



In this edition:

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

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

Lest We Forget.

WELCOME

In this edition we hear from Association President Malcolm Fallon in Opening Shots, and The Sergeants Mess prepares us for this year's ANZAC day march.

In Personalia we learn about *Leading Bombardier Fred Kerr* through content kindly submitted by John Davies back in 2015 and lost while the Regiment Facebook page was down. Thank you John for your submission, and apologies that it's taken so long to get into print!

The story of *Patrick (Paddy) Leonard Christopher McLaren* has kindly been provided through Jim's Historical Militaria Collection.

We also learn the story of *Gunner James Zampelis* courtesy of Jim Claven, historian, freelance writer and member of Melbourne's Battle of Crete and Greece Commemorative Council.

Throughout this edition are featured three beautiful poems written by Carolyn Jeffery, daughter of the Association's very first Secretary, Bruce Needham. Carolyn has previously submitted her father's biography, which was published in a previous edition of ACTION FRONT. Carolyn lives in Sydney and has previously travelled to Melbourne to march with us. Thank you Carolyn for your valued contributions.

In Bombardment our historian Terry Cole tells us about the very exciting upcoming display at the Shrine of Remembrance. Read on to learn about the pictured statue!

Finally, Counter Battery closes us off with a digital call to action.

Please follow the 2/2nd Field Regiment Facebook for all updates on future events and timings. For those not on Facebook, these details will also be published on the 2/2 Website.

Website: <https://www.2nd2ndfieldreg.com.au/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/2nd2ndFRA/>

ANZAC (Bruce Needham 1919-1984)

I saw you there today
A white wraith in a sea of khaki
A mirror of that far-off time
When waving green merged with the brown.

You lifted your slouch hat and saluted me
To let me know that you were there
Never one to miss that march
With memories of that once-lived time.

You walked those miles across the desert sand
Journeyed then to Crete, Ceylon, Aitepe and Wewak
Those sounds of gunshot, artillery and screams muffled by mud
Are now echoed by the brass and pipes.

A swaying line of uncertain gait
With hair so white or not at all
Medals proudly puffed and silent faces, the banners too proclaim
The 2nd/2nd 6th Division, a family of men.

And as I watch from my Sydney screen
I realize that I have lost you again
But after your endless march across that hospital bed
You at last are at peace, and home with your mates again.

Carolyn Jeffery
25 April 1985



OPENING SHOTS

From the President - Malcolm Fallon

Welcome to the autumn 2025 edition of *ACTION FRONT*.

Whilst the Association has been relatively quiet since our AGM last October regarding functions, a band of committee and members have been working hard behind the scenes, meeting with The Shrine Curator Neil Sharkey to further and strengthen our relationship in regard to a display at The Shrine commencing March 2026 that will go through until March 2027.

I wish to acknowledge the work Neil has done to get this display on the books of The Shrine where planning is always 4-5 years in advance. I also wish to acknowledge our own historian Terry Cole for the thinking, planning and commitment he has put into this project. Terry initially raised this project when we developed the 5 year plan for the association and his passion is driving the project for us.

Terry has prepared a separate paper, which will become a feature in future editions of *ACTION FRONT*. Look for his report within.

Before going further, it would be remiss of me not to thank Robert Lennie for putting his hand up to join your committee. I look forward to Robert's contribution with his considerable knowledge of his father's service to the 2/2nd. May you enjoy your experience on the committee Robert!

Our website continues to attract attention with many people visiting to keep up to date on news and events. Combined with our Facebook page (with the 2 linked to each other) there are many favourable comments. Both are updated regularly and keep readers informed of events. We welcome contributions and blogs/ questions.

HAVE YOU VISITED THE WEBPAGE YET?

<https://www.2nd2ndfieldreg.com.au/contact.html>

Click on the link to take you directly to the website.

ANZAC DAY 2025 falls on a Friday this year making a lot of people look at it as a long weekend.

I hope this doesn't affect the numbers marching and watching, but in fact may turn into a positive with football and other activities bringing people to the city for the weekend.

The now annual lunch following the march continues to flourish with our booking capacity at 40 seats available.

Same location as past two years being the **Rising Sun Hotel**, 2 Raglan Street, South Melbourne.

RSVP no later than **15 April** with names and numbers attending please.

Send RSVPs to me via phone/SMS
0417 32 6970 or email
president.2nd2ndfieldreg@gmail.com

SEE ALSO THE FLYER with ALL the details of where to meet prior to the march and the lunch further into this edition.

We are always looking for contributions to *ACTION FRONT*. If you have anything you would like to share, we would be thrilled to receive your article. We only have so much material and would be rapt to receive an article and photos from you.

Put in any format and we will work to get your article into print. What may seem like a bit of family history/folklore/legend to you will get our attention!

If you would like a feature done on your relative, download the "serviceman's profile" form from our website, fill in what you would like printed and send to Sarah.

Email our Editor Sarah with your contribution or comments to assist us to keep *ACTION FRONT* relevant and interesting.

actionfront.2nd2ndfieldreg@gmail.com

We will start a Letters to the Editor page with your comments, remember we need feedback and encouragement to continue to produce a quality paper!



—

“Rogue Heroes”, as previewed in the last *ACTION FRONT*, how many took the time to watch the 6 episodes making up the first series?

Bloody good weren't they???

Well, the good news is series 2 has finally aired, about 6 months later than scheduled, but well worth the wait.

The second series has the SAS entering Italy and moving into Europe which will ultimately end World War II. Action packed with the predictable bit of romance thrown in, it is high on my “must watch” each Wednesday night (not for the romance but the history!!!). By the time we send this newsletter out I expect the second series will be nearing completion.

