

Take Post April 2024



Newsletter of the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Assoc'n Inc

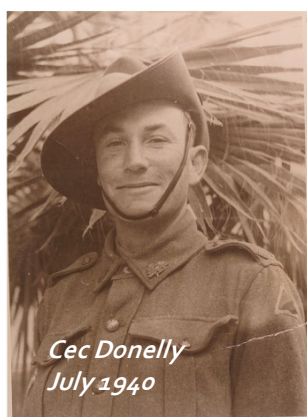


Gunner Cec Donnelly: A Personal Account and Recollections Of His Time As A Prisoner Of War From 1941 To 1945

In the 2014 issue of Take Post we told the story of Kaye Huggins' visit to the area in Italy where her father Cec Donnelly, 7 Battery, 2/3rd ALAA Regiment, (VX46836) had been a prisoner of war at Campo 57 located at Gruppignano. Cec Donnelly was one of many 2/3rd members who spent four years in Italian and German POW camps following the fall of Crete in May 1941.

In 2019, we printed a small excerpt of Cec's own recollections.

More recently, Cec's son, Alan Donnelly, volunteered to deliver the history talk usually delivered by Research Officer David McDonald between courses at the AGM and Reunion Lunch. Alan's talk was based on memorabilia, letters and photos of his father in his possession, as well as his own recollections of conversations with his father.



*Cec Donnelly
July 1940*



*Cec Donnelly
April 1946*

Alan's Recollections:

Cec's service record discloses:

He enlisted at Caulfield on 29 July 1940 and was posted to the 2/3rd on 18 September. Two months later, he was promoted to L/Bdr and some six weeks later embarked on

HMT Mauretania for the Middle East. Shortly after arrival in the Middle East, Cec was graded as a Group III Driver Mechanic, and on 5 May 1941, was sent to Crete with 7 Battery.

Following the Battle of Crete between 20 and 30 May 1941, Cec was reported missing, but it was not until a Red Cross telegram received on 15 August 1941 that he was reported as being a PoW.

Initially, Cec was interned at Prato Isarco, Bolzano in Italy, where he spent sixteen months, before being moved to Campo 57 at Gruppignano in December 1942.



Campo 57, Gruppignano

Cec was moved again in August 1943 to Campo 106 in Italy. In December 1943, Cec was on the move again—this time to Germany and to Stalag VIII B (8B), where his allocated PoW number was 34459.

Six weeks later, he was transferred to Stalag 344 at Lamsdorf, where he remained until his liberation in May 1945. After recovering in the United Kingdom, Cec arrived back in Australia in July 1945—five years after he enlisted.



Stalag 344 in Poland

Continued on Page 5

2/3rd Remembrance Group

The Remembrance Group, comprised of direct descendants of original members, was formally established in 2008 and today numbers almost 100 members.

If you are the son or daughter of an original member and/or have children who would like to participate in the activities of the Remembrance Group, please contact Malcolm Wrigglesworth, Honorary Secretary on 03 9726 0803 or send us a message through the "Contact Us" section of the Association's website: www.anti-aircraft.org.au/Contact Us It is not an onerous role and currently costs only \$25.00 per year to participate. Your support is important if the men and the deeds of the 2/3rd are to continue to be remembered and promoted into the future.



**They shall grow not old,
As we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them,
Nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We will remember them.**

Lest we forget!

In 2014, the Association made a submission to the Australian War Memorial in partnership with the National Library of Australia, to include our web site in PANDORA, Australia's Web Archive. PANDORA was established by the National Library in 1996 to enable archiving and provision of long term access to on-line Australian publications. As a PANDORA partner, the AWM identifies, assesses, selects and catalogues sites of relevance to Australian military history. Based on our submission, the AWM assessed our web site to be of relevant military history, and authorised the National Library to add it to the PANDORA Archive.

In 2022 the Association prepared and lodged a funding application under the DVA's Saluting Their Service program to enable us to migrate the website to a new and easier to maintain content management system. Our application was approved and the Association was allocated a \$10,000 grant to undertake the website upgrade.

2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association Incorporated

Take Post is published by the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association Incorporated for the benefit of members and friends of the Association.

The 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment was raised in Melbourne in 1940 and served with distinction in World War II, with Theatre Honours from Crete, Tobruk, the Western Desert, Syria, Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Lae, Buna and Borneo. The Regiment experienced a high number of battle casualties through deaths, wounded and prisoners of war.

Formed in 1945, the Regiment Association has been active in commemorating and celebrating the history of the 2nd/3rd ever since.

In 2008, the Association's Constitution was amended to allow descendants of the original 1,935 members of the Regiment to become members of the Association and to provide for the future carriage of the Association.

The Association was incorporated on Anzac Day, 25 April 2021.

The 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association Incorporated is an Incorporated Association managed by a voluntary Committee of Management.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT—2024 AGM



Greetings to all members and friends of the Regiment Association. It is a great honour to be penning (albeit digitally!) my first report as President of the Association. I was elected at the 2023 AGM. My predecessors as Presidents of the Association's Remembrance Group, Anne Rae and Lynton Rose, provided outstanding leadership over many years following the 2008 handover to subsequent generations from the ageing Committee members who were veterans of the Regiment.

The past year has been a particularly busy one for the Association. Our Committee continues to work really well together, with members generously volunteering to take on tasks from time to time. Perhaps the highlight of the year was a matter that I dealt with in my December 2023 Association newsletter, namely the desecration of the memorial plaque to the Regiment situated at the Werribee Racecourse, its replacement, and the 20th anniversary commemoration of the original installation of the plaque held there on 24 September 2023. Particular thanks go to Committee members Ian Campbell and Malcolm Wrigglesworth, and friends of the Association Graeme and Matt Heddle, for their brilliant work on replacing the stolen plaque, and to other organisations (particularly the Werribee RSL and Racecourse management), for the commemoration ceremony.

Another highlight of the year was the rebuilding, on a modern platform, of our website www.anti aircraft.org.au, funded by a Saluting their Service grant from DVA. The work was undertaken by Malcolm Romano, the Prin-

cipal of DesignsenseWeb, the company that manages our website, supported by Colin Bragg and myself. If you have not done so recently, please visit the website and explore the huge range of fascinating information available there.

The front-page feature article in this year's issue of *Take Post* focuses on one of the many 7 Battery men captured on Crete in May 1941, and who spent the rest of the war as prisoners of war in Italy and Germany, or on the run in occupied territory having escaped from captivity. I am referring to Cecil (Cec) Donnelly. His son Alan will be our featured speaker at the April 2024 Association Reunion, speaking about Cec and his experiences. Please read Cec's own account in this issue.

I invite you to turn back to the front page and look at the two photographs of Cec Donnelly, the first dated July 1940 immediately after he enlisted, and the second April 1946, at the first reunion of the newly formed Regiment Association. I see a fresh-faced young man in the first photograph, and someone who has seen and experienced an awful lot during the intervening years—perhaps more than anyone should have to—in the second.

The apparent differences in Cec's appearance resonate with an important recent ceremony conducted at the Australian War Memorial. It is the dedication ceremony for a contemporary artwork titled 'For Every Drop Shed in Anguish', held on 22 February 2024. 'The Memorial commissioned the artwork in consultation with veterans and their families who have experienced or witnessed service-related trauma. The sculpture by Alex Seton is made up of 18 unique droplets of marble, some weighing up to 3,000 kgs, which represent the blood sweat and tears shed by those affected by their service and their families.' The focus is to remind us that the suffering of wartime does not end with the silencing of the guns, but for many service people and their families continues long after return to everyday life. See <https://www.awm.gov.au/media/press-releases/blood-sweat-and-tears-set-in-stone-at-australian-war-memorial>.

