my brother Doug and I were in Crete during the invasion by the Germans. I was taken prisoner – Doug was shot and died of wounds. He was buried after capitulation in the Suda Bay region. I eventually finished up at Stalag VIII B in what is now Poland, and was repatriated in 1945.

In May 1947 my mother received, by mail, Doug's wallet which was inscribed "Presented by Citizens of Violet Town".

The mother of a German soldier who served on Crete and survived service (including POW) on the Eastern front was concerned that her son had something personal belonging rightfully to Doug's mother and they decided to return it.

Some difficulty was experienced in those days of securing safe mail, but this was eventually done through a friend of the mother, who worked for the British Army of Occupation in Hamburg. Our family was very grateful for her concern. Doug was a sheep farmer out of Violet Town (Koonda) and his wallet and story are now in the War Museum there.

I also had an experience of a "personal" nature. I was on a working party at a lime kiln, living away from Stalag VIII B in barracks provided by the employer, as most working parties were. As the Russians reached the Oder River, groups such as us were marched west daily from barn to barn under army control.

I escaped when we were halted by a bogged refugee cart on a back road crammed with refugees and lay low for the day in the surrounding forest. Towards evening I walked to what appeared to be, and was, an empty farmhouse at the edge of a village.

I searched for food without success and was in the attic when three ladies who could not speak English, and who lived there, returned for the night. They were sheltering daily from an expected Russian advance through their village.

As it happened, the Russians went through the next village, but the ladies left the farmhouse every day, and left me to have some food and a bath (some weeks overdue). I believe they thought I would be some protection for them from the Russians.

A few days later, at the ladies' suggestion, I walked through the still deserted village to a camp of Free French labourers. From there to a larger French Camp (French army officers in uniform) who contacted the Russian army (white flag, Red Cross) through a Czech who could speak Russian. The Russians took control and we were delayed somewhat and had to do some work such as loading and unloading lend-lease trucks.

Eventually we were repatriated to the US Army at Torgau, on the Elbe, and finally by the RAF to England.

In 1946 or '47 I received a letter from an English speaking friend of the three ladies who wondered what happened to me after I left them. I replied but contact was not maintained.

Members at the 1998 Anzac Reunion



Mal Webster, Phil Bannister, Bill Cassidy, John Nicholson, Len Woolcock, Bill Waller

THE SENTRY'S LOG

Alex Barnett (8) reports that *Jack Harker* of Port Macquarie received an achievement award in the Australia Day Honours list. After WW2 Jack joined the Merchant Navy as a butcher. In 1945 and 1946 he was stationed at Hong Kong at a time when its residents were suffering from the state of its economy which was vastly different to recent times.

Jack recalls Chinese wharfies going to the butcher's shop for four inches of chicken gut to cook on the steam pipes of his ship. Girls would do washing and sewing and were so starved they would be glad to be paid with the innards of fowls.

Since Jack left the Navy in 1949 he has been a steady community worker in many ways – including delivery of Anzac Day meals to those unable to attend their ceremonial luncheon and in organising transport for ex-service personnel to hospitals, trains or airport. Jack remains bright and cheerful despite problems with his legs and knees.

Alex Barnett also advises that he hopes he will have his book on POW experiences in WW2 published in the latter part of 1999. If there are any members of the Regiment who became prisoner of war and who have not been in contact with Alex, he would be interested to hear of their adventures after the Italian capitulation and of their subsequent career in 'civvy' life for inclusion in the epilogue of the book. Alex Barnett's address is 2 Hassall Street, Port Macquarie, NSW 2444.

Despite the fact that *Col McNaughton* (8) lives quite close to the water's edge at Metung, Gippsland Lakes, neither he nor his home suffered

from the devastating Gippsland floods in June 1998 – even though his little jetty was metres under water. However Col has had other difficulties, suffering from pneumonia and persistent shingles.

Frank Hands and *Ron Bryant* lost an old mate in April last year – namely Gunner *George Young* (8) of Baynton. Frank and Ron had many good days' rabbit shooting with George, and visiting his family. In fact, George's model farm had few rabbits; but George would arrange with his neighbours for permission to shoot on their properties.

Gordon Connor reports that the WA Troop still get together occasionally. Fifteen members enjoyed the pre-Christmas meeting. *Gordon Fellows* and *Theo Fitzharding* were absent due to ill health. Gordon Connor has to do his best as chief cook as a result of his wife Gwen's nasty fall and resultant damage to her right arm.

