



# "TAKE POST!"

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

*April 2000*



*A Troop, 8 Aust Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (Airborne) at Melville WA – July 1943*

## REUNION NOTICE

The Anzac Reunion will be held on **Monday April 24, 2000** 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 Rd).

**Note: Our reunion is on Easter Monday!**

*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, Monday, April 24, 2000  
(doors do not open before 11:30 am)

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:*

G. Fellows.	8 Bty
R.G. Peters.	
D.A. [Alec] Forbes.	8 Bty
Gerry Chambers.	RHQ. 9 Bty
Reg Goldfinch.	
Richard (Dick) Telford	8 Bty
Bob Samson	9 Bty
A.J. Henry	7 Bty
Ron [Killer] Curtis	9 Bty
H.S. [Bert] Stringer	8 Bty
Peter McGeorge	7 Bty
M.J. McGillivray	8 Bty
Theo Fitzharding	9 Bty & R HQ
F.C. Scott	9 Bty
M. Takasuka	7 Bty
A.J. [Jack] Walsh.	7 Bty
Phil Bannister	7 Bty

*Lest We Forget*

**2/3 Australian Light Ack-Ack Association****Jack Crittenden's  
PRESIDENTIAL REPORT**

How quickly the year has slipped by since I made my last report to the Newsletter. These days life in general seems to have sped up and time rushes by. As children it seemed so long between birthdays, but no longer so - they come and go so fast!

During the celebrations of the new millennium much attention was given to the events of past years. Whilst there were heroic and good things to remember there were also many reminders of the loss of life and the misery in the world due to wars. I hope future generations will be wiser in their administration of world affairs and come to more peaceful solutions of world problems.

I am eagerly looking forward to catching up with you all again at our reunion on 24th April and to those who are unable to attend because of poor health I send you my very best wishes and assure you we will be thinking of our absent friends on that day. This year marks a special milestone for most of us as it is 60 years on July 6th since the 2/3rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment was formed at the Werribee racecourse.

As I write these notes I clearly remember passing through the gates for the first time as a very raw soldier in my rough ill-fitting uniform. It was a time to embark on new experiences and also a time one formed long lasting friendships.

The main event I attended after Anzac Day last year was the "Battle for Australia" commemoration service at the Shrine of Remembrance. Its purpose was to honour the courage, sacrifice and service of the men and the women who repulsed the Japanese attack on Australian territory.

It was a very impressive ceremony with addresses by the Victorian Governor and diplomats from New Guinea and the United States. Following this, representatives from most of Victoria's Secondary Schools laid floral tributes at the Cenotaph.

Later at the luncheon, an ex-Naval officer told vividly of first-hand experiences in the great Coral Sea and Midway battles. This particular commemoration service was a first for Victoria and is now a permanent feature on the calendar of annual events at the Shrine.

It was well organised - there were plenty of chairs provided, and I suggest that if you would like to attend in September this year and are unsure of the details, contact John Campbell in August.

Finally, my thanks to our helpful and hard working Committee and to all who assisted in the production of "Take Post".

*Jack Crittenden*

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

*President:* JACK CRITTENDEN

*Patron:* BERT BAGLIN

*Immediate Past President:* CEC RAE.

*Hon Secretary:* JOHN CAMPBELL,

Box 205, PO Mentone, Vic. 3194.

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*Assistant Secretary:* BRUCE TULLOCH

*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.

## EDITORIAL

From the book *"Lake Boga at War"* which tells the story of the training of Catalina pilots and others, the following extract seems appropriate for these days. We thank Sir John Gorton for permission to quote from his speech and the Legacy Club of Melbourne which has already published it.

Eight months had passed since cessation of hostilities. In cities, towns and hamlets throughout Australia, 'welcome home' receptions continued, honouring those who had returned from the war, remembering those who had not. At Mystic Park, 3 April, the largest gathering in memory now joined in such a reception. His public speaking untried, aspiration to public life unsignalled, John Gorton, ex RAAF fighter pilot, Kangaroo Lake orchardist, and future Prime Minister of Australia, responded to the toast on behalf of his fellow returned servicemen.

"There has been a good deal of confusion of thought as to why we went to war, and as to what we can reasonably expect as the result of our military victory. We did not go to war to make a new and better world. We cannot expect to make a new and better world as the result of the exercise of brutal military force. We can only expect to achieve the kind of world we want by

the use of brains and effort during peace. We fought only to preserve, for ourselves and our children, that conception of political freedom and justice which was being attacked by a tyrannous power. We succeeded in the defence. Yet, I have heard not only civilians but also returned soldiers say that because the world is not better, but worse, therefore the war was fought in vain. That it was a futile thing without reason or result and that all the suffering which it entailed was wasted.

