

Action Front



Official journal of the 2/2 Field Regiment Association

Volume LXXVIII, No 1.

April 2018

Still priceless.

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1. PARTY

First, a warm welcome to our new members and first-time readers of Action Front.

For those that were unable to attend, please find a transcript of our president's speech from the plaque dedication at the AWM in *Bombardment*, followed by a report of the event by Mel Johnson in *Reconnaissance*. A scan of the order of service can be found on the back page. ANZAC Day timings are on page 5.

A reminder for new and old members alike: anybody who would like to have poetry, reviews, stories, photos, or personal updates published is welcome to email the editor at [djabor@gmail.com](mailto:djaboor@gmail.com). If you're not confident in your writing, don't stress! Drafts can be sent through for some pre-publication tidying up, and you're among friends anyway. This is your journal, and we would all love to hear from you.

2. VALE

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

VX 816 John Bryan Hogan
13 Oct 1919 – 30 Sep 2015

Apologies to the Hogan family for this late advice.

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

Lest We Forget.

Rest Well Gallant Men and Women

Sound, sound the clarion, fill the fife,
Throughout the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

T. Mordaunt

3. OPENING SHOTS

Welcome dear Regiment to Volume 1 of the 78th publication of Action Front. We've had an exciting start to the year already with the dedication of the plaque at the Australian War Memorial (see Bombardment and Adjutant's Report for speeches, photos, and write-ups), and we're maintaining the momentum (retaining the initiative? Exploiting our advantage?) into Anzac Day.

I would like to acknowledge the terrific work of Ron Stark on compiling a new nominal roll for the regiment. Ron uncovered some interesting (additional) histories in his work, such as the post-regiment military careers of some men, and some fascinating brushes with the Germans. Hopefully in time we can get disseminate these histories more widely. Watch this space.

I won't be in Australia for ANZAC Day this year (about which I'm conflicted – I'll write about it next edition), and I sincerely hope that the day is mild, the bands are in synch, the marshals are reasonable, and that turnout is colossal.

Finally, a note on yearly memberships. Thank you to those who have recently signed up, or recently re-enlisted, with a \$20 contribution. And of course, a huge thank you to those who have made larger donations since last edition! Donations and memberships are vital to this association and, while donations will not be mandatory, any member who can afford the \$20 per year is encouraged to contribute. EFT Details can be found on page 6.

4. BOMBARDMENT

Transcript of the 2/2nd President's address at the AWM plaque dedication ceremony

This has taken a bit of time to organise, but eventually we can be gathered here to unveil the third plaque here at the AWM (after plaques at Brallos Pass in Greece and at the Repatriation Hospital in Heidelberg) in memory of the artillery men of the 2/2nd Field Regiment 2nd AIF.

Firstly, I would like to welcome 2 special guests:

Justice Richard Refshauge of the ACT Court, the son of the first Regimental Medical Officer of the Regiment, Captain William Refshauge, later MAJ GEN Sir William

Refshauge, a very astute man, as is his son. He has known me all my life and has been an inspiration to me.

Secondly, LCDR Stuart Withers of HMAS Albatross and a 'bit of a helicopter pilot' who has been involved in several 'exciting' engagements including INTERFET 1999 and pirate elimination in the Indian Ocean. He also just happens to be my nephew.

A third invited guest, Joaquim Santos of the Timor-Leste Embassy here in Canberra who I met in Darwin on my way to Timor-Leste in April 2017 when he was also on a pilgrimage back to his country to remember the murders of comrades and their resistance to the unlawful occupation of their country was unable to attend due to work at the embassy.

I also welcome dignitaries from the War Memorial who have helped make this ceremony possible including Dr Brendan Nelson.

The 2/2nd Field Regiment were a Victorian Regiment mainly made up of reservists from pre-war units. The officer cadre were mainly made up from recruits from Footscray Technical College who were also serving as reservists in artillery batteries. They had been mainly press-ganged by the 2nd CO of the Regiment, Bill Cremor, who had taught them at the aforementioned college.

