

1871

A Field Battery Association, Inc.

## National Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2016

2016

**From the President's Chair.**

G'day everyone, Firstly, I would like to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year, and now I will get onto the sad news.

We have lost several of our members since the last newsletter and we have some members on the sick list.

The members we have lost are Leslie Owen (Squizzy) Taylor, Brig (Retd) Donald David Weir CBE and Norman Leslie Mills.

Squizzy Taylor served with the Battery from 1956 until 1960 and was a member of B Troop, including on active service during the Malayan Emergency. Squizzy was burnt to death on the 9th January in the horrific bushfires that Western Australia had. Squizzy lived in Yarloop, which was wiped off the map. Being an old B Troop driver, I knew Leslie very well. He retired from the Army as an S/Sgt.

Brigadier Don Weir served in the Battery twice, 1948 and as the Battery Commander 1960- 61. I was the Q Store, L/Bdr driver when Don was the BC. When I was the RQMS of 12 Field Regiment, second tour, Don was the Brigade Second in Command. Don Weir was one of the best officers that I have met; he ranks with men like Jack Kelly and Murry Forbes. Don Passed away at Erina on the 10th February, and as you can see he was awarded the Commander of the British Empire.

Norman Leslie Mills served with the Battery from 1969 until late 1970's, I think. I have had a lot of trouble finding out about Normie's service with the Bty, I have tried to ring Yvonne for the last two days but her phone is always engaged. Normie was the transport Sgt of the Bty in Vietnam and when we came home he was promoted to S/Sgt and was the BQMS. I was a good friend of Normie and at one stage we were contemplating taking our discharge and buying a prawn trawler at Yeppoon. Normie was not a member of the Association, so his name does not go on the Honours Roll, he will be sadly missed.

We have several people on the sick list; and they are Ron Hart, still in hospital, the Nambour, Selangor private hospital, give him a ring on 07 5459 7444. Harry Cook has not been well so give him a ring and see how he is, phone 03 9478 2340. Our Auditor, David (Banger) Harris has had a stroke, give Anne a ring and see how he is doing, Ph. 039439 6368. Allan (Bruno) Sneddon is in an aged care facility, it is, Bayside Aged Care, room 11, 136 Marconi Road, Bonnells Bay, NSW, 2264, if you are in the vicinity, go and pay him a visit, he would love to see you, Bruno has had Parkinson's disease for the last twenty years and is still going strong, just had his 88 birthday, June had to have a spinal operation and could not look after him. Ian Leven has not been well, give him a call on 02 6686 3488 and brighten his day.

In 2017 there is to be another Gunner Dinner and Happy Hour. It is to be held at the same venue, The Events Centre, Caloundra. I will inform you all about this event when I have details. I consider the last one in 2014 as the best event I have ever been to, also our AGM will coincide with this event.

That is enough rambling from me at this time, until next edition, Tex

Harry Cook has spent some time in Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital, apparently with the continuing leg problems. If you would like to send a Get Well card his home address is:

**6 Mattea Court Reservoir Victoria, 3073.**

Ivy Cook will pass them on.

## Take cover, it's just friendly fire; The night Manly bombed Bondi

January 15, 2016 12:58pm John Morcombe  
Manly Daily

THERE'S always been a friendly rivalry between Manly and Bondi, but residents of the latter in 1947 might have been forgiven for wondering about the meaning of "friendliness" when fragments of shells fired from the School of Artillery at North Head crashed through the roofs of several Bondi flats and houses.

One shell fragment grazed the back of a man's head after it crashed through his roof and could have killed him.

The "shells" turned out to be fragments of star-shells, or parachute shells, that were fired into the night sky from North Head on November 16, 1947, to mark the beginning of an army recruitment campaign.

Initially the army denied it was responsible, with a spokesman saying that all the shells had been fired "well and truly out to sea" and should have been completely safe.

He said that the most the more than 100 shells that the army fired that night would do would be to illuminate the beaches at Bondi and Manly, as intended, and that the shells were fired by regular army personnel with long experience in that operation.

But the army was quickly forced to admit responsibility after officers inspected the shell fragments and realised the homes that had been struck were in a straight line pointing directly at North Head.

From then on, "incorrect settings or faulty fuses" on the shells were blamed for the "friendly fire".

