



"TAKE POST!"

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

April 2005



B Troop, 7 Aust L.A.A. Battery, Melville, W.A. — Lieutenant A Girdwood, Troop Commander

REUNION NOTICE

The Anzac Reunion will be held on **Sunday April 24, 2005** from 12 noon until 3:30 pm (doors do not open before 11:30 am). Cost of Annual Subscription, lunch and drinks is **\$30** [Prepaid].

[Prepayment is required to confirm booking with Hotel]

Please see the enclosed notice regarding the **new venue** —

The Victoria Hotel
215 Little Collins Street, Melbourne

John Campbell, Hon Secretary.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The **Annual General Meeting**
will be held at:

The Victoria Hotel
215 Little Collins Street, Melbourne
at 11:45 am, Sunday, April 24, 2005
(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:*

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| | Bty |
| Clive Greenhill | 9 |
| John Graham | 9 |
| Eric Allpress | 7 |
| Cecil Palmer | 8 |
| Frank Harrison | 9 |
| Phil Bishop | 9 |
| Len Chadwick | 9 |
| John Ballantine | 9 |
| Les Stephens | 8 |
| Jack Williamson | 9 |
| Pancho McDonald | 9 |
| Keith Gregory | 9 |
| Brian Layton | 7 |
| Harold Earle | 9 |
| John Morrison | 7 |
| Keith Sitlington | 8 |
| George Howat | 8 |
| R W J Westcott | 9 |

Lest We Forget

2/3rd AUSTRALIAN LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

President:

RON BRYANT

6 Blanche Ave, 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,
BRUCE TULLOCH : HARRY
SAUERBERG : MAL WEBSTER.

MELBOURNE ANZAC MARCH 2005

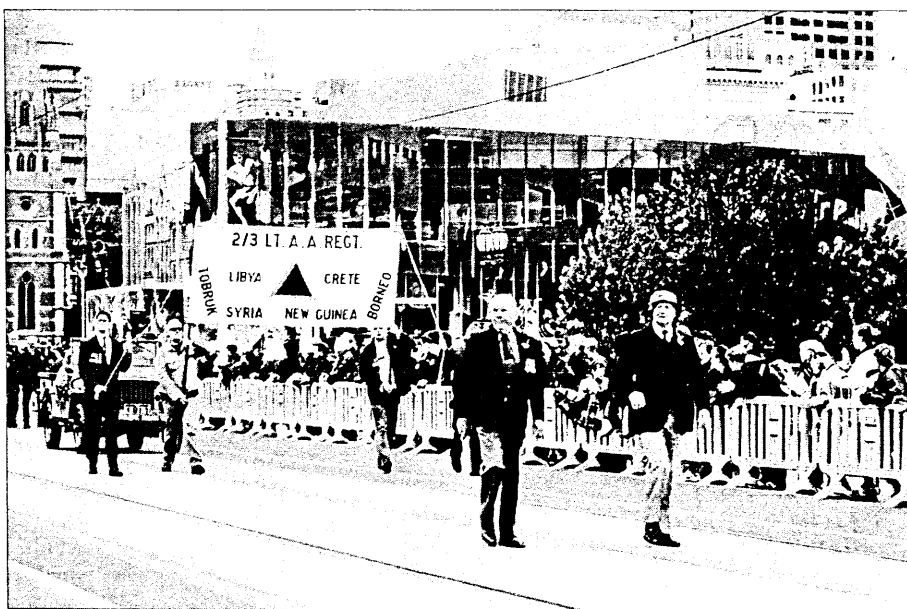
Please note that our assembly point is the same as last year.

We should assemble at 9.30 am between Collins and Little Collins Streets, at the opposite side of Swanston Street to the Town Hall, directly behind 2/2 Heavy Ack Ack.

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

Some concern has been expressed at the Kindred Organization's Meeting that the standard of dress of some young people marching could be improved. Someone commented that a few looked as if they were in a Moomba Parade!

It was emphasized that the ex-servicemen march to honour their Regiment and fallen comrades, hence a reasonable standard of dress should be expected.



ANZAC MARCH — MELBOURNE 2004

John Campbell and Malcolm Webster leading the Regiment
on Anzac Day in Melbourne.

We'll try to shift the camera back to include you this year — so do come!

NEED TO KNOW?

Occasionally, we have been able to assist descendants requesting details of service or seeking some personal observations about a member. Often these details have assisted kinfolk in obtaining DVA assistance or helped fill in a gap in a family history.

We do our best to refer the enquirer to surviving men who served with, or may be familiar with action experienced by their relative.

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.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hearty greetings to all members and supporters in this 65th year since the formation of our Regiment.

At the 2004 Reunion, numbers were down again — to 40. We were very pleased to have as guests Bob Westwood, a member of the Werribee Racing Club Committee, and Graeme Heddle, both of whom had contributed so much to our day at the Werribee Races in September 2003, when the memorial to our Regiment was unveiled. Other Werribee friends Geoffrey Smith and Rick Wolany had also been invited but regretted that they both had prior engagements.

At the 2004 Anzac Day March, we were fortunate that the rain held off for the March. It was disappointing that only 12 members of our Association paraded. We were reinforced by a couple of friends from other units and about 15 descendants of our men. I am sure that we can do better than 12 members marching. If not we have to do some 'soul searching' in the future.

Suggestions have been made that we merge with another Regiment's Association for both the Reunion and the Anzac March. Our Committee has considered this before. Although there may be sound reasons for merging we prefer to remain independent and under our own Banner for as long as possible; but we need the support of members to carry on.

We were disappointed recently to learn that Air Force House is no longer available for Reunions. It has been a first-class venue for us for 18 years. The management and staff have given us the utmost consideration over this period. We record our appreciation for the privileges extended to us.

For our 2005 Reunion on 24th April, your Committee has booked an attractive room at the Victoria Hotel, 215 Little Collins Street, Melbourne. This venue is convenient, being just east from Swanston Street, with access by train or tram. It has become necessary to increase the cost to members from \$25 to \$30, which will cover a "sit-down" hot meal, drinks and your usual membership subscription.

