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**THE 2/2ND AUSTRALIAN
MACHINE GUN BATTALION
ASSOCIATION
MUZZLE BLAST**



DECEMBER 2012

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Jim Dods, Gerry Ferguson, Charles Gold, Nev Green,
Norm Ihlein, John Kenyon, Frank Lavan, Ian Mills, Les Reid,
Mick Riley, Bok Rowe, Keith Sloss, Reg Somerville,
Lon Villiers, Wes Ward

FROM THE COMMITTEE



All members of the Committee and Association wish everyone a happy Christmas and a peaceful, healthy 2013.

We look forward to hearing from you and if possible sharing time and a meal with you on ANZAC Day in Sydney

There was a successful AGM in November. The minutes are unavailable at present. Most importantly Ron Myers, is elected President, a position reserved for a Veteran. A Chairman Barry Izzard and Vice Chairman Denis Riley have been elected from the Associates and Committee Membership.

From BARRY IZZARD (our New Chairman)

I am honoured to be selected as Chairman of the association and will do my best to uphold the standard set by our President But will be asking for any assistance from all and sundry if needed

Have a MERRY CHRISTMAS and a SAFE NEW YEAR

Regards BARRY

MONTHLY MEETINGS, Members and Associates

are normally held on the *fourth Saturday of the month.*

However as the next January meeting should be January 26th, Australia Day, that meeting is postponed to February 2nd, 2013

The normal February meeting will remain unchanged, on February 23rd, 2013

at 11.30am, Roseville Memorial Club, 64 Pacific Highway, Roseville, conveniently opposite Roseville Station.

These meetings are the ones where plans for ANZAC Day are made

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Of \$20 are due annually, in April.

If you receive Muzzle Blast and you are not an original member or a widow, please check if you are currently financial

MUZZLE BLAST heard from :

Louise Bargwanna thanks for another excellent edition of the Muzzle Blast. Mum has moved to a nursing home so I can read her the copy I receive electronically

Helen Wallace Hi Lindy, I certainly did enjoy reading this. What a super job you have done. Thanks so much.

Robert Lamb Dear Lindy, Thank you so much for your support of Muzzle Blast, great work! I am Adrian Simpson's Grandson

Kim and Alison Lees Thank you for using the photos I sent and arranging the story in Muzzle blast on the Atherton Tablelands. It was great to read the article and get more of the history of the area around Atherton.. I also have a photo of the old fireplace which I have attached below - I was wondering about the significance of this and now know the answer..

You mentioned that for a gold coin you can camp at Rocky Creek Memorial Park. This is certainly true. The morning we went past there were a large number of caravans etc. in the park and we believe it is a very popular spot for those who stop around that area. As with all free and/or low cost camping areas there are always a large number of occupants



Margaret Cameron : Just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed reading this latest edition of Muzzle Blast. So many of the names were familiar to me, but the only one I really remember is Adrian Simpson from meeting up at all the combined Q'ld and NSW reunions. I have kept in touch with Adrian in a spasmodic sort of way over the years since my Richard died, and it was great to see a photo of him after all this time.

Eric Nunn sent a letter with a wartime photo of he and Russ and a description of a lasting friendship, continuing through the years and finally an attempt he made to care for him which sadly for both, couldn't be sustained. Eric has moved to Ascott Gardens Retirement Village , Orange

Sharon Summers: Sent good wishes and told of her Grandmother Peg's new address in Melton Vic

Paul Lemar Many thanks for this. The visit (Alamein 70 years on) is getting very good coverage down here in SA in the last 48 hrs.

Bruce McVey Thanks for the updates (Alamein 70 years on)

It is 70 years since the Battles of El Alamein

It would be fair to say most of us who were not there in 1942, grew up becoming aware of El Alamein, a small town on the coast of the Mediterranean in Egypt. For those brave men amongst us who contributed to the significance of this place in 1942, it evokes deep and vivid memories. For descendants, mates and associates of 36 Battalion men who lost their lives as a result of combat in that area, it is the source of great sadness but also, pride

Winston Churchill had a conviction to secure the Middle East before he could attempt any campaign to liberate Europe from the Nazis. In The Middle East, the British 8th Army led by General Auchinleck was taking a battering from the Afrika Korps lead by Erwin Rommel . The 9th Australian Division was called to assist

