

2/1 FIELD REGIMENT CLUB

KIBBLES POST

APRIL 2011

President

R Olsson
19 Delaware Avenue
ST IVES NSW 2075
(02 9144 6763

Secretary

J Hynes
1203/281 Elizabeth Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000
(02) 9267 7200

Treasurer

O Pearce
51 Tillock Avenue
DOBROYD POINT 2045
(02) 9798 5397

VALE

AC Young	JT Johnstone	Fred T Conquest
C Mitchell	M Lardelli	JH Finucane
R Judd	P Hatton	A Moroney
GYD Scarlett		

BDR A.C. Young – NX18311 - Joined the Regiment in M.E., posted to 1st Bty “B” Troop after time, he was promoted to BDR. His brother, Robert Young, was also in 1st Bty, after the war he went to live in Dubbo. About 2 years ago he couldn’t manage on his own so he went to live with his son.

SGT J.T. Johnstone – NS150690 – was a member of a large group of a unit that was withdrawn from service and posted to 2/1st Field Regiment. They all retained army rank, a change in policy, previously all other ranks had to revert to Gnr. It was not welcome amongst the members of the 2/1st Field Regiment because it stopped promotion.

BDR Fred T Conquest – Signaller – NX8148 – enlisted at Marrickville in 1939 and sailed with the Regiment on 10/1/1940 as a member of 2nd Bty. After the war he lived in Hurstville and was on mailing list. He moved to Wyong but at the time he overlooked to advise Kibble’s Post of his change of address. We learnt of his passing through the Death Notice of the Daily Telegraph.

GNR J.H. Finucane – NX56609

GNR C Mitchell – NS93938

SGT Mick Lardelli – NX1069 – original member of “A” Troop 1st Bty. Joined the Regiment October 1939, age 17, and in the words of Ken Kell “he was a great bloke” (see following letter).

Letter from Ken Kell

Monday 20th

Villa 163 Golden Ponds Resort
Cape Hawke Drive
FORSTER NSW 2428

Dear Ossie

I have a niece living in Ryde who husband was an Inspector of Police in the Gladesville area, and sent me this article about Mick some time ago. Every Anzac Day that I used to attend I used to sit with Mick and a few others of the old "A" Troop, NQM (Pudden) Jones, Owen Bond etc. Both Mick and I were both 17 on enlistment, but I was younger by a few months.

He had his heart operation before me, and took up playing golf at an older age. He was a no nonsense Mayor, and was telling me how he controlled his meetings in a strictly formal way and would not tolerate anyone getting carried away by wasting time "waffling". He was a first class chap and was highly regarded by all of us who knew him. He will be greatly missed indeed.

I consider myself very lucky for I still get on the exercise bike every afternoon and do at least a half hour plus. I intend to purchase a walking treadmill as my poor old "bike" won't last much longer.

The local National Service Sub-Branch has invited me to give a couple of presentations on the subject of the circumstances why it was introduced etc., so I will include a copy for you, just for a bit of a read.

They are certainly taking over the Ex-Service Organisation as we of WWII are quickly falling by the wayside. I was involved with Owen Saville and was there at the beginning between 1951 until the first period finished in 1958.

I am not up to travelling to Sydney as the traffic now is much too busy. Jean is also not keen in travelling by train or bus as she is not too steady on her feet, but I do not mind driving long distances, so we intend to go across to South Australia and then visit Jean's old hometown in Ballarat, Victoria.

I also want to do this trip before they put me on a restricted licence, due to my age. Although I never have any trouble passing the driving tests at present. Well Ossie, take care and I will be in touch.

Regards, Ken

Signaller Ray Judd – NX3357 – original member of “B” Troop. He enlisted at Victoria Barracks early in October 1939.

BDR P Hatton – NS8111 – 2nd Battery passed away 26/12/10. Phil was an original in 2nd Bty (3/11/39). He was a member of 14 Field Bde, which was stationed at Marrickville. He was a fully qualified Sgt, in fact Col. Reddish who was grooming Phil for a commission, so that nobody could say he favoured him.

During peace time there was a Shield that the so called leading Artillery units would win in the competition each year. Phil who happened to inform Major Keith O’Connell (who lost the shield) about the win, O’Connell said to Phil “you won’t get on here”, everyone lost their C.M.F. Rank, Phil was reduced to Gnr and O’Connell made certain of that.

During the early days in Egypt Phil was giving a lecture, who should be outside was the CRA Brig. Herring who said to Phil “that lecture you just delivered was perfect, in fact it should have been given by an officer”. Brig. Herring sought out O’Connell and told him to promote Phil to Bdr immediately. It wasn’t long after that Phil was on a patrol, all the party unarmed except the officer, Lt. F. Lord on charge, no bullets in the revolver, ammo in the pouch, so Italians had no trouble in capture of 12 men.

After the war Phil was General Manager of the big insurance firm, Mercantile Mutual.

BDR Alec Moroney – NX8121 – marched into 2/1st Field Regiment at Ingleburn on 3/11/39 and marked out of life on 8th November 2010.

Alec served with 1st Bty and saw action wherever 1st Bty was at the time. In Greece and at Kalamata where we directed to, no further land there, surrounded with water on all sides, sitting on the beach 8000 Australian troops waiting for the Navy to come to the rescue.

The air attack became so heavy that the Navy stopped their rescue attempt after they lost several destroyers and ships. Our C.O. Lt Col H. Harlock who had been on a destroyer saw that lots of the Regiment were still on the beach, he walked off to remain with his unit. In fact he took command of those troops that were left on the beach, organized rear guard action. Nothing but a few rifles and Bren Guns, those few captured two German field guns and a tank. In the end he gave the order to surrender and everyone to escape if possible. Alec managed to get a small fishing boat but alas this got sunk also, most of those on this boat were wounded. Alec removed his boots to help his swim ashore and during all the confusion Alec and Norm Smart rescued many of the wounded to shore. Alec was taken Prisoner of War and spent 4 years with the Germans. After the war Alec was a keen worker for the RSL and many other organizations.

Alec and Norman were recommended for their bravery, like many others of the regiment they came under the cloud set by Lt General Maitland Wilson, the Field Commander who always referred to Australians as Colonials, that NO Australians were to receive any medals or awards for service in Greece or Crete, so that put paid to that.

G.Y.D. Scarlett – NX134 – 39er – Graham was one of the original officers, he was a member of the 9th Field Brigade Victoria Barracks, enlisting first as a Senior Cadet and when he turned 18 years transferred to the Militia. He obtained his commission in the 9th Brigade and when WWII was declared he enlisted in what was to be the only Force Australia was to have, 20000 Special Force, Lt. Col Kelly was the C.O. 2/1st Field Regiment and he selected the officers he required and wanted.

Major N. Peters was the O.C. 1st Battery, a regular army officer who had recently returned from detachment with the British Army in India. Major Peters had adopted the ways and attitude of the English Army Officers towards the way they treated ordinary soldiers, resulting in many arguments between Peters and Scarlett. Peters was unaccustomed to dealing with Australian War Volunteers, he wouldn't allow 2nd Battery personnel to visit their friends in 1st Battery at Ingleburn in 1939 and lots of difference between the Officers and O 'R's" with Major Peters. Lt. Scarlett was a very sincere, honest person who looked after the welfare of his troop and in his eyes there was no need to treat the men (all war time volunteers) in such a way, the result being Major Peters made life hell for Graham and his men right through our training in Australia, Palestine, Egypt and then in action in the Western Desert and Greece. Fate took a hand, Major Peters was taken Prisoner of War.

Graham Scarlet was the main officer who stood up for the soldiers of 1st Battery. He was the most popular and efficient officer of the Regiment "A" Troop 1st Battery. On the return of the regiment to Palestine we were an Artillery Regiment without guns until new equipment arrived. Captain Scarlett was Troop Commander of "A" Troop in June 1941 as the Manning detail shows. Graham was the most popular and well liked by all. On our eventual return to Australia in August 1942, things changed for many. Graham became B.M. of RAA 6th Division, then 10th Division. Graham served in M.E. for more than 2 years before he was detached to Britain as Lt. Col in Mortars Regiment and finally Full Colonel. He was detached for many weeks with 41st American Division who were fighting the Japs around Lae.

During service in N.G. his daughter, Philippa, who was born after the war is very proud of her father as she has every right to be, she sent me many photos, some of which I hope can be included in Kibbles Post. *Editor: Sorry, I could only include one photo due to limited space and quality of photos.*



G.Scarlett and Jock Crawford Palestine 1940?

Correspondence received by John Hynes (Hon. Secretary)

April 5 2010

John Hynes
2/1 Field Regiment Club
1203/281 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear John,

As usual, although sadly shrinking in size, "Kibbles Post" has fascinating war yarns, giving people like my mother, Jean and I insight into what you all went through.

That this year is the 65th anniversary of the end of the war, and as it happens, the 65th anniversary of my birth, July 7 1945, one thing I was told was that my late 2/1 father, George Monten, received, in action, an announcement of my safe arrival (I got the impression via loud speaker system or somesuch, down the lines, to the artillery.)

It has struck me that nothing much is being made of this anniversary (overshadowed by 90th anniversary of Gallipoli landing?), and possibly less and less people think much, if at all, about either world war 2 or the aftermath, which thanks to you and the million or so others who fought, has been for Australia a time of peace and continuing prosperity. What seems to remain is a bit of controversy, should some of your sons and daughters, like me, join 6th "divvy" vets, happy to have us, in the Anzac March, a thing I think is going to fade for world war 2 once the last vet standing/marching is too frail or "marches out." I am inclined to think having a big Anzac remembrance service, now the world war 1 and 2 generations are passing could put a focus on remembrance, maybe even not in the 21st century continuing a returned servicemen's march (but in Adelaide, it is now the Vietnam vets who are calling shots and shaping what will be, not world war survivors, nor any our leaders for that matter.)

I for one would again like to thank 2/1, very grateful that my dad and others "made it" and always remembering those who did not. Our family's close friend, 2/1 Alan (John A) Elder who died in 2005, on the eve of the 60th anniversary of the end of the war (not a coincidence, he chose that time to withdraw all treatment, suffering as he was advanced Parkinson's), told me that at every Anzac Dawn service since the war ended, he particularly remembered a Bluey Dight, one of those killed in that "friendly fire attack Cape Wom" May 7 1945. Bluey was one of the "reos" who joined 2/1 for the Aitape-Wewak campaign, a gunner, and someone, along with another two

2

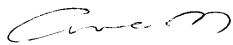
killed that day - Marks (Alfred?) and "Silver" Simpkin - who had become friends of Alan and my father, George (who could have been known as "Tuck", that his middle name, or "Monty")...Bluey was, Alan said, quite plump and short, and of course had red hair, was a really "nice young lad," from Melbourne (Prahan.) I did try contacting Dights via phoning, but encountered none who could recall a relative who was killed during the war. It is so long ago, there is the official remembrance, the plaque in the Canberra Memorial, for this apparently very likeable young digger whose life was taken in that doubly tragic way that comes with the "friendly fire" stuff-ups that are ever it seems part of wars...so maybe someone from 2/1 recalls Bluey Dight?

