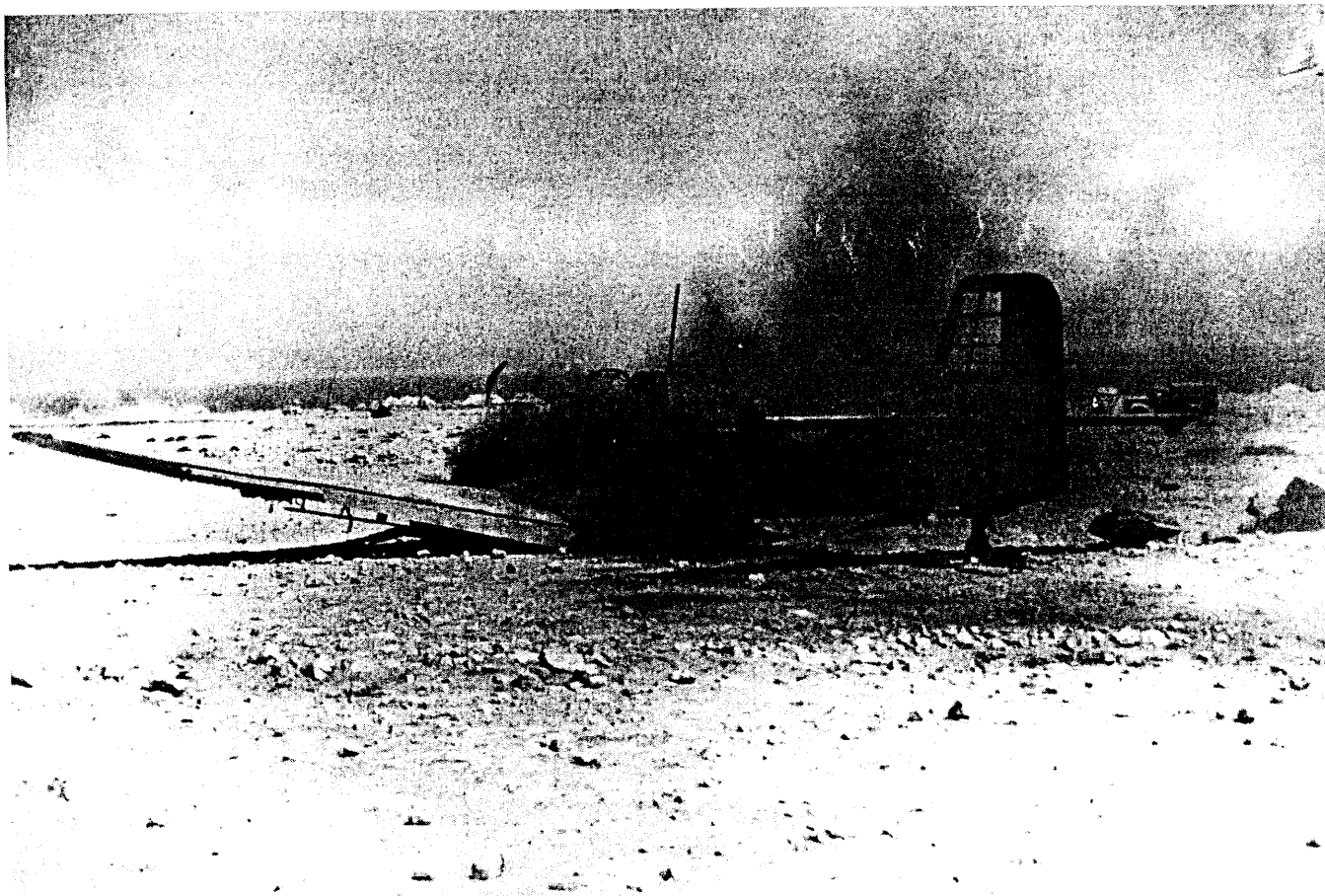


TAKE POST!

NEWSLETTER OF THE 2/3RD
AUSTRALIAN LIGHT ANTI-AIRCRAFT
REGIMENT ASSOCIATION

April 2006



A German Junkers 87 Divebomber shot down by Anti-Aircraft fire at Tobruk April 1941

REUNION NOTICE

The Anzac Reunion will be held on Monday April 24, 2006 from 12 noon until 3:00 pm (room is not open before 11:30 am).

Cost of annual subscription, lunch and drinks is \$30 (being highly subsidised). (Payment is required to confirm booking.)

Please see the enclosed notice regarding the new venue:

The Naval and Military Club
27 Little Collins St, Melbourne

John Campbell, Hon Secretary

NOTICE OF MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at:

The Naval and Military Club
27 Little Collins St, Melbourne

at 11:45 am, Monday April 24 2006 (room is 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 meeting.

John Campbell, Hon Secretary

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

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

	Bty
L.F. Young	
J.A.J. Ross	7
R. Farrant	Sigs
J. Curry	7
W.N. Barnes	
E.R. Kerr	8
W. (Bill) Nicholls	9
R.G. McLennan	7
L.J. Davis	8
M.R. Bennett	9
T.R. Dawson	8
R.E. Scott	7
D.W. Pulsford	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 2006

We should assemble at 9:30 am in Swanston Street (west side) between Flinders Lane and Collins Street 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 their left breast. Uniformed officers will salute.

