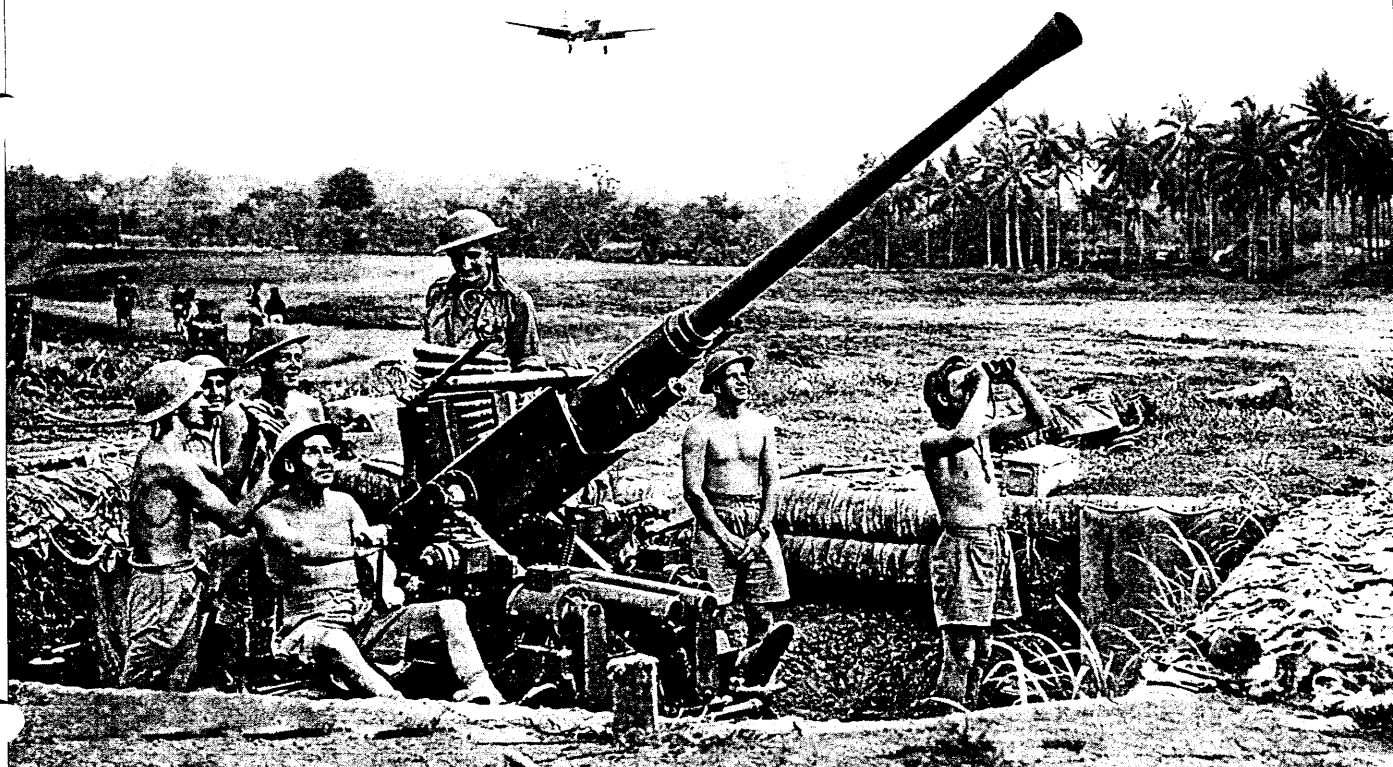


# "TAKE POST!"

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

*April 2003*

## Ready for the Zeros at Milne Bay in 1942



### 9th Battery Bofors at Milne Bay

No.1 is Jack Crittenden — the gun layer is Bunny Cheong — No.4 is Buck Boughton  
Can you tell us who the other 2/3 Light Ack Ack gunners are?

### REUNION NOTICE

The Anzac Reunion will be held on **Thursday April 24, 2003** 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).

*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, Thursday, April 24, 2003  
(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:*

|                 |        |
|-----------------|--------|
| Frank Leeman    | Bty. 9 |
| Noel Moulton    | 8      |
| E. C. Louen     |        |
| Jack Crittenden | 9      |
| Jim Hawley      | 7      |
| Ivan Peters     |        |
| Gordon Connor   | 7      |
| J. R. Ross      | 9      |
| Ken Welch       | 7      |

**Lest We Forget**

*Attention!*  
*New Assembly Point*

The 1 Corp H.Q. and Units will start from outside Young & Jackson's in Swanston Street. There are five other Units before 2/2 Heavy A.A., then we, the 2/3 Aust. Light Anti-aircraft Regiment, follow them.

Therefore we will assemble somewhere about Flinders Lane (on the West side of Swanston Street.)

1st Corp will march off at 9.40 am. We should be ready at 9.30 am.

Although it is recommended that men march in ranks of ten – it is usual for smaller groups to march eight abreast.

On reaching the top step of the entrance to the Forecourt, you are asked to march at attention. "Eyes Right" will be ordered at the Eternal Flame (not abreast of the official party) and men in civilian clothes will remove headgear and carry over the left breast. Uniformed officers will salute.

**MELBOURNE ANZAC  
MARCH 2003**

*Please note that our  
assembly point has changed.*

**VALE — Jack Crittenden 10/3/1921 to 23/8/2002**

Jack joined the Second AIF in 1940 and served with the Ninth Battery of our Regiment, which sailed from Port Melbourne to the Middle East, in the troopship *Mauritania* on 30th December 1940.