We will remember them. Lest we forget. Ubique.

The Hereward by Bill Dellar, (VX37219), C Troop, 7 Battery 2/3rd ALAA Regt

It was early in the morning of the 29th of May

When she received the warning of Stukas on the way

Hereward, that grand old ship, a destroyer of the fleet

Was sorely overloaded with evacuees from Crete

Guarding her two mother ships, unable to manoeuvre

A fighter to the last, as records well will prove her,

Her four point sevens flinging death into the skies

Mingled with the chatter of her multiple point fives.

A near miss shook her plates and like noisy thunder,

One landed down below split boilers and pipes asunder.

With motive power silenced and guns destroyed on deck,

She lay upon the ocean a helpless floating wreck.

To leave the burning ship, was the order of the day,

Without panic or confusion but a little less delay.

Throwing floats and wreckage overboard and discarding all our gear,

We quickly followed after into Father Neptune's care.

A south east swell was rolling, the water icy most,

As we bravely struggled onwards towards the distant coast.

Above, the Stukas glided to the object of their quest,

Till battled scarred and burning she slid to her last rest.

For five long hours we labored at the mercy of the seas

Till rescued, wet and weary, by the Ities M.T.B's.

Some killed on board by shrapnel, some perished in the sea,

And we picked up at long last, live in captivity.

But when the war is over, and we are back at home,

We'll think of them in future years who lie beneath the foam.

Those comrades of our hardships, and pals of high degree,

We'll remember at reunions and drink to their eternity.

The Sentry's Log



Sentry's Log By David McDonald

As the Association's Research Officer, I have the pleasure of responding to requests for information about the Regiment and its members. Many of these are quite straightforward, with descendants seeking information about relatives who served in the Regiment or in other anti-aircraft units. I am usually able to provide them with information about how to find out what they are looking for, particularly through accessing the person's service record at the Australian Archives.

<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/SearchScreens/BasicSearch.aspx>

Another option is to review the relevant sections of the Regiment's history, "On Target"

<https://www.anti-aircraft.org.au/about-us/on-target/on-target-the-book/>

A useful source for interpreting the service record abbreviations is the National Archives web page 'Abbreviations used in World War I and World War II service records' at <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/defence-and-war-service-records/researching-war-service-abbreviations-used-world-war-i-and-world-war-ii-service-records>

Another is the Australian War Memorial's online Encyclopedia at www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia

Please contact me at:

info@anti-aircraft.org.au if you need further assistance in understanding the service records, or have queries regarding other matters concerning the Regiment's history, etc.

The following are examples of the enquiries received from members and interested persons through our web site:

Chris Ellis

Chris asked about his father VX24276 Sgt Michael Ellis. We advised him that he was a member of 6 Bty, 2/2 Heavy AA Regiment and subsequently 6 Bty, 2/3 Composite AA Regt, not 2/3 Light AA Regt. The similarity in unit and sub-unit names is a common source of confusion. Information on sources covering the unit, and on contacting their unit association, was provided, including advice about the memorials to the 2/2 HAA Regt at The Shrine in Melbourne, and at Rocky Creek, Qld (Atherton Tablelands region).

Ross Williamson

Ross wrote seeking information on his late father's WW2 service: NX24699 Gnr Herbert Williamson. Advised that he was a member of 3 Bty, 1 AA Regt, later renamed 2/3 Bty, 2/1 Lt AA Regt. He asked about his father's medals entitlement, noting that 'I am looking to develop replica medals for my children in preparation for Anzac Day in France next year so any help would be useful'. Information and advice was provided.

Bill Stokes

Regiment Association member Bill Stokes raised some interesting questions about his father's service (Maj/Lt Col Phil Stokes), following the return of the 2/3 LAA Regt to Australia in March 1943.

On 08.06.42 he was appointed Commanding Officer of 116 LAA Regt (based at Perth); 21.06.44 relinquished command of 116 LAA Regt and appointed command of HQ 13 AA Group (Melbourne); 21.12.44 appointed command 2 AA Group (Sydney); 06.04.45 appointed command of 52 Composite AA Regt (Merauke, Netherlands New Guinea); 25.04.45 flew from Townsville to Merauke as Lt Col Commanding Officer of 52 Comp AA Regt, and soon after became commander of all the forces at Merauke area; 21.09.45 relinquished command of 52 Comp AA Regt, returned to Australia and appointed Officer Commanding Troop Trains for Victoria.

James Tansey

James requested advice about his grandfather, NX22763 Pte Charles Vincent Tansey. He has Pte Tansey's service record but, as is so often the case, has difficulty interpreting what is hand-written there. Pte Tansey was a member of 1 AA Regt, 2/9 Bty 2/3 LAA Regt & 2/9 Bty 2/3 Comp AA Regt, and served at Sydney, Darwin, Middle East, Adelaide, Townsville, Milne Bay, Buna, Lae, Morotai, and Labuan Bay. Although a member of artillery units, his rank remained Private, not Gunner, as his military occupation was as a cook. Pte Tansey had an unusual checkered military history.

Corrinne Boon

Corrinne enquired about the service in the Regiment of her uncle, NX38068 Gnr George Earl Low, 9 Bty. She wrote 'My mother who is 101 years old and lives with me at Wauchope in NSW was his only relative apart from myself.' She also expressed interest in understanding which troop ships he sailed in. We advised that Gnr Low served with the Regt (and then with 2/9 LAA Bty, 2/3 Comp AA Regt) in the Middle East, Port Moresby, Milne Bay, Buna/Gona, Lae, Morotai, and Labuan. Information on the troop ships and on how to join the Association was also provided.

Ross Smith

Ross provided comprehensive information on his father's service, VX46675 Pte Leslie James Smith, 2/8 Bty reinforcement. His service record contains interesting correspondence between Pte Smith and the Army Records Office regarding his eligibility for the 1939/45 Star. For details, please see the article on page 7 'The Medal Muddle'.

Janet Fitzgerald

Janet wrote seeking information on her father, VX33354 Gnr George Alfred Phipps, 7 Bty, POW at Campo 118, Campo 57, & Campo 52, escaped to Switzerland and returned to Australia. He was awarded the Italy Star 'by virtue of service rendered subsequent to escape from captivity', and was Mentioned in Despatches for 'Gallant & distinguished service in field Europe'. Awaiting further correspondence with Janet.

Cec Donnelly—A Personal Account (continued)



In England after repatriation



Alan Young



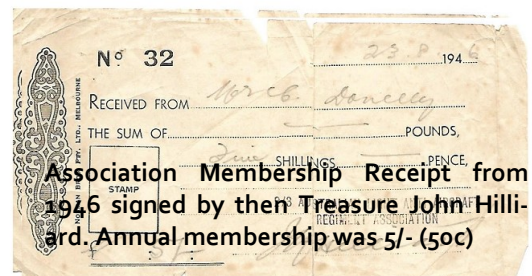
PRIVATE ESCA RIORDAN

During his time as a PoW, Cec was able to correspond with family and friends, including this (*transcribed*) letter to Ray and Nancy Mills, who owned the grocery store where Cec worked before enlisting. It was written on 30 August 1941.

Dear Ray and Nancy,
Just a note to let you know I haven't forgotten you. I am at present a prisoner of war in Italy. I was picked up by an Italian M.T.B. after swimming for 5 hours in the Mediterranean. The ship we were on happened to get in the way of a few bombs, so you can judge why we left. Mick (a friend of Cec) is here with me, but we think Joe was on another boat as no one has seen him about. I have seen a fair amount of life and country since I left home. The prison life is very monotonous, nothing to do but walk around or sleep. We are being treated very well. We received a "RED CROSS" parcel & 50 cigs a week. How is Dawn and Keith? I suppose they are quite useful to you in the shop. Remember me to all the boys at Lodge & tell them I hope to be with them soon. Well as news is scarce, I close with love from Cecil.
 All letters were opened by the censor!