The Regiment was formed on 13 October 1939 with LT COL Alan Ramsay (late MAJ GEN Sir Alan Ramsay) in command. They came together from various sources but mainly volunteered at the Chapel Street, St Kilda barracks and then transferred to the Melbourne Showgrounds or directly to Puckapunyal. They were the first Victorian Artillery Regiment of World War 2, alongside 2/1st Regiment from NSW and 2/3rd from the other states. 2/1st were designated to attach to 16th Brigade, 2/2nd to 17th Brigade (2/5th, 2/6th, & 2/7th Battalions) and 2/3rd to 19th Brigade.

2/1st and 2/2nd went directly to the Middle East with only one complement of guns as the government only allowed that many guns to leave Australia. These were outdated WW1 18 Pounders and 4.5 inch Howitzers and were in dreadful condition.

The Regiment embarked on 14th April 1940 on HMT Dunera from Port Melbourne and reached Kantara on 17th May and then into Palestine where manoeuvres were carried out around Beersheba with both Regiments sharing the guns on a week by week basis. The CO's of both 2/1st and 2/2nd (by now LT COL Bill Cremor) tossed a coin to see who would get the guns as it was becoming obvious that action was approaching. I think Cremor had a two sided penny as he never lost. He got the guns and brought them up to standard, but by the time they went into action at Bardia, 2/1st had the last laugh as they had been re-equipped with brand new 25 Pounders!

However, 2/2nd still claim to have been the Regiment to have fired the first Australian artillery shots of the war at Fort Capuzzo about 21st December 1940.

They went into full action at Bardia in early January 1941 when Lieut. Bob Nethercote was killed at his OP and SGT Charlie Gilbert won the Regiment's first bravery award, the Military Medal for going out under fire to repair communication cables. CAPT Ron McPherson was awarded the Military Cross for his work as FOO. The RMO, CAPT Bill Refshauge was able to save MAJ Andy Arthur from having his legs amputated by Italian Surgeons after he was injured and captured. The Regiment mainly supported the 2/6th Battalion in this action on the south east front especially around Post 11. They went on to actions at Tobruk, Derna and through to Benghazi and then back again to Egypt.

Then came the ill-fated Greek campaign. The Regiment served with distinction in rear-guard actions at several places including Servia but especially in the Brallos Pass in April 1941 when two guns halted the German advance for 36 hours until they were both destroyed and 7 killed and several wounded. LT Jack Anderson was awarded the Military Cross. (The Regiment Association has recently had a plaque erected and dedicated at the site of this action with the assistance of the Greek military and the Australian Ambassador.)

There was further action up the pass around the village of Skamnos which has never been properly documented, but many acts of bravery were known to have been enacted but without due recognition. The guns were firing over open sights as the Germans swarmed up through the railway tunnel. The Regiment was in the front line as the 2/11th Bn. had been withdrawn. Several men walked back up through German occupied territory to reach safety!

These were the Regiment's finest hours.

The Regiment then withdrew towards Athens and their embarkation place at Megara where they had to destroy their 25 Pounders and were ferried to Crete on HMS Decoy, HMS Hasty and HMAS Waterhen.

They were disembarked at Suda Bay with little else but their kit and some .303 rifles which had been part of each gun's equipment. These were commandeered by infantry battalions and they were later given American Remington rifles and formed into an ad-hoc arrangement, later known as Wood's Own Rifles after CAPT Frank Wood, of 3rd Battery.

Some guns of various vintages and parentages became available and COL Cremor arranged for the acting C/O, MAJ Jaboor, to toss the CO of 2/3rd Regiment for the guns, the loser getting the guns. Cremor must have lent his coin to Roy, as 2/3rd lost.

After losing some more men, mainly to air attack, the Regiment was told to withdraw to Sphakia on the south coast where most were able to be evacuated by the navy. It was a tough and arduous trek across the White Mountains with some men left behind some of whom were able to escape later.

After recuperating and reinforcing in Palestine they were shipped to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and, whilst not officially going into action, were bombed by the Japanese at Columbo whilst unloading vehicles and guns and then were told to locate their guns on the beach at the eastern shore of the island in another classic GMFU.