Another curiosity thing for me is the origins of the name "Kibbles Post", also the history of the journal (maybe there is a book in collected stories over the 60 plus years?)...

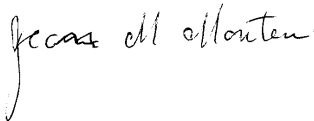
But this letter is to wish all of you still with us all the very best, including for those at the lunch, an enjoyable Anzac Lunch, and to support continuing "Kibbles Post", my mother and I send \$30, the cost, I note, of a lunch for my mother, if she could join you!

Again thanks, also maybe via "Kibbles Post" we can pass on best wishes to Keith "Tanglefoot" Godfree and family. I have not heard lately from the last 2/1 survivor in Adelaide, George Watts, but the last time I spoke with his wife, she told me, very worriedly, that he is suffering some sort of dementia - he's a character, a veteran of Kokoda as well as 2/1, he did have a website...as is said, old soldiers never die, they only fade away (or words to that effect, I don't know source of that quote?)

Yours sincerely, and we salute you all, with very best wishes,



Anne & Jean Monten



Jean, widow of George T Monten 2/1 (since Alan Elder published his story about the "jaunt" to the Philippines, "Kibbles Post" Anzac Day 2002, I have thought of the regiment as "two bar one", the Yank label for you?)

2 Ross Street, Plympton Park, SA, 5038 Phone 08 82767294
Email: amonten@optusnet.com.au

Correspondence Received by Hon. Treasurer, Ossie Pearce:

Letter from Victor Gibbins

Dear Ossie

This is my first newsletter, as I suffered a small stroke just prior to Christmas 2009. I spent that Christmas-New Year in Lady Davidson Hospital, undergoing both speech and normal Physio. I have recovered, however my writing and speech are a little slow.

During the year I had two stays in respite care at the Hunters Hill Lodge – one when John broke his ankle in June and also in October when John and Glenys went on holiday for a few weeks. John announced his engagement to Glenys early in November.

Whilst attending a friends 90th Birthday I ran into a guy whom I had not seen since we were together in the 2/1st Field Regt. In 1939 – small world! His name is **Jim Jeffries** and he has just moved from Sydney to Nambour in Queensland.

My eldest granddaughter, Stephanie, gave birth to her first child in mid-June, a boy they have named 'Kobe'. I now have two boys and one girl as great-grandchildren. Maya (eldest great grandchild) was born 91 years to the day from my birth.

This Christmas I am having a week or so with John and Glenys at their holiday home at Laurieton. I may return her to Turrumurra for my medical/physio appointments whilst the others remain up there.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and healthy New Year.

Kindest Regards,
Victor Gibbins

Note from Ossie Pearce: Victor is the last of the original officers, age 96. He left in the advance party 1939.

Jim Jeffries ("D" Troop, 2/1st Field Reg. – 2nd Battery)
c/- Hostel
98 Windsor Street
NAMBOUR QLD 4560

Letter from George V. Horwood

31/5/2010

Dear Ossie

Enclosed is the letter of thanks and appreciation from our American visitor on Anzac Day, Mr Tony Inzana, as stated in our telephone conversation.

Hoping we are able to include in the next edition of "Kibble's Post".

Wishing you and yours the very best.

Sincerely
George V Horwood

Letter from Tony Inzana , US Vet WWII (typed in red)

May 7, 2010

Dear George

I am purposely using red print to signify the colours of the Artillery.

I want to express my thanks to you and the members of your regiment for inviting me to march in the parade and then enjoying a wonderful luncheon with comrades in arms from WWII.

I shall never forget the experience of marching in downtown Sydney. The people lining the sidewalks were just great. The men of your regiment are fine "lads or blokes", I would have been proud to serve alongside of any of them.

Until next time give my best regards to all of your regimental friends and may life be good to them.

*Very sincerely
Tony Inzana
US Vet WWII*

Updates on members and wives of members from Ossie Pearce

Editor's Note: Ossie endeavours to keep in touch with a number of members and their wives/widows throughout the year and I'm sure they appreciate his phone calls and friendship. If you would like to include an update on any member or their wife/widow please either write or ring Ossie (see first page for details) and we will include in the next issue of Kibble's Post.

Les Walker - we last saw Les a couple of years ago when he marched on Anzac Day, bad luck started then, heart attack. He returned to Alstonville where he lives with his wife. He is now laid up again after a complete knee reconstruction. Les sends his best wishes to all.

Pauline Salter – couldn't attend Anzac Day, in hospital after a knee reconstruction. She has two connections with the Regiment, sister of Alfie Daniel and was married to Bill Salter.

Betty Brown – Keith Brown's widow was unable to attend her usual Anzac Day because of illness.

Harry (Gosie) Martin – can't travel now so he can't attend but did manage to attend Dawn Service and Remembrance Service in Gosford.

Gordon Craig – who was an active Committee member for years but now he can't leave Woy Woy

Bruce Cruickshank – original "B" Troop, now lives in Moonby Nursing Home in Kootingal with his wife. They both have single accommodation a few doors away from each other but at least they are close.

Phillip Hatton – 2nd Bty – taken P.O.W. near Darno in 1940 with the Italians, when Italy withdrew from the war he was handed over to the Germans. Returned home and back to civil working life, then retirement. He kept his bad luck, walking home after a game of bowls along a dark footpath which ran parallel to a canal, no fence, he was severely injured in a fall and is now confined to a nursing home. *Editor's Note: Phillip Hatton recently marched out – see Vale.*

Ken Kell – another of the originals. He put his age up by 3 years to be 20, the age of enlistment was 20 to 35 years. Some were over the limit, Ken was a very efficient Gunner in 1st Bty and gained the rank of Warrant Officer because T.S.M. 2nd Bty (Troop Sgt. Major). After the war he joined the Permanent Army. He went to England with the Coronation Team. He mounted the guard on Buckingham Palace. On return to Australia he became an Instructor at Duntroon Military College teaching the cadets to become officers in the Permanent Army. He now lives in Forster with his wife.

Isobel Jack – who is the widow of Steve Jack. Isobel lives on a small farm which is miles from nowhere, nearest village is 15 miles away. She says she has lived all her life in the bush. Isobel is very proud of Steve and his achievements and his story that has been published in Kibble's Post.

Ray Judd – an original 1st Bty Signaller, is not enjoying the best of health. A very popular person, when we often talk per phone to other members of the Regiment the first

thing anyone says “how is Ray Judd, what’s Ray Judd doing?” There is very few who were as popular as Ray. His family is looking after him at home. *Editor’s note: sadly Ray has also “marched out” since Ossie spoke to him – see “Vale”*

Marshall Currie – had a serious operation on his eye socket, a matter of thirty eight stitches around the eye, skin cancer. Marshall is now 94 years and life hasn’t been very kind to him, but he won’t give in.

CONFLICT AT WAU

George Macris © October 1991

They came across the mountain track, “Black Cat” it’s given name
 They hoped to take the town below whose gold was named in fame.
 Instead of gold they met the steel of seasoned fighting men
 and Jap blood ran and Jap men died, and were turned back again.
 In minds of some, these yellow men were thought to be the best
 But this proved false as once again our men put them to test.
 They fought them from the slanted slope that was Wau aerodrome
 And drove them back across the hills to where they had come from.
 Around the bend at Crystal Creek the pine tree soared on high
 and half-way up, commanding all, the Jap sniper did lie.
 His aim was good and men did fall as round the bend they came,
 They dodged and bent and swung around, it was a deadly game.
 There was no hope of beating him so some went round the side
 And fought their way through jungle thick, and – so the sniper died.
 They made their aim from top to toe and raked the branches, green.
 They heard his cry, knew he was gone, thought he was never seen.
 So round the bend the diggers came to carry on the fight,
 And left a place called “Slaughterhouse”, it was a dreadful sight,
 A.V.C. named for one of them, but who could make the choice?
 Brave deeds were done by many men but they did not rejoice
 Because of those they left behind who fell to make the gain.
 In this green hell of terror they’d evermore remain.
 And they’ll remain in memory of those who saw it through,
 who knew the tasks in front of them, but still recall the few
 who helped to rid this savage place of vicious, greedy foe.
 Proved to the world they could be beat, and showed the way to go.

ANZAC DAY 2011

Assemble for March as usual Cnr. King and Castlereagh Streets, Sydney
 9.00 am to 9.30 am. The Luncheon will be held at the same location as
 previous years (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.

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

Attended Function Anzac Day 2010

Members (m) denotes “marched”

Rex Olsson (m)	Henry Taylor (m)
John Hynes (m)	Fred Hodgson (m)
Bob Ausburn (m)	Robert Edgar (m)
Marshal Currie (m)	Alec Moroney
Nev Day (m)	G (Tony) Pazzi
George Horwood (m)	Ron Hartman
	Ossie Pearce

Tony Inzano – American Army Captain – visitor marched with the Regiment

Members unable to attend function (the following have all asked me to put in an apology for their non-attendance on Anzac Day)

Arthur Asher – Nursing Home, Springwood
 Bruce Cruickshank – Nursing Home at Kootingal (near Tamworth)
 Phillip Hatton – Nunyara Age Care, Peakhurst
 Ray Judd – Home Care
 Ken Kell – Forster (sick wife)
 Mick Lardelli (very ill, cystic fibrosis, oxygen at all times) – Shalom Centre, Marsfield
 Harry (Gosie) Martin – RSL Leisure Living Centre, Gosford
 Doug Nix – ex POW living in Queensland
 Victor Gibbons – restricted in his movements, ankle wounds and being 96 years does not help a lot.