The small coastal town of El Alamein was significant in its location. It is where the railway line and the road converged at the Mediterranean Sea. Fifty kms to the south was a low lying area approximately 20,000kms sq. It is an arid, hot, windy, sandy and salty place known as the Qattara Depression Being totally inhospitable and unsuitable for tanks, it created a natural boundary and a bottleneck which for both forces, could be seen strategically as an advantage. 106 kms away to the east from El Alamein, is the 2nd largest city of Egypt, the ancient and very busy port of Alexandria, home to one of the 7 Ancient Wonders Of The World. Another 224 kms south is Cairo, the Egyptian capital, located on the Nile Delta and densely populated. 130kms further south east is Suez and the famous canal on which Rommel, running low on fuel and supplies, had set his sights. He was also aware that if captured it would have a significant impact on supply to the Allies.

The landscape in the area is hard stony and featureless. Any ridges giving higher ground and greater visibility were worth fighting for.

There were two battles of El Alamein, described so brilliantly in the Battalion History and is best read from that source

The first was fought in July 1942. The battles at Tel El Eisa and 'Ruin' Ruweisa Ridge are part of that history and significantly, whilst not defeating Rommel it stopped them in their tracks. The Allies had fiercely and successfully defended the higher ground

The Battalion lost 14 men.

Desperately seeking a victory, and not happy with the performance of General Auchinleck, Churchill replaced him with General Bernard "Monty" Montgomery.

October 23rd marked the beginning of the second battle of El Alamein which continued until Rommel's defeat and withdrawal. November 2nd marked the end of the Battle and a complete change of fortune for the Allied Forces

The Battalion had lost another 22 men

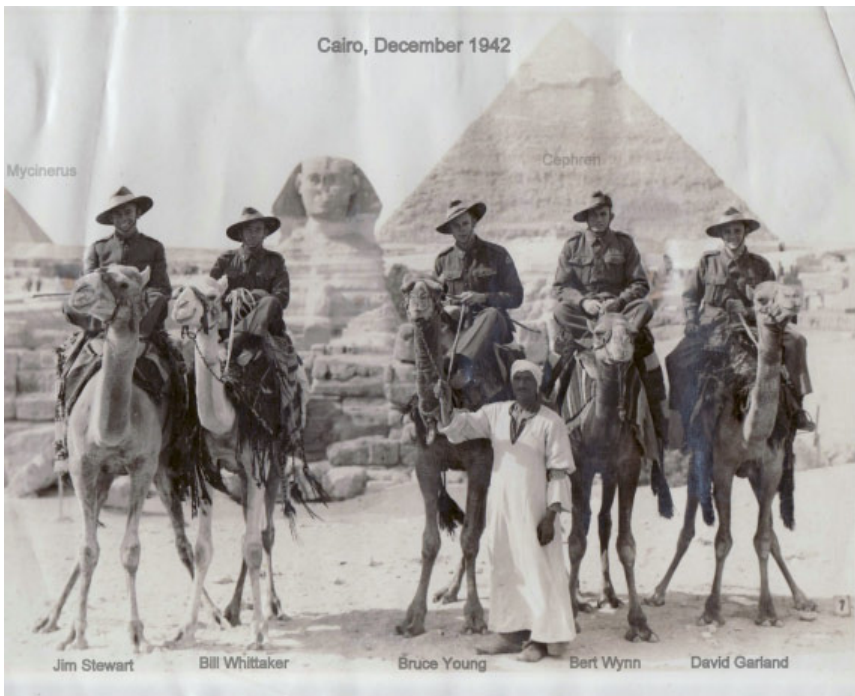
From the Australian 9th division 620 died, 1944 were wounded and 130 were taken prisoner (recorded by official historian Barton Maughan)