Before watching the second series, I thoroughly recommend the first series must be watched first to get the story and continuity. I really rate and recommend this to you. Yes, there is a bit of swearing in context of a war and mainly soldiers living on the edge and sharing life under extreme circumstances.

To watch:

- *SBS Streaming
- *Rogue Heroes (scroll down in alphabetical order)
- *Series 1-6 (approx. 55 mins per episode)
- *Series 2 (3 episodes shown at time of writing).

I have a friend who is absolutely “head over heels” of **Lieutenant Colonel Robert Blair “Paddy” Mayne DSO - 3 Bars** and his Irish accent among other things!!!!

Lt Col Paddy was a real character (they all were) and there is a statue of him in his home town in Ireland. To see this man who was later a solicitor/lawyer and international rugby player among other roles makes you want to shake his

hand! He was hard, a rebel, rogue and hero and true to his Irish background.

MUST WATCH 10/10 (my biased opinion).

Do a “google search” on Paddy Mayne and watch Rogue Heroes and tell us what you think.

I will do a book review next edition after reading his biography.

—

ANZAC – The Greek Chapter

The documentary as detailed last issue and on the website was shown in both Melbourne (4 viewings) and in Sydney. This doco was extremely well received and sold out in each of the 4 Melbourne viewings I attended.

A very balanced view of The Greek Campaign with some wonderful interviews with 2/2nd soldiers, Jack Anderson in particular.

It is hoped to get an airing on either/both ABC or SBS for ANZAC Day. I haven't heard whether the producers have been successful in their endeavours. Keep an eye open if it gets an airing. In closing, I again thank the committee for their support, diligence and commitment in keeping the 2/2nd Field Regiment Association Inc. in good health and an eye open for the future.

I hope you can make ANZAC Day a memorable occasion wherever you are and look forward to hearing from you with a report from your home town.

Please take care and look out for one and other.

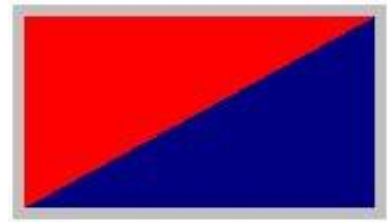
Kindest regards

Malcolm



THE SERGEANTS' MESS

Malcolm Fallon

2025 ANZAC DAY MARCH & LUNCH DETAILS**MARCH:**

Advice has been received by the Association from the ANZAC Day organisers as follows:

WHERE	Flinders Street, East of Swanston Street , diagonally opposite Flinders Street Railway station, basically outside the front doors of St. Paul's Cathedral (this is the same location we marched from prior to the changes in 2023-23). Look for the 2/2 Banner. If you have difficulty finding us, please call my mobile on 0417 32 6970 (Malcolm) and we can guide you to us.
TIME	As close to 0830 hrs as possible. March off time is fluid due to the fact it is always an unknown how many marchers will turn out to march, arriving on time ensures you are not left behind.
NOTES	<u>PLEASE ALLOW AMPLE TIME TO TRAVEL, PARKING (if coming by car), GETTING THROUGH THE GATHERING CROWDS AND AROUND BARRIERS THAT ARE IN PLACE.</u> *** PLEASE NOTE: YOU ARE WELCOME TO CARRY A PHOTO OF THE PERSON YOU ARE REPRESENTING BUT THERE IS AN ENFORCED 'NO GLASS' POLICY. *** (i.e. If photo is in a frame, the glass <u>MUST</u> be removed. Recommend laminating a duplicate photo.)

POST MARCH LUNCHEON:

The now annual post march lunch will again be held at the same venue as the past two years. We have secured 40 places upstairs for the 2/2nd descendants and followers.

WHERE	Rising Sun Hotel (a.k.a. Home of South Melbourne Football Club) 2 Raglan Street, South Melbourne
TIME	1230 hrs onwards (Short 10min. stroll from The Shrine)
BOOKINGS	PHONE/SMS: 0417 32 6970 (Malcolm Fallon) EMAIL: president.2nd2ndfieldreg@gmail.com
RSVP	15 April 2025 (BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL – LIMITED TO 40)

THE 2/2nd FIELD REGIMENT ASSOCIATION Inc. COMMITTEE LOOKS FORWARD TO WELCOMING DESCENDANTS & FOLLOWERS.



PERSONALIA

In this issue of ACTION FRONT we feature Leading Bombardier Frederick (Fred) Raymond Kerr (VX603), Patrick (Paddy) Leonard Christopher McLaren (VX10532), and Gunner James Zampelis (VX989).

*Leading Bombardier Frederick (Fred)
Raymond Kerr (VC603)
This content was submitted by John Davies.*

Fred Kerr was born on 25th April 1918, the only child to William Frederick Kerr and Edith Dorothy Kerr of Middle Park. He attended Melbourne High School in 1932 and 1933, playing the school's Under 14 Australian Rules Football team. The book '50 Years of Rugby' lists Fred as a member of the Power House first grade team in 1936. This was the club's first season in 'A' grade during which they played and beat the Melbourne Club in the semi-final which had been the 1935 Premiers; only to lose to Footscray 29 – 0 in the final.

In that year, the first team won fourteen of their twenty matches, losing seven and drawing two. The Melbourne Age reported 'in making the final in their first year in senior football; Power House have put up one of the most memorable performances in the history of Victorian Rugby'. It was during 1937 that Power House gained its first representation in an Australian team. Two players, Stan Bissett and Merv 'Mo' Blundell were selected in the Australian side to play South Africa. Fred Kerr was one of five Power House players to represent Victoria in that season.

1938 was a memorable season for the Club, and the minutes 1938 AGM make enjoyable reading: *"A Grade played twenty matches of which 17 were won, two lost and one drawn, and won the premiership by a comfortable margin defeating Footscray in the final"*

Seven Power House players represented Victoria in 1938, including Fred Kerr; this was the Victorian team which defeated New South Wales at the Many Oval. Both Fred Kerr and Max Carpenter represented Australia in a Test Match against New Zealand that year.