"It was not wasted. We retained a system of government in which we, the people choose our governors, dismiss them when we wish, and have a voice in our destiny. We retained a conception of justice in which the humblest one amongst us has

equal rights before the law with the head of the State. We believe those principles were worth defending, not because in themselves they provided all that could be desired for human happiness, but because we believed that we could only advance to a full and satisfying life for all if we retained the freedom on which to build.

"A foundation is not a house; but without a foundation you cannot build an enduring structure. That we have retained this foundation is the answer to those who claim the war was futile.

"No person of susceptibility, no soldier who has seen his comrades killed, no Christian, above all no mother with growing children can stand idly by and see the chance we have once more won, once more wasted.

"That is why I demand of you, in the name of the dead and the returned, that you do not consider this war as task finished; that you do not regard the celebrations as the last chapter in the book. Look on

it rather as halftime – a joyful occasion certainly – but only a break in the continuous task. For tomorrow we must carry on again, and the tasks which lie in front of us are immense and urgent as never before".

*Gorton paused, then gesturing with upturned hands, concluded:*

"It will be hard. Without the spur and urgency of a war, it will mean a constant effort from all of

us. But I am going to call on your imaginations. I want you to forget it is I who am standing here. And I want you to see instead Bob Davey. And behind him I want you to see an army: regiment on regiment of young men dead. They say to you, *'Burning in tanks and aeroplanes, drowning in submarines, shattered and broken by high explosive shells we gave the last full measure of devotion. We bought your freedom with our lives. So take this freedom. Guard it as we have guarded it, use it as we can no longer use it, and with it as a foundation, build. Build a world in which meanness and poverty, tyranny and hate, have no existence.'*

"If you see and hear these men behind me – do not fail them".

## 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 attending the Annual Reunion the subscription is included with the cost of lunch and drinks. Our thanks to those who, last year, forwarded their \$5 with welcome accompanying letters.



## From the Secretary's Desk.

When we were young who would have thought that we would still be around to welcome in the year 2000! We *must* be survivors!

This year I have received plenty of mail from you, also of course many phone calls – thank you – it is great to get your comments and queries. Keep them coming please. Here goes —

A letter from **Joan Nicholson** advising that husband John is now in a nursing home. **Pat Sullivan** enjoys the articles and photos in "Take Post" they bring back many memories. **Len Chadwick** finds the distance too great to attend reunions but sends greetings to all. Thank you **Beryl Hawkins**, I hope your grandson enjoyed Indonesia and his diet of rice, rice and more rice. We all enjoyed **Gordon Fellows'** article about the returning coin as you did Beryl. **George Roberts** [8], writing from far flung Gerang Gerung, will welcome any who can call and see him, he is off the Western Highway on the way to Adelaide. **Stan Walker** [9] thanks for your reminiscences of many years ago especially about the "snail soup" prepared by **Pancho McDonald** when on kitchen bitch duties – Stan didn't think much of it Pancho! **T. Baker Williams** has shifted from his farm into Echuca. Hope you have settled in well and look forward to seeing you at a reunion soon.

**Allan Read** tells of **Dudley Gallagher** telling a story against himself "I had been ticking off a gunner, he was full of decorum saying 'yes sir, no

sir'. As I was about to dismiss him he asked, 'May I speak please sir? Of course, said Dud. 'Sir I have a brother just like you. How is that? What do you mean? Punch drunk sir'".

**Dan Hawkes**, **Stan [Blue] Walker** and **Cliff Cullen** represented the 2/3rd at the last Anzac March in Sydney. Dan also reported that **Bob McAndrew** was in hospital having his other leg off. I did write to Bob and wished him all the best. Dan also advised a Penguin soft cover book *Crete to Korea* is available.

**Esme Curtis** wrote advising of Ron's death. We too will sadly miss him at our reunions where he was well known and popular. **Phil Roberts** [8] phoned from Salisbury England where he has lived and worked for many years. He must have forgotten the time difference as I got the call around midnight! I soon woke up when he said he wanted to send some money to the Association. A very nice letter and a green banknote arrived in due course. Phil and Mearn's sons are both doctors, one a surgeon in New Zealand, the other an MD in UK. Have a great holiday in N.Z. this year!

**Edie Russell**, wife of Jim, advised that he had a bad stroke about four years ago and is now in a nursing home. The Ron Berry you speak of Edie is not "our Ron Berry", if you would like to contact Ron let me know and I will send you his address.

**Isa Fellows** also advised of Gordon's death and **Gordon Connors'** great efforts over many years in keeping the members of the unit and their wives together and in contact with each other.



## Your Committee

Rear Left to right:

Ron Bryant, John Campbell, Les Harris, Ian Rutter, Frank Washbourne, Cec Rae, Bert Baglin, Jack Crittenden, John Hepworth, Mal Webster.

Front row:

Dave Thomson, Roy Thomson, Bruce Tulloch.

**Ralph Hawkey** [8] advises that Nathalia now has a 25-pounder and a Bofors in town, apparently rescued from the surrounding district. I hope you have organised some gun drill Ralph. **David Carty** sends greetings and insists that "Take Post" keeps coming to his letterbox. **Fred Toy** [8] has had a trip south and called on **Mick Wade**, **Noel Moulton** and **Ralph Hawkey**. Will look forward to seeing you at the next reunion Fred. **Jean Bell** and **Evelyn Eaton** spent some time with **John Ballantine** seeing if John could enlighten them of their late husbands' doings in the 2/3rd.

**Ken Welsh** sent greetings from Noosa and **Cyril Kaighin** wrote advising that **Jack Henry** was very ill – unfortunately Jack passed away a little after that letter came. **Jack Fennessy** can't get to reunions as he is hooked to an oxygen machine. **Ron Walsh** in Tasmania sent a long letter and urged any of the unit going to Tassie on holidays to please look him up. Ron has had three bypasses and sounds ready for another life! He is still very involved with racing and would love to offer Tassie hospitality to members, (his phone number is 08 6272 8522).

**Margaret Dickenson** has moved house and enjoys "Take Post" which is also well-read by the younger family members. **Dave Humphreys** has improved in health I think Margaret. **Bob Phillips** [8] writing from Noosa Heads, is green with envy looking at the photos of the "young men" of the 2/3rd – that shows what good living does Bob. Sorry to know that some of your parts don't work so well Bob, but it beats the alternative!

Details of Alex Barnett's book appear on page 10 of this issue Bob. **Lynton Rose**, son of Clive Rose



**Anzac Reunion — Melbourne 1999**  
Eddie Pitman, Bunny Cheong, Jack Allison and guess who?

advised of his mother's death and wishes to continue getting "Take Post" – you are certainly on the mailing list Lynton. **Jean Bell**, widow of Jim, has or is about to move back to the farm where she and Jim lived for many years. Jean will be close to a daughter who now owns the farm.

**Kevin Grey**, secretary of 2/3 Comp AA Regt Association, of which 9th Battery was the Lt AA component, sends regular newsletters and advises the following dates of their lunches in Sydney. A welcome will be extended to any of our members who may be in Sydney on 13 June, 12 Sept, and 12 Dec at Kiribilli Ex-Servicemens Club from 12 noon in the bistro lounge [drinks and meals of your choice]. Lunch with the ladies on Sunday 6 Aug is held at the same venue from 12 noon for a drink before going to the dining room, cost \$25 to \$30.

**Arthur Kennedy** reminds any members when in Sydney, not to miss the artillery museum at North Head, it is well-worth the visit. **John Anderson** gives a reminder to any member who may be or is extremely disabled, the pension rate is 150%. Talk to John on 03 9725 6934 about becoming a member of the EDA Association for the cost of \$20, John states that the association can help you try for EDA status. One last thing from me – as our age increases, marching on Anzac Day can be a problem, so if you would like to be there but need transport for the march, please advise me immediately. I can then make the necessary application to Anzac House.

Best wishes to you all, and thanks for all the news you send me.

**John Campbell.**



**Anzac Day — Sydney 1999**  
Bob "Robbo" Robson chats to K Gray who is holding 2/3 Comp. AA Regiment banner.



## THE SENTRY'S LOG

Our patron **Bert Baglin**, as dapper as ever, still appears regularly at Melbourne Legacy, despite two hip operations in recent times. Bert, a foundation officer of our Regiment, was 7 Battery Captain during the battle for Crete in 1941. He was evacuated by the Royal Navy, after surviving numerous bombing attacks on their ship.

On returning to Palestine, Bert was transferred to 2/4 Light AA Regt and as a Battery Commander took part in the Alamein campaign and was wounded. On his eventual return to Australia he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel to command 112th Light AA Regiment and still went on to other postings.

Bert's career was detailed in the 1994 *Take Post*, when he became President of our Association. He has served Legacy for over 50 years. He is now in his 90th year and we wish him well.

We hear that **Jim** (Cracker) **Hardy**, [9 Bty], already a life member of the RSL, has now been named "A Living Treasure." Congratulations Jim!

**Frank Washbourne** was noticed walking across the new Bolte Bridge before its opening to traffic. He had accepted an invitation from the Premier for this occasion, and was interviewed on radio.