Ron Bryant was pleased to contact *Phil Hurst* who sports that very low number of VX5862 – Phil was in the 6th Division and served with 2/7 Infantry Battalion in Libya, Greece and Crete. At Suda Bay Phil was wounded in the shoulder by shrapnel from a large mortar bomb. As "walking wounded" he crossed the island and was lucky to be evacuated by the Navy. After many weeks in hospital receiving treatment for his wounded shoulder and resultant bad infections, he asked for a transfer to join his brother, *Stan Hurst*, who was in our 8th Battery. Phil saw out the war in New Guinea and Australia with 8th Battery. He and his wife Shirley now live at Mount Waverley – sadly Stan died about six years ago.



2/3rd Members at the 1998 Anzac March in Melbourne

15,000 TROOPS SACRIFICED FOR "ULTRA" AT CRETE?

In his recently published book, *Churchill and Secret Service*, the author, David Stafford, has drawn upon previously unavailable sources of information to reveal details of secrets and events, relating to Churchill's involvement in the history of the 20th century. (Permission granted by the publishers, John Murray Ltd, to quote, as requested, from the actual text for *Take Post*, is gratefully acknowledged).

Churchill's experiences, as a youthful correspondent and soldier, had convinced him of the value of secret intelligence and the planning of clandestine operations. Throughout his political career, he applied this knowledge on many occasions: he assisted in the passage of the Official Secrets Act in 1911 to counter German spying activity in Britain; during WWII he drafted the charter for *Room 40* - Britain's first modern Signals Intelligence Agency using *Signet* to co-ordinate all spying information. In 1940, as Prime Minister, he created the Bletchley Park Agency, where most-secret *Ultra* reports decoded vital messages from the German *Enigma* transmitter. He established the Special Operation Group Executive to plan behind-the-lines activities; he co-opted Roosevelt in forming the Trans-Atlantic Intelligence Agency, after America came into the war.

It was the code-breakers at Bletchley Park, processing huge quantities of information from enemy and other sources, who produced the vital items of intelligence that Churchill referred to as his "Golden Eggs". These messages, to be read only by Churchill and his immediate assistant, were jealously guarded, for they provided "immense power against unsuspecting enemies and a trump card in dealing with his Chiefs of Staff and allies".

Late in 1940, *Ultra* revealed large German troop movements to the east in Europe. While their purpose was not immediately apparent, this intelligence was a factor contributing to the decision to withdraw troops from the Desert to Greece.

At the time Churchill was trying to impress Stalin and Roosevelt with the legitimacy of Britain's vital interest in the Middle East. Crete was already important as a naval base for the Mediterranean Fleet so, as tension increased in Greece, development of the airfields in Crete became more urgent, especially as *Ultra* continued to provide General Wavell, commander in Greece, with "astonishingly accurate details of the German Order of Battle" and the inevitable realisation of the inadequacy of his own resources to counter their offensive.

The withdrawal of forces to Crete, for General Freyberg, meant an increase in his responsibilities in taking over command of the island's defences from Major-General Weston, commander of the Royal Marine Naval Base Defence Organisation. "Freyberg learned about *Ultra* at midday on 30th April 1941, following a hastily-convened staff conference at a villa between Maleme and Canea.

Wavell, who had flown in from Cairo, had just told him of his appointment as commanding officer on the island, and of the impending German attack; he explained what *Ultra* intelligence was and how, precisely, it would reach him; he was to tell no one on Crete about *Ultra*; he

was never to take action on the basis of *Ultra* alone lest the Germans suspected that *Enigma* was being read".

Freyberg's NZ troops had already been deployed after discussions with other commanders, but now, he alone on Crete knew the full *Ultra* secret, and could tell no one about it.

"On the 7th May, on Churchill's orders, Freyberg received the detailed summary of German operational orders for the attack, decrypted just the day before. Freyberg faced a terrible dilemma. The impending attack was far heavier than he had anticipated and the weight of the attack from the air as compared to that from seaward twice so. Initial troop deployments were wrongly placed to counter such a massive attack aimed at the airfields, particularly Maleme.

EX-PRISONERS OF WAR ASSOCIATION

A National Re-union will be held in Melbourne, 11th to 18th October 1999. All Prisoners of War, Widows, their relatives and friends are invited to attend this great program of functions and entertainment. For full details of events and costs write to:

Victorian Ex-Prisoners of War Assoc.,
PO Box 2, Flinders Lane PO, 8009,
or telephone 9629 5365, Fax 9629 5365.

"Ultra" continued:

The obvious answer was to move more troops to the airfield, but this would break the rule: no action on the basis of Ultra alone". Freyberg sent a message to Wavell indicating that if the rule continued to be enforced "then Crete was lost". Freyberg later recalled that in his reply, Wavell sent a message (to be destroyed on reading), "The authorities in England would prefer to lose Crete than risk jeopardising Ultra".