Our Association will substantially subsidize the actual cost. As the location is so convenient with public transport, most of us will not need a car to attend. As the numbers attending will influence future plans, I urge you to join your old mates for a happy day at the "Vic".

Further details for the Re-union are on the enclosed booking slip. As catering costs are now more critical, please note that with the new arrangements, booking your seat and pre-payment are essential!

Referring to the 2005 Anzac March, the leaders of our Regiment are selected by our Committee from those who have contributed time and energy to our Association, and who in fact can march. This year, Dave Thomson and Ron Bryant have been invited to lead us.

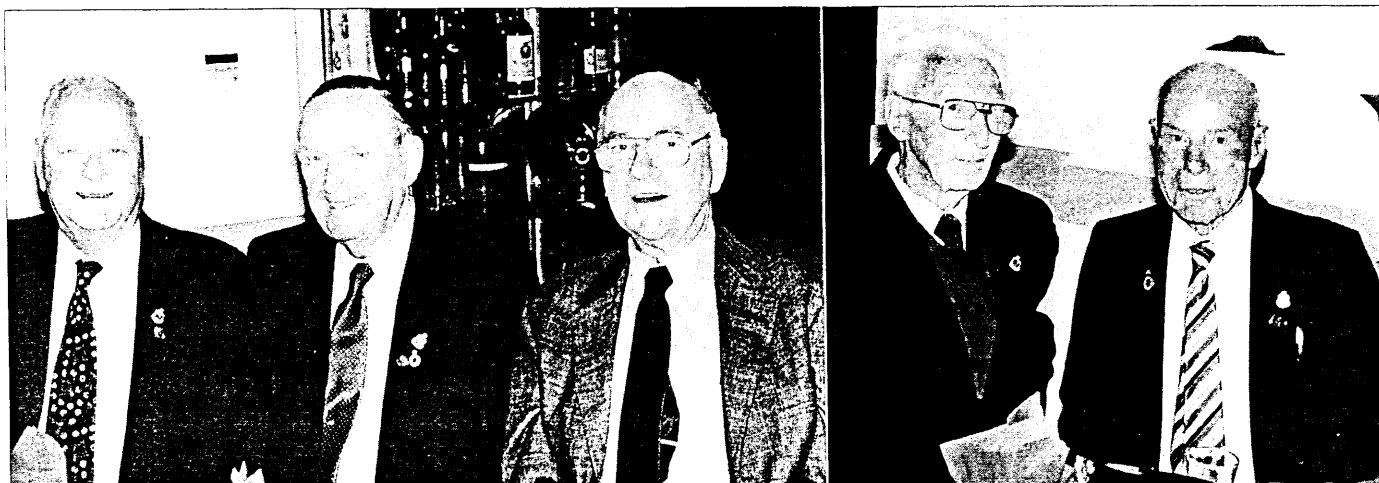
Again our thanks go to Max and Linda Parsons who have set up "Take Post" for 14 years; to Ron Berry who updates our computer records of members and to John Campbell : Secretary; John Hepworth : Treasurer, and to Committee members for keeping the show on the road.

John Campbell has not been well, so he is on 'light duties' at present. Cec Rae has been Acting Secretary in John's absence. Cec is no stranger to the job as he was Secretary for many years.

On behalf of our Association, I record our best wishes to the men and women of the services who have been so ably representing Australia in conflicts, peace-keeping and policing abroad, especially to those who have been involved with the disastrous tsunami in Asia and India.

I look forward to seeing as many as possible at the Reunion and the March. Time is flying and we're all in the front line now. Its important to get together to recall those remarkable days which we shared during World War II. We're not ready to fizzle out now — let's go a bit longer in strength until we say: "That's it!"

Ron Bryant



Left to Right — Pat Delves, Alan Girdwood, Dave Humpheys, Bill Waller, John Anderson
A "full hand" of members enjoying the 2004 Reunion in Melbourne.

Brevity is the soul of wit — a little can say a lot

In *"The Age"* special edition for its *"150 Years Journey"* to commemorate 150 years of publication, there was a story on the history of its feature: *"Letters to the Editor"*.

It stated ... "apart from providing a forum for the indefatigable Constance E. Little and a coterie of fellow devotees — who screamed blue murder when *The Age* attempted to drop *Access Age* in the late 1990s, it signalled a qualitative shift, for better or for worse, in the nature of letter writing."

The Constance E. Little is, of course, our correspondent, widow of Charles Little (8). Constance still frequently has her pithy letters in *The Age* columns.

Below are some actual examples:

NED Kelly's armour deserves a special place in history (*The Age*, 16/11). Compared with some modern corporate giants, drug barons, warmongers, racists, etc — he was a gentleman who fought against injustice.
Constance E. Little, Eagle Point

CONSTANCE! Constance! Ned Kelly "a gentleman who fought against injustice" (17/11)? Ned Kelly was a police murderer.
Jack Thomas, Trentham

AS AN octogenarian, experience and observation thoroughly convinced me that global warming must be regarded seriously.
Constance E. Little, Eagle Point

STATE premiers fighting for their workers' jobs, building Australian sophisticated warships. These weapons are a curse, let us pray that they will never be put to use!
Constance E. Little, Eagle Point

JOHN Elliott may be bankrupt, but he looks the kind of bloke who would give a hungry man the price of a meal.
Constance E. Little, Eagle Point

WALLETS and emotions have been drained on the Asian disaster. Time now for charity to begin at home. Urgent problems on our own doorstep are overdue for prompt attention.
Constance E. Little, Eagle Point

Anzac Day

by Constance E. Little,
widow of Gunner Charles Little

I felt it had been all in vain,
Anzac Day holds too much pain.
Each year it seems more difficult,

Then — I heard the lovely lilt
of children's voices, shrill with play
In the park across the way.

They romped, and played with happy glee
A football landed just near me.

The April sun beamed warmly down
On strong young limbs, so lithe and brown;
And veiled in time, old Diggers smiled,
Kindly, wisely, gently — mild.

