



COMMENTARY

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARMoured CORPS ASSOCIATION WA Inc

4/2020 VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC EDITION

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FROM THE PRESIDENT - ROBERT GESMUNDO

Welcome everybody to this edition of Commentary and thank you for taking time out to read it. Let me start by thanking everybody who attended the AGM as having a quorum allowed us to have a positive meeting and completing all business on the Agenda. I would also like to thank all the ladies who attended and supported the Association. The Minutes of the AGM will be circulated shortly allowing you all to be informed. I

It is with pleasure that I thank Col Ken Ashman (Rtd) for again accepting the position and role of Patron of the Association. We look forward to his expert advice and guidance and also thank his lovely wife Sue for her role

My thanks also go to our Immediate past President John Dwyer for his dedication and hard work and always serving the Association and the Membership. A thank you also to his wife Annette for her support.

The Corona Virus, as we all know, has restricted our activities and the Committee met to discuss possible alternatives to keep our Membership informed and, if possible, allow us to share quality time and friendship.

I do appreciate that for some of our members, who like me, are recycled teenagers, it may be difficult to attend functions.

Your Committee is always ready to listen to any suggestions that may allow us to meet and share friendship so please if you have any ideas let us know and we will do our very best to consider any suggestion.

The Committee has been very active since the AGM and Ross Leighton, our Social Event Member has been working on a suitable event.

As always, any event is only successful with member support so when you receive the information please consider it and reply as this will enable us to take the necessary action.

Similarly, you will receive a couple of questionnaires asking for your opinion in the best interest of our Association so once again I ask you to take action by replying expressing your opinion.

At present Cambrai Day – 22 November 2020 at RAAFA is still progressing as planned however we are controlled by the restrictions imposed on us for our better health so the situation may change. We will keep you informed.

I do hope you enjoy this Edition of Commentary and would like to thank our Editor John Dwyer.



75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

"Fellow Citizens— the war is over."

Prime Minister Ben Chifley

15th of August 1945

During the Second World War almost 750,000, the majority of those who enlisted, served in the Australian Army. They fought in campaigns from the Mediterranean to South East Asia and New Guinea. One of those who enlisted was our Association member Col Ted White (Ret) who was raised in Western Australia and joined the Commonwealth Bank. After enlistment Ted served in New Britain and with the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan. He rose to the rank of Sergeant in the Australian Intelligence Corp. The story of Col E A White who rose from the rank of Trooper to become Hon Col of the Tenth Light Horse was written by another Association member, Barry Bamford, himself a past Squadron Officer Commanding in the Regiment. That story is produced later in this edition of Commentary.

During the war many Australians served on the home front in the armed forces, and civilians devoted themselves to the national effort, working in volunteer defence and in rural and urban industries geared to wartime production. At the completion of the War many in the Armed forces who served in Australia had difficulties in accessing services to support regaining employment etc. This was the genesis of the Royal Australian Armoured Corp Association established to represent the many in the Corp who did not leave Australian shores but served within Australian—units such as the Tenth Light Horse Regiment and 1m Armoured Division.

The 2/10th was the last horsed unit in the Australian Army and performed a valuable role in the sand plain and coastal areas around Perth. As the most likely attack was expected within the Fremantle -Northam Sector the Regiment maintained a constant reconnaissance of the coastline.



The Regiment was given preference in training prior to the establishment of the 2nd AIF and is pictured above during training at Naval Base late 1939 until March 1940.



When he visited the 10th Light Horse Regiment at Naval Base, Lord Gowrie watched an attack exercise. The regiment, acting as an advance guard to a brigade of cavalry, moving north from Mandurah, encountered an "enemy" force in the vicinity of the Naval Base. Twice checked by the enemy, the Light Horse gained its objective by outflanking movements each time. Lord Gowrie followed the manoeuvres from heights, overlooking the valley through which the regiment was advancing.

An estimated 75% of the members of the 10th Light Horse were rural men from the south-west of WA, places like York, Harvey, Bunbury, Toodyay, and Waroona, and most were farm workers or farmers leaving their property in the hands of family or staff. ^[9] They brought their horses into the city by train, alighting at the Spearwood station and walking to Naval Base. ^[10] The rest were from all over the Perth metropolitan area, men with businesses and jobs on hold for them while they undertook their national duty.

600 men, with 600 of their own horses, were encamped at Naval Base during that summer period. The camp was modern, with huts, stores, and kitchens, all with electric lights, and the regiment included cooks, bootmakers, saddlers, and tailors.