It was always a mystery to those stationed at Maleme, why no troops were posted beyond the bridge and the west bank of the near-dry Tevronitis River, which bordered the western edge of the Maleme airfield. It was there that so many of the glider-borne and airborne troops successfully landed. The answer appears to be provided now by the *Ultra* evidence.

"This recently revealed evidence and the testimony of Freyberg's son throw light on the fall of Crete and explain why, on the day he received Wavell's letter, Freyberg cancelled a planned move by the 1st Greek Regiment to an area immediately west of Maleme airfield – a decision that has long mystified historians of the battle and that was never explained by Freyberg who died in 1963 still protecting Ultra's secret".

Some 15,000 British and Dominion troops were killed, wounded or captured. The Germans lost 7,000 killed. They never again attempted an airborne landing against enemy territory. It's easy to be wise with hindsight; but it does seem that a reinforcement of Maleme could have been explained – and hence, *Ultra* protected – by reference to the failure of the Germans to bomb the airfield with other than anti-personnel bombs, a decision that revealed an intention to use it themselves. But what remains clear is that *Ultra* emerged from the debacle intact and that Churchill's enthusiasm for it remained undimmed.

Rats Of Tobruk WORLD REUNION

A world reunion of the Rats of Tobruk will be held in Brisbane from 5-10 April 2001. The organizing committee of the Rat's Association will advise all its members of arrangements.



Tom Dawson, John Bright, Col Reilly

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Naturally you wish to be a financial member of our Association and the treasurer can grant your wish — just fill in the enclosed remittance slip, add a cheque for \$5 and post it to

John Campbell
PO Box 205, Mentone 3194

If you are attending the Annual Reunion the subscription will be included with the cost of lunch and drinks.

Our thanks go to those who, last year, forwarded their \$5 with welcome accompanying letters.



Ern Kerr, Ern Cope, Ian Rutter

GALLIPOLI LONE PINE LIVES ON

The Gallipoli "Lone Pine" has become a piece of living history in Australia.

Every Australian soldier who served at Gallipoli knew of Plateau 400 or "Lone Pine" – the scene of some of the fiercest hand-to-hand combat by Australians in World War 1. The Plateau was distinguished by a solitary lone pine which bore silent witness to the heroism and tenacity of Australians who fought there.

Lone Pine was a heavily fortified Turkish trench position, identified by a solitary *Pinus Halepensis* species *Brutia* commonly known as an "Aleppo Pine".

At 5.30 pm on August 6, 1915, Australians of the First Brigade attacked the Turkish trenches under heavy machine-gun and artillery fire. The Australians found the trenches were roofed over with pine logs covered with earth. They clawed the roofing back and jumped into the trenches below. After savage hand-to-hand fighting the trenches were taken by 6 pm. Attack and counter attack continued until August 10, when fighting at Lone Pine ceased, and the position was firmly held in Australian hands.

The six Australian Battalions involved lost 80 officers and 2197 men in the battle for Lone Pine. Turkish deaths were estimated at between 5,000 and 6,000.

At Gallipoli, during the eventual evacuation, 33 men of the 24th Infantry Battalion mounted a gallant action. They were left behind to keep up the pretence that the Lone Pine trenches were still occupied. They destroyed the remaining guns, and embarked before daylight twenty minutes before the appointed time and less than two hours before a storm blew up which would have made withdrawal impossible.

Although the Lone Pine was destroyed in the fighting it lives on today in Australia.

This is where the Legacy Lone Pine story begins.

During the withdrawal a soldier, Sgt Keith McDowell, picked up a pine cone from the original Lone Pine and placed it in his haversack as a souvenir. Sgt McDowell carried the cone for the remainder of the war and when he returned to Australia gave it to his aunt, Mrs Emma Gray of Grassmere near Warrnambool. "*Here Aunty, you've got a green thumb, see if you can grow something out of this*", the late Mrs. Gray's son, Alexander, recalled.

But it wasn't until some 12 years later that Mrs. Gray planted the few seeds from the cone, five of which sprouted and grew into little trees. One of the pines eventually died but the remaining four survived.

In May 1933, the 24th Battalion planted one in Wattle Park on the occasion of the Trooping of the Colour.

On 11th June 1933, the second tree was planted with full military honours by General S G Savige of the 24th Battalion, at the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, where it now shades the well-loved statue of Simpson and his donkey. The late Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley G Savige KBE, CB, DSO, MC, ED, was the founder of Melbourne Legacy. Formed in 1923, the

Melbourne Legacy Club was the first such Club to be established.

