



## From the President's Chair.

**G'day fellow members,** Welcome to the May edition of the National Newsletter. Since our February Newsletter, we have lost another member who was on the sick list; he is John Sheehan. John passed away on the 22nd February; John served in the Bty, from 1952 to 1954 and 1958. Ron Hart is still on the sick list and he is in the Wesley, Brisbane, he would love to have people come and visit him. Ray Alcorn and I went and paid him a visit on the 23rd April.

I received an email from Reg Anderson's daughter, Linda Noble, telling me that her mother, Sylvia had passed away on ANZAC Day; it was a great shock to me to hear this news as Sylvia was a lovely and caring woman. Reg, from the members and committee of the 'A' Field Battery Association, please accept our deepest sympathy.

Great news, we only have five unpaid members for 14/15, if you are one of the five, please pay before the 30th June. New financial year begins on the 1st July, we have 30 members who have paid for 15/16 and it would be great not to have to write letters to members who have not paid their subs. I am very pleased to say that we have got twenty new members to the Assn, three of them are Life Members, there are a few more that are going to join (I hope), I ran out of application forms.

The visit to the Bty on the afternoon of the 24th April was a great success. We all met at the Gaythorne RSL club and we were bussed into Enoggera barracks by Bty drivers. (Incidentally, all the drivers are now back in Artillery, this warms the cockles of my heart, also my old and close friend who came and had ANZAC Day with us, Lance (Pud) Gilkinson, Lance and I were drivers in the Bty in the fifties and early sixties), this overcame the problem of having to get individual passes to get into the camp.

The Bty provided a sausage sizzle for a gold coin donation. After lunch the Bty put on a demonstration of bringing a M777A1 gun into action, very different to the 25pr, L5 and M2A2 guns, also they showed us the Command Post in a Bushmaster vehicle.



After the demonstrations we all retreated to the Gunners Club. One of our new members has a micro-brewery and he donated some slides of beer to the club to sell and boost their coffers, incidentally, it was quite a nice drop.

Saint brought along items for sale and the Bty had some items for sale.

It is pleasing to note that the BC is a Life Subscriber and one Bdr and a Gnr are yearly subscribers. The only disappointment was the Henry Green room, it is definitely not up to the standard that it was at Holsworthy, I know that

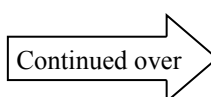
lack of space has been a problem and a lot of items are still stored but there are three major items missing, the L5 and the two 4.2in mortars. The L5 that is in the Henry Green room is the Assn's howitzer.

For the people who live in Brisbane, if you have the spare time and can arrange to get into Enoggera, go out and give them a hand to get the Bty museum back up to the standard that Cameron Stephenson and Frank Berrier had it. I would like to thank the CO of 1 Regt, Lt Col. Nicholas Foxall and the Bty Comd 'A' Bty, Maj. Matthew Hodda, for inviting us out and hosting us for the great afternoon. Incidentally, Nick Foxall is an ex 'A' Bty member and maybe he will join the Assn.

The Association was invited out to 1 Regt for their ANZAC Day Dawn Service at their new memorial and it is very impressive, especially the two 25prs. The service was memorable and I laid a wreath on behalf of our Assn, for our fallen comrades. The Assn was represented by about twelve members, including, my eldest son, Daryl and my daughter in-law Luanne.

The ANZAC Day march was the biggest that I have been involved in, especially as it was the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli and we had the largest contingent since I have been going to Brisbane, swelled by the Late 80's, early 90's members, it was great to see.

Our 25pr was hijacked once again by the RAA Assn, Qld, this has to stop and the gun should be in front of the 'A' Bty Assn. We will be contacting someone about this.



The boat cruise went off without a hitch, this year; we even had to wait for the boat to arrive. My daughter, Leanne and my Grandchildren Kierra, Stephen and their partners and my mate Lance Gilkinson came on the cruise, we sat with Jessie James and his daughter. I think it might be my last, as there are only so many times you can go up and down that part of the Brisbane River. I would like to see another venue for us to meet after the march, as the Pig and Whistle is getting too overcrowded.