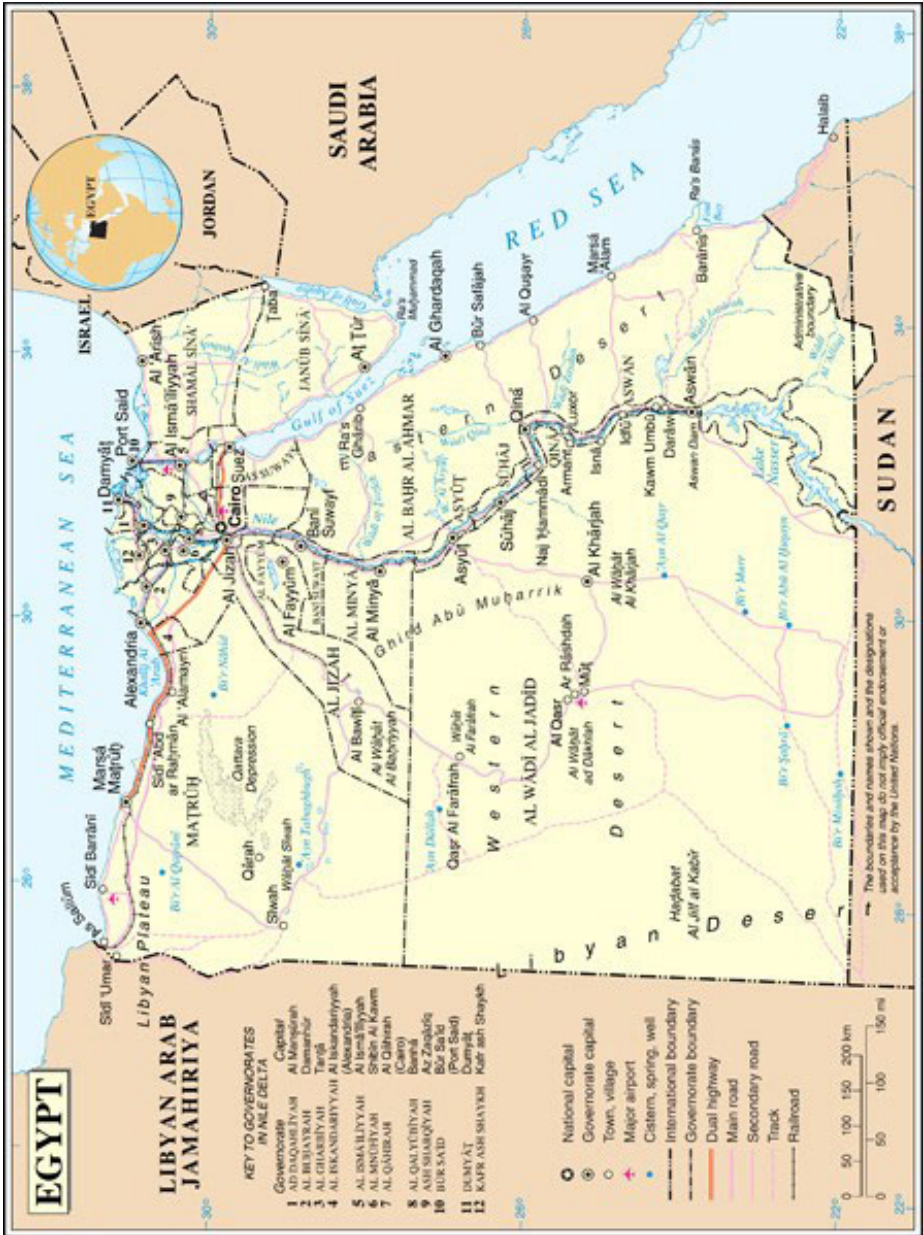
It was the first victory for the Allies, the turning point of the War. The role of the 9th Division was crucial to the victory, acknowledged by Montgomery at the time, and the most important battle fought in the war.

The Battalion History describes such breath taking acts of bravery, some officially recognised and others simply legendary; acts of compassion, man to man; and mateship. Ingenuity is again a theme in making things work, when there is lack of instruction, lack of appropriate equipment or lack of supply.

Inspirational and emotional reading, and the foundation of pride in being associated with the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion

Down Time After the Battle





large_detailed_political_and_administrative_map_of_egypt_with_all_cities_roads_and_airports_for_free_1(1).jpg

Corporal Saved Diggers

Many stories can now be told of the splendid work of this machine-gun battalion, which played a big part in the first capture of the "Hill of Jesus."

