

1871

A Field Battery Association, Inc.

National Newsletter

MAY 2012

President Ron Bassan's Report

From the Presidents Chair.

G'day everyone, welcome to the May edition of the A Field Battery National Newsletter, firstly may I say that the Anzac Day march in Brisbane was the poorest turn out that I have experienced since I have been President. Nearly to the time of march off there was only four of us ready to go and I thought we would have to carry the banner with no one marching behind, I quickly for some people to carry the banner at fortunately at the last moment people turned up and I think there were about 18 that finally turned up.

Now for the gripe, I travel 1100 kilometres each Anzac Day to march behind our banner, this involves considerable expense to me, but I don't mind, as I am very proud to be an ex-member of the oldest continually serving unit in the defence force. I believe that more of you members should make a similar effort to march behind the banner on Anzac Day, either in Sydney or Brisbane.

Being an ex-BC, Rod Althous led the Brisbane contingent and each year it surprises me that so many turn up to watch and clap as the parade goes by.

We paid for twenty people to go on the Brisbane River boat cruise and only nine turned up so the association had to pay for eleven unused tickets, however the people that did go on the cruise thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

I have been told by Ian Leven that the march in Sydney was fairly attended and the weather was good, for a change. Don Green brought the banner for the boys to march behind and "A" Battery shared the downstairs area with ay the Coronation hotel with 102 Battery. A booking has been made for the first floor after the march next year.

Don Green had arranged for some platter of food to be provided and Ian wanted to take the hat around to pay for them but Don would not have this and paid for the food out of his own pocket. Thank you Don for this most generous gesture, unfortunately Don has not been well lately and he had an operation not long after the Anzac Day march, I hope you are

recovering well and are well on the way back to being your old self.

I have not heard how the march went in other cities but I am sure we will hear from them in the near future.

The Annual General Meeting and Reunion is to be held at the Maroochy River Coach House, 46 David Low Way, Maroochdore, QQLd. 4560 on the 7th - 9th. September, all bookings to be madedirect with the Coach House, phone (07) 5448 4344 or email info@maroochycoachhouse.com.au

I will not be at the reunion this year, I will be in Perth attending the Australian Orchid Conference, Don Sinclair will chair the AGM so please accept my apology and if you will have me again, I will be

standing for President/Secretary once more.

The AGM is on Saturday 8th. September, starting at 10 00 hrs, EST, please make an effort to attend and if you would like to be on the committee, please put your nomination form in.

Don't forget that the annual subscriptions of \$20 or \$200 for life membership are due on the 1st of July, please try to have the money to me by then, you will find my address on the back page

That's enough rambling from me, for this edition.

Semper Paratus. Tex.



Anzac Day Sydney. L/R Kevin Mitchell , Peter Berrier , Dodger Noonan, Don Green, Terry Easton, Ian Leven , Don Spearpoint. The two Cadets are our banner-carriers, Brad Bowcock (Grandson of Kevin Mitchell) and Craig Demouilpied.

Anzac Day for A Field Battery

The Army were first away in the Brisbane Anzac Day march so we had to assemble earlier than usual to step off at 10am. Weatherwise, it was a perfect day which assured a massive crowd attendance of cheering and happy adults and even happier flag waving kids.

Everything went so smoothly on the march that we were finished and dismissed before 11.30, it was a 10minute walk to the Pig and Whistle where the management were kind enough to let us in early for a recovery drink or two. Of course the three LAD guys would have been content with a refreshing lemon squash but we all know that the Gunners are a bad influence and as usual forced them to have a couple of schooners before boarding the ferry for our magnificent Brisbane River cruise.

The ferry trip is one of the best post march reunions you could wish for with a great crew on board presenting a wonderful and plentiful barbeque, a well stocked bar and a constantly changing scenery that is hard to beat, however I will have to agree with Tex complaining about the poor attendance by A Battery members, it's difficult to understand how you cannot be impressed with all this.

Could it be that all the Gunners who experienced sea sickness aboard that infamous trip home aboard The Flaminia are frightened of a recurrence ? Well don't be scared, you have absolutely no chance of chundering on this placid trip, unless, of course you are trying to keep up with Paul "The King." Forsythe at drinking beer. Paul is a true gladiator of the grog and does not receive the recognition he so richly deserves, we all know that he would have no problem with David Boone's 1989 record of 52 cans of VB on a flight to London.

I can't wait to do this delightful trip again, as long as we don't have the same frightening experience; after we got off the ferry and were saying our goodbyes Brian Czisowski suddenly went ghostly pale and collapsed to the ground.