Guidelines issued by kindred organisations and unit associations to descendants:

1. Marchers should be neatly and respectfully attired. (Sporting pullovers, torn dirty jeans and running shoes are not appreciated.)
2. Descendants marching for a deceased family member should be restricted to one member; extended families lengthen the march unreasonably. The deceased's medals should be worn on the right breast. Descendants should march at the rear of the assembled veterans.
3. Every effort should be made to keep in step with the band and other veterans. Remember, it is a Commemoration March, not a Mardi Gras.
4. Large photos of deceased veterans carried by descendants are not appropriate.

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 relatives.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

To continue to be a financial member of our Association just fill in the enclosed remittance slip, add your cheque of \$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 2006

Best wishes to all members of our association, and to your families, in the 66th year since our Regiment was formed.

Last year, following the loss of our venue at Air Force House, we held the 2005 reunion at that well known old hotel, the Victoria. Being well satisfied with that venue, we tried to book it again for this year's reunion. Unfortunately, the Victoria had been booked out for major events.

After viewing a couple of alternatives, we were very pleased to be able to make a booking for the Naval and Military Club. This Club is most suitable for our purpose. The location, 27 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, is in easy walking distance of Parliament Railway Station, and tram stops.

It is 60 years since the Regiment's first reunion at North Melbourne Town Hall. We have members who attended early meetings and are now in their nineties, still soldiering on at our reunions.

So, come along and enjoy some times with old mates at this heavily subsidised lunch at a first-class venue. Eventually, we will bow out; but in good style! Booking and payment up front is essential. Dress: jacket and tie are essential. Many of our members are familiar with the Naval and Military Club. If you are not, don't miss this opportunity of enjoying the Club, with its military atmosphere. See the enclosed booking slip and return it to John Campbell as soon as possible to enable us to have a firm booking.

Last year's Anzac March

The number of members of our association at the March was disappointing. There were ten members and 20 descendants and friends behind our banner. If we can't improve on the number of members marching, we will be compelled to join with other anti-aircraft units, in which case there will be some loss of identity for our Regiment. This will eventually happen; but let us defer it.

I'm pleased to report that Hon. Secretary John Campbell has improved in health and has been well and truly back on the job. On your behalf, I thank him, Treasurer John Hepworth, the members of your committee, and Ron Berry who looks after our computer records, for keeping the show going.

I am sad to advise that Max Parsons of 2nd/12th Field Regiment (who with his wife Linda set up so professionally our *Take Post* newsletter in a voluntary capacity for 14 years) passed away on January 2006 following a serious illness. Max has been a good friend to our Regiment and to me—always ready to assist us. There is further comment on Max and Linda elsewhere in this newsletter.

Take Post

In this issue, we are pleased to reproduce a most interesting letter from Major Simon Hawkins, grandson of the late Raleigh Hawkins who was a member of our 7th Battery. I mentioned this letter at the last Reunion and have taken the opportunity of including it for the benefit of members who were not there.

If you can recall events associated with our Regiment or men that should be recorded in next year's *Take Post*, please send your notes in to me.

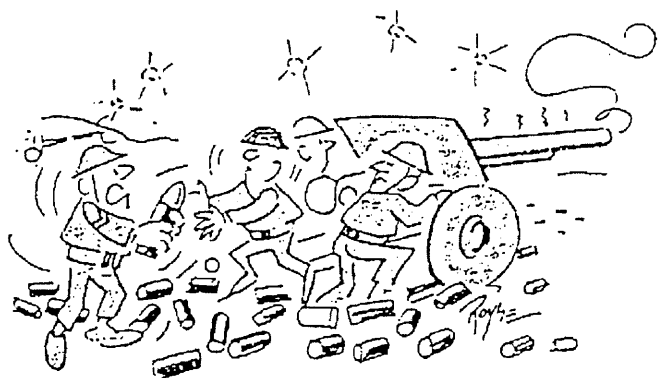
On behalf of our association, I send our best wishes to the men and women who have been representing Australia in conflicts, peacekeeping and policing abroad. I think the word 'heroism' is more applicable to service people, firefighters, medical and scientific researchers and others who devote their lives to humanitarian service, rather than to highly rewarded sporting people and corporate high fliers.

I realise that many of our members are unable to be at the March for many reasons, but we want as many of our members as possible with us before time runs out for us. Good luck to you and your families for the remainder of 2006.

Ron Bryant

ON TARGET

We have received 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.



Do you have to keep saying 'Thanks very much'?

Air Defence in Australia



Bofors/SAAB RBS70 Missile System

My name is Major Simon Hawkins and I am the Operations Officer of 16th Air Defence Regiment. I am also the grandson of the late Raleigh Proudfoot Hawkins, who was a member of 7th Battery, 2/3rd Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment during the period 1941–45.

The reason for my letter is to provide you with an insight as to the current state of Air Defence in Australia. As you are all aware, there have been very significant changes in the world of Air Defence in recent times. This has largely been as a result of the huge advances in Aircraft and Anti-Aircraft weapon technology, as well as significant advances in Air Defence doctrine and tactics.