The book 'Australian Rugby, the Game and the Players' records that: *"Fred was a tall Victorian flanker who played splendidly against New Zealand in Sydney in 1938. The All Blacks were shocked when Kerr was amongst eight players dropped from the Australian team for the following tests – a savage reaction by selectors to Australia's 24 to 9 defeat. The All Black considered Kerr to be the best forward they met on tour"*.

When war broke out, Fred joined the 2nd/2nd Field Regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery with two other Power House men, Lisle Barden and Colin Morley, as part of the 6th Division deployed in Greece. In 1941 the division was forced to withdraw to the south under constant air and ground attack by the German Army. Lisle Barden recounts the story:

1995 ANZAC Day 50 Years On

White cockatoos herald the mute dawn of this ANZAC day
They fly low over the trees in silent screeches
A car, a lone man on an empty road in Forestville
I am puzzled
He is short, dark haired and wears a mourning suit.

The grey roads wind emptily in all directions
And slash through the silence of this suburb
Usually carrying cars and foot soldiers, but now
Emptied of men
For the able and old congregate in Sydney's dull city streets.

Sounds of pipe bands at the Cenotaph
And deep rumblings but now it is too late for Gallipoli men
Long snakes, not smooth, but wavering shuffles now
They are mainly men
While my golden boy surfs, old men weep.

*Carolyn Jeffery
1995*

“The mountain overlooked a large plain, with Lamia in the background. It was to be called the Thermopylae Line and in fact was the last set piece battle involving the ANZAC Corps of the 6th Australian Division and the First New Zealand Division.

As our regiment of guns and vehicles wound its way up the mountain, the Division Commander decided to place two guns on the front of the slope, to try to stop the Germans rebuilding a bridge across the Sperkios River which was to be blown when the last of our infantry came across. So, two guns of ‘A’ troop, 3rd Battery 2/2 Australian Field Regiment under the command of Lieutenant John Anderson were pulled out of the line and were put on a tiny flat area on a hairpin bend on the road about half way up the mountain. I can still see it in my memory. Bombardier Fred Kerr was a member of (No.1) one gun crew, I saw him when I went up to this position next day and fired the gun onto the road from Lamia and we registered targets.

Next day, 23rd April 1941 it was on. The Germans tried to find our guns – we tried to keep them hidden – but, our guns had to fire to keep the Germans away from the bridge. We were fighting with the famous 25 pounder gun, but eventually the enemy brought up a battery of 5.9 medium guns. Eventually, the inevitable happened, the longer range guns found our guns and blew them both out of action. Seven of our gunners, including Freddie Kerr, were killed, and three severely wounded – we finally got them out. It was a gallant action.”

Fred (F.R.) Kerr Number VX603 with the rank of Leading Bombardier is record on the Honour Board as killed in action on the 23 April 1941.

Lest we forget.

*Patrick (Paddy) Leonard Christopher McLaren (V10532)
Credit for article and images – Jim’s Historical Militaria Collection*

The story of an Artillery Gunners successful bid for freedom after being wounded & becoming a German/Italian POW following the Axis invasion of Greece & Crete.

Born in Brighton, VIC on 17 March 1914, the son of Leonard Fairleigh Patrick McLaren & Irene Jane Lambert Burney. He was educated at Brighton Grammar School, Christian Brothers College St. Kilda & Caulfield Grammar School. He was employed as a Fitter & Turner (1929–31) & Travelling Frock Salesman (1931–40).

Having previously served 2 years in the 5th Battalion (Victorian Scottish Regiment), Paddy enlisted in the AIF on 27 February 1940 at age 25y 11m & was allocated S/No. VX10532 as Gunner with [2/2nd Field Regiment](#) & posted to B Troop, No.3 Battery. Assigned to the 6th Division, the 2/2nd embarked for the Middle East on 14 April, arriving in El Kantara a month later, carrying out training & exercise until December.



Fighting in North Africa

In December, the 2/2nd came under command of the 16th Brigade & as part of Operation Compass, firing their first shots against the enemy on the 21st when they began shelling the defences of the Italian fortress of Bardia. They were re-allocated to the 17th Brigade on the 29th & remained in support of their actions during the Battle of Bardia, 3–5 January 1941

Fighting in Greece

On 31 March, the Regiment deployed to Greece on board SS Pennland & disembarked at Port Piraeus on 3 April. The campaign was short-lived as the Allies were quickly overwhelmed by the German advance. During the course of the fighting, the 2/2nd supported the 16th Brigade at Veria Pass, the 19th Brigade at Servia, both the 17th & 19th Brigades on the Thermopylae Line & finally the 19th during a rearguard action around the Brallos Pass, before being evacuated on board HMS Decoy

Fighting in Crete

In the chaos that followed the Allied withdrawal from Greece, the Regiment was landed at Suda Bay on Crete on the 26th – the nights were extremely cold, they had no blankets & many were without great coats. Lacking their Artillery, they formed into an ad-hoc Infantry Company known as Cremor Force (named after the 2/2nd Commanding Officer, Lt Col William Cremor).

