

2/1 FIELD REGIMENT CLUB

KIBBLES POST

APRIL 2010

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VALE

T Harland	P Shepherd	H Collins
R Mooney	G Ballantine	

Received from the Hon Secretary, John Hynes:

Familiar names and faces, but few in number (is that good or bad?)

T Harland

Trevor Harland was known in the regiment as “Barlo” (Why? He didn’t know, nor did anyone else).

He joined the regiment in the Middle East as a gun-crew member. Cheerful, courageous and hard working, he loved his regiment and served it well. A consistent supporter in post-war years. We miss him.

P Shepherd

Peter joined the regiment in the Middle East as a driver. From time to time as the occasion required he worked hard as a gun crew member.

Uncomplaining and always cheerful he formed part of what I called the “Dorrigo Dons” (a play on their home town and local paper) with Harold Cork, “Scratchy” Jack Lattimer and in latter years Neil “Chunky” Curnow.

In post-war years, Peter, never a giant in stature proved his worth when he lost his sight and never complained – cheerful to the end, enjoying “Kibble’s Post” when read to him by his son.

A good man gone from us.

R Mooney

Ron was one of the two surviving original officers of the regiment (Victor Gibbons is still with us).

Ron was a competent, well liked and respected troop commander with the regiment who performed well in the desert.

Upon our return from the Middle East, he together with other seasoned officers was posted to a field regiment forming part of the armoured division.

We only saw him from time to time but his military career continued to flourish, finally retiring as Lt. Colonel.

Post-war he supported the Regimental Association loyally with enthusiasm. It had been our intention, with the 6th Division Association to have Ron lead the Division on Anzac Day 2010, but sadly that was not to be.

A first rate gunner whose sage advice will be sadly missed.

H Collins

Harry joined his older brother “Charlie” just in time to serve at Buna in the last days with “X” Troop.

Subsequently served with 51 Bty in the Aitape/Wewak Show – a cool, calm and efficient gunner who, in post-war years supported the association warmly.

G Ballantine

George was a keen, hard working and courageous Signaller who served his regiment in a first class manner, particularly in our last campaign.

Another one of those who supported with association with enthusiasm.

J Wheeler

From “Vale” it is most appropriate to refer to Jim Wheeler who “marched out” on 1st December 1942!!

Some months ago I had a lengthy and somewhat disconcerting telephone conversation with a Major Jack Thurgar of Military History Section, Department of Defence, Canberra.

He asked if I knew Jim Wheeler and more particularly could I describe him.

I was to say the least shocked and intrigued by the nature of this enquiry because I knew only too well that Jim Wheeler, whom I only ever called “Mungindi” had been killed in action 67 years ago in a vain attempt to rescue “Alfie” Daniels.

Jack Thurgar explained that after all these years Jim Wheeler’s remains had been found on the Soputa/Sanananda track and positive identification was difficult.

I reported that I knew Jim Wheeler very well, who was known as “Mungindi” (his home town) by members of F Troop 51 Bty.

I described him as approximately 6ft tall, rugged build and with a strong good-looking face, a typical “country boy”. This description seemed to accord with forensic tests and there the matter rested for the moment. Attached are three pages, prepared by Major Thurgar which reports the whole matter in detail.

“Mundingi” was re-interred on 1 December 1942 with full military honours at Bomana Cemetery, Port Moresby (shown on ABC Channel). His sister (the only living relative) attended with her two sons (who paid their own fares).

Some current aspects of this sad but memorable event have left me puzzled. Firstly how was it that “Alfie” Daniels was readily transferred to Bomana Cemetery in 1942 while Jim Wheeler was transferred to that cemetery 67 years later.

The main explanation lies in the absence of identification; there were two Americans and four Australians unidentified and a Lt. Logan from 2/12th Battalion.

All these remains were re-interred simultaneously with “Mungindi” on 1 December 1942.

I was the sig laying line to “Alfies” forward O.P. so had a close physical contact with the scene.

I knew the basic facts of that fateful day but soon after the battle was recalled to help lay line to the forward O.P.’s proceeding to that other bloody scene called Gona.