Visitors

Susan Neill (nee Hatton)	Lynelle Dawson (nee Hatton)
Ross Hatton	Lorraine Pearce
Andrew Horsley	Karen Pearce Howard
Christian Thurston (Ted Fulton)	Colin Pazzi
Bruce Crowe	Bill Lawson
Bob Hudson	Cheryl Lawson (nee Boaz)
Richard Gibson	Marjorie Boaz
Alex Gibson	Betty Moroney
Robert Gibson	Kevin Currie
John Donald	Amandi Sharp
Naomi Howard	Jan Anthony
Quentin Anthony	Alan Jackson

Wayne Fuller
 Leonie Barnett
 Nattie Shaw
 John Fraser
 Kayle Berg
 Terry Dwyer

Hunter Johnson
 Warren Fuller
 Peggy Pazzi
 Shirley Pazzi
 Rosemary Donald

2/2nd A.F.R. Association – NSW Branch who joined us for a Combined Luncheon (due to unforeseen circumstances the 2/2nd were unable to hold their Reunion Luncheon at their previous venue and we were more than happy to welcome them to be part of our Reunion Luncheon)

Members (original)

Ross Fuller
 Colin Bragg
 Ted Gardiner
 Graham Montgomerie (Acting President)
 Alan Jackson (Honorary member - original member of 2/1st Medium Field Regiment)

Non-Members – 2/2nd

Antoinette Jackson	David Bragg
Andrew Jackson	Roy Murphy
David Montgomerie	Mark Flew
Malcolm Fuller	Alan Flew
Gavin Fuller	Ron Flew
June Kentwell	Jake Flew
Natalie Shaw	Sue Hammond

Total attending function:

Members	16
Visitors	<u>46</u>
Total	<u>62</u>

Donations – July 2009 – June 2010 – (L) denotes letter received also

J Simson	Mrs Ann Fuller
H (Gosie) Martin	M Currie
Mrs E Miles	Ms P Weekes
H Noble (L)	R Hudson
Hammond Family (L)	F Hodgson
Ruth Elliott (L)	J Hynes
Jean & Anne Monten	J Summerside
N Day	A Smith
O Pearce	H Johnston (L)
E (Tony) Pazzi	\$50 Anonymous Donation (I
H Moroney	mislaidd the name of the Donor 1/3/10)
G Horwood	

Statement of Income and Expenditure
2/1st Field Regt. Club Association
Year ended 30th June 2010

<u>Year 2009</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Year 2010</u>
9444.38	Balance b/forward	8157.22
1325.00	Donations	955.00
27.54	Interest	2.10
<u>1865.00</u>	Anzac Day Function	<u>2550.00</u>
12661.92		11664.32
	<u>Expenditure</u>	
200.00	Donation: Banner Party	200.00
	Anzac Day – Sydney Boys High	
441.70	Kibbles Post – printing, postage	341.00
<u>3863.00</u>	Anzac Day – food, drink etc	<u>4050.00</u>
4504.70		4591.00

Cash Book Summary

Balance (2009)	8157.22
Plus: Income	3507.10
	11664.32
Less: Expenditure	<u>4591.00</u>
Credit	<u>\$7073.32</u>

Bank Statement as at 30/6/09

Cr. \$7073.32

Function Expenditure Breakup (\$3863.00)

Food	2580.00
Drinks	1330.00
Holiday Surcharge	-
Staff Gratuities	140.00
<u>Total:</u>	<u>\$4080.00</u>

Ossie Pearce
Hon. Treasurer

Report from Hon. Treasurer, Ossie Pearce

**Commemoration of the 69th Anniversary of the Battle of Crete
and the Greek Campaign
The Cenotaph, Saturday, 15th May 2010**

**The Official Greek Representatives being Major General D Sinanoglou
and Lt Commander E Kyriakidis**

I represented the Regiment, as I do each year. The 6th Division repats are getting very thin on the ground, Alf Carpenter 2/4 Battery, Ted Baker, 6th Division Cav and myself.

As history tells us how important it was, Germany had plans to double-cross Russia and invade them in the spring of 1941. 6th Division and 2nd Division Kiwi and 1 Brigade of English were sent to Greece, March 1941. The Greeks were surrendered by Lt General Tsolakoglou, the traitor, who wrote to the Germans, unbeknown to his General Commander, to say he would surrender the Greek Army if they made him Military Governor of Athens, which they did 20/4/41. That caused the retreat of all Allied Forces, all the Greek Officers retained their side arms and the men were not looked upon as P.O.W's, but were demobilized at once leaving the Germans to use their 14 Divisions and 6 Panzer Division (tanks), Air Force against 2nd Division and one Armoured Brigade.

The Anzac Corp had been formed in Greece under command of General Blamey and Major General Freyberg, his 2 i/c. Lucky for us, General Blamey, who didn't agree that the Australians should go to Greece, sought out where evacuation ports could be used if necessary. General Wavell gave permission for the withdrawal and the order was not given to Blamey by General Wilson until 23/4/41, and the withdrawal could only be carried out at night so as to give the troop ships time to be out of range of 400 planes the Germans had in Greece.

2/1st Field Regiment was directed to Kalamata to await evacuation, all equipment had to be destroyed, no fires, all the troops sat on the beach to await our turn to get off. The destroyers would come to the jetty and the troops would climb aboard and transfer to a troop ship. No ship made a second trip, much too dangerous, as it was the *Salmat* was sunk all hands and 2000 troops lost, *Costa Rica* so badly damaged during an air raid it had to be sunk, none of the troop ships used escaped damage, other ships being *City of London*, 1 trip only and *Dilwarra*, 1 trip only.

On the following pages are a Report by NX3115 A.F. (Fife) Donald dated 13-5-41 of his, Ken Jorgenson and Reg Hammond's escape by fishing boat from Greece. There is also a letter sent home by Fife and an extract from Sancha Donald's Greek Travel Journal in June 2008 when he visited Greece to retrace Fife's steps leading up to his escape, and photos taken during his visit there.

REPORT BY NX 3115 GNR A.F. DONALD OF 2/1 FD REGT

13-6-41

On the morning of 29 Apr whilst on the beach at KALAMAI, the C.O. told us that Brigadier LEIGH had come back to offer surrender and that each man was to decide for himself whether

- (a) to stay on the beach
- (b) to return to the dispersal area, or
- (c) to take to the hills

The C.O. then walked away. This was at 0430 hrs. He said that if the men decided to take to the hills it would be advisable for them to be clear of the beach by 0500 hrs.

With me were NX 1061 Gnr K.H. Jorgenson and NX 8157 Gnr R.F. Hammond. We left the beach and went past the dispersal area, picking up some rations there, on our way to the hills. We halted at 0700 hrs, where we had a good view over the town and surrounding district and could see enemy transport moving through the areas we had just left. There was a considerable amount of firing, both rifle and M.G., especially on the road running south from KALAMAI.

After that we went to sleep and at approx. 1400 hrs we looked down and saw Australian, N.Z., British, Cypriot and Palestinians moving in to surrender; big batches under enemy escort; others moving in, so it seemed to me, under their own free will.

We waited until dark before moving and made south-about 3 miles further down the coast, where we hoped to get water. We halted at 2330 hrs and next morning moved into a spot close by where we obtained water from a spring. Here we were able to watch German troops, transport, and equipment and guns moving south from KALAMAI.

We understand that this road finishes a few miles from KALAMAI and the Greeks told us that the Germans were halting there. These guns were of the 60 pdr type (piece pulled back for travelling much the same as 60 pdr). We saw three of these guns move down and estimate that about 3000 tps moved past. Included in these were motor cycle troops with M/G mounted on the sidecars. All transport displayed a red cover over the bonnet (looked like bunting) which we assumed was for identification by their aircraft. Most of the MT was painted grey, and the enemy were also using British Chev and Bedford trucks (with our camouflage still on).

We saw no gas equipment, either on vehicles or on the personnel. Neither on tps killed in KALAMAI or on troops of occupation was any gas equipment seen. Generally the speed of the German convoys was about 15 miles per hour. Vehicles had to change down for even a small hill.

That afternoon we saw Germans out in a boat fishing and we decided to make an attempt that evening to get the boat they were using as we noticed it was beached at a point approx 500 yards from our direct front. The German arty fired about 10 rounds out to sea - approx 5 miles - and of these only two rds exploded.

(We also noticed at BRAHOS that when shelled at night most rounds were "duds")

We moved off at 2000 hrs and reached the beach at approx 2130 hrs. We hid our gear and removed our boots and crept along the beach towards the boat. We could hear the Germans talking in the house adjacent to the boat, but everything seemed quiet so we continued with our plan. After examining the boat, and deciding it would do the job, we lay on the beach waiting for the moon to sink at 2330 hrs.

- 2 -

When the moon had disappeared we launched the boat and in the absence of oars used pieces of butter box and paddled down to pick up our gear. We noticed a searchlight being used in KALAMAI.

We planned to cross the bay before daylight so that we could fit up for the voyage to CRETE where we suspected we would contact British troops. We reached the other side of the bay - a distance of 10 miles - just as the sun was rising. We slept all day, and found on waking that we were adjacent to a road running South. Troops and guns were also going south along this road. Troops looked fresh and did not look as though they had been in action.

The following day we cut down fir trees for use as a mast, oars and sweep, cut up a blanket for a sail and to be ready to move off at sunset. At 1900 hrs we went to a house to replenish our water supply and were fed and watered by the Greek family. They told us that all large villages to the South were occupied by the enemy and between the point of their house and KALAMAI German families were filtering in. We sailed at sunset.

By 1530 hrs on the following day we were within two miles of Cape TAINANON so decided to beach for the night. Greek villagers told us that no Germans were near as there were only mountain tracks to those parts, and after they had fed us we went to sleep.

At 0700 hrs next day we sailed and when 10 miles off Cape TAINANON we were circled by an Italian Seaplane which continued on its way after seemingly being satisfied. This was a three engined aircraft.

At 2000 hrs we made KYTHERA island to the west and as the wind was favourable we decided to keep going. By dawn we were to the east of ANTI KYTHERA island and could see CRETE in the distance. The wind dropped with sunrise and we were becalmed until 1530 hrs. Puffs of wind from the South warned us of an approaching storm and as we could not make ANTI KYTHERA island we decided to run back to KYTHERA for shelter and water.

The 15 miles back was covered by dark and during this run we sighted two German bombers making back from the direction of CRETE. The wind, by this time, was blowing due east at gale force and we lay "close hauled" in the lee of the island until dawn. The seas abated with sunrise and we were able to land on a beach where we slept all the morning. On waking we were approached by Greeks who told us that there were other Australians, New Zealanders and English - 25 in all - at a port six miles away on the southern side of the Island where they were waiting for transport. We decided to carry on with our boat, intending to notify the authorities, if these troops had not landed, on our arrival in CRETE.

The Greeks then went away and brought us food and persuaded us to spend the night in the monastery, which was three miles up in the hills. On reaching the monastery the Greek ranger told us, through an interpreter, that the 25 troops had moved to another port - 15 miles from the monastery and were being taken off at 0100 hrs next morning.

As the wind was still strong and against us we decided to go with these troops and, guided by the Greek ranger, set off for the port. At all villages we were fed by the Greeks, quite a large percentage of whom spoke English. We arrived at the port at 0130 hrs to find the boat had left at 2300 hrs, but the Greeks promised to move us within 48 hours so we slept the rest of the night.

-3-

Next morning the Greek awakened us, gave us breakfast - we also had lunch with him, and at 0430 hrs we were joined by some Greek soldiers and civilians making for CRETE. We had a telephone call to say that a party of Australians, New Zealanders and English were on their way to the port (19 in all) and if the boat came in, not to leave without them. One of the Greeks lent his house for their accommodation and they arrived at 2200 hrs.

Next day we rested and a boat took us off at 2000 hrs and we made ANTI KATHERA island by 0100 hrs. That day and the following day our party of 22 were fed and looked after by the Greeks and we discovered another party of about 13 Aust and English already on the island.

At 2100 hrs two boats were brought alongside the pier and we embarked for CRETE where we arrived at 0230 hrs. We were met by Greeks who opened a cafe and, after obtaining food from an army dump, cooked us a meal.