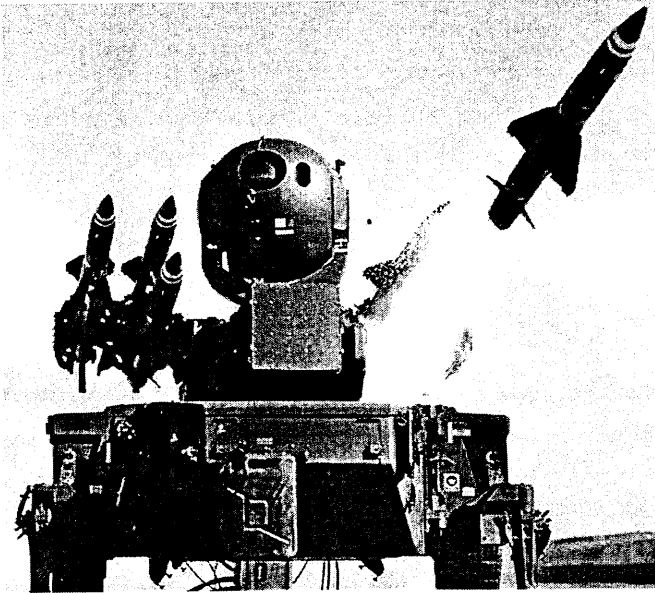
As was correctly pointed out on page 12 of *Take Post* of April 2003, the term Anti-Aircraft has now become Air Defence. The reason for this change is due to the developing changes to the hostile air threat. No longer is the threat only from hostile fixed wing aircraft and weapons, such as cruise missiles. Therefore, there is a requirement to defend against anything that comes from the air, hence Air Defence. We have recently viewed a demonstration of the Skyranger/Skyguard Air Defence system, which claims to have the capability and accuracy to shoot down mortar rounds in flight! Amazing developments!

The 400 members of the 16th Air Defence Regiment, based in Woodside in SA, man what is currently Australia's only Ground Based Air Defence capability. We currently operate two weapon systems, the British Aerospace Rapier Missiles System and the Bofors/SAAB RBS70 Missile System. The Rapier system will be retired at the end of this year and Regiment

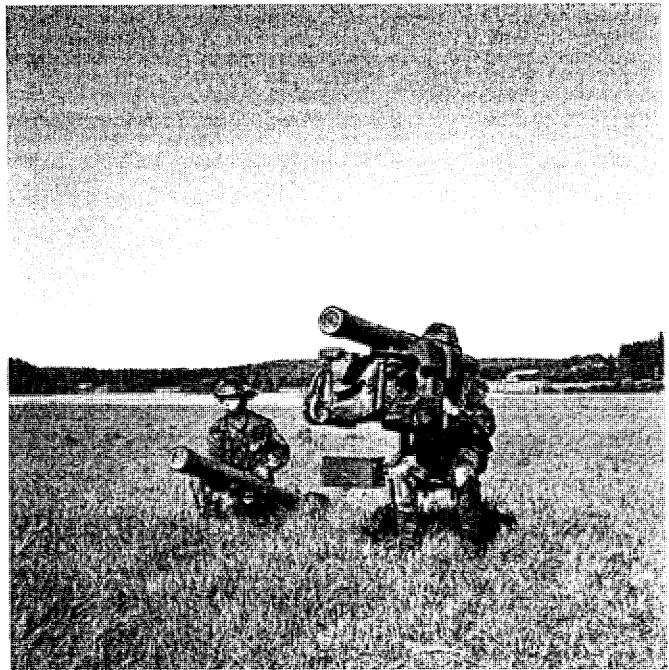
will then become an all RBS70 Regiment.

The RBS70 is fitted with a thermal night sight and can be cued onto targets by a PSTAR search and target acquisition radar. With a range in excess of eight kilometres and a day/night capability, it is quite a formidable system. RBS70 has the added benefit of being man-portable and capable of being deployed on just about anything, from Armoured Personnel Carriers, helicopters, 6x6 Landrovers and seacraft just to name a few. The RBS70 is a Laser Guided missile system operated by a crew of five soldiers and a bombardier.

16th Air Defence Regiment continues to play an important role in Australian Defence strategic plans, with the Regiment contributing Air Defence components to the first Gulf War (1991) as well as Afghanistan (2002) and the



British Aerospace Rapier Missile System



second Gulf War (2003–2004). Recent deployments have seen the RBS70s deployed on board the Royal Australian Navy's Landing Platform Amphibious HMAS *Kanimbla* and HMAS *Manoora*. No missiles have been required to be fired in combat of recent times.

The future of Australian Air Defence is also looking bright, with a great deal of investment currently being placed into our improving capability. This has included an upgrade to our RBS70s, as well as the building of a state-of-the-art \$14 million dollar Advanced Air Defence Simulator. With increasing numbers of personnel and

the sustained growth of the Air Defence Regiment's importance to the Australian Army's operational outputs, the future continues to look bright for Australian Air Defence.

The Regiment passes on its regards to those gunners who have served their country in pride as we all do now.

Major RS Hawkins

Worth repeating

The story is told of the time the nation of Israel hosted an international Inter-faith golf tournament for all clergy of the Jewish-Christian world. It was as they say a big deal! When word of the tournament reached the Vatican, the Pope called in his advisors and said: 'Who's representing us at this tournament?'

'No one', they responded, 'We don't have any world class golfers here right now.' Well the Pope didn't like this at all. He thought about it for a few moments and said:

'What about Greg Norman? Why don't we get him to represent us?'