Jack served with the Battery in the Western Desert of Egypt when it was engaged in *Operation Battleaxe* aimed at the relief of Tobruk. The operation failed as the British tanks were out-gunned. The Battery went on to Beirut for a time, then to the Suez Canal area.

In February 1942, despite Churchill's desire to send troops to Burma, the Regiment returned to Australia. After a brief home leave, Jack's Troop proceeded to Port Moresby and then Milne Bay to be amongst those who put a stop to the Japanese advance towards Australia.

Jack was proud that a postage stamp issued to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Battle for Milne Bay showed his gun-crew with him as No.1. [see the photograph on the cover page of this *Take Post*.]

Jack subsequently returned to Australia and was discharged in 1945.

He and his brother Doug rejoined their father in their licensed grocery business in Malvern. Jack eventually became managing director. They expanded the business with outlets in Melbourne and suburbs. The name Crittenden became synonymous with good food and wine. In 1981 the business was sold to Myer and Jack retired to live at Brighton.

He enjoyed many interests, including Rotary and serving on the committee of our Association – the last three years as President. After a brief illness, he died peacefully at home on 23 August, 2002.

We extend our sympathy to his wife Mavis and family.

His brother Doug recently arranged the bottling of a huge bottle [a Balthazar] of Penfolds Grange Hermitage [the equivalent of 16 normal bottles of Australia's finest red]. The unique bottle was auctioned in Jack's memory and brought over \$50,000 to the anti-cancer cause.

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

**President:** RON BRYANT

6 Blanche Avenue, Parkdale, Vic 3195  
Phone 9580 2494

**Vice President:** LES HARRIS

**Immediate Past President:** CEC RAE.

**Hon Secretary:** JOHN CAMPBELL,  
Box 205, PO Mentone, Vic.3194.  
Phone 9583 8756.

**Hon Treasurer:** JOHN HEPWORTH.

**Newsletter Editor:** RON BRYANT.

**Committee:**

IAN RUTTER, DAVE THOMSON,  
ROY THOMSON, BRUCE TULLOCH,  
FRANK WASHBOURNE, MAL WEBSTER.

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION**

To continue to be a financial member of our Association just fill in the enclosed remittance slip, add your cheque for \$5 and post it to  
**John Campbell PO Box 205, Mentone 3194**

If attending the Annual Reunion, subscription is included with the cost of lunch and drinks. Our thanks to those who forward their \$5 and to those who send welcome letters.

## A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT — RON BRYANT

For the information of those members who were not at the Annual General Meeting in April 2002, Jack Crittenden advised us that he had decided not to stand for re-election as President of our Association. I was duly nominated. As there were no other nominations, I was declared President. My first duty was to congratulate Jack Crittenden on his three year term of Office. He carried out his obligations with dignity, represented our Association at functions and presided over our meetings with patience and a minimum of fuss. I am very sorry to have to report that Jack passed away on 23rd August 2002 after a short illness. In this issue of *Take Post* you will find obituaries on Jack, and also on Gordon Connor who was leader of our Western Australian group. I feel honored to be President, particularly as I am the first member of 8th Battery to hold that Office. I did reflect that World War 2 organisations such as ours would be amongst the few in which men in their eighties can still get a job!

Our 2002 Reunion was successful despite the inevitable sad decline in numbers. About 45 members and a few relatives of members had an excellent lunch, with drinks, served by friendly staff in the attractive Air Force House dining room. The Unit's red and blue colors brightened the decor. Our reunions in recent years have been in great contrast to those held just after World War 2 in the old drill halls. Air Force House is a fine venue for us as we get older.

**The Anzac March:** The members who marched behind our Banner on Anzac Day were well down in number – about 25, including some relatives. Despite rain, we cheerily survived, encouraged by the wonderful crowd of well-wishers who braved the weather. The large number of people of overseas origin was obvious, and praiseworthy.

If you are well enough, do take the opportunity to attend the forthcoming Reunion and Anzac Day March. Seize the day!

Time is running against all of us. Your mates want to share memories with you.

In view of the reductions in numbers, suggestions have been made to merge with other Units in the March, but we prefer to march behind our own banner.

As mentioned in an earlier *Take Post*, the leader of our Regiment in the March is now selected by the Committee from those of our ranks who have contributed time and energy to our Association's affairs over the years, and who can in fact, march. This year **John Hepworth** and **Cec Rae** have been invited to lead us.

The Regiment has a proud history of service in World War 2.

With the aid of our Secretary and Committee, I look forward to helping to sustain the Association, with its memories of our Regiment and mates.

*Ron Bryant*

## Some of the men of "I" Troop — Werribee Camp 1940



**L to R (back) :** Gunners Neil, Canning, Purves, (?), Allender, Wright, (?), (?), Membrey, Rae, Johnson, Bird H D, Oddy, Cole, (?), Anderson, Nolen, Boothby (1/2 view), Gray J K, Mears, (?), Westcott, Crees. — **Front :** Evans, Smith, Sauerberg, Minetti, (?), Pulsford, Clucas, Bridges, Paton, (?), Biscoe, (?), McEwan, Brown, Delahunty, (?), Silver. — **Reclining front :** Hardy J.

## SIXTY YEARS AGO!

*During the years 2001 and 2002, 60-year commemorations have been held in respect of momentous events in which our Regiment was directly involved. It is timely to reflect on some of those events.*

The Battle for Crete occurred in May 1941. our 7th Battery went into action there with Bofors guns for the first time. The well equipped and highly trained German parachute troops and airborne troops won the battle after suffering grievous losses. The Battery was credited with shooting down 62 enemy aircraft.