Paddy was WIA with gunshot wounds to both thighs during the fighting somewhere between Kalyves & Maleme. In a letter to his sister, Paddy wrote that after 6 days of fighting all night & being bombed all day, he was wounded. He was evacuated to a small village where a lot more wounded were. Bombs were dropping all over the place & fighting was going on all around. After a couple of days, the sound of battle grew & the wounded were wondering what was happening, when all of a sudden “in burst the Nazi play boys” & they knew what had happened” – they had become German POW’s

Escape & evasion in Crete & Greece

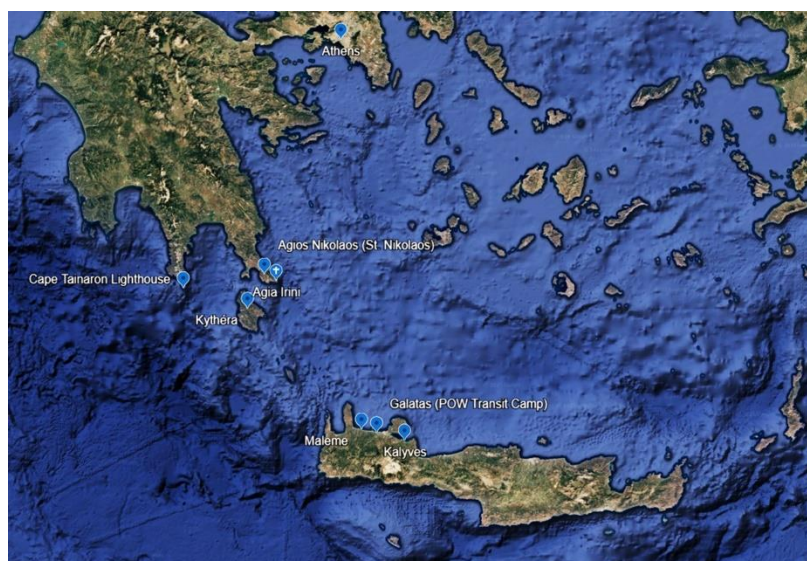
They were taken to the POW transit camp near Galatas & Paddy was admitted to the camp hospital until August when he could walk again. Here he met up with VX856 CPL ‘Pat’ Murphy, also of the 2/2nd Regt & straight away they began planning their escape. It was not easy as there was plenty of wire around the camp, not to mention the armed guards who did not hesitate to shoot.

After about a week, Paddy, Pat & another of the Regt, VX17073 GNR ‘Charlie’ Jager, snuck through the wire & hid in a bomb crater until dark, then made for the hills.

With the aid of some Greeks who fed & clothed them, they dodged the enemy for a couple of weeks until they made their way to a point where they could steal a small fishing boat, subsequently making their way to the southernmost part of Peloponnese, Greece.

On the run, parties of Allied escapees, some of them from Crete, wandered from village to village seeking a means of making their way to Africa or Turkey. One such group known as Redpath Group, had come together & were led by New Zealander 30836 SGT John Redpath.

This diverse group of Australian, New Zealand & British, was acting on its own initiative & their initial plan was to make their way on foot (over 800 km’s) up through Greece & into neutral Turkey, though they realised the coming winter snow & lack of food would make it almost impossible to trek.



They had been taken in by the Greeks south of Neapoli Voion & were being hidden in a big cave in the wildest area near village of Agios Nikolaos (St. Nikolaos) at the foot of the Taygetus Range in Laconia, SE Greece, Aided by the Mayor, Demetrios 'Jim' Livanos, who had once worked on the South African goldfields & spoke good English, they hid for another month as they made plans for further escape.

Redpath held a master-mariner's ticket, so it was decided they would pirate one of the trading vessels that regularly paid fleeting visits to the small port in order to drop off Cretan smugglers before sailing on their way to Piraeus. After making several attempts at pinching a boat, they finally found a small caique sheltering in the bay of Cape Maleas which they successfully pirated by force & renamed "Agia Irini" (St. Irini) – presumably after the Agia Irini Church which overlooks the cape where they commandeered the vessel.

Redpath had a compass & a map given to him by Jim Livanos, a passenger/crew of 18 jubilant escapados on deck & the swearing skipper & 2-man crew locked below with their cargo of figs. As only one day's rations had come aboard, for a journey that was to last 8 days, they mainly lived off the pirated figs.

The passenger/crew under John Redpath were:

VX14087 Bennie Travers 2/2nd Field Rgt AIF

VX856 Pat Murphy 2/2nd Field Rgt AIF

VX17073 Charlie Jager 2/2nd Field Rgt AIF

VX10532 Paddy McLaren 2/2nd Field Rgt AIF

WX179 John Cole 2/3rd Field Rgt AIF

NX15437 Ian McLaren 2/2nd Bn AIF

NX8942 Ernest Noel Park 2/2nd Bn AIF

VX15848 Reg Hipwell 2/7th Bn AIF

VX15841 Ted Millman 2/7th Bn AIF

WX399 Charles Hosking 2/11th Bn AIF

21069 G. E. Voyce 5th Field Rgt NZEF

2702 A. Empson 18th Bn NZEF

2548 W. H. Bristow 18th Bn NZEF

9375 T. S. Leaver 20th Bn NZEF

955 B. Barrow OHC NZEF

30836 G. Moysted 19th Army Troop Coy NZEF

1876300 J. Roe 62nd Field Coy RE

13358 G. Witty 9L G.E.

Under Redpath, the 21 men (including the 3 crew) crammed into the 40 ft. Agia Irini & flying a swastika flag they found in a locker, made their way west to Matapan where they took a fix from Cape Tainaron Lighthouse, plotted a course between Matapan & Kythera (Kythéra) & started south back past Crete aiming for the coast of North Africa.

At dawn on the third day, a bomber came out of the sun & dropped 12 bombs from up high. Having missed, it came down low & machine-gunned them for another 40 mins. Thankfully, the small size of the caique & rough seas, made them a hard target & bomber missed every time.

They continued resolutely, holding their course under a Greek flag for the next 5 days. Fuel had long run out, but winds continued to fill her sails & at last Cole, on watch, sighted the North African coast & the harbour entrance to Sollum. But nearing that entrance, they were attacked by enemy planes – Sollum was still in the hands of the Afrika Corps.