On 18th June 1933 the third tree was planted at "The Sisters", near Terang, just northeast of Warrnambool. This is the area where Mrs. Gray's family lived and the home of several Gallipoli veterans. The fourth tree was planted in the Warrnambool Gardens on 23rd January 1934.

In 1964 Legatee Tom Griffiths, then President of Warrnambool Legacy, put forward the idea that more seedlings should be raised in the Jubilee Year of Gallipoli from the established trees with the object of planting memorial trees throughout



Jim Courtney, Lieut Dick Harry and Major Phil Stokes examining the Breda AA Gun in Libya

Australia in memory of those who fell in action at Lone Pine in 1915.

Two batches of cones were sent to Melbourne, one from the tree at "The Sisters" and another from the tree at the Warrnambool Gardens, and the full cooperation of the (then) Forests Commission of Victoria was guaranteed by the Chief Commissioner, Mr Benallack. Unfortunately, these cones had been gathered too late as the seeds had already been cast, and the few seeds that survived failed to germinate.

However, Melbourne Legacy then undertook the propagation and distribution of seedlings. With the assistance of the Shrine of Remembrance trustees, permission was granted by the Melbourne City Parks and Gardens curator to harvest a limited number of cones from the 24th Battalion tree at the Shrine. These were gathered by the Forests Commission and, after the necessary preparatory treatment, were planted in the Commission's nursery at Macedon.

Approximately 150 seedlings were raised from these cones by Dr Grose, Director of Silviculture.

The Melbourne Legacy's Commemoration Committee was responsible for the collection,

propagation, presentation and dedication of Lone Pines from the 24th Battalion tree at the Shrine of Remembrance.

On 14th September 1989 further seedlings were collected with the hope to raise 1000 trees from the seeds. This could not have been done without the invaluable assistance of the Department of Natural Resources and Dr. Peter May at the Victorian College of Agriculture and Horticulture in Richmond, Victoria.

Thus, Legacy is helping to keep the memory of the Gallipoli "Lone Pine" alive – its spirit living on today. Presentations are made to schools, ex-service organisations and interested bodies by Legacy Clubs in the hope they will be cherished as a symbol of Australian nationhood and of its pride, devotion, courage, selflessness and sense of service to others.

DVA FACTS

Department of Veterans' Affairs has published information sheets which cover the following:

Catalogue No.

Aged Care	HSV 40
Care in Nursing Homes and Hostels (an overview).	HSV 05
Dementia Care	HSV 41
Dementia: A practical Guide for Carers	
The above book is free to carers - others \$6	
Preventive Health Activities	HSV 44
Convalescent Care	HSV 77
Program of Appliances for Disabled People	HSV 106 and 107
Contact any DVA office for further information.	

OUR TREE AT THE SHRINE

As reported in the 1998 Take Post, we have a Simon Poplar tree dedicated to the memory of our Regiment at the Shrine of Remembrance Gardens, Melbourne.

It has been suggested that it could be a meeting place, perhaps about 45 minutes after we complete the Anzac March and finish our coffee break.

We appreciate that many of the marchers attend other activities after the March, however for those interested, the tree, with its 2/3rd Light Anti Aircraft Regiment plaque is on the St Kilda Road edge of the Shrine gardens nearly opposite Dorcas Street, but just a few yards south.



HMAS *Canberra*, the cruiser which escorted our troop transport, the *Mauretania*, from Melbourne to Colombo in January 1941.

The *Canberra* was lost near Savo Island during the Battle of Guadalcanal on August 9, 1942 after being struck by 24 Japanese shells. US destroyer *Patterson* stood by until the cruiser was abandoned — US ships then shelled and torpedoed the *Canberra* to sink it.

A sad end to a great ship.

THE MIRACLE OF THE COIN

The following story is stranger than fiction but it's true. It's bizarre to say the least!

In 1941 I was evacuated to Alexandra Greek Hospital from Tobruk, where I was placed in a bed next to a Greek Mariner with whom I became friendly. He asked me if I had an Australian coin that I would swap for a Greek coin and, as I had a shilling coin, I swapped it for his Greek drachma. Later I was transferred to the 6th British Hospital outside Cairo, where I met an Englishman who was able to engrave the Greek coin with my name and Army number. After drilling 2 holes in it, I wore it around my neck with my identification disc.

A Roman Catholic Padre, who I met, asked me if I was one of the Faith and when I told him that I was a Protestant, he then asked me if I was a 'believer' and I advised him that I was. He asked if he gave me a little medal would I wear it, to which I replied that I would. When he gave it to me he said that if anything would get me back home to Australia this would.