Long time — No see

While caravanning along the Murray Valley, Ron Bryant (8) passed Ottrey Lodge at Cobram. That name registered and he called in and found Ralph Hawkey. Sixty-three years had passed since they had known and seen each other when in F Troop, 8 Battery, in Libya.

During the Benghazi Retreat, Ralph had suffered a gunshot wound from a German armoured group. Unfortunate as that was, Ralph was lucky to survive as British gunners were nearby and drove off the enemy column with their guns. After treatment at Tobruk Hospital, Ralph was sent home — eventually becoming a dairy farmer at Nathalia. His son Phillip has taken over the farm. Ron and his wife Doreen drove Ralph out to see the property. Ralph was the original soldier-settler on this irrigated

"The Battle for Crawley Bay"

Hon. Sec. John Campbell (8) visited Perth in October last to attend meetings of the Australian Cemeteries and Crematoria Association. John has served 38 years as a voluntary member of the Cheltenham Cemetery Trust, the last 34 as Chairman. This Trust includes the Bunurong Memorial Park, with its cemetery and crematorium developed in 2000 at a cost exceeding \$20 million.

At the Perth meeting, John was one of five members honoured by presentations of Life Membership Certificates, in John's case for his contribution to the Cemetery industry during his 38 years service.

While in Perth, John took the opportunity of having a nostalgic look at Pelican Point on the Swan River where the Battle for Crawley Bay was enjoyed in 1942 by 8 Battery providing A.A. protection for the U.S. Navy's Catalina flying boats. The Battery did fire a few accidental shots across the river. More importantly, about 16 of our gunners "captured" young ladies in that area and married them.

Incidentally, John's son Bruce is now a Community Advisor in the far outback, at Pipalyatjara. Where's that?

In the north-west of South Australia near the WA border. Enterprising people, those Campbells!



Ralph Hawkey & Ron Bryant at Cobram

block. With his wife Phyllis, they had created from bare land a viable farm with beautiful gardens. With its matured trees, the block is a credit to their many years of hard work. Fortunately, the lady tenant of the home gives loving care to the gardens. Sadly, Ralph and Phyllis are in different locations of care; but never-the-less in very good surroundings.

THE SENTRY'S LOG

Home-grown Terrorist?

Frank Hands (8) recalls teaching Gunner George Young how to swim at the jetty located at the Swan River in the West in 1942. George weighed 17 stone and was not confident. With a rope around his waist he was persuaded to jump into the water. During the ensuing panic, George lost his dentures. Mick Falcke dived in and located them.

Frank and his mate Bertie were in Canberra recently, re-visiting the Australian War Memorial. Around lunchtime, alarm bells and sirens sounded. Security guards blocked all exits because of a bomb scare. Bertie looked for his camera and recalled that he had left it with his papers in a parcel near the bomber "G for George". It turned out that this package had caused the bomb scare! Next morning, they faced up for re-entry to the Museum. "*Oh, not you back again.*" was the welcome! Oh well, it was good to keep the security people alert.

Incidentally, Frank travelled to London late last year with his son Stephen and his family. They were well looked after by their Car Club friends, Brian Moore and his family, who got them out with the Vintage Sports Car Club and Veteran Car Club enthusiasts. Highlights of their journey were visits to the Kensington Science and York Railway Museums and the beautiful City of Cambridge.

Congratulations to Phil and Shirley

Phil and Shirley Hurst celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on 26 June, 2004. Phil was still in uniform for their wedding. Phil served in 2/7 Infantry Battalion in Libya, Greece and Crete. He was wounded in the shoulder in Crete. After crossing the island, he was evacuated by the Navy. After recovering from the wound and infections, he joined our Regiment to be with his brother Stan Hurst.

Phil left the Army in August 1945. The newly-weds conducted a grocery business in Yarragon, managed a motel in Traralgon, then lived in Sydney for 12 years. They now live in Mount Waverley. They have two daughters and three grandchildren. Both have been involved with community organizations in many capacities.

A Citizen of the World

Mrs Jeane Manning, widow of Geoff Manning (7) died on 7th August 2004. (Geoff was killed on Crete on 20th May 1941. Jeane was a talented artist. After WWII, she resided mainly in Majorca, Spain, for about 29 years. In 1989, Jeane returned to live in Australia, at Castlemaine.

Not having children of her own, she had taken the opportunity to travel a great deal and was regarded by her friends as a citizen of the world.

Saida George

Ray Everlyn (9) sent the photo (below) of himself (centre) and Jack le Marshall (right) with bags of oranges at Khassa, Palestine — they were checking on Saida George, seated on his ass. The gentleman's "credentials" were in fact unrepeatable in this respectable journal, having been provided by some other digger, to the unflattering effect that he was "a rogue of the first order and was not to be trusted in any circumstances!"



Jack was transferred to 7 Battery and unfortunately was killed in Crete. Ray, now 83, thinks he is the last surviving D.R. from 9 Battery H.Q. Ray's only son passed away some years ago at the age of 10. His wife died in 2003. However, he is blessed with 3 daughters, 12 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. One of his grandsons is in the Army Reserve.

Duntroon to Townsville

Lieutenant James Hepworth, grandson of our Honorary Treasurer John Hepworth, graduated at Duntroon in June 2003. At the time of writing he is in signals at Townsville. On last Anzac Day, James, accompanied by his cousins Lisa and Robin, and his aunt Anne, marched with us. Being in uniform and one of the few who could keep in step, James improved the look of our contingent!

John Hepworth's son Douglas, father of James, recently suffered in a very bad car accident in Perth. His condition has improved after a long convalescence.

"On Target"

We receive requests from member's descendants for the Regiment's history "*On Target*"; but we have no further copies. If you have a copy which is no longer required, perhaps you could get it to our Secretary. If you happen to be a 'loner' now with no family wanting your copy, don't let it be thrown out when you fall off the twig. The Association will recycle it for you.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Once again I have had a fair bit of correspondence from members and relatives of members and so I will try to pass on some of the 'happenings'.