Enquiries and information obtained indicate that “Mungindi’s” remains were found many years after 1942 by a local native farmer. Those remains, in 1995 presumably went to the relevant “graves” unit and in 1997 were in a box held in the offices of the Australian High Commission at Port Moresby!

I understand that the “facts” outlined above are the subject of an enquiry currently being held.

Rest assured I will follow this matter to the end (mine or the enquirers).

Received from Hon. Treasurer, Ossie Pearce:

Victor Gibbins rang the other day as he had just arrived home at his son's house after being in hospital over the last few months, Sydney Adventist Hospital at Wahroonga and then Lady Davidson. Victor is now 96 years old and has trouble getting about, a war injury to both his ankles, and his son drives him everywhere.

Victor is the last original officer of the Regiment, he was in 2nd Bty. He was one of four in the advance party that sailed in December 1939. When the Regiment returned to Melbourne on 14th August, 1942 he and I were in the rear party at Seymour, waiting for the Guns Truck etc. to be unloaded from the "Westenland". Eventually it happened, loaded on Good Trucks we went around through Tocumwal, arrived at Flemington, NSW (real army!) and our destination changed again, this time to Greta, arrived there in the middle of the night. We had to knock down the Railway Station fence. The next day we were given our due leave, the main part of the Regiment had returned to Greta Camp after their leave. We got 3 days and were recalled.

Many experienced officers from both Infantry and Artillery were transferred to various units to help with the training. NX156 Victor Gibbons became CO 4th Field Regiment.

His current address is now 6 Boronia Avenue, Turramurra, NSW, 2070 and his Phone Number is 02 94493202.

ANZAC DAY 2009

Another day where the March and the Luncheon helped us to remember all those no longer with us and to enjoy the company of those whose presence helps us much to perpetuate the memory of the “regiment”.

Numbers are falling however, not only at the March but at the Luncheon, notwithstanding the female presence of more recent years. Forty-three attended – members 15, wives/widows 4, and visitors 24. Eight of those attending marched, plus two others, who marched only.

The Luncheon was a success, staff and catering first-rate but as the letter attached attests we were less than happy with the bill, particularly the “holiday surcharge”. However, my discussions with the hotel management have since been relatively satisfactory, so much so I have booked for Anzac Day 2010.

The Luncheon will be held at the same location as last year (i.e. The Marque Hotel) at Railway Square (Cnr. George and Quay Streets) from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm. Female relatives and friends are warmly welcomed and charges will be \$30.00 per head for members and widows and for all other visitors, male or female, \$45.00 per head.

As to the 2009 March you will remember I expatiated at some length on this subject in the last issue of “Kibble’s Post”, so further discussion will yield little in the matter of finally determining the nature of future Anzac Day Marches through the city.

However, at the “wind up” meeting of the March Committee it was reported that the 2009 March had 1,000 World War II veterans and 7,000 “descendents”. Exhibited was a photo of a former Spitfire Pilot aged 91 who stood with his Association for four hours before marching off – a fact which requires no further comment.

Before the 2009 Luncheon we had the Annual General Meeting at which the following were elected.

President

Rex Olsson

Vice-President

Alec Moroney

Hon. Secretary

John Hynes

Hon. Treasurer

Ossie Pearce

Committee

Gordon Craig

George Horwood

Ron Hartmann

Attached are various documents relating to our finances and those who keep those finances going.