One of the Cardinals says, 'Greg Norman? He isn't a clergyman? He isn't even Catholic'.

'Ask him,' the Pope answers, 'I'll make him bishop.'

Norman agrees, plays the tournament and comes back to the Vatican. 'How did it go Bishop Norman?' the Pope asks.

'Great,' Norman replies, 'We came in second.'

'Second?' the Pope exclaims obviously disappointed. 'Who came in first?'

Norman responds, 'Rabbi Arnold Palmer!'

From the Secretary's desk 2006

Each year it is a bonus to get many letters from members, widows and other family members. Good wishes were expressed to all members of the Association, with the hope that we have a great reunion this year. This reminds me that there is a **new location for the lunch** on the 24th April. Do read the details on the front page and don't miss out.

Canon (former Phil Roberts 8th) who has resided in England for many years sent a very newsy, full of reminiscence's letter during the year. Thank you for the finance sent in notes, if it was easier that way, that is the way to do it. Yes Phil I was 84 in the April of 2005, just a fraction older than yourself.

Kevin Grey sec of 2.3 Composite AA regularly sends a newsletter from Sydney. Many 9th Battery members became a part of that unit. Kevin writes that his members were getting rather thin on the ground; unfortunately that is happening to all Second War survivors.

Bob Wescott 9th is not able to get out much as he is now on 24-hour oxygen. Bob sends greetings to all his mates. **Dan Hawkes 9th** writing from NSW reminisces of his former mates—some passed away—**CecRae, Harry Sauerberg, J. Delahunty, Jim Paton, Jack Purves, Jim Silver** and **Gerry Chambers**, and too many more to mention.

Thank you for your letter Trixie, I am sorry to hear that your husband **Keith Fryer 8th** is now legally blind and his general health is deteriorating, I am sure he is in good hands. To answer your question, yes, **Bluey Page** is still around. **Nat Ellard** deceased and **Pots Tinning** unknown.

David Carty 9th writing from Buderim Qld sends greeting to all. David says he is 'still a boy' but an 'ageing

one', aren't we all. Join the club David! Betty, wife of **Arthur Spiller 8th** reports that Arthur turned 90 in 2003. Congratulations Arthur. Thank you **John Ballantine 9th** for the note sending good wishes to all the C1 gun crew. What bad luck to have your camera pinched and lose precious photos.

It was good to hear from **Huck Finn 9th**, the best information I can give you Huck, is that Pancho died on 10th December 2002. Zilla, his widow, wrote me a year or so ago to advise me, and also that she had shifted. I have her address should you wish to write to her. Daphne, widow of **Arthur Block 9th**, sends best wishes, and some finances for the Association. Thank you Daphne. Joyce Ritchie, daughter of **Lt Col JA Hipworth** sent a donation and expressed her thanks for all the information she gets from *Take Post*. Thanks for your continued interest in the Association Joyce. Gwen, widow of **Gordon Connor 7th**, writing to our editor Ron, enclosed a donation, thank you Gwen. Gwen and **Frank Wallis'** wife Loyal, deceased in 2005, had been friends in WA for many years. I trust that you have settled into your new home Gwen.

Daniel Wanders, grandson of **Alan Young 7th** was not able to be a banner bearer last Anzac Day. We hope to see you this year Daniel. **Frank O'Toole 9th**, sends greetings to old mates, he is not able to travel these days. **Ralph Hawkey 8th**, enjoyed receiving newspaper cuttings of our Return to Werribee, a couple of years ago, thanks for your letter Ralph. **Alex Barnett 8th** reports that his latest book *Diary of a Desert Rat* is in the hands of the publisher; but does not have a printing date yet. I hope we all live long enough to get to read it Alex.

Isa Fellows, widow of **Gordon Fellows 8th** wrote letting us know that she was visiting Crete during 2005. (See her story in this issue of *Take Post*.) Graeme Hawkins, son of **Raleigh Hawkins 7th**, used information in *Take Post* as a part of his talk to his local Rotary Club's Anzac Day meeting. This went very well and he was asked for copies of what he said. Thank you for sharing that with us Graeme and for the enclosed donation. Margaret Warren, daughter of **John (Jack) Phillips**, asked if anyone could identify either Jack or **Tom McNamara**. Both may be in the photo on the front cover of last year's *Take Post*.

Eric Maxwell, son of **Vern Maxwell 8th**, sent a poem written during the war by an AIF member. I'm sorry Eric, I cannot get any clues as to the author. Once again, **Bob Phillips 8th**, writes from Noosa, that 'getting old is a fair bugger'. I think we would all have to agree with those sentiments, Bob! These days Bob has to use a magnifying glass then with much difficulty, and great interest, reads *Take Post*. Because of his sight, Bob had not marched in Noosa, but last year with the help of wife Phyl, marched



John Campbell and Tom Dawson



Les and Dot Harris—at Les's 95th birthday

in memory of his Regimental mates, and those of his mates who were killed in action when he transferred to

the RAAF. Bob is tempted to 'go for it' again this year. Don't think Bob, just do it.

Just a few tit-bits to finish up—**Dave Humphreys 7th**, has had a hip replaced and another to be done. **Alan Reed 9th** send his subs for the **next ten years**, oh boy what an optimist! **Duncan McPherson 9th**, still has that beautiful handwriting. **Les Stephens 9th**, celebrated 65 years of marriage. Congratulations Les!