It was a time of deep concern for us and did not look good until fortunately a nurse who happened to be walking by took over and told us to ring an ambulance, the management of the Pig and Whistle also offered help The ambulance arrived within minutes and took Brian away leaving a concerned group of friends fearing the worst. Thankfully it all turned out well as Brian was treated for severe dehydration and discharged from Brisbane Hospital a few hours later. Great news for Baron's many friends.

←
6-year-old Poppy Thorpe proudly holds her handmade wreath which she laid at the dawn service in Hobart.



Gympie



Adelaide



*They shall not grow 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,*

KEN. AGNEW
TOM. BANFIELD
CLARE. (BONNIE) BASSAN
TREVOR. BEER
FRANK. BERRIER
S.J. BLANCH (OAS. Malaya)
DOUG N. BRYAN
MALCOLM J. BUGG
GORDON CARMICHAEL
TOM. CARRUTHERS
KEITH. CHRISTENSEN
RICHARD. DUGGAN
R.M. DUCAT (OAS. Malaya)
PAT. DALY
TOM. DAWSON
JOHN. DOWNES
GEORGE. FORSYTHE
M.K. FUSSELL (KIA, Afghanistan)
ROBERT J. (BOB) GRAY
NEIL HARDEN
MICK. HARKEN
B.D. HENDERSON (OAS. Malaya)
KEN. KENNEDY
BOBBY. LEWIS
JOHN. MACDONALD
I.G. MATHERS (KIA. Vietnam)
E.J. (LOFTY) MOORE
R.J. PARKER (OAS. Vietnam)
R.J. (JIM) PONTING
DAVE. QUIRK
PETER. RAINSBURY
CLIVE. RALFE
BRIAN. SCOTT
PETER. SEDDON
ALAN. SINGH
NOEL. SMALL
R. F. SMITH
BRIAN. WHISKER
JOHN. WHITELAW. AO,CBE
BERNARD. (PLONKY) WINE
GUS. WOOLFE
JOHN. WORBOYS

Their Journey's Just Begun

**Don't think of them as gone away,
their journey's just begun,
life holds so many facets-
this earth is only one.**

**And think of them as living
in the hearts of those they touched...
for nothing loved is ever lost-
and they were loved so much.**

E. Brennerman

Rogue Afghan soldiers who murdered a Digger and wounded three others escaped to neighbouring Pakistan soon after the shootings.

Maj-Gen Abdul Hamid, Afghan National Army chief in southern Afghanistan, said he had reliable intelligence they were no longer in his country.

Lance-Cpl Andrew Jones was shot in cold blood by ANA soldier Mohammed Rozi in May last year and three Diggers were shot and wounded by another Afghan soldier in November.

Both men escaped despite dragnets that included unmanned spy planes and special forces troops.

Another Afghan who shot dead Australian troops Capt Bryce Duffy, 26, Cpl Ashley Birt, 22, and Lance-Cpl Luke Gavin, 27, at a base in Northern Kandahar Province last November was killed in the exchange.

Insurgent leaders from Oruzgan Province have set up camp in the lawless border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan and it is believed both shooters received help to escape from Afghanistan.

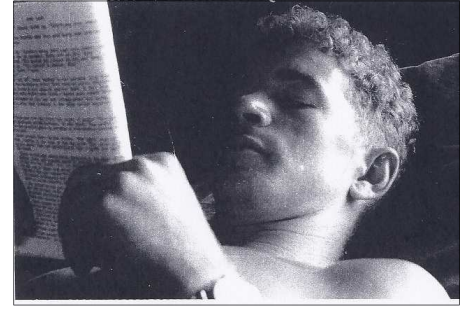
General Hamid, who commands the 205th Hero Corps, said army recruits were being much more closely vetted since the shootings.

There are 195,000 troops in the ANA, including 20,000 under his command in the south

Maj-Gen Hamid said the security situation was improving, but his forces would be unable to secure the country without logistic, training and air support



Four mates enjoying a few coldies in Penang, from the left, Quirky, Super, Paddles and Cutie



Max Van Dyk has answered the call for some input from the gunners, he has sent some documents that will be copied in future newsletters. On the left is a photo of a very happy foursome .

The name of the gunner in the top photo will remain a secret as it looks like he may be engrossed in reading a copy of "Debbie Does Dallas."

The Saint contributed the following article about what is wrong in the modern army

What's Happening to our Army

Whenever old diggers get together they seem to talk about the same old subjects. Maybe because they shared the same experiences, but there are only so many of those. One subject that often raises its very ugly head is about the 'modern' army and its diggers.