Near Maleme airstrip, the key focal point in the invasion, the German war cemetery has 4,465 graves of the invaders. The enemy also suffered severe losses at other parts of Crete and at sea. The Germans never again carried out a large scale airborne invasion.

Allied and Greek forces' losses were also severe. Of our 7th Battery of about 250 men, 51 were killed, and 107 taken Prisoner-of-War. The Battery's death toll was higher than in any other Australian unit in Greece and Crete, although several units lost more men as prisoners-of-war.

\* \* \* \*

In February 1941, 8th Battery travelled from Egypt in a tramp steamer to Libya. The gunners had one rifle to every 6 men, but had no anti-aircraft guns or indeed any equipment such as trucks, tents or cooking gear. After collecting old captured 20-mm Breda anti-aircraft guns and old Italian rifles, the Battery, using borrowed trucks put their guns on sites from Tobruk to Benghazi. Settling down for their first sojourn in a foreign land, they had a little shooting at aircraft, but they were shaken up in March 1941 by General Rommel and his well trained and superbly equipped Afrika Korps.

The enemy travelled east from Tripoli, then south through the desert to attempt to outflank the disorganized Allied troops who had been rather comfortably garrisoning the country after the earlier spectacular Allied advances.

So began the "Benghazi Handicap" with thousands of men, trucks and guns streaming back to Tobruk, and many going back to Egypt.

Some 24,000 Allied troops were cut off at Tobruk and besieged by 11th April. For the next five and a half months, these troops who became known as the "*Rats of Tobruk*" lived in holes in the ground through heat, sandstorms, extreme shortages of water, monotonous rations, severe bombing raids and heavy shelling from artillery. The Battery was credited with shooting down 23 enemy aircraft, 14 more were probably destroyed, 60 were badly damaged and 100 others were hit. Had the Battery been equipped with Bofors guns, using shells with 2-pound H.E. projectiles instead of with the scrounged old Bredas with 4-ounce projectiles, then the proportion of planes shot down to those just damaged would have been higher.

3,500 enemy aircraft were engaged by British and Australian anti-aircraft gunners during the Siege of Tobruk.

In September 1941 the gunners were evacuated by British destroyers which took them back to Alexandria. The men's health had deteriorated through the harsh conditions, but casualties had been relatively light, with 5 gunners killed, 16 wounded and 30 captured. With the other Rats of Tobruk they had resisted forces which had superior equipment. This was the first time in World War 2 that the German Army had been stopped.

\* \* \* \*

In May 1941, 9th Battery had been involved in a British setback. The gunners had joined with the British 7th Armoured Division in an advance from Egypt to Tobruk in *Operation Battleaxe* aiming to push back General Rommel's forces and join up with the besieged garrison at Tobruk. The gunners, equipped with Bofors, had many engagements with aircraft, shooting down several planes. One gun was lost, one gunner was killed. The British losses were severe. *Battleaxe* was discontinued.

Later, 9th Battery had a short stay in Syria. In 1942, the Battery returned to Australia.

\* \* \* \*

In June 1942, the Battery sailed to New Guinea, with its A and C Troops going on to Milne Bay. A couple of months were spent on arduous duties, including unloading of ships, road making and laying of steel matting for airstrips, as well as air defence.

On 22nd August 1942, Japanese Marines who had landed met the Australians in the Battle of Milne Bay. Fighting lasted until 9th September. The Army and RAAF units worked together to defeat the Japanese amphibious force in fierce battles. 161 Australians died and 700 Japanese were killed.

This was the first significant defeat of the Japanese invaders on land in the Pacific war, to the extent that they were evacuated. The Japanese continued to raid the area by air for some months. Two men of the Battery died by accident and the troops suffered badly from malaria.

\* \* \* \*

Over 60 years on, how fortunate we are to be able to look back to those memorable times and to remember mates, so many of whom became casualties or prisoners-of-war. All of our ranks gained satisfaction from our Regiment's subsequent service which included years of training, and watching the skies for aircraft from ships, aerodromes, deserts and jungles.

## THE ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT — RON BRYANT

*After 3 years as President, Jack Crittenden decided to retire. He remained on the Committee; but as reported elsewhere, sadly passed away in August 2002.*

At the 2002 AGM Ron was elected as President, so now he wears two hats — President and Editor. As editor he writes the introductions to presidents; but as he was overcome with modesty about writing his own profile, I, Doreen, his wife of 54 years, offered to do it.

Ron grew up in Elwood, the elder of two boys. His father was a keen fisher/shooter/hunter so Ron was brought up to those activities. It was that, and an urge to ride horses which led him to join the Militia cadets at 15 years of age.

In June 1940, Ron enlisted in the AIF as a gunner, so leaving his pre-war craft as a book-finisher. He was an original member of 8th Battery and training began at Werribee. I was told that Werribee was not renowned for home comforts nor equipment for training soldiers!

On 29th December 1940, the Regiment sailed aboard the majestic liner *Mauritania* for Colombo, and from there to Palestine in the British troopship *Devonshire*.

The experiences of the 8th Battery in the Middle East and New Guinea have been related in the book *"On Target"* and in the Editorial in this issue of *Take Post* I so don't need to repeat it here.