Despite juggling with the swastika, the Greek flag & finally a white one, a well-disposed fate switched the wind to a southerly blowing from the desert which rapidly developed into a khamsin (dry hot desert dust storm). This not only hid the boat from enemy view but blew them into striking distance of Mersa Matruh, still in British hands – the Aghia Irini had finally found a safe berth & its crew found their long-sought freedom.



Greeks in the aftermath of Redpath Groups escape to North Africa

Unbeknownst to Redpath's group, 36 hrs. after they sailed from Agios Nikolaos, the company of Italian infantry quartered in Neapolis, began a sweep through Cape Malea searching the cave where they were believed to still be hiding. The Mayor, Jim Livanos had impressed on his family that, under whatever duress, they must deny all knowledge of Redpath's group & maintain their stance to the end. Consequently, when Italian infantry broke the doors & entered Jims's kitchen demanding he give up the whereabouts & threatening to shoot his children one by one if it were not divulged, his wife grappled with a pointed rifle & in the melee which followed, received shots through the lip, the right arm, thigh & just below the right knee, while Jim was beaten unconscious & jailed. Despite this, Jims family remained steadfast in their story & by this time the evidence against them was far away at sea.

The original skipper of the pirated Agia Irini, was recompensed by the British Administrator for the losses he'd suffered, with a purse of gold sovereigns. He declined a job offer & when his caique was again seaworthy, sold his figs & sailed for home. Instead of retracing his route, he crept up the coast of Palestine, Syria & Turkey, then, hopping from island to island by night via the Dodecanese to the Peloponnese, he anchored in the cove where his boat was originally stolen. From there he walked to the Mayors house in Agios Nicholas & in the kitchen, pulled out his purse, thanking Jims's wife for making his fortune, trickled a stream of sovereigns onto her table. His reward from the British authorities in Alexandria for co-operating with Redpath, enabled him to buy his own caique & become a successful trader.

Back in North Africa & return to Australia

The men of Redpath Group, having successfully returned to Egypt after two bombing attacks by air at sea (one by allied planes & one by German), went their separate ways to hospital or re-join their units or returned to Australia for discharge. Paddy, after having his wounds seen to in hospital, was classified by the medical board as med class B "fit for field duties other than active service with field formations".

He returned to Australia on 30 October & re-joined the 2/2nd Fld Regt at Singleton in December. Following further postings to 120th General Transport Company in June 1943, Camp Pell Canteen Staff in August & 42nd Water Transport Operating Company in September, Paddy discharged from the AIF on 8 January 1944 with the view of becoming an Air-Gunner in the RAAF.

Enlisting as Patrick Leonard Christopher McLaren, Paddy was taken into the RAAF as an Aircrew Trainee, S/No. 440511 on 11 January, though this seemed not to be a fit for him, as after completing 6 months training at No.3 ITS (Kingaroy) & No.4 STT (Adelaide), he discharged on 31 July to return to service in the AIF.

I can't find any further service details form him & conclude he must not have returned to WW2 service

Two of Paddy's brothers also served during WW2, VX3054 Lieutenant Keith B. McLaren (AIF) & 13905 Ivan R. McLaren (RAAF). Following the wars end, Paddy moved to the Northern Territory where he became a Stores Officer for the Department of Works & Housing Initially working under Brigadier Leonard C. Lucas, OBE, DSO, MC, VD, Paddy was responsible for purchasing & supplying all stores, petrol, oil & food supplies from Darwin to Tennant Creek.



Service medals awarded to Paddy McLaren

In October 1950, he made application for commission in the RAAF though was eventually denied. Paddy returned to Victoria where on 4 February 1963, he passed away in St. Kilda at age 48. Paddy was interred in the Ferntree Gully Cemetery – he left behind an ex-wife & daughter.

Lest we forget.

Gunner James Dimitri Zampelis (VX989)

This article has been reproduced from an article published in Neos Kosmos by Jim Craven. The original can be accessed here: [Remembering the battle of Crete - Neos Kosmos](#)

Every May we gather to commemorate the service and sacrifice of those who served in the battle of Crete, defending the Island from the German invasion in May 1941. One of those we should honour is Gunner James Dimitri Zampelis. Among the 2,500 Australians of Hellenic heritage who served in the Second World War, James is the only one who was killed in action in the battle of Greece and Crete.

His story is that of thousands of other Australians who fought on Crete – and in the defence of the Greek mainland before that. It is the story of an ordinary man, who once walked the streets of Melbourne as we do, enjoying life- and where his Greek-born father had made his new home. A man like so many others who sailed overseas into harm's way, leaving a worried family behind – including a young son. And like so many others their fears would be answered by his sad death on the beautiful but suddenly dangerous Island of Crete.

James and the Zampeli Odyssey

James was born in Melbourne on 22 December 1912, a new addition to the growing Zampeli family. He was the son of Gerasimos and Louisa Zampelis. The Zampeli's came from the village of Marantohori on the Island of Lefkada. When James' father decided to migrate to Australia in 1900, he is said to have been the first to have done so from his village. After short stints in Kalgoorlie and Sydney, Gerasimos finally settled in his new home of Melbourne in 1903. At the time Melbourne had only a small Hellenic community, with the 1901 census listing only 181 Greeks living in Melbourne.

James' mother was Louisa Elizabeth Sievers, who had married Gerasimos in Melbourne's Greek Orthodox Church in 1910. Louisa and her husband would have three children – Helena arrived in 1911, followed by Dimitri (or James as he would be known) in 1912 and finally Harold Andrew in 1916. Sadly, when young James was only 7 years old his mother passed away, at just 28 years of age.