You all should know that this year's reunion is at Sawtell on the 11th – 13th September. The venue is the Sawtell RSL Club LTD. The two times we have had our reunion there previously, they have looked after us very well and the township of Sawtell is a lovely place.

### **The Programme and Cost for the Reunion are:**

**Friday 11th: Meet and Greet, 1800hrs for 1830hrs, Sawtell RSL. Cost \$22.00**

**Saturday 12th: Annual General Meeting, 1000 hrs.**

**Sawtell RSL, upstairs, right hand room.**

**Saturday Lunch: own responsibility.**

**Saturday Evening: Semi Formal Dinner, 1800 hrs**

for 1830 hrs, Dining Room, miniature medals to be worn. Cost \$42.00.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup>: Recovery Breakfast, 0800hrs, Dining Room, Cost \$20.00.**

**Bus Trip:** Depart: First Avenue, in front of RSL, 1000hrs. Cost: \$35.00. Tour to be advised in the next newsletter. Lunch to be provided by the Assn.

**Farwell Barbecue:** Sawtell Golf Club: 1830hrs for 1900hrs. Cost \$30.00.

**Cost all Functions: \$154.00.**

It would be lovely if all members made an effort to attend our Reunion and Annual General Meeting this includes our Vietnam and New Members. I would like to extend an invitation to the Battery Commander and all members of 'A' Battery to attend.

Bookings must be in the Secretary's hands by the **31st August**, cheques to be made out to the 'A' Field Battery Association Inc.

That's enough rambling from me for this edition. Semper Paratus Tex

**Ray Alcorn recently visited the Milne Bay battlefield and was greatly impressed by the untrained Australian Militia men of the 61st Battalion. He has sent in this historical remembrance from World War 2**

## **The Battle for Milne Bay**

Milne Bay is on the South East coast of Papua New Guinea. Australian Forces on Milne Bay had a vast coastline to defend against a Japanese invasion, which they knew must come as the Japanese had already landed on Buna and Gona on the 22/23 July 1942. Zero fighters of the Japanese Air Force had commenced sorties around Milne Bay on 4 August 1942.

Japanese Marines began preparations for the assault on Milne Bay and the capture of the operational airstrip, which would give them a base to attack Australia.

On 25 August 1942, 2700 Japanese Marines of the crack 5 Sasebo Special Naval Landing Force landed at Wahuba around 11 miles East of Gili Gili from 3 Japanese Cruisers, 2 minesweepers, 2 tankers and 2 transports in Milne Bay.

The Japanese advanced slowly and met resistance from the Militia forces in the area. They were from the 61st Battalion. They were a small force of untrained men but fought very well against veterans of the Japanese Marines.



**This Japanese Type 95 Ha Go light tank was abandoned during the battle of Milne Bay**

Kittyhawks from 75 and 76 RAAF fighter squadrons coupled with support from a troop of 25 pounder field guns

made the Japanese advance difficult. The Japanese were now at the edge of No.3 airstrip. On 29 August Japanese warships began shelling the airstrip and on the 31 August 1942 the Japanese Marines made 3 assaults against the Australian defenders and were soundly defeated.

After heavy losses the Japanese began to leave Milne Bay but not before they shot all their own wounded and destroyed equipment. The Japanese left Milne Bay on 7 September 1942 and did

not return. This was the first defeat of Japanese Forces in World War 2. They never lost a battle before Milne Bay and after they never won a battle.

The defeat was memorable because it was the first time the Japanese had lost and they had lost against mainly untrained Militia.

The Japanese Marines were all veterans of past actions and were considered the best of the Japanese Armed Forces.

**Thanks for this interesting report from Major M S. Hodda Battery Commander "A" Field Battery**

Tex, Please see below a short script of what has been happening in the Bty this year.