Attended Function Anzac Day 2009

Members

Tom Kneale

Neville Day (m)

A Summerside (m)

Marshall Currie (m)

Harry Collins

Ron Hartmann

Tony Pazzi

Mick Lardelli

Fred Hodgson (m)

Ossie Pearce

Alec Moroney

Rex Olsson (m)

George Horwood (m)

George Ballantine (m)

J Hynes (m)

(m) Marched

Members unable to attend function

Harry Taylor (m)

Robert Edgar (m)

Wives/Widows

Mrs Betty Moroney

Mrs Pat Weekes

Mrs Marie Ballantine

Mrs Joan Summerside

Total attending function:

Members 15

Wives 4

Visitors 24

Total 43

Donations – July 2008 – June 2009

K Godfree	Mrs E Miles
B Cruickshank	Mrs P Weekes
K Kell	Mrs B Hanson
F Hodson	Mrs P Kitchen
C Thurston	Mrs B Brown
J Stewart	Mrs L Fuller
N Day	
R Hartmann	
A & B Moroney	
G Pazzi	
R Ausburn	
H Oldenberg	
A Noble	
A Summerside	
M Currie	
M Lardelli	
R Hudson	
T Harland	
D Shepherd for P Shepherd	
H Smith	
J Hynes	

Statement of Income and Expenditure
2/1st Field Regt. Club Association
Year ended 30th June 2009

<u>Year 2008</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Year 2009</u>
9361.18	Balance b/forward	9444.38
1548.00	Donations	1325.00
58.00	Interest	27.54
<u>2050.00</u>	Anzac Day Function	<u>1865.00</u>
		12661.92
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
20.00	6 th Division Assn. Fee	0.00
200.00	Donation: Banner Party	200.00
	Anzac Day – Sydney Boys High	
372.80	Kibbles Post – printing, postage	441.70
<u>2980.00</u>	Anzac Day – food, drink etc	<u>3863.00</u>
3572.80		4504.70

Cash Book Summary

Balance (2007)	9444.38
Plus: Income	3217.54
	12661.92
Less: Expenditure	<u>4504.70</u>
Credit	<u>\$8157.22</u>

Bank Statement as at 30/6/09

Cr. \$8357.22 which includes \$200
Unpresented cheque (since presented)

Function Expenditure Breakup (\$3863.00)

Food	2670.00
Drinks	559.00
Holiday Surcharge	534.00
Staff Gratuities	<u>100.00</u>
<u>Total:</u>	<u>\$3863.00</u>

Ossie Pearce
Hon. Treasurer

D.A JACK'S STORY – PART 2

We have previously published Steve Jack's story of the Attack on Bardia and Tobruk. Now we move on to the attack on and "surrender" of Benghazi to Steve and his Gun-crew. Some Generals and other "VIP's" might take issue with the question of "surrender" but I would back Steve any day. We have two more issues of Steve's story to tell which will be kept to next issue of "Kibble's Post".

When we arrived at Tobruk we moved into our first gun position and we started shelling on observed target and I wasn't long before the Italian artillery started to retaliate. But we kept going and we moved a couple of times when the area we were in got a bit too hot for us and we finally moved into one position, it was the best and safest position we ever had.

It was on the edge of a ridge. Going back behind us was a big waddi. We could only drive one tractor right through at a time, drop guns then go to the end and turn around, then drive back out. And the funny part about it was the Ities couldn't see us. They knew approximately where we were but they just couldn't see exactly and when they started ranging on us, or trying to, the shells fell on the top of the ridge in front of us or behind and just exploded out of sight and safe for us. Any overthrows went straight over the top of us and down the waddi and exploded in the bottom of this deep waddi, so we were fairly secure there and we were able to relax.

Well we occupied that waddi, that position on the bank of the waddi, for about a week because the 19th Brigade was moving up, they were going to do the attack on Tobruk. While we were there, we were all getting a bit smelly by this time not having had a bath for several weeks or a couple of months. Anyway they let two gun crews at a time walk down to the Mediterranean on a little inlet there where the waddi used to run into it and we had a great time swimming and bathing in it and we felt very refreshed. We marched back, we were only allowed a certain time down there, the two gun crews that were down there we marched back and the next gun crew section was waiting to go and as soon as we arrived back on the guns they took off down and had their swim and shower. We all felt very refreshed and felt clean again, even though it was only salt water we were swimming in but we felt clean.

We stopped on that position which we were reluctant to leave and all the Italian artillery overthrows never hit on our gun position at all. It went straight over our heads and down this deep waddi where they exploded harmlessly and any ones that were a bit short fell on the opposite slope to where we were and never did us any harm either.