Due to Japan's entry into the War, the Regiment returned to Australia to man guns in the West. Later, 8th Battery commenced training as an airborne unit but that project became stillborn. Following six months service at Buna, New Guinea, sadly, the Regiment was disbanded. Ron and 90 members of the Battery were transferred to 2/2nd Composite A.A. Regiment, in which they served restlessly until the end of the war.

Ron's final tour of duty was for six months aboard HMAS *Westralia* bringing troops home from the Pacific islands.

After discharge, Ron studied accountancy and was later employed on the Trusts staff of Blake & Riggall, Solicitors for 3 years. He then moved to Perpetual Trustees (Vic.) for 29 years — eventually becoming company secretary.

Soon after discharge, we met, and were married in 1948. Our two daughters arrived in 1949 and 1951. Over the years, we were all introduced to camping, fishing, boating and even target shooting! With the exception of shooting, we still enjoy these pursuits.

Ron is a foundation member of the Victorian Field & Game Council and was its secretary for 10 years. He also served as president of the Port Phillip Region of the Field & Game Association.



These organisations did much to alert government to conservation of wetlands, to increase waterbird populations. The members contributed time and labour to revegetation of wetland areas and to construction and installation of nesting boxes.

His other interests include Legacy, of which he has been an active member for 33 years. Ron can still be found outside Myer's in Bourke Street rattling his tin on Legacy Badge Day.

We have been fortunate with our travels, caravanning around much of Australia. Overseas journeys have included an 8,000 mile camping trip across to the Congo, up through Central Africa and across the Sahara; crossing India on public transport, and driving for 15 months across Europe, from Norway to Crete in a motor caravan. During this latter trip, we visited many old battlefields in Belgium, France, Gallipoli and Crete. It was our two-month stay in Crete which inspired Ron, with Les Harris and Cec Rae to write the Unit history *"On Target"*. Ron has been editor of your newsletter for 16 years. I hope that he can continue.

Along with you, I wish him well for his term as President.

*Doreen Bryant*

### 'Great Battles and Heroes of WWII'

*"Take Post"* has reviewed a few interesting books in recent years. We're moving ahead, by reviewing two outstanding videos titled as above. They run in total, for 118 minutes and feature true stories and actual footage from bombing raids, a Spitfire cockpit over London, tank and artillery actions at Alamein and air and sea battles on many fronts. Also covered are profiles of great leaders and heroes who made history.

There is little reference to Australians who nevertheless would have been in many of the engagements. Some of the events are not in sequence. However, the films are an extraordinary record of incredible events.

We obtained our video from the City of Kingston library at no cost. Perhaps your library may be able to get a copy for you.

## *Gordon Connor*

### *Our Leader in Western Australia*

9 November 1916 to 22 July 2002

Gordon was born at Rushworth, Victoria, but as a young man lived in South Yarra, working for the Melbourne Gas Company. He joined the AIF in 1940 and became a member of 7th Battery of our Regiment.

Soon after arriving in Palestine, 7 Battery moved to Crete. At the time of the savage battle with German paratroops on 20th May, Gordon was at Heraklion. In the area, three-quarters of the 2,000 enemy who jumped became casualties. With most of the town in enemy hands by nightfall, gunners, including Gordon, who were stationed on the mole of the harbour were in a critical situation. They obtained rowboats to endeavour to reach a gun-site east of the harbour. After rowing for 3 hours, a ship's engine was heard. Fortunately it was the British destroyer HMS *Kingston*. The crew picked up the gunners.

The ship, still heavily engaged, was unable to land the men back in Crete. Gordon and his mates spent four days on the *Kingston*. The ship suffered intense bomb and machine gun attacks, but managed to pick up survivors from other ships which had been sunk. Our men gave the ship's crew valuable assistance in caring for casualties and other duties.

Eventually the battered *Kingston* was ordered to return, in convoy, to Alexandria in Egypt. Then the gunners returned to our Regiment in Palestine.

On Gordon's eventual return to Australia, he served in Western Australia where he met his wife to be, Gwen, a nursing sister in the RAAF, they were duly married in Scots Church, Melbourne; Gwen at that time being stationed at Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

In 1944, Gordon left the Regiment to join Z Force. His story of the tough training was related in our March 1992 *Take Post*.



Members of 9 Battery on Camel Parade near the Pyramid of King Cheops — Egypt 1941.

L-R : Charlie Heddle, Bill Crowley, A Jones, J McPherson, E McNichol, Don Heddle.

The War with Japan ended while Gordon was in Z force based at Darwin and waiting to go into action. The war being over — Gordon decided to take his discharge.

Subsequently, Gordon became a Protector of Aborigines at Broome and Port Hedland, while Gwen became Matron of an aboriginal hospital. Later, Gordon worked in W.A. for Dalgety's and Wesfarmers until his retirement. Following publication of the Regiment's history "*On Target*", Gordon rallied the W.A. members of the Regiment, organising meetings, social events and Anzac Day marchers. The W.A. contingent was proud to march behind the Regiment's banner which had been made by Beris Sleight, wife of Charles.

With dwindling numbers of the W.A. men able to march, Gordon made arrangements for the banner to eventually be placed at the Museum at the Gunners Historical Society at Leighton W.A.

Gordon was a Life-member of the W.A. State Branch of the RSL and a member of the State Executive for several years. His health had deteriorated during the last couple of years. We offer our condolences to Gwen, his wife and carer for 59 eventful years.

\* \* \* \*



#### Close-ups

Who said you couldn't have a good time in the Army?

Gunners Cec Rae, J Paton and P Allender  
enjoying leave at Tel Aviv.