While scouting near enemy positions on the same day, Corporal Victor Knight, of Sydney, sighted a number of tanks accompanied by infantry about to develop an encircling movement against his unsuspecting unit.

Corporal Knight was in command of a troop of two Vickers guns.

Already two counter-attacks had been beaten off when suddenly the enemy opened up another barrage much fiercer than the previous ones. Sensing the possibility of a third counter-attack, but unable to see the area fronting his guns, Corporal Knight crept out through the shellfire to find if any movement was taking place behind the cover of the battlehaze.

Over the ridge top and 500 yards beyond the fog of bursting shells, the dust and sand cleared somewhat, and he was able to see the shadowy forms of moving tanks, accompanied by infantry, no more than 1500 yards away. This did not surprise him, but the direction of their attack did.

Instead of making a frontal attack the enemy were developing an outflanking movement. It would have meant disaster if allowed to continue. The Australians would have been attacked from the rear.

Disregarding the shellfire, Knight raced to his guns. His No. 1 gunner, Lance Corporal Ronald Allenden, of Turrumurra, New South Wales, and Lance Corporal John Boughton, of Katoomba, grasped the situation instantly. Swiftly rooting up their Vickers from their emplacements, they rushed them to the ridgetop, over and forward.

Within the next few moments, without bothering about digging in, they were blazing away at the tanks and infantry. The effect was immediate. Their first burst of bullets told the enemy that his outflanking tactics were exposed, and sent his infantry to earth seeking cover.

The noise made by the Vickers guns also warned the Australian anti-tank gunners of a new emergency. They tackled the enemy armour hotly, making the Germans change the route and jay-walk in defence.

In the midst of this, Corporal Knight appeared standing ahead of his guns calmly picking out

targets and directing the fire control.

So shrewdly did he anticipate the moment when enemy observers had pinpointed his guns, that although his gun positions were blasted three times by shells, the counter-fire came only from the post he had vacated the positions for others.

Vickers bullets cannot pierce tank armour, but Allenden, who is crack A.I.F. machine-gun shot, demonstrated the correct use of his weapon for such occasions. He concentrated his fire on the vapor slits in the side of the tanks through which the drivers see.

This resulted in the slits being closed protectively, which made the tanks blind on one side and easy victims for anti-tank gunners, who soon shot five to scrap-metal.

At this stage, Corporal Jim Stewart, of Sydney, had also turned his two guns towards the Germans, whose attack finally was broken up and routed at a point 700 yards in front of the Australian lines.

Later, during darkness, the Germans not only retired to their lines, but retreated a further 1000 yards. Several hundred of enemy losses were credited to the bullets of Corporal Knight's machine-gun troop.

Another member of this unit is F. W. Christian, a descendant of the "Bounty" mutineer. He travelled over 1000 miles from Lord Howe Island to Sydney to enlist.

LAY-BY FOR VICTORY

"Austerity in our own lives and investment in war savings will establish a body of people who will rehabilitate the country after the conflict—is finished," the State organising secretary of the War Savings Campaign (Mr. A. V. Porter) said on Saturday.

After peace was restored, he said, free spenders would be needed to use all their buying strength to swing industry back to ordinary production. Self-denial at present, coupled with investment in national savings, would reinforce the war effort. "Everyone should co-operate and lay by for victory," Mr. Porter added.

NURSES' CHURCH SERVICE.

The part played by doctors, nurses, and Red Cross workers in the world to-day was extolled by the Rev. A. Butler at the City Tabernacle last night, when 80 nurses in uniform attended the annual service of the Nurses' Christian Movement.

FOOTBALL STAR NOW SHINES IN DESERT

From KENNETH SLESSOR, Official War Correspondent.
EL ALAMEIN, August 23.—Sergeant A. W. Longhurst, of Paramatta, who won medals on the football field in pre-war days, has won a Military Medal as a star of another kind of battle—the first battle of Tel El Eisa, or “the Hill of Jesus,” on July 10.

Unorthodox handling of a Vickers' gun enabled him to capture a German tank crew..

It was a typical Victor McLaglen movie act, only with this difference—the Australian's role was a real life one.

“Gus looked the funniest sight in the world, lumbering after a tank with a stickbomb in his hand ready to hurl when he got within range,” said Corporal Bill Oakes, former newspaper editor. “He is a big hulking giant, and though he lumbers when he runs, he is not so slow as he looks.