23/8/1946 – Receipt No. 32 - 5 shillings



Association Membership Receipt from 1946 signed by then Treasurer John Hilliard. Annual membership was 5/- (50c)

Fellow PoWs with Cec included Alan Young who married Wilma Orman (*a nurse who worked with Vivienne Bullwinke*) after the war, Jack Henry who built the "blowers" used to heat food in the PoW camp (*see Take Post 1991*), Bill Wigglesworth, Bill Dellar (*who wrote the Hereward poem*) and Esca Riordan.

By way of memorabilia, Alan has a pocket knife that was souvenired by Cec, taken from a deceased German SS officer with the inscription "Loyal brotherhood in arms".



Cec Donnelly 1940



Sixty 2/3rd Regiment members at the first Anzac Day march after WW2 in 1946— Cec Donnelly fourth from left. Of particular interest is the original Regimental banner.

Continued on Page 6

Cec Donnelly—A Personal Account (*continued*)

In Cec's Own Words

I enlisted on the 29/7/1940 and was drafted into the 2/3 Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery. I was stationed firstly at Caulfield and from there sent to Werribee. At both places we were stationed at the racecourse where we slept on straw palliases in the concrete stands. Our training was done at Werribee and in December 1940 we sailed for Palestine on the 'Mauretania'. Other ships in the convoy were Queen Mary, Aquitania, Dominion Monarch and Awatea. After some time in the desert we were then shipped to the island of Crete in the Mediterranean. The German intention was to invade Crete by sea but the British Fleet sank all the invading boats and barges. The Island was then bombed solidly for two weeks, then Paratroopers were flown in of which hundreds were shot down and killed before the Germans finally made a landing at Maleme. Here they set up a landing strip and finally overran the Island. The British ships 'Imperial', 'Dido', 'Orion', and 'Hereward' sailed in to evacuate the troops who boarded the ships during the night of May 28th 1941. At 5.30 am. on May 29th., under heavy Stuka attack, the 'Hereward', the ship I was on, received a direct bomb which went straight down the funnel. Quite a number of our soldiers and British naval men were killed when the ship was hit, others went down with the ship but the majority jumped overboard and were picked up some hours later by Italian torpedo boats.

I had been in the water about six hours and have no recollection of being picked up by the torpedo boat. We were taken up to the beach of a small Island and, according to my mates, I was laid out with the dead bodies. Luckily, I eventually became conscious and, with others, was sent to Rhodes Island for three months, the first three weeks of which were spent in hospital because of exposure in the water. We were issued with one set of underwear, one pair of socks, one pair of boots – mine were size 9-I take size 6-, one pair of trousers, one shirt, one jacket and two blankets. These were all the possessions we had as all our belongings went down with the 'Hereward'. We were then shipped to Italy and sent to a camp at Capura and from there to Bolzano in the north of Italy near the Brenner Pass. After some time we were moved to camp 57 at Gruppignano near Udine close to the Yugoslavian border. This infamous camp was under the command of Colonel Calcaterra. Details of this camp can be read in Malcolm Webster's book, 'An Italian Experience' and Alex Barnett's book, 'Hitler's Digger Slaves'. We spent about twelve months at this camp and were then sent to work in the rice fields on the Lombardy Plains for the next twelve months. Here our beds were three tiered bunks with thin straw mattresses. Our daily rations were as follows;
Macaroni or rice 66 grs Bread 200 grs . Cheese 50 grs
Beans 30 grs Coffee- made from acorns- 7 grs Vegetables 30 grs

Meat and bone- which we were allotted every second week – 150 grs. Macaroni, beans and vegetables- possibly stale cabbage leaves- were made into soup in the camp kitchen and when cooked it was very thin and we were each issued one ladle at 11am. each day. In the afternoon we were issued with a bread roll. These rations were 7% above starvation point and this was our daily menu for twelve months. Three hundred and eighty cases of beri beri went out of the camp

in one day to the local hospitals. The camp was crawling with lice and rats and we were allowed one shower a week. In the winter we were often without water because of the intense cold and would have to melt snow to obtain water. Hut searches were often carried out for hidden radios, maps and compasses so we were stood outside in the bitter cold of winter or the heat of summer from 8am till night fall. Sniffer dogs were used and often turned on the men. At one stage I was imprisoned for a month in solitary confinement as some of us protested over the lack of food. I was handcuffed for ten hours a day for this period. My daily food consisted of two slices of dry bread and a drink of water. Bed was the floor with no blankets. It was impossible to walk after a month so I had to crawl back to the huts. Red Cross parcels eventually came through but with much irregularity. These were supposed to be issued each week but if there was any trouble amongst the men they were withheld and sometimes the Italians stole some of the parcels so this meant the remaining parcels had to be shared. It was reported that an Italian Major was imprisoned for ten years for stealing parcels.

The contents of Red Cross parcels were: Evaporated milk 400 grs Lunch biscuits 250 grs Cheese 250 grs. Cocoa 250 grs Sardines 500 grs. Pork meat 375 grs Corned beef 375 grs Sweet chocolate 340 grs Sugar 125 grs Powdered Orange Cons. 200 grs Prunes 500 grs Instant coffee 125 grs Cigarettes 2 20's pkt. Smoking tobacco 1 60 gr pkt. This camp, 57, at Gruppignano, was known to be the worst camp in Italy. There were many escape plans and it took 5 or 6 months to dig one tunnel (dug by Western Australian miners) from which about 40 men escaped but most were recaptured next day. Punishment for trying to escape was severe beatings and imprisonment. The method used to disperse of the soil from the tunnels was to cut sleeves out of old shirts and attach them to the inside of the leg of the trousers and fill with the soil. It would then trickle away whilst walking around the compound. The camps were surrounded by fences of barbed wire about 15ft. high with an inner entanglement of wire. At each corner was a sentry box with a searchlight and a guard armed with a machine gun.

When Italy capitulated I was loose for sixteen days before being captured by German S.S. (Secret Service) troops. During this time I lived on what food I could find, mainly maize in the field and a few grapes if I was lucky. Some days I didn't have any food at all. Once captured, I spent the night in the Turin gaol before being sent to Germany in cattle trucks. These trucks were so crowded it was impossible to lie down so we all had to take lying down in turns. This trip took three days and three nights. We were put into camp 344 then sent to a working camp, Lager 741, which was situated in Zwittaw near the Czechoslovakian and Old Sudatenland border. At this camp we were deloused, showered and issued with a new set of clothes. There were no lice in this camp in Germany. Here we were issued with extra food: Bread 500 grs Meat (old horse) 100 grs (not every day) Coffee 150 grs (once a month) Margarine 25 grs (believed to be an extract of coal) Sugar 25 grs Jam 25 grs (occasionally) Cheese 10 grs Oats 10 grs Potatoes 500 grs (in soup) Occasionally we had sauerkraut with caraway seeds. At one stage we were snowed in so no food came into the camp. We lived on swedes and mouldy black bread. The coldest temperature during this period was 28° below and the warmest was 21° below. We wore all our clothes to bed and had two blankets but