We all know that nothing stays the same, and change is inevitable. We just have to look in the mirror to have that confirmed.

But we must remember that 'change' is not always good. 'Change' can be for the better, or it can also be for the worst, and a lot of us think that a lot of changes in the Military have not been for the better.

Now being an old salesman you don't have to explain to me the human reaction to change, and the accepted theory that the older people become, the more they resist change. Try getting an old person to take on a new idea.

So with that out of the way lets talk about the older soldiers view of our Army today. Soldiers no longer 'dress up'. The days of the dress blues, white shirt and tie, gold chevrons, and on parade the white webbing, Pith helmets with polished brass chin straps. Too much work I hear you say? Nonsense, sure there was a lot of polishing and ironing, but soldiers have always liked to dress in their uniforms.

When we had decent uniforms, diggers very often went out in uniform. Ask them about their special garments they kept for 'leave dress'. They were proud to



wear their uniform and be seen in it. What about Battle Dress in winter with khaki shirt and tie.

Oh, the powers that be will tell us that it costs too much money. How much are they spending on recruitment programmes? And what about the cry that the Army is a reflection of Society. So young people today go around looking like a bunch of bums, so our soldiers are made to look the same. Does anyone agree with me? Write to your newsletter and tell us.



Now what about the drill and discipline. Last year at a ceremony at Enoggera an Engineer captain was explaining to a group of old veterans why the army was not getting enough recruits. His thoughts were that the young people today think that in the Army they get screamed at and have to do all that stamping around with short hair and called names by bullying NCOs.

He said we have to convince them that sort of thing was in the 'old days' and doesn't happen now. A lot of us just walked away shaking our heads in disgust. I suppose trying to explain our view of that would be that you had to be there to understand.

What about Espirit de Corps and the brotherhood. I doubt if any old diggers joined the army for the money.

It was the lifestyle, so it couldn't have been that bad.

I could go on about the drill and dress for a long time, but I would like to give others a go to see if they share my thoughts, or tell us about your "terrible" experience with those screaming NCOs.

Nuff said from me. Saint



Another story from
**Tommy (Bulldog)
Caldwell, our
Mooroolbark
Correspondent.**



dived out of the window and finishing up in a screaming heap on the ground, I can remember running down the stairs expecting to find him in a bad way, but apart from a few cuts and bruises he was alright.

What ! You've never heard of Mooroolbark ?.
It's a charming little town in Victoria with a population of 19,335 that dwindles to 19,333 when Bulldog and his Sheila attend the A Battery meetings.

The Picture Theatre Incident

We must all be mellowing in our old age. Remembering what we were in our younger days, I don't suppose we were any different from today's youth, full of adventure, indestructible and looking after our mates. It brings to mind a time in Malaya, drinking with a mate, Denis McLeish in the bar of a picture theatre, I think it was the Pathe in Butterworth, as the day wore on we were becoming a bit under the weather.

We had heard stories of the Kiwis SAS blokes jumping out of two stories high bar windows and the next minute the window was opened and Mack was half way out of it and muttering. "If the Kiwis can do it, so can I."

Apart from being quite dangerous there was another problem; it was not a clear drop to the footpath, there was a large neon sign in the way.

After taking out half of the neon sign as Mack

In the meantime all hell had broken loose so we decided to depart the scene. We were pursued by the Theatre Manager and the Provost Corp consisting of an Australian, British and RAAF persons.

The only place of refuge we could find was the Wellesley Bar so we headed for the toilet locking the door behind us, unfortunately the toilet window was too small for further escape so it became a stand off and we were in deep shit, not from the toilet but from our pursuers.

Apparently having a drink in the bar at the time was an Australian Engineer Officer who we didn't know from a bar of soap but he became our negotiator.

After considerable bargaining it was agreed that we would pay for the damage to the neon sign and be released in the custody of the Officer.

After our release from the toilet and things had settled down he bought us a beer and told us to clear out and he didn't want any more to do with us.

We never did find out his name but if I ever do I would like to buy him a beer and sincerely thank him for getting us out of deep shit.....**Bull Dog.**



L115A3 Long Range Rifle

A British soldier dubbed the Silent Assassin has broken a distance record after taking down two targets from a mile and a half away.

Corporal of Horse Craig Harrison, a British Army sniper, killed two Taliban machine gunners in Afghanistan from a distance of 8,120 feet, Sky News reported. "The first round hit a machine gunner in the stomach and killed him outright. He went straight down and didn't move," the 35-year-old said of the incident, which took place

in November 2009. "The second insurgent grabbed the weapon and turned as my second shot hit him in the side. He went down, too. They were both dead."