James Zampelis (right) with father Gerasimos and sister Helena

Like many Greek immigrant families, Gerasimos did not take long in establishing a new business for his family in Melbourne. After sponsoring his cousin Nicholas to follow him to Australia in 1924, they opened Nick's Café at St Kilda's big intersection, the then St Kilda Junction. Young James was soon working as a waiter. And so began the Zampeli family's long association with Melbourne's hospitality industry.

From St Kilda to War

The Second World War broke out in early September 1939. Barely four weeks later, James went to the Army Recruitment Centre at the No. 7 Drill Hall in Chapel Street, East St Kilda, and joined up as Gunner Zampelis. He was 26 years old. By this time, James had started a family of his own, adding his son Peter James Zampelis to the Zampelis presence in St Kilda. Separated from his wife Doris, James listed his son Peter as his next of kin on his enlistment papers.

It's no surprise that when he was enlisted into the 2/2nd Australian Field Regiment he was given the job of mess steward – a job he was eminently qualified for given his employment and family history! James' first experience of army life was months spent at training camps at Broadmeadows and Puckapunyal, near Seymour. But on

14th April 1940 James departed from Port Melbourne as part of the second convoy of the 2nd Australian Imperial Force – following in the wake of the Anzacs of the First World War.

The 2/2nd became one of Australia's famous fighting units in the Second World War. With it, James would take part in some of the major engagements fought by the Australian Army in the Middle East, as well as Greece and Crete. The unit was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Cremor who took a keen interest in the conditions experienced by his men. A former school teacher, he was affectionately known as "old bugger and blast" by James and his fellow diggers. One of the other officers in the unit was Captain William Refshauge, the Regimental Medical Officer, who would come to know James personally during the unit's campaign in Crete.

James' First Battle Honour Bardia

James arrived at the Kantarra Army camp in Egypt on 18 May 1940, the unit being incorporated into the artillery component of the famous Australian 6th Division commanded by Major General Iven Mackay. The unit's routine of artillery training was ended with the Italian declaration of war on 11 June.

The 2/2nd took part in the defence of Egypt against the initial Italian invasion and in the famous Allied counter-attack led by Major General Richard O'Connor. The campaign resulted in the rout of enemy forces in Libya. One of the battle honours of the unit was its role, with the rest of the 6th Division, in the battle of Bardia in Libya. This battle took place over three days in early January 1941, with the twenty-four guns of the 2/2nd taking part in the artillery bombardment of this heavily defended port and supply base. It was famously reported that some of the diggers advanced at the attack singing an Aussie parody of the popular song of the time – "South of the border, down Mexico way!"

The Australian success was hailed in Australia, compared to those of the First AIF in the First World War. Recruitment surged back in Australia in the wake of the news of the victory. Australia's official historian of the Second World War noted the vital role of the artillery to the victory, its effectiveness and planning having "subdued the enemy's fire at the vital time". While the battle was followed up by a rapid advance, often referred to as the "Benghazi Handicap", James and the 2/2nd would not be able to take part in these fruits of their victory at Bardia. They were off to defend the land of his father – Greece.

James – An Anzac in Hellas

With the decision to send Allied troops to help in the defence of Greece, James' unit along with the rest of the 6th Division embarked for Greece on 28 March 1941. The arrival of what would become over 17,000 Australians in Greece in 1941, would see Australian soldiers and nurses set foot on Greek soil for the second time in less than thirty years. James was following in the footsteps of those Australians of the First World War who had served on Lemnos during the Gallipoli campaign, the sailors of the Corfu flotilla as well as the soldiers and nurse who served in the four year Salonika campaign.

The Australians received a warm welcome on their return to Hellenic soil. But the time for celebration was short. In late April, the Germans joined their Italian and Bulgarian allies in invading Greece. Along with many of the other Australian fighting units, James and the 2/2nd were transported north from Piraeus all the way up the length of Greece to the Servia Pass in northwestern Macedonia. It was here that the Australians would confront German forces for the first time since 1918.

The story of James' campaign in mainland Greece is that of the Second AIF. Short, dogged defensive actions, followed by strategic withdrawals through the mountains and valleys of central Greece. The guns of the 2/2nd started their campaign in Greece on 16 April at the Servia Pass, continuing across the Aliakmon River defence line, then through Zarkos and Lamia – James and the 2/2nd were positioned to defend the withdrawal of the Allied troops.

It was at Brallos pass – above the plains of Thermopylae – that the 2/2nd made a stand. Like the famed 300 Spartans of Classical Greece, the Australian artillery stood at the mountain pass in the way of the massive German onslaught, keeping the way clear for the thousands of troops and civilians on their way to the south.

On the 21st April the guns of the 2/2nd held up the German advance across the Sperkios River in the valley below Brallos Pass. Holding their position until the 24th, the Australian gunners were subjected to sustained German artillery and aerial attacks – in one two hour period suffering some 165 aerial bombing attacks by 65 dive bombers and over another eight hours some 160 enemy artillery rounds. But due to camouflage and subterfuge, the Australian casualties were slight, with five killed and three wounded.

Many of the diggers from the 2/2nd at Brallos may well have been aware of James, and no doubt would have been swapping stories of their lives back in Melbourne's inner southern suburbs. Diggers like Sergeant LS Ingram, a former physical culture instructor from Albert Park, who was killed at Brallos. One of the surviving gunners of that engagement was Sergeant JH Lees, a butcher from nearby Prahran. The commander of the guns at Brallos, Captain JR Anderson, an accountant from Brighton, was awarded the Military Cross for his courage and leadership there.