18 March 1941



## FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

*Welcome once again to my bits and pieces. I think that it keeps us together and gives a little information on what we are all doing.*

**Ina Gregory** advised that **Keith Gregory** (9), is in full time care, but comes home most weekends. Keith sends his regards to all his mates. As usual, **Kevin Grey** secretary of the 2/3 Composite AA Regiment Assoc. regularly sends news of that Association. A number of our 9 battery members, are associated and attend functions. Keep up the good work Kevin. **Constance Little**, happily settled in a retirement village, sends newsy bits to me. There are a few verses in this issue written by Constance. She catches up with **Col McNaughton** (8) who lives in the same area in Gippsland.

Thank you to **Doug Esler**, for advising of the death of his mother Jessie. A nice letter from **Reg Dickson** (7) wishing to buy a copy of "OnTarget". [If anyone can help, please contact me.] **Jim Silver** and **Alan Rundle** (both 9th) applied to attend the Milne Bay Commemorative Mission but missed out as there were only 20 places altogether. From **David McDonald** son of **Robert McDonald**, Sigs - Had hoped to be at the 2002 Reunion, but didn't make it. [Maybe this year David.]

**Dan Hawkes** (9) sent us our front page photo of the Bofors crew at Milne Bay. Dan remembers **Grif Weatherly** when visiting the gun crews always had a camera hanging around his neck. [Have you any photos for the editor Grif?] A great letter from **Bob Phillips** (8) enjoying immensely although reading with great difficulty owing to sight impairment, **Alex Barnett's** book "Hitler's Digger Slaves". It is a good read! **Col Reilly** (8), a regular at the reunion and the March, missed on coming last year because of a sudden illness. [Better luck this year Col.]

**Joyce Ritchie**, daughter of Lt Col Hipworth, telling of his great-grandson Captain Chris Smith having passed through the Military Academy and Duntroon. He was posted to Israel in June last. **John Ballantine** (9) was in hospital and who was in the ward with him but **John Graham** (also 9). [I hope that you are both OK.]

A lovely letter from **Rosemary Hay**, daughter of **Herbie Hay** (8); Rosemary enclosed a copy of her eulogy given at his funeral. As well as being a good athlete, he was a well known cricketer in Bendigo and

district, and later an owner of horses, with which he had some success.

**Mary Woodfield**, nee Elder, writes that she always watches the March. Mary has taken her children to the Hellenic Memorial at the Shrine so that they can honor their great grandfather. **George Roberts** (8), still wondering where **Bluey Page** (8) is. [Bluey hasn't been too good George, and hasn't travelled — give him a call at (03) 9807 5684.] **Stan (Twinkle) Rowan** (8) however did call and renew old times, as did **Roy Popplestone** (8). **Lynton Rose** son of the late **Clive Rose**, sent a change of address to Beaumaris and thought that the photo of the Regiment taken on Anzac Day 1946, and printed in last years "Take Post" was a 'classic image' of that era. [I thought that none of us had the look of those "Bronze Aussie Anzacs".]

Thanks to **Bill Garrigan** (7) for identifying names in a photo for **Margaret Warren**, [daughter of **Jack Phillips**]. **Alex Barnett** (8) appreciated the plug for his book "Hitler's Digger Slaves". [I hope the sales have been satisfactory Alex.] **Frank O'Toole** (9) has trouble travelling from NSW for our reunion. [Maybe one day soon Frank.] Frank has seen **Jack Hunt** (9) every so often. Had a phone call from **Beryl Hawkins** during the year, asking that because of poor sight, would I send "Take Post" to her son Graeme — no problem Beryl that will be done.

**Esme Curtis** writes that she has moved to a retirement village since the death of **Ron (Killer) Curtis** (9). [We will miss Killer at our reunion and March this year Esme.] A letter in his impeccable writing, from **David Carty** (9), thanking the Committee for its good work. [Thank you David, lets hope we can continue for a few more years.] Winifred, widow of **Len Jeffrey** (7) rang asking if any 7 Bty members can remember her

husband either in Crete or in POW camps. If so please contact me, the Secretary, and I will arrange for Winifred to contact you.

I have had many messages of thanks to the committee for its work for the Association; the quality of "Take Post" is always high on the list too. Thank you all for those expressions and I am sure that your committee will endeavour to keep up the standard. As **David Carty** said in his letter "you must all be over eighty"; he is not far wrong.

Make the most of the year — each year is getting shorter.

**John Campbell**, Hon Sec.

### *Adversity*

*Strength had vanished - hope had fled.*

*Even self respect was dead.*

*The passing world had no caress*

*To comfort all these comfortless.*

*The prisoner stirred, and looked around*

*At careless men that care had found .*

*And then, in deep humility*

*He asked, 'Dear God - what use are we?'*

*In troubled ground the Gardener knew*

*The seeds of understanding grew.*

*And the Gardener smiled, then whispered He,*

*'My son I still have need of thee'.*

*Ian Rutter. (7 Bty)*

## OPERATION BATTLEAXE

*The object of this operation, from 15 to 17 June 1941, was to defeat the enemy troops in the Western Desert and to drive them back west of Tobruk.*

*These extracts from "The Story of One Gun Crew" are from the diary of Cec Rae, 9 Battery.*

**OPERATION BATTLEAXE — 15 to 17 June 1941.**

**6 June '41.** Two guns were ordered south to Advance Headquarters. We went south into the desert, making our own tracks. On reaching the map reference, we found no sign of anyone. Fortunately we met a vehicle coming in the opposite direction and were told that HQ had moved to another reference, which caused us to travel across mined country – our arrival caused surprise.