One of the houses hit by a shell fragment was that of Alfred Turner, whose home in Brighton Blvd, Bondi, was struck by a piece of metal 12cm wide that punched a hole through tiles, roofing and the ceiling before hitting his son. "We were sitting at the back of our home playing cards when the flares began to shoot across the sky," Mr Turner told a reporter. "My son, Arthur, got up and said: 'There's one of the flares.'

"A moment later there was a crash. Mr son put his hand to his head as if stunned.

"The air was full of plaster. There was a gaping hole in the roof and the metal cylinder lay on the floor.

"If it had fallen an inch to one side, it would have killed my son."

Rose Palmer had just returned to her home in Military Rd when it was struck by a shell fragment. "I was just unlocking the garage door when there was a crash like a thunderbolt," she said. "Tiles and wreckage

from the room came crashing down about me. I tripped over the remains of a window box filled with flowers. It was too dark to see what the damage was."

The third home struck by a shell fragment belonged to Keith Downey and his wife in Military Rd, adjacent to Miss Palmer's.

The couple had been at the beach but ran home when neighbours told them their house had been damaged. "We hurried home and found tiles from our roof lying in the front garden," he said. "My neighbour, Miss Palmer, handed me a half cylinder of metal which measured

five inches by two inches and a half."

In nearby Hastings Pde, Norm Charlton, his wife and a friend, Philip Quayle, were sitting in the Charltons' home when a shell fragment crashed through the roof of their dining room, narrowly missing Mr Quayle.

"There were crashes over the ceiling as the tiles fell," he said. "The shell left a gaping hole in the ceiling, struck the wall and then wrecked a chair. "We could hardly see each other for the cloud of plaster which filled the air and coated the floor." Smaller fragments of steel fell on other homes in the area.

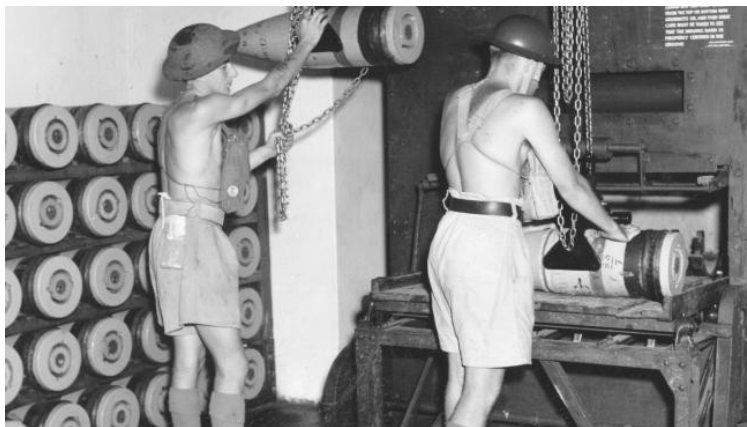
The police visited

the damaged homes and took possession of the steel fragments.

The following night, the Minister for the Army, Cyril Chambers, said adequate compensation for the damage would be paid by the army and that a military court of inquiry at the North Head School of Artillery would examine the matter.



**One of the 9.2-inch guns at North Head being fired**



**Gunners loading 9.2-inch shells into a hoist that took them up to the lower gun floor at the North Head Battery.**

Courtesy Australian War Memorial

## Rich 300 years of Artillery history

ON Wednesday, a historic event took place at the cafe of a hotel in Kuala Lumpur. A baton bearing greetings from the British Royal Artillery to the Queen, who is its Captain General, arrived here on its global circumnavigation.

The baton's journey started in 2015 and it has gone through Europe and India. It is now on its way through South-East Asia and Australasia. It is expected to arrive back in Britain and handed to the Queen on May 26.

The Royal Malaysian Artillery was born out of the Royal Artillery upon independence in 1957.

Eighty-nine pioneers crossed the causeway from Belakang Mati, Singapore and formed the First Field Battery Federation Artillery in Kajang. They also fired the ceremonial gun salute from the Victoria Institution field on independence day.

Such is the richness of our history and heritage, and this event rekindled the everlasting bond between Britain and Malaysia. A team of mountain cyclists carried out

mission "Peninsular pedal", where men from the 43 Battery (Lloyd's Company), 47th Regiment RA, did cycling stints around Kuala Lumpur and Selangor as part of the challenge of Ubique 300 (reference to the Artillery motto "Everywhere" and 300 years in existence).