Kevin Grey, secretary of the 2/3 Composite Regt based in Sydney, has found another 9th Bty member. **Albert Bains** is the name. Welcome Albert, you will now get our "Take Post" each year.

From W.A. **Reg Dickson** (7) has sent me the new address of **Cliff Ross** (8). Thanks Reg, he has been on the missing list for a year or two. I have received a great letter from **Stan Walker** (9) Stan was one of those "bloody kids", [his expression], who joined the unit on its return to Aussie from the Middle East. Stan had spoken to **Bob McAndrew** (9) on the phone some time before writing.

Elizabeth Egan, daughter of **Roy Richards** (7) has been in touch seeking particulars of her Dad's service. **Glen Harry** (8) was Elizabeth's mothers' brother. **John Harrison** (7) writes that heart attacks and diabetes have slowed him down a lot. I hope that you are feeling better by now John.

Terry Gleeson (Sigs) was a Detective Sergeant and writes that he met **Peter Macgeorge** during that time. Peter was a crime reporter for the Sydney newspapers. It's a small world isn't it!. **Bob Robson** (9) marched in the Sydney Anzac Day March; he reports that the banner was carried by **Cliff Cullen** (9) and a son of **Bede McDougal** (Sigs).

Phil Bishop (8) and his wife Nancy featured in the *Colac Herald* when they visited Apollo Bay to relive their honey-moon there in 1942. Phil recounted in that article that the *Herald and Weekly Times* gave them four cans of petrol for the car and that was as far as they could get, and return home.

Daphne Block wrote to tell me of the death of her husband **Arthur Block** (9). Arthur had been a very busy man, building hundreds of houses and commercial buildings, also building three boats. He also wrote his memoirs of his army life. Thanks Daphne, I hope that you are getting along OK.

Robert Harrison son of **Frank Harrison** (9) sent a copy of his eulogy given at the funeral of his dad. Frank had grown up on a farm in Leongatha and after his Army service continued farming in the area. Frank was obviously a very remarkable man.

I had a nice chat with Graeme, the son of **Raleigh Hawkins** (7) advising me of the death of **Eric Allpress** (7).

Alf Sutherland answered a request by Enid Hayes of WA. in last years "Take Post", for information about the **Miller brothers** (8). Alf had grown up with the Miller family and enlisted with three of the brothers. He was pleased to be able to communicate with Enid.

Frank Wallis (Sigs) has taken me to task for writing last year, that he lived at Tathra in NSW — just to set the record straight it is Glen Forrest W.A. I was a little bit out — only about 3000 km, just a good route march Frank! Joyce Ritchie, daughter of **John Hipworth** (RHQ) reported that Hippy's grandson, having won a scholarship to the Military Academy in Canberra and now a Commissioned Officer in the Army was sent to Rwanda then had 12 months in Israel and Lebanon on border patrol. He is now at Rockhampton. Army life must be in the genes Joyce!

Roy McLaren (7) now 85, appreciates "Take Post" and wrote of his times on the Heraklion Aerodrome and the recognition he received by being presented with a Greek Honorable Service Medal. Well done Roy, just "keep on keeping on". **Rex Emmett** (7) sends his best wishes to all and hopes that he will get to a reunion. He only needs to get someone to conduct the service in Ouyen. It sounds as though you are doing a great job in that district Rex. **John Ballantine** (9) must be a "devil for punishment", he writes that in 1947 he joined the CMF and served as a Captain until 1964.

I received a nice letter from Jean Bell, widow of **R.J. Bell** (RHQ). Last Christmas Jean had a bad fall causing a broken leg and other injuries. I do hope that all is well now Jean. [Put more water with it next time!]

Once again a very nice letter from **Bob Phillips** (8) of Noosa. Bob's letter was about mateship, and how Bob related to the mateship of our Army mates which has extended throughout the last 6 decades. I enjoyed it greatly, thanks Bob.

Dan Hawkes (9) wrote wondering how many were transferred to other Units. I don't have accurate figures Dan, but some 50 went to the 2/4th Lt AA in Palestine before we returned to Aussie. Another 50 or so went to the 116th Lt AA in WA. Probably about the same number went to the 109th Lt AA and I know a number went to 235 Heavy AA battery. So we did lose quite a few.

Eric Maxwell son of the late **Vern Maxwell** (8) and a great supporter of the Association, has sent me a poem. No Eric, I cannot find any details of the source, or name of the author. Thank you for your interest and support.

Bob Westcott (9), **Arthur Spiller** (RHQ), **David Carty** (9) and **Keith Fryer** (8) and many others have sent greetings to their mates including the few I mention here.

I will close off now and hope that I have a better year than the last couple of months so that I can sit at this computer and rattle a few more keys for a year or two more.

With best wishes to you all. **John Campbell** (8)

WHAT THE MELBOURNE PAPERS SAID ABOUT US IN '41

Examination of newspaper cuttings of 1941 provides some surprising reading – we thought that the folk at home knew little or nothing about conditions in Tobruk. A typical GHQ Cairo communiqué of the period stated: *"Our patrols at Tobruk continue their activity, inflicting casualties on enemy working parties. The situation on the frontier area is unchanged."*

However the public were better informed by war correspondents – this is an example:

8th August 1941 Cheerful, Dogged Band. Heroes of Tobruk Write New Epic.

By Official War Correspondent Ian Fitchett

Things seem to have changed little after my absence of more than two months.

The town is more battered and many buildings that had become familiar throughout the area have been reduced to rubble. The dust still blows white and thick, blotting out all vision without warning. Planes still roar overhead and the sky is dotted with black and white puffs as the ack ack guns roar into action.

Judging by the great height that enemy planes keep, compared with the early days, our anti aircraft defences seem well on top.

Vehicles are still dispersed in their hundreds on the plain running to the coast, and the food and ammunition dumps do not seem to have diminished in size.

The harbour looks the same, littered with sunken hulls and masts, while other ships lean crazily, beached high up on the water's edge.