**11 June '41.** We went over to Indian soldiers and were asked to sit down on blanket rolls. After a chat, the evening meal arrived. Plates of routi [pancakes] and curry were placed in front of us. The Indians would not touch their food until we were finished.

**12 June '41.** Sandstorm – something to be experienced to be believed – sand in our eyes, nose, in the food and cups of tea.

**14 June '41.** Awakened as usual at 5 to hear hundreds of trucks, tanks etc, passing on their way to the front. (5.30 pm). Moved forward providing AAD [anti-aircraft defence] for column consisting of Buffs, Scots infantry etc. We are in a big convoy of miscellaneous vehicles and the two guns (like [Navy] destroyers) on either side of the convoy. At 7.45 a plane shot down – saw three flashes in the sky and the plane crash and burst into flame.

**15 June '41.** 6 am. Passed Wellington bomber burnt out, graves of the crew were nearby.

**16 June '41.** Heavy fog this morning. Artillery still hammering away – fire more intense. A few German prisoners came in a truck – some tank chaps with them. Moved forward with convoy taking supplies to front – convoy very fast.

02.00. Seven Junkers 87 [dive bombers] flew over us at 150 feet. We halted when they were 500 yards away & went into action, but we were too late. We were strafed all the time & the planes offered perfect targets. No damage done. The Germans were in this area this morning.

03.00 Stopped within sight of the "line". Libya is about 2 miles away. Our other guns have shot some planes down. Whilst here quite a few Gerrys flew over, but too high. We saw 15 dive bombers release bombs where we had just been. We could see the bombs being released. Planes just out of our range. We picked up some prisoners, all badly wounded – one Nazi airman & several Ities. (Before we had gone into action, one of the drivers declared that if he came across any Germans he would shoot them. He was fated to be in the back of the utility truck bringing back a wounded German. He, the driver, could not have been more caring or considerate than a German nurse.)

**17 June '41.** We went east along the escarpment to Safarfi Pass. Here we had a great view of the escarpment and surrounding country (including the blue Mediterranean). The road from here to the coast road was terrible. Coggin's gunwheel had a puncture but he came on later. There were many trucks going back. They were almost bumper to bumper and it was later rumoured that some drivers did not stop until they reached Alexandria. Soon after, Brin came



A Group of Middle East Veterans

Back: Arthur Jones, Bill Crawley. Front: Charlie Heddle, Colin McPherson, (?).



back and told us to clear out as we were retreating. Our feelings were of hopelessness and helplessness. It almost broke my heart to see the huge stream of MT retreating after we had hoped for so much.

**20 June '41.** About 5 ME 110s bombed and strafed us although nothing came very close to our gun. Ink Troop "A" 3-tonner was destroyed by a bullet entering the petrol tank. The fire could have been put out if the fire extinguisher had been OK. Ten boxes of Bofors rounds and some kits went up.

We remained in the Western Desert until Sunday 20 July and after handing over our guns to an Irish Regiment we left for Beirut by way of Cairo.

\* \* \*

**NOTE:** If you would like a copy of the full treatise by Cec Rae which also includes "*The Story from the Other Side*" being extracts from General Rommel's papers and notes from other sources, write to —

**Cec Rae**, 3/184 Weatherall Road, Beaumaris 3193, enclosing a \$5 note or cheque to cover costs.

#### LET'S DRINK TO OUR JOLLY GOOD HEALTH!

A professor was trying to illustrate to his class the effect of alcohol on the human body. First he put a worm in a glass of water. The worm crawled out none the worse. Then he put the worm in a glass of alcohol, and the worm died.

"Now," he asked the class, "what's the moral?" Raising his hand, one of the students said, "If you drink alcohol, you'll never have worms."



Dave Thompson — Banner Custodian and Flag Bearer at the Anzac March  
Dave has served on Committee for 51 years.

## ANZAC DAY

by Constance Little, [widow of Charles (8 Bty).

I am an Anzac's daughter  
And learned at Dear Dad's knee,  
The truth of pain, and slaughter  
That was Gallipoli.

I heard with wide-eyed wonder  
Tales, grim and dark with shock,  
How lives were rent asunder  
By war's evil time clock,  
While back in far Australia  
My mother, with small son,  
Awaited news with anguish  
Of battles fought and won.  
It's hard not to feel bitter,  
Sometimes, when life is tough,  
For all the medals glitter  
Could not atone, enough.

Written for Constance's late father,  
Pte John Owen Magee, 6 Bn, 1st. Alf.



Tiny Brazenor aspiring to be a Rodeo rider.  
Palestine 1941

Congratulations to **Les Harris** (7) and **Win** on the celebration of their 60th wedding anniversary in 2002. Les at 92 years of age, and Win are still very active at home, in the garden, with Probus and Melbourne Legacy. **Tom Dawson** (8), very dapper and well-groomed, visits Les. Both Les and Tom shape up remarkably well.

**Ralph Hawkey** (8), a widower, lives in Cobram, Vic. His address: [PO Box 535, Cobram, 3643]. Reading Alex Barnett's book "*Digger Slaves*", he was interested to find photos of himself and mates. (Ralph was not a POW, he was sent home from Tobruk after being shot during the Benghazi Retreat.)

Ex-POW **Alf Sutherland** sends his greetings and requests information on "the date of a 60% cut in rations in Italy, together with the weight of the new rate of extravagance". His recollection is 13 ounces per day. He believes it was while they were in Calcaterras 'guest house' late in January 1942. It sounds as if those reduced rations are still sticking in Alf's craw! Alf's address is RMB 1032-B, Wodonga 3691.