Life in camp

The troopers' days began at 5.45am and involved physical exercise, horsemanship, and training manoeuvres in small troops and large squadrons, with a focus on becoming a coastal defence unit should Western Australia ever be invaded. They took every chance to swim their horses at the beach, which attracted huge quantities of sharks to the area - one night in late November local fishermen caught 24. ^[11]

Machine gun exercises were regular, and the noise of the bullets echoed around the district. Journalists on a visit for the Perth newspaper the Mirror quipped that 'motorists driving along the main road to Mandurah might have been excused for thinking that a battery of wood-peckers were at work in the foreshore bush'. ^[12]

By most accounts the 10th Light Horsemen enjoyed their time at Naval Base exceedingly, but the concerns of home were never far from their mind. Sitting in the YMCA hut on camp surrounded by fellow recruits playing bobs and table tennis, one man wrote 'I have just enjoyed three days' Easter holidays, which I spent in complete relaxation. I really enjoy camp life, but have worries at times like the rest of the farmers in camp'. There was, he said, a lot of work for him to do on his farm once the camp broke up in mid-April. ^[13]

In the event of an enemy landing on the beaches North of Perth 10LH Regiment was tasked with resisting an enemy advance from the Beaches to the North of South. Under the scenario of a landing in the Bunbury area the Regiment was to move South and engage enemy forces in the Brunswick area.

A plan to mechanise the Regiment was delayed because of the entry of Japan into the war with only A SQN supplied with mechanised equipment at the time. In November of 1943 10LH undertook jungle training at Wellington Dam and then moved to the Swanbourne rifle range. In March 1944 the unit established coast watch points between Wreck Point and North Point when a Japanese attack was thought imminent.

After a long stay at Wanneroo the Regiment moved to Bellevue Camp 4 and late April and was disbanded on 12 May 1944. The tactical mobility the horses gave the unit to patrol the sand plain country in the areas of Wanneroo, Mundijong and Gingin played an important role as one of the eyes and ears of 3 Aust Corps.

Source Information: Australia's Forgotten Army – Graham R McKenzzie-Smith
City of Cockburn – Cockburn History



In some ways, George Goldie and Ted White made an odd pairing. One a self-confessed rebel who was loath to salute his superiors, the other a former commanding officer with nearly 30 years of service under his belt. But to the record-breaking crowds at this year's Anzac Day parade in Perth, all that mattered was that the men riding in a Jeep were World War II heroes.

Age finally caught up with Mr White, 90, this year and he was unable to march with his unit. He might have missed out on the centenary parade if it wasn't for Mr Goldie, 94, and his Jeep. "I managed to get a lift in the end — and who did I manage to get a lift with," Mr White said. "The bloke that's always trouble."

They can laugh about it now, but both men fought against the Japanese when the war was threatening to reach Australia. In 1942, Mr Goldie, a signalman, was sent from Victoria to WA to defend against a possible invasion. "When we got on the train they told us we could be in touch with the enemy in three weeks," he said. He was later involved in the Balikpapan landing in Borneo, one of the last big battles of the war.

Mr White, meanwhile, had spent six months patrolling the island of New Britain alongside Kokoda Trail survivors. "We had some well-trained blokes," he said. "We'd wait for the Japanese to come and they always did, then we'd invariably knock off a few and they'd go away." He went to Japan after the war as a sergeant in the occupation force then returned to Australia and rose to the rank of Honorary Colonel of the 10th Light Horse.

Also in the Jeep were Korean War veterans Len Ogilvie, 87, and Nicholas Couanis, 82. Mr Ogilvie had been in Korea for only five weeks when his machine gun section was attacked and he and a friend were cut off from their group. He was shot three times but survived. His friend was killed.

Mr Ogilvie thinks about his friend every Anzac Day, but he also remembers the way indigenous soldiers were treated back home. "I had about five uncles on the frontline in New Guinea and being Aboriginal they weren't allowed to have a drink when they came back," he said. "They could go to war and fight for their country beside their mates but they weren't allowed to have a beer with them. "Once you put the king's uniform on, you were equals. It was the best six years of my life."

All four men have different stories, but on Anzac Day they share a bond bigger than rank or race. Like the others, Korea and Malaya veteran Mr Couanis chokes up at the size of the Anzac Day crowds. "I'm humbled and proud to have served in the forces and I'm proud of all my mates," Mr Couanis said. "On that day, I feel for them and the people there make me feel proud of them. "When you're walking back to catch the train and someone comes up and says, 'Thanks, mate,' you don't know what to say.

"It does get emotional."

Source: The West Australian 2015

SIR EDWARD (WEARY) DUNLOP

In a Foreword to the publication "The Anzac Tradition —Between the lines Sir Edward wrote these words in regard to the 2nd World War:

In WW2 more than 1,000,000 of our people bore arms and 27,000 died. The Middle East campaigners carry imperishable memories of the Western Desert, Greece, Crete, Tobruk, Syria and the great victory of Alamein. The tide of the war reached our own soil and there was bitter fighting in New Guinea and the wide Pacific.

The disastrous fall of Singapore left 22,000 Australians, through no fault of their own, prisoners of the Japanese. The next 3 and a half years inflicted upon them slow starvation, slave labour, brutality, multiple diseases and lingering death. Appalling conditions resulted in the execution or death from starvation and disease 7,777 men and women, and reduced most of their fellows to diseased, emaciated wrecks.