The local host led by Lt Robbie Lee Knowles RA, was from the Ex-Artillery Association of Malaysia. Its patron, Lt Gen Datuk Jaffar Mohamed (Rtd), who is also the most senior



artillery officer, received the baton and offered the best wishes from thousands of Malaysian gunners.

The ceremony was witnessed by a small group of Malaysian senior artillery generals, officers and the association committee, together with the Defence Attache of the British High Commission, Col Stephen Hall. The baton is now heading for Singapore.

MAJ A. R. RAMACHANDRAN (RTD) Seremban

## Brisbane Youth Detention Centre offenders to refurbish a World War II artillery gun

February 4, 2016

Young offenders in the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre will join forces with Ipswich Railway RSL Sub Branch and TAFE Queensland Skills Tech to refurbish a World War II artillery gun.

The 25-pounder has stood at the front of the Ipswich Railway Sub Branch for many years, and once refurbished is to be given a new home in Ipswich in time for Anzac Day.

Partners in the project, led by East Coast Apprenticeships (ECA), include the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, 1st Regiment, Royal Australian -Artillery from Enoggera, TAFE Queensland SkillsTech and Ipswich City Council.

"This project provides a wonderful opportunity for young offenders to give something back to their community, and learn some valuable trade skills in the process," said ECA CEO and project manager Alan Sparks. "It's also a chance for them to learn about our proud military history and the sacrifices made by -generations of defence -personnel ..."

Ipswich Railway RSL sub-branch secretary and former Gun Sergeant John Dredge said it was reassuring the historic artillery piece would be repaired.

**Former Battery Commander Kerry Simonds (right) and former gun sergeant John Dredge at the 25-pounder they manned as part of 5/11 Regiment**



**Young offenders in the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre will join forces with Ipswich Railway RSL Sub Branch and TAFE Queensland Skills Tech to refurbish a World War II artillery gun.**





## Australia launched an offensive against emus in the 1930s

When the green light was given for Australian soldiers to launch a military offensive on home soil, it was done so with haste.

Reports had been flocking in that a new enemy was threatening the livelihoods of hardworking West Australians — and something needed to be done fast.

It was 1932 and the country was still recovering from the Great Depression. This new invader left nothing in its wake. Hordes would obliterate everything in their sights.

Australia needed to eradicate this new found enemy. So Defence Minister Sir George Pearce gave the go-ahead to launch a full military operation, now known as the Great Emu Wars.

Yes, that's right, emus. This was the big new threat that was destroying lives. It might sound a bit far-fetched but even today this native bird, which forms part of our coat of arms, still wreaks havoc across Australian farmland. But the great cull of 1932 wasn't a success. It was a complete failure yet it remains etched in our history as an official act of war.

A small group of soldiers from the 7th Heavy Battery Royal Australian Artillery were drafted in to take out the flightless birds. They were put under the command of Major CWP Meredith, whose initial strategy appeared to be to go in Rambo-style. The soldiers were given Lewis machine guns and around 10,000 rounds of ammunition. Surely that would have taken them out apparently not. The team set off on November 1, 1932, for the rich agricultural plains (of the now former settlement) of Campion, about 271km northeast of Perth, to begin the campaign. But when they arrived they discovered it was too late to save some of the farms.

Some farmers had already been driven from their properties, unable to stop the beasts, which had destroyed everything in their paths. These beasts were nothing the soldiers had ever encountered before. They were tall, fast and agile and moved in packs.

Immediately they began firing yet the ferocity of the machine guns were no match for these skilled adversaries, whose numbers were estimated to be around 20,000. It's OK. I laughed at this too. They did really fire machine guns at a bunch of emus and missed.

But wait, there's more. A new tactic had to be devised for the second day — an ambush. About 1000 of them had been reported moving towards a nearby dam. So, the soldiers lay in wait. As daylight broke the first wave appeared and the men opened fire. But despite unloading hundreds of bullets, the soldiers only managed to kill less than a dozen of their feathered foes. According to a report from the The Sunday Herald, which no longer exists, the emus had a six-foot leader who would keep lookout. Yes, lookout, to alert the others when the gun-toting soldiers approached. After nine days, and very little success, the emu offensive was called off much to the despair of struggling farmers but to the amusement to



Australian machine-gunners were drafted in to take on the big new threat, emus



the rest of the country. The Sunday Herald reported years later, in July, 1953, that Major Meredith found the emus almost impossible to defeat. "If we had a military division with the bullet-carrying capacity of these birds it would face any army in the world," he was quoted as saying. "They can face machine guns with the invulnerability of tanks.