We don't usually publish obituaries on our comrades who have passed on as it is generally impractical to obtain sufficient information, and to do it properly, obituaries would take up most of our pages. However, the Age published a comprehensive story on **Dick Telford** [8] who died on 9th January 1999 and we quote the following extracts:

"Dick Telford led a reformation that defined educational opportunity for people in western suburbs of Melbourne, and contributed to the successful development of the Victorian TAFE system. After the war he completed a science degree at Melbourne University and began a career as a maths/science teacher in the technical school system.

"He introduced a women's learning centre into the traditional technical trade school to provide access for adult women denied educational opportunity for cultural, ethnic or religious reasons".

*After listing many enterprising projects by Dick, the report stated:*

"Thousands have benefited from the magnificent legacy of Dick Telford's tireless efforts and the inspiration lives on in many who were directly touched by one of the state's great educational leaders."

### *From army news:*

Brigadier Robert Atkinson recently accompanied an Australian Trade mission to the Middle East to find new clients for Australian technology.

During the Gulf War, Brig Atkinson had occasion to speak to the head of the military hospital in Kuwait and asked about the fate of Iraqi casualties. The hospital chief said they had seen very few casualties, as the Iraqis seemed to have no valid hospital systems. They simply left their severely wounded to die — others were dumped on the Kuwait hospital doorstep.

A chilling reminder of the value of life in a ruthless dictatorship! We suggest to our members that they do not volunteer for service with the Iraqi Army, whatever the pay!

### *Nonagenarians!*

Do let us know of our members who have turned 90 years of age or are in their 90th year so we can offer congratulations from our members. Notify our Secretary John Campbell or Editor Ron Bryant.

### *Look up your photos!*

We are running low. If you have old photos of groups or relevant equipment — particularly in action situations — let's have them. They need to be clear prints or enlargements. Photocopies are usually not good enough.

## MELBOURNE ANZAC MARCH 2000



Members of 2/3 Lt A A Regiment  
will assemble as usual in  
Flinders Street  
on the east side of Swanston St.

It is estimated that our Regiment  
will move off at approx. 9.20 am.

Eyes right will be ordered at the  
Eternal Flame  
not when abreast of the official party.

## MURRAY "TAKA" TAKASUKA

*Cyril Kaighin* [7], who maintained a close friendship with *Murray (Taka) Takasuka* over the years, received a phone call from *Taka's* widow, *Mira*, telling of Murray's death shortly after his 89th birthday in November 1999.

Previous references in *Take Post* have mentioned the special contribution the Takasukas made to rice growing in Australia; *Taka's* story is also unique.



*Murray Takasuka*

After volunteering and being rejected for enlistment at Bendigo, Murray went to Melbourne and was signed up as an Australian-born volunteer. As the only soldier with a Japanese background in our Regiment, he treasured the respect and friendship he earned from his mates – especially during and after the Crete campaign.

On return to Australia he was very disappointed when authorities denied him his right to proceed with his unit to New Guinea because of the 'risk' involved for himself and his mates.

In contacting *Kaigh*, *Taka's* widow passes on to all Murray's mates his appreciation of the friendship and pride he felt in 2/3 Light AA Regiment.

### *Members are reminded that —*

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

## BILL TOM'S WIDOW FIGHTS ON

*Jean Tom, widow of Bill Tom of 8 Battery, hasn't been to war but she has fought enough battles in Australia to win an Anzac award.*

*As reported by June Alexander in the Weekly Times of June 9, 1999 —*

Jean, whose father fought in WWI, and her husband in WWII, lives in Romsey, north of Melbourne, and has lived most of her life on farms.

The fortitude she showed in graduating with a Master of Science Degree from Melbourne University in 1946 has been put to work at all levels of community life. Jean chose the Country Women's Association as her base for her pursuit of voluntary service. Jean plays down her contribution, saying she simply made the most of the opportunities offered by the CWA.

At an age when many people are sitting back and resting, Jean continues to make the most of every chance to push her support of causes. Right now she has three of them – farm safety programs, domestic violence and celebrating our cultural diversity.

Jean is a member of a federal committee looking at the best way of helping and supporting people in rural and remote areas who are suffering domestic violence.

Celebrating our Diversity was the theme for CWA in 1999 and, according to Jean, it is about putting a positive spin on our cultural diversity.

"It is about encouraging our members and others to make links with women of other cultures within their own communities," Jean said. "This is not an easy thing to do but the CWA has so much to offer to these people. We have so many branches – our branches are our strength.

"If we can encourage people to look on the advantages that these people can bring to the community and form some links, then we will be making headway."

Jean has been involved in many organisations outside the CWA and these have included the Victorian Women's Trust and the Rural Women's Network.

"I take their messages back to CWA and let our members know what is going on in other communities," Jean said.