Thank you all for the good wishes I received early in 2005 when the angels nearly took me in hand. All is well now and I hope to continue at this keyboard for a few years yet.

Regards to one and all.

John Campbell Hon Sec.

Vale—Max Parsons

With sincere regret, we advise of the death of Max Parsons who passed away on 7th January 2006, at the age of 85 years.

With his wife, Linda, Max had been setting up our newsletter *Take Post* in a voluntary capacity for 14 years. He suffered from cancer some years ago. With good treatment and his own positive attitude, he made a remarkable recovery enabling him to return to his writing, publishing, golf and family activities.

Max's business career was mainly spent with Crittenden's, where he contributed a great deal to the development of the company, ultimately as a director.

He was an original member of the 2nd/12th Australian Field Regiment, serving in Tobruk, Alamein, New Guinea and Borneo with the rank of Sergeant on all the gunnery tasks and as Observation Post Officer, in the toughest conditions that desert and jungles had to offer.

He was the author of his Regiment's history *Gunfire*, which recorded so many of the dramatic events and actions carried out during World War 2 by this famous Regiment. The book was praised as it recorded so clearly the work of the gunners at the gun positions and at the observation posts, as against many war histories by serving Officers and professional writers who were not so closely involved in the actions.

After World War 2, Max became the editor of the 2nd/12th Field Regiment's newsletter *Take Post*, which

has enabled the Regiment's Association to remain a cohesive unit for 60 years. He also produced or assisted with several other World War 2 military publications.

When our 2nd/3rd Regiment commenced our *Take Post* newsletter, we used the same name, unaware of Max's prior use of the title *Take Post*. He, and his committee, generously allowed us to go on using the same name, so appropriate for gunners.

From there-on, Max assisted our Editor Ron Bryant, to develop our newsletter, so that both of these newsletters have been of a high standard.

Max had a soft spot for our Regiment, as in the siege of Tobruk, a few of our 8th Battery's 20 mm Breda guns gave some 2nd/12th gunners protection from enemy dive-bombers and reconnaissance aircraft, while the gunners gave our troops protection by counter-battery work against the enemy's field guns.

A few ribald remarks were uttered by the A.A. gunners when the field gunners, as soon as they arose at dawn fired rapid 'gun-fire' at the enemy, they returned for breakfast in the adjoining wadi, leaving the A.A. gunners to drive off the Henschel spotter plane, while being hammered by the German artillery in 'replying' to the 2nd/12th guns!

Max became a life-member of the 2nd/12th, and was awarded the Order of Australia Medal.

He will be greatly missed by all of his friends. Our condolences go to Linda and their devoted family.

Battle for Crete: May 1941

Abridged from Lt. John Purcell's diary and letters now filed in the Australian War Museum in Canberra



Sfakia, on the southern coast of Crete—this photo shows the steep mountain road by which Allied soldiers reached the beaches for evacuation

When John Purcell, with the 78 members of 'A' Tp, from 7 Bty, moved to Maleme airfield in Crete, his immediate concern was the posting of crews to the four Bofors gun sites supporting the six similar sites already manned by members of the British 52nd LAA Regt. He was assisted by Lt. Jock Macindoe and Troop Sgt. Roly Tonkin in establishing and maintaining routine procedures for supply and equipment to the sites. The ongoing problems for Lt. Purcell revolved around liaison with senior officers of the British, N.Z., and R.A.F. forces also operating in the area.

From the 13th to the 19th May, Lt. Purcell kept a small pocket diary. Early entries refer to meetings with various officers of the nearby units and of contact with members of the local community. Following a visit to gun sites he recorded a note: 'all guns operating predictor equipment'.

'Night bombing indicted that the enemy knew selected targets that received regular attention. Grove (H.Q.) machine-gunned stick of bombs going for pilots, tents and Bofors gun sites. Gave order to evacuate grove. Took to grape vines over the canal. Grove machine-gunned twice by diving planes.'

15th May: 'Early morning attack, then down the sky like meteors, waves of ME109s shooting at gun positions and planes on the ground—hell of a row. Bofors and machine-guns firing. Saw one plane going down. Unable

to tell whether friend or foe. Planes all over the sky. Three Hurricanes and one Gloster putting up a great show against hopeless odds. Must have been 30 109s at least. Second wave appeared and tore up the drome. One Hurricane burning and one Gloster upside down on the beach. Tore round with additional ammunition. Found all crews with their tails up, all excited, all except one reported hits. Good for nerves.'

Rumours about enemy major attack plans circulated freely.

'Luxford said, proposed enemy attack by 500 troops by parachute, 5000 airborne, 1600 by sea. N.Z. Brigade get all the dope. 52nd Regt. do not pass it on to us. Went up to A.A.H.Q. where Colonel Mather congratulated us for planes credited by Vreforce.

'26 German bombers headed east over Maleme (JU dive bombers), could see them moving low out to sea. Suddenly planes appeared from Theodori Island, screaming as they dived on the drome. Hell of a row with Bofors in action. Could not see a thing for dust. Got in truck with Tonkin and went to ammunition dump—got boxes on board and went to gun sites; Apparently six fighters had slipped in low to the sea under cover of the island on the seaward edge of the drome.