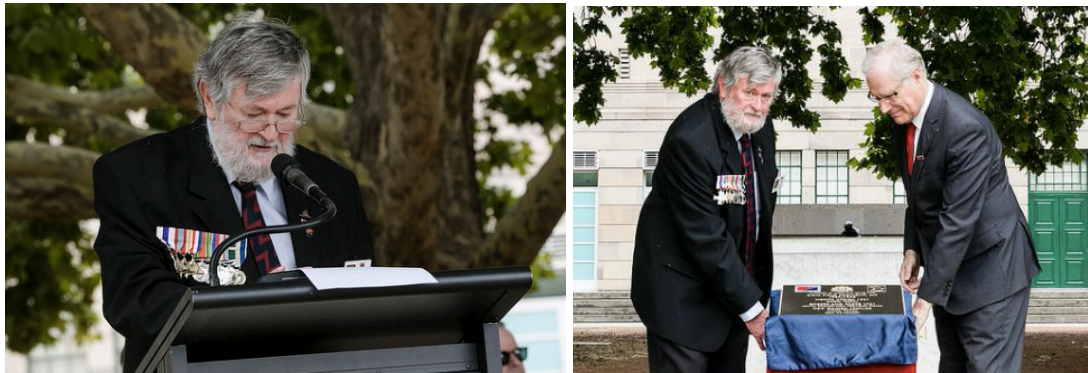
They returned to Australia in 1942 and then saw no active service until December 1944 when sent to Aitape and Wewak in northern New Guinea, where more deeds of bravery were done including the George Medal awarded to GNR J. McAllister for saving 13 men from the flooded Danmap River.

The Regiment was disbanded on 11th January 1946 but the members decided to keep the Association alive which it has done to this day with descendants taking over the reins. There was always an Annual Dinner (now Lunch) and large turnouts on Anzac Day Marches both in Melbourne and Sydney.

They were very proud of their Regiment.

We, the descendants are proud of them.

Lachlan McPherson
President, 2/2nd Field Regiment Association



5. RECONNAISSANCE

Australian War Memorial Plaque Ceremony

Charles Bean's vision for a museum had started during the Gallipoli Campaign in WW1 where he saw first hand that Australian soldiers were devoted collectors of battlefield souvenirs. Further upon seeing the carnage on the Western Front in the second half of 1916 he felt not only a museum but also a memorial to commemorate all those who had been killed should be built. After twenty-five years the Australian War Memorial was finally opened on 11th November 1941 as a place for family, friends, and the general public to visit and to pay their respects.

In June 2014 it was decided by the committee to have a plaque erected. Approval was sought and received from the Australian War Memorial, Canberra to proceed. It took close to three years to bring everything together what with the strict guide lines and due process which had to be followed, with every aspect needing to be 'ticked off' before we could proceed to the next. Included amongst others things were the plaque's size, the font, and having the recommended company cast the plaque. Also the Australian Army had to verify the correct detail and the exact wording, plus grant approval to use the badges and emblems. Keith Rossi had advised us that funding was available from the Department of Veterans Affairs. A submission through their *Saluting Their Service* grants program was made and we were successful in receiving full project funding. Once the plaque had been cast it had to be forwarded to Canberra for cataloguing and safe-keeping, after which we could submit suitable ceremony dates. Because of the huge demand for ceremonies (due to the centenary of WW1) February 2018 was agreed upon. The committee agreed that it was also an opportune time to have a second plaque cast (at a discounted price) and this was unveiled on Remembrance Day 11th November 2016 at the Repatriation Hospital, Heidelberg, attended by veteran Bill Rowe and several descendants.

And so, at 2pm on Wednesday 21st February 2018 the time had come for the official unveiling and dedication of a plaque in memory of those who served with the 2/2 Field Regiment 1939-1945.