At 0700 hrs we rang through to authorities at CANEA, who sent trucks over for us and after arriving at CANEA, conveyed us to our respective units.

Conversations with other members of the party produced the following information -

1. That German troops had occupied the territory from KALAMIA right around to the other embarkation beaches.
2. Were using captured Greek cavalry equipment (horses etc) for mountain patrols.
3. Had commandeered all small and sea going vessels, which they had put into use as coastal patrol boats. The smaller islands in the vicinity of "S" and "T" beaches had been occupied and boats conveying our troops had been machine gunned by these patrol boats.
4. That the German troops were apparently well fed, leaving behind at bivouac sites, partially used tins of chocolate (definitely German Issue - marked in German), Norwegian Sardines, biscuits and tinned mixture of biscuit and meat.
5. It was very evident that tobacco and cigarettes are scarce as empty containers were English make.
6. Some troops, who were in the vicinity of the CORINTH Canal spoke of German troops landing by parachute, troop carrying planes and gliders and it seems that a small force of 100 rifles were able to keep these well equipped Germans at bay sufficiently long enough to escape. They were of the opinion that the CORINTH Canal bridge was not blown as they did not hear a report sufficiently loud enough to suggest this, although in the heat of the battle this may not have been noticed.
7. We saw at KALAMIA - prior to leaving - while marching up the road towards our embarkation point, German M.G. units, who were advance tps of the main body (2000hrs) firing on British troops with no resulting casualties to us.

The New Zealanders, who were in the lead, quickly sized up the position, and, backed up by Australian Inf. and those of other units who were armed, led an organised advance against the Germans. By this time night had come on, which helped greatly and by 2300 hrs four hundred P.W. had been taken beside numbers killed. 4

-4-

Our casualties were very slight, none killed, about 15 wounded. The position was then in hand and two 60 pdr guns, some 28 pdr guns were captured and put out of action. We then proceeded to the beach, and as the Germans were still holding the pier the navy suggested taking tps off per ship's boats.

Before any tps had embarked we were told that the destroyers had to leave to engage stations, and it was after this that Brigadier Leigh went forward to offer surrender. (5)

(Sgd) NX 3115 Gnr A.F. Donald.

NOTE: This party had no compass or map. They used a map cut out of "The Sketch" and steered by the sun and stars.

Sailing on the Sea of Crete
A letter from Fyfe Donald 2/1st Field Regiment, Sixth Division AIF
to his Mother written on the 15th of May 1941

Dear Mum,

While resting for the time being, the opportunity arises again for dropping a few lines and as it is about a month since I last had the opportunity of writing, you will certainly be glad to receive this.

I'll get right down to business and start off by saying that Greece has been our domicile for the past month and here we are safe and sound after some pretty hard and torrid moments and I don't mean maybe. Of course you have read all about the evacuation from the different spots on the coast and must realise the magnitude of the job to move thousands of men in such a short time.

Now I'll give you a story that you read about in books never realising that such incidents do happen in real life. At 4.30am on the 28th April, Ken Jorgenson, Reg Hammond and self were cut off from our troops near the evacuation point (Kalamata) by certain events and knowing that we were within a hairsbreadth of capture by the enemy, did some fast thinking and planning as to our future movements. I must say here that we had picked up a Sphere magazine in which was a map of Greece, Crete and surrounding islands and as a matter of interest we tore the page out for future reference and you'll see that Dame Fortune must have had her eye on us and guided our movements.

Our plan of campaign was decided on and immediately put into action and there is no doubt that studying our position and planning our escape before bolting in any direction was responsible for our successful landing here in Crete. We each had rations for four days; bully beef, meat and vegetables ration (tinned) one tin peas and each an emergency ration of chocolate and a packet of biscuits.

The main thing was to get into the mountains at the back of the town before daylight and to lighten the load we retained only our greatcoats, one blanket each, a spare pair of sox, shaving gear etc, water bottle, dixie and a haversack - everything else went by the board and so off we started.

By 7am we were pretty high up and seemed safe for the time being and could look down and watch Jerry's movements, so off to sleep. At 4pm we stirred, had bully and biscuits and looked over the land again. We were out of water so had to move and were waiting for night to fall, that being at 8.30pm. Eventually we set off again and travelled along the side of the mountains just below the crests and believe me it would have made some of the most ardent mountaineers hesitate crawling down into gorges and up steep sides in the black of night. After three hours of this we halted for the rest of the night and next morning a Greek led us to a spring.

We decided to put in the day adjacent to the water as it was a nice shady spot with a commanding view of the surrounding country. All day we watched the Hun columns go by and in the afternoon saw some who were "billeted" in a house below us row out and do some fishing. We watched their boat return and decided to try and pinch their boat that night.

At 7pm we started off down the mountain trying to do the worst part of the decent before dark. By 9.30pm we reached the beach at a point 500 yards from the cottage, we dumped our gear, took off our boots and crept along the beach in the shadow of the cliffs and at last reached the boat. She looked A1 and we decided to "lay doggo" until the moon went down at 11pm before going further with our plan. It meant an hours wait and it's the longest hour I ever put in.

We could hear the Huns talking in the house and when a dog started barking and one of them came outside I thought it was all up but he didn't investigate far and breathing became more natural again.

At long last the moon disappeared and straight to work for us. With every scrape of the boat on the shingle beach we expected a challenge but eventually we had her afloat and then discovered the absence of oars so grabbing a piece of butter box each we canoed down to pick up our gear.

As we expected a hue and cry the next day when the boat was missing we headed for the opposite side of the bay and believe it or not, paddled ten miles across with the pieces of butter box, landing just before the sun rose. We were dead beat and slept all day, had a feed, smoke and a yarn and off to sleep again.

Next morning we looked our prize over and started to fit out for a voyage to Crete. We didn't know where the troops had been evacuated to but thought that Crete was sufficiently far enough away to be safe. The boat was very tiny, only 12 feet long but she represented a getaway so we christened her the Endeavour.

We cut down four fir trees with a table knife, two for oars, one for the mast and the other for a sweep or rudder. All were made 10 feet long leaving a light end for the boom. Two blankets were then sewn together and cut to fit our mast and boom, the remaining piece being used as a jib.

We reckoned on a journey of 150 miles and that night set sail at 8pm. A good wind was blowing and we started 4 hour tricks on the helm that giving us all 8 hours rest between watches. In the morning the wind was still favourable so we continued on course until 3.30pm when we landed on a beach (Cape Matapan) for the night. From a nearby settlement the villagers brought us bread and cheese and at 7pm we were bedded down and enjoying the best night's sleep since being separated from the boys. The Huns were nowhere near us, there was only a mountain track to the place and so anxiety left us.

At 7am we were off again only to get a decent scare about 9am. I heard a plane and saw what I thought was a Sunderland flying boat. We stood up and waved until Reg Hammond was the first to realise our mistake and recognised it as an Italian Savoia seaplane. I must have looked like the Statue of Liberty standing stock still with arm stretched out. By all that's lucky he circled us once and made off while we were expecting anything from a bomb to a hail of bullets.

We kept going all day and the next night only to be caught in the doldrums in the middle of the day. By 3.30pm the sky started to blacken and a puff every now and then warned us of an approaching storm so we decided to run back twenty miles to an island (Kithera). The storm raged all night and we just kept off shore till morning when we found a beach on which to land.

All the coasts in this region are exceptionally rugged and a place to land is only offered about every 10 miles or so. We slept all the morning and the villagers brought us eggs, bread and cheese. Some spoke quite good English, a fact that is not strange in Greece and the islands as thousands of them have been to Australia and America. They told us a large motor boat leaving from the other side of the island for Crete. We decided to tramp overland and catch it for the wind was still blowing against us. A Greek came with us, to show the way which led over mountain roads and tracks and at every village the people gave us wine, bread and boiled eggs; at one place we were taken to a café and given fried eggs, 6 eggs each.

At 1.30am we arrived at the port to find that the boat had sailed at 11.00pm so off to a well earned sleep. A Greek woke us in the morning and took us to his place for breakfast and it turned out that he had been a cook in a restaurant in Taree, the proprietor of which had been known to me. That day and the next we stayed there and at 8pm the next day we boarded a motor launch and were on another stage of the journey. At 1am we arrived at a small island (Antikithera), half way to Crete and for the next two days waited for transport. All the time the Greeks fed us on onion soup, roast mutton, mutton stew etc and were kindness itself.

We set off at 9pm on the second day of our stay on a large Greek trading yacht and at last reached Crete and were taken to a building for a bite to eat. The place had been opened up specially for us. After a sleep for a few hours we rang the British HQ some twenty miles away and they sent a truck to get us. When we arrived back amongst Aussie encampments (2/2nd Field Regiment) the first familiar face I saw was Ron's (D'Archy) genial old dial and did we pump the old handshake. It was a real welcome to have met him again. In all it took us thirteen days to report back and although effort was almost continuous and the going extremely hard and sometime dangerous, not once were we dismayed or sorry for ourselves. It was a great adventure and the three of us were all enthusiasm the whole time. In all we covered 150 miles in our small boat and another 70 odd in the Greek fishing launches. The Greek people were splendid and we would not have been treated in a better manner in our own country. Greece is a beautiful country and we have seen a lot of it. Athens is the finest city we've visited since leaving Aussie, but we only had two days there.

Wally Walsh is on the island and quite safe, but haven't seen him, and it seems as though I miss out on a yarn with him again. Ron says "for goodness sake wind up, I have to censor that", so as the news is above all used up I'll take his tip. It seems that I'll be able to get back to the old routine of a letter per week again for a while, so will be writing again soon. Have not had any mail for a month, but we expect to get some in a few days time. Hope you are both keeping

Extracts from the Greek Travel Journal of Sancha Donald

June 7, 2008.

..... We identified a couple of beaches that we thought could have been the escape point. The first beach we came to seemed to be the one. We checked into a hotel that was located on the southern headland above the beach. After a swim in the sea we walked along the beach past a couple of houses. We came to a house that John thought could have existed during the war.

We went into what is now a restaurant and asked about the house attached to the restaurant. Here we met an elderly couple who could not speak English. They fetched their son who translated. The son and elderly couple were at the back of the restaurant which was quiet as it was about 3.00pm – we thought they were possibly the owners.

The son told us that the house we noticed was built in the early 1960's. John explained our reason for asking and they instantly showed us another house – the second house now in disrepair that was the house. Not only was it the house where the German soldiers had been billeted but the old man had been in the house at the time Fyfe, Ken & Reg stole the small boat – he remembered the incident – he would have been a teenager or younger at the time. We took a photo – John and the old man – everyone was emotional – everyone shook hands and kissed.

After dinner, which had been embellished by a small baptism celebration, we walked back to the beach. John took three sprigs of gum leaves and put them into the water as a mark of respect to these three brave men.