'Hurricanes shot three of the 109s down while they were trying to sneak around the west of the island while the Me110s attacked from east of the drome. Good work. Also understand they got two bombers over Suda. Lost two Hurricanes.

'Gun crews on seaward edge not too happy about certain matters (withdrawal of N.Z. mg and troops from beach front where they were to provide protection for gun positions against seaborne attack; guns in their fixed positions could not depress to sea level) must see what I can do. Went to 'I' Troop and saw Hamilton and reported to Major Kay. He cleared up several matters. Two rolls of barbed wire were dumped at beach front gun sites. Tonkin and I took wire to gun sites.

'Was with Sgt. Manning when sighted 23 bombers escorted by Me fighters in view high above the drome. Thought they were headed for Suda where after terrific row white smoke went up.'

18th May: 'Beautiful morning. Recce planes over Suda. Understand ammunition ship and oil tanker hit at Suda. Pall of smoke over the harbour. 1015, attack on Maleme drome by D215s escorted by four Me109s. Anti-personnel bombs dropped on drome—Hurricane destroyed. All crews OK. Some bombers over while Jock and I were on drome. Hopped in trench. Heard whistle of bomb descending, then crash. Jock and Tonkin joined me and we made off towards the dust and smoke. Looked like our old position and sure enough three bombs had landed in the grove killing one and injuring two New Zealanders. Fell in a slit trench.'

19th May: 'Seven Me's dived on the drome—set fire to some oil and pasted around No. 1 gun position. Haversacks, respirators and other articles in the dugout perforated. Reported to Major Kay and arranged for Jock to go down and see Marines in. They are to relieve No. 1 Sub for 24 hours spell. No. 1 Sub very cheerful at the prospect. Went down to see Luxford. Couldn't get any information from him. On my return two S.D.'s came to hand—not very reassuring—Jock returned and reported No. 1 Sub out OK. Had gang cover tracks in ploughed area. Gives show away.'

(This was the last entry in the diary at Maleme. On 20th May 1941 the airborne attack commenced soon after first light with bombing followed by dive bombing around the airfield, then glider-borne troops directed at capturing the gun sites and parachute troop landings over a wide area. The diary appeared again with a list of names on N.Z., R.A.F., R.N. and Australian troops posted as sentries to prevent troops appearing on the beach at Sphakia prior to the evacuation.

Many years after the war Mrs. Purcell showed Les Harris the diary and told him of the letters she had given to the War Museum from which the following extracts were obtained.)

'20th May (the day of the offensive): With Jock up the

gully 1½ miles to the N.Z. lines. Found Birch, Hannan, Mann Sleep, Newstead, Parkinson and Plant there (Plant was later captured, escaped and had further experience as a P.O.W.) Others from Troop H.Q. including Sgt. Tonkin, Barnes, Thomson, Jones, Lord and Carlyon were separated and captured. Jock and I knew the N.Z. Captain who gave me a hand grenade and a Bren and we moved to a ridge with the infantry. Later moved to the artillery position where we helped direct fire on the airfield.

'With infantry moved towards the wireless early warning station where we were cut off by a group of paratroops. After being captured and spending a night as a prisoner when the party camped at a spot on the mountainside, with a R.A.F. companion, escaped during darkness and eventually made towards the south coast where it was known there was a R.A.F. post. On arriving there met a number of Dave Humphrey's gun crew. They had been relieved by a Marine gun crew to take 24 hours rest away from the drome on 19th May.

'At the coast I met Naval officers Lieuts. Blake and Sutton. The small naval craft carrying radio equipment from Suda to Spakia had been sunk by German aircraft the previous evening. The rugged coast made movement along the seafront impossible so it was decided to try and reach the coast at Sphakia. Included in the party were Harris, Elder, Brown, Malloch, Ecker and Selleck from our Troop, R.N. officers and ratings and several New Zealanders—about 20 in all. Of those who remained, most were worn out.' (Aided by a local guide named Tony.) 'We proceeded onwards and during the tedious climb that followed the going was very hard. We kept to ten minutes in the hour halt. Passed several villages clinging to the mountainsides.

'On the way we reached a shepherd's hut where we were invited in. About 20 of us—ragged, unshaved, some with tin hats, naval men, army khaki, bearded shepherds. A darkened corner of the hut revealed what rude furniture there was. A fire in the corner had pans of milk for cheese, the latter was to prove a godsend for us, the shepherd produced vessels of what looked like whipped cream. It was warm sheep's milk cheese in its early stage, I've never tasted anything equal to it - like scrambled eggs. There was the shepherd's livelihood disappearing down our throats. In the cold night we huddled together, some in bunks, some with sheep skins provided by the shepherds.

'Eventually we passed a steep crest with precipitous sides and entered a ravine with steep gradient that seemed interminable with sheer walls towering above us (Samaria Gorge). This led us to the coast.'

(The coastal village was Roumeli from where the King of Greece had been evacuated some days previously. Fortunately the phone line to Sphakia was in order enabling Lieut. Blake to communicate with authorities there who sent a caique commanded by Captain Ellabeck to take the party to Sphakia, from where the evacuation of troops was organised by the Navy.)