Harrison was nearly 3,000 feet beyond the effective range of his British-built L115A3 Long Range Rifle. The powerful weapon is reportedly only effective up to 4,921 feet, the Daily Mail reported, which is less than a mile. "Conditions were perfect, no wind, mild weather, clear visibility," Harrison said, according to Sky News.

The father of one child from Gloucestershire in Southwest England pulled off the impressive shots while protecting his commanding officer and several Afghan soldiers, who were on patrol when they were attacked in the Helmand Province.

The sniper's shots broke a record previously held by Cpl. Rob Furlong, a Canadian Forces soldier, who in 2005 killed an Al Qaeda gunman from about



Corporal of Horse Craig Harrison, a British Army sniper, now holds the record

7,972 feet away.

Sgt. Brian Kremer of the United States Army held the record in 2004 with a shot in Iraq that struck its target from about 7,545 feet.

Corporal of horse is a rank in the British Army's Household Cavalry corresponding to sergeant in other regiments. Formerly, no cavalry regiments had sergeants, but the Household Cavalry are the only ones to keep this tradition alive. It is said to stem from the origin of the word sergeant, which comes from the same root as servant. Since even the lowliest trooper in the Household Cavalry was once a gentleman, it was considered that such a rank was inappropriate.

Wheatley, Kevin Arthur (1937–1965)

by Anthony Staunton

Kevin Arthur Wheatley (1937-1965), by Michael Barry Shannon, 1965
Australian War Memorial,
SHA/65/0092A/VN

Kevin Arthur Wheatley, was born on 13 March 1937 at Surry Hills, Sydney, third child of Raymond George Wheatley, labourer, and his wife Ivy Sarah Ann, née Newman, both born in Sydney. Educated at Maroubra Junction Junior Technical School, Kevin worked as a milk carter, food sterilizer, machine operator and brick burner. At the registrar-general's office, Sydney, on 20 July 1954 he married a 14-year-old milk-bar assistant Edna Aileen Davis, who used her stepfather's surname, Gimson.

On 12 June 1956 Wheatley enlisted in the Australian Regular Army. Following recruit training he joined the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in September 1956 and transferred to the 3rd Battalion in March 1957. He served in the Malayan Emergency from September that year to July 1959, before transferring in August to the 2nd Battalion and in June 1961 to the 1st Battalion. In January 1964 he was promoted sergeant and in August, temporary warrant officer, class two. Short and stocky, he was a highly respected and well-liked non-commissioned officer with a reputation as a rough, wild man who was a good soldier. He was known as 'Dasher' for his Rugby Union

football prowess. Arriving in the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) in March 1965, Wheatley joined the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam. He distinguished himself on 28 May by risking heavy fire to rescue a 3-year-old girl. On 18

August, when South Vietnamese troops ceased advancing during an assault, he took the lead and inspired them to continue charging up a hill. His men routed some fifty People's Liberation Armed Forces (Viet Cong) soldiers.

Wheatley and another Australian, Warrant Officer R. J. Swanton, were on a search and destroy mission in the Tra Bong valley, Quang Ngai province, with a platoon of the Civil Irregular Defence Group on 13 November 1965 when it was attacked by the Viet Cong. The platoon broke in the face of heavy fire and began to scatter. Swanton was shot in the chest. Although told that Swanton was dying, Wheatley refused to leave him. Under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire, he half-dragged and half-carried Swanton out of open rice paddies into the comparative safety of nearby jungle. He refused a second request to withdraw, pulled the pins from his two grenades and waited with his



motionless colleague while the enemy approached. Two grenade explosions were heard, followed by several bursts of fire. Wheatley and Swanton were found at first light next morning, dead from gunshot wounds. The Australian policy at the time was to bury war dead overseas but

Wheatley's body was returned to Australia after funds were raised privately. Survived by his wife, and their son and three daughters, he was buried with full military honours in Pine Grove cemetery, Eastern Creek, Sydney. A public outcry resulted in the government announcing on 21 January 1966 that the remains of service personnel who died overseas would in future be returned to Australia at public expense if their families desired.

For refusing to abandon a wounded comrade in the face of overwhelming odds Wheatley was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. He had also been awarded the United States of America's Silver Star. The Republic of Vietnam had appointed him a knight of its National Order and awarded him its Military Merit Medal and Cross of Gallantry with Palm. In 1993 Wheatley's V.C. and other medals were presented to the Australian War Memorial, Canberra.

The Rising Sun badge new stamp series

Recently we saw the launch of a new postal stamp series depicting the Australian Army's iconic military symbol, the Rising Sun badge, which is sure to whet the appetite of philatelists.