I replaced the drachma coin with the medal given by the Padre and wore it continuously until I lost it two years ago at Kununurra, in the north of Western Australia. I replaced the lost medal (one similar to the St Christopher medal) with a replica. I had lost the drachma coin either in Egypt or Palestine.

About eight years ago my son, Geoffrey, received an unexpected phone call from a lady living in Bayswater, Western Australia, who asked him if he had been in the armed forces and he told her that he hadn't but his father had and he had the same initials. The lady, a Mrs Bartlett, advised him that she had found a 'medal' engraved with "G Fellows" and a number on it. When she told Geoff that the number was "VX45773", Geoff said that it sounded like his father. She gave Geoff her name and phone number and I rang Mrs. Bartlett.

When she told me the name and number engraved on the 'medal', I confirmed that this had belonged to me and asked her how she came into its possession.

She said that her mother-in-law had recently passed away and the 'medal' was within a box of "all sorts" she had purchased at an auction in Sydney. It really had me confused and Mrs Bartlett said that she would bring it to me when she next visited their nearby holiday home. No one was home at the time of her visit and she left the 'medal' in our letterbox. I was amazed to see that it was actually the Greek coin which I had last seen in either Egypt or Palestine over 40 years previously. I thought this was an unusual happening as her mother-in-law had found it in Sydney in the box of things she'd purchased at an auction and I wondered why Mrs Bartlett should have started looking for someone in Western Australia when my Army number pointed to the fact that I had enlisted in Victoria.



Doug Simson and John Campbell adding the figures

Approximately two years ago, I was repeating the story of the drachma coin to an old friend who was visiting. I'm not sure what I did with the coin after that discussion, but when I next went to get it, it was nowhere to be found as obviously I hadn't put it in its usual safe keeping place and we kept a look-out for it, hoping it would one day turn up in the house.

About 3 weeks ago, George Howat of our 8th Battery, an old Army mate, phoned and asked me if I had recently lost something. I replied that I'd had my boat cleaned out of fishing gear and I had mislaid an RAC folder containing, among other things, my Bankcard and driver's licence. He said, "No, it's not any of those things, it's a Greek coin with your name and Army number on it". I advised him I'd lost it two years ago when I must have confused it with other coins and spent it – it was the same size as a 20c piece. George said, "Well, I got it amongst change from a taxi driver."

So the coin had been in circulation for two years and ended up with an old friend, which to me is a miracle. What tales that coin could tell! I believe there is something special about a coin that refuses to give me up, so now I am going to have it appropriately framed.

Gordon Fellows

BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA COMMEMORATION

Following the successful Navy-Army-Air Force Commemoration Services of the Battle for Milne Bay in the last three years at the Shrine of Remembrance, it was resolved by the Battle of Milne Bay Steering Committee and endorsed by the Ex-service Organisations' meeting at the RSL that the name of the Shrine Service Commemoration be changed to "The Battle for Australia" Commemoration Service.

The title of the committee be changed accordingly.

In 1999, the Commemoration will be held in the first week of September on a date yet to be announced.

Take Post is keen to receive articles written by members — why not put pen to paper today?



The Bathurst Beauty

Sergeant George Bartlett (Workshops) at Geraldton WA.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR ANZAC DAY 1999

The following decisions were made by the Anzac Day Commemoration Council on 4th December 1998:-

Anzac Sunday will be 18th April. The traditional service will be at St Paul's Cathedral.

An Airforce Officer will lead the March.

Other decisions were:

"that descendants be discouraged from participating in the Melbourne Anzac Day March; but that they be strongly encouraged to attend the March as spectators."

"that non-returned service personnel not receive approval to march in the Melbourne Anzac Day March."

Malaya/Borneo Veterans are to be allocated a position in the Post-1945 section of the March.



Frank Washbourne, Doug Simson, Lin Davis



Frank Hands, Fred Toy, 'Blue' Page



Tobruk Harbour — 1941

A British Bofors site where several 8 Battery gunners served. (AWM Diorama).

“There they were held, because the courage, pertinacity and aggressive patrolling of Morshead’s men were instrumental in keeping the German Panzer forces at bay — for the first time — thus blasting Rommel’s hopes of conquering Egypt in 1941.

“Tobruk has come to rank with Anzac as one of the outstanding feats of Australia’s military history”.

(Extract from the description of the Tobruk diorama at Australian War Memorial, Canberra)



Derna Harbour — 1941

Phil Roberts’ guncrew ready for action on the Customs Building at Derna