Well from there, when the 19th Brigade had moved into position and our attack position had been reconnoitered, we moved and we settled down and laid the guns out on our recorded pattern to fire a creeping barrage in front of the 19th Brigade who were advancing. Well we didn't have to dig in this time because they thought there'd be more rocks and late getting dug in so they told us to build up. So we filled empty ammo boxes with sand and stacked them in a row around the gun position and filled sand bags and stacked them on it and around it and it looked very, very effective. Our gun position officer was very pleased "oh" he said "it looks very secure" – it wasn't though but it looked good.

Anyway the infantry moved through. We all had our charge of rum and we were

starting to breathe fire through our nostrils with our service rum, SRD – service diluted. The infantry moved through up into the jump off position and when we all in position and the infantry were ready to attack we opened up a dawn barrage. When we were laying a creeping barrage, we were very close to the barbed wire. But actually when we moved in the GPO and officers were very upset to make that well within machine gun range and anyone makes a noise it's back to the waggon line he goes to disgrace! But anyway we were all dead silence and if any number one breaks open a case of ammunition with a pick it's back to the waggon lines! And no loud talking or shouting out.

We settled in there and while we were talking the RSM Ted Resuggen, permanent army bloke, he was in charge of the survey company and they were busy surveying all the guns to put us in on the regimental grid. And out of the darkness came his best parade-ground voice, and it was a big voice too, "bombardier Sprint!", caused by bombardier Sprint was his assistant, and he shouted out "here S'arnt Major!". We all shuddered and the officers had been laying down the law to us about making noise and how close we were up on the barbed wire, well within machine gun range that we might get a burst or two from the Italian machine gunners. Anyway even though we sort of chuckled to themselves and we settled in and everything was quiet.

We stacked our ammunition all ready and I didn't have to fire the smoke this time as I had no smokes to fire. So I heaved a sigh of relief, it were a bloody nuisance. The next thing happened we opened up on the barrage when the infantry had gone through. We got a bit of chinking from them going through, telling us to "shoot straight boys, shoot straight", "don't drop any short". Well we were never ever guilty of dropping any short and as they marched through we cheered them on a bit and then settled down.

We opened up on our barrage on the specified time and we were firing a program and the next thing happened the Italians started firing back at us. I was standing next to Bunny Roach, my gun layer, and the other gunners were crouched down behind the gun limber or the ammunition stacked in it. I was standing up, a bit behind Bunny Roach and slightly to his left, and I was standing in the opening between the limber and the gun. I'd just given him the new lift and the time, it was still dark, the new lift and the time to start and before I could move or do anything there was a whistle and a bang, a hundred pound six inch shell landed right between the gun and me.

It blew a great cloud of dust and sand and smoke in the air. Bunny was protected by the gun shield but the blast hit me and blew me clean over the trail of the gun. I landed in the corner half stunned and I was staggering back up onto my feet again when another one hit, practically in the same hole. It exploded and another bash and I tried to get going again and 'cause I was wearing ear muffs this time the guns were hurting my ears and making me deaf. I was staggering to my feet and another one landed right behind the gun pit blowing these ammunition boxes full of sand and sand everywhere. Oh of course there was a cloud of smoke, smoke and dust and black

and no-one could see anything - hanging over the gun. The other gunners looked on the other guns and said "well it looks like Steve's mob has gone". I staggered onto my feet and "everyone all right?" and no-one was hurt, thank God. I said to Bunny "you alright?", "yes, Steve I'm right". I said "you got the gun laid the last switch and that?" and "yeah everything's laid Sargeant", "ready? right to fire".

We fired again and through the smoke and dust the flash and crack of a 25 pounder echoed out. Oh, and the rest of the crew they all knew we were safe and they all stood up and cheered. So we nearly bought it there at that time but it was a very close shave. Mick Haywood, the gun position officer, came running over. He said "are you alright Steve?" I said "yes sir", "anybody hurt?" I said "no sir, we're all OK" he said "Steve, you are going to live to be an old, old man" I said "I hope so Mick". And that's how we have.