Cec Donnelly—A Personal Account (continued from Page 6)

nothing would warm us, it was so cold. At this camp we worked for twelve months on building construction work and had to go to a quarry for stone for the foundations. This was during the severe winter so had to remove the snow and ice before we reached the stone, which was quarried with picks. We were treated well by our guards who were older men and had been in W.W.1 and had themselves been P.O.W's. They were A.I. compered to the stand over tactics of the Italian guards. I spent 2 ½ years in Italy and 1½ years in Germany. When the war ended we tried to reach the Americans at Pilsen about 500 miles away. We walked for days and everywhere we looked there were people going home. The roads were packed and 3 million came into Prague. The Germans bombed Prague for four days so there were dead lying everywhere. We met the Russians on 9/5/1945 at a town called Jablene (pronounced Gablene) on the Czechoslovakian border, then we were caught up in a fight with three S.S.armies who would not surrender to the Russians. The S.S. were trying to get to the Americans in Pilsen. We eventually got to Prague where we spent five days. Whilst there we saw the Russian victory march in that city. Upon arrival in Pilsen the Americans took us to Regensburg. On May 14th we left by plane for Reims and then on to England. We arrived home in Australia in July 1945 on the 'Stirling Castle' after being away 1669 days. The two most important things to come out of these events was the appreciation of our freedom, our country and the companionship and comradeship of the men. One chap in our camp worked from the age of twelve on a station property at Tharlawindi in New South Wales. When war broke out he rode his horse 600 miles to Sydney to join up. He could neither read nor write. He celebrated his sixteenth birthday in the prison camp.

HMS Hereward

Bill Dellar (VX37219), C Troop, 7 Battery wrote a poem about HMS Hereward whilst in Prato Isarco PoW camp with Cec Donnelly in October 1941. Bill's poem, which has not appeared in any previous issues of Take Post, is included on Page 3 of this issue of Take Post.

The Medal Muddle

In August 2023, Research Officer David McDonald received an email from Ross Smith (a Vietnam veteran) .

Ross's father Leslie James Smith (VX46675), who died in 1994, served with 2/3rd 8 Battery during WW2. Stanley David Rowan (VX45142), Ross's uncle was also in the 2/3rd - a gunner in 8 Battery.

Ross's mother gave him his father's medals in 2017 and he decided to have them mounted and framed, and discovered the 1939-1945 Star was missing. Initially, he thought it had simply been misplaced but was able to purchase the medal from a local military regalia business.

More recently, and when perusing his father's 20 page service record (obtained by the Morwell RSL), Ross discovered that his father had in fact applied for the 1939/45 Star on three separate occasions, but that each of his requests had been rejected by the DVA, even though he had served over 400 days overseas with the Regiment.

Ross commented that he had unwittingly awarded the 1939/45 Star to his father himself.

In his reply, David advised Ross he was aware of a number of the Regiment's members not receiving the 1939-45 Star, including his own father who had served 444 days in operational service, and did not receive the Star.

David added that although his father had died in the 1970s, he (David) had applied for the 1939/45 Star in about 2008 and it was provided to him, no questions asked.

In a subsequent exchange of emails, David commented on the complications regarding eligibility for the 1939/45 Star.

"According to his Service Record, he arrived in the Middle East, which would have been Palestine, in July 1941 as a reinforcement and was allocated to the 3 LAA Regt in September. That month 8 Battery was withdrawn from the Siege of Tobruk, back to Palestine, so presumably that's when he joined the Battery.

I note that his rank was Private

throughout his service, not Gunner. Given that his final unit was 8 Australian Base Postal Unit, it could be that he filled a similar role in the 3 LAA Regt (later 2/3 LAA Regt) and the subsequent 8 LAA Battery (Airborne) after the Regiment was disbanded in mid-1943?

But that does not make much sense to me: postal work in a gun battery? Surely that work would have been conducted at a higher formation?

Did he ever talk about the roles he filled during the war?

Also, the 1939-45 Star business is really confusing – to me at least! It was an Imperial Award – the British set the eligibility criteria initially, but it seems that the Aussies made changes as the war developed. Certainly, though, at the time of his Middle East service he would have needed 180 days west of (not 'east of') the Suez Canal, but he did not. The service record says that he had only four days service there, so perhaps he spent much of the time at the rear area in Palestine? But ... the 3 LAA RHQ moved from Palestine to Egypt (ie west of Suez) and served there from April to September 1941.

My father served west of the Canal also, but not for 180 days. Nonetheless, I obtained his 39-45 Star in 2008, no questions asked.

I have read that there were questions asked about the eligibility criteria, as it was only one day's service in an operational command to get the Africa Star, and the inconsistency between the two service stars was considered problematic. Perhaps the 'not east of the Suez Canal' provision was subsequently dropped?"



When is a RAT not a RAT?

Editor's Note: President David McDonald picked up this article after it was posted to the Facebook page of the Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk Association. David contacted the author, Ray Windlow, who gave us permission to include the article and the image in Take Post

'Ray emphasizes that the work his Association does to identify the Rats, and document their service, is a team effort, not that of a single member'

This is not a riddle though the reason for the question is.

Many, many times we are asked to make determinations of a soldier's RAT status. In the majority of cases, it is fairly straight forward. Despite the fact that his Service Record doesn't have a big stamp saying "RAT" or "TOBRUK" on the page, the Unit he served in and its whereabouts at the time of the Siege is generally enough to be able to safely say Yes or No.

But then come the problematic ones. The men who served in Units not generally acknowledged as being in Tobruk OR only a small part of the Unit was there.

Examples of this are:

- 2/3rd Lt AA (8th Battery)
- 2/2nd Field Workshops (No. 6 Recovery Section)
- 7th Australian Division ASC (Supply Column)
- 7th Australian Division (J Section Signals)
- 1 Aust. Corps Signals (No. 4 Line Section & 2 W Op Section)

And up until recently, one that gave us lots of problems,

HQ (2/1st) Guards Battalion – A Coy and some C Coy

Unfortunately, when it came to record keeping in time of war, precision and detail is often found wanting.

Details of so many men requiring amendments to their postings, dispersal and fate meant that a lot of the "in depth recording" just did not happen in the field or back at 2nd Echelon where piles of paperwork amassed daily.

It was not just on a personal level that such recording failed to happen, but often at the administrative level of returns of officer and other ranks. It is understandable though when you consider a Battalion strength of 600+ men and their whereabouts would need to be accounted for.

So as a generality, this recording was limited to promotions, demotions and sometimes who was off in hospital and who had just come back. Whether the paper pusher at HQ demanded more or less, what was procedure and what wasn't had less relevance when it came to front-line troop activities in time of war.

As a result, we often have Service Records of individuals from Units such as those mentioned above that, whilst acknowledging a man belonged to a specific Unit, his other location and dispersal remained unrecorded. This is where the riddle begins and sometimes ends with no clear picture or answer, when making a determination of WAS HE A RAT or NOT. We dearly wish it was not the case but sometimes there just is INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO AUTHORITATIVELY SAY that a soldier was in Tobruk.

To that end we have decided to add a 4th ROT STATUS to our

database – UNDETERMINED.

This will be allocated (reluctantly) once we have examined the soldier's record and searched for mention in the war diaries and still not found enough evidence to answer the question YES or NO.

Hopefully one day something will be located amongst the various archival resources to remedy but at this time, we cannot proceed much further than we have.

IT DOES HAPPEN THOUGH. The recent discovery by researcher Matt McHugh of the letters confirming the assignment of the 1st Aust. Railway Construction Coy men to a British Docks Operating Coy in Tobruk is a great example. This is such a rarity that our colleague Dr Karl James from the AWM commented:

"...confirming this detachment or loan of men from 1ARCC to a British Docks operating company in Alex and then to Tobruk is very impressive. It's not often that old war stories such as this one can be confirmed by archival evidence...."

Another recent example is for the HQ Guards Battalion. We knew from David Goody that a number of men from this Unit, including his father, were at Tobruk but no definitive list could be found.

