

Action Front



Official journal of the 2/2 Field Regiment Association

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Still Priceless

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1. PREPARE FOR ACTION

We have the wonderful news that the Brallos Pass Memorial is to be constructed and plaques dedicated in October this year. This is an opportunity to read and reflect on part of Chapter 13 from Action Front - "Greece - A Tragedy of Heroism", which can be found in the Bombardment chapter.

More information on plaques is detailed in the Adjutant's report.

2. VALE

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,
we will remember them.

NX 177608 Norm R. Taylor

Irene Leech (widow of VX 903 V. J. Leech)

And to all members of the Regiment who died in WW2 and have
deceased since.

Lest We Forget.

Rest Well Gallant Men and Women

We, who are left, in gratitude, remember you still.
Our deepest sympathy goes to their loved ones and relatives.

3. OPENING SHOTS

I'm David Jaboor, son of VX 90 R.F. Jaboor, and new editor of this fine publication. I started joining the Anzac Day marches with the regiment when I returned to Melbourne a couple of years ago, and I'm now looking forward to becoming much more involved with the regimental association in general. I served in the regular Army from 2008 – 2014, and continue to serve, albeit in greatly reduced capacity, as a reservist. I'm a full-time social work student, and I enjoy home-brewing and writing. I'm looking forward to getting to know you all better in the coming months and years.

I'd like to start by gratefully acknowledging the work done by Lachlan McPherson in keeping this newsletter published for so long. It's wonderful to have a tangible reminder of how active and committed this association is, and I can attest from my short experience that quite a bit of time goes into the publication. Over the last ten years, this time has been given by Lachlan.

Thank you also to the committee, members past and present, and of course to those who served with the 2/2, and their families.

Soldier on.

4. BOMBARDMENT

THERMOPYLAE

By the morning of 21st April, the Anzac Corps had established itself upon the Thermopylae line. Most of the troops remembered from their infancy the story of Leonidas and his four hundred Spartans holding this pass and now twenty-four hundred years later, the Anzac Corps was placed in almost the same position. Out on the right between the mountains and the sea lay 2nd New Zealand Division. Extending from it across the mountains was deployed what was left of 6th Australian Division: in the line were 19th and 17th Brigades. In support were the 2/2 Field Regiment and a battery of the 2/1st Field Regiment under command. On the 6th Division's front the enemy had to attack either up the cliff faces or to go around and try to out-flank the position to the left. To prevent him attacking from the front and to render his attack on the left flank more circuitous, the 2/2 Field Regiment's job was primarily to ensure that the bridge over the Sperkhios River would not be available to him and also to watch the left flank and to prevent the enemy infiltrating towards the infantry.

At 0700 hours that morning over came Messerschmitt after Messerschmitt machine-gunning the road and bivouac area. All the regiment's vehicles had as usual been very well dispersed and put under cover as far as was possible. Nevertheless, four trucks of the regiment were set alight, and destroyed. During the continuous attacks on the morning Bombardier L. Kay and Gunners R. Matthews, G.K. Stewart and W.P. Matters were killed and a number of other troops were wounded, Bombardier Barwick very seriously. During the day, dribbling up the pass came the 17th Brigade from their flank job out at Kalabaka and the composite force known as "Miles Force." As soon as the last of these troops had passed, the bridge over the Sperkhios River was blown up by the engineers. But the regiment had little time to notice what was going on beside it. Its job was to get its guns into action. Throughout the day, gun by gun at long intervals was sent up to the new positions selected by the officers on the previous afternoon. This meant taking a gun out of its hiding place, travelling it slowly, stopping, as soon as the Messerschmitts came over (and hoping it would not be seen) and eventually putting it into its gun position. As soon as it was dusk, deep gun-pits were dug and the camouflage nets duly erected over them.