It was so pleasing to see so many attend and included Lachlan McPherson, Derek & Jenny Trewarne, Richard Refshauge, Stuart Withers, Mel Johnson, Terry Cole, Eloise & Imogen Cole-Dearling, Michael Jaboor, John Cameron, Sue & Frank Foley, Ian, Sotiria & Anthony Gleeson, Malcolm Fallon, David, Zachary & Megan Clancy, Leonie Watson, Jeanette O'Brien and Roslyn Watson. All sons and daughters, grandsons and granddaughters, a great granddaughter and other family members and they had travelled by vehicle and plane from far and wide including Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and a few from Canberra.

The ceremony was conducted in the Captain Reg Saunders Courtyard with its two magnificent oak trees and garden - a beautiful setting. Seating had been arranged for the official party, descendants and also the five-member military band from Duntroon. A formal ceremony with a welcome from the AWM Director, Dr Brendan Nelson, an address by our President Lachlan McPherson, prayers by the Chaplain, unveiling and dedication of the plaque, reciting of two verses of the 'Ode', the Last Post, One Minute's Silence, Rouse, the National Anthem, Benediction, Thanks and Farewell and Acknowledgements.

After the ceremony a wreath was laid by Derek Trewarne and Anthony Gleeson. With our permission the wreath was later placed in the courtyard where the Last Post Ceremony is conducted every day. The cards from all wreaths are kept in perpetuity at the memorial. Members also took many photographs before we all adjourned to Poppy's Café for afternoon tea.

Our Association can justly feel proud that this plaque at the Australian War Memorial will ensure that all those who served with the 2/2 Field Regiment 1939-1945 will be always honoured and remembered at a very fitting place which Charles Bean had envisaged all those years ago during World War 1.

LEST WE FORGET

The official images from the AWM media team are readily available through the following site and you will need to scroll through as everything is in chronological order. Further images can be found on the 2/2nd website, and at:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/australianwarmemorial>

We wish to acknowledge and thank the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, and the Australian Department of Veterans Affairs.

Mel Johnson
Secretary

6. COUNTER BATTERY

Iraq was high stress, but it beat the monotony of Kuwait. I was sharing a room with eight soldiers, many of whom spent their nights alternately crying of homesickness, or pacing the lines with rifles cocked. In an environment where rockets and shells routinely hit the base, meal times were an unlikely stress point; mainly because half of the forward base would descend on a small concrete mess hall at the same time to jostle over meagre rations, doled out by angry Iraqi cooks. For this reason, I deliberately forewent the edible food, and waited until just before the mess closed before presenting for whatever scraps were left.

One evening it was just myself and a table of three sullen Iraqi soldiers in the mess, when a siren wailed over the base. It didn't signify any immediate threat, but it did mean we had to urgently RV with our units.

I cast aside my tray, and trudged out of the mess behind the Iraqis. On hitting the door, one of the Iraqis uncapped his canteen and splashed it behind him, hitting me in the face with his dirty Iraq sewer-water. "Watch it, moron" came a voice, which I quickly realised had been mine. They turned to face me while I stood, hands on hips, sizing them up. They were small, dressed in Iraqi desert cam, and each had an American M4 rifle slung across their back. While technically allies, the tension

between the Iraqi Army and other coalition forces had been building for weeks, with the Iraqis trying to reclaim some lost power (and lost face) from the Western armies. I was outgunned by these three but, unlike them with their slung rifles, I was carrying a holstered 9mm pistol. Not only did I have the close-quarters advantage of a short-barrelled weapon, but I could draw it in an instant. And, thanks to my four months on the range back in Kuwait, I could unload a full clip in about two seconds, with deadly accuracy.

The standoff continued and, to bring my presence properly to bear, I unsnapped my sidearm by ripping the riveted flap off the canvas holster, and rested my hand on the butt of my 9mm. I kept reminding myself of my rights to escalate. If they reach for their weapons, I draw mine. If they bring their weapons to bear, or even touch the cocking handle, I fire into the centre of each scene mass. I noticed the centre man's water bottle shaking in his hands. He was clearly terrified, and was weighing up the same decision. Did I want to go down like this? Whether I lived or died, it was going to be over an accidental splash of water. It was a moral weighing up of their rights versus my pride. I felt no fear, but my heartbeat thumped in my ears while sweat dried cold on my skin under my dirty fatigues.