Quite recently the Unit diaries of HQ Guards Battalion were digitised and scanned, and to our joy, lists of soldiers returned from service with the 9th Division in Tobruk were contained therein. Some 190 men have now been confirmed and added to the RATS Nominal Roll.

So, if you see or receive a reply of UNDETERMINED from us, it is because we frankly cannot answer the question based on the information we currently have available.

It's not a YES but equally it is not a NO.

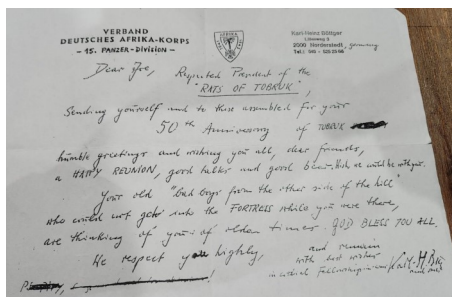
undetermined

adjective 1. not authoritatively decided or settled

LEST WE FORGET



A Letter From The AFRIKA KORPS



Editor's note: In December 2023, we were alerted to an item posted by Jeremy Marriot to the Facebook page of the Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk, referring to a letter from a former member of the Afrika Korps 15 Panzer Division, to the President of the Rats of Tobruk on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the siege.

The letter now resides in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

An image of the original letter from Karl-Heinz Bottger is included above.

The transcription of Karl-Heinz's letter is:

"Dear Joe,

Respected President of the "Rats of Tobruk"

Sending yourself and to those assembled for your 50th Anniversary of Tobruk, humble greetings and wishing you all, dear friends, a HAPPY REUNION, good talks and good beer. Wish we could be with you.

Your old "bad boys" from the other side of the hill who could not get into the FORTRESS while you were there, are thinking of you of olden times.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL

We respect you highly, and remain with best wishes in cordial Fellowship in _____

Karl H Bottger"



82nd Anniversary Of The Siege Of Tobruk

In April 2023, Committee member John Macmillan, on behalf of the Association, attended the proceedings of the 82nd anniversary of the Siege Of Tobruk organised by the Rats of Tobruk Association (ROTA). John's thoughts and comments on his attendance are presented for your information and interest.

"It was a great privilege to represent, with my wife Annie, the 2/3rd Regiment Association yesterday - my first ROTA since the 75th anniversary.

Despite a shower or two early on, the sun came out. What a great ceremony, organised with precision, warmth and dignity.

Each speaker and person recited verse and the lass who sang two verses of the National Anthem in such a non-pop style was alone worth the attendance.

The Polish contingent was present. I spoke to a man who was holding their banner and had fought, not in World War Two, but against the Russians at the time of the Cold War – and they are effectively still doing it I may say so.

The poignant verse by Lieutenant Shortland was recited perfectly by "Weary" Dunlop's grand daughter."



The 2/3rd Wreath laid at the 82nd anniversary of the Siege of Tobruk



Representing Poland



John Macmillan's father CV (Dick) Macmillan (VX35142), 8 Battery. John explained the photo is of his father being "an arse on an ass". Dick was invalided out of Tobruk with an old rugby knee injury, apparently a decision he was not happy about it. See the doggerel on Page 15.

The Secretary's Report



The major task for the Secretary was coordinating the 20th Anniversary of the Plaque at Werribee Racecourse.

The original plaque had been stolen and cut into pieces for the value of its bronze and copper.

A replacement plaque was arranged by the Association's committee with the assistance of Graeme Heddle through his local business and community contacts. .

We had a good attendance of descendants of original veterans, many who had travelled far distances, along with the Werribee Mayor Susan McIntyre and Councillors, Federal Member Joanne Ryan, RSL President Darryl Ryan and representatives of local families, businesses and organisations. Unveiling of the rededicated memorial Plaque was conducted by Committee members Gaye Berry, Ian Campbell and Malcolm Wrigglesworth, and Graeme Heddle, followed by wreaths and flowers placed by official parties and individual family descendants.

Due to our on-line enquiry function, and the FAQ page on our web site, I receive very little direct correspondence, usually enquires from descendants about membership.

Our Annual Statement and Financial Report for Consumer Affairs Victoria for the financial year ending 31 December, 2023 will be provided online by 30 June 2024, after the AGM and two Committee members sign the relevant declaration.

Donations

Thank you to all members who have made donations throughout the year, and in particular Foster and Cathy Crooke, Dot Harris, and Doreen and Janet Bryant.

The Website

The DVA grant of \$10,000 was used to upgrade our website during the year and our thanks go to Malcolm Romano of DesignsenseWeb for his technical assistance and support.

Remembrance Group

For the seventh year in succession, annual subscriptions are being held at \$25.00 per member.

The Association continues to have approximately 100 members. It was pleasing that we had 40 members and guests attending the 2023 AGM / Reunion Lunch.

Please remember to advise myself or Treasurer Ian Campbell of any changes to your address, email and phone numbers, so we can update our records, and advise you of developments or events that maybe forthcoming during the year.

Thank you and kind regards to all.

Malcolm Wrigglesworth, Honorary Secretary.

A Walk Down Memory Lane - Part 2

Editor's Note: In the 2022 issue of Take Post, we included extracts from the early editions of Take Post produced by the late former President Ron Bryant between 1988 and 2008. All early issues of Take Post are available for viewing on our website, along with just ten of the Regimental Bulletins, which preceded Take Post and which were produced in the late 1940s.

We are pleased to take another walk down memory lane and to bring you some further extracts from the stories and issues from the twenty years between 1988 and 2008.



1992 MILNE BAY STAMP

A postage stamp issued by Australia Post depicts a Bofors gun crew on No. 1 strip (*Milne Bay*). Who were the crew members?

1992 A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT JIM PATON

As you will have appreciated, a colossal amount of effort went into the production of "On Target". "Take Post" is designed to "keep the pot boiling" from year to year and demands considerable effort by our worthy editor, Ron Bryant, in particular.

Production of "On Target" not only enabled members of the Regiment to learn of previously unknown experiences of mates in the various areas where the 2/3rd served, but also encouraged many to record their personal experiences with the hindsight of fifty years.

Many diaries and items of memorabilia have been forwarded to the War Memorial Museum in Canberra. Jack Henry's model of the "Blower" (pictured in 1991 "Take Post") has been gratefully acknowledged and added to the POW display. Les Harris's Ensign miniature camera is in the camera cabinet of the photographic section. About 25 of Ron Bryant's photographs taken in Tobruk and New Guinea have been added to their collection.

1992 VALE JOHN WILLIAM RHODEN VX13726

The Commanding Officer of the 2nd/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment from 1940 to 1943, and Patron of the Regiment's Association, Lt Col. J. W. Rhoden E.D., died on 21st December 1991. John Rhoden was born in 1903 in Melbourne, the son of John P. Rhoden, solicitor. He was educated at Melbourne Grammar School, being captain of the school in 1922, in the school eighteen and eights in that year, and Cadet Lieutenant in 1921.

In July of 1922 John Rhoden enlisted as a gunner in the 8th Field Artillery Brigade, rising through the ranks until commissioned in 1924, promoted captain in 1927, and major in 1930 to command 6th Medium Artillery Battery.

In April 1940 he was appointed second in command 2nd/2nd Medium Artillery Regiment, 2nd AIF, and in July promoted Lieutenant-Colonel to form and command 2nd/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment in which he became known as "The Boomer". The Regiment was disbanded in July 1943. He relinquished command of 102 AA Regt (AIF) on 29/12/1944 and was appointed commander of the Tatura Internment Camp, until placed on the Regimental Supplementary List on 7/11/1945.