They are like Zulus whom even dum-dum bullets could not stop." The paper also quoted another emu-hunter as saying: "There's only one way to kill an emu — shoot him through the back of the head when his mouth is closed, or through the front of his mouth when his mouth is open. That's how hard it is."

Following their withdrawal, there was uproar with the WA farmers claiming the military offensive did have an effect. An article on November 10, 1932 in the now defunct newspaper The Argus, wrote those in the Campion district were "alarmed at the Defence department's decision to recall the machine gun party which had been eradicating the emu pest". "The settlers state that after overcoming preliminary difficulties the gun party had begun to make an impression on the ravaging hordes," the report says.

The decision also became a source of ridicule in parliament with Sir George being labelled "the Minister for the Emu War". The group was recalled and sent back to the sweltering settlement of Campion. It had been revealed the first operation managed to kill 300 birds, but there were still thousands more which wreaked havoc across the farming community. So Major Meredith and his troops opened fire once again killing around 40 on November 13, 1932. By the time December rolled around the team were killing around 100 emus per week.

However the mission eventually came to an end on December 10, 1932. According to reports, Major Meredith claimed they killed 986 emus with 9,860 rounds. He also claimed 2,500 birds had died as a result of the injuries that they had sustained from the offensive. It would take another 20 years before the WA Government would embark on another ambitious project — an emu-proof fence.

Costing 52,000 pounds, the 217kms fence, which is 4ft10 high, was joined to the rabbit fences across the state.

In 1994 the WA government sanctioned a cull in the Mid-West region after complaints from farmers emus were gathering in large numbers along the fences. Conditions in the area were dry, and many of the emus had become trapped and starving. Volunteers were given permission to shoot the birds in a bid to prevent them from suffering.

## **What the Average Anzac Took Into Service with Him...and What He Brought Home**

The experience of service during the First World War gave young men the opportunity for adventure, escape from the boredom of everyday life, a chance to visit the 'Mother' country and a chance to possibly cement a future through reputations earned. Men departed in the tens of thousands, fearful of missing the 'big show' and eager to prove their worth. They ultimately accepted death, as long as it was quick and painless. Men of the first A.I.F. departed their homes carrying small comforts of a life that they knew.

The question of what the average Australian Anzac took with them into service provides a most interesting social insight into the nature of Australian society into the second decade of the 20th Century. What those same men brought back to Australia is equally as unique. Aside from the 'official kit' that was supplied to the members of the AIF, they also carried many personal artifacts.

For the first Australian Anzacs, the Gallipoli Landers, their assault possessions would have been purposely kept to a minimum. Instructed to carry emergency rations and water for twenty-four hours, additional personal items were stowed in kit bags onboard transport ships for delivery later. Rations would have consisted of Bully beef rice, jam, cocoa, tea, some bread and hard tack, or "ANZAC Wafer"; a rock hard biscuit that was often ground to make alternative meals.

The Anzacs carried varying smaller items on their person, often in the breast pockets of their often over-sized uniforms. Smoking paraphernalia such as 'Woodbines' Cigarettes or a bakelite pipes were commonplace overtime, even for original non-smokers. The comfort of tobacco was a small consolation in the trenches and a ready source for barter and trade. Photos of loved ones for those 'quieter' moments of reflection were also often carried in breast pockets for easy access around uniform webbing. Either singularly stowed or within a keepsake notebook, bible or small hold-all, such photos were a direct connection to a distant life. Letters, notes, poetry, postcards, and other memory artifacts such as pocket watches, compasses and lighters were also carried on the person. In recent years, the discovery of the bodies of 250 Australian soldiers in mass graves outside the small village of Fromelles in northern France, has given us greater insight into what the average Australian had on their person.

Some 6,200 artifacts were removed and catalogued during the archaeological dig and recovery of the

bodies for identification. These included usual pieces of military uniform such as buttons, buckles, fabric and even the occasional boot, often with Australian maker's marks.