*Jean was one of eight Australians to receive an Anzac Award. Congratulations from our Association, Jean!*

## THE ITALIAN BREDA — as used by 8th Battery at Tobruk

The scavenged Bredas were a poor substitute for Bofors guns. The sights were rather ineffective so were discarded in favour of the crude 'hosepipe' method. The man in charge of the gun traversed ahead of the plane by swinging the seat with the traverse gear de-clutched. The gunlayer elevated or depressed the barrel. All shells were tracers.

The gunners soon got the knack of 'hose-piping' by virtue of the hundreds of rounds they fired. Considering the planes were often at 1500 to 3000 feet, if two or three concentrated guns were sending up perhaps 500 shells per minute, they could be very effective. However, on most occasions only one Breda at a time could be firing at a particular plane.

Stoppages were all too frequent — sometimes a half dozen times in an action — causing frustration for the gunners and danger when aircraft were attacking their positions.

Numerous planes were hit, but due to the small size of the projectile, many got back to their lines. In comparison when a Bofors shell hit a plane it usually crashed immediately.

### *A Description of the Italian 20-mm Breda:*

One of the two standard Italian 20-mm AA guns was the weapon known to the Italian army as the *Modello 35 Breda Cannone-Mitragliera, 20/65 modello 35 (Breda)*.

It was first manufactured in 1934 by the *Societa Italiana Ernesto Breda* of Brescia, a company that was no stranger to weapon production but whose staple activity was building locomotives and trucks. The Breda gun was designed as a dual-purpose weapon against ground and aircraft targets, and was taken into service by the Italian army in 1935.

The 20-mm Breda gun was a very effective weapon, and was much used by the Italian army. It had a rather complicated twin-wheeled carriage that could be towed into action behind a truck, but it was light enough to be manhandled over considerable distances and it could even be broken down into four pack loads for man carriage or mule transport. In action the gun required a team of three

men: the aimer sat on the gun and used a complex telescopic sight incorporating a predictor function.

Ammunition was fed into the gun on 12-round trays and the feed mechanism contained the odd Italian feature of placing the spent cartridge case back into the tray once it had been fired. Exactly what function this feature was supposed to impart is uncertain but it appeared on several Italian automatic weapons and at least had the advantage of keeping the gun position tidy.

Against ground targets the gun fired armour-piercing rounds. Aircraft targets were engaged with a high explosive projectile that incorporated a very sensitive percussion fuse to operate against light aircraft structures. The projectile also had a self-destruct feature if it did not hit a target. The tripod platform of the gun provided a steady base for firing, and against aircraft the gun proved to be very successful.

Against tanks it was less effective, but any weapons captured by the Allies during the North African campaigns were usually mounted on the light armoured cars of the day to provide them with more offensive capability

than that provided by the usual machine-guns. The Germans also took over numbers of

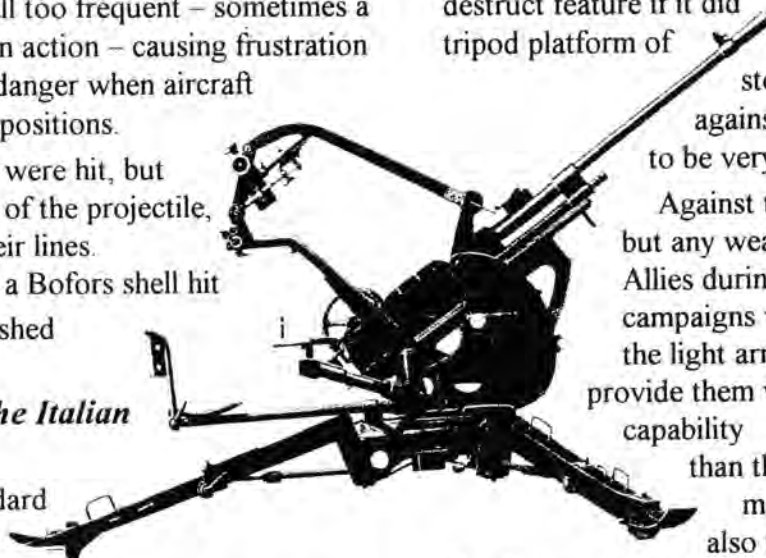
Breda guns for their own use in North Africa under the designation 2-cm Breda (i), and the Italian surrender of 1943 meant that all guns on the Italian mainland immediately changed to German use.

Much farther afield, some Breda guns were also used by several of the warring Chinese military factions.

Apart from the *modello 35* there was also a *modello 39*. This was a much more complex weapon: it used the same gun as before, but allied to a static pedestal-type mounting on which the gun itself was suspended below curved arms that carried the sighting system.