Launched by Victoria Cross recipient, Keith Payne, the stamp series charts the development and changes in the Rising Sun badge design over the years.

Proudly worn by soldiers of the 1st and 2nd Australian Imperial Force in both World Wars, the Rising Sun badge has become an integral part of the digger tradition. The distinctive

shape of the badge, worn on the upturned side of the slouch hat, is commonly identified with the spirit of ANZAC.

The release of the Rising Sun badge stamp series is a timely reminder for the Australian public of the service and sacrifice of the ANZACs, and today's soldiers who carry on the ANZAC spirit.

Since the badge was first produced, its design has gone through seven iterations, five of which are shown in the stamp issue: the first, third, fifth, sixth and seventh patterns. Today, Australian Army soldiers wear the seventh pattern Rising Sun badge.



It is during May and June of the year that we recall the anniversary of four of the major battles in the second World War that resulted in an enormous loss of life and physical and mental injuries, however probably the most significant and satisfying historic event in this period was the surrender of Germany.

Battle of France, 10 May–25 June 1940: 469,000 casualties

The Battle of France marked the end of the so-called Phoney War, that strange, uncertain period of the Second World War which saw neither side commit to serious military action and witnessed the German forces invade France and the Low Countries.

Despite similar numbers in their respective forces, the Germans managed to overcome the French, bolstered by the British Expeditionary Force and Belgian and Dutch divisions.

This was mainly due to superior German training and communication, and the Allies' wrongly held belief that the Maginot Line, the heavily fortified French border with Germany would firstly hold; and secondly, that the Germans would concentrate their efforts on it.

In the event, the Germans attacked through Belgium and Holland, thereby rendering the line an expensive mistake.

The Germans devastated the inexperienced French (and other Allied) troops and took the entire country soon after.



advance as much as 25 miles a day before stopping just 35 miles east of the German capital.

The Red Army then proceeded to attack the city from the east and south, while a third group devastated German defences from the north.

The relentless Soviet army marched ever onwards, causing widespread panic in the already depleted German defences (bolstered by inexperienced Hitler youth members) and, following fierce and bloody fighting, took the Reichstag on the 30th of April 1945, more or less signalling the conclusion of the war.

Battle of Monte Cassino, 17 January–18 May 1944: 185,000 casualties

Waged between the Allies and the joint German and Italian troops in the early

part of 1944, the Battle of Monte Cassino was one of the hardest fought battles of the Second World War. The main objective for the Allied forces fighting their way up from Southern Italy was to break through the Germans' Gustav Line a series of military fortifications running across Italy and gain control of Rome. Named after the 1,400-year-old monastery of Monte Cassino that stood at the centre of the German defensive line (and which was controversially destroyed by American bombers during the battle), the fighting was made up of four smaller battles that took place in January, February, March and May, respectively. The eventual capture of Rome came at a high price, with at least 125,000 casualties on all sides — and as many as 185,000 by some estimates



Second Battle of Kharkov, 12 May–28 May 1942: 300,000 casualties.

Kharkov was a strategically important city in the Ukraine that had seen fierce fighting in the autumn of 1941, when the Germans captured it. The following year the Red Army launched a major offensive to retake the prized city. Unfortunately for the Red Army, the Germans were still very much active in the area and were able to call upon forces to launch a strong defence and counter-offensive. The Germans encircled the three Soviet armies and effectively destroyed them. In a devastatingly effective operation, the Germans wiped out nearly 280,000 Russian men and 650 tanks. A disaster for the Soviets, the Second Battle of Kharkov pressed home the importance of staying on the defensive to the Red Army and inflated the Germans' confidence which many saw as playing a part in their downfall on the Eastern Front.



Battle of Berlin, 16 April–2 May 1945: 1,298,745 casualties

The last major offensive of the war in Europe, the Battle of Berlin saw the fall of the German Army, the suicide of Hitler and the beginning of the end of the Second World War.

The inexorable push of the Soviet army westwards saw them



The Battle is Won, Germany Surrenders

General Alfred Jodl, Chief of the Operations Staff in the German High Command, signs the document of unconditional German surrender at General Eisenhower's Headquarters in Reims, France, May 7, 1945.

On Jodl's left is Admiral Von Friedeburg of the German Navy, and on his right is Major Wilhelm Oxenius of the German General Staff.

Below: German Field Marshall Wilhelm Keitel signs a surrender document at Soviet headquarters in Berlin, May 9, 1945.

The Soviets had insisted that a second ceremonial signing take place in Soviet-occupied Berlin



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