Anyway we got back into our firing again and we kept up our shooting until the daylight had come and we started to move out, out of the gun pits and to move forward and advance because the infantry was still going and we were getting opportunity targets coming up in front. So, we moved out and it was daylight then and as I walked around I counted 30 shell craters, six inch shells, around my gun position. Ooh, we must have been the target! And there were a few unexploded shells lying there and I looked at them, I never touched them but I looked at them, and stamped on the base was 'Woolwich Arsenal 1916'. So the Ities were giving us back our own stuff from the first world war and anyway a lot of them were exploded but a lot of them didn't, though, old age I suppose deterioration.

Anyway, we started to advance from there and we proceeded forward behind the infantry and got into position, then started laying more barrages before them to check up their advance. This went on all day until finally we got onto the Tobruk aerodrome and that's where we settled in there for our final shooting.

There's a couple of dead Ities lying around the flat and a twin barrelled, oh about four inch, anti-aircraft gun. I think it was taken off a naval boat, it'd been used there. There was a few dead Ities lying there, only looked to be young fellows, too. So that was the Italian light cruiser, it'd been badly damaged in a battle at sea and had gone into there for a refuge. And they were trying to get out and they'd been shot at by their navel guns at all our troops so the Colonel saw it and he declared it a regular target. Course he put all 24 guns onto it and of course, well within range now, well it started. About 20 rounds of gunfire each on it and from 24 guns they all landed on that San Remo light cruiser, and of course she didn't go anywhere then. As far as I know she was still sunk there in the water when the 9th division moved into it.

They started surrendering, the Italians started surrendering, and I think from there there was about 23,000 prisoners taken there. We settled in there and that night we camped on the aerodrome. on Tobruk aerodrome and we were settled down and

chuck waggon came round and we had a feed.

The next thing a mate of mine Bill Bowie, a Sargeant in D Troop, he'd collected a bloody Marmon Herrington gun tractor and he took it for a drive into Tobruk. But next thing he came back, he was half sozzled. Ah and he came back and he drove up to our gun position where we were all camped and he said "Steve we've missed the water waggon" he said "I'll swap you two gallons of Cognac for two gallons of water". Ooh, that was a mistake, too. But I swapped him two gallons of water for two gallons full of cognac. Oh gawd. My blokes had been wanting to break out and go scrounging but I wouldn't let them 'cause we don't know if these blokes are done, we might have to start advancing again immediately, so we'll just have to wait and see. I didn't want a team of drunken gunners with me at night.

I had a mouthful of this cognac and it was liquid firewater but they all got stuck into it and my driver Billy Blackall, he was a good mate, he laid his blankets down alongside mine and alongside the tractor and we climbed into it. And anyway we all went to sleep 'cause there was nothing doing and they told us to settle down for the night, so we settled down. And they settled down very quickly, they'd got a gutful of cognac into them. Two gallons of liquid firewater. I wasn't game to drink a lot and get drunk in case we had to move so I only had a couple of mouthfuls that's all.

So we settled down there for the night and when morning came and dawn I was awake and Billy Blackall was lying there in his blankets alongside me. I said "come on Billy, get up". Oh he moaned and groaned and he didn't move and I grabbed his blankets and jerked them off him and when I did I told him "don't move! Lay there and keep still!". There was a big black scorpion curled up on his knee and it was a big one. It was nearly as big as a small bird and I picked up a felt hat while he was lying there, course he was scared stiff he wasn't game to move, and I smashed it with my hat and drove it off and stamped on it. Course he was OK then, but he was a bit shaky. Oh it would have given him a nasty bite, probably it could have killed him. Those scorpions had an awful bite and a sting.

So anyhow, we were all packed up and ready to move again and we still waited there. A few of them slipped into town and did a bit of looting. Got into the Tobruk bank and came back with haversacks packed full of lire, big denominations too. And they found refrigerated rooms there stacked full of South American beef, frozen, and they found a lot of other things. They found a lot of American cigarettes, Lucky Strikes and Camels and they brought them back. Everyone had a sand bag full of them and we had 'em all there and blokes that didn't smoke before, me included, started smoking because we were a bit ikey, we didn't like having to pay for them. And we got these backsheesh and we got into them. And I've been smoking ever since, for nearly sixty years.