1993 BOFORS AT MILNE BAY

Geoff George, in handing over the Australian gift of the Bofors gun to the Premier of the Milne Bay district, made these remarks:

"Today marks a very important time in the history of Milne Bay. Fifty years ago this area was cleared of the enemy. The airstrip was the mainstay in effecting such clearance, for without 75 and 76 Squadrons of the RAAF there could have been no victory.

"The Bofors gun you see here was the main defence of the airstrip. These guns managed to keep the enemy aircraft high in the sky preventing accurate bombing. My crew and I were privileged to operate one of these guns, almost on this very site and I am proud to have been one of those who contributed to the eventual victory.

"Mr Premier, in this your 17th year of independence, it is with great pleasure that on behalf of my unit the 2/3 Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment (whose colour patch is depicted on the gun), on behalf of the people of Australia, Geoff Masters and others too numerous to mention, I officially hand this gun over to you as a 50th Anniversary gift. It would now be deemed a privilege if you would officially unveil the plaque".

Wreaths were laid at the foot of the memorial in memory of Squadron Leader Charles Gurney by the official guests. Visits were made to the Squadron Leader Peter Turnbull and the Corporal John French, VC memorials. Miss Gwen French a sister of John French was in the group.

1995 SIDI BARRANI Retrospect By Harry Corneliusen

Dumps of foodstuffs were abandoned by Mussolini's warriors. Strict Middle East HQ orders stated: "BEWARE! These foods may well be poisoned." After gazing hungrily at the heaps of food, a member of our crew decided to give it a go. He cut open a tin of minestrone soup with his bayonet and nervously polished off the soup. We watched him expectantly for some hours. No problems eventuated so we hopped into soups, canned tomatoes and fruits - a welcome diversion from our bully beef, biscuits and herrings.

One of the other Bofors managed to get into action, but to their horror it was realized that the leather muzzle cover hadn't been removed from the end of the barrel. Fortunately the 2-pound shell was not activated to explode until it reached a certain distance into the air. We lived - we learned - fast.

It was in this action that a bomb fragment accounted

for our driver, Dick Todd, who was minding his own business asleep in the cabin of our gun tractor. It was also the scene of the demise of two British 2nd Lieutenants who, un-tin-hatted, were admonishing their troops: "Get down. Take shelter!" when they sustained a direct hit with a bomb

Our daily ration of fresh water was a water-bottle a day for all purposes (ablutions, teeth cleaning and drinking). We welcomed the daily truck transport to the Mediterranean where we proved the inadequacy of the salt-water soap.

An enterprising gun crew carried out a successful raid on the Suez docklands and was able to fill a layer of sandbags around their gun-pit with revolutionary new cans of American beer, which kept the crew happy for weeks. Oh well - there were good days and bad.

Saluting Their Service Grant

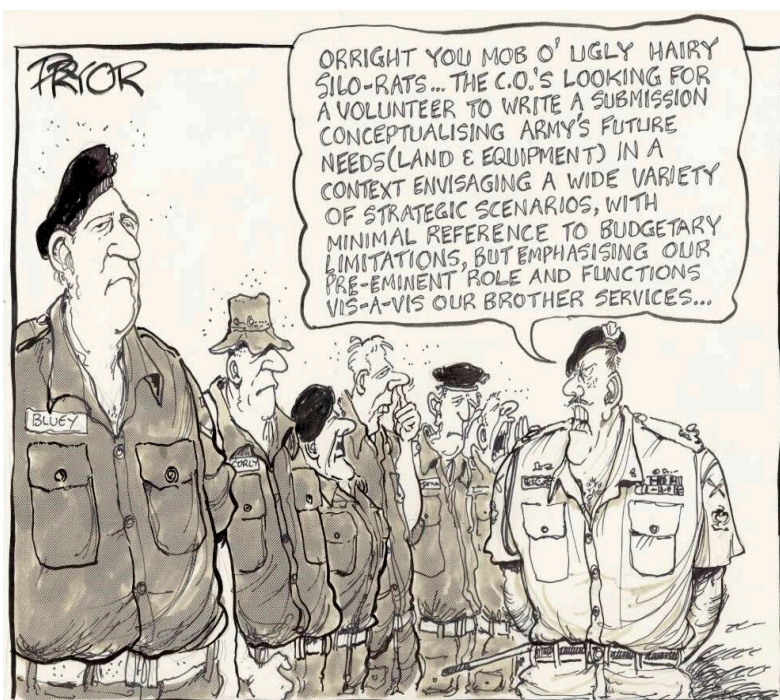
As reported in the 2023 issue of Take Post, the Association was successful in obtaining a DVA Grant of \$10,000 to migrate our website to a new Content Management System—Wordpress.

Over a period of several months, the layout and linkages of the new website were designed, gradually implemented and tested, and finally populated by transferring every item on the old website to the new website.

Prior to going live, our website support team from DesignsenseWeb conducted a ZOOM demonstration of the website enabling Committee members to comment, make suggestions and/or to identify any errors or missing links.

As a consequence of the DVA funding and with the technical support of DesignsenseWeb, we are confident our website will continue as a primary source of information relating to the 2/3rd in particular and to the anti-aircraft role during World War Two in general.

To give you an idea of what is required to lodge a successful application, the following 1985 cartoon by long serving (30 years) Canberra Times editorial cartoonist Geoff Pryor states it rather succinctly!



20th ANNIVERSARY OF 2/3rd ALAA REGIMENT MEMORIAL PLAQUE AT WERRIBEE RACECOURSE

In the Association's December 2023 Occasional Newsletter, we provided a detailed report on the ceremony (and the events surrounding the ceremony) to recognise the 20th anniversary of the Regiment's memorial plaque situated at Werribee Racecourse.

The plaque is dedicated to the 900 young men who formed the 2/3rd ALAA Regiment and trained at the racecourse and around the Werribee area from August 1940, prior to deployment to Egypt and the Middle East a few short months later.

In addition to our newsletter, the local newspaper, the Wyndham Star Weekly, promoted the event as a significant part of Wyndham's military history reflecting on both the reinstatement of the stolen plaque and the 20th anniversary of the installation of the original plaque. Interviewed by the Star, Honorary Treasurer Ian Campbell commented: *"The plaque is commemorating the fact they, the Regiment, served and this was the site of their initial training. When they were here at Werribee they never laid hands on an anti-aircraft gun, there were none to train on, I think they all felt inadequately prepared when they got over there. The Werribee Racecourse is an important site. It is where young men met for the first time and became life-long friends, relying on each other during and under some pretty difficult circumstances."*

The replacement plaque was funded by Wyndham businessman Paul Hopper and was unveiled at Werribee Racecourse on 24 September 2023.

By way of a follow up to the events described in the newsletter and the newspaper, we are pleased to include the Wyndham Star's front page photo and some photographs taken on the day.



Members and guests watch on at the commemorative ceremony.