There was no need to go to Kythira, we had found all that we came for and more. We could see the bay they had paddled across to – to a beach some ten miles away, the harsh mountains they had climbed and hidden in were immediately behind us and the old man had learnt for the first time that whoever stole the small boat some 67 years ago had gone on to Kythira then to Crete and had survived.....

June 13, 2008.

..... After breakfast we made the journey to Kolimbari by bus. This was the port that Fyfe, Ken & Reg would have arrived at in the fishing boat that brought them from Antikithira.

We were glad we found this place – whilst it did not compare to finding the departure point, house and old man it completed the journey for both us and it would have been remiss not to have made this little additional effort.....



John outside house that housed the Germans and from where the boat was taken, and the Greek man who remembered the incident and would only have been a teenager at the time



The rugged mountains, Fife, Ken and Reg would have crossed to make their escape



The beach in Greece thought possibly to have been the escape point

D.A. JACK'S STORY – PARTS 3 & 4

As promised the final chapters in Steve's Jack's story including North Africa, Ceylon, Marriage, Regimental Parade and New Guinea

After Benghazi surrendered they started to evacuate or, actually they'd started to evacuate their troops, before they surrendered and they were heading off on the Tripoli road towards Tripoli when at Beda Fomm the Seventh Armoured Division, the Desert Rats, they cut them off there and attacked. And we were ordered forward to support them and we moved out in convoy.

And we pulled up alongside a broken down Italian tank on the outskirts of Benghazi and there was a big white blockhouse, cement blockhouse, on our left and here were hundreds and hundreds of turkeys running round. So of course while we were stood there waiting for the convoy to move Bunny Roach and Alf Woods tore off over into it with a couple of sand bags. And they grabbed a couple of turkeys and stuffed them in the bags and I was shouting at them to "come back, the convoy's moving" and they came back on the run and piled into the thing and "we're right for tea tonight, Steve. We got some roast turkey!" "Oh right" we thought "that looks good".

And we went on until we came to where the battle was raging at Beda Fomm, where the Italians had got a belting from the Seventh Armoured Division, and there were truck after truck coming back loaded with Italian prisoners. Course the Seventh Armoured Division confiscated every truck they could see and loaded them up with prisoners and brought them back. I did hear that (back to the prisoner of war camp in Benghazi) I did hear afterwards that they collected another ten thousand Ities there but I never had any confirmation of that, but that's what I heard. Anyway we moved on and we took up a position at Beda Fomm and we were laid out in a tank line ready to attack the tanks if they came, Italian tanks that came charging out. And we were there and the battle had apparently ended and the troops started coming back and the 2/4th Battalion had been left behind to garrison the town of Benghazi.

So we waited there and dug a hole, put a fire in it, broke up some wood - wooden ammunition boxes, anything we could find - and we had the fire burning away and the tucker waggon came in and we waved them away:

"We don't want it, we're having roast turkey for tea"

"Ah right"

so away they went. Well they got the fire all going and the blokes started to dry pluck these turkeys and roast them in the coals but when they lifted up the wing flap of one of the turkeys and then the other one, we'd already killed them, here they were all the diseases and sores and wogs in North Africa were in there! Oh gawd, we couldn't eat them so we put them in the fire and burnt them. Ah they smelt nice when they were burning too but we weren't game to eat them they were that many, all the diseases in North Africa had been pumped into them. Next day we pulled out and went back to Benghazi, because the battle for Beda Fomm was over, and the

Division was chasing a few stragglers and that towards Tripoli. So we went back to the airport only this time we didn't set the guns up, we put the guns and the tractors and MT into all the hangers where the LAD could work on them and drivers working on the trucks and things and greasing everything up and getting everything serviceable. So as we came back into Benghazi from Beda Fomm we went past this big white block house and on one side there was nothing but on the other side in big black letters was written 'Polta di Esperimento Benghazi'. It was an experimental farm! and so we had to eat emergency rations that night.

And so we settled down in Benghazi only this time we camped in the aerodrome. This time we camped in all the barracks and everything else and a few of us scouted round and we found a few cut down drums, cut down longwise, 44 gallon drums. So we found water, we filled them up and we had a copper there and we filled it up with water and had it getting heated up and a few of us decided we'd hop in these tubs and have a bath. Oh and it was good too. And someone found a cake of lifebuoy and oh, we were made. We had a lovely hot bath and every now and again someone would pour another gallon of hot water into the tub to keep it hot. And anyway, quite a few of us went through that bath and we felt bloody good. We felt clean anyway although our clothes weren't too good, they were a bit smelly, but we got cleaned up anyway. We didn't have to worry much about our hair because we'd had most of it clipped off close.

Anyway the next day, after our bathing and that was finished and we'd had a meal, we were settled in and then we got the hell of a shock. A couple of Heinkels came and started bombing and strafing. They hit a few of the barracks and a couple of blokes got wounded. I think it was Joe Greenwood and Neville Freeman. Neville got a bit of shrapnel in his shoulder or something but Joe Greenwood wasn't so badly hit. But they had to go back out to hospital anyway and from hospital Neville was sent home to Australia. We thought he must've been worse hit than Joe but Joe was alright, he stayed on.

Well after a couple more forays from the German airforce bombing and strafing we decided we'd better move out. So we moved back up onto the escarpment near Fort Regima and oh we had a few days leave in Benghazi first. And while we were in Benghazi I was down near the waterfront and here was a 15 inch gun monitor, I think it was the Erebus or the Terror, was moored alongside the mole that went out across the harbour. And the Heinkels came over and they started bombing and strafing it. Course they had all their anti-aircraft guns going flat out on the monitors, and everything else round, so anyway they broke off the attack. The return fire was a bit too hot for them so they left.

And oh we poked around the town and had a look at it for a while and went back to our camp at the airport. And the next thing happened we were bombed and strafed again. But this time we moved, we moved out of the airport and that and moved back up the escarpment past Fort Regima. And there they'd found an empty ammunition dump. It was, oh, I suppose about four or five hundred acres in this valley and the Ities had excavated cavities in all around this circle and they'd filled them up with big concrete blockhouses with big rolling doors, roller doors on the front. And the sergeants had one of these for our mess and our camp, and all these huts or emplacements around they were filled up with gunners and everything else. And the Italians had laid a narrow gauge railway line right around the circle and they used to roll these little trucks along, load them with ammunition and take them to wherever they had to go. But anyway they'd shifted all their ammunition it was all gone, just the empty huts. And they'd been swept out, they were quite clean. So that's where we camped for a few days. Oh, we had a lovely place there too! Blokes had accumulated – ah, the Sergeants' Mess, as we called it - it had a couple of sofas in it and a few armchairs and a little bar in the corner where we'd have a few bottles of chianti and port and Italian wines and a few hurricane lamps hanging round and we were quite comfortable there for a few days. When it came to eating, one of these little trolleys would roll around and we'd climb onto it and just pump it's way down to the mess hall and we all had a good feed down there. And we were living quite comfortably there, oh, for about a week.

But the Colonel had got a report of all these things we'd accumulated and put in the huts and in these big cement things. There was 'more than our war establishment' (much more) that we'd looted out of houses and things like that and hotels. So next thing we got orders for a training move. We were stripped down to the basics, just our war establishment and we were supposed to go out in the desert for a drive for the day and then return; to our luxury apartments. But the Colonel had sprung a trick on us. He'd got rid of all this excess luggage that we'd gathered, baggage that we'd gathered, so we muttered at first. But when we got out in the desert on the way past Beda Fomm we found out we weren't going back to our comfortable quarters. We went right on past Agedabia and right out into the desert and we took up an anti-tank position.

We dug big circular gun pits so the gun could rotate and fire through 360 degrees

and the guns were set up 400 yds apart, they covered a long line for 24 or 36 guns. And we dug in there, settled in. It was soft digging we were all supposed to dig in, dig our slit trenches. Anyway I scraped out a bit of a slit trench meself at the back of the gun, I was tired of digging all the way over the desert

“oh” I said “bugger it, that'll do me”.

Anyway the gun position officer came round, and he looked at my slit trench he said

“Sergeant Jack that's a bloody disgrace. Look, it's just a shallow scraped out hole in the ground”

“yeah” I said “but I can get in it”.

He said

“Nobody else can and you wouldn't have much of a chance in that either”.

So, I got me liver twisted. I go “I'll show him”.

I got in and I dug a beauty, it was soft digging too. I dug it right along, I put steps in down one end of it and I had it down about four or five feet deep and right along for about another four or five feet and I sandbagged it and revetted it.

It was a work of art.

He never came back to see it though, but I was ready for anything.

Anyway the next thing happened we had to go out on an armed reconnaissance and they took a troop of 25 pounders, six guns, a troop of Bofors 2 pounder automatic anti-aircraft guns, a company of the Northumberland Fusiliers and, oh, what was it - there was some other odds and sods troops and I dunno probably about fifty light tanks and armoured vehicles and away we went out on this armed reconnaissance. We were away for about a week in the desert, just driving and going along and next thing we got as far as the salt marshes, about a hundred mile from Tripoli, and that's when we hit trouble. The bloody Germans were coming down and they attacked. Of course we fought back and we steadied them for a while but we decided there were too many for us to handle. We had to go back, we withdrew and went back to our gun positions. And the Bofors went up and took up position again at the end of the line of guns, course the others went with the armoured division and the company of Fusiliers, Vickers machine gun Company, they rejoined their Battalion.

And anyway we all set up again in our gun position and in another couple of days they told us the 9th Division was moving in and relieving us and we were to withdraw back to El Agheila. So next day we packed up all our camouflage nets and brought our gun tractors up and dragged the guns out of the pit, out on the edge of the gun pit. And everything just about ready to move and all of a sudden I'd lost me driver, Billy Blackall.

"Where the... what the hell's that pinhead gone and done, what's he doing?" And I walked round the front of the tractor and there was Billy Blackall heading across the flat as fast as he could run, pulling on his steel helmet. He had a slit trench dug about a hundred yards away where he'd had his tractor parked and he suddenly dived down and I thought "Now what's up with him?" And about half a mile behind us here was Regimental Headquarters and there were trucks going everywhere, blokes running and a plane, a Heinkel, down strafing them and it was spraying bullets around everywhere. And I took one look at this and I yelled at the blokes to "take cover". So next thing the plane swung up and swung round in a circle and I was about number two position that time and he started down and he swung around Command Post and he dived down on the number six position and started machine gunning. Oh and I took one look at this and I told everyone to take cover and they all jumped at their slit trenches. And I dove into my very good slit trench and while I was in there the plane came along the line of guns firing away, machine gunning, and it had four 20mm cannon in those plus a few machine guns in the wings. And I dived into the slit trench and a few 20mm shells exploded on the edge and blew sandbags and I had sand trickling down the back of me neck and I got right down in the bottom, boy I was glad I'd dug that bloody pit deep!

So as it went over me I bobbed up to have a look and he had a tail gunner. We'd never experienced that. We'd been strafed before but not by a tail gunner and I bobbed up to have a look and there was four in the tail in a turret and all I could I see was these red dots and 20mm cannon shells exploding along the ground. So I dived straight back down into the pit and I fitted right into the bottom of it.