So anyway, next thing we got orders to move and we moved on towards (I forget now, there's a small village just past Tobruk - oh I just can't think of the name of it at

the moment it'll come to me afterwards) Giovanni Berta. It was a little farming village and we got hunting round there and getting things, seeing what sort of food we could find. We'd acquired a lot of tuna in big seven pound tins in Bardia and started to eat it, oh yuk it was oily. But we didn't know, you tipped it into a pan and fried it and it was excellent. So that's what the blokes started doing and having very nice tuna. It was American tuna too, all canned. The Ities must have had a big stock of it because we found quite a few tins of tuna after that in the stores.

Well we moved on out of Tobruk and the 7th Division, armoured division, they were advancing and we advanced towards Giovanni Berta and here were all these hills covered with grass and green trees and shrubs it was quite a nice looking place. We followed this track that was to take us on, anyway we came to a position where the Ities had set up an ambush with a 2 pounder anti-tank gun and they'd shot up a couple of these light armoured scout vehicles of the 7th armoured division but they'd been shot up too and they were finished.

We proceeded on past there until we came to Giovanni Berta and we settled down there for the night. And I looked across this bit of a valley and here was a nice little village there so I thought I'd walk over and have a look at it. So I walked over and had a look and here was poultry there and stock and course I left my gun crew back on the gun position and told them not to leave until I came back. And anyway I went down there and fossicked round and I found a piggery with some lovely white porkers in it. So I slaughtered one of them and hung it up and dressed it and hung it around in the house and found some all clean freshly ironed sheets and I wrapped the pig up in the sheets and I thought "oh well the blokes'll have a bit of nice pork anyway". I made a bit of a rugged job of dressing it but it would've been very nice the same.

So it was coming on towards evening and I started to walk back across this little valley, it wasn't very far with the pig wrapped in clean sheets over my shoulder and I was going past, oh, a shed - that's all you could describe it as - and there was light there shining out through the cracks in the wall and I could hear blokes talking. I walked in and scared hell out of them. There was another gun crew there, I knew them, they weren't a very nice lot of blokes, put it that way. They were there, the sergeant wasn't with them, but they were drunk as lords and they had an old San Arab there, poor old grey headed bloke. And one of the blokes was waving a big Italian 45 calibre revolver at him and swearing at him and that and the poor old bugger he was just shaking. And I walked in, of course they knew me, and they immediately started to behave. And I said to this old fella, I said to the bloke "put the bloody gun away" and they all did what they were told and shut their big mouths. They'd been shooting off and I looked at this poor old bugger shivering and shaking there and I said to him "yalla igary" which in Arabic means "go quickly". And he went out the door like a bullet, bowing and scraping "effendi". Oh yeah, he bolted. He abused the blokes and told them to get back to their gun in case they moved, if they weren't there they'd be in big trouble. So they all shuffled out and headed back v

their loot of grog and stuff.

I walked back and got to the gun position and the blokes, my blokes, thought I'd brought something back that they could eat. "Ooh a nice bit of pork, we can eat that" so I said "it's too much meat for one gun crew 'cause we've got no way of cooking it all" and they were pretty poor. I said "take it over to the battery cook house and tell them not to forget it for us. Well a couple of them took it over and came back, that was the last we saw of the pig we never got any of it all. The battery cooks had a good feed of it though. That was the first time our food scrounging had come unstuck.

But we proceeded on. From Giovanni Berta we proceeded on towards Derna. And when we came to Derna we got a position on the banks of the Derna waddi. Oh, it was a big, steep, wide and deep and wide waddi too. And the 2nd/4th battalion had gone across the waddi and they were getting ready to attack someone or do something and the 2nd/1st field regiment 2nd battery was to support them. So we put our 12 guns lined up on the banks of the waddi and anyway the 2nd/4th battalion decided to withdraw and never notified us.