Thank you for continuing to send copies of the association newsletter to the Bty. We enjoyed reading your February issue including the very subtle request for an update from the Bty. This year has already been a hectic one with 'A' Bty scheduled for a large number of activities in support of the community (if you've seen a gun at a fun-run or a rugby game in Brisbane, the odds are it was us) as well as a busy training schedule.

The Battery is currently forming the core of the Emergency Support Force (ESF) for South Queensland, a role we had held for only a few days when Tropical Cyclone Marcia descended through Shoalwater Bay Training Area (SWBTA). Ultimately we were not required although we had made ourselves ready.

One fortunate outcome of manning the ESF was being able to train a few extra gunners on the chain saw. This came in very handy when in March we deployed to SWBTA for Exercise BARCE and Ex Highside in May.

The devastation wrought by TC Marcia was evident everywhere - downed trees, fires and smoke gave the training area the appearance at times of a WW1 battlefield. Fortunately some good work on the chain saw by the gunnies enabled us to stay on mission.

The outgoing Chief of Army paid a visit to the hill and made favourable comments whilst the

gun line enjoyed a high charge direct fire shoot punctuated by torrential rains that occasionally reduced visibility to knife-fighting range.

The attached photo was taken on the last day of live fire and shows the gunline at our final position which we shared with 104 Bty. Despite the rain morale was high!

The large training activities for the year are rapidly approaching and 'A' Bty looks likely to be the centre piece of Offensive Support for both the Brigade Combined Arms Training and Exercise HAMEL due to much of 104 and 105 Batteries being committed elsewhere.

We're also expecting to host most of a Bty of US Marine gunners which should provide a great opportunity to learn from each other. With luck (and funding) this will turn in to a reciprocal visit later in the year.

By the time this goes to print we will have had the pleasure of seeing some of you at our AN-ZAC day function. Thank you for your support and comradeship and best wishes for the rest of the year.

Respectfully, Matt Hodda

M S HODDA Major

Battery Commander, 'A' Battery

1st Regiment, RAA

**The gunline at our final position which we shared with 104 Bty.**



## Anzac Day in Sydney 2015

### Report from our NSW man Robert ( Dodger ) Noonan

The day started out as nicely as any I have seen. Sunshine, no wind or rain, not too hot , not too cold, and it stayed that way for most of the day. There was one of the largest number of spectators attending this year as there has ever been, probably because of the amount of publicity given to the centenary of Anzac year and the clement weather. Marchers were also out in larger numbers. One of the reasons for this is that Don Green had organised a dinner for those National Servicemen from the same intake as him and who were posted to A Bty in Malaysia in 1966. Don has written the following paragraph on the dinner.

This year the Nashos who served with the battery in Malaya during 1966/67 all turn 70 in the first 6 months of this year and also celebrate 50 years since being conscripted. Of the original 29 we had 10 who came to Sydney for the march and a dinner in the evening. Of the 29, 6 are known to be deceased, the whereabouts of 3 are unknown and we had 4 apologies, so a turnout of 10 was a great result with some coming from country NSW, Qld and Vic to join the Sydney regulars. There were 8 wives who joined in the celebrations and dinner in the evening which was great. I think everyone enjoyed their stay of several days in Sydney and hopefully this may set the pattern for future Anzac days. Attendees were Don Spearpoint, Greg Kittelty, Ian Leven, Mike Pitman, Terry "Tom" Dooley, Wayne Brooking, Bob McVey, Bruce Campbell, Tony "Seaweed" McDonald and Don Green. Apologies were from Ron Allen, Terry Easton, John Hoban and Bob "Lofty" Incurvill. The ABC also gave us a mention in their TV broadcast commentary.