The *Modello 39* version was usually retained for the defence of the Italian mainland.

*Specifications of the Breda are shown at the foot of the next column:*





## Helping hands from the Italians

The Ministry of Defence in UK. has records on many ex-prisoners-of-war. The following extracts are from a report by the late **Harold Brimacombe** of our 7th Battery who was captured at sea off Crete on 25th May 1941 and became a POW at camps in Rhodes and Italy before escaping from a working camp at Vercelli, Italy in September 1943.

*The following report was written by Harold in 1945 and describes his escape and release:*

On 10 September 1943 I, accompanied by three other Australians, escaped from Working Camp 106 Vercelli and proceeded north along the Sesia River. On the morning of 11 September we contacted a friendly Anti-Fascist Italian who was collecting all possible arms from Vercelli and hiding them in this area. We stayed some 10 days here assisting in the cleaning and packing away of arms and at same time searching for all other British ex POW's who wished to be guided to Switzerland. Having collected in all about 180 chaps and distributing arms amongst them, left travelling by night with the idea of taking arms to Partisan Troops at Oropa then sending British through with guides to Swiss frontier.

Arrived at Zubiena approx. 27 Sept 43 and whilst waiting for food supply to arrive were met by two supposedly Italian Officers bearing letters addressed to our above-mentioned friend and guide. Satisfied by origin and contents of letter he handed over command to some Officers who immediately called in all arms to be re-distributed following morning, each arm to be issued upon signature of bearer.

### Specification of Breda modello 1935

**Calibre:** 20 mm

**Length of piece:** 1.30 m

**Weight:** in action 307.35 kg

**Elevation:** -10 to + 80 degrees.

**Traverse:** 360 degrees.

**Muzzle velocity:** 830-850m per second

**Maximum effective ceiling:** 2500 m

**Rate of fire:** (cyclic) 200-220 rpm

**Projectile weight:** 0.135 kg

*One very prominent feature of the 20-mm Breda gun was the long sight arm arrangement, which was meant to keep the gun sight in front of the aimer's face at all angles of elevation. It worked very well, but was rather complex and heavy, and elsewhere much simpler design solutions were usually found.*

On the following morning at 6.30 am we were surprised by 15 trucks of German troops and being thus disarmed were forced to scatter, each man for himself. Approximately 80 men were captured; the rest in small groups each going their own ways. My same 4 companions and I made our way northward till we found a group of armed Partisans at Graglia who promised to feed and lodge us till able to furnish a guide to Swiss frontier. Stayed here till 31 October 1943 when we were disbanded owing to an attack by Germans.

Taking one other Australian with me I made my way to Sala-Biellese where, finding a friendly family, I stayed till 17 December 1943. Having heard of the revival of a group of Partisans in Biella Mountain area left after 4 days march, contacted some 45 armed men. Stayed here till approx. 29 February 44 then transferred to 75th Brig where there were 27 other British Ex POW's. Stayed here till middle of March when owing to a dispute over unfair rationing, general shortage of food, arms and ammunition, we left and spent 3 months living in a mountain shack supplied with food by friendly civilian.

June 44 found once more my first Guide from Vercelli commanding a detachment of 45 men from 75th Brig (Garibaldine) operating on the plains between Vercelli and Northern Foot hills, joined this detachment and assisted in ambushing, sabotage, raiding Fascist quarters and capture of spies. November 1944 left with group of 26 British, accompanied by guide and 10 armed Partisans, for France but owing to health which had troubled me during past 2 years was unable to withstand trying conditions and was turned back by Partisan doctor as unfit. Shortly after, contacting British Mission dropped in Biella area marked off and on with same (according to health) till arrival of American troops at Biella, 2 May 1945. Reporting to local aid station (American) was sent back through American Hospital to Allied PW Report Depot Boulogne and thus through to here Naples 19/05/45.

The following people were of assistance:

*10 Sep '43 to 16 Mar '44. Mario Bati, Monte Vicino, Firenze.*

He sheltered and fed me, Cpl Smith (UDF) and Gdsn Jones (Coldstream Guards) at great risk. Gave me civilian clothes, viz. 2 shirts, 1 pr pants, 1 pr socks, 1 pr boots - approx. value 5,000 lire? - and 200 lire in cash. Left "chit" not acknowledging help given, but giving my name and home address, Smith and Jones did likewise.

**Harold Brimacombe POW Escapee : cont:***Apr '44 to July '44. Villagers of S Adriano:*

Supplied food to self and Cpl Smith for period - average about 2 meals per day. No chits left.