However, many objects recovered reflected a soldier's daily life a fountain pen, a bible, a French phrase book, and a leather pouch with coins still inside. Ironically, a return rail ticket from Fremantle to Perth in Western Australia was found. The purchaser, then to soon be a soldier, would have intended to use the return section of the fare upon his cessation of service. A number of smoking pipes were also recovered, often in the breast pocket area of the remains discovered.

In military service of the era, smoking was commonplace and for many men it assisted with the monotony of military life and the aromas of No-Man's Land. Often, the curious larrikin nature of the Australian Digger would result in the collection of souvenirs from the battlefield or enemy. John "Barney" Hines, a British-born Australian soldier of World War I, was particularly known for his prowess at collecting souvenirs from German soldiers. The German Pickelhaube or spiked helmet was a prized find and one such example was found in the knapsack of Private Alan James Mather, No. 1983, when his body was recovered from the Messines battlefield in Belgium almost 95 years after he disappeared. He was identified and reinterred in Prowse Point Cemetery in Flanders.

Pistols, particularly German Lugers and Mausers, were prized by the Anzacs, often being reused during trench raids and silent attacks. These souvenirs were brought home after the war. After four long years of campaigning, the Australian Diggers had procured a vast array of souvenirs, personal effects and essential non-official kit.

However, the greatest insight into the personal effects of the Anzacs that may have been brought home to Australia after the war, is to examine the service records of fallen men. Captain Leslie Russell Blake MC, No. 7306, 5th Brigade, Australian Field Artillery, of Hawthorne, Victoria was killed in October 1918. His service file indicates that following his death, three storage items were returned to his family in probate; a tin trunk, a sealed suitcase and one parcel.

In contrast, Lance Corporal Benjamin Lancaster, No. 3814, who enlisted at a similar time to Captain Blake, had his own personal effects returned to his family. The package consisted of one Wallet, 2 Badges and a purse. Despite the hardships of war and throughout the service of the Australian Anzacs during WWI, there remained a willingness of the individual soldier to maintain personal effects.



**A WWI AIF soldier displaying a front view of an Australian 1915 Pattern leather equipped uniform. The pouches, belt and shoulder straps were made of green hide and the side pack and water bottle holder made of canvas**

## BL 5.5 Inch Gun.

In January 1939 a specification was issued for a gun to replace the 6 inch 26 cwt howitzers in use with most medium batteries.

The first units were equipped in UK in the summer of 1941 and in North Africa a year later, 20 guns equipped British and Free French batteries at El Alamein. Subsequently it also equipped Canadian, Australian, South African, Polish and Indian regiments, and after the war, it was also used by New Zealand. In the Second World War the normal organisation was a regiment of 16 guns organised into two batteries.

The 5.5 was retained in service after the war. It was used by the Royal Artillery on operations in Korea, South Arabia and Borneo.

It was probably used by the Indian Army in wars against Pakistan, and was used by the Pakistan Army against India in the mountains of Kashmir during the Kargil War of 1999.

The South African Defence Force used it extensively in the early stages of the South African Border War, including Operation Savannah, calling it the G2. Approximately 72 are still held in reserve by the South African Army.

In British post-war service it also replaced the BL 4.5 inch Medium Field Gun. When 6-gun batteries were introduced in the late 1950s, medium regiments had 18 guns and the third battery in each field regiment was equipped with 5.5 inch guns instead of 25 pounder guns. It remained in UK service with Territorial Army regiments until 1980 and in Australian service until replaced by M198 in about 1984.

The UK replacement for 5.5 inch was the FH-70 155 mm towed howitzer, in service as L121. The last 5.5 rounds were fired in the UK in 1995.

In use, the 5.5 was generally towed by the AEC Matador artillery tractor. From the 1950s in British service, the 5.5 was typically towed by an AEC Militant Mk 1 6x6 truck and subsequently the FV 1103 Leyland Martian 6x6 Medium Artillery Tractor . All 5.5 guns were manufactured in the UK.



### GENERAL PARTICULARS:

**Calibre: 5.5 inches (140 mm)**

**Weight: 5850 kg**

**Shell weight: 36.3 kg (80 lbs) high explosive**

**Rate of fire: 3 rounds per minute**

**Muzzle velocity: 510 metres/second (1673 f/s)**

**Number of charges: 4**



**The truck normally associated with the 5.5 inch gun is the AEC Matador**



**MILLS, Norman Leslie  
(Norm)  
Passed away  
18th January 2016  
Late of Eastwood**

Beloved husband of Yvonne.  
Loving father and father-in-law of Gary & Margarida, Leanne & Mario Millauro. Cherished Pop to 7 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. Will be sadly missed by all his family and friends.