“Gus chased that tank for more than 50 yards, but it clapped on speed and got away, leaving him baffled and cursing. But Gus got his own back later.”

Longhurst's section had just taken up a captured position near Tel El Eisa railway station, but a shrapnel barrage did not give them a chance to dig in, and they were keeping their heads down in shallow slit trenches until the artillery let up.

TANK ATTACK

A German counter-attack was expected at any time. Enemy gunfire began to lengthen, and over the ridge came six German tanks, headed for the Australians. The artillery again lengthened the barrage, which had the effect of cutting off the Australians' retreat.

This seemed to place them at the mercy of the tank commanders, who, on reaching the Australians, shouted at them to surrender, and, getting no response, steered their tanks straight at the slit trenches with the intention of running over them and crushing the occupants.

Australian artillery and anti-tank gunners soon shot six tanks to a standstill, leaving the job of

dealing with their survivors to the Vickers machine gunners, who made a prompt job of it.

But Sergeant Longhurst noticed one tank nearby which appeared to have a charmed life and was, moreover, inflicting considerable damage. It was then that he sallied forth on his second one-man tank attack.

After chasing it a short way, he let fly with a bombstick. The bomb hit the target neatly, but failed to halt the tank. However, a few seconds later an anti-tank gun blew it off its tracks.

Sergeant Longhurst, who had returned to his machine-gun position, was just in time to see Germans scuttling out of the wrecked tank, trying to dash back to their lines. In a split second, he had swung his Vickers on them, calling on them to surrender.

When the Germans continued their escape without pausing, he tightened his grip on the trigger and tried to line them along the sights. Then he discovered that the ground rise in front of the gun stopped the Germans from being brought under fire. Unless the gun could be elevated a few feet it was powerless to hit them.

The fleeing Germans evidently had realised this, but they had not reckoned on the footballer's wits and strength.

Bending down, he tensed his muscles, then stood up lifting the heavy Vickers gun (which with tripod weighs about 100lb.) firmly clamped in his arms, looking not unlike Victor McLaglen.

Sergeant Longhurst calmly turned the muzzle on them and motioned to another gunner to set behind the trigger. It did the trick. The moment they found themselves thus covered, the Germans threw up their hands and surrendered.

70th Anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein and North Africa Campaign

Commemorative Visit, October 1942

Having been passed medically fit, twenty one 88-95 year olds were taken on the commemorative journey by Veterans Affairs, with Minister Warren Snowdon and chief Lieutenant General David Morrison . Ron Myers was chosen to represent the Battalion. They departed Monday October 18th when they flew to Cairo where they visited the Egyptian Museum. The following day it was a tour of the Nile, the pyramids and sphinx . On Thursday October 19th they arrived in El Alamein. It was on Friday the 20th that they attended a ceremony at the 9th division Memorial and then at the Commonwealth War Cemetery, 80m away, they attended an international service. There are 1234 soldiers buried in this cemetery, including men associated with the Battalion. Many recognised Ron in the footage sent to our newsrooms. The landscape around him was harsh and barren, the war graves were beautifully maintained, headstones in the sand, Bougainvilleas adding some scattered colour, and gum trees. The Australian Newspaper reports that

Lt. Gen. David Morrison said in his speech

“Our soldiers fought superbly here. In the pantheon of bravery and sacrifice that lights our past, in the glow of battles such as Gallipoli, Kokoda, Kapyong, and Long Tan, none burns brighter than Alamein”

Most there and here felt proud and emotional.

In Alexandria the next day, the groups gathered to attend another Commemorative service. Dinner was taken by the waterfront. On October 25th they arrived home having travelled via Dubai after another moving ceremony held as a tribute to Australians who died in the Middle East Area of Operations since 2001.



One of the 21 tour members at the El Alamein War cemetery

An excellent article was written in the Australian newspaper by Paul Kelly and Patrick Walter, about the anniversary and this associated tour. Titled “Australia’s pivotal role in the ‘end of the beginning’ remains underrated at home”

It can be found at the site below, but requires a current subscription to the newspaper

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/features/australias-pivotal-role-in-the-end-of-the-beginning-remains-underrated-at-home/story-e6frg6z6-1226513865089>

Other great articles and photos are found in the veterans affairs website

http://www.dva.gov.au/news_archive/Documents/North_Africa.pdf

http://minister.dva.gov.au/media_releases/2012/oct/va087.htm

On their website, each Australian representative was profiled by the Department of Veterans affairs

http://www.dva.gov.au/news_archive/Pages/north_africa_bios.aspx

This is Ron's:

Ronald (Ron) Joseph Myers Age 93

Ron Myers was called up in the first week after war was declared and joined the Citizens Military Force (CMF). Prior to enlisting in Paddington in July 1940 he was a junior clerk. Ron Was an original member of the 212nd Australian Machine Gun Battalion, with whom he remained throughout the war, serving in the Middle East, New Guinea and Borneo.

Initially posted to Cowra for training, Ron remembers that it was in Cowra that the first signs of mateship began to develop within the battalion. A few men decided to enter a wild horse riding competition. Billy, who was from 'the bush', was chosen by the group to ride the horse, and won the prize money. The winnings were shared at the local hotel as a celebration of their new friendship.

Following training and a period of leave, Ron sailed for the Middle East with the battalion, arriving at the end of January 1941. On arrival, the battalion moved to Khassain Palestine to undergo further training. In April 1941 Ron moved to Mersa Matruh in Egypt, where the battalion carried out garrison duties. In January 1942, he moved to Syria, where the battalion remained, now attached to the 9th Division, until called into action in El Alamein in July 1942.

The 212nd Machine Gun Battalion played an important role in the fighting at El Alamein. Ron vividly remembers the opening of the Battle of El Alamein in October 1942. He heard the sound of bagpipes coming from the left flank, and saw a piper of the 51st Highlanders, illuminated by burning tanks, leading the Scottish regiment, which Ron describes as a 'haunting experience' that he will never forget.

Other experiences were more intimidating. At dusk one evening, Ron recalls, German tanks had advanced to his position at El Alamein, stopping a mere 100 yards from him and his mates. A stand-off developed between the tanks and the Sth Anti-Tank Regiment guns. No shots were fired, and after what felt like a long time looking down the barrel of the tanks' guns, the tanks withdrew.

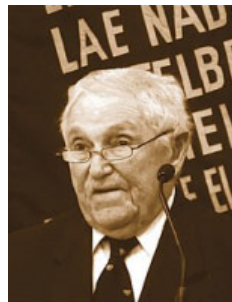
Ron left El Alamein with the 212nd Machine Gun Battalion in early December and moved to Gaza, where he participated with the battalion in the 9th Divisional Parade. Ron sailed for Australia from Palestine in January 1943, arriving in Sydney in February 27th.

Ron next served overseas with the 212nd Machine Gun Battalion in Milne Bay, arriving in late July 1943. Between July 1943 and February 1944, Ron served with the battalion in New Guinea, including participating in the landings at Lae and Finschhafen. Ron returned to Australia in early 1944, where he underwent further training, participating in a junior leaders course.

In May 1945, Ron sailed for his final period of service overseas. The battalion gathered in Morotai in preparation for landings in Borneo. At the war's end he was discharged in December 1945 with the rank of Corporal. Ron remembers feeling a sense of relief, but also feeling lost without the men who had become his family.

Ron did not feel complete until he met and married the woman who would then be his wife for sixty-three years. He is immensely proud of their three children, four grandsons and one great-grandson.

In addition to raising a family, Ron has been an active member and President of the 212nd Machine Gun Battalion Association, Ron was instrumental in the establishment of the association's website, and has led them in the Anzac Day march for the past five years. He has been a member of Legacy for thirty-six years and was Chairman of the National Pensions Committee for three years. Ron takes great pride in taking part in the Anzac Day march every year and has done so since his return to Australia at the end of the war.