I shall however always be uplifted by the memory of how men in the last extremity of illness and exhaustion so often took upon their emaciated bodies the burden of friends they felt to be in worse case. Many such men and women in those sad camps and in the Pacific and in Japan itself laid down their lives for others. Australians revealed an ability to out-work and outsuffer all their compatriots. Such was "the greatness of their generous hearts"

Sir Edward Dunlop
AC, CMG, OBE, KCSJ,
MS, FRCS, FRACS, FACS,
DSc, Punjabi (Hon)



OAM TO MRS DONNA PRYTULAK PAST SERVING MEMBER OF THE 10TH LIGHT HORSE REGIMENT

Donna was awarded the OAM for her service to veterans and their families. CPL Prytulak was the first female member of the unit joining A SQN 10LH at Northam. Amongst other achievements she was part of a trial to conduct re-supply to sabre troops at night during operational exercises of the unit in the Puckapunyal range area. During her service period with the ARES she learned and developed the skills that help her become part of the leadership group of the RSL and in many other areas of community activity.

Donna has recently retired as State Vice President and Director of the RSL. Her Chair positions have included the Commemoration Committee 2017, 10th Light Horse Re-enactment of the freedom of the City of Northam 2011/2, 100th Year ANZAC Committee. Donna has also been President of the Northam sub branch of the RSL, Parents and Citizens Association Northam.

Previous awards have included Westpac Bank Ruby Rose Community Service Award 2011, Pearce Citizen Award 2010 and Paul Harris Fellow 2017.

To Donna and her husband Mike who was a SGT in the Light Horse congratulations on the award a deserving recognition of many years of work within the community and in particular in support of veterans local and State wide.



MILITARY DISPLAY AND SWAP MEET

To be held on the
8th November 2020

At the NORTHAM MEMORIAL HALL
FITZGERALD STREET NORTHAM

Entrance a gold coin donation

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Set up time 7:00 am onwards

If you are interested in having a stall or
having a display

Please contact

donnarsl1957@gmail.com or
northamrslsb@hotmail.com by the 1st
November 2020

morning and afternoon tea
available and sausage sizzle

Back with his mates — Thai-Burma Railway survivor Harold Martin leaves a towering legacy after death in Albany at 103



Liam Croy Albany Advertiser

Wednesday, 6 May 2020 5:17AM

Harold Martin is back with his mates — the ones who never made it home. One of Australia's last Thai-Burma Railway survivors, Mr Martin died in Albany on Tuesday afternoon at the age of 103.

For what he went through and the legacy he helped keep alive, he was a giant in a city inextricably linked with the history of Australia's wartime sacrifice.

The revered World War II veteran made it to one last Anzac Day, albeit set against the bizarre backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic.

His sons, Ray and Jeff, were able to make it to Albany to spend time with him in the days before his death.

They will return to Albany for a funeral service next week which will likely be restricted by the COVID-19 public gathering rules.

The family plans to live-stream the service to the public.

Mr Martin was born in Kanowna, east of Kalgoorlie, on January 1, 1917, and retired to Albany with wife, Molly.

He is survived by two children, seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester led tributes to Mr Martin, thanking him for his service and extending his condolences to friends and family.

"They should be very proud of his incredible contribution to Australia over his 103 years," Mr Chester said.

"The Hellfire Pass Interpretive Centre in Kanchanaburi, Thailand proudly displays a wonderful photograph of Harold and it was an honour to have a man of his experiences delivering the Ode at commemorative services held at Hellfire Pass in recent years.

"Over 60,000 Allied prisoners of war took part in the construction of the Thailand-Burma railway, including 13,000 Australians.

"Tragically 2700 of those Australians never made it home. We thank them, and Harold and his friends, for their sacrifice for our country."

Mr Martin and his fellow prisoners of war endured horrific conditions on the Thai-Burma Railway, characterised by backbreaking work, grossly inadequate meals, and deadly sicknesses.

He had joined the army aged 23 to defend Australia, but Singapore fell 10 days after he arrived in 1942.

After two years of slave labour on what came to be known as the Death Railway, Mr Martin was put on a ship bound for Japanese coal mines.

His ship was hit by US torpedoes, leaving him and hundreds of other skeletal prisoners of war treading water in the South China Sea.

He and 72 fellow Allied soldiers were picked up by the crew of the USS Pampanito after almost four days spent clinging to makeshift life rafts.

“They were going to shoot us because they thought we were Japanese, then they spotted my (blond, curly) hair,” Mr Martin said in 2016.

Mr Martin rarely spoke about those experiences in the decades after the war because he did not think anyone would want to hear about them.

Fortunately, he opened up in his later years, sharing a story that should never be forgotten.

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Not for profit advocacy's helping
the well being of past and present
armed services personnel.

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