What changes there are are not such in the true sense of the word. They are the final development of magnificent organisation and staff work. In Tobruk garrison there is not one idle mouth to be fed. Every man left here is here for a purpose, with a job to be done.

Enemy "Nervy"

... Perfectly organised team-work has been responsible for the successful defence of the fortress and the gradual but sure change-over from defence to fierce aggression that has reduced the enemy outside to a state of nerves.

Wherever one goes, the old familiar faces appear – leaner perhaps, but as dusty and cheerful as ever. Shorts and boots are the universal dress and the men are all burned almost black.

In the back areas one is reminded of life in a small country town ... as you bump along the roads and through the deep wadis, there are the same friendly waves from men you have never spoken to but have got to know well. ... As the bombers pass overhead, all disappear into caves and trenches only to reappear and move round the plains, rocky hills and deep gullies like so many brown ants.

Wind and Dust

Everywhere there are new craters and huge grey black splotches of burnt rock and earth. The "scorched earth" of the Ukraine cannot compare to that of Tobruk

Here all was desolate and barren before the war and the thousands of tons of high-explosive that have been poured into the area for so many months can do little to add to the stark ugliness of the scene.

Overhead the sun beats down, what wind there is only brings dust by the ton. And despite the many elaborate precautions, flies are bad enough to bring discomfort.

How the men keep their good health and cheerful spirits is one of the miracles of Tobruk. Regular mails have done much to cheer them and "*Tobruk Truth*" still keeps them in touch with the outer world.

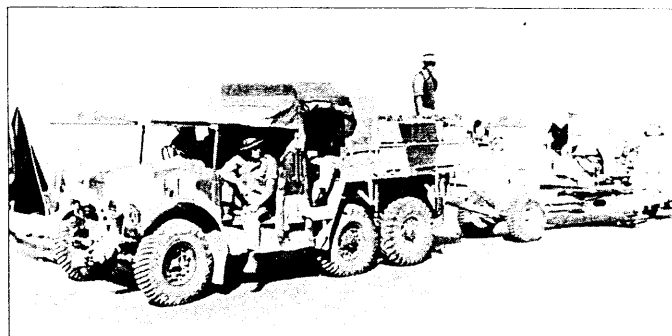
18th August 1941

To all outward appearances, when dusk falls on Tobruk the garrison seems to be settling down for the night. But in the forward zones all is bustle and activity. Night is the time when our patrols move out.

Some are on reconnaissance, others straight out fighting patrols, with one aim, to contact the enemy and hit him hard. So demoralised have the Italians become that they have resorted to the use of searchlights in an endeavour to get some warning of the fierce onslaught that is always liable to burst out of the night. The Germans are tougher, but our men have found that they will rarely stay to fight it out when contacted at night.

On a typical patrol sent out to discover the extent and position of an enemy minefield, every man wore sandshoes and was heavily armed with tommy-guns, grenades and a Bren. The patrol had covered 4,000 yards when they found the minefield. The officer-in-charge told his sergeant to examine the mine, while with other members of the party, he went to trace the extent of the field.

On his return he found that the sergeant had lifted one of the mines, and was carrying it in his arms. The patrol reached our lines again at 4 am and the mine was handed over to the Engineers for examination.



A Troop, 9 Bty Morris Tractor and Bofors in the Suez area
— February 1942

DEATH FROM THE SKIES — by Peter Macgeorge (7 Battery)

63 years have gone since that afternoon we lay sprawled face down on the churned-up gravel near our Bofors anti aircraft gun at Heraklion, capital of Crete. Large German supply planes within range of our gun were passing directly over us, but for the moment In hopes that the pilots would become even more confident and fly lower, we let them pass. They were JU 52 carriers mainly and we watched them drop crates of supplies to the paratroopers dropped the day before.

It was the inland side of the coastal airport which we and other gun crews from 7 Battery were helping to hold.

The waist-high sandbag wall around our gun had been partly flattened by bombs and machine-gunning from German planes since the blitz began 10 days earlier. There were craters almost right up the edge of the concrete emplacement.

All other guns around the airport had also been blitzed.

The place must have looked a mess from the air, and it was evident the German pilots, flying so low, believed the ground defences had been knocked out.

But some of the guns, like ours, were still useable, and the crews lying "frozen" on the gravel were awaiting the orders to fire.

We had strict Instructions not to move a muscle while we waited, but, though I was scared even about raising an eyebrow, I can remember glancing up and seeing someone in grey uniform, holding a sub-machine gun, standing by the open hatch of one of the big, slow-moving planes.

Soon after that, came the order. Two of us scrambled into the seats behind the Bofors traverse handles and two others grabbed clips of shells. The sergeant yelled "Fire!" and the gun started pumping out its tracer shells.

All the guns swung into action almost simultaneously, and most scored at least one hit. It was a brief but nightmarish scene of destruction which lasted almost 30 seconds before the planes began veering away and roaring higher.

Fought when Allied air power was almost negligible, the battle of Crete, with its great German sky armadas and the battered but wily ground defences, must have been one of World War II's most awesome spectacles.

It was about 12 May, 1941, when the first waves of German aircraft appeared low over the Aegean Sea. We could see the sun flashing on their perspex canopies, a long line of tiny reflections almost lost against the sparkle of the water.

The first of the oncoming swarm of planes, Stukas and Messerschmitt 109s, swept up over the cliffs of Crete, climbed steadily, deployed into smaller groups, and opened fire with machineguns as they dived out of the sun. On their heels came the heavier and higher-

flying Messerschmitt 110s which dropped bombs around the Bofors until the airport was almost blotted out by dust. The raid lasted about two minutes, and after the last of the planes had gone all we could hear was the crackle of flames from bombed hangars and installations.

For the next fortnight there were four or five raids a day, each with additional bombers and each lasting a little longer than the last. Two or three planes were shot down, and their machineguns, with

ammunition, were set up along the runways and manned by troops retreating from the German onslaught on Greece.

About 4pm on day 10 of the blitz, the invasion started. The planes were not low against the sea as before, but high up, big formations filling the air with a heavy drumming. The armada, as it approached, divided into three parts, two of which headed off to points further west along the Crete coast, with the third bearing towards us.