As dusk fell, the Germans set about trying to repair the bridge over the Sperkhios River. Accurate fire from the two forward guns prevented them, however, doing much. This fire was maintained all night and so at daybreak on 22nd April the bridge was still unrepaired and the enemy could not get across. All that day, the enemy tried very hard to locate the forward guns by every means in his power. He used air reconnaissance and tried air ranging but did not succeed. About midday, the guns

opened fire on a German aeroplane which had been brought down on the plain by a Royal Artillery detachment with a Breda light anti-aircraft gun stationed alongside the regiment's two forward guns. Four airmen from the plane were seen to escape to the river. The guns immediately started to fire on the plane and damaged it very badly.

About 1700 hours, the enemy commenced to move down the road from Lamia, and at a range of 10,900 yards Anderson put the first enemy vehicle out of action. Dusk fell shortly afterwards and the rest of the night twelve rounds per gun per hour were fired at irregular intervals. It was obvious that the enemy was making strenuous efforts to repair the bridge but that the regiment's fire prevented his doing so. Soon after sunrise next morning another convoy moved down from Lamia at about 30 yard intervals and was immediately engaged. They appeared several times again through the trees, each time with a longer interval, but they were prevented by our fire from moving forward. The enemy now brought a medium battery to a wood south-east of Lamia. Anderson tried to engage this battery but although he used, against all artillery tradition and practice, two third charges and one first charge, thereby getting an additional five hundred yards range, his rounds still fell short.

During the day, Anderson continued firing but every time his guns opened up he received retaliation from the 5.9's. About 1300 hours he was surprised to see an enemy convoy at the foot of the pass about half a mile to his left flank. It was obvious that they had got around by making a detour. As a company of German infantry were dismounting, Anderson fired about 60 rounds over open sights as fast as the guns could be loaded and so inflicted a large number of casualties upon the enemy. The enemy then used his 5.9's to fire air burst high explosive against our guns in addition to the usual ground bursting shells. Eventually, both guns were put out of action. As the crews were moved off, several rounds inflicted grave casualties on the gun detachment. Seven of the gunners were killed and three were very seriously wounded.

The destruction of these two guns was a great tragedy that afflicted the regiment. The guns and those gunners who had so faithfully served them had done their job. Their action had undoubtedly saved a more precipitate retirement of the Anzac Corps, because had the enemy been able to get up the pass, before 19th and 17th Brigade were completely in position, it is quite possible that he would have been able to convert the hitherto orderly retreat into a rout from which few would have escaped. The tragedy was emphasized by the characters of the lads who were killed. Bombardier Orm Tulloch, a talented musician, quiet and reserved, was a brilliant assistant in an Observation Post and had been sent down with a message to the forward gun when the bombardment started. Lionel Caldwell was another

militiaman who enlisted in October, 1939. For quiet determined courage there were few men in the regiment who could equal Lionel Caldwell. Several years before the war he had distinguished himself as the one driver left on a bolting six-horse team, who eventually brought it to a stop despite the danger to himself. He was the troop artificer, and it was his job to ensure that the guns remained in action. Therefore, he went to the guns and shared their fate. Len Ingram, an original of the regiment, had his brother back at 3rd Battery gun position. John Drake, the youngest son a family, and himself in his thirties, who had had his eldest brother killed in the First War, was a militiaman before the war who enlisted as soon as he was nineteen. Fred Kerr, the only son of a very brave set of parents and a brilliant athlete, had determined, despite all objections, to join the original 6th Division. The disaster naturally cast a gloom over the troops who had known their dead fellows, but its main effect was to make them more determined than ever that the Hun would pay. Lieutenant John Anderson carried some of the wounded along a goat track up the side of the pass to the nearest R.A.P. For these dead gunners there would well be repeated and paraphrased, the message of Leonidas:

“Go! Stranger, tell at Melbourne that we who lie here died content.”

5. COUNTER BATTERY

Some musings from the modern Army – D.M. Jaboor

I'm the third of my family to spend long periods of time training in Puckapunyal and, from what I've heard, the third of my family to hold no particular affection for the place. I've read about the 2/2's training history in Puckapunyal, and I'm not drawing any strong comparisons between mine and their experiences (especially with my modern boots and cold weather kit, and no 24lb shells to carry). My total distance marching around the Puckapunyal Range is approximately 120kms in six years which, for the sake of perspective, was often covered by the regiment in the span of a week. I thought I'd share a macabre little story from my time as a very green Private soldier.