There were quite a few of the younger generation of A Bty marchers as well, good to see them turn out. Another reunion for 102 Bty was also being held in Sydney this year, and many of their number had previously served in Malaysia



Photo of the 10 Nasho's plus one (Mal Smith) before the Sydney march



Pictures taken by Greg and Margaret Kittelty and Terry Dooley's daughters

with A Bty. I caught up with Max Franklin, John Harms, Lawry Bird, and many more. A Bty as usual took pride of place at the head of the RAA column, being the senior battery. Our banner was again carried by cadets from the 233 St. George Area cadet Unit. They were cadets Raphael Daz and Gabrielle Covic. who did a wonderful job of leading our motley bunch old reprobates.

Things took a slight downturn when it came to the refreshments at the end of the march. Our usual watering hole, the Coronation Hotel, has changed hands during the course of the year and the upstairs venue is no longer available for our get-together. The downstairs bar has also been remodelled to accommodate some poker machines and a smoking room, which restricted the space available for the less mobile among us to have a bit of a sit-down. A quick recce was done by Vince Greck's wife Mel, and the Sydney Bowlers Club in York Street seems like the most promising spot for a new permanent after-march watering hole. More on this subject later in the year.

Around 4.30 the weather decided we had had enough of the good stuff and took a turn for the worse. Luckily most of us had by then either wended our way home or found a nice dry bar to prop up. It was the worst rain and hail storm for many a year and made the news all round the

country by wrecking several factory roofs and uprooting many trees. However it was very shortlived and didn't dampen our spirits one bit. Looking forward to next year.

Sent by Bruce Stark via David Troedel one of our 101 Battery friends, photos of 18 pounders from the Canberra Times.



These three photos of the Anzac day march in Brisbane taken by Tex's daughter Leanne show how the numbers have been increased by the contingent of over twenty A Battery members from the late eighties and early nineties



After the Dawn Service at Enoggera Barracks and lining up prior to the Brisbane march



**Our Annual General Meeting and Reunion is going to be at Sawtell RSL, NSW.**

Hoping for a big response, especially from our Vietnam boys and partners.

The Reunion will be from Friday 11th until the evening of Sunday 13th September 2015.

**The Programme and Cost for the Reunion are:**

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**Sawtell RSL. Cost \$22.00**

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**Cost all Functions: \$154.00.**

**Bookings must be in the Secretary's hands by the 31st August, cheques to be made out to the 'A' Field Battery Association Inc.**

**Alternatively you can pay into Heritage Bank A/C no. 8732884 S21 BSB code 638-070. Make sure you identify deposit with your name.**

## Places to Stay.

### The Sawtell Hotel.

51-55 First Avenue, Sawtell, NSW, 2452.

Phone: 02 6653 1213.

Web. Sawtellhotel.com



### Coasters Motel & Apartments.

77 First Avenue, Sawtell, NSW, 2452.

Phone: 02 6653 1541.

Email. reception@coastersmotel.com.au

Web. www.coastersmotel.com.au



### Sawtell Motor Inn.

57 Boronia Street, Sawtell, NSW, 2452

Phone: 02 6658 9872

Email. info@sawtellmotorinn.com.au

Web. www.sawtellmotorinn.com.au



**Sawtell RSL Club** is a bright and colourful meeting place for Members and their guests. open daily from 10 am Facilities include a vast variety of Dining alternatives, Oasis Bistro open every day for lunch (noon to 2pm)& dinner (6.30 to 8.30pm). Indoor and Outdoor lounge areas and a Family friendly atmosphere.



**Sawtell is a short distance from the Pacific Highway and about 5kms south of Coffs Harbour.**

## We will be holding our 2016 Reunion in Canberra.

Could our Canberra members check out some sites and let Tex know?

Planning to go to the War Memorial and Treloar Centre, for starters.

The Australian War Memorial is Australia's national memorial to the members of its armed forces and supporting organisations who have died or participated in the wars of the Commonwealth of Australia. The memorial includes an extensive national military museum.