To be continued in September.

The above is the first half of a true story. It is recreated with permission, but goes deliberately uncredited, and is posted here with minor edits (language, OPSEC).



PERSONALIA

Jottings from near and far

If you would like to keep us updated on what's happening, or if you have something you would like to share with the association, please email [djabor@gmail.com](mailto:djaboor@gmail.com)

New members

A warm welcome to all new members. The regiment has approximately four fixed meeting dates per year (ANZAC Day, the annual luncheon, and two committee meetings), as well as the occasional ad hoc event. We'd love to get to know you, so please drop the editor a line with a quick blurb about yourself/your family/your connections to be shared here.

Lachlan McPherson

Brother Ewen and wife Nonie have taken off cruising again to Hobart and then Singapore. Ewen told me he wants to go to the Hotel Raffles and have a scotch! He'll be back for Anzac Day.

Lachlan is off to Greece, Crete and Gallipoli in May and early June to see the plaque at Brallos Pass and the Battle of Crete commemorations and then the WW1 battlefields. That's just the start of what's hinted as a big year!

David Jaboor

Your sturdy editor has recently finished university, and is almost completely out of the Army. He is hoping to hand in his ID and focus on social work full time for 2018.

He is also heading to Taiwan and Japan around mid-April, and is going to have to seek out a Dawn Service somewhere in the Taipei hinterland.

Malcolm Fallon

Malcolm is visiting Italy, England, Spain, and France in the coming months. While in France Malcolm will visit the British Cemetery Tilloy Les Mofflaines, and the grave of his Great Uncle John George Gabellini, who was killed at Bullecourt on 3 May 1917. Malcolm has shared the below picture of his father, VX53739 Ronald Ernest Fallon, who was a gunner with the 2/2nd. He can be found bottom row, first on the left.



8. THE SERGEANTS' MESS

Committee Meeting

The next committee meeting will be held at ANZAC House, 4 Collins Street, on Monday 18th June. Timings to come.

8. DIARY DATES

Please put these dates in your diaries:

Wednesday 25th April	ANZAC Day
Monday 18 th June	Committee meeting (ANZAC House, 1000h)

9. ADJUTANT'S REPORT

We are very pleased to announce that Justice Richard Refshauge has agreed to be the patron of the 2/2 Field Regiment Association. A role following in the footsteps of his father William Refshauge who was the first Regimental Officer of the regiment and later a Major General. Thank you very much Richard.

The 2/2 Field Regiment Association continues its close ties with the Greek community here in Victoria where Terry Cole, Mel Johnson, Peter Geddes, Pam and Ian Giulieri attended the "OHI" day ceremony at the Hellenic Memorial in the Shrine precincts on Saturday 28th October last year. This was followed by a luncheon hosted by the Hellenic sub-branch RSL at their club rooms in South Melbourne where we are always very warmly received.

Our president Lachlan attended the Hellenic guard ceremony on 22nd March hosted by the Victorian State Government at Parliament House. The founding of Modern Greece is celebrated on the 25th March each year. This date goes back to 1821 and was the starting day of fighting which took many battles over twelve years for them to finally triumph and gain their independence.

On 5th December 2017 nine of us enjoyed lunch at the Wool Exchange Restaurant in Geelong just as a Christmas get together and included Lachlan McPherson, Sue &

Frank Foley, Malcolm Fallon and family, Liz & Robert Lennie, Kat Gibson & baby Dorothy and Mel Johnson. Small numbers but easy for everyone to chat. Thank you Lachlan for making the arrangements and most likely a Christmas gathering will be put into our yearly events.

In May president Lachlan is travelling to Greece and Crete. He will visit Lamia and Brallos Pass and then go onto Crete for official commemorations around the May 20.