It was July 2009, and my company were on an infantry training exercise on Puckapunyal Range. The range is one of two places in Australia where soldiers are still allowed to dig pits and trenches which, if you're optimistic, is an interesting distraction from marching. At the time Puckapunyal was the site of an experimental exercise in Kangaroo culling, in which a disease was introduced to the population to send them mad before eventually killing them. At the time, every feature was dotted with dozens of the poor sods, staggering and groaning and bashing their heads against trees.

We were nearing completion of the exercise, when I was ordered to report to CHQ for a priority task. I fronted my CSM, who sneered at me and said “You’re doing a driving task for the School of Arty. Take the Unimog and pick them up from their mess. They’ll tell you where to go”.

As welcome as the break was, I’d only gotten my truck license the month before, and I was too green to know where anything on base was. I eventually found the Artillery mess, and a dozen trainee gunners piled into the back of my truck. Their troop sergeant gave me some rough directions, and we set off for range control. It was around 1700h, and Puckapunyal’s kangaroo population had gathered to the edge of the roads to eat grass in the fading light. The noise from my truck was enough to panic them as I approached, and the headlights were just bright enough to render the kangaroos – forever darting in front of moving cars in order to get away from them – dazed and unable to move out of the way. A combination of my speed, inexperience, and sheer kangaroo numbers led to me inevitably clip one, sending it bouncing beneath the chassis of my truck as it skidded to a halt. I could hear it groaning as I radioed the Warrant Officer at range control for advice.

Me: Range control I’ve hit a roo – do I just leave it?

Range control: Idiot. Hell no. If its alive you’ve got to kill it.

Me: Do I shoot it?

RC: NO. Take the metre bar and bash its head in, that’ll do it.

I jumped down from the driver’s seat and dragged the meter-long, steel tyre iron from under the seat, and walked slowly over to the writhing kangaroo. The gunners looked on from beneath the canopy, jostling for a better view. The kangaroo raised its head as I took my back-swing, and looked at me through its wide eyes. I swung with full-force and connected with the side of its head. The sound was like a bell tolling, and the shock rippled through the tyre-iron, forcing me to drop it. The roo, suddenly recovering from its shock, let out a grunt and struggled to its feet before lunging straight at me. I weaved, and it continued on its path, bouncing awkwardly into the twilight. Shaken, I walked back to the cabin, with the laughter of the gunners echoing behind me.

I did recover from this little intro into the wider Army, and managed to spend the remainder of my career without running over (or trying to kill) any more native fauna. I learned that night that kangaroos are ridiculously tough, Warrant Officers will sometimes get you to do things the hard way, and that sometimes digging pits is better than driving trucks.

And if you need a meter bar swung, give it to a gunner.

6. THE SERGEANTS' MESS

The 77th Annual Luncheon and AGM is coming up, and the Committee has once again tried very hard to keep the cost of this day down. Please make an effort to be at this year's lunch to be held again at Waverley RSL's Sunset Room on Sunday 23rd October, 1130h for noon. Your invitation can be found on the last page of this edition, and we hope to see you there!

7. DIARY DATES

Please put these dates in your diaries:

Sunday 23 rd October	77 th Annual Lunch and AGM.
Friday 11 th November	Repatriation Hospital plaque dedication
Monday 5 th December	Committee Meeting

8. ADJUTANT'S REPORT

Following on from the report of the action at Brallos Pass I wish to present a quick overview for October in Greece and report that both Terry Cole and John Trewarne will visit Greece to meet with the military on 6th October to clarify the exact site with construction to be commenced immediately which will take about ten days.

Saturday 29th October has been agreed upon to conduct the dedication and unveiling of the plaque. Mel Johnson along with many of her family members have booked their travel to coincide with the ceremony and are also sightseeing and taking tours.