Crete in 2005

By way of contrast



Isa Fellows, widow of Gordon Fellows, shares her recent experience in Crete

We enjoyed Crete. We had two days in Dubai enroute, which I loved, especially going out into the desert and riding the dunes in a 4-wheel drive, riding a camel and having an enjoyable meal while watching a belly dancer. I even had a butterfly tattooed in henna on my ankle (only with the urging of my daughter-in-law, Anne).

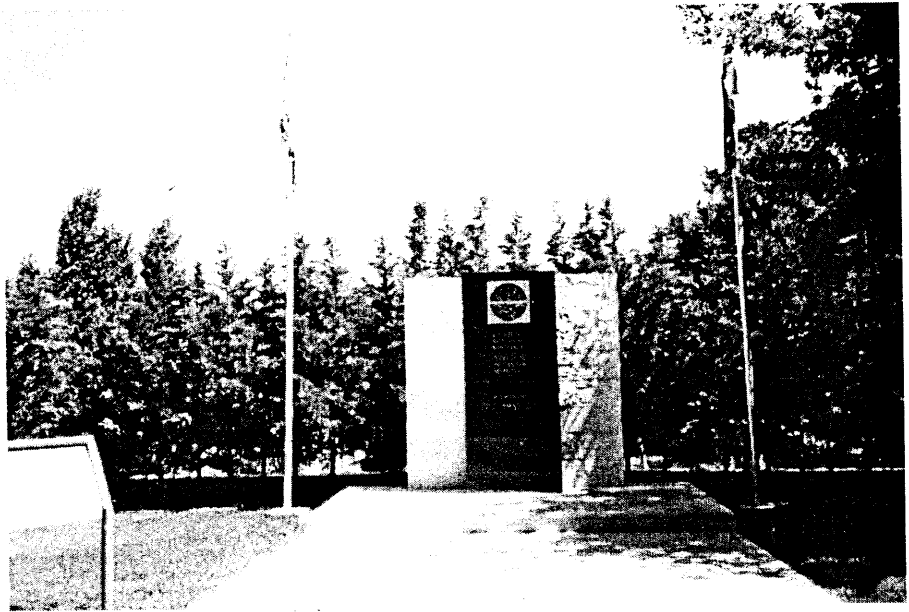
We then had four days in Athens before flying to Crete, where we had hired a car. Anne managed the right-hand driving very well, but I had quite a bit of bother in navigating as the names on the map we had, supplied by the car company, did not correspond with the names on the street signs, some of which had two names. Even some of those we asked for directions found it difficult to read the map and we eventually found out that the Greeks have a new and an old language and the street names were in the old and the map in the new. We enjoyed our stay at Heraklion, where we firstly visited Knossos. Other places we visited were the Archeological Museum, where a lot of the artifacts recovered from Knossos are displayed and nearby we found the Battle of Crete museum, which is not very big and mainly dedicated to the German invasion; occupation and the defence by the Greeks. There were many uniforms, pictures and armoury of the Germans but I saw very little of the Allies' presence. There were small flags of the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Greece, Germany and Australia displayed next to the front entrance desk and also a plaque dedicated to New Zealanders and Australians who had lost their lives. On a wall were large photos of veterans from Australia, New Zealand,

United Kingdom, Greece and Germany, who attended a commemoration ceremony in 1991.

We then decided to go to Agios, Nikolaos, where we wanted to swim but the beaches were mainly of large pebbles. After a look around the town we drove back along the coast, which as we did in most of Crete found very pretty. I expect the National Road, which runs a bit further in from the coast, was built after your visit. It is a very good road and takes out a lot of the bends that are in the coast road, but has little view of the ocean. I would think that a lot of tourist complexes, which have private access to the beach in front of each complex, have been built since your visit. They are lavish and possibly a lovely spot to spend a holiday but we were very happy with our hotel, the Galaxy, in walking distance of the centre of the city. We had also arranged hotels which have a pool, very refreshing after a day out in hot temperatures.

We found our visit to the Historical Museum, quite different from the Archeological Museum in that it depicted the life of Cretans from early history, displaying clothing, eating utensils, tools, etc., and it wasn't crowded with people. The top floor was devoted to the Battle of Crete with again mainly displays of the German occupancy. However, set in the floor was a very large glass area, under which it showed a video of Germans landing by parachute, the defence by the Allies, only recognisable by their tin hats and I recognised one Bofors gun. The cruelty meted out by the Germans against Cretans was shown in graphic pictures and videos.

Hellenic–Australian Memorial,
Rethymno



Close by the museum was the old city and harbour and we enjoyed these areas including several churches. Greece now uses Euro currency, which made quite a difference to the cost of everything in comparison to our last visit when they used Dracmas. We loved walking and exploring the little streets and shops. We did not meet very many of the older Cretans, who have succumbed to age but generally we found the people very pleasant.

On the way to Hania we stopped at Rethimino where we visited the Hellenic/Australian Memorial about which Ian Rutter wrote. It was very impressive, set in a nice park and consists of a high column with the flags of Greece and Australia to each side. In the front are four glassed-in stands in which the Battle of Crete is depicted, giving details of those Allies who went to help the Cretans.