*1 Nov '43 to 17 Dec '43. Marrietta Zacchero, Sala Biellese, Vercelli.*

Supplied food and lodging to myself and Cpl Gomersall in her own home at great personal risk for mentioned period and later to myself at odd periods amounting to approx. 3 months. *Eva Caneparo and Rita Bonino of Biella* also helped with medicines and clothes etc for 3 to 4 months.

*10 Mar '45 to 25 April '45. Daniele Favario, Biella, Vercelli.*

Whilst under a civilian doctor and on diet, this person gave me a room in his home and supplied all food for 6 weeks, previously having helped myself and numerous other British every time we passed by giving meals and food to carry away.

*Virgilio Rocchi of Biella.*

This person has, at all times from Oct 1943 till time of liberation 1945, kept an open house to all passing British. Meals for up to 6 at a time and always lodging for 1 or 2 for a night. Although never having stayed more than 2 or 3 days at a time I have always been able to count on this place as a home from home when in need. ♦

**Hitler's Digger Slaves***Caught in the Web of Axis Labour Camps*

by Alex Barnett

The author, Alex Barnett served with 8 Battery, 2/3rd Lt AA Regt and while serving in North Africa his career took a turn for the worse when he and his mates suddenly became prisoners of the Germans.

After a long trip to Italy and a POW camp, the rebellious Australians soon earned a reputation as 'trouble-makers'. They were badly treated by the Italians but when Italy capitulated they again came under German control.

Shipped to Germany, their reputation went with them, resulting in more ill-treatment and eventually they were forced into labour for the Third Reich.

At war's end, the prisoners were sent on a forced march away from the advancing armies, half starved, they hung to life while awaiting rescue - a dramatic story of one man's war.

Paperback **\$25** inc postage. Order from:  
**Warbooks AMHP,**  
**13 Veronica Place, Loftus 2232.**

**A Soldier Departs**

We sat on the sand so clean and cool  
The sunshine making the sea a pool  
Of shimmering light that lapped at the shore.  
The sight was one we all adore.

But across from us, just around the bay  
Was a huge troop ship, all painted grey  
Preparing soon to sail away  
With a load of our boys, so dear and gay.

One soldier to us was especially dear.  
He was all we had, but he heard the call  
Of our motherland who stood in fear.  
He couldn't stand by and see her fall.

You must be brave and not shed a tear  
He'll soon be back, so don't you fear  
So smile for me as you always do  
Carry on, and we'll all win through.

But when that ship belched forth her smoke  
And with sirens screaming to life awoke  
A moment of panic I'm afraid I knew  
My heart sadly cried, "He's going from you."

My heart cried aloud "Oh why must you go  
You mean so much to us you know."  
But he was gone, he couldn't hear me  
As the ship sailed away on that silvery sea.

Then knowledge came with soothing calm  
That God would keep us all from harm  
That He was there, forever near  
Guarding those we hold so dear.

So as that ship faded from our sight  
And day was merging into night  
I felt that God's love was a wonderful thing  
And only His love would real peace bring.

*Ruby Pearl Wright (circa 1940)*

Ruby Pearl Wright was the wife of Arthur Wright, 8 Battery, and mother of three daughters. Their fourth daughter was born when the Battery was besieged in Tobruk. Arthur wrote home to his daughters: "Look after your mother and the little one. Tell your mother to call the baby anything she likes, but Jerry." The fourth child was named Barbara and Arthur returned safely. Whilst Arthur and Ruby have passed on, their four daughters and their grandchildren survive.

Grandson Brian Murray, of 9 Bolden Street, Heidelberg 3084, is collating information on Arthur's war service and Brian's telephone number is (03) 9458 4708 if you can assist him.



## OUR TREE AT THE SHRINE

In last *Take Post* our members were invited to meet at the Simon Poplar tree dedicated to the memory of our Regiment at the Shrine of Remembrance – after the Anzac March.

We appreciate that many of the marchers attend other activities after the March. However, for those interested to meet again this year, the tree, with its 2/3 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.

At right: 2/3rd gunners assemble at the Tree after the 1999 March.



## Hitler slave joins battle for justice

**Members reading *The Age* of March 25, 1999 would not have missed photos of Darcy Edwards that accompanied this article by Fergus Shiels:—**

As Darcy Edwards saw it, if the bombs falling through the icy fog didn't kill him, the slave labor, emaciating hunger and minus-20 degrees would.

"I thought it was my last," Mr Edwards wrote in his diary on Christmas Day 1944 after the latest bombing raid claimed the lives of eight more of his fellow camp inmates.

Mercifully, the Melbourne digger survived the Nazi prisoner of war camp. Now, at the age of 81, he has joined a remarkable international legal fight for justice. An Australian class action will be lodged in a New York court next week on behalf of WWII slave laborers now living in Australia.