From a personal point of view for our family this will be a pilgrimage to visit the site as our father VX5824 Gunner Doug Lennie was one of the severely wounded and subsequently taken as POW on 27th April 1941 and spent until November 1943 in various camps in Germany and German occupied Poland.

He never spoke of the war and it has only been through finding out about the 2/2 Field Regiment Association that we have been pieced together what actually happened at Brallos Pass - we are forever grateful to the veterans who formed the Association and also as time went on the descendants which has meant that the strong and proud history of the 2/2 Field Regiment has been maintained to this day.

There is no formal tour arranged but if anyone else wishes to come to Greece to attend the ceremony that would be wonderful.

At this point of time the formal side of the ceremony has not been given to me but as soon as it is available will be put on our website or you may contact me on:

E: dexta33@bigpond.com P: 0355932271

In further news from the committee I wish to advise that we have a new Editor for Action Front and welcome David Jaboor and we thank him most sincerely for taking up this task.

Also we recognize and thank our previous Editor Lachlan McPherson for his dedicated commitment over ten years to produce Action Front.

Another project that we have been working on for the last two years has been to have plaques cast for the Australian War Memorial, Canberra and the Repatriation Hospital Heidelberg. We have been able to source funding for one of these plaques and acknowledge the Department of Veterans Affairs for that funding which amounted to \$1809.00.

On Friday 11th November 2016 at 11.00am as part of the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Repatriation Hospital our plaque is to be dedicated and everyone is most welcome to attend.

Of significance to point out it was our Keith Rossi who mentioned that we look at having a plaque placed there. Also that Keith had played a huge role to veterans and legacy through his work at The Repat.

For the plaque at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra this ceremony is booked for 2pm on 23rd August 2017. This was the earliest date that was available because of the huge number of inquiries, events and ceremonies relating to the Centenary of WW1.

If you are planning a trip to Canberra sometime in the future this would be an excellent opportunity to visit and incorporate the ceremony into your itinerary.

9. CEASE FIRING!

I would like to take this opportunity to discuss the direction that I would love to see this journal go in the future. We have an active committee and membership base, and Action Front will continue to be published on schedule. Between now and next April I will be working on getting the journal into a web-browser ready format for future editions. The print edition won't be going anywhere for paid members, but having an accessible copy on the website will be a great resource. Anybody with any future articles in mind is encouraged to start writing. I'm more interested in good, relatable content than I am with polished professional writing, and I'd be delighted to work in collaboration with any willing parties.

Thank you again to all who keep the 2/2 Field Regiment Association going strong.

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2/2 FIELD REGIMENT 77TH. ANNUAL LUNCHEON



1939 - 2016

Sunday

23rd. October 2016

11.30 a.m. til 3.30 p.m.

Waverley RSL "Sunset Room"

161 Coleman Parade

Glen Waverley 3150 (Melways 71 C2)



We are again conducting our Annual Luncheon at Waverley RSL and we wish to make our 77th Regimental Dinner one to remember by having as many 2/2 veterans and their families coming along to commemorate this special occasion.

We can set up family tables or arrange tables for those who wish to sit in the company of particular people as well as mix and match those who are new to our Regimental Dinner with the aim of them meeting new friends.

The cost this year is \$ 50 per person for the Veterans / Wife / or Widows and \$ 65 per person for the rest of us for the meal and drinks



CUT ALONG HERE

I WILL / WILL NOT BE ATTENDING THE ANNUAL LUNCHEON AT THE WAVERLEY RSL
 AT 11.30 am FOR LUNCH AT 12.30 pm. ON SUNDAY 23rd OCTOBER 2016
 I WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY GUESTS AND ENCLOSE \$..... BEING
 FULL PAYMENT FOR THE LUNCHEON.

NAME (please print).....

NAME(S) OF GUEST/S.....

Please make all cheques payable to " 2/2 Field Regiment Association "
 c/o 57 Marianne Way Mount Waverley 3149

Direct Deposits to BSB 063 001 Account: 0090 2130 please advise your name on the remittance
 and/or email notification to kimtaunt@optushome.com.au