They came over in line ahead, probably six columns of them, surprisingly closely spaced, like a cloud, a noisy ungodly

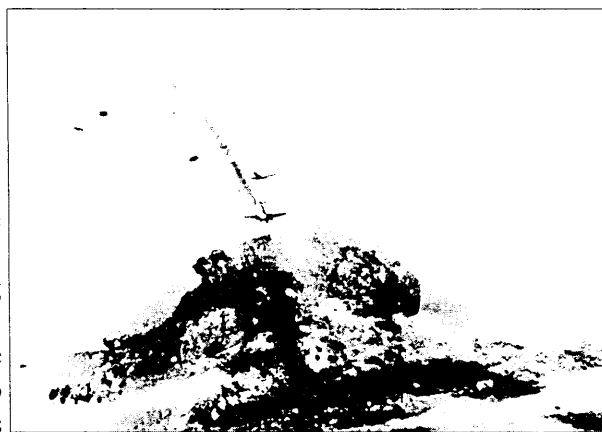
scene made the more bizarre by silver trails left by the tracer shells arching up from the ground defences.

Some of the planes were hit but only a small percentage, and a few kilometres inland they began dropping paratroops along a 10km tract of land far from the airport's south side.

The parachutes were colored to help unit re-groupings and they formed a melodramatic ever-failing curtain which thickened as the planes kept arriving. Some aircraft, edging out of line apparently to avoid fire from heavier calibre ack-ack guns, crashed into low



German Parachutists dropping down from Troop Carriers



Plane hit by A/A fire crashes into bomb-ravaged hill

hills. But it made no difference. The planes kept lumbering in.

Then came the gliders, behind tow-planes, a Wellsian scene of noise and action. Some of the planes drew two gliders, some three. There were also heavier planes, each with a jeep-like vehicle fixed to the under carriage like a frog in the clutches of an eagle. The troop-laden gliders, and some of the powered craft, came to rest in flurries of dust and broken parts on a stretch of ground not much more than a kilometre from our positions. The crash landings formed a barricade behind which the troops took refuge from Allied small-arms fire.

One of the strangest things about the afternoon was the skirl of a distant bagpipe from a member of a Scots unit advancing on foot towards the line of wrecked aircraft.

More German paratroopers and equipment began arriving the following morning, and then, about twice a day, the supply planes came over, flying ever closer to the Bofors.

The Germans concentrated on building up their land forces and were soon ready to break out and take the airport. With their unchallenged air power, nothing could have stopped them.

On May 29 we received the news we would be taken off the island that night by units of the British Navy. We boarded the ships from the Heraklion mole and set off for Egypt, but were bombed shortly after dawn by Stukas.

My ship was sunk and I was picked up by an Italian motor torpedo boat and taken to a concentration camp north of Venice. But many others got away, to join the fight against the Japanese and the desert battle against Rommel.

*Crete had fallen, but the Germans
paid for it in blood.*

ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE DISCIPLINE (or lack of it!)

It was at the disaster called Crete in May 1941. Two troops of 2/3rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment were deployed near Heraklion to repel the expected airborne assault of German parachute troops. Luftwaffe aircraft continually sortied to the island and made detailed, low level reconnaissance of the Allied troop positions.

Not far away from where the gunners of 7th Medium Regiment RA were positioned as infantry east of Heraklion, a troop of Australian Bofors 40-mm guns were in place, and under strict orders NOT TO ENGAGE enemy aircraft before 'D' Day of the assault. One morning, an Me 110, cheekier than usual, circled around several times at no more than a few hundred feet above the Bofors.

The Australians could stand the strain of not firing no longer, and when the 110 came around again in a steep turn, one Bofors crew let one clip of ammo go.

They hit the aircraft fair and square between the engine and wing root and it plunged to earth seconds later with an almighty crash.

P.J.D. Langrishe (of Woking, Surrey), a former officer of 7th Medium Regiment, supplied this anecdote.

Keith Gregory : A Murchison Treasure

with acknowledgements to the Shepparton News and Geoff Adams

Keith Gregory was one of thirteen men, eleven of whom were in the 20th Light Horse Regiment in 1936, who joined the A.I.F. together in 1940. They all finished up in our 9th Battery. Their experiences were recorded in the book "*The Dirty Thirteen*".

On his return to Murchison after World War II, as well as being a wool classer, he went on to join the committees of numerous town services, putting in numerous voluntary hours, and being awarded many life memberships.

He became manager for the Australian Wheat Board at Murchison East and a sub-agent for Dalgetys. He held executive office in just about every service organization in the District including the RSL, Legacy, Scouts, the Historical Society and every sporting and recreational club. The establishment of a caravan park and introduction of a sewerage system for the town were two of the larger projects which he worked on.



In his backyard Keith had a 'museum shed' containing thousands of pieces of Murchison history — here he is holding a piece of the Murchison meteorite. [Photo by courtesy of "Shepparton News"]

With Keith's remarkable life of service and the age of 93 years that he reached, it is no wonder that he was well known and sought after as the historian of his area.

At his funeral service in September 2003, the cortege was preceded by a sole horse dressed in the traditional way to honor a Light-Horseman and led by its owner Leoni Quick.

Keith enjoyed our Reunions with his mates. We record our condolences to his family, in particular to his wife Ina who obviously was a wonderful support to Keith in his community endeavours.

A Bastard of a Place.