**Aged 78 years  
Forever in our hearts**

## In Memory of Our Departed Comrades

The following page is to pay tribute, as we honour those members of A Field Battery who have passed away but are by no means forgotten.

We remember them as friends and comrades in happy and sad times.

Most of them we knew as young soldiers, in later years developed a close friendship as we grew older

If you know of a departed A Field Battery member who is not listed here, please contact us and we will update the list. Thank you.





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  
LES ASHBY  
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  
REG CLATWORTHY  
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R.M. DUCAT (OAS. Malaya )  
PAT. DALY  
TOM. DAWSON  
JOHN. DOWNES  
BEVAN FILCE  
MAURICE FONTAINE  
GEORGE. FORSYTHE  
MAX. FRANKLIN  
M.K. FUSSELL (KIA, Afghanistan )  
ROBERT J. (BOB) GRAY  
BARRY HANDLEY  
NEIL HARDEN  
MICK. HARKEN  
B.D. HENDERSON (OAS. Malaya )  
REG KELLY  
KEN. KENNEDY

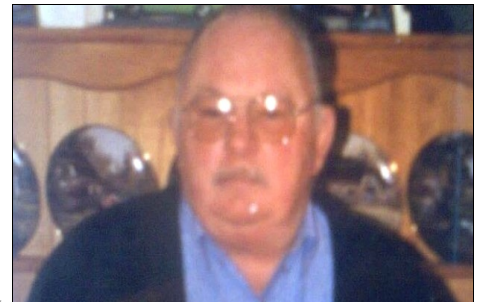
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BILL LIDDELL OAM  
JOHN. MACDONALD  
BARRY MARR  
I.G. MATHERS (KIA. Vietnam )  
IAN. MEIBUSCH A.M  
JACK MILLIGAN  
E.J. (LOFTY) MOORE  
BRIAN. MURTAGH  
R.J. PARKER (OAS. Vietnam )  
R.J. (JIM) PONTING  
DAVE. QUIRK  
PETER. RAINSBURY  
CLIVE. RALFE  
JOHN SALMON  
BRIAN. SCOTT  
PETER. SEDDON  
JOHN SHEEHAN  
ALBERT (ALBY) SHERIDAN  
ALAN. SINGH  
NOEL. SMALL  
R. F. SMITH  
LESLEY (SQUIZZY) TAYLOR  
IAN UHLMANN  
BRIAN. WHISKER  
JOHN. WHITELAW. AO,CBE  
BERNARD. (PLONKY) WINE  
GUS. WOOLFE  
JOHN. WORBOYS

### **LESLEY OWEN ( SQUIZZY ) TAYLOR**

It is with a heavy heart that I must report the loss of Leslie (Squizzy) Taylor. Squizzy was burnt to death in his home at Yarloop, WA, when the town was burnt down in the horrific bush fires.

53252 Leslie Owen (Squizzy) Taylor served in 'A' Field Battery at Georges Heights and was part of the Battery during two year deployment to Malaya, during the Malayan Emergency, Squizzy also served in Vietnam with 1 Field Regiment 1966-67 and 4 Field Regiment 1970-71.

Squizzy retired from the Army after 18 years service as a S/sgt . For the people who knew Squizzy, he was a great friend and he will be sorely missed. Passed away on 7 January 2016 Aged 77



**Les Taylor, 77, was one of two men killed in the Yarloop Western Australia bushfire**

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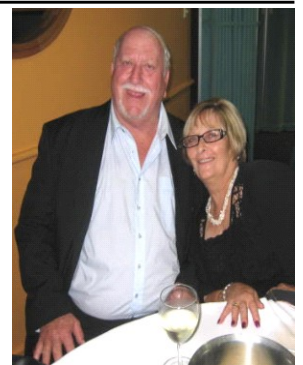
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An amazing collection of photographs and news items covering the 1940s to the present day with A Field Battery. **This website is addictive, with the news, links, notice board and a great selection of music while you browse away.**

One of the best websites available and kept up to date by Kimbo.

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