Among their number is Mr Edwards who says he unearthed bomb-damaged cables for the global electrics giant Siemens at a massive petrochemical plant in the Sudetenland.

"I have never been so bloody cold in my life," he said. "In mid-winter they'd burn coals to thaw out the ground for three days before you could dig.

"I was 11 stone two when I went into the army and I was seven stone two when I got to England a month after I was released. We worked 12 hours a day, 7 days a week in ice and snow and (virtually) no food. We were lucky because being army we were getting Red Cross parcels. Enough to keep us alive."

Then there were the Allied bombing raids to contend with. "You never heard bombs whistle.

They were just like a bloody big roar, like a train coming through a tunnel. On Christmas Day '44, there was a thick fog, a real pea souper, and the sirens sounding. We said there was no way they'll come on Christmas Day. What a mistake to make."

More than 260 companies, including corporate giants like BMW, Volkswagen, Leica, Audi and Krupp, are being pursued in multiple lawsuits by former slave laborers. The global compensation claim could run into tens of billions of dollars.

A St Kilda lawyer, Mr Henry Burstyn, has already registered more than 1000 prospective Australian claimants. The survivors want the companies to account for human rights violations, including slavery, genocide, property theft and conspiracy with the Nazis.

Mr Edwards and his brother Mick, who died two years ago, both enlisted, were captured and endured captivity together. They were among hundreds of thousands of POWs forced into slavery by firms now accused of complicity in the Hitler regime's crimes against humanity.

After being captured by Rommel's tanks in Libya on 7 April 1941, the Edwards brothers were imprisoned by the Italians and then the Germans. The 2/3rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment gunners had trained with broomsticks before being shipped out and, on landing, had to scavenge for guns.

"We got some Italian guns they had left around and they wouldn't knock a sardine tin off a fence. When we were caught we were firing at a tank and it just coming at us. Luckily he saw the funny side of it and didn't shoot us."



## BRAVERY ABOVE BLUNDER

*This is an outstanding book by Lieutenant General John Coates (Rtd) AC, MBE. It is a scholarly historical account mainly relating to command. Here are some extracts relating to Ninth Division in Tobruk and El Alamein. (By courtesy of 2/12 Field Regiment Association's newsletter – Take Post).*

### *Ninth Division in Tobruk and El Alamein*

..... this is an easy subject to be enthusiastic about. How a raw and inexperienced Australian infantry division could defend a squalid Italian fortress in an obscure North African port like Tobruk and, in the process, stop dead in its tracks a previously unstoppable German Panzer force commanded by the outstanding General Erwin Rommel is much more than legend: it is a moving, sensitive saga of under-indoctrinated, under-trained, ill-equipped young men, and some not so young, cohering, then refusing in a truly professional way to be budged from a place they believed they could hold.

Then later at El Alamein in one of the great set-piece battles of the war, the division, by drawing on to its front the overwhelming mass of the German armour – until then the key to Rommel's success – fighting it to a standstill, thus permitting Montgomery's other forces to break out further south, was no less distinguished an exploit.

..... It is my belief that the 9th Australian Division was and remains one of the great divisions of the world. Even among other Australian divisions, that assertion is not easily proved, but it has claims to uniqueness as a fighting division in any of Australia's wars.

### *John Coates quotes from "The Rats"*

The spirit which began in Tobruk [*an Officer wrote afterwards*] is hard to define. Throughout all those months, it so permeated the whole atmosphere of the place as to be almost tangible. Everywhere one was as conscious of it as the very sand that filled the air we breathed, the food we ate, and the vile brackish water we drank. It manifested itself in the manner of the men. Although most of them looked like scarecrows, and many of them, owing to the lack of fresh vegetables and in spite of the vitamin C tablets, were covered in suppurating 'desert sores', they bore themselves with pride.

Instinctively, one recognised them for what they were; dedicated men, resolutely, grimly determined to endure fear, discomfort, hardship. and, if needs be, death, rather than surrender [*which the besiegers had offered by leaflet*]. Rommel couldn't hope to defeat such a spirit any more than he could understand it. When he came up against it he was confounded by it ... For a year and a half they had had everything their own way. Then they came up against the fortress of Tobruk and battered themselves senseless against it ... In the long run – and what an interminably long run it seemed – it was the spirit of the men within the fortress that won the Battle of Tobruk.

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*If you haven't already read "Bravery above Blunder" – seek it out at your local library!*

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## 'UNLOADING BY BLUNDER'



*7th Battery Gunners demonstrate the 'quick' method of unloading ammunition from their truck enroute from Pearce to Geraldton in 1942!*

*L to R: Wally Little, (?), two bums, Tom Grant, Jim Ross, Con Hogan.*