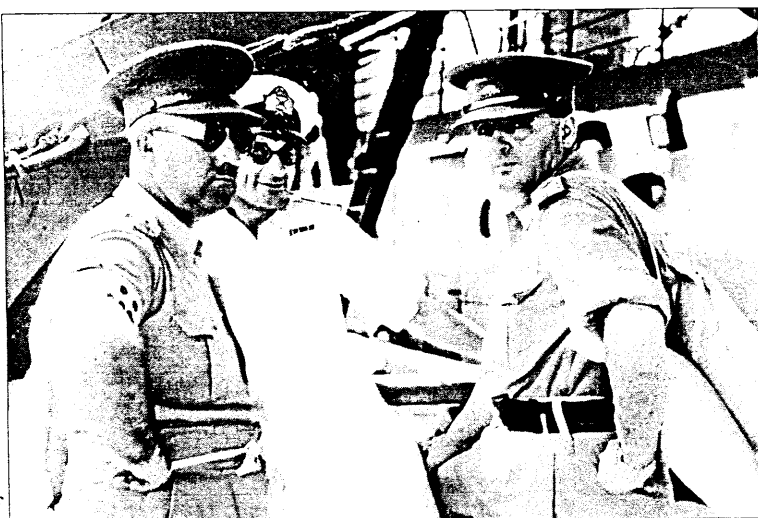
The book, *"A Bastard of a Place"* a history of the World War 2 battles at Kokoda, Milne Bay, Gona, Buna and Sanananda written by Peter Brune is an absorbing story. Its 600 pages of military drama, views on Australian commanders, soldiers, Papuan natives and of the privations suffered by most of the participants in those battles in 1942/43 is worthy of study by those responsible for the security of our country now and in the future. Never again should troops with such inadequate training and equipment have to carry the defence of Australia.

The author suggests that General MacArthur and General Tom Blamey sacrificed Australian field commanders as scapegoats to protect their own positions, and pushed officers in the field to battle by the antiquated method of large scale frontal assaults over open ground against well dug-in Japanese troops, without allowing time for good reconnaissance, so suffering terrible casualties.

The old proverb — "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die" applied on so many occasions when lives seemed to be needlessly sacrificed.

All Australians should read some history of our infantry battalions to whom the Nation owes a great debt. This book provides much of their interesting history.

Most public libraries would have the book.



Lieut Colonel John Rhoden and Lieut (later Major) John Purcell (7) with the Executive Officer of the Troop Transport "Devonshire" in the Red Sea 1941. Colonel Rhoden was Officer Commanding Troops aboard ship.

A GREAT AUSTRALIAN TRAIN JOURNEY

9 Battery arrived in Adelaide from the Middle East in March 1942 by the *"Andes"* and several small freighters. We were billeted in private homes then given leave to Victorian towns and cities. After nine days wonderful leave we returned to Adelaide.

Left Adelaide again on 12th April about 10 a.m. A long wait at Sunshine where many of the troops were able to find a pub. Off to Tocumwal on which section we lost one of our men who fell from the train and was killed. At Tocumwal, because of the change of rail gauge we had to off-load all our guns, equipment and stores and reload them on to another train. This was done by the troops as there was no-one else to do it. The carriages were smaller than the capacious Victorian ones, so it was a case of squeezing up closer together. Crossing the border; we left behind us thoughts of our loved ones and thought more of army duties.

We were now slowly progressing towards Brisbane by the 'back way' through Narrandera, Junee, Harden — the next day over the Hawkesbury River, through Newcastle, Gloucester, Kempsey. Many stops to allow other trains to pass. At one stop for the steam engine to take on water we all got out, stripped off our clothes and had a good wash in a nearby creek — the first for some time. The next day breakfast at Casino and reached Brisbane in the afternoon of the 16th when we were transported to Doomben Racecourse for the night with leave into Brisbane and also on the following day.

Mention must be made of the work the local ladies did to produce good meals for all of the Battery, sometimes at early hours of the morning.

On to Roma Street station in Brisbane where we repeated the change-over from one train to another. This time to an even smaller gauge and smaller carriages - so we had to squeeze up together yet a little closer. The sleeping arrangements were to say the least 'cramped'.

The only good thing about the Queensland trains was they had a little balcony fore and aft of the carriage where one could stand and get some fresh air if you did not mind the soot from the steam-engine. Back on the train on Saturday the 18th afternoon, with tea at Gympie. The next day thru' Rockhampton, St. Lawrence and Mackay.

Monday 20th April we arrived Townsville and disembarked, with our equipment. But guess what?

No one in authority knew why we were there. So into trucks which took us to the local cemetery where we were told to camp for the night - on the bare ground — no tents.

Fortunately we found a pub so we were off to sleep in no time. We camped at the end of Garbutt airfield. The Coral Sea Battle was in progress.

At 4 a.m. an American bomber crashed about 200 yards from us. A 500lb. bomb exploded and, pieces of plane and bomb landed amongst the sleeping Battery. Our only casualty (a minor one) was one man hit on the foot by a splinter of metal. Sadly there were no survivors from the aircraft crew.

The next day we moved on to Garbutt Field as A.A. Defence. The journey of approximately 3000 km took eight days.

Meanwhile 7 and 8 Batteries were having their Great Australian Train Journey across the Nullabor plain to Perth.

C J Rae

Australian Gunners used captured Italian equipment in Tobruk

Both 2/12 Field Regiment and 2/3 Light A/A Regiment played merry hell with enemy guns in Tobruk.

The following article is reproduced from Take Post – 2/12 Field Regt Association's newsletter.

Today's soldiers might never believe that in World War II a field regiment went into action armed only with what the gunners could carry — no guns and no transport — but it happened — in Tobruk!

With slide rules and a knowledge of trigonometry (pocket calculators had not then been invented) and using salvaged enemy and obsolete guns, the 2/12th gunners supported the infantry for nearly five months during the Siege of Tobruk, firing over 56,000 shells at the enemy.

When the Tobruk Siege commenced, three brigades of 9 Division and one of 7 Division comprised the main Australian forces defending Tobruk but their artillery regiments were back in Palestine and Egypt. Scattered within the perimeter were pre-1914 guns of both British and enemy origin, also large dumps of ammunition for the Italian guns. As all supplies had to be brought in by sea, ammunition was in short supply so it was decided to bring in gunners to "give the enemy some of their own back"

Formed in May 1940 at Puckapunyal, the Regiment, (then 2/2 Medium Regt), trained on 60-pounder guns but when the Allies lost much of their medium equipment at Dunkirk the unit was converted to a field regiment: 2/12 Field Regt and trained for a short time on 18-pounders (this proved to be the only gun the unit would not fire in action).