And he zoomed over the hill, there was a bit of a hill at the end and D Troop was along there and Jack Fairly a signaller was sitting in his radio truck sending out signals, such as 'GE calling RE, come in' or 'GD calling RD, come in' and the next thing a burst of cannon shells came through the side, over the back of the truck and took his radio out. Blew it to pieces. Poor old Jack, I think he's gone now and he probably wouldn't even remember that now.

And anyway he stormed over - the Heinkel stormed over - the line of guns and he ran into a hail of Bofors. Course the Bofors saw what was happening and they were laid there waiting for him. When he came along over the line of guns of D Troop they into him. And he flew away but I don't know whether he was badly damaged or what. Someone said afterwards he was smoking when he went away so the Bofors might have knocked a bit of a hole in him.

Oh they were a bloody good light anti-aircraft gun. Automatic, 2 pounder shells with an 8,000 feet range where they didn't fall back - they spontaneously exploded at 8,000 feet - and exploded if they hit anything on the way up so the Germans were always very wary around the Bofor gun positions.

And anyway we all pulled out. We mounted our trucks, no-one was hurt, we were lucky, but no-one was hurt and nothing was damaged except a few bullet holes through the canvas tops on our gun tractors. And we pulled out and we started moving out and the Colonel ordered us to travel across the desert in desert formation which is open and scattered and not on the road. About half a mile away there was a beautiful asphalt road we thought "oh here, we'll be able to roll along at 40 miles an hour".

But the Colonel ordered us to keep off it and we saw his wisdom afterwards, because there were trucks going up and down the road and the Heinkels were coming along and strafing them. We'd of had a lot killed if we'd gone on that road.

But we stuck in the desert formation and although later on in the day we got strafed again, going across the desert. And one gun had its tyre blown off but they pulled another tyre off one of the section limbers and replaced it on the gun, they were the same size, and they replaced the one on the gun.

Well we kept going for oh, probably, quite a few miles and just short of El Agheila we pulled up there and the troops were scattered all over the place. We were supposed to go on giving our gunners training and we were down in a little hollow, my gun was, and the others down in other little hollows but they were scattered about a bit. And we had to put a sentry up so, I've forgotton his name now, I put him up. He used to be a preliminary fighter, a boxer, in the Sydney Stadium the Sydney boxing Stadium before the War. He was a good bloke, he wasn't very bright but he was a good solid worker. And he was sitting up on top of a mound of dirt and he saw a group of officers coming so he shouted out to us down the valley. Course we were loafing and we were supposed to be doing training so we put on an appearance as though we were training and he called out this red light. We knew what it meant. Anyway the officers came in, looked around and the 2i said to me

“Sergeant, what's this red light?”

“Oh” I said “I dunno. Gunner so and so he has a code all of his own. I don't understand it but apparently he does and he thought we'd all understand his code too”.

We understood it alright!

So the officers all left and we packed our dial sights and things away, which I'd supposedly been instructing them on. Anyway we checked everything out and we were all ready to move again and the next day we got orders to move.

“Ah beauty” we said “we're going back to Alexandria”.

The 9th Division was coming up and we moved out, we were the last unit to move. All the battalions had gone and the 16th Brigade Anti-Tank Company had still remained with us and that's where they stopped too. The 16th Brigade Anti-Tank Company finished up in Tobruk with the 9th Division. We started withdrawing and rumbling back along the road all the way past our old battle fields. We pulled up at Derna and had a look at the grave where our blokes were buried and then proceeded on again. So we travelled on towards Bardia, went down the escarpment at Halfaya Pass and headed through Sidi Barrani and headed towards Mersa Matruh. Ah dear.

When we got to Mersa Matruh Skeeter Pearce with his usual run of bad luck, or good luck, depends on how you look at it, he was driving his gun tractor and his driver was sitting in his seat - in Skeeter's seat. And we ran onto an English land mine and they hadn't cleared it or left a map. Skeeter drove in and blew his truck up and his driver got badly hurt but Skeeter never got a scratch hardly, just another one to get another wound stripe. And oh of course he was an unlucky man; personally he was a very fortunate man I think.

But we travelled on there, we came to *?Amiriya? (32:19)* and that's where we settled down and camped but all our guns and MT had to go to workshops. Course the rest of the Division was moving out towards Greece and Crete and we were supposed to go too. And the 2nd and the 3rd Regiment they'd been equipped with 25 pounders. Actually, the English Artillery 51st Regiment were very upset. They were forced to hand their 25 pounders over to the 2nd/2nd Regiment and in return the 2nd/2nd Regiment gave them back their 18 pounder mark 4's and the obsolete 4.5 Howitzers and so they were very disgruntled about that, having to give over their beautiful 25 pounders that they were experts on, for these antiquated guns. So anyway we had to wait there while our guns and equipment were in the workshops. And after a couple of weeks the First Battery and Regimental Headquarters all their equipment came out of workshops and then

immediately they went down and on the boats and headed for Greece. But Second Battery gear hadn't come out and they were still in workshops, so anyway we had to wait there. So eventually our guns and everything, MT transport came back out of workshops and everything was going pretty good. So we dropped the canopies on our trucks and we used to go down to the wharves every day in Alexandria and they used to tell us "sorry, no transport today" so we'd go back to camp.

Well this went on for a couple of weeks and we're still at camp! And the Battery Sergeant was sitting down in the Sergeant's Mess one night and next thing our Regimental Sergeant Major, Ted Resuggen, and a few Sergeants from Regimental Headquarters and First Battery they moved in and they told us what had happened, the whole story. We knew nothing of that - about the debacle that was in Greece. But we were lucky we didn't go to Greece after hearing them, what they had to say.

So we settled down there and had to wait. Course the English wanted us,

"oh, twelve 25 pounders..."

Rommel was coming down towards Mersa Matruh, at Sallum and Sidi Barani and of course the English wanted us. A complete Battery, twelve 25 pounders, fully equipped and fresh out of workshops and all their equipment and manned by veteran gunners, and of course we'd picked up a few reinforcements there too. And anyway Tom Blamey refused he wouldn't let them have us, oh they were very upset about that too, but we'd of probably got massacred, too, up there.

Anyway next thing happened we were having a game of cricket and a runner came down from Battery Headquarters with the orders "Ready to move back to Palestine, within two hours." Course we got the orders and we took off at the run. Half an hour later the battery reported "Ready to move" and we had to go back to Palestine.

By road.

So we started off and we came up, we crossed the canal on a pontoon bridge, and we came through Ismailiya and across a pontoon bridge, we drove across that and we headed up into Palestine. Well we drove along for about a day and a half I suppose and we drove into our next camp, which we called Khassa. And we were there for quite a long while - in fact we used to call the place 'the Siege of Khassa'.

Course we blew in there and here was the remains of the Regiment that had come back, they'd settled in and course they welcomed us like long lost brothers too, and we did the same for them. Cause we were a very closely knit regiment, too,

I think we were more closely knit than any other unit in the AIF. But aw, the 2nd/4th Battalion was a pretty closely knit unit too. We had a long association with them and we had a lot of mates in them and they had a lot of mates in us.

We settled down there course we had twelve 25 pounders, ready to go into action. Oh god, the 7th Division was moving up into Syria and the 5th Regiment never had enough guns so we had to hand over our beautiful twelve 25 pounders and all our gun tractors and equipment and signalling equipment, we had to hand it over to them. Oh and they came in and picked it up and they were amazed at the condition the guns and the trucks and everything were in because they'd been very well maintained all the way through. So they took off. Oh we had a few of our Sergeants from 10 Battery and us had a bit of a farewell party in the Mess that night, which was quite a good party really, everybody enjoyed themselves even if they were a bit sick next morning. But they pulled out and we sat down to a dreary process of training on different things and practice and practice and more practice. They were boring days, those, hammering skilled gunners into a boring training exercise which they all knew as well as what we did.

But anyway cut a long story short, they blocked the Germans at Mersa Matruh and El Alamein and they held them there. They were pretty well knocked about too, the Germans and their equipment and they lost a lot of equipment too. And anyway the 9th Division was trapped in Tobruk and they were a thorn in the side for over twelve months on the Germans. They attacked many times unsuccessfully and were repelled with heavy losses and Rommel despaired of ever breaking into Tobruk. But of course when the Ities had it, when we captured it, they left a lot of guns there and a lot of ammunition. Italian field guns, but our blokes soon learned how to use them, and the Infantry were having a practise time having a great time, shooting at the Germans and Ities with the Italian guns. Of course they weren't as effective as our 25 pounders but it kept the Germans and Italians on the run at times.

So after that we got equipped with our new guns and transport and everything else and we were ready to move and do things, too. But in the meantime the Japanese had started coming down through the islands and down through Singapore. And we got orders to move. Back to australia, we

thought. And we got on the train and we went down to Suez and there we got on the boats.

We got on the old *Westerland*, it was a Dutch boat that used to run on the Atlantic side with a Dutch and Lascar crew. But anyway we were fairly comfortable on it and there was, oh I think it was, the 4th Field Hospital it was on the boat too.

Of course all the nurses and that they got all the good cabins and things and we had our hammocks on the deck and round about. And we headed off towards Ceylon and we thought we were going home. But we had to get off. They took the boats into the harbour at Ceylon and they were shifting other troops and things around but we went ashore.

Oh gawd, we were still in winter dress uniform and we landed out of the winter into the tropics. Ohhh, blokes were - I had a great rash right down both sides and across my stomach and when we came off the boat and had to march to our camp all the skin was rubbed off and it was all these big yellow pustule things. A lot of the blokes had it. We'd contracted it on board the old *Westerland* in the showers and toilets, it was a nasty skin disease. We had green paint all over us, that green dye they used to put on, it was very good too but we needed it too.

Anyway we moved out, out of Colombo. We got a train out of Colombo and we got off the train and we had to march about 12 or 15 miles with our full packs and kit bags and everything to where our camp was to be. So we marched along the road and quite a few blokes fell out on the road, they just couldn't keep going cause the sweat was pouring out of us all. We weren't used to it and with our heavy winter dress on we were just hosing the sweat out of us. And ohh, this sort of tinea disease we'd contracted on the boat - the skin rubbed off all these little yellow blisters and we were raw meat. And sweating in our webbing gear and heavy uniforms they were just rubbing us, so we were a pretty miserable mob when we got to this camp. All the camp consisted of was a house and an aerodrome alongside it was being built out of the jungle with all these Senegalese workers. But there was one good thing about it they had a shower there. Just a shower rose on a pipe, out in the open next to a lane, where everybody - but we didn't care, we just had to get into it. There was plenty of cold water, which was quite warm in that climate, but we really enjoyed a shower

Then we settled down there and brought our guns off the boats. And they had to crane them off, land them on the wharves and pick them up with a truck. But this was a bit of a change for us, all this heat and sunlight and tropical climate. We all lost a few pound in weight, sweating, and as soon as

we could we got out of our winter clothing and back into our shirts and shorts, which was a big relief.