From left: Graeme Heddle, Ian Campbell, Malcolm Wrigglesworth and RSL President Daryl Ryan. (Photo: Damjan Janevski) 357355_01



Bill Stokes, Sue Leidler, Gaye Berry, Malcolm Wrigglesworth



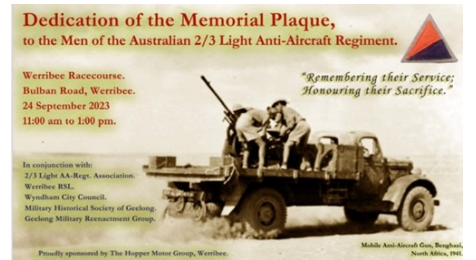
Guard of Honour provided by the Geelong Military Historical Society



Alasdair and Tim Crooke with the Regimental Banner above the newly installed plaque



The newly re-installed plaque



Poster produced by Matt Heddle promoting the anniversary



Members and guests inspecting the military display assembled by the Geelong Military Historical Society



A jeep provided by the Geelong Military Historical Society

MYSTERY OF THE STRATHPINE DISCS

In March 2022, Research Officer David McDonald reported that Don Malcolm, who lives at Warner on the outskirts of Brisbane had contacted Secretary Malcolm Wrigglesworth about an intriguing find on his property. David followed up and found that Don has a farm at Warner which includes the site of the WW2 Strathpine Army Camp, and that Don had been using a metal detector in one of his paddocks and located five Identity Discs. Some of the discs are single discs whereas others are a pair, as issued. They were discovered approximately 30 centimetres below the surface.

Four of the discs are for members of the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment – photos of the four discs are included with this story – those that have the details stamped upon them are original Army issue ID's, and the one with running writing would probably have been privately engraved.

Don would like to locate any descendants of the five soldiers so he can pass on the discs. Don has also undertaken a fair bit of research online and has found the gravesite of Allan Percival Dunn (VX45875).

Details of the men to whom the discs were issued are:

ALLAN PERCIVAL DUNN VX45875 Gnr 7 Bty
DoB 27/9/1918 Rainbow 3LAA Regiment on Discharge

NORMAN DAVID GREGORY VX18811 Gnr 7 Bty
DoB 23/12/1918 Brunswick 2/3 ALAA Regiment on Discharge

ARTHUR HILLMAN VX31596 Gnr 8 Bty C Troop
DoB 26/11/1914 Melbourne 2/7 ALAA Bty on Discharge

JAMES CLIFFORD McCALMAN VX47451 L/Bdr 8 Bty
DoB 4/12/1909 Wangaratta 2/2 AA Regt on Discharge

RONALD CYRIL WALKENDEN WX 36657 Gnr
DoB 18/9/1923 Bellevue WA 2/3 Aust S/L Bty on Discharge

David replied to Don Malcolm
"Many thanks for sending through those excellent photos of the ID discs, and the information from the DVA Nominal Roll.

I have tried to find some additional information to link to the discs. Unfortunately, what I hoped would be available, namely the service records for these five men, is not the case. Australian Archives has not yet digitised any of them, so they are not yet available to the public. That means that we cannot document, with complete confidence, where they were and when. However, there is always the option of ordering them from Australian Archives. Each service record would cost about \$36 and it could take up to 3 months before they are digitised and delivered.

That said, I have checked up on the locations of the men's sub-units, identifying when they were at the Strathpine Camp. At first, we need to be clear what units and sub-units they belonged to: 2/3 = second/third; AA = Anti-Aircraft; LAA - Light Anti-Aircraft; Regt – Regiment; Bty = Battery; Comp = Composite; SL = Searchlight;

DUNN: 7 LAA Bty, 2/3 LAA Regt (then probably 2/2 Comp AA Regt after July 1943)

GREGORY: ditto

HILLMAN: our nominal roll: 8 LAA Bty, 2/3 LAA Regt (then probably 2/8 Bty (Airborne) after Jul 1944). Oct 1944 probably transferred to C troop, 2/7 LAA Bty, 2/2 Comp AA Regt upon the disbandment of 8 LAA Bty.

McCALMAN: probably same as Hillman

WALKENDEN: not on the nominal roll for 2/3 LAA Regt. DVA nominal roll shows 2/3 AA SL Bty but the most authoritative source says there was no such AA searchlight battery.

Sub-units of the 2/3 LAA Regt and its successors at the Strathpine Camp:

After returning from the Middle East, and leave and training in southern Australia, at the end of June 1944, 7 LAA Bty, 2/2 Comp AA Regt moved from Melbourne to the Strathpine Camp where they stayed for the months of July and August 1944, with some men staying on until 7 Bty was disbanded in October 1945.

C Troop was formed in October 1944 from 8 Bty men, when the Battery was disbanded.

The 8th and 9th LAA Batteries of the 2/3 LAA Regt were never encamped at Strathpine.

There are some stories of their time at Strathpine in our Regt history, *On Target*, a section titled 'Strathpine – Queensland', commencing at page 302 in the 9 Bty chapter, online at <https://www.anti-aircraft.org.au/about-us/on-target/on-target>

David circulated the email from Don Malcolm to the Association Committee members to establish whether any of them had any contact details for the families of Dunn, Gregory, Hillman or McCalman – none of the Committee were able to shed any light on the people to whom the discs were issued – but perhaps one of our members or website visitors may be able to shine a light on the Strathpine Discs.



Regiment Structure & Movements July 1940 – July 1946

Editor's Note: Members who attended the 2023 Annual General Meeting and the Reunion Lunch enjoyed an interesting and very informative presentation by President and Research Officer David McDonald relating to the structure and movements of the Regiment and its sub-units before and after disbandment in July 1943.

Talking with members following David's presentation, we received many positive comments from members who had struggled to understand the structures and movements of the Regiment, until it was clearly spelt out in David's presentation. Accordingly, we are pleased to present David's talk for those members who were unable to attend the AGM, and who may also appreciate an explanation.

Your Editor has added a few words where necessary - by way of background and for linkage purposes.

The order to form a Regiment, to be known as the 2/3rd Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, came from the Commander Royal Artillery, 1st Australian Corps, 2nd AIF. Because anti-aircraft guns were to be used for the first time in the Australian Forces, three new regiments came into existence, two heavy anti-aircraft regiments and one light anti-aircraft regiment – the 3rd.

Where Did The 2/3rd Sit In The Army Structure 1 Corps Artillery

1 A-A Brigade	2 A-A Brigade	3 A-A Brigade
1 HAA Regiment	1, 2 & 3 Batteries	
2 HAA Regiment	4, 5 & 6 Batteries	
3 Lt AA Regiment	7, 8 & 9 Batteries	

The establishment of the 2/3rd Aust Lt AA Regiment

Regimental HQ	Signals Section	Workshop Section
7 Battery	8 Battery	9 Battery

The Troops

7 Battery	8 Battery	9 Battery
A Troop	D Troop	G Troop
B Troop	E Troop	H Troop
C Troop	F Troop	I Troop

In theory, each Troop had six guns.

This was the formal establishment of the regiment but it rarely, if ever, matched it exactly.

RHQ included the Commanding Officer (Lt Colonel), Adjutant (Captain), Quartermaster (Captain), Regimental Medical Officer (Captain), Chaplain, Postal Section and their staff.

Each Battery (Bty) was commanded by a Major, supported by a battery Captain, and had an establishment of approximately 250 officers and other ranks.

Each Troop (Tp) was commanded by a Lieutenant and had an establishment of approximately 80 officers and other ranks. In theory, each Troop had 6 Gun Detachments, i.e. 6 guns.

Each Gun Detachment (Det) was commanded by a Sergeant and had an establishment of approximately 8 to 10 men.

Signals Section was commanded by a Lieutenant and had an establishment of 1 officer and 39 other ranks. Included were 5 wireless telegraphy (WT) detachments, 1 operating sub-section and 1 cable sub-section. Linesmen were attached to each Battery.

Workshop Section was commanded by a Captain and had an establishment of approximately 50 men.

Throughout the regiment were distributed cooks, despatch riders, drivers and others in key support roles.