**The Commemoration Court**

## A Letter from Rod Althaus

Hi Tex,

Well, you well know that the best of plans can go pear shaped and that's what happened to us on Anzac Day. We had arranged for a golf buggy to take us through the march and when we arrived at the marshalling area we found that in fact, we had been allocated to A Bty's marshalling area as requested.

Come the time to move off, we were bundled together with other buggies, but instead of going to A Bty, the marshal directed us to somewhere near the beginning of the procession! There was no time or space to do an about turn, so off we went to see the wonderful public response all along the route with a mix of all sorts of ex-servicemen.

We were then driven back to the main assembly area and so were able to catch up with the rest of my family, view the rest of the parade, and give you a hoy on your way through – you all did look bright and sparky! So sorry we didn't quite get there even tho we had good intentions.

On another topic, I mentioned on the phone a week or so ago that I saw my grandson being inducted a while back. Here is an article about the enlistment proceedings which you might like to include in the next newsletter.

Hope you and yours are well – I'm slowly getting more mobile and relying less on my walker. Cheers, and keep up the good work of keeping the troops under control!

**Rod**

### A PLEASANT WAY TO JOIN THE ARMY

**Do you remember the day when you joined the Army? There must be a story you could all tell.**

My grandson Daniel had his turn two years ago, and the local recruiters did everything to make the day a pleasant one for the new enlistees and their friends and relatives who chose to be there.

In years gone by, the formalities were conducted in the dreary conference room at the Recruiting Centre in the Brisbane CBD. Not very attractive, with very little warm atmosphere to encourage the new recruits to really look forward to their initial training.

Now, times have changed! These formalities

are now held in the open at the park on Kangaroo Point, with guests seated on the small amphitheatre there.

The recruiting officer conducts the proceedings, and the SO1 Personnel (Lt Col) from Enoggera Barracks presents the Enlistments Certificates to the successful enlistees. These young men and women must have been told that it would be a good idea to dress appropriately, e.g. have a neat haircut, and wear a suit or ladies' equivalent. Guess what – they did!!

After a welcoming speech by the Recruiting Officer, the recruits filed past the SO1 Pers, who individually wished them well, shook their hands and handed each one their enlistment certificate. They then reassembled near the bus which later took them to the airport. Then, three incidents lessened the solemnity a bit, but I think would happen only in Australia. In any case, I reckon they were appropriate.

#### Incident Number 1

After the Colonel had presented a certificate, and given his "words of encouragement" to one lad, he, with a very pleasant smile, said "**Thanks Mate,**" and sauntered off. I guess the instructors at Kapooka would have had a quiet word when he got there.



#### Incident Number 1

Farewells were said, kisses and cuddles administered, tissues disposed of, and the new recruits boarded the bus. After one lad disappeared into the bus, his mother suddenly began to excitedly jump up and down, calling out in a very loud voice - "**I'm free!!! I'm free!!!**"

(I've often wondered what the story was behind that outburst).

#### Incident Number 3

As the bus disappeared round a bend on the way to the airport, a father turned to his wife and said, with some emotion, "**Come on love, we'd better go home and make another one.**"



Life can be interesting when you are a spectator!

## This Month In Australian Military History May

### 1 May 1945 26th Brigade, 9th Division, troops invade Tarakan

General MacArthur instructed Lieutenant General Sir Leslie Morshead, commander of I Corps, to seize and hold Tarakan Island and destroy the enemy forces there. The Netherlands East Indies Government was to be re-established, Tarakan's oil producing capacity was to be conserved and the island's airfields put into use. The operation was codenamed Oboe 1, and the invasion began on 1 May 1945. Within five days the town and airstrip had been secured.



**George "Snowy" Howell**



**Rupert "Mick" Moon**

### 2 May 1945 Soviets take Berlin

The fall of Berlin signaled the end of the Second World War in Europe.

### 3 May 1917 Second attack on Bullecourt

Operations against the Hindenburg line at Bullecourt were aimed at protecting the British flank during operations at Arras. After a disastrous first attempt, a second involving the 2nd Australian Division was made. That attack succeeded, at a cost of about 7,000 allied casualties.