We enjoyed our stay at Hania also and found it easier to find our way around. We had a good trip, but a bit scary over the mountains, sometimes going through cloud to visit the Samaria Gorge. Unfortunately, the weather that day wasn't the best for viewing; but we were impressed with its size. Much different to those in Australia and not as colourful. We really enjoyed the trip down from the mountains when the sky was clearer and decided to divert to Maleme, where we visited the German cemetery. The grey concrete graves are marked with plaques, with two or three bodies in the one grave. The flowers surrounding were portulaca. It has an imposing position overlooking the sea. It was sad to see so many graves marked as 'unknown soldier or airman'. We also went further east to Kissamos, not a very imposing town and seemed to be mainly for fishing; but the scenery in Crete was always lovely.

After getting lost and seeing another part of the island, we got to Souda, which probably has changed the least since earlier days. There were a lot of older Cretan men sitting around, just talking or playing games. The Commonwealth Cemetery, like those I have seen in other places around the world, with its white standing plaques and an individual flower in front of each grave, was really lovely and impressive. It is good to see that the Commonwealth cares for their lost servicemen. I only found one grave of a 2/3rd soldier VX27838 J. Hawke.

Again there were so many graves dedicated to an 'unknown serviceman'.

Our hotel, the refurbished Kriti, was near the centre of the city and close to the waterfront. We really enjoyed our dinners on the waterfront and I liked the way the Greeks come out at night and stroll along. Anne and I didn't feel at all frightened about walking the streets at night, sadly unlike Australia now.

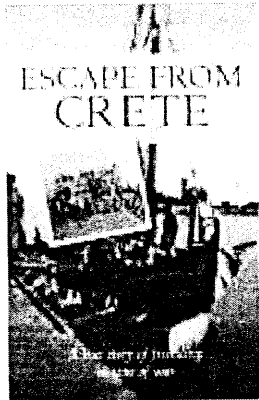
One day we drove down, again over the mountains, to the beachside of Paleohors, where we enjoyed swimming and lazing on the beach. They have a good system here where banana lounges, an umbrella and small plastic table are provided, which costs very little for the day.

We were sad to leave Crete as we had enjoyed ourselves so much. After having to leave Hania at 6:00 am and drive back to Hiraklion we enjoyed the fast ferry ride to Santorina and our four day stay there, from which we then again took the fast ferry to Maxos for two days. One of the highlights of the drive from Hania to Hiraklion was seeing the sun come up over the sea—really lovely! They make a big thing of the sunsets in the islands, but I don't think they are anywhere as nice as the sunsets we have here or up north. Flew back to Athens and left the next day via Dubai for home. This was the uncomfortable part of the journey and very long and I was glad to be home again, very tired, as we had walked and walked, and kept going most of the time, except for relaxing and swimming in the hotel swimming pools.

I trust that you all had a wonderful time together at your reunion, although sadly depleted from previous years. Kindest regards and best wishes to all for continuing health.

Isa Fellows

Book reviews



Escape from Crete is the most gripping book I have read in the past twelve months. Written by Charles Jager (2/2nd Field Regiment, AIF) the book graphically describes the experiences of the author and his mate, Ben Travers, following their capture and escape from German pris-

oner of war camps twice.

Jager's story is told with humour, pathos and high praise for the bravery of the Cretans who hid them from the enemy by sheltering and sustaining them for many months prior to their escape to mainland Greece. Again the Greeks risked their lives to assist them in their ultimate, and exciting escape to North Africa.

Doreen Bryant

Jager, C 2004, *Escape from Crete*, Floradale Productions Pty Ltd and Sly Ink, \$24.95.



Tobruk 1941 is a well-presented hardcover book published by the ABC in 2005. It has a readable short history of about 20 pages on the Siege of Tobruk, then about 115 pages of excellent photographs. The photos record mainly Army activities, but there are some dramatic naval shots.

One chapter is devoted to our President, Ron Bryant's photos, which mainly depict the life of Phil Robert's gun-crew in and out of action at one of their gunsites, located to give protection from dive-bombers to a nearby artillery battery of 2nd/12th Field Regiment. Ron's photos in this chapter plus some others in the book are in good company, with many photos taken by cameramen of fame such as Frank Hurley, a legendary Antarctic photographer and Damien Parer, who was killed later in action in the SW Pacific. Phil Roberts, as many of readers know, is a retired Canon of the Church at Salisbury, England. He was delighted to see the photos of his first gun-crew of which he was in command at the ripe old age of 19 years.

Cochrane, P 2005, *Tobruk 1941*, ABC Books, \$49.95.

Cannon balls

In the heyday of sailing ships, all war ships and many freighters carried iron cannons. Those cannons fired round iron cannon balls. It was necessary to keep a good supply near the cannon.

But how to prevent them from rolling about the deck?

The best storage method devised was a square based pyramid with one ball on top, resting on four resting on nine which rested on sixteen. Thus, a supply of 30 cannon balls could be stacked in a small area right next to the cannon.

There was only one problem—how to prevent the bottom layer from sliding/rolling from under the others. The solution was a metal plate called a 'monkey' with 16 round indentations. But if this plate was made of iron, the iron balls would quickly rust to it. The solution to the rusting problem was to make 'brass monkeys'.

Few landlubbers realise that brass contracts much more and much faster than iron when chilled. Consequently, when the temperature dropped too far, the brass indentations would shrink so much that the iron cannon balls would come right off the monkey. Thus, it was quite literally, 'Cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey!'

(And all this time, you thought that was an improper expression, didn't you?)