Sydney



Middle East



Photos of the 70th Commemorative Tour to El Alamein

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dvaaus/sets/72157631770769881/>



Dubai



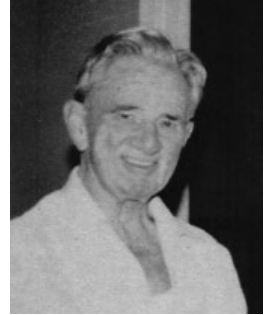
VALE



Bruce Alan Robinson

NX 28383

21/02/1921-30/10/2012



Bruce was sergeant of B3 Platoon and known as “Wimpy” The nick name possibly is derived from the time Bruce spent in the pre-war Militia.

He was sergeant of some of the toughest men in the Battalion, also disciplined and very much “mateship” oriented.

A group of men with backgrounds as varied as any in the Battalion.

Together these men were turned into a cohesive group led by Lt Gerry Ferguson and Sgt Bruce “Wimpy” Robinson.

I can't give personal examples of Wimpy's war service as we were in different Platoons and in different positions during that period, but I will give a few examples of the Battle of El Alamein in which B3 Platoon and Bruce took part:

And I quote from our book Muzzle Blast:

“Finally about 4am another attack was made towards the Cutting. With the B3 guns pouring in 10,000 rounds and B1 Platoon about 5,000, not to mention the Kartzoff Detachments share and SOS fire from the artillery; this last effort had even less success than the earlier raids.”

“B3 Platoon was dug in and ready for the pre-dawn barrage of artillery and machine gun fire which opened the way for the infantry, who had moved out 1000 yards from their FDL's in trucks. B3 fired some 30,000 rounds from their guns in an hour-long shoot.”

B3 Platoon, advancing on the night of October 24 with the 2/17th Battalion, had some of its trucks perforated by enemy fire coming at right angles from the left flank.....Dawn on October 25 found B3 Platoon very tired, looking out over a seemingly flat desert landscape. Both sections opened fire at ranges up to 3,900 yards against enemy transport.”

Wimpy took part in all of these actions and many more.

On a personal and more recent note, he attended and sat at my table at Anzac Day every year since the war ended. We enjoyed his company and he will be remembered.

Thank you Ron Myers who delivered this eulogy at Bruce's funeral and provided the transcript



Alan Russell Sutherland

NX 56183

11/11/2012



Russ served in El Alamein and New Guinea however missed the El Alamein campaign as he was wounded en route.

When the Second World War broke out Russ enlisted in the army. He was recruited to the 2nd/2nd Machine Gun battalion and saw service in El Alamein in North Africa and also in New Guinea.

He was wounded on two occasions being hit in the forehead and leg. He also survived many near misses in his deployment overseas including being on a torpedoed ship.

I would like to now read to you a short extract from Russ' war diary on one of the many incidents that Russ encountered during the war:-

"New Guinea – November 1943. Along the Sattelberg Road Nev Stewart and myself and one other Machine Gunner were squatted on our haunches talking and having a smoke when a burst of gun fire from a Japanese machine gun ploughed up the ground besides us. Lucky for us we were on the edge of the gun pit and Nev Stewart, who was in the middle of us, flung out his arms and took us with him head over kettle into the gun pit as the next burst of gun fire splattered dirt, stones and bullets into the soil around where we were squatting. Another lucky day.

That afternoon I was told a fellow wanted to see me, and I met for the first time my future brother-in-law Durie Macfarlane (my father) for the first time. He was taking a patrol from the Papuan Infantry Battalion behind the Japanese positions to spy and not be seen and get a rough count of enemy troops in the area for brigade Head Quarters".

Russ was a very proud war veteran.

Thank you to Scott Macfarlane, Russ' nephew who delivered this eulogy and provided us with the transcript. Thank you too Eric Nunn for providing the wartime photo

LAST POST

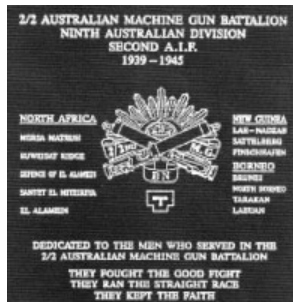
It is with sincere regret that we report the passing of

Bruce Alan Robinson NX 28383

Alan Russell (Russ) Sutherland NX 56183

*To their families and friends,
members of the Association extend deepest sympathy*

*'They fought the good fight,
They ran the straight race,
They kept the Faith'*



LEST WE FORGET

ODE

(For The Fallen By Laurance Binyon)

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow,
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

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