### 4 May 1942 Battle of Coral Sea begins

This was the first naval engagement fought by aircraft alone. Although neither side won a clear victory, the Japanese were forced to attempt to capture Port Moresby in a ground campaign, rather than by sea as they had hoped.

### 5 May 1915 Australians and New Zealanders on Cape Helles

The 2nd Australian Brigade and the New Zealand Brigade were redeployed from Anzac Cove to Cape Helles to assist British and French troops in their attempts to capture the dominating heights known as Achi Baba.



**Alfred Jodl, center, signs the instrument of surrender ending Nazi Germany's involvement in World War II in Rheims on May 7, 1945.**

### 6 May 1917 Corporal G.J. Howell, VC

Corporal G.J. Howell, 1st Battalion, originally of Enfield, NSW, wins the Victoria Cross near Bullecourt.

### 6 May 1969 Warrant Officer 2 R.S. Simpson, VC

Warrant Officer Class 2 R.S. Simpson, Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, originally from Chippendale, NSW, wins the Victoria Cross in Kontum Province, South Vietnam

### 7 May 1945 Germany surrenders

Germany's surrender, signed at the French city of Reims, ended the Second World War in Europe.



**Ray Simpson**

### 8 May 1945 Separate surrender of Germany to the Soviet Union

At the end of the war in Europe, Stalin refused to accept the German surrender, signed at Reims, as valid and demanded another, which took place at 11.30 pm on 8 May. 9 May became the Soviet Victory in Europe day.

### 10 May 1900 Zand River

New South Wales Mounted Rifles in action at Zand River, South Africa.



**Jack Mackey**

### 11 May 1945 Wewak captured

Wewak was captured by the 6th Division in a combined land and amphibious operation. Its fall marked the beginning of the end of the Aitape–Wewak campaign, the last major campaign on mainland New Guinea in the Second World War.

### 12 May 1917 Lieutenant R.V. Moon, VC

Lieutenant R.V. Moon, 58th Battalion, of Bacchus Marsh, Victoria, wins the Victoria Cross at Bullecourt.

### 12 May 1945 Corporal J.B. Mackey, VC

Corporal J.B. Mackey, 2/3rd Pioneer Battalion, originally from Leichhardt, Sydney, wins the Victoria Cross on Tarakan. It was a posthumous award.

### 13 May 1943 Axis forces surrender in Tunisia

The surrender of Axis forces in Tunisia meant the end of the three-year-long North African campaign.



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**14 May 1956 Sungei Siput, Malaya**

2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, attacks communist terrorists near Sungai Siput, Malaya.

**15 May 1945 Private E. Kenna, VC**

Private E. Kenna, 2/4th Battalion, originally from Hamilton, Victoria, wins the Victoria Cross near Wewak, New Guinea.

**16 May 1901 Lieut. F.W. Bell, VC**

Lieutenant F.W. Bell, 6th West Australian Mounted Infantry, of Perth, Western Australia, wins the Victoria Cross at Brakpan, South Africa.

**18 May 1885 Sudan contingent departs Suakin**

New South Wales troops of the Sudan contingent depart Suakin for Sydney, having spent a little over two months in the Sudan without seeing any serious action.

**19 May 1918 Sergeant W. Ruthven, VC**

Sergeant W. Ruthven, 22nd Battalion, originally from Collingwood, Victoria, wins the Victoria Cross at Ville-sur-Ancre, France.

**20 May 1915 L/Corp A. Jacka, VC**

Lance Corporal A. Jacka, 14th Battalion, originally of Winchelsea, Victoria, wins the Victoria Cross at Courtney's Post, Gallipoli. Jacka's was the first VC to be awarded to an Australian in the First World War. He also went on to win the Military Cross and Bar.