Recently, *The Age* had a brief story on how Prince Charles exercises his democratic right by writing to Government on his views on contentious matters of the day. The *Age* article, part of an editorial, stated amongst other things — "In fact, over 20 years, the Prince has become the British equivalent of that famous letter writer to *The Age*, **Constance E. Little** of Eagle Point — except his letters on various subjects don't go to newspapers, but straight to the top of Government."

Constance, widow of **Charles Little** 8 Battery, is an old friend of "*Take Post*". [See her poem in this issue.]

### All Teachers in Palestine 1941 ➔

Left to Right:  
Bob Franking,  
A L Middleton,  
Keith Butler,  
Colin Brown,  
Arthur Duke,  
Jim Charters,  
Gerry Chambers  
and Les Harris.



**Dan Hawkes** (9) sent in the fine photo of the Bofors gun and crew at Milne Bay airstrip that is featured on the front page of *Take Post* ... Dan is OK except for a few typical medical problems.

**Harry Sauerberg** (9) and his wife Hilda recently celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. Both look healthy and happy. On their first date, the young Hilda took off her footwear to walk through a brook. On

reaching the other side, Harry pulled out a hanky and dried Hilda's feet. How gallant! What a way to make an early impression! The Sauerbergs are still very active. They regularly help seniors in Brighton, and are members of Probus.

**Alex Barnett** (8) who lives at Port Macquarie, sadly lost his wife Lois in November last. His excellent book, "*Digger Slaves*", has sold out. Alex expects

that a second edition, together with a new book "*Diary of a Desert Rat*", will be printed later this year.

### "Run Rabbit Run"

The 1998 edition of "*Take Post*" included extracts from a summarised wartime personal diary entitled "*Run Rabbit Run*", written by **Ian Rutter** of 7 Battery.

Amongst other things, this interesting publication has some details of Ian's experiences in the airborne invasion at Crete in 1941, of his capture and his time as a prisoner-of-war.

If you would like a copy of "*Run Rabbit Run*", write to **Ian Rutter**, 10 Vista Avenue, Ringwood East, 3135 enclosing a \$5 note or cheque to cover costs.

\* \* \* \*

Often at great cost, ships of the Navy supported the Regiment, escorting troopships, assisting evacuations, and suppling food and ammunition. This account from *Vetaffairs* tells of one very sad episode.

'The 1500-ton sloop, HMAS *Parramatta*, after 40 weeks of unbroken active service, was employed as part of the Tobruk Ferry Service which was the lifeline to the besieged troops in Tobruk. On the Tobruk run

*Parramatta* was subjected to continual attacks from enemy aircraft and submarines. On her initial voyage to Tobruk she located and attacked a German U-boat with depth charges, but the attack was unsuccessful. *Parramatta's* last voyage commenced from Alex on 25th November 1941. On the 27th, off Bardia, a German U-boat attacked *Parramatta* and the ammunition ship she was escorting. The initial

torpedoes missed both ships. A/Cdr Walker ordered a change of course and speed to engage the enemy. A single torpedo fired from 1500 metres struck *Parramatta* amidships. The vessel rolled over and sank within two minutes. In all, 138 sailors went down with the ship, including the Captain and all of the officers. Only 25 men survived.'

Again we record our thanks to the Navy.

## State President of the RSL.

**Major General David McLachlan, AO, Ret'd.**

We congratulate David McLachlan on his installation as State President — Bruce Ruxton's successor.

David served in Malaysia and Vietnam, and had a series of attachments to British and United States Army Units in Germany. He attended an International Course at the U.S. Navy Postgraduate School in California.

In 1991 he was appointed General Officer commanding Logistic Command, an Australian Command with 10,000 military and civilian personnel responsible for assets valued at \$2.5 billion. He retired from the Regular Army in 1994 but still has several professional and voluntary appointments.

David is married to Louise. They have three children. We wish him well in his new responsibilities.

\* \* \* \*

## 6th Australian Division Stavromenos Memorial in Crete

The defence of Crete by 6th Division in May 1941 is commemorated by a memorial at Stavromenos, Rethymno, on that island.

The local municipal authority created the Memorial which comprises a tall obelisk on an elevated platform complemented by two 40-mm Bofors guns provided by the Commonwealth of Australia.

The Memorial is maintained under arrangements involving the local authority, the Australian Embassy in Athens and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

In recent years, souvenir hunters had removed some of the unit colour patches from one of the main plaques on the Memorial, and these had been replaced on more than one occasion by the Office of Australian War Graves.

However, as the colour patches continued to attract the attention of souvenir hunters, the Office of Australian War Graves undertook to provide a replacement plaque with moulded colour patches. The new plaque was consigned to the Australian Ambassador to Greece, HE Dr Robert Merrillees, who in turn delivered it to the Nomarch [Mayor] of Rethymnon.

For their part, the local authorities arranged renovation of certain components of the Bofors guns and repair of flood-lighting. Ambassador Merrillees reported that in consequence of the joint Australian/Greek endeavour, the Stavromenos Memorial was in excellent condition for the anniversary observance.



*"Clancy of the Overflow"*  
A Palestinian at Hill 95  
happy in his job of  
disposing of the piddle.

## Grandma bought a bumper sticker for her 1985 Holden

*and wrote to her son:*

"The other day I went to the local religious book store, where I saw a 'Honk if you really love Jesus' bumper sticker. I bought it and put it on the back bumper of my car. I am really glad I did, for a really uplifting experience followed.