After Brallos, James and the 2/2nd withdrew south over the mountains to avoid the German air attacks on temporary roads built by Australian engineers. James arrived at Megara, south of Athens, during Anzac day 1941. After spending the day resting under olive trees, James embarked during the night on Allied transports headed for Crete. But despite having dragged their guns and ammunition over the length of Greece, they were forced to destroy their armaments to make room for more evacuated troops. James and his unit would face their next battle without their artillery.

An Anzac Death on Crete

When James arrived in Crete he would have witnessed an island preparing for war. The large harbour at Suda Bay was full of Allied shipping – warships, troopships and supply ships. Already the Germans were preparing the ground for their coming invasion with bombing raids on this important harbour and other key installations. James was first assigned to help at the harbour. The daily bombing had made it too dangerous for the local civilian labourers, so James and the 2/2nd joined in on 4 May.

Working alongside Australian engineers, they did a great job – only stopping to unload during air-raids. The 2/2nd even successfully salvaged several Bren gun carriers from a sunken ship in harbour with its upper deck under several feet of water. Without their guns, the artillerymen of the 2/2nd were now given rifles and put into infantry roles. Over the coming days, as the German attack unfolded, James and his unit would form part of what was designated the Suda Brigade, commanded by the British Lieutenant Colonel AF Hely of the 106th Royal Horse Artillery.

The role of the Brigade was to defend the inner ring around Suda Bay and to act as a reserve. This lay along a stream which flowed through the village of Mournies, famous as the home of the famed Greek leader Venizelos. The battle of Crete commenced with German paratroops landing over Maleme airfield on the morning of May 20 and it would rage over the Island until the evacuation by the Allies in June and be replaced by a four year occupation and spirited resistance by the Cretan population. James' war on Crete centred on this village of Mournies, with the rest of his unit. The Germans attacked the village on a number of occasions in the days following their landings but were repulsed.

On the morning of 24 May 1941 James was assigned to help Captain Refshauge with the wounded men at a sick parade in Mournies village itself. On that morning the site was dive bombed. Whether this was in response to the attacks of the nearby 2/8th Battalion, or merely an attack on the Allied forces in Mournies itself is not clear.

Nevertheless, James and five others were killed and several wounded. Years later the now knighted Sir William Refshauge remembered James “as a good fellow who had been most helpful in tending wounded comrades at the parade which cost him his life.” He was 28 years old when he was killed. James was first declared missing in action but later corrected to his having been killed in action. The records say that James was buried by his comrades “500 yards south west of Mournies village”.

Anzac Legacy

James was one of the nearly 600 Australians killed in action during the campaign in Greece and Crete.

The remains of many who were killed during the battles on Crete could not be located after the war. This was despite the best efforts of the Australian Graves Registration Units who undertook this task on Crete. The names of these diggers are memorialised on the remembrance walls at the Phaleron Military Cemetery in Athens.

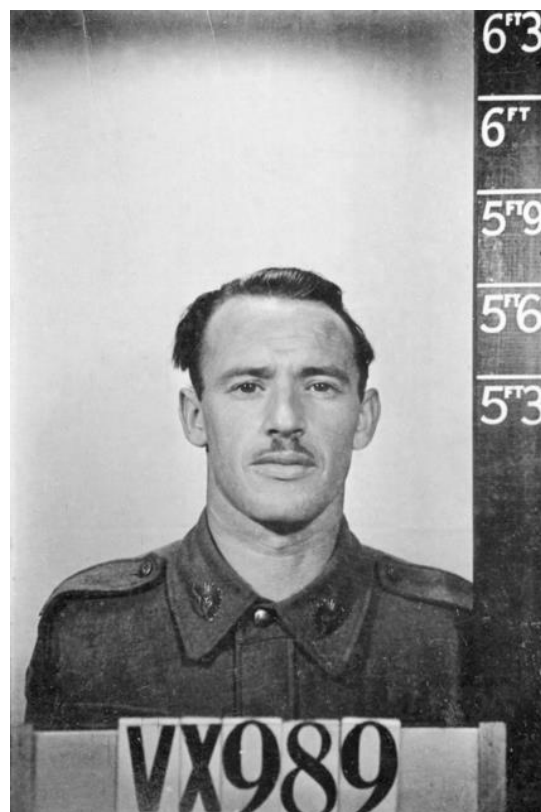
Yet the remains of these Australians – including James – lie forgotten in the soil where their comrades buried them in the lulls after the heat of battle. Would it not be a fitting testimony to Australia’s honouring of its Anzac heritage – and its connection with Greece – that a renewed effort be made to locate James’ remains, buried south west of the village he died defending seventy three years ago?

Modern technology has delivered amazing results in the battlefields of Western France, such as Fromelles, delivering recognition and remembrance to lost diggers and their descendants. Moves are currently underway to locate diggers buried near Vevi in Northern Greece all those years ago in 1941.

James’ father became a proud Australian citizen in 1947 – six years after his son gave his life for Australia. As far as we know, James’ son Peter still lives in Melbourne.

James’ story is in many ways quintessentially Australian. The son of migrants, he joined up to defend Australia and saw service and sadly paying the ultimate sacrifice in the land of his father – a symbol of the enduring link between Australia and Greece.

Lest we forget.



Vic. Paybook photograph of VX989 Gunner James Dimitri Zampelis, courtesy of the Australian War Memorial

Lost Men (part 1)

So many brave men fought on the Somme
 My great-uncles
 Alfred Benjamin Needham 1876-1916 KIA
 John Valentine Needham 1882-1922 Shell shock
 Lindsay Ernest Samuel Feltham 1894-1917 KIA.

I also never knew the brothers they left behind
 My grandfathers
 Edwin Thomas Feltham 1891-1919 Spanish flu
 Frederick Cunningham Needham 1879-1940 Heart failure.

Now Alfred and Lindsay's names face each other
 At the War Memorial
 Like sentinels to past lives
 Their bodies lie so far from home
 But joined by a marriage and the mud.