I forget how long we were camped on that aerodrome. But it was quite a while though, cause we were supposed to be defending it against paratroopers dropping onto it because it was a new aerodrome being built. And it was quite a long one too and fairly wide. And all these Senegalese, Ceylonese, whatever they were, they were working on it. Men and women. And I know all our blokes were under the shower, no cover or anything, or surround, and all the women used to be going to work down this lane they'd all be looking and giggling at these naked Australians under the shower. We didn't care, we didn't suffer any false modesty at that time. But they were walking down this lane - it was right past the shower. Next thing we got orders we mustn't have a shower in public out in the open with nothing on. Anyway they put a bit of a wall round it in the finish so we could shower there with dignity, but it didn't worry us.

We were on Ceylon for quite a while. We were supposed to be there for about four or five weeks but I think it was over three months before we got off the island. Because the Japanese had been hammering at Singapore and hammering round Indonesia and they'd been causing a disturbance in Australia and of course the government was in a panic too. But when we started off from the Middle East we were ostensibly going home. But the 19th Brigade left first and they went straight home, the 4th, 8th and 12th Battalions and the 3rd Field Regiment they went straight home. And they immediately grabbed them and bunged them up into Darwin and up there in the north because they were expecting the Japanese to invade there any time. And while we were coming home Churchill wanted to put the 6th and 7th Divisions but he wanted the 9th left in Egypt because they were necessary for the defence of Egypt. And so Curtin gave him the 9th Division, he'd leave them there, but the 6th and the 7th he wouldn't give him ours. He wanted to put them into Burma, but as General Sturdee pointed out the troops weren't tactically loaded. The troops were on one boat and their equipment - guns and tanks and whatever - were on another boat. It'd take them three weeks to get ready for action again and so Curtin bailed up on him. Oh and the Pommy was most upset! He never believed that an Australian Prime Minister would refuse him the troops he so desperately needed.

He did a good job not giving us to him because we'd of been massacred, same as the others. We'd of been dumped down in Burma with hardly any equipment and having to start retreating immediately. It was a terrible setup there.

But anyway we avoided going to Burma and we were there, oh, I think it was three or four months instead of the few weeks we were supposed to be there. And of course the Japanese had been trying to come through there too. But, as a matter of fact, one of the long range flying boats was buzzing round and he saw this Japanese battle squadron, naval battle squadron, moving towards Ceylon. And he rang up and told them on his radio and they said (they woke up to what it was) and "Ah" they said "don't be silly, that's not the Japanese squadron. That's the new Battle Squadron coming out from England." And they sent the message, the radio message, in clear - which the Japs could understand it, it wasn't in code and "Ooh, a new English battle squadron? Ohh" so they turned tail and went back about their dirty business without heading for Ceylon.

Course we expected to have to face a landing in Ceylon with the few troops that were there. We had guns along the beach in case of a landing and oh we went up in the hills. One place we had a gun position on the edge of a track winding up a mountain and they'd, Ceylon people, had dug gun platforms out on each side of it along the edge of the cliff. We lowered our guns and our platforms down onto it and so we had the guns in a line up alongside this road, just below the road crest, and they built like a hut of these plaited palm fronds tied together over it for cover and left the front of it open, just like a shed, so that we could fire out of it. Course we were back up on the side of the hill too on the side of this road, so it was impossible to carry out a voice control. So they gave us these English Tannoy speakers. They were speakers like a small radio and it was connected by wire up to the Control Post and you'd get orders on this Tannoy speaker and when you got the orders you pressed a button to acknowledge it. And you might get the order 'troop target HE 117, charge three, 8,000 yds' you pressed the button on the top, that acknowledged the orders.

Oh they were quite good, we liked them. Occasionally someone would forget to press the button and there'd be a shout come out of the Tannoy "Acknowledge number four!" so number four would jump to action, press the button down. But they were very good. We had to hand them over when we left.

An English Division was coming out and I think they moved into Ceylon. But we didn't give them our equipment. We carried our own guns. They had theirs and all their equipment and they relieved us.

And we went up in the hills for a while, to a convalescent camp and an artillery training range up there and we did a bit of firing up there in the hills. Ohh it was very trying, it was very hilly and mountainous and hot and steamy. Anyway, we came out of that and then we came home. We marched

down we got off the train in Colombo and marched down to the wharves and here's the dear old Westerland sitting up there waiting for us. She'd taken some of the 19th Brigade back to Australia and they'd re-equipped with Australian tucker and Australian beer from Adelaide. We weren't lovers of West End but it was Australian beer so it was good. We didn't argue about it especially when they gave us a couple of bottles a day on rations.

So we got on it. And there was a hospital unit on board. Course we had no contact with them and the, oh, who else was it? - the 2nd/3rd Battalion and the 2nd/1st Field Regiment. She was licensed to carry, I think, about 1200 passengers but she had about 3,000 on this time and she was an old coal burner. Three screws, triple screw, and she'd been used on the Atlantic trade. She was a solid old type coal burner, steam powered.

So while we were there the Japanese attacked Colombo and they got a bit of a shock. Britain had just sent a load of the latest model Hurricanes out, ooh and they were hot shots. And they got into the Japanese and the Japanese didn't know what hit them, they got planes knocked down everywhere when these had jumped them. Anyway, we took off from there and put out to sea and we were heading towards - going south. And I used to look at the stars at night and see we were still going south and I said "it looks like we're going home".

And the next minute we'd be looking at the stars and the boat was doing a lot of diving around, it'd change it's course, and one minute a group of stars would be on our left and the next thing that group of stars would be way over on our right. So we guessed we were zigzagging, so the stars would be moving backwards and forwards.

Anyway on the boat, the troops all had about 24 to a table and they were given a ration of 2 bottles of beer a day. But they had to pay for them at 6d a bottle, no tax or anything out there at sea on those boats, we got it at cost price. So anyway my bombardier, Tod Monk, he had a table with 24 blokes on it and he used to collect the beer for that table - 24 bottles a day. Oh gawd, and then they had to pay for it at 6d a bottle. A lot of them were broke and a lot of them weren't drinkers either, and Tod said to me

"what am I going to do with this extra beer?" he said

"I gotta pay for it."

And at 6d a bottle it wasn't going to break many blokes,

"but" he said "a lot of the blokes don't drink and a lot of them they're broke."

"Well" I said "how many bottles have you got left over tonight, Tod?" and he said

"I've got 12 bottles."

“Well,” I said “you put the money in and if you haven't got it I have. Now we'll take those bottles of beer and we'll go up in the bows at night, sit on the anchor chains and drink them away from everybody's sight.”

So Tod used to get his quota there every day, oh it was all West End, but it was all right. We got to like it. And we got up in the bows and sat on the anchor chains around a little cabin that was up there and we sat down there, watched the boat rising and falling, we looked at the stars and we looked at everything and we watched the moon. We were zigzagging and a couple of other boats in the convoy, I forget how many of them, they weren't a big convoy but we were just sailing along. Then one night the Orderly Officer came walking around, Hughie Hoffman, ah he was the Orderly Officer.

“Ah” he said “Sargeant Jack and Bombardier Monk! This is where you blokes get to at night.” And he said

“Well, and where'd you get all that beer from?”

Course we told him. It was stuff that the other troops couldn't drink and we had to pay for it.

“Oh well” he said “do you mind if I join you at night?” he said

“I'll put my share in.”

So Hughie joined us too. I liked him in a way. A lot of blokes didn't. He wasn't very popular with the Officers and in the Officers' Mess - he didn't like being in there with blokes that didn't like him and he didn't like them - so he came out and joined us there at night. And we sat there and all talked about everything, anything and everything at all. Looked at the stars and looked at the transports and we had quite a pleasant time for about a week. And anyway old Hughie used to join us there every night when he wasn't Orderly Officer or something, even then he'd still come and join us.

And he sat there and talked, he was a very intelligent bloke and quite a nice bloke, too, when we got to know him. Tod and I got to like old Hughie.

So anyway, when we're getting off the boat at Melbourne the last night we had our little party out on the bows and we're getting off at Melbourne and he came along and he says

“I want to thank you two blokes”

“oh” we said “why's that Hughie?”

“Well” he said “this has been, these few nights, weeks and nights, out here in the bow with you blokes has been the happiest time I've ever spent in the army.”

“Oh. Well we're pleased about that Hughie.”

“No,” he said “I want to thank you blokes. It was you blokes that made it nice for me.”

Of course we wriggled our bums a bit on our anchor chains!

“Oh” we said “we're pleased Hughie. We enjoyed your company, too.”

That pleased him because he wasn't a very popular man in the Officer's Mess. They were bits of smart alocs some of them. But he was a good bloke, Hughie, when you got to know him. And we got to know him and he got to know us too.

Anyway we landed at Port Melbourne, went ashore, got on the trains and headed up to Seymour. And next thing we were getting ready to go on leave. We had 28 days leave per man in our home state. So anyway we got ready to move on leave from the camp at Seymour. And I copped a job. They went and gathered up, found out how much money everyone wanted. Of course they all wanted everything they had in their pay book. And well, about 800 odd men going on leave and a lot of them had a lot of money in their pay books, there'd of been thousands and thousands of pounds. I know I had quite a wad there. And so they had the money there in boxes, pounds, pounds and pounds for the payday the next day and I got the job of guarding it. Sitting on it with a Tommy Gun on me lap, just in case. Oh they didn't trust everyone and I know a few of the blokes there I wouldn't trust either! And so, we got paid next day and got our leave passes and got on the train and headed off to Albury.

Those Victorian trains are very good they were 5' 3" gauge and they were wide and there was plenty of room in them and they could certainly rattle along. Well when we got to Albury of course we had to change trains there and get on the NSW trains, cause there was only a 4' 8½" gauge from there on, where the other was 5' 3". But anyway there was a nice comfortable train all lined up for us and we all got in and climbed in and settled down for the night and we headed off for Sydney. And we got there the next morning.

So, when I got off the train I was standing there talking to Bill Bowie and a couple of others and the next thing my sister and, I think it was a couple of Forrest girls, from Kenebri they attacked me. Oh gawd, they saw me there and recognised me and rushed over to me, nearly knocked me down. And they said

"Mum's sitting up here, too."

See the trains had been coming through with troops for two days and Mum said

"I think he'll be on there today." She knew.

Anyway they took me over to Mum. Course she was a bit of a wreck then, nearly blind. She was living with my sister and the Forrest girls up at Kings Cross, they had an apartment there and she'd worked with the Forrest girls in Wee Waa so she knew them well.