Timeline 1940-1943

Jul 1940	1 AA Brigade formed, incl 3 LAA Regiment – the first AA troops to the Middle East
29 Dec 1940	Embarked Melbourne
30 Jan 1941	Disembarked, thence to Khassa Camp
Feb 1941	8 Battery to Egypt/Libya to support 6 Infantry Division => Tobruk (siege)
Feb 1941	8 Battery to Egypt/Libya to support 6 Infantry Division => Tobruk (siege)
Apr 1941	Regiment (less 8 Battery) to Amiriya, Egypt (for Greece)
24 Apr 1941	7 Battery to Crete, RHQ & 9 Battery Egypt air defences for Western Desert Force
July 1941	RHQ & 9 Battery withdrawn to Hill 85 Camp, Palestine
July 1941	9 Battery detached to Beirut, Syria
July 1941	7 Battery rejoined unit at Hill 95 Camp ex Crete
Aug 1941	Part of 7 Battery moved to Syria to join 9 Bty
Aug 1941	Units and higher formations renamed: 3 rd Lt AA Regt became 2/3 rd Lt AA Regt
Sep 1941	2/8 Battery rejoined unit at Hill 95 Camp ex Tobruk
Dec 1941	Japanese attack Malaya and Pearl Harbour
23 Jan 42	Japanese capture Rabaul
Feb 1942	RHQ, 2/7 & 2/8 Battery to Suez, Egypt; 9 Battery rejoined them there
Feb 1942	Regiment embarked at Suez
Mar 1942	Regiment disembarked at Adelaide
Mar 1942	Japanese occupy Lae & Salamaua
Apr 1942	9 Battery Adelaide to Townsville; RHQ, 7 & 8 Battery to Perth
Jun 1942	9 Battery to Milne Bay via Port Moresby, less 'B' Troop which remained at Port Moresby
25 Aug 1942	Battle for Milne Bay commenced; Japanese defeated 7 Sep
26 Oct 1942	'B' Troop of 2/9 Battery moves from Port Moresby to Milne Bay
2 Nov 1942	Kokoda recaptured
Jan 1943	2/8 Battery to Geraldton WA
May 1943	RHQ to Moora, WA, 8 Battery to Exmouth, WA
Jun 1943	2/8 Battery became 2/8 LAA Battery (Airborne)
Mid-1943	RHQ plus Workshop Section merged into 121 LAA Regt near Geraldton.
	Signals Section transferred to 109 LAA Regt

Regiment Structure & Movements July 1940 – July 1943 (Continued)

- 14 Jul 1943 2/3rd LAA Regt disbanded
- 4 Aug 1943 Helidon, Qld: 7 Bty becomes part of 2/2 Comp AA Regt
- 1 Sep 1943 Milne Bay: 9 Bty becomes part of 2/3 Comp AA Regt
- 6 Oct 1943 2/9 Bty moves from Milne Bay to Lae
- 4 Dec 1943 2/8 Bty embarks for Buna

Timeline 1944-46

- 28 Feb 1944 2/7 Bty moves to Buna, joins 2/8 Bty there
- 4 May 1944 2/7 Bty departs Buna, returns to Australia
- 25 May 1944 2/9 Bty sails from Buna to Aus
- 8 Sep 1944 2/8 Bty last parade
- 11 Apr 1945 2/9 Battery sails from Brisbane to Morotai, Dutch New Guinea to join 9 Inf antry Division
- 30 May 1945 2/9 Battery sails from Morotai to Labuan Island, Borneo (Brunei Bay landings)
- 15 Aug 1945 Victory in the Pacific Day
- 2 Nov 1945 The first function of the newly formed 2/3rd Aust Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment Association (Prahran Drill Hall)
- 15 Nov 1945 2/2 Comp AA Regt disbanded (2/7 LAA Battery)
- 10 Dec 1945 2/3 Comp AA Regt departs Borneo and returns to Australia for demobilisation (2/9 LAA Battery)
- 15 Jan 1946 2/3 Comp AA Regt disbanded (2/9 LAA Battery)

Donkey Talk Doggerel by CV (Dick) Macmillan (VX35142)

As I sat on my arse on my donkey
A paradox came to mind
If my arse on my ass is in front of its arse
Then the arse of my ass is behind.

Concise Oxford Dictionary:

Doggerel: trivial, worthless, irregular

Poetry that is badly written or silly, sometimes because the writer has not intended it to be serious.



Descendants of the Rats of Tobruk Association

In December 2023, we were contacted by Matt McHugh from DOTROTA, who advised that the list of 8 Battery members of the Rats of Tobruk provided to us in 2017 by Owen Carlton, from the Rats of Tobruk Tribute, had been significantly updated and is a lot more accurate.

A total of 182 members of the 2/3rd are included on the updated list, which includes (where available and if applicable) the following information:

ROTA badge, Surname, Given Names, Rank, Date of Birth, Enlisted, Date of Death, Service Number and Awards

In due course, the updated list will be uploaded to our website and may be viewed at:

<https://www.anti-aircraft.org.au/regiment-members/rats-of-tobruk/>

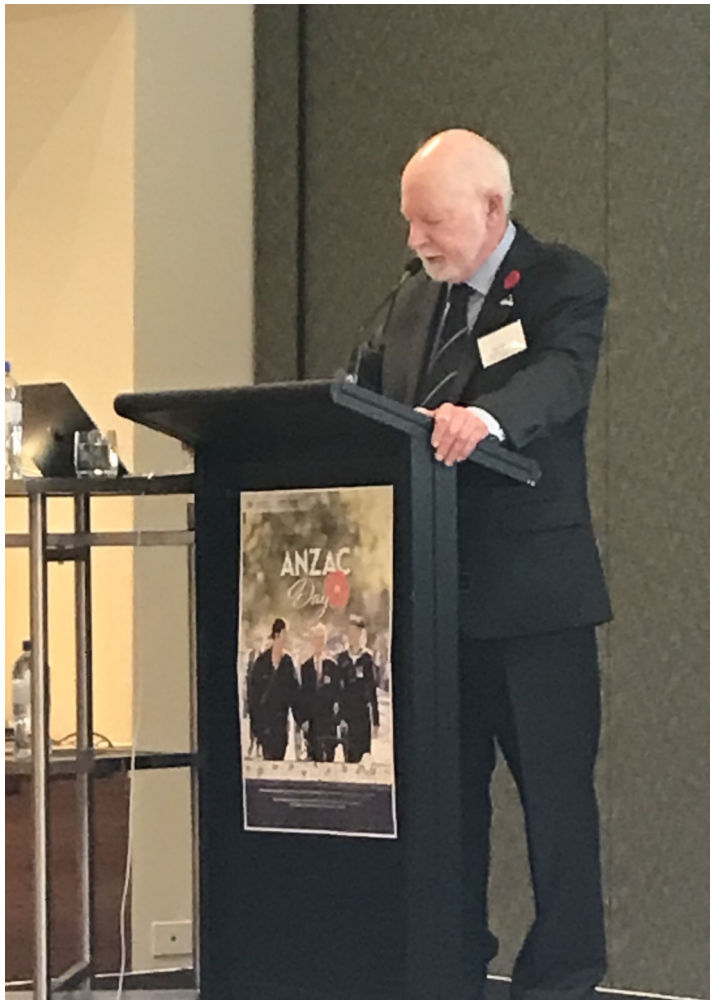
Candid Camera



Members listening to reports from the President, Secretary and Treasurer prior to the Reunion Lunch.



Colin Bragg, Malcolm Wrigglesworth, Rob Bennett and Foster Crooke in deep discussions.



President David McDonald delivering his always interesting and informative annual Research Officer's talk.



From trop left: Roger Stephens, Colin Bragg, Russell Luckcock, Griff Loughnan and Simon Coghlan



Alasdair Crooke and Ian Campbell carrying the Regiment Banner past the Shrine of Remembrance on Anzac Day 2023, followed by President David McDonald



After the Anzac Day March