**21 May 1968 HMAS Sydney leaves Brisbane**

HMAS Sydney leaves Brisbane on its tenth voyage to Vietnam with 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, embarked.

**22 May 1940 Decision to form 8th Division made**

Most of the 8th Division was lost in the fall of Singapore in February 1942. The Division never took the field as a complete Division because the battalions of the 23rd Brigade were sent to Ambon, Timor and Rabaul.

**23 May 1942 Kanga Force moved to Wau, New Guinea**

Kanga Force was formed in April 1942 to reinforce the New Guinea



**Edward "Ted" Kenna**



**Bill Ruthven**



**Keith Payne**

Volunteer Rifles. Kanga force was primarily involved in reconnaissance work, but did stage some raids against Japanese positions in the Wau-Bulolo area.

**24 May 1969 Warrant Officer Class 2 K. Payne, VC**

Warrant Officer Class 2 K. Payne, Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, originally from Ingham, Queensland, wins the Victoria Cross in Kontum Province.

**26 May 1968 Fire Support Base Balmoral attacked**

Fire Support Base Balmoral, just north of FSB Coral, was attacked by a North Vietnamese Army battalion. Three soldiers from 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, were killed and 14 wounded. Six enemy bodies were found.



**Frederick Bell**

**27 May 1965 HMAS Sydney's first voyage to Vietnam**

HMAS Sydney departs on first voyage to Vietnam with 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, embarked.

**28 May 1902 Boer War ends**

Boers surrender, ending the Boer War. Over 16,000 Australians served in South Africa, nearly of whom 600 died.

**29 May 1941 HMAS Perth damaged**

HMAS Perth was damaged during the evacuation of Allied troops from Crete. Over 16,000 troops were successfully evacuated from the island over four successive nights.

**30 May 1942 RAAF participates in first 1,000-bomber raid**

First 1,000-bomber raid launched by the RAF. The target was Cologne, Germany. To make up the numbers crews were taken from operational training units to participate in the raid.



**Albert Jacka**

**31 May 1942 Japanese midget submarines raid Sydney Harbour**

Of the three Japanese submarines that attacked Sydney Harbour, two were destroyed or disabled during the raid; the

third disappeared and was located off Sydney's northern beaches by a group of amateur divers in November 2006. Little material damage was caused by the attack, but 21 sailors were killed when the depot ship HMAS Kuttabul was torpedoed



## Many backgrounds - one goal

GREG SHANNON 20 Apr, 2015

With the releasing of records and the increased interest in our military history that has occurred in the past few years, more and more insights can be gained into those tumultuous years when Australians of all walks of life answered the call to arms in great numbers.

During WW1, approximately 420,000 Australians volunteered to serve in the military, in the Australian Imperial Force and the Royal Australian navy.

More than 330,000 of them were sent overseas to fight and a staggering 60,000 were to be killed with 137,000 wounded. These volunteers reflected the social and cultural backgrounds of our society at the time. Predominantly Western European in origin, descendants of the early settlers, convicts, or recent migrants, some were also diggers of Eastern European, Asian and of course Indigenous heritage.

It is known that close to 1000 members of the Australian Imperial Force were of Chinese ancestry, and one, Billy Sing was the subject of an earlier column, while the most decorated Chinese-Australian soldier of the war was Caleb Shang who lived much of his life in Cairns.

But what about our Indigenous soldiers? Their stories are now being told, but for too long it seems we didn't know enough about their efforts.

Recently the NQ Toyota Cowboys co-captain, Johnathan Thurston highlighted the need to remember the feats of Indigenous soldiers and as records become more available, this must happen.

So who were these men who proudly wore the Australian uniform in war time and found equality in the military that for many, sadly eluded them in civilian life in those times? It is estimated that between 500-800 Indigenous Australians answered the call to arms during World War I. Two Indigenous diggers from this number who can be used as examples of the roles Indigenous Australians played in World War I are William Reginald Rawlings and Frank Fisher. Just two who were to leave a lasting legacy for our nation.