Course I was heading for Rocky Creek, Kenebri. So I caught the train the next night on platform 10, at twenty past ten. And I headed off that night, all night and most of the next day and we got to Binnaway. We got off there and had a feed there and got back on the train again and we headed off towards Coonabarabran and we got to Coonabarabran and oh went along to Barradine and Kenebri. And I got out of the train there and Isobel and her father were there, they'd come in to meet me and took me out to Rocky Creek. And we were there for, oh, we stopped there for about a week. Oh it might not be a week, I didn't want to lose all me holidays. So when Isobel and I left there and we went back to Sydney on the train. And we got off the train in Sydney and I went and bought the wedding ring at Prouds. I guessed the size, but I wasn't far out and we went to a Mr King in Crown St. He used to teach me, in the Church of England he used to teach me Sunday School when I was a little boy living at Coogee, and I used to go to this Sunday School there.

And anyway, we got married in the Church there.

Well my leave had cut out and I had to report back to Camp at Greta. And I'd done very well for a while because when I went to the transit depot on Central who should I find there but one of my old gunners Horrie Crossfield. So he immediately put down "no transport available".

Well this went on for about a week and I marched in there one day expecting to be "no transport available" but Horrie was on leave and here was another bloke there and he immediately sent me straight back to Greta. So I landed back in Greta Camp.

And while we were there they put on the Brigade March through Sydney. It was the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalion and the 2nd/1st Field Regiment.

So we caught the train back to Central from Greta. Then they told me I'd been nominated as the Regimental marker and the Regimental right guide, because going down through the city it'd be all right guide. I had a very responsible job and I had been selected. Anyway, we arrived on Central Station and all climbed out and marched down in threes to a place just outside. There was a ramp just outside Central and we had to march down through and up Elizabeth St. then turn down into the Domain, go past the Cenotaph and then back down along George St. So when we were there Jack Lewitz, who was the acting Regimental Sergeant Major, said "Regimental marker Sergeant Jack, take the post!"

So I very smartly sloped arms, marched out - there's a lot of people watching, too, I was a very smart man on rifle drill in those days - so I marched out and ordered arms, stood to attention. And of course I got a round of applause from all the spectators, mainly Regimental people and relations. So next thing he said

“2nd/1st Field Regiment, fall in on Sergeant Jack in six ranks!”

So they all fell in in six ranks. There were no Batteries or Regiments it was all the Regiment, that's all, and they all lined up. Officers took post and someone realised that it would be all right dress going down Elizabeth St and the rest of it, so that meant I was in the wrong position for being the right guide. So I was ordered to take one pace forward and change places with the bloke in the rear, the leading bloke in the rear rank. So we did that and he sloped arms and turned around and took up my place I turned into his position and ordered arms so we got another round of applause from the spectators. They enjoyed watching a very smart piece of rifle drill.

And anyway we got orders to move and the band was playing and we marched down into the street and turned right on a right wheel and marched under the viaduct into Elizabeth St and we turned a left wheel there and we marched straight ahead down Elizabeth St and past Oxford St. And of course there were a lot of spectators, they were all cheering and clapping and we went down past Hyde Park until we came to the turning into the Domain. There we did a left wheel and we marched down towards the Cenotaph and there the centre split in two and six ranks went to the right and six ranks went to the left, so we marched on through and rejoined and came on into George St and turned left and began to march down towards the Town Hall.

As we were the artillery and the 2/1st Field Regiment we were the leading Regiment in the Brigade and with bayonets fixed and everything on the slope we looked very, very smart. And we proceeded down until we reached the past (*doesn't quite follow 8:00*) and there we got the order “right dress!” and “eyes right!” as we went past the front of the Town Hall with all the gold braid and brass caps standing up there.

And a few of our Officers broke off and joined them, such as the Colonel and Battery Commanders. The Officers were in a block. they weren't with the troops, they were in a block at the front of the Regiment.

So we proceeded on down amidst great cheers and clapping and shouting from everybody. We marched on down towards Central Station and we marched up the long ramp that led up from George St, we marched up there. We hadn't changed arms at any time onto the different shoulders during the march. We marched with our rifles and bayonets on our left shoulder continuously, we never changed arms. So of course by this time the shoulders were getting a bit sore, they were starting to ache a bit, but we grimly hung on and kept everything right.

And we marched onto Central and down alongside a train that was waiting and there we ordered arms and unfixed bayonets and then we got the order

to embark to mount on the train. So we climbed in, found all our positions where we had to go - everything was well organised - and we settled down. And we proceeded on to Greta and when we got to Greta they marched us back to camp, we had to start packing all our gear. Kit bags and everything, they were already packed, and they marched us down to the Greta railway station and we climbed into another train there and we took off for Brisbane.

Well we travelled all night and eventually got to Brisbane and we disembarked there. We disembarked at the station but another train took us down to the harbour and then we knew what was happening. We camped there that night and the next morning we were on the boats and we found out we were heading for Port Moresby.

So we took off in Liberty boats. Well the Regiment was on one Liberty boat and I suppose the other Battalions were on a separate boat each too. And we started off in convoy and we sailed up the coast and then turned and went towards, right up the coast, and turned and went into Port Moresby and that's where we disembarked.

We disembarked at Port Moresby and we camped there for the night. We had to get off the boat and march down to Port Moresby from the wharves and we waited there, camped there for the night and - my memory gets a bit rusty there - but anyway, about a mile from Port Moresby there was a vacant camp and we moved into it.

We sent our party down to pick up off the wharf, to pick up our guns and our MT gear and there we were in New Guinea.

Of course we were all starey eyed looking at everything, but around Port Moresby it was quite a warm climate but it wasn't too bad. It was a bit like the country around Coonabarabran. All ridges and valleys and ridges and valleys and the mountains in the distance about 20 miles away.

Well all the infantry came off. The Kokoda Track had just started then too and the 21st Brigade had already gone up. And the 39th Militia Battalion, who were a very fine battalion. But they had, their Colonel was an AIF Officer and he'd been in action in the Middle East and Greece and Crete and he knew what they had to expect.

So they marched up there and headed over Kokoda Track until they got to Kokoda and then they started the fight back. They had some severe fighting round Kokoda but then they had to backtrack, march back in a rearguard action. The 21st brigade had joined them by then and together they fought a brilliant rearguard action all the way back. Oh it was a tough trot they had too, but they did very well. And the 21st Brigade took a battering too.

This was the first contact of any major Australian party with the Japanese in the jungle. And there was a lot of them. There were more japs than Australians fighting on the Kokoda Track.

But we were sitting back there at Port Moresby and of course there was no scope for any artillery up there then. So in the meantime they were expecting the 17th Brigade. It had gone to Milne Bay and the 7th Militia Brigade went with them. So they had the best part of six or seven thousand Australians there at Milne Bay but they didn't have many at Port Moresby. But the Japanese attacked Milne Bay because they reckoned they'd only have to march a couple of hundred miles up the coast and they were into Port Moresby. But they got a hammering there at Milne Bay because they had Kitty Hawk fighters there, fighter bombers, and they were bombing and strafing. And the Japanese Navy came in there and there was a hospital ship there with all the lights and everything on, they ordered her to get out of the bay, to leave the port and go away. They were good in that way, they hadn't attacked any hospital ships. So the hospital ship moved out in a hurry.

And we started doing our training and marching (*without guns? with our guns? 17:51*) on the coast inland from Port Moresby. The climate was a bit like our western country. There wasn't much rain in the day but it used to rain at night but up on the mountains it rained every afternoon at 4 o'clock. We were camped there and they were busy, the coastal artillery was busy mounting 6 inch American field guns at what we called Bootless Inlet, because they reckoned that's where the Japs might try and make a landing there because it was all flat country around it.

Well they never had enough NCO's so they sent most of the sergeants from 1st Battery, 2nd battery and 51. Oh there was a big team of us. We were sent down

there to keep these Militia blokes working and digging and concreting and helping to put these 6 inch American guns in action.

Well I was the senior Sargeant so I was promptly appointed Battery Sargeant Major of the camp. I never had much to do except work out the manning details and who had to go with them every day. Course that used to only take about 10 or 15 minutes, so then I had nothing to do after that. And we used to look at this Bootless Inlet and see fish jumping about in it everywhere. There was a lot of coral in it, elephant head coral and stuff, it came up and it grew up to just below the surface.

Well we were watching all these fish jumping about and about half a dozen of the Sargeants not on duty we decided we'd get some. We could get plenty of dynamite and gelignite, to get a heap of that and go fishing.

Well a couple of native boys took us out in a lakatoi, that was a twin hulled canoe with the decking in between them. So we went out in that and the native boys would get off and dive in the water and they'd swim back and get back on the lakatoi and they'd pick up little pebbles and they'd throw them to where the schools of fish were and wherever they threw that we threw a stick of gelignite in with it. And oh there was a whoomph! And we did a couple of sticks like that, oh and a whoomph! and the fish were bursting out of the water. And there were some big parrot fish and things like that amongst them. So we immediately dived in carrying sand bags cause if you got hold of a fish by the tail he shot out of your fingers he was so slippery but if you grabbed him by the head you could pull him towards you and pull him down the open mouth of the sandbag. And when we got the sandbags full we'd swim over and tip them into the empty lakatoi.

And oh we had a heap of fish, there were hundreds and hundreds of them we got that day. We had enough fish there to feed all the troops for a whole week if we could keep them refrigerated. So of course everybody had to put a working party on to scale them and things like that.

But oh these Militia boys thought we were wonderful men! these AIF sergeants! They'd never seen anything like it. They were all going to join the AIF after that. I don't know whether they did or not, a lot of them did though I think.

Well we got back to our camp with all these fish. We had enough to feed six hundred men for a week. The lakatoi was so loaded down on the empty side the other side just tipped up in the air and we had to climb back in and put a few bags of fish in there as well and us too. We levelled the lakatoi up a bit and we left a few bags of fish in the lakatoi for the native boys to take back with them and they were quite happy.

When we went back to our camp we had to find a working party to bag and carry all these fish up to the cook house. So we did that and the fish were scaled and cleaned and whatever had to be done to them and we lived high for a week on fish and chips and a lot of other odds and ends, which was very, very acceptable.

And these militia boys had never seen anything like it. They reckoned they were all going to join the AIF! They reckoned we were wonderful blokes, all the AIF sergeants. Anyway that was the story of Bootless Inlet.

Anyway we were relieved there and other troops came in and we went back to our units. And we settled in around Evans House and 51 Battery was across the valley from Evans House and Regimental Headquarters was there at Evans House but we were straight across the valley from them. So we

went on training with our 25 pounders. Then they decided we'd practise pulling them to pieces to be able to load them in the Douglas transport. Well we got very efficient at that, then we had to assemble them again when we got to wherever we were going.

Then it turned out 51 Battery, the Colonel had asked, although we were all veterans we were a new battery formed within the Regiment and we'd never been into action as a battery. Well the next thing happened we practised this assembling and dismantling again 'til we were efficient at it.

***Editor's note:** We hope next issue of "Kibble's Post" to give the background on how "Kibble's Post" came into being as we have been asked by some of our readers. Whilst the number of members is falling we are still mailing out over 120 copies of the Post each issue to remaining members and families of members. How true the words of the Anzac Day Ode.....*

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

LEST WE FORGET