Well the result was our forward observation post, I think it was Lieutenant Fores Lord, he was the officer in charge and there were three or four signallers with him (two or three, I'm not sure how many now, records will show that) but they had no weapons. All they had, Lieutenant Lord had a 40 calibre Webley pistol and no ammunition - which was typical - so anyway, the Italians came onto them and they had to surrender. They had no choice. No arms and no ammunition they were forced to surrender and our whole forward observation party was taken prisoner.

So, oh dear, the next thing they started to advance, the Ities started to advance, towards us - on the other bank of the waddi. And we were ordered, got the order "send all spare men and what rifles and guns you've got down to the bank of the waddi but keep enough on your gun to be able to fire". Next thing our Colonel turned up and he took charge.

Course we sent two or three gunners each down to the bank of the edge of the waddi. Course by this time we'd accumulated a few Breda light machine guns and a few other weapons and they proceeded to blaze away at the Ities that were advancing on the other bank. They backed off and then the Colonel got there and a couple of blokes left on each gun we had to start firing. And oh, when the 25 pounder shells started landing amongst them they shot through very quickly.

But they had a battery of 75 millimetres with them and they withdrew from in front of us and went further along the waddi and opened up on A Troop, which was the battery on our right. They opened up on A Troop. They scored a direct hit on Skeeter's number one gun in A Troop. They scored a direct hit on that and wiped out Skeeter's gun crew and I forget how many were killed there, I think most of them were killed. They got a direct hit on his gun pit. And Skeeter only got a couple of slight scratches, just enough - only skin scratches - just enough to go to the RA and get them dressed and be recorded for a wound stripe. A red stripe you wore on your

sleeve to show you'd been wounded.

And course when the other guns got going and the Colonel turned up there he started shelling the Ities. And they couldn't take that very well, so they shot through. And A Troop had dug in and First Battery and they started warming the Ities up too. Anyways Derna was finished, they all started surrendering there and retreating. So we all started to advance towards Benghazi. And First Battery took the coast, went down the Der Pass, down off the escarpment onto the plain and they headed on the back road towards Benghazi. And we took the inland road with the 2nd/4th Battalion and Second Battery. We proceeded then towards Barce on the inland road. D Troop leading and we were in E Troop, we were following, and D Troop went into action on the escarpment at Barce.

And here was this very nice little small town laid out with a church bell tower on it and people just walking round. So they put a salvo of four rounds, no six rounds, in. They put a salvo right over the town and landed - there were no surrender flags hanging up anywhere - then they dropped another salvo short, they bracketed the town. Oh gawd, that caused a panic. The next thing on the church steeple they ran a white sheet up, of surrender. I forget the officer's name there now that went down. and a few of the gunners went down and took the surrender of the township of Barce.

Course we were coming along then on the road and we had settled in ready to open up too, but anyway we didn't have to. And we moved on again. There was another place, I'm not quite sure where it was now, but we were in position and the Forward OPIP Officer, they were firing on - it was a long range, oh probably about 14,000 yards - and we'd been firing on supercharge and we never had enough of them. So Forward OPIP Officer wanted another salvo. "Oh" he says "gawd" and he's fossicking around and he held up a blue bag, a charge 3, and he shouted out "ram that in, an extra charge 3". Everyone woke up what it was, what he meant and they put an extra charge 3, out of one of the discards, put that in the gun too. And when the guns fired oh the recoil, it came way back and shuddered with this extra charge in it. And the GPO was looking at that and all he could see was him being bowler hatted and sent back to Australia in disgrace for destroying six 25 pounders with an unauthorised charge, cause the guns they went right back on their recoil and they shuddered as they were running out again. Anyway he said "I can't give you another salvo we'll bust their guns" he said "no matter, they're surrendering" and anyway he said "E Troop's in position now. They're close up they can give me any backing up I want". So that was that.