Carolyn Jeffery
 2019

Lost Man (part 2)

Different battles were fought in Africa, Crete and PNG
 My Dad
 Bruce Needham 1919-1984 HD
 Was brought home by Curtin's fears
 But now, in boxed ashes way north in the ocean of PNG
 Lost to me again by the sea.

Carolyn Jeffery
 2019

BOMBARDMENT

Shrine of Remembrance Exhibition – Terry Cole
THE ANZACS MEET KING LEONIDAS

It has been confirmed that the 2/2 Field Regiment Association will co operate with the Shrine of Remembrance to present an exhibition, starting in March 2026, and continuing for 12 months. The exhibition is based on the proposal submitted by this Association to tell the story of ANZAC resistance to Nazi invasion of Greece and the significant battles on the Thermopylae Defence Line during April 1941. April 2026 will be the 85th anniversary of these battles by Australian and New Zealand soldiers.



*Shrine of Remembrance
 - Melbourne*

Representatives of the Association including our President, Malcolm Fallon and Secretary, Mel Johnson, met with the Shrine curator Neil Sharkey on 24th February and were shown the display space in the vaults of Remembrance where the exhibition will be located. It is a significant space in the WW2 vault area and implies the importance of the 1941 battles that occurred at this historic location in Greece. This is where King Leonidas and the 300 Spartans with other Greek soldiers of the day fought, “to the end,” resisting the huge forces of Persia’s King Xerxes in 480 BC. Today this location displays the Greek National monument to King Leonidas.

The Brallos Pass is on the Thermopylae Defence line and it is here that this Association has erected a memorial commemorating the heroic stand by two 25 Pdr field guns of the Regiment. These guns and their crews fought to the “end” just as King Leonidas did in 480 BC. The Regiments Official History “Action Front” describes, on page 105, the significance of making a fighting stand at this location.

“Most of the troops remembered from their infancy the story of Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans holding this pass and now twenty four hundred years later, the Anzac Corp was placed in almost the same position.”

While the detail design of the exhibition is the responsibility of the Shrine staff this Association has made numerous suggestions for inclusion. Ongoing discussions will occur, but we believe that the Australian War Memorial in Canberra will be asked to loan significant items including one or two paintings by Sir William Dargie of ANZAC battle locations on the Thermopylae Defence line. Further reports of the progress of the exhibition will be given in due course but it can be emphasised that this is a significant event for the Association to be involved with.

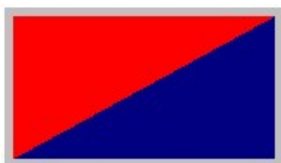


Greek National monument to King Leonidas



Memorial commemorating the 2/2 Field Regiment stand at Brallos Pass - Greece

COUNTER BATTERY



2/2 FIELD REGIMENT ASSOCIATION Inc.

HAVE YOU



***Visited the 2/2nd Field Regiment Association
Website and Facebook pages?***

- ***Read the Regiment's history,***
- ***Learn who was decorated for their service,***
 - ***Read past copies of "ACTION FRONT",***
- ***Search Nominal Rolls by Name, Rank or Number,***
 - ***Retrieve released archival information,***
 - ***Links to AWM & The Shrine, Melbourne***
- ***Vice versa links from/to Website & Facebook pages,***
 - ***Current up to date news & events***
 - ***"Blog" with us***
 - ***AND so much more***

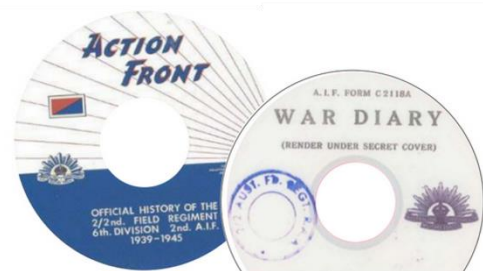
Facebook: 2/2ndField Regiment Association

Website: <https://www.2nd2ndfieldreg.com.au/events.html>

ENJOY YOUR WEBSITE!

Cease Firing!

Thank you again to all members for their support, contributions, and readership of Action Front. For those who can donate to the association, details are below.



Action Front

Official History of the 2/2nd Field Regiment, 6th Division 2nd A.L.F. 1939-1945 on CD-ROM

\$60.00 (includes postage)

2/2nd Field Regiment War Diary

Official documentation of the 2/2nd Field Regiment available on CD-ROM

\$60.00 (includes postage)

The Association can also be supported through a range of 2/2 souvenirs, full list available here:

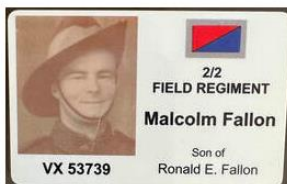
[Items for Sale - 2/2nd Field Regiment Association Inc. \(2nd2ndfieldreg.com.au\)](http://2nd2ndfieldreg.com.au)

Payment options:

Pay EFT 063 001 A/C 0090 2130, advise kimtaunt1951@gmail.com that you have made the payment, the item you are purchasing and your delivery address.

OR

Mail cheque payable to 2/2 Field Regiment Association 13 Surfers Avenue, Ocean Grove VIC 3226, and advise your purchase and address.



Name Badge

Plastic name badge with emblem.

Your name and relationship to descendant.

Includes your supplied photo (.jpeg file preferred).

\$25.00 (includes postage)



2/2nd Badge

Metal lapel pin

\$ 15.00 (includes postage)



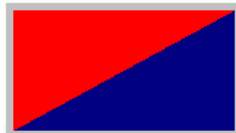


2/2 Field Regiment Association Inc.

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** Further to be added as information is identified & verified.



2/2 Field Regiment Association Inc.

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