Their experience on 60-pounders favoured 2/12 when it was decided which regiment would go to Tobruk and so, 2/12 Field Regiment became the only Australian field artillery in Tobruk during the siege.

On moonless nights in May 1941, 2/12 gunners were transported on Navy destroyers from Alexandria to the besieged garrison and collected whatever guns and howitzers they could find.

The remarkable collection included ten British 4.5-inch howitzers; eight ancient 60-pdr guns; Italian 75- and 105-mm guns; 100-mm gun-howitzers and huge 149-mm howitzers. The enemy guns posed many problems — manuals and range tables were in a foreign language, gun sights calibrated in 'mils' as opposed to 'degrees', and range drums in metres not yards. Mechanical problems were overcome by innovative artificers and spare parts obtained by cannibalising other guns. Problems solved, the 2/12th effectively deployed and fired them all!

As a measure of their success it is noted that on

August 3, 1941, the regiment's mixed bag of guns supported an attack by our infantry with nine 4.5 hows, eight 75-mms, three 100-mms, four 105-mms, two 149-mms and two 60-pdr guns, firing approximately 4,000 rounds (mostly by the 75s). Of the 56,000 rounds fired by the regiment in Tobruk, more than half were supplied by the enemy.

After being relieved from Tobruk, 2/12 Regiment's next campaign at El Alamein was fought with what became its favourite gun the British 25-pdr. In the Lae-Finschhafen campaign in New Guinea, the Australian-built 'long' and 'short' 25-pdrs were used and, in Borneo, 'long' 25s were the main ordnance but with a sprinkling of 4.2-inch mortars!

The 2/12th employed nine different guns, howitzers and mortars against the

enemy and fired a grand total of over 358,000 rounds while achieving a record of 74 weeks in action, longer than any other Australian Field Regiment in WWII.

The 2/12 Field gunners remember the enemy Italian Breda Guns that were manned by 2/3 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment's 8 Battery in Tobruk and deployed near the 2/12 guns to deter dive-bombing Stukas and German 'spotter' planes.

Two great Regiments supporting each other!



Phil Roberts and Nap Croft
clearing the 20-mm Breda A/A gun at Tobruk.

Young Australians need to know who their real heroes are.

By Louise Merrington of the Age Student newspaper.

Sport has been central to our identity as Australians. Now, it seems to be the sole focus of our national pride.

If we want today's youth to be interested and active in the politics and culture of our country, then we need a foundation to build on. When whole generations are growing up ignorant of our history, there is a danger that our national identity will erode.

In a letter to *The Age* recently, a worried primary school teacher noted how, when she asked her students to write about their heroes, the responses were all about sporting figures. What about Sir Edward Dunlop, she asked. The sad truth is that these students probably never even heard of "Weary" Dunlop.

But what happens when our sporting teams stop winning? Without sport, how do we define ourselves? It is a question I cannot answer, because, like so many young people, I am no longer sure about what it means to be Australian.

After the 2004 Olympics, Melbourne hosted a gigantic homecoming parade for our athletes, our so-called national heroes. While I have no wish to denigrate their remarkable sporting achievements, it seems that too often we tend to overlook the real heroes of the community.

On Anzac Day 2004 I marched for the first time, with my 93-year-old grandfather and the boys from the RAAF 460 Squadron. These men flew in Lancaster bombers over Germany during WWII, and their stories are simply phenomenal. Marching with them, I truly understood for the first time the vital importance of remembrance. The veterans were marching not just for memories of the past, but as a warning for the future.

If we stop educating our young people, if we forget our history, then we will make the same mistakes over and over again. Older generations have already paid the price and suffered terribly for this. Must the younger ones be forced, through ignorance, to do the same?

I wonder if, when our young men and women return from Iraq, they will receive the same positive reception that our athletes enjoy.

Young people need to learn about our roots, and not just the European ones.

The message from the war veterans is clear. We ignore history at our peril.

The Third Age — We Are There!

Dr Barry Jones AO opened Melbourne Legacy's Badge Week Appeal last year with an address entitled 'Coming to Grips with the Third Age'.

The speaker posed the question "Is life expectancy approaching its limit?" Evidence suggests otherwise — for instance female life expectancy in the record breaking country (Japan) has increased for 160 years at a steady pace from 40 to 80 years. This straight line projection may well continue up to 2040! Male life expectancy is also increasing steadily albeit with the straight line at a lower angle.

It has been reliably estimated that in Australia and France 50% of girls born in the year 2000 will be alive in the year 2100 (slightly fewer boys).

The THIRD AGE describes a demographic category, people who had left the paid work force, physically and

mentally capable and independent, and likely to live to an advanced age before the onset of the Fourth Age (the period of dependence, decrepitude and death). Modern life expectancy and retirement practice mean that traditional assumptions about age are wrong. Thus we have been taking the minority of the problematic elderly, the chronically sick, those who cannot look after themselves, those who



Phil Hurst, Frank Hands, Les Shields at the Melbourne reunion

live in institutions, those about to die, for the whole body of the retired; confusing the Third Age with the Fourth Age. With increased longevity and increasing labour force entrants (perhaps more than our economy's capacity to employ), we find the perhaps inevitable abrupt transition to retirement (of people physically fit and mentally alert) can cause acute psychological problems, especially when the transition is very abrupt.

Mr Barry Jones then went on to illustrate the tendency in Parliament for people to retire when they have just reached the Third Age. He entered the Third Age abruptly in September 1998 aged 65 on ceasing to be an MP, his last full-time paid job. ... He stressed the longevity of parliamentarians — of 63 ministers in the Hawke-Keating governments (1983-96) only one had died.

He thought he had a real chance of reaching the century and his present age of 71 is no barrier to a host of positions — board member, consultant, researcher, writer, public intellectual, even a tour guide.

The Third Age: Era of personal fulfillment (marked by very little public spending) (60-85 years?) is 12% of our community.