And we moved from Barce, we moved on towards Benghazi. And oh there was some pretty country we went through. But when we came to Fort Regima it was an old castle built on the top of the escarpment looking down over towards Benghazi. We went through there and we had to go down the escarpment. We were leading (D Troop) then - because they'd stopped back a bit at Barce. And we went down the escarpment, a winding road. A couple of trucks and trailers loaded with fuel tipped

over and crashed down the valley. Some of them busted and some of them didn't, but a bit badly dented though, and we picked them up the next day. And we went down this long winding road down this steep escarpment and we had a gunner sitting on the 25 pounder and had the hand brake pulled on on it, course it had a hand brake on it, and he sat there on the seat and pulled the hand brake on and held it there and skidded the 25 pounders down. And we finally hit the bottom on the level going with relief and there spread out before us was the Regima airport, Benghazi airport.

So we went down into that and we took up positions right on the far side, on the road, in amongst all these huts and houses and sheds. And we took up a gun position there and some of them went further in. And D Troop went further in and battery headquarters was just a bit back behind us and we settled in and the 4th battalion was in front of us and they'd settled in for the night. And anyway we laid our guns out ready to open fire on Benghazi. Oh, it was well within our range - probably only about ten mile - we could have shelled anywhere in the city, and they would've too.

Anyway night time was coming. When we came down to the bottom of the escarpment, here was an Arab boy running around with a mob of Arab fat-tailed sheep and Bunny Roach and Alf Woods dived out of the back of the truck and rushed over and wanted to buy a sheep off him, a fat sheep. And they said "how much you want for it?". He thought they were going to steal it off him and he said "20 lire" which was probably about twice the market price of it. Oh, they were big noting - we had bundles of lire in our pocket from Tobruk - they peeled off a 100 dollar bill and gave it to him. The boy was in ecstasy, he was over the moon. He wanted to sell them the lot! Anyway they caught one sheep and brought it back and slaughtered it and we hung it on the gun muzzle. We used it there so we could wind it up and down, a lot like a gantry.

So that was our first night at Benghazi.

And we settled in there and had this sheep down. Next thing here's a row of lights coming down the road through the 4th Battalion, they were coming down towards us and I said to the blokes "for god's sake get that bloody sheep off the gun muzzle and have the gun laid down the road" cause we were the point gun on the end of the line and we would've been shooting straight down the road. And next thing, they did that very smartly, and next thing all these cars, oh there must have been a dozen of them, drove into the gun position and pulled up right in front of my gun with the gun muzzle staring them in the face. And then all these Italian Officers and Generals and things - there was the Lord Mayor of Benghazi and the General commanding the city, oh and the Chief of Police and a few other notables. And I picked up my rifle and put my tin hat on and marched out and demanded what they wanted. And away they all jabbered at me in Italian, which I couldn't understand, but I could understand the one word "surrendado" - surrender.

And I turned around and shouted back to our command post and they went "what's the matter?" and I said "I've got a lot of Italian", in all these car lights, "I've got a lot

of Italian Officers here and the impression I gained from what they talk, which I understand, I got the impression they want to surrender". "Oh," they said "That's good. Bring them over here to the command post". So I marched them over to the command post.

I'd just taken the surrender of Benghazi!

I marched these Italians over there and Bobby Lou could speak a bit of schoolbook French and he blabbered at them and then he found out what it was and "Oh" he said "Steve, you've just captured Benghazi!". And so I just laughed.

They took them up to Battery Headquarters and by the time they got there the Colonel had got there too and it finished up Benghazi surrendered.

Apparently the Italians wouldn't surrender to the Infantry. Because in the Italian Army they have two lines of command, Infantry is one command Artillery is another command and they didn't want to surrender to the Infantry, because they couldn't damage the town very much, but the Artillery could. They could shell the town and destroy it. And that's what they were all laid out on the town ready to open fire on.

So I unofficially took the surrender of Benghazi. And anyway I went back to the gun crew and told the gun crew what had happened and I said "you are now the controllers of Benghazi". Course they all roared laughing. I said we unofficially took the surrender. That was the way it's always been.

Anyway I think that's about all Benghazi for the time being.