William (Bill) Reginald Rawlings came from country Victoria from where he joined up in March 1916. A 25 year old horse breaker he opted to join the infantry and ended up in the Victorian 29th Battalion in France.

By February 1916 the enlistment rate in Australia was very high following the Gallipoli campaign when the Australian Imperial force had to be reinforced and in fact doubled in size. Many thousands of volunteers rushed to join, becoming known as "The fair dinkum's" because by then the grim reality of war was well known and the chances of surviving unscathed were slim.



**Reg Saunders was one of Bill Rawlings nephews who served in World War II, as a sergeant with fellow members of the 2/7th Battalion. Reg would later become the first Indigenous Australian to be commissioned an officer in the field in 1944**

Bill Rawlings was a "fair dinkum" and he proved to be a courageous, resourceful soldier. In July 1918 he was awarded the Military Medal for bravery and his citation read in part "his irresistible dash and courage set a wonderful example to the remainder of the team". A few weeks later, Bill was killed by shell fire. One of his fellow diggers was reported to recall in later years "The AIF judged a man not by his colour, but by his worth".

Bill Rawlings legacy was to live on though, through his nephews, Reg and Harry Saunders. Reg, born in 1920, was to become the first Indigenous Australian soldier to be commissioned in the field as an officer during World War II.

Both Reg, and his younger brother Harry grew up knowing the stories of their uncle Bill (and their dad, Chris Saunders who also served in World War I) and it was no surprise that both volunteered when the World War II started. Harry was still under 18 when he volunteered and he was to die on the Kokoda track fighting for his country with the 2/14th Battalion. Reg meanwhile had joined the 2/7 Battalion, made famous by the 1970-80's TV show "the Sullivans", and in fact in that TV series, Reg featured as a real character (played for TV by his own son).

Reg Saunders fought through the Middle East, and in Greece with the 2/7 Battalion before returning to Australia and fighting in Papua New Guinea.

He was commissioned in 1944. After the war he returned to civilian life but answered the call to arms again in 1950 for the Korean War and served as a Captain in the Australian army.

The other notable indigenous Australian Soldier in World War I who was to leave a great legacy was Frank Fisher. Frank was one of the many Indigenous volunteers who joined the Queensland 11th Light horse in 1917. He lived in Townsville for a while where his son Frank junior was born in 1905. Frank senior was 38 when he volunteered, and he served with distinction in the Middle East with the Light Horse. His legacy lived on in sporting circles as his son Frank jnr became a superb Rugby League player in the South Burnett region, and was named in the Indigenous team of the century in 2008.

Frank junior was to become the grandfather of a champion athlete named Cathy Freeman.

How proud old Frank senior would have been, the World War I veteran to see one of his descendants representing Australia as Cathy did on the track!

As we celebrate 100 years since the original ANZAC day, the stories of all Australians who served our country from the many ancestral and cultural backgrounds should be told and honoured. Their stories could fill many books.

**Lest We Forget**



**Cathy Freeman**



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,  
We will remember them.  
*Lest we forget.*



**KEN. AGNEW**  
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**TOM. BANFIELD**  
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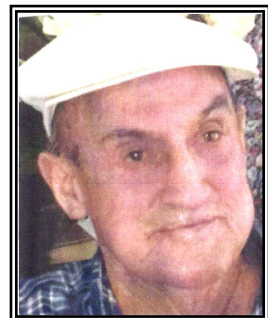
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**ALAN. SINGH**  
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**R. F. SMITH**  
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**JOHN. WHITELAW. AO,CBE**  
**BERNARD. (PLONKY) WINE**  
**GUS. WOOLFE**  
**JOHN. WORBOYS**



## **John Francis SHEEHAN**

22-05-1933 - 22-02-2015

John's funeral was held at Mt Gravatt  
Crematorium Chapel 2nd. March 2015.  
All of "A" Battery members convey their  
deepest sympathy to his family



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