The following information is provided so that descendants know the directions and exact google earth co-ordinates for the Brallos Pass memorial

From Lamia take the Old National Road past the airport, cross the Spherkios River and travel across the plain to the foot of the escarpment - from there it is 6KM up the winding road, at:

38Deg 46Min 58.33Sec North and 22Deg 26Min 55.33Sec East

I am very pleased to say that on the first anniversary of the dedication of the plaque our caretaker Dimitrios Harazani and LT COL Moukas visited the Brallos Pass memorial and laid wreaths. From time to time I telephone both of them to stay in contact.

ANZAC DAY, Wednesday 25th April 2018

The Regiment will form up at no later than 1030h in Flinders Street near St Paul's Cathedral, to move off at 1100h and march 6 abreast as usual.

It is most important that you are on time to complete the roll call and be ready, as we may step off earlier than scheduled. For the roll call please have a business size card with your name, your forebear, his rank and service number, your relationship with him and your contact details ready to hand to a committee member.

For any new members joining us this year please be aware of the large crowds, and that barriers are in place so allow yourself plenty of time to get to our meeting point.

Please observe the following points:

- As always everyone is required to wear appropriate dress and footwear as your forebears would have done.
- Descendants wearing medals (original or replica) must have them pinned on the right hand breast.
- A reminder that - NO photographs are to be carried and pushing of prams and pushers is NOT PERMITTED.

With so few veterans still with us if you know of a veteran who can participate please do your best to encourage and assist them to come to Anzac Day 2018 - vehicles have been requested to carry our veterans in the march.

As the 2/2 Field Regiment has always maintained a long and proud history this special day presents the opportunity to honour and remember all our veterans whether you partake in the official march or join with the thousands who line up along St Kilda Road and onwards to the Shrine of Remembrance.

The detail for a get together/drinks after the march will be available on the day and most likely back in the Federation Square precinct - everyone is welcome.

Mel Johnson
Secretary

10. CEASE FIRING!

Thank you again to all members for their support, contributions, and readership of Action Front. For those who can donate (any amount) to the association, the EFT details are:






Account Name: 2/2 Field Regiment Association

BSB: 063 001

Account No: 0090 2130

Please advise your payment by email: kimtaunt@optushome.com.au

Soldier on.

<p style="text-align: center;">Commemorative Plaque Dedication Ceremony</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">in recognition of the service and sacrifice of members of the</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2/2nd Field Regiment Association</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Wednesday 21 February 2018 Captain Reg Saunders Courtyard Australian War Memorial</p> 	<p>BENEDICTION Chaplain Mau Monu</p> <p>THANKS AND FAREWELL Mr Derek Trewarne Vice-President 2/2nd Field Regiment Association</p> <p>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS Chaplain Mau Monu Musician Justin Williams Band of the Royal Military College, Duntroon</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">For images from today's ceremony please visit: http://www.flickr.com/photos/australianwarmemorial</p> 
 <p style="text-align: center;">Order of Service</p> <p>WELCOME Dr Brendan Nelson AO Director Australian War Memorial</p> <p>COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESS Mr Lachlan McPherson President 2/2nd Field Regiment Association</p> <p>PRAYERS Chaplain Mau Monu Command Chaplain Special Operations Command</p> <p>UNVEILING OF COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE Mr Lachlan McPherson and Justice Richard Refshauge</p> <p>DEDICATION OF COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE Chaplain Mau Monu</p>	<p>THE ODE Mr Lachlan McPherson</p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p>Response – <i>We will remember them</i></p> <p>LAST POST</p> <p>ONE MINUTE'S SILENCE</p> <p>ROUSE <i>Lest we forget</i> Response – <i>Lest we forget</i></p> <p>THE NATIONAL ANTHEM <i>Australians all let us rejoice, For we are young and free; We've golden soil and wealth for toil; Our home is girt by sea; Our land abounds in nature's gifts Of beauty rich and rare; In history's page, let every stage Advance Australia Fair. In joyful strains then let us sing. Advance Australia Fair.</i></p>

The Office Bearers are:

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Donations

The 2/2nd Field Regiment Association extends its thanks the following donors since last edition:

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Ian Kirk

Algy Drewett

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