"I was stopped at a traffic light at a very busy intersection, just lost in thought about the Lord, and did not notice that the light had changed. Immediately that bumper sticker really started its magic. I found a whole lot of people who really loved Jesus. Why, the guy behind me started to honk like crazy. He must really love the Lord because very soon he leaned out of his window and yelled "Jesus Christ" as loud as he could.

"It was fantastic! Why It was like a football game when he started shouting "Go Jesus go!"

"Everyone else started honking too, so I leaned out the window and waved and smiled at all those loving people.

"There must have been a guy from Bondi back there because I could hear him yelling something about a "sunny beach" and he was waving in a funny way, with only his middle finger stuck up in the air. I had recently asked my two grandsons what this meant. They kind of looked at each other, giggled and told me that it was a good luck sign.

"Lovingly recalling what they had told me, I leaned out of the window again and gave him the good luck sign back. How wonderful it is to share!

A couple of people were so caught up in all the joy of the moment that they got out of their car and were walking quickly towards me. I bet they wanted to pray, but just then I noticed that the light had changed. I stepped on the gas and it was a good thing that I did because I was the only car to get across the intersection, I looked back at them standing there, then leaned out of the window, gave them a great big smile, and held up the good luck sign and drove away.

Praise the Lord for so many wonderful people around us!"

*We look forward to seeing you*  
at the Anzac Reunion, April 24 from  
12 noon to 3.30 pm at the  
Air Force Convention Centre  
4 Cromwell Road, South Yarra.  
\$25 covers lunch, drinks & annual sub!

## **"ANTI-AIRCRAFT" is now "AIR DEFENCE"**

In "Take Post" 1995 and 1997, it was mentioned that the Bofors RBS-70 laser beam air-defence missile system had been purchased by the Australian Army.

Since then, Australian Anti-aircraft units have been re-named Air Defence Regiments or Batteries. Why?

Because, as we understand, the units don't use 3.7s or Bofors — anti-aircraft guns have been replaced by Rapier and RBS-70 units firing surface-to-air missiles.

We will try to obtain more authoritative information. Meanwhile, our Bofors have passed into history, except for some very limited use in the Navy.

\* \* \* \*

### **Gunners relax in the Middle East →**

L-R. Back: J Donnley,  
A Hansen, C Bramich.

L-R. Front: C Humphries,  
Charles Heddle, H Goodwin.

\* \* \* \*



## **CONCESSION FARES FOR PENSIONERS ON GREAT SOUTHERN RAILWAYS**

Kindred Organisations Committee advise that concession fares are available for pensioners on Great Southern Railways between : Melbourne and Adelaide; Melbourne and Alice Springs; Melbourne and Perth; Sydney and Alice Springs; Sydney and Perth.

TPI and EDA pensioners attract the biggest concessions. DVA has to advise Great Southern Railways (GSR) that you are eligible and of your pension status.

Telephone DVA Sydney – 1800 026 185 [freecall] and ask for the Rail Concessions officer. You will be sent a form to complete. This authorises DVA to release your pensioner status to GSR who enter it on their database. Once your name is on their database, you may book a train journey with them by telephoning 13 21 47.

\* \* \* \*

## **A CATALINA RETURNS**

(with acknowledgements to *The West Australian*)

Many of our gunners will recall the US Catalina flying boat base at the Swan River, Crawley Bay, Perth, in 1942 where Bofors guns were manned to provide anti-aircraft protection. Catalina detachments deployed to Albury, Geraldton, Shark Bay and Exmouth. The Americans had a big impact on Perth. There were 200 American personnel flying and servicing the Catalinas.

The US naval presence in Perth and Fremantle peaked at 2,000 officers and enlisted men.

The University of Western Australia, adjoining the base, was used as barracks for the Catalina crews, and also provided engineering facilities, a sick bay, mess hall and galley. Despite a few hiccups, the residents of Perth were grateful for the strong military presence when Japanese invasion seemed imminent. The Catalinas were capable of being used for dropping troops behind enemy lines, anti-submarine patrols, reconnaissance, air-sea rescue and mine-laying.

Fifty years later at a commemoration lunch it was decided to bring a Catalina back to Crawley and to create a museum to honor the achievements of the aircraft and their crews.

The Australian American Catalina Memorial Foundation was born, with Keith Mattingly as first Chairman. He garnered support and donations for the National Catalina Memorial Museum

and Education Centre. A suitable Catalina was found in Texas. Following painstaking restoration, the fuselage engine, wings and tail were packed into shipping containers and shipped to Perth in September 2001.

The Catalina was bought for \$300,000 by the WA State Government and is in storage. It is intended to be housed in a museum to be built on Matilda Bay Reserve near the site of the original U.S. base.

The 116th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment Association, whose gunners eventually took over the guns at Crawley Bay from our Regiment, has been very actively engaged with the project.

A 40-mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun in good condition has been acquired and is to be cleaned and painted. Together with other memorabilia it will be displayed when the Museum is completed.

While Keith Mattingly, Perth businessman Bill Wyllie, patrons and contributors, with financial support from Western Australian State Lotteries, the State Government and the corporate sector, have accomplished so much in getting the project this far, more money is needed before construction of the \$3 million museum can begin.

Donations to the Australian-American Catalina Foundation Inc., which are tax deductible, can be made by writing to the Honorary Treasurer, GPO Box E201, Perth 6000.