

Chapter 6

Second World War

Others who Served – 2nd Australian Imperial Force

*If someone has done military service,
They earn the title "veteran," and more;
They earn our deep respect and admiration;
That they are special no one can ignore.*

*They sacrificed the comforts we enjoy;
The list is long of all the things they gave;
Our veterans are extraordinary people;
They're loyal, dedicated, true and brave.*

*When terror and invasion were real threats,
They showed us they could handle any storm.
We owe our freedoms and our very lives
To our veterans, who served in uniform.*

*Our veterans should be celebrities;
They're exceptional; no other group compares.
We're grateful for the many things they've done;
They're always in our hearts and in our prayers.*

*We owe our veterans support and friendship;
Let no one ever question what they're worth.
These men and women served us and our country;
Our veterans - the very best on earth.*

The Best on Earth

By Joanna Fuchs

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Australia's Army comprised a small regular force and a large, but ill-trained and equipped, Militia. In September 1939, the Government authorised the establishment of the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF) for overseas service. This force reached a strength of four infantry divisions, an armoured division and various headquarters and support units. The Militia force, which remained in Australia, was neglected until the outbreak of the war in the Pacific.

In 1941, the Militia units were activated and further formations were established in 1942. Despite the total loss of the ill-fated 8th Division in February 1942 (in Singapore, Rabaul, Ambon and Timor), the Army reached its peak strength of eleven infantry divisions and three armoured divisions later that year. Ironically, Australia's economy could not afford such a force and a year later it had reduced to six infantry divisions and two armoured brigades, and further reductions were made in 1944 and 1945.

Australia did not possess a stock of modern weapons and equipment at the outbreak of the war. The British Army could not assist as it was preoccupied with its own mobilisation. Perversely, the Treasury Department opposed the diversion of large numbers of men and women from industry to the production of weapons, and it opposed the expenditure of large sums on defence. It took some time for the Army to overcome its objections, and modern weapons were soon coming off the assembly lines in Australia. In the meantime, the 2nd AIF, like the Militia, made do with the weapons that the 1st AIF had brought back from the First World War.

All members of the 2nd AIF were allocated a serial number. The first letter represented the state of enlistment: N - New South Wales; V - Victoria; Q - Queensland; S - South Australia; W - Western Australia; T - Tasmania; D (Darwin) - Northern Territory; P - Papua New Guinea. The serial numbers of female soldiers followed this with an F. 2nd AIF serial numbers then had an X. A low number indicated an early enlistment. Soldiers transferring from the Militia often kept their old number with 100,000 added, while Permanent Military Force officers had 20,000 added.

Following the end of the war the Australian Army was rapidly demobilized. However, the force formed for occupation duties in Australia became the nucleus of the permanent Australian Regular Army, and a large number of militia units continued to be maintained.

The servicemen listed in this chapter either enlisted in the Australian Army while serving with the CRB or joined the CRB after they returned from the war. One of them was killed in service but his name is not listed on the CRB Roll of Honour.

They are listed alphabetically.

Driver James (Jim) Robert Alford, VX32244

Jim was born in Morwell, Gippsland, in 1905 and enlisted in June 1940. He described himself as a Country Roads Board employee.



Jim Alford's paybook photograph.

Jim joined the 120th Australian General Transport Company. General Transport Companies derived from Field Supply Units. They were responsible for transporting goods, including ammunition, between depots. The history of these units is convoluted and difficult to trace, as the same companies often existed under multiple names. Their chain of command and reporting relationships also changed. Many also had detachments that worked independently from main units.

From June to October 1940, Jim was a driver in Petrol Company before he embarked for the Middle East in December 1940. In February 1941, he attended the Middle East Cookery School before re-joining his unit a month later.

On 2 July 1941 he was admitted to hospital with a fracture (unidentified) and on 29 September 1941 he was declared "*Fit for duties other than active service with field formations.*" A month later he returned to Australia. On his return to Australia he was hospitalised a few times with dyspepsia and osteoarthritis and his medical category was downgraded to 'B'. He was diagnosed with hallux valgus which is a progressive foot deformity causing functional disability and reduced quality of life.

Jim was discharged on 21 January 1944.

After the war he returned to the CRB and worked in a Bituminous Surfacing Unit. However, he sustained an injury which prevented him from working in that unit so he was shifted into the Materials Laboratory where he was trained in the testing of materials for road and bridge works. I suspect that his injury was related to his foot. In his archive reporting his death, it noted dyspepsia and hallux rigidus – a stiffening of the big toe.

Jim died in the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in 1982 aged 76.

Corporal James (Scotty) Allan, VX20555

James was the genial Depot Foreman at the Geelong Division of the CRB, and was a beloved identity within the Board. He was born in January 1912 in a small town called Coaltown by Wemyes in Fifeshire, Scotland – hence his soubriquet, 'Scotty'. As a young man, he worked in a coalmine and in 1928, he emigrated to Australia and settled in the Kyabram district, working on the land and gaining a keen interest in agriculture. He even played a few years of Australian Rules football for Tongala.

He joined the army in June 1940 and saw service in Syria, New Guinea and Borneo (Balikpapan) with the Royal Australian Engineers and it was in the service that he first gained his knowledge of dozer driving and construction and demolition work.

He enlisted at Wyuna (near Kyabram) in Northern Victoria and on his Attestation Form it states his occupation as bridge construction. He was posted to the 2/8th Field Company Engineers.



Scotty Allan's paybook photograph – 1940.

He undertook initial training at Puckapunyal and about a month after his enlistment he was admitted to the camp hospital with an injured right hand. He was discharged a week later but it must have been pretty serious as he was soon admitted to the Australian General Hospital in Caulfield where he received treatment for another three weeks.

In September 1940, he was appointed a Trade Specialist Group II Carpenter in Brighton. In February 1941, he embarked from Melbourne for the Middle East. Although the file gives no indication of his location, we know from his own anecdotes that he was in Syria. He spent a few days in hospital there with sandfly fever.¹ Scotty spent three weeks recuperating before returning to his unit. On 11 March 1942, Scotty embarked on the USS *Westpoint* for Sydney.

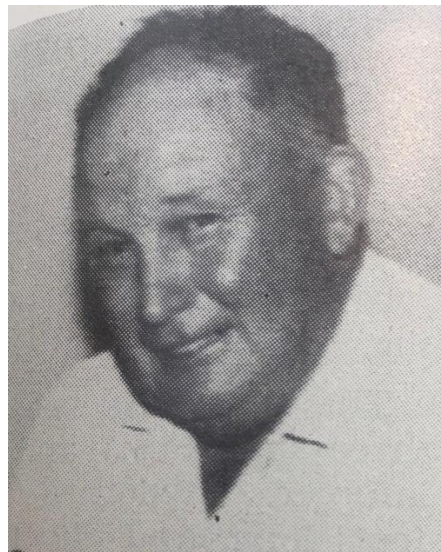
He spent time in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory (to what they describe as Lines of Communications Areas). He embarked from Townsville in May 1943 aboard the SS *Taroona* and landed in Port Moresby in New Guinea. In March 1944, he injured his right hand again. The report stated that he accidentally crushed his right hand while engaged as a member of

¹ Sandfly fever is a viral infection spread by mosquitoes. Most infected persons are asymptomatic. Small papules appear on the skin and persist for four or five days. Severe cases experience recurring bouts of fever. Recovery is slow and no specific treatment is available.

a pile driving team when moving a hessian pad on top of a pile when the monkey dropped, crushing his hand. The report said that *“The injury sustained is likely to cause permanent ill effects but not likely impair his future efficiency as a soldier. Corporal Allan was on duty at the time he sustained the said injury and there was no negligence, misconduct or failure to observe any act or regulation on the part of Corporal Allan.”*

He arrived back in Australia not long after this incident and he was hospitalized in Sydney with malaria. In October 1944, Scotty relinquished his Group II Carpenter status and became a Grade I Operator Excavator and was appointed an unpaid Lance Corporal. He embarked from Cairns in May 1945 on LST 777 bound for Morotai and three weeks later he landed in Borneo. He embarked from Balikpapan in August 1945 and was discharged later in the year.

Following his discharge from the army in October 1945, Scotty joined the CRB as a grader driver in Benalla Division working in the Mt Hotham area on the snow roads. Shortly after the formation of Geelong Division, he joined another CRB stalwart in Paddy Watts, and together they constituted the Geelong Divisional Depot staff. Under Scotty’s leadership, the depot grew from humble beginnings to one of the largest in Victoria.



Scotty Allan on his retirement in 1965.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Sidney (Sid) Atkinson, VX80989

Sid was born at Millbrook, near Ballan, in July 1902, and he later attended Melbourne High School in 1917-1919. He married Alma Zell McWilliams in 1936.

He initially served as a pupil surveyor in the Shire of Frankston but joined the CRB in 1924 as a computing draftsman. Through his studies and extensive field experience he became a licensed surveyor in 1930. Thereafter he was actively engaged in title survey work for the Board arising from road deviations and re-alignments as well as supervising contract licensed surveyors. In 1951 he was appointed to take charge of the Title Survey branch as Principal Survey Officer, a position he held until his death in 1965.



Sid Atkinson from the CRB staff photograph taken in 1930.

Sid had a long association with the Australian Army. He was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Militia in 1927 in the 2nd Survey Company and was promoted to Captain in 1931. His company was an artillery survey unit whose purpose was to provide information to enable guns to range accurately on their targets.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, the unit was expanded to become the 2nd Australian Survey Regiment. Sid was promoted to Major in 1940 and took command of the Regiment and was further promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 1941. He joined the 2nd AIF in 1942. The Regiment trained 600 men to become surveyors and observers and all the other specialist services needed to staff the unit.



2nd Survey Company surveying shale oil deposits in central NSW - 1942.



Lieutenant Colonel R.S. Atkinson in the centre of the front row.

Sid's civilian training as a surveyor and his practical knowledge ideally suited his command and he achieved great success in turning raw recruits into competent surveyors. All surveyors had to learn astronomy, as well as fast and accurate surveying techniques. Lieutenant Colonel Atkinson was a popular commanding officer and was widely respected by all who served in the Regiment. The Regiment was broken up into separate batteries in 1943 and Sid was then appointed to the staff of the Brigadier Royal Artillery at headquarters 2nd Australian Army, where he served with distinction until his discharge from the AIF in June 1944.

After his appointment as Principal Survey Officer at the CRB, Sid implemented a Printing Section to meet all of the Board's requirements – including plan printing, offset printing, stat-filing and publicity productions. He built the section up to 12 survey parties - comprising licensed surveyors - to do all the Board's title survey work. Perhaps his most important achievement was to introduce a method of compiling highway record surveys using aerial photography. These were previously done from field notes produced by survey parties – a system which was notoriously slow and rather laborious.

Sid's son, Barry, also had a long career in the Board working as a bridge design engineer.

Sid died in 1965.

Sergeant Francis (Frank) John Attridge, VX110696 (V14461)

Frank joined the CRB before the war. He was a timekeeper in Central Division (as it was then known). He ultimately became the Contracts Officer. During the 1950s, Frank worked in the Administration Section. He was very interested in dogs and horses of the racing kind. His son, Jack Attridge, was one of Melbourne's leading rails bookmakers. It was known that Frank ran an SP business as he received a lot of calls at work from punters seeking odds. Frank inadvertently put his CRB phone number in an advertisement in the *Sporting Globe* – instead of his private number – and the Board's Secretary, Rolf Jansen, confronted Frank about this. He told Frank to get the number sorted out quickly. Rolf had apparently received a call on the Board's phone asking what the odds were in the hurdles at Caulfield for the following Saturday.

Frank was born in Wandiligong in 1903 and enlisted in September 1942 at the age of 39. Frank was a telegraphy operator (with a speed of 20 words per minute) and was trained in Pitman's Shorthand. All of his service was in Australia – mainly in Victoria but with some in NSW. During this service he was attached to the Director Mechanical Engineering LHQ. He was discharged from the 1st Royal Australian Engineers Training Battalion in November 1944.

He married Vivienne Caughey in 1928.

Frank shifted north after his retirement and he died in Tweed Heads, NSW, in 1989.

Private Adrian (Bill) Bernard Avery, VX15232

Bill was born in Yarram in July 1918 and enlisted in Caulfield in May 1940. He was a labourer and was probably a road worker when he worked for the CRB. In 1948, he married Desma Helen Bird and they lived in Highett.

He was posted to the 2nd/14th Infantry Battalion.

He contracted a dose of mumps while training at Puckapunyal. In October 1940 he embarked from Sydney on the *Aquitania* bound for the Middle East. The file does not mention where they disembarked. However, we do know that the battalion was stationed in Egypt and Palestine before it saw action against the Vichy French in Syria in June and July 1941, in a short-lived campaign. Garrison duties in Lebanon followed before the battalion was withdrawn to Australia in early 1942 as Australian forces were concentrated in the Pacific to respond to the threat posed by Japan's entry into the war.



Private Adrian (Bill) Bernard Avery

In the Middle East, Bill suffered cellulitis and an infected bronchial cyst which required hospitalisation (in Dimra). In early 1942 he was again sent to hospital with hepatitis. He was discharged and declared "*Fit for duties other than active service with field formations.*" The battalion

withdrew to Australia in March 1942. When he arrived home Adrian was suffering from deafness and a state of anxiety and was admitted to Rockingham, Kew, and thereafter to hospital in Caulfield.

He was discharged as medically unfit in November 1942. At the bottom of the discharge paper written in red capital letters it states: "REPAT CASE. ANXIETY STATE".

In 1972, Bill wrote a Statutory Declaration seeking a duplicate *Returned from Active Service Badge*. He had misplaced the original one and he needed proof for his employer, Victorian Railways, in order to qualify for long service leave. In it, he stated that he was "discharged as medically unfit for service not occasioned by my own default, land mine damage." He also stated that he was a 100% Repatriation pensioner.

Poor fellow. Bill had a short life. He died in in Prahran in August 1972 at the age of 54.

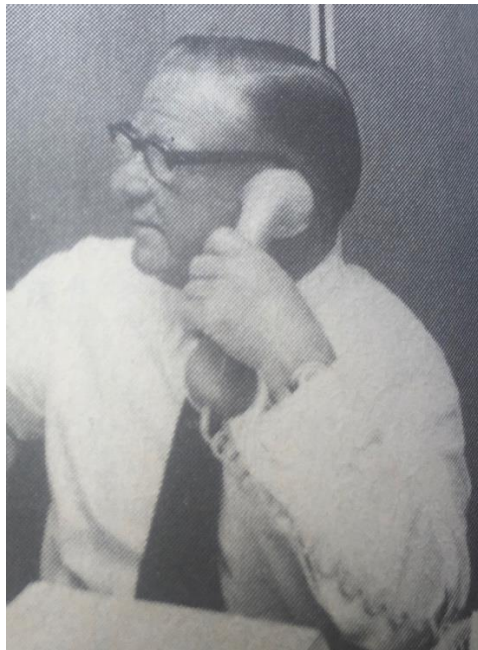
Gunner Mervyn (Merv) Ernest Bailey, VX18385

Merv was born in Kerang in December 1909 and enlisted in May 1940. He was an orchardist at the time of his enlistment. He was posted to B Squadron of 7th Cavalry Division Regiment where he was a Gunner. However, he was discharged six months later in November 1940.



Mervyn Bailey's paybook photograph – 1940.

Merv's archive states that his discharge was sanctioned "Under A.M.R. and O. 253 (ix)" and underneath, in very faint pencil it said 'Family reasons.' This means Australian Military Regulations and Orders. Regulation 253 sets out the conditions under which a soldier may be discharged and Clause (i) of the current Regulation states: "*Because, by reason of his age or standard of medical fitness, he cannot be suitably posted in his present rank or grade*". The clauses of the current Regulation are numbered alphabetically and 'i' is the ninth – or 'ix' in Roman numerals. However, the clauses have been amended more than once – and one of them refers to compassionate grounds leading me to conjecture that family reasons might be the grounds of Merv's early discharge.



Merv Bailey – circa 1970s.

Merv worked as an administrative officer with Major Projects Division. In the early 1970s he was in the Wandong Office on the Hume Freeway Project. Later he worked in the Works Sub-branch where he was a close colleague of Keith Pullen (see Chapter 7) in carrying out the administrative duties - including the annual Direct Works' allocations.

Mervyn retired from the CRB in 1976 after 23 years of service. He died in 2011 in Shepparton.

Sergeant Jeffrey (Jeff) William Barton, VX57942 (V1193, VE292725)

Jeffrey was born in Malvern in 1919 and, as a 19 year-old student, he joined the CMF in January 1939. He enlisted in the AIF in June 1941 by which time he was married. He described himself as a physical culturalist. Jeff certainly had a physical presence. His Attestation Form indicated that he was 6 feet 2 ½ inches tall but from my personal recollection, I think he was taller. He was certainly solidly built.

He was a well-known figure in the CRB as he distributed the pay packets of cash to the staff every fortnight. He was always accompanied by an armed guard with a holstered pistol. This practice was stopped in 1988 when Victoria Police exposed a plan by the notorious criminal, Russell 'Mad Dog' Cox, to rob the CRB payroll.



Jeff Barton's paybook photograph – 1941.

Jeff trained at Puckapunyal for four months and, in November 1941, he sailed from Sydney to the Middle East on a journey lasting three weeks. Stan Hodgson (Ex-Divisional Engineer Dandenong) remembered Jeff well and said that he played football as a ruckman with the Melbourne Football Club Reserves. Because of his athletic prowess he was put in charge of physical training on the troop ship transporting the men overseas.

I have personal knowledge of him as a footballer. When I joined the CRB in 1961 I was drafted to play in the annual Engineers versus Administration football match. I was selected to play full forward for the Engineers and Jeff was full back for the Administration. He would have been 41

or 42 at the time – about twice my age. In fact, he sailed for the Middle East when I was three months old! I have guilty memories of the game as we collided and Jeff was injured, but he didn't hold a grudge and still delivered my pay packet.

His archive is not clear about the unit in which he served but it must have been involved with artillery because he was initially a Gunner, then a Bombadier and then a Corporal. In January 1942, while still serving in the Middle East, he was promoted to Sergeant. His archive is not clear as to where he served. The siege of Tobruk was over before he arrived so I suspect he may have served in Palestine – but this is conjecture.

He embarked from the Middle East on 23 May 1942 aboard the SS *Félix Roussel* bound for Sydney. The, *Félix Roussel* a French ship, had an interesting story to tell. Soon after the beginning of the Second World War, she was requisitioned by the United Kingdom when she was turned back to Aden (in Yemen) from Port Said, Egypt. She was then sailed to Bombay and later manned by a mixed crew of French volunteers and British, sailing under the Free French flag. The first trip as a troop transport took place in October 1940 when she took Australian and New Zealand troops to Egypt in a convoy.

She made numerous troop transport trips between Bombay and Egypt, and in February 1942, participated in the evacuation of Singapore, having earlier been a member of the last convoy to reach Singapore prior to its capitulation. *En route*, she had sustained damage during heavy air attacks. In the evacuation, *Félix Roussel* carried at least 1,100 evacuated women and children, RAF personnel and some survivors from HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Repulse*. The *Félix Roussel* continued to serve as a troop ship in the Indian Ocean until mid 1944 after which it moved to the Mediterranean theatre until the end of the war.

On his arrival back in Australia, Jeff was posted to the Watsonia Detention Barracks and in September 1942, he was transferred to the Provost Corps in Geelong. The Provost Corps is the Military Police. Its role is to aid the Army in maintaining law and order including custody of prisoners of war, security and law enforcement. They were also responsible for military detention within Australia. The Corps in the Middle East also helped Australian soldiers in directing them to their attack lines as well as handling and guarding prisoners of war.

Jeff's physical presence would have suited the role of policing and warden duties. Although his archive is not specific, he may have carried out a provost role during his service in the Middle east.

During World War 2, the Geelong Gaol became a military detention barracks known as the 8th Australian Detention Barracks or Geelong Detention Barracks. It housed those members of the Army, Navy and Air Force along with a couple of international soldiers, who were incarcerated for offences. It held up to 192 soldiers under sentence during its five year history. These soldiers performed the largest breakout in Victorian prison history when 22 men escaped in July 1945.

Jeff was discharged from the Army in January 1946. His demobilization was deferred as no trained replacements were available to take over the provost duties.

Jeff retired from the Chief Accountant's Branch of the CRB in 1980 with 33 years of service.

Sergeant Guy Morehead Baxter, VX6730

Guy was born in Camberwell in 1914 and he enlisted in Seymour in December 1939. He was one of the earliest to enlist – barely two months after the start of the Second World War. Guy started life as a jackaroo in the Mortlake area of Western Victoria where he worked up until his enlistment. He married Violet Muriel Bridger in 1942.

After the war, the 1954 electoral roll listed him as a farmer at Moyhu (near Wangaratta) and in 1963 it described him as a salesman in Wangaratta. Even later, in 1967, Guy was living in Melbourne working as a clerk. It would have been around this time that he joined the CRB working in the 5th Floor Control Office at Kew. In this position, Guy supervised the Floor Controllers on every level at Head Office.

Guy was a Sergeant in the 2nd/6th Armoured Corp. This was an armoured reconnaissance regiment attached to the 6th Division. His posting on discharge in 1945 was the 2nd/6th Australian CAV (Commando) Regiment. The 2nd/6th saw action in the North Africa campaign and in the Middle East where it distinguished itself at Bardia, Tobruk and Syria. Later, following Japan's entry into the war, the 6th Division was brought back to Australia and following reorganization, the regiment was converted into a cavalry commando regiment, incorporating the independent companies that had been formed at the start of the war. In late 1944, the 2nd/6th

Cavalry Commando Regiment was deployed to New Guinea, where it participated in one of the final Australian campaigns of the war in the Aitape-Wewak area.

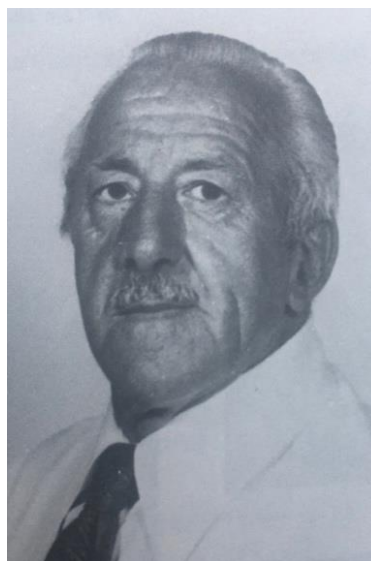
Guy's archive has not been digitised.

Lance Bombardier Leslie (Les) Frank Beecher, VX 105182

Les' record is sparse. He was born in Lakes Entrance in 1915 and enlisted in Springvale in September 1942. His occupation was clerk. Les married Irene Flora Bell in 1942.

He did not serve overseas. He was stationed at Balcombe and Dandenong in Victoria, and Western Australia. He was discharged in February 1944 with the rank of Lance Bombardier. His posting at discharge was with the Sound Ranging Cadre.

He was discharged as 'Medically unfit'. He suffered from nephritis which is an inflammation of the kidneys.



Les Beecher – 1977.

Les was a clerk in the Bridge Division of the CRB. He retired in 1977 after 25 years of service. He was a foundation member of the VicRoads Association committee.

He died in Ballarat in 1980 at the age of 65.

Trooper Luigi Bortoli, V23182

Luigi was the only 'Bortoli' to have enlisted in the Second World War. I know nothing about Luigi's work history at the CRB.

He was born in Asisga in Italy in October 1906 and he enlisted in Beechworth in June 1941. I cannot find Asisga in Italy – it may have been Asiago or Assisi. He cited his occupation as brick layer. Luigi left Genoa in Italy and arrived in Melbourne aboard the SS *Re D'Italia* in October 1924. It appears that he travelled with only one family member, Guerrino. Their address in Australia on arrival was Moorabool – perhaps they were joining up with other family members.

He was posted to the 8th Light Horse Regiment. It is somewhat paradoxical that such a regiment existed in the Second World War. It was a mounted rifles regiment raised during the First World War in September 1914. The regiment fought against the forces of the Ottoman Empire, in Egypt, at Gallipoli, on the Sinai Peninsula, and in Palestine and Jordan. After the armistice the regiment eventually returned to Australia in March 1919. For its role in the war the regiment was awarded fifteen battle honours. During the inter-war years, the 8th Light Horse was re-raised as a part-time unit based in the Indi region of northern Victoria. It was later converted to a divisional cavalry regiment during the Second World War but was disbanded in 1944 without having been deployed overseas.

Luigi was discharged from the Army in October 1941 so that his length of service was barely four months. His archive is only one page. It gives no clue about the reason for his discharge. He could have been discharged for a number of reasons – he may have been considered too old or he might not have passed health requirements. The other reason might have been his Italian heritage.

People from 30 different countries were interned in Australia during the war, but the largest groups were Italian, German and Japanese. Almost 20 per cent of the Australian-Italian population was interned. The majority of internees were men, but there were also women and children, including some that had been born in Australian.

Another group who suffered a similar plight were the 300 indigenous Australians who were interned because they lived on a Cape York mission run by a German pastor. After the war the

Aboriginal internees that hadn't perished were divided up: some were returned to the mission, now called Hopevale, and others were deposited on Palm Island.

In the electoral roll for 1963 Luigi Bortoli is described as a farmer living at Brimin, near Beechworth in Northern Victoria. In 1977, he is described as a farmer living with his wife, Savina, in Kilby Road, Kew.



Italian detainees at Loveday, South Australia,
the largest Commonwealth internment camp in the Southern Hemisphere

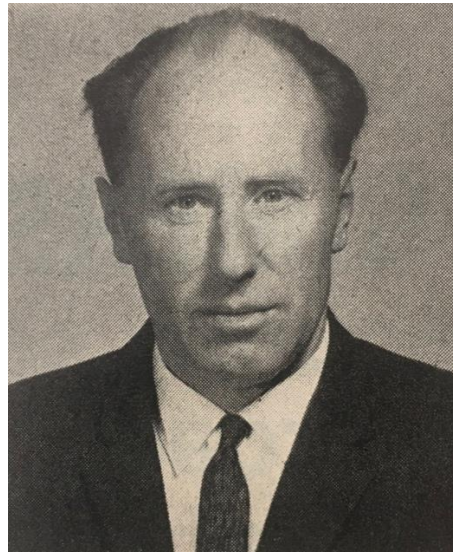
Luigi died in January 1980.

Sapper William (Bill) Simpson Brake, VX96311 (V158054)

Bill was born in Camberwell in 1923 and enlisted in February 1945. At the time of his enlistment, he was a student having completed two years of his civil engineering studies. He was a Sapper in the 3rd Australian Engineers Store Base Depot RAE.

Bill had a stellar career at the CRB in road design and in the regional divisions (Bairnsdale and Benalla). He was the Chief Engineer between 1972 and 1974 and then became a member of the Board when Tom Russell was Chairman.

Bill married Mona Lesley McDonald in 1949.



Bill Brake – circa 1960s.

Corporal Leo George Brauer, VX36024

Leo lived in Lavers Hill in the Otway Ranges of Victoria. He was born in Footscray in 1919 and enlisted at Geelong in July 1940. He described himself as a labourer and it is highly likely that he would have worked for the CRB on the Great Ocean Road as Laver's Hill is located on the highway. This road is sometimes described as the largest war memorial in the world. He was posted to the 2nd/6th Australian Infantry Battalion.



Corporal Leo George Brauer.

The 2nd/6th Battalion was formed in October 1939 and was among the first troops raised by Australia during the war. In early 1940, it deployed to the Middle East where in January 1941, it took part in the first action of the war by Australian ground forces, the Battle of Bardia, which was followed by further actions around [Tobruk](#). Later, the 2nd/6th Battalion was dispatched to take part in the Battle of Greece, although its involvement was short-lived and they were soon evacuated.

Leo arrived in the Middle East on 3 May 1941. He spent a few brief times in hospital with scabies and dermatitis at camp Kilo 89 in Palestine. He was located at camp Hill 69 for the remaining six months he spent in Palestine.



Hill 69, Palestine, Anzac Day - 1941. Australian soldiers marching on parade.

In March 1942 they embarked for Australia but disembarked in Ceylon a fortnight later for garrison duty. In June, he contracted malaria and was hospitalised for three weeks. He left Colombo on 10 July 1942 and arrived back in Melbourne on 4 August 1942. In fact it appears that he spent his time in the ship's hospital on the homeward journey and he was in and out of hospital in Australia until September still suffering from malaria. The disease persisted. He was readmitted to hospital in February 1943 after which he was granted two weeks of leave.

In May 1943, he embarked from Townsville on the *Duntroon* for New Guinea. Two days later he disembarked at Port Moresby. On 30 July he was hospitalised, yet again, with malaria but this time it was only for a few days.

In September 1943, Leo left Milne Bay for Cairns. This was the period of refreshment and further training in the Atherton Tablelands. It must have been a great relief for them after the rigours of Palestine and the fighting in the Salamaua/Lae campaign in New Guinea. In December 1944 the Battalion was moved back to New Guinea to Aitape via the *Thorns Corwin* but Leo was only there for a little over a month before he was flown back to Townsville to do a course run by the School of Military Intelligence on photo interpretation. Although he passed the course, he was ranked lowly among his peers and he was deemed to show little aptitude for that type of work.

So he was sent back to Aitape in New Guinea where he saw out the war. Leo was discharged in November 1945.

Leo married Iris Thelma Brown in 1947 and he died in Colac in November 1989.

Corporal Douglas Leslie Brumley, VX64333

Douglas was taken as Prisoner of War of the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Lieutenant David Alexander Cameron, NX58450

David was born in Balwyn in 1917 but joined up in Paddington in NSW, hence the 'NX' in his service number. He enlisted in July 1940 and was discharged from the 2nd/14th Field Regiment

with the rank of Lieutenant in January 1946. This is the same regiment in which R.E.V. Donaldson served (see below) and it saw service in New Guinea, New Britain and Rabaul.

When he enlisted, he gave his occupation as a shipping clerk. David joined the army from the CRB but I don't know where he worked or in what capacity. His archive also records that he married Sheila on 13 March 1941. When he joined up he was a Gunner in the 7th Field Brigade 107 Field Battery.



David Cameron's paybook photograph – 1940.

He attended Artillery School in Holdsworthy (NSW) and he also passed a bomb disposal course. All his overseas service was in New Guinea. In January 1944, with the 2nd/14th Field Regiment, he arrived at Finschhafen, near Lae, on the north coast of New Guinea. By this time, Australian forces had wrested it back from the Japanese. In December 1944, David embarked from Madang via the SS *Westralia* to Rabaul where he served 12 months before returning to Australia.

In 1950, he married Coral Mary Harden. This was his second marriage.

David died in Sydney in 1975.

Warrant Officer William (Bill) Thomas Carpenter, VX13906

Bill has created quite a conundrum because in his archive, his date, place of birth and next of kin are all unknown. There are only two pages in it. One is a Service and Casualty Form, undated, and all it says is "Still serving".

The other page is a list of his medals – 1939/45 Star, African Star, Defence Medal, War Medal and Australian Service Medal. The latter was sent to him on 14 August 1950.

After the war, Bill remained in the army until he retired at the age of 55 following which he joined the CRB as a staff member in the Personnel Section. However, I have been able to ascertain that Bill was born in Williamstown in 1910 and died in Wantirna in 2003 at the age of 93.

Bill's name is on the Roll of Honour of the Rats of Tobruk and it states that he was in the 2nd/12th Field Regiment - and that he was a Warrant Officer 2.

I have written – under the entry for Noel Keil later in this chapter – about the Rats of Tobruk so shall say no more here. Charlie Robinson (see below) was also one of the Rats of Tobruk.

Corporal Russell Grantham Cooper, VX83436

Russell was born in Colac in 1922 and lived in the small town of Gellibrand in the Otway Forest. He began work at the CRB in 1939 as a Junior Clerk. He had tried to enlist in the Royal Australian Navy initially, but his application was rejected - possibly because of colour-blindness. He then enlisted the Citizens Military Force (CMF) in September 1941 and he joined the 2nd Australian Survey Regiment as a Gunner under the command of another CRB officer, Sid Atkinson (see above). His regimental number was V275110.



Russell Cooper in uniform and in civilian life.

In August 1942, he transferred to the 2nd Australian Imperial Force and his regimental number became VX83436. In September he made another shift to the General Details Depot at Caulfield for Concentration Independent Commando Companies AIF, and later that month, he transferred to the Independent Company training centre at Wilson's Promontory. He became part of the 2nd/7th Independent Company which was redesignated as the 2nd/7th Commando Squadron after their first tour of service in New Guinea in 1943.

Russell's early career in the army was spent training at Balcombe and Watsonia in the 2nd Survey Regiment but his later training at Foster (Wilson's Promontory in Southern Victoria) and Canungra (Queensland) was with the men forming the Independent Company.

Training at Wilson's Prom was not for the faint-hearted. Officers and NCOs had six weeks of intensive training, and then they trained other ranks for a further six weeks. An Independent Company was formed from those who were left standing. In November 1942, the Training Centre at the Prom was closed down and training was transferred to Canungra, Queensland, where the tropical conditions were more appropriate for Australia's jungle fighting needs.

An excellent source of information about Australia's Independent Companies is a PhD thesis by Gregory Lewis Blake entitled *The Australian Army's Independent Companies and Commandos 1940-1945*. It described the process used to select recruits:

“Volunteers were expected to exhibit self-reliance, intelligence and independence and expected to be able to operate without direct supervision if necessary. Jack Boxall of the 2/5th Independent Company said: “We had been ordered to select strong, tough types who looked as though they would have a go at anything.” The broad concept of those concerned with training the companies was that the main role would be guerrilla warfare.

Throughout their period of instruction, the assessment of Independent Company trainees was unrelenting. The Officer instructors watched the trainees continually, to determine if they came up to the standards required. They particularly paid attention to personality traits, looking for men who remained cheerful in adversity, were easy to get along with, and were able to stay the course when things got rough. The task of identifying those who could not cope with physical strain and duress involved tests such as the trek to ‘Sealer’s Cove’. This involved a full-day trek across rough country with no food, no water, no smoking and no talking. At the end of the day the party would be met by trucks. The men were told that the trucks were there to give a ride to any man with sore feet that thought he could not make it back to camp. Anyone who took the offer and boarded the trucks was immediately sent back to his unit.”

The 2nd/7th Commando Company arrived in Port Moresby in February 1943. The Japanese Army had launched an amphibious attack on New Guinea from their garrison in Rabaul. They successfully took Lae which is located on the north coast, directly above Port Moresby. Japanese troops then advanced easterly overland towards Wau where Australia had established a base which potentially threatened the Japanese positions at Salamaua and Lae. The 2nd/7th was flown to Wau to join other Australian companies in the Salamaua-Lae campaign. The Australian forces became known as Kanga Force. After bitter fighting, they were successful in defending Wau and succeeded in pushing the Japanese back to Mubo, all the while conducting harassment raids. Alexander Bruford VX 60359, who also worked for the CRB, was killed in this campaign (see Chapter 5).

The Company served in the Wau area for seven months before being shifted to strengthen the garrison at Ben Bena against the Japanese advance. The garrison then had roughly 400 men. Bena Bena is east of Goroka and borders on the Upper Ramu in Madang province to the north. It had a small airstrip which was strategically important. They sent patrols through the Ramu Valley to observe Japanese movements and the main approaches to Bena Bena. Welcome reinforcements arrived and, after serving nearly a year in New Guinea, the company was withdrawn to the

Atherton Tablelands in Queensland. It was here that they were amalgamated with two other commando squadrons to become part of the 2nd/6th Cavalry (Commando) Regiment later to become Commando Squadron.

When the squadron returned to Australia late in 1943, Russell was hospitalized with malaria in January 1944 - in 115 Australian General Hospital (115 AGH) which was located on the campus of the Austin Hospital at Heidelberg in north eastern Melbourne. Through until August 1944, Russell spent time in both 115 AGH and in 2nd/6th AGH on the Atherton Tablelands with malaria.

Malaria has been a military problem throughout history capable of causing epidemics that stop military operations. There was a lethal epidemic of malaria in New Guinea in September 1943 to March 1944 that killed 92 Australian soldiers and Russell's illness falls into this timeframe.

However he recovered and he returned to New Guinea in October 1944. During this period the squadron took part in the Aitape-Wewak campaign. But illness continued to dog him. He was put on the 'X' list which means he was away from his unit because of infectious hepatitis on three separate occasions. He remained in New Guinea until war's end.



Wewak area, New Guinea. May 1945. 2nd/7th Squadron troops coming out of action in the Prince Alexander Ranges.

The Aitape–Wewak campaign was one of the final campaigns of the war in the Pacific. Between November 1944 and the end of the war in August 1945, the Australian Army, with air and naval support, cleared the Japanese Army from the coastal areas and drove them inland, amidst difficult jungle conditions. Japanese casualties from combat and disease were high, but at last the war had finished.

Russell received a letter from the CRB when he was in New Guinea requesting him to pay a superannuation contribution. During his absence he had been placed on permanent staff and he had to pay his contribution. He was quite amused by this but it did strike him as being a rather odd request. He was away from Australia fighting for his country and his employer was seeking some minor payment from him.

Russell said it was the Board who got him out of the army at the end of the war. He was a bit upset by this because he had an opportunity to go to Japan as part of the occupation forces. He never knew the grounds on which the CRB was able to arrange the discharge of a very junior clerk – but it happened. He was discharged just before Christmas 1945. He wanted to have a few days at the beach before resuming work but he was advised that if he started the following day he would be eligible for Christmas pay and half-staff leave. He started the next day.

Later, he went to university, taking leave from the CRB to obtain a Commerce Degree in 1949. He returned to the CRB that year, and went on to enjoy a long and distinguished career, rising to become Chief Accountant. He married in 1952 and had three children. He retired in 1982.

One final word about Russell. He was an excellent public speaker with a great sense of humour and his farewell speeches to members of staff were always memorable.

Russell served the CRB for 42 years and retired in 1982.

He died in October 2006 at the age of 84.

Lieutenant Jack Neville Crebbin, VX62490

Jack came from Ballarat. He was born in January 1912 and enlisted in August 1941. He was a draughtsman and during the war, in February 1944, he married Ethel Lorraine Warnock in Waverley, NSW.

Jack joined the Bridge Division before the war and was responsible for ordering reinforcing steel, cement and other materials. He was an A-Grade tennis player in his youth and, in John Pittard's recollection of him, he enjoyed kicking up his heels at the weekend. Jack was very fair skinned with white hair and when he got 'on the turps' he looked frightful. John recalled coming into the office one Monday morning and he passed Jack sitting stock still, looking frightful. As John passed him, Jack muttered *sotto voce*, "Will this bloody week never end?"



Jack's enlistment photograph – August 1941.

Jack initially joined the Royal Australian Engineers. He undertook many training courses at Royal Park, Bonegilla Engineering Training Depot, Echuca and Wagga (with the Australian Army Transport Company), Liverpool School of Military Engineering, and Southern Command. Much of this training was related to bomb disposal and it was noted that he "obtained good knowledge".

Jack joined the 2nd/2nd Pioneer Battalion and in April 1945 he embarked from Brisbane to Morotai. The 7th and 9th Divisions were being concentrated in readiness for their amphibious landings on Borneo, as part of the campaign to reoccupy areas of the Netherlands East Indies.

The Pioneers supported the landings by the 9th Division by helping to defend the beachhead at Tarakan. By the end of June the fight on Tarakan was almost over but by this time the 2nd/2nd had returned to Morotai in preparation for the 7th Division landing at Balikpapan on 1 July.

The 2nd/2nd was unique in supporting both divisions. Its work at Balikpapan was similar to Tarakan: helping to organise and defend the beachhead, guarding prisoners, and providing labour for burial parties and other activities.

Japan surrendered on 15 August. With the war over the 2nd/2nd was declared redundant and its personnel were either discharged or transferred by the end of the year.

Jack flew back from Balikpapan on 5 November 1945 and was discharged from the army later that month.

He died in September 1962 at the age of 50.

Lieutenant David Henry Vaughan Davies, VX92016

David was a civil engineer. He was born in Maitland, NSW in 1922 and enlisted in April 1943. At the time of his discharge in October 1946, he was attached to the 2nd Field Company. He had originally signed up in September 1941 while he was in the third year of his studies for a Diploma of Civil Engineering. I suspect the Army may have deferred his enlistment until he had completed his Diploma.



David Davies' paybook photograph.

David served in New Guinea between December 1943 and August 1944. He sailed aboard the HMS *Gorgon* from Townsville to Lae and returned from Buna to Townsville on the SS *Alfred C True* – an American Liberty ship. He also served in the Dutch East Indies – Morotai and Balikpapan – from May 1945 to May 1946. He was discharged in October 1946 with the rank of Lieutenant.

He had intensive training in bomb disposal

His name is on the list in Appendix 2 but I have been unable to find any other record of him or anyone who knew him. I can only conclude that he may have been working with the CRB at the time of his enlistment at the age of 21. There is an entry on his Attestation Form that said he was a 'CE draughtsman'.

The electoral rolls from 1968 to 1977 show that he lived in Canberra.

David died in 1997.

Warrant Officer Class 2 Albert John Deverall, VX397

Albert was born in Swan Pool in December 1899 and he enlisted in October 1939 at the age of 39. His file states that he was a clerk doing 'secretarial and accounts at the Country Roads Board'. He married Irene May Nimmo in 1931. He was posted to the 9th Australian Ordnance Stores Company and was discharged in September 1943.

The various companies of the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps (RAAOC) were concerned with supply and administration, as well as the demolition and disposal of explosives and salvage of battle-damaged equipment. The Corps contained clerks, logistic officers (including quarter-store staff, warehouse staff and food technicians), petroleum operators, parachute riggers and ammunition technicians. Members of the Corps were nicknamed Roaches.

Albert embarked from Melbourne for the Middle East on HMT X4, arriving at Kantara in Egypt on 17 May 1940. There is mention in the file of him being at Gaza in Palestine. In March 1941, he was evacuated to the 2nd Australian General Hospital in Cairo, Egypt, suffering from an inguinal hernia.



The 2nd Australian General Hospital in Cairo.

Albert had other afflictions that required hospitalisation including lymphangitis – the inflammation of the lymphatic system caused by an infection. There is also mention of injuries to his right arm, his left leg and both thumbs. He spent time in the 60th British General Hospital and, in April 1942. He was transferred to the HQ of the AIF in the Middle East where he received support from the Australian Comforts Fund – an organisation which, like the Red Cross, provided assistance to service men and women.

Albert's health deteriorated further and he was evacuated back to Melbourne on the SS *Coptic* in June 1942. His medical category was downgraded from B to D. He suffered from psoriasis (a skin condition) and Buerger's disease – a disease that affects blood vessels in the arms and legs leading to pain, tissue damage and in the extreme – gangrene. The disease is closely linked to smoking. Back in Melbourne, Albert was assessed as having peripheral circulatory disability and he was discharged from the Army in September 1943 as medically unfit.

Albert died in Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital in 1966 and is buried at Fawkner Cemetery.

Captain Wilfred (Bill) Dolamore, VX 27638

Bill was taken Prisoner of War by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Captain Robert Edward (Ted or REV) Vaughan Donaldson, VX39020

Robert Donaldson was born in Canterbury in September 1914. He enlisted in the CMF in February 1939 and served for three months full time before enlisting in the AIF in November 1940. He started as a Gunner in the CMF and was promoted to Bombadier in December 1939, Sergeant in May 1940, and Lieutenant a month later. After enlistment in the AIF, he was promoted to Captain in December 1941, and Temporary Major in March 1945 – a rank he relinquished on his discharge in September 1945.



Ted Donaldson's paybook photograph - 1940.

In *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board* the following entry appears:

“In 1940 Mr Donaldson joined the A.I.F. as a Lieutenant in the 2/14 Australian Field Regiment, Eighth Divisional Field Artillery, and saw service in the South West Pacific area. He was discharged with the rank of Major in 1945 and joined the Board’s staff as a qualified accountant in September that year.

In 1949 he became Deputy Accountant, a position he held until 1956, when he was appointed the Board’s Secretary. In 1962 he was appointed Member of the Board and in 1963 he became Deputy Chairman.”

In the history of VicRoads, *Roads for the People*, it states that R.E.V. Donaldson ... *‘joined the Board in 1945 after service in the South West Pacific area with the Australian Imperial Force’*. He succeeded Paddy O’Donnell as Chairman of the Board in September 1971.



Portrait of R.E.V. Donaldson as Chairman of the CRB.

The initial ‘V’ in his name is not recorded in his enlistment documents but his third name, Vaughan, is shown on his birth certificate. Everyone referred to him either as ‘REV’ or Ted.

The 2/14th Field Regiment was raised in late 1940 as part of the 8th Division. Initially, it remained in Australia as a garrison force in Darwin but in late 1943 it deployed to New Guinea supporting operations on the Huon Peninsula and New Britain. From early 1945 until the end of the war, the regiment engaged in operations against the large Japanese garrison on the island. At the end of the war, the 2/14th briefly undertook garrison duties on Rabaul before returning to Australia and disbanding.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART21354

This drawing by Roy Hodgkinson depicts six unidentified Australian soldiers involved in jungle operations, members of the Royal Australian Artillery, 2/14th Australian Field Regiment with a 25 pounder gun, on the Huon Peninsular in 1944.

Ted's file is fairly scant but I was able to ascertain that on 10 December 1943 – when he was appointed Captain – he was located at Lae Headquarters. He was sent to hospital in Port Moresby during 1944 and 1945 with dengue fever.

There was considerable post-war correspondence on file – in 1970 - between the Army and Gordon Rogers, Assistant Secretary Personnel and Noel Allanson, Secretary, CRB, seeking clarification of Ted's length of service. This was required to determine his long service leave entitlements. It also included his full-time service in the CMF. The confusion arose because the army sent the details of another serviceman called Donaldson. It was finally settled.

Ted Donaldson was highly respected by staff as an excellent administrator. He served at a difficult time when the anti-freeway movement was at its peak and a change in attitude by the Government, where Ministers in all Government Departments started to manage and attempt to be managers and, as a result, the managerial freedom of Departments was reduced. He also recognized that in the increasingly complex business of the Board there needed to be a wider scope for the delegation of authority and responsibility at the lowest levels possible. The staff appreciated and accepted the challenge and the efficiency of the Board's administration was considerably increased.

Ted was described by Lillian Moon, a stalwart of the Secretariat, as more sophisticated than any of the previous Chairmen that she knew. She praised his determined efforts to streamline the working of the Board, citing that the Board used to have 300 items on its agenda, but Ted was able to reduce this to a manageable size. When Ted visited the regions, he always asked for the names and photographs, if any, of the people he would be meeting – including field personnel – including their family details and interests. In this way, he was able to chat with people on first name terms and made people feel at ease.

He was one of the few Chairmen of the CRB who was not an engineer, but he sought and accepted technical advice from other Board Members and engineering staff. During a huge anti-freeway demonstration on the Eastern Freeway in Fitzroy, Ted thought it was only proper that he should address the crowd. Senior engineers offered to stand in his stead, but Ted refused them saying that, as the Chairman of the CRB, it was his responsibility to face any hostility from the public. Of course, they howled him down.

Ted retired in 1978 after 33 years of service. He died in Somers in May 1997.

Major Robert (Bob) Frank Eastick, MBE, VX39192, 43163

Bob was born in Nhill in 1913 and enlisted in the AIF in January 1941. Bob was attached to the 9th Division Australian Engineers. He was discharged with the rank of Major in October 1945 and shortly afterwards, he married Margaret Ramsay Norman.

I have not been able to find an archive for Bob and there is a conundrum I have yet to solve. He has two service numbers – one for the 2nd AIF and the other for the RAAF. If I can find his file in Canberra, I might be able to solve this puzzle.

The Eastick family in Nhill has a strong representation in Australia's fighting services. Along with Bob, there are Frederick Harold (b. 1889), possibly his father, Frederick John (b. 1923), RAN, Herbert Ronald (b. 1922) Army, John Rodderick (b.1923) Army, Richard Clement (b. 1922) Army, Robert William (b. 1925) RAAF, Thomas Alexander (b. 1920) Army, Victor Thomas (b. 1890) Army, and Vivian Victor (b. 1915) RAAF. I notice that Thomas, a Captain in the Army, is on the Honour Roll of the Rats of Tobruk.

The 9th Division was the fourth division raised in the 2nd AIF. It served in front line combat longer – cumulatively - than any other Australian division and was one of Australia’s most decorated units. It was the only 2nd AIF division formed in the United Kingdom, from infantry brigades and support units formed in Australia. Its exploits in the Middle East (including the siege of Tobruk) won praise from both Bernard Montgomery of the Allied forces and Erwin Rommel of the Axis forces. Together with the 6th and 7th Divisions it served in both the Mediterranean and Pacific Theatres.

During 1940, the component units of the 9th Division were sent to the UK to defend it against a possible German invasion. After serving during 1941 and 1942 in the North African Campaign, at the Siege of Tobruk and the first and second battles of El Alamein, the Division returned to Australia. In 1943 and 1944, it served in the New Guinea Campaign and, during 1945, in the Borneo Campaign.

Bob was awarded an MBE in 1947 for meritorious service in Brooketon, Brunei, and Miri (all in Borneo) and Tobruk (in Libya).

Bob’s career at the CRB was in bridge construction. He supervised the construction of the Johnston Street Bridge across the Yarra River linking Abbotsford and Kew in 1950-51.



Johnston Street Bridge.

Bob had a colourful and authoritative air about him – befitting a major – and there is a story in the folklore of the CRB about him managing this project. Work used to commence at 7 a.m. and Bob always ordered pies for lunch. He went round the job each morning and counted the heads and ordered two pies per person irrespective of whether you liked pies or brought your own lunch. In those days there were people who lived along the banks of the river. One man – a white Russian – lived in a nook in the abutment of the bridge. These people were the real beneficiaries of Bob's largesse. There were pies to burn.

Bob was also involved in the construction of the ill-fated Kings Bridge – he supervised the fabrication of the steel girders for the King Street Bridge. He left the CRB in the 1960s and shifted to Sydney where he started up his own consultancy business.

Bob died in 1999 aged 86.

Sergeant Harold Sharpe Eicke, VX114998 (V28084)

Harold was born in Windsor in 1923. He initially served in the CMF from February 1942 to November 1942 with the Australian Head Quarters Engineering Service when he enlisted in the 2nd AIF. He described himself as a 'clerk' and was appointed a Corporal. He was found to have mild bronchial asthma which qualified him for Class II duties. This classification means that he was medically fit for employment, subject to single service waiver action. It is a medical condition which is permanent or unlikely to resolve within 12 months.

He served with 9th Australian Workshop and Park Company in NSW. I am not sure what this company did – other than it served a logistics role - but the Australian War Memorial website has many photographs of the company working in New Guinea, milling timber. In June 1943, Harold embarked for New Guinea where he served until September 1944 – mainly in the Port Moresby area. He also served from May 1945 to May 1946 in Morotai in the Dutch East Indies (now part of Indonesia) by which time he had been promoted to Sergeant.

Harold married Mildred Joan Weston in 1947 and they had two children, Margaret and Geoffrey.

Harold joined the CRB as a clerk in 1965 and two years later, he became a Stock Control Officer. He was later appointed Project Accountant and then Divisional Accountant of Major Projects. In 1974 he was appointed Internal Auditor for the Country Roads Board – a position he held until his retirement in 1983. He is well remembered throughout the organisation as a stickler for detail, an attribute vital for an effective auditor.



Harold Eicke – 1983.

In the late 1960s, Stan Hodgson was ADE Metro and Bob Morison was Project Engineer for the roadworks associated with the Lower Yarra Crossing. Stan recalled: “Bob had a lot of African and Asian visitors down there at one stage and was trying to give them some Australian hospitality so he ordered some cream cakes for morning tea. They thoroughly enjoyed them and all went very well until the auditor of the day - Harold Eicke - when he was going through the bills, said ‘Cream cakes, cream cakes? The Board doesn’t buy cream cakes; tea and biscuits are quite adequate’, to which Bob replied, ‘Well, look, we won’t call them cream cakes, we will call them ‘miscellaneous tarts’.”

Harold died in July 2012 at the age of 89 years.

Lieutenant Harry Clifford Everard, VX124879, V55340

Harry was born in Warrnambool in 1917 and when he was called up for full-time duty in April 1943, he already held the rank of Sergeant in the 10th Line of Communication Provost Company in the CMF. Lines of Communications Units operated in an administrative structure providing control of personnel, equipment, stores and consumables. Harry served in the CMF from December 1941 to April 1943 with a Service Number V55340. At the time of enlisting in 1943, Harry was married and his occupation was cited as 'salesman' in the retail hardware trade.

During his service he was stationed in the Geelong District but not long after transferring to full-time duty he was sent to Officer Training School in South Australia and in September 1943 he was discharged for the purpose of being appointed to a Commissioned Rank – as Acting Lieutenant. He was posted to the 11th Australian Division Provost Company.

During this latter training, Harry received an excellent pass. It was noted that "... this student has indicated that he is capable of exercising the demands of higher authority."

In December 1943, he disembarked at Port Moresby in New Guinea exactly a month after the birth of his first child. Like many in the Australian Army in New Guinea, Harry was struck down by dengue fever, malaria and dysentery. Harry served for eight months in Port Moresby and a similar stint in New Britain. In July 1946, Harry returned to Townsville. He was discharged from the Army in January 1947, and in the following March he was informed that he had been Mentioned in Dispatches 'recording His Majesty's high appreciation of your distinguished service while serving with the Australian Military Forces.'

At some time after the war, Harry joined the CRB as a Traffic Officer – at first in Benalla Division and then later in Bendigo Division and served for about 30 years. In 1974 Harry wrote to the Army requesting a reissue of his medals and awards as a consequence of his house being burgled. The Army obliged.

Harry died in Bendigo on 6 April 2000.

Signalman Peter Norman Fletcher, V101772

See entry for Able Seaman Peter Norman Fletcher, PM4679 in Chapter 8.

Gunner Bruce Carey Genat, VX131746

Bruce was 20 years old when he enlisted in the Australian Army in 1943. He was from Camberwell and his rank was Gunner. He was discharged in October 1944 from – according to the Nominal Roll - HQ 3 Division. His occupation at enlistment was a clerk.

He enlisted in the field with the 3rd Australian Division Headquarters. He left Brisbane on MV *Duntroon* for Port Moresby on 1 March 1943 and transferred to 114 Australian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. The regiment comprised 39 people of which there were 23 Gunners.

He returned in Australia in May 1943 and in the following August, he was embarked in a ship called *Cape Hatteras* bound for Milne Bay in New Guinea. In New Guinea, he was hospitalised a few times suffering from dermatitis.

After the war, in 1947, Bruce married Dawn Lorraine Hannaker and his file shows that he remarried in May 1984.

Bruce was discharged on 1 September 1944.

He was the Materials Research Division Clerk in the CRB during the 1970s.

Bruce died in March 2013 at the age of 90.

William (Bill) Clarence Gill, WX28914

Bill was born in Subiaco in Western Australia in February 1921.

He joined the 2nd AIF the day after Japan entered the war. His background was electronics and he became involved in the installation and maintenance of radar. He was seconded to the School of Radio Physics at the University of Melbourne to assist in the development and installation of

the 'Chronograph' – a portable unit to verify the initial velocity of projectiles leaving a gun barrel to determine the wear factors of guns and the proofing of ammunition.

He then became a Senior Instructor Electrical Wing at the Royal Army Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME) Training Centre. Later, he was sent to the UK for further training and field appointments in British Army organisations, involving a 6-month posting to a British workshop unit in Germany in the post-war occupation forces.

After returning to Australia he took up duties at Army HQ in Melbourne. These involved radio, radar, instruments, electronic predictors and army representation on standardisation committees. Later he was posted to 28 Commonwealth Brigade in Malaya. This included a two month stint in Thailand in a major exercise along the Malay/Laos border.

Bill also visited Vietnam as an observer following which he spent one year at the RAAF School of Languages studying Indonesian. His final service was as a workshop manager of a base of around 200 people involved in vehicles, general engineering, instruments, guns and armaments, and radio.

He retired from the army at the compulsory age of 50 and joined the CRB as Office Services Manager. He soon found that he had fallen among many kindred souls.

Bill went back to his home state of Western Australia and died there in January 2007.

Lance Sergeant William (Bill) Egbert Golding, V15321

Although the nominal roll states that Bill was born in London, he was actually born in Rise, Yorkshire – in January 1900. However he lived in Cardiff, Wales. He also enlisted and fought in the First World War as a 14-year old and that story is told in Chapter 3. He enlisted in the Australian Army at Nyah West in May 1941.

Bill arrived in Australia in December 1920 aboard a ship called "*Melta*". The passenger list also stated that his intended country of future residence was England so I don't think Bill was intending to settle down in Australia. His occupation was 'Telegraphist'. He came to here to work with the Marconi Company of England, and this period of employment provided the opportunity for him to visit Egypt, China, Japan and many other parts of the world.

In 1923, under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act, he applied for the lease of a farm at Hattah in the Mallee region of Victoria. His application was successful and he was granted an allotment of 803 acres. His purpose was to become a wheat farmer. He had spent a bit of time doing some farming work and he had acquired assets worth £110 – comprising two horses (£30), cash (£10), Bank Account Mildura (£40), one gig (£25) and a harness (£5). He was just 23 and single.

However he forfeited the lease in 1934. I can only surmise that the friable nature of the soil, persistent droughts and the Great Depression all coincided to determine Bill's fate.

I am not sure of his next move but I suspect he went to Boundary Bend on the Murray River and did a bit of farming because it was from near here that he enlisted for the Second World War. He described himself as farmer/radio operator.

In the Roadlines magazine of March 1965, it states that Bill was posted to the Singapore and Rabaul areas working on signal installations. However there is no mention of this in his archive and he was discharged in December 1942 from the 2nd Signals Training Battalion with the rank of Lance Sergeant - meaning that he only served for about 18 months. He was discharged on the basis of 'Being required in a reserved occupation.'

Bill joined the CRB in 1951 and became a Senior Bridge Overseer. He built many bridges around the State, including: Gooley's Bridge at Jamieson; Shamrock Bridge over the Campaspe River in Kyneton; Thom's Bridge over the Latrobe River; Djerriwarrah Creek Bridge on the Western Highway; Craigieburn Overpass; Pascoe Vale Road Bridge; Murray Road Bridge, Coburg and Gunn's Gulley rail overpass at Moe.

Brian Kemp was a Supervising Engineer on a couple of these jobs. He recalls that Bill sported a toothbrush-like moustache and that he regarded himself to be in the 'officer' class. Bill recounted much of his personal history and adventures to Brian – to the extent that when Bryan added it all up, he concluded that Bill was several hundred years old. Brian also recalled the respect that the men had for Bill as their overseer.

He retired in 1964 and died in Mont Albert in 1976.

Corporal Howard Stowe Goudie VX 144480 (V185983)

Howard was a long-serving Patrolman at Ensay in Bairnsdale Division but unlike many of the men in that Division, he was not a Prisoner of War. He is in the photograph shown later in Chapter 9 of the Vice Regal inspection of roads in Bairnsdale Division. Howard was born in Warracknabeal in 1919 and was 23, and married, when he joined up. His wife was Elizabeth Olive Hall. He was a textile worker.

He served in New Guinea with the 29/46th Australian Infantry Battalion from March 1943 to August 1944. After the First World War the defence of the Australian mainland lay with the part-time soldiers of the Citizens Military Force (CMF), known as the Militia. The Militia was organized to maintain the structure of the 1st AIF and kept the same numerical designations. The Militia units were distributed in the same areas the original AIF units were raised. Thus Melbourne's 29th Infantry Battalion was the "East Melbourne Regiment", while the 46th Infantry Battalion was the "Brighton Rifles". Both battalions were raised in 1921.

When the war started in September 1939, the 29th and the 46th held numerous training camps. However, with Japan's entry into the conflict and a run of victories in South East Asia and the Pacific, the battalions' training intensified and in March 1942 was sent to Queensland. In August the 29th merged with the 46th, thus forming the 29/46th Infantry Battalion.

In March 1943 the 29/46th Battalion joined the 4th Brigade and was transferred to Milne Bay in New Guinea and spent the next 16 months in the islands. While at Milne Bay the 29/46th carried out intensive jungle training, conducted patrols, and was used as a source of labour for work parties.

In September the 29/46th and the rest of the 4th Brigade left Milne Bay for Lae in New Guinea. Moving by landing craft, the brigade was to protect Red Beach and support the 9th Division during the Huon Peninsula campaign. The 4th Brigade saw extensive service in New Guinea. After patrolling the rugged country behind Sattelberg, the 4th Brigade followed the coast from Gusika to Lakona and the 29/46th captured Fortification Point. Between April and August the brigade garrisoned the Madang area and carried out numerous patrols.

In September the 29/46th returned to Australia and, after some leave, regrouped at Strathpine in

Queensland for further training. However, its stay in Australia was brief and the brigade returned to the islands in January 1945, this time to New Britain.

Rather than carry out a major offensive against the Japanese, the much smaller Australian force used active patrolling to confine the Japanese to Rabaul and the Gazelle Peninsula. Following Japan's surrender, the 4th Brigade moved into Rabaul, as part of the occupation force, in September.

Howard was hospitalised a number of times with malaria and dermatitis but seemed to survive the war unscathed. He was discharged in January 1946.

Peter Lowe, as a young engineer in the CRB, remembered Howard with admiration. He described him as 'a bit of a rough diamond' but affable and welcoming. Howard shifted to Nicholson in East Gippsland on his retirement in 1977- after serving as a patrolman for 22 years - and he died in December 2007, aged 88.

Colonel Robert (Bob) Charles Handley

Bob is an enigma. I cannot find him on any electoral roll, nor can I find a birth or death record. There are others with the same name but they are definitely not him.

I have not been able to find a service record or archive for Bob but, in the history of the Engineer Training Depot in Swan Street, Richmond, called '*The Swan Street Sappers*', it states that Bob was a railway engineer. He joined the 3rd Field Survey Company, Royal Australian Engineers (RAE), a CMF unit, in 1940. He then entered the Permanent Military Forces as a sergeant surveyor and was commissioned at SME in 1942. He moved to 23rd Field Company in Darwin and was seconded to the North Australian Railway in November 1942. He remained in this posting at Katherine until mid-1945.



Colonel Bob Handley – circa 1969.

He joined the Board in Bendigo in 1946 and was appointed Assistant Highway Engineer in 1956, Road Construction and Maintenance Engineer in 1958, Divisional Engineer in Benalla in 1962, and Chief Works Engineer in 1969. Bob was appointed Chief Engineer (Special Duties) in May 1978. This was a trouble shooting appointment and could be described as an engineering audit role.

Bob retained his interest in the Army. He was Commanding Officer of the Board's Army Reserve regiment from 1967 to 1970, and Commander 6th Construction Group RAE until 1974. He was honorary ADC to Governor Generals Lord Casey and Sir Paul Hasluck from 1967 to 1970.

Private Cecil Haylock, VX5736

Cecil was a labourer on the field staff of the CRB in the Bairnsdale district. He was born in 1907 and enlisted in Orbost in Eastern Victoria when he was nearly 33 years old. He married Helen Purvis Buchanan in 1932.



Private Cecil Haylock

Cecil was posted to the 2/7th Infantry Battalion. He lodged at the Melbourne Showgrounds for a week and then moved to Puckapunyal for training. In April 1940, he embarked on HMT Y/4 to Palestine. He disembarked at Kantara in Egypt from where the Battalion proceeded to Palestine. This was the start of a series of hospitalisations which was to result in his early discharge from the Army.

He had suffered from pharyngitis (a sore throat) before he left Australia but once in the Middle East he suffered from haemorrhoids, asthma and 'chest trouble'. He entered hospital in Gaza (twice) and Dimra (three times) and was eventually evacuated in September 1941 for Australia. He was hospitalised in Sydney and then sent down to Caulfield and Malvern. His health problem seems to have been asthma.

He was discharged from the Army in February 1942 as "Medically unfit for service not by his own default". Across the bottom of the form, written in capital letters was "BRONCHITIC ASTHMA". He had served 853 days of which 547 were served overseas.

Cecil died in Bairnsdale in 1961 at the age of 54.

Major Frank Kyle Helsham, QX42591 (Q185112)

Frank was the long-serving Accountant in Warrnambool Division of the CRB. He was born in Perth, Western Australia, in November 1901 and enlisted in Brisbane in January 1940 at the age of 38. He was married and he described himself as a public accountant and secretary.



Frank Helsham's enlistment photograph – 1940.

His Q185112 service number indicates that he had earlier joined the Australian Army Reserve before enlisting. There is a written statement in his archive – lodged before his enlistment - saying that he had made his will and lodged it with the Bank of Adelaide in Brisbane. After enlistment, he served as a Lieutenant in the 3rd Australian Chief Engineer (Works) and the 53rd Regiment of the Royal Australia Artillery. He was promoted to Captain in October 1940 and became a Temporary Major in September 1942 and a Major in August 1943. Later, he rose to Lieutenant Colonel on the Reserve List.

Frank's work was involved in stores. From May to November 1943, he worked at Adelaide River and Coomalie in the Northern Territory both of which are north of the 14.5 degree (south) parallel thus entitling him to the award of the Defence Medal. From January 1945 to January 1946, he served in Lae and Bougainville in New Guinea and in May 1947 he was Mentioned in Dispatches for his work in the South West Pacific theatre. In October 1947 he was awarded the Australian

Efficiency Medal. This medal is awarded for 12 years of efficient service, meaning that Frank joined the Army Reserve in 1935.

At the time of his discharge in August 1948, he was a Major in the 1st Chief Engineer (Works). Frank joined the CRB in 1948 and retired in 1966.

Frank was active in various groups in Warrnambool – The Warrnambool Theatre Group (as one time Secretary, player, and backstage staff), member of the Rostrum Club and President of United Services Institute, and the Board's Representative for the National Disaster Group.

He died in Warrnambool in September 1972.

Lieutenant Howard William Peter Hobbs, VX93857 (V54256)

Howard was born in 1919 in the farming district of Douglas near Horsham in Western Victoria. He was the youngest of six children and he attended the local primary school to eighth grade and then completed his secondary education by correspondence. To do this, he had to leave home to live with his elder sister at Freshwater Creek near Geelong. He then attended the Gordon Institute of Technology and graduated with a Diploma of Civil Engineering in 1938 - and then on to the University of Melbourne where he graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering Science in 1943.

He joined the Army Reserve in January 1940 and transferred to the 2nd AIF in July 1943. He was posted to the 10th Field Company which saw service in New Guinea and Bougainville. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant.



Howard Hobbs' paybook photograph - 1943.

While he was at university, he met Yvonne Anderson and they maintained their friendship over the war years and they married in 1945. The photograph below was from the Australasian newspaper on 11 August 1945.



Lieutenant Howard Hobbs and Yvonne on their wedding day.

Howard's archive is fairly scant but enough to confirm that all of Howard's overseas service was in New Guinea – and Lae seemed to be where he spent most time. He served in New Guinea between 12 September 1944 and 18 June 1945, and again between 2 January 1946 and 6 February 1946.

Howard was discharged from the army in February 1946.

He joined the CRB in 1947 as an Assistant Engineer in Benalla. He then moved to Warrnambool Division and, in 1958, he transferred to Melbourne to become the Programme Engineer whose role was to prepare and assist in the general supervision of the programme of works on the roads directly under the Board's supervision. He eventually rose to become Chief Road Design Engineer. Howard retired in 1980 due to ill health leaving a formidable legacy of major road projects in Victoria. He worked for the CRB for over 32 years.



Howard Hobbs – 1979.

Howard died in 2009 at the age of 90.

Brigadier Frank Hosking ED, VX108279 (V38038)

Frank was the Advance Planning Engineer at the CRB. He was born in Middle Park in 1904 and, in 1929, he married Constance Joanna Howat. He enlisted in the 2nd AIF in July 1942 in Queensland and retired from the Army in December 1945. Frank was working with the CRB prior to enlisting.



Frank Hosking – from the CRB Staff photograph taken in 1930.

Frank served initially in the Army Reserve. He joined in 1922 and, until his enlistment in the CMF in October 1941, he undertook 14 training courses on various subjects – so he had a very broad understanding of the military well before war broke out. In the CMF he served with the 29th Battalion in Seymour until he was discharged in July 1942 to join the 2nd AIF. His rank was Lieutenant Colonel.

As Brigadier General, he was the Commanding Officer of the 10th Australian Infantry Brigade in 1942 and the 15th Brigade in 1942 and 1943 fighting in the New Guinea Campaign. He retired in 1945 with the rank of Brigadier. In 1956 he was awarded the Efficiency Decoration. He was President of the Public Service Sub-branch of the RSL for 14 years. The Efficiency Decoration was instituted in 1930 for award to part-time officers after twenty years of service as an efficient and thoroughly capable officer.



Brigadier Frank Hosking – circa 1944.

Frank's high rank did not prevent him from joining the sick list. He was hospitalised in December 1943 with jaundice and a month later, with chronic cholecystitis (inflammation of the gall bladder).

Frank completed his Engineering Degree with Honours at the University of Melbourne in 1925. One of his lecturers was A.E. Callaway who was the Chief Engineer of the CRB. His first job with the Board was that of a Plant Inspector on bituminous surfacing plant on the Princes Highway East under the supervision of Overseer Costello. The engineer in the charge of the project was Louis Loder – the Highways Engineer – later to become Sir Louis (Chapter 3).

Frank was the CRB's first Advance Planning Engineer. The position was created after Caleb Robert's return from a trip to the United States where he foresaw the need for the Board to undertake long-term planning.



Frank Hosking on his retirement in 1969.

Frank's son, Peter, also had a long career with the CRB. He started in the Accounts Branch and rose to the position of Group Manager – Technical and General Services. Peter was also a Lieutenant Colonel in the 22nd Construction Regiment in the Citizen Military Force – now the Australian Army Reserve. Peter was also a formidable cricketer – he played District cricket with St Kilda and played one Sheffield Shield match representing Victoria against South Australia in 1958 - scoring 21 runs and taking one wicket.

Frank retired in 1969 after 43 years' service with the Board.

He died in May 1984 at the age of 79.

Captain Leonard (Len) Thomas Izard, VX 36505

Leonard was a surveyor living in Camperdown when he signed up at the age of 23 in 1940. He was born in Merbein in 1917. Len was attached to the 2/1st Survey Regiment, Royal Australian Engineers, and served for a year in the Middle East, seven months in New Guinea and a further seven months in Borneo. He enlisted as a single man but he married Joyce Kisler in 1941 before he embarked for the Middle East.

The Royal Australian Survey Corps provided the maps, aeronautical charts, hydrographical charts and geodetic and control survey data required for land combat operations. This included surveys for artillery, naval gunfire and close air support, mapping and charting, navigation systems, communications, intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance systems; map production and printing of new maps and charts.

In 1941, 2/1st Corps Field Survey Company RAE sailed with the 2nd AIF to provide survey and mapping to the Australian Corps in the Middle East theatre including Greece, Egypt, Cyrenaica and the border zones of Palestine, Syria, Trans-Jordan and Turkey. In response to the 1941-1942 offensive of the Japanese in the Asia/Pacific theatre, the Company returned to Australia in early 1942. Over the next four years, survey units provided survey and mapping support to military operations in the Northern Territory, Papua, New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Dutch New Guinea, Borneo and the States of Australia in particular northern Australia.



Soldiers from the Australian 2/1st Corps Field Survey Company, near the Turkish–Syrian border, December 1941, mapping the topography using a plane-table.

In the Middle East he served as a Sergeant but he was promoted to a commissioned rank for subsequent service in Asia. He was hospitalised twice in the Middle East with parotitis. Parotitis is an inflammation of one or both parotid glands, the major salivary glands located on either side of the face. It takes many forms but it can also be brought on by dehydration – probably a common occurrence in the war in the desert.

Some of the locations mentioned in Len’s file include Port Moresby, Morotai, Lebuan and British North Borneo. He was also mentioned in dispatches.



Len Izard at enlistment.

He served in the Middle East for 12 months, in New Guinea for seven months and the Netherland East Indies (Indonesia) for seven months. Len was discharged in October 1945 on an accelerated discharge on compassionate grounds. The file does not reveal those grounds. On the officers retired list it states his rank as Captain.

After the war, Len worked in Ballarat Division. I suspect he qualified as an engineer after his return from the war because Tom Glazebrook remembered him working as an engineer and not as a surveyor. However, his Record of Service in his archive states that he was a surveyor and an assistant civil engineer. Tom also remembers that his son worked at Bendigo Division in the laboratory when Tom was the Divisional Engineer there.



Len Izard – circa late 1960s.

Len died in in Ballarat in 1974.

Lance Corporal Frank Wolfe Jackson, VX 29148

Frank was taken Prisoner of War by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Corporal Raymond (Ray) Cuthbert Jardine, VX84570, V43807

Ray was the Senior Draftsman in Bridge Division and he was responsible for standardizing many of the components used in bridge design. He had a great flair for drafting and was very quick in producing details of alternative treatments for consideration. Ray was also interested a new design

for the Australian flag and he submitted a number of designs in a national competition. He was a small, nuggety man and it was he who once revealed to me an incident in war that shocked me – but I won't relay the story here.

He was in a machine gun unit and he said that his small, strong frame was ideal for slinging the tripod over his shoulders when moving about. He recalled once that his unit was stranded in a wetland area and they were wading in water most of the day. At the end of the day when he took off his socks most of the skin on his feet peeled off.

Ray came from St Arnaud in north western Victoria. He was born in 1920 and enlisted in Casino, NSW, in August 1942. He described himself as an architectural draftsman. He had joined the CMF in October 1941, ten months before his enlistment in the 2nd AIF.

Ray was attached to the 57/60th Australian Infantry Battalion and he was discharged in March 1946 when the battalion was disbanded. The 57th was formed during the First World War and reverted to a Militia Unit until the Second World War when it amalgamated with the 60th Battalion to fight against the Japanese in New Guinea and Bougainville. It was unable to embark for the Middle East due to the provisions of the Defence Act, so it had to remain in Australia to undertake defensive duties in NSW and Queensland. However, after Japan's entry into the war, it was mobilised to New Guinea.

In Port Moresby it served as garrison troops around Tsili Tsili before joining the Finisterre Range campaign in early 1944. After the capture of the Kankiry Saddle in January, the 57th/60th led the advance to Madang (on the northern coast) reaching it in April 1944. In August, the 57th/60th returned to Australia for a brief period of rest on the Atherton Tablelands before being dispatched to Bougainville, where it took part in the southern advance towards Buin, including the Battle of Hongorai River – its last action of the war.

Ray served two stints in New Guinea – between March 1943 and August 1944, and February 1945 and November 1945. The latter stint also included service in Bougainville. In all, his overseas service totalled 804 days. He was hospitalised twice with malaria. No doubt because of his drafting skills, he was temporarily attached to a number of survey companies as a draftsman.

In September 1945, Ray undertook a course in driving military transport. He qualified as 'Distinguished'. He was described as 'Very keen. Good worker. Reliable.' At the time of this training, Ray was attached to 3 Section 2nd Australian Field Survey Company.

He was discharged from the Army in October 1946 and he must have joined the CRB soon after as he retired from the CRB in 1980 after 33 years of service.

After the war, in 1947, Ray married Ivy Gert Falconer. He died in 2004.

Lance Corporal Noel Bentley Keil, VX 46869

Noel and I worked together on the Snowy River Crossing Project at Orbost in East Gippsland where he supervised the laboratory. He was the most decent and genuinely gentle person you could ever meet. He lived on a small farm outside Lakes Entrance and he loved giving all the kids a ride on his tractor. He had a slightly nervous disposition and Dawn, his wife, explained to me then, that he was one of the Rats of Tobruk.

The Rats of Tobruk were soldiers of the Australian-led Allied garrison that held the Libyan port of Tobruk against the Afrika Corps, during the Siege of Tobruk in World War II. The siege started on 11 April 1941 and was relieved on 10 December 1941. The Australian War Memorial described the campaign thus:

“The second year of the war had begun with a series of impressive British and Commonwealth successes against the Italians in Libya. Australian troops led the advance. But a rapid German offensive quickly reversed these early victories. All that stopped the Germans’ march on Egypt was the defiant garrison at Tobruk.

For eight long months, surrounded by German and Italian forces, the men of the Tobruk garrison, mostly Australians, withstood tank attacks, artillery barrages, and daily bombings. They endured the desert’s searing heat, the bitterly cold nights, and hellish dust storms. They lived in dug-outs, caves, and crevasses.

The defenders of Tobruk did not surrender, they did not retreat. Their determination, bravery, and humour, combined with the aggressive tactics of their commanders, became a source of inspiration during some of the war’s darkest days. In so doing, they achieved lasting fame as the “Rats of Tobruk”.”

It was the Germans who coined the Australians as rats. The Nazi propaganda machine tried to erode the defenders’ morale. The Radio Berlin host, Lord Haw Haw, derisively referred to the

Australians as the “*Poor desert rats of Tobruk*” who were “*caught like rats in a trap.*” The derogatory references were meant to dispirit the troops but they backfired. The comments appealed to the Australians’ dry sense of humour and they proudly began referring to themselves as the Rats of Tobruk. They even went so far as to create an unofficial Tobruk siege campaign medal bearing the likeness of a rat and made out of scrap metal taken from a German bomber they had shot down with captured German anti-aircraft artillery.

Noel was born at Sorrento in 1920 and he enlisted in July 1940. At the time of his enlistment his occupation was a clerk.



Noel Keil at enlistment in July 1940.

He was originally assigned to the 8 Division Petrol Company (8 Div) which was one of the companies that kept supply of fuel to the army – both at home and in the field. In fact 8 Div had 80 of its ranks go missing or captured by the Japanese during the Malaya Campaign.

Noel’s first overseas service was in the Middle East. He left Australia in December 1940 and arrived in the Middle East in February 1941. He was a member of 9th Division at Tobruk. After completing its initial training in Australia, Great Britain and Palestine, the units of the 9th Division were sent to Cyrenaica in Libya in early March 1941 to complete their training and equipping as part of the garrison of this region. It was desperately short of equipment such as machine guns, mortars, anti-tank gun and carriers. Faced with an overwhelming Axis advance, the division retreated towards Benghazi and then further to Tobruk in early April 1941.

Over the course of the next six months the 9th Division and the rest of the garrison repelled repeated attempts by Rommel's forces to capture the port. The successful defence of Tobruk was due to three factors: the use of the pre-existing Italian fortifications around the port, aggressive patrolling and raiding of Axis positions and the firepower of the garrison's artillery. Fighting from fixed positions, the Australian infantry successfully contained and defeated repeated German armoured and infantry attacks on the fortress. After the failure of the British attempts to relieve the fortress in May and June 1941 the 9th Division was successful in gradually improving Tobruk's defences through aggressively raiding Axis positions.

Upon the request of the Australian War Cabinet, the bulk of the 9th Division was withdrawn from Tobruk in September and October 1941. The defence of Tobruk cost the 9th Division 3,164 casualties including 650 killed, 1,597 wounded and 917 captured.

During his ordeal in Tobruk, Noel was hospitalised with hepatitis. However he did not return to Australia with the rest of the division. It appears that he was transferred to No. 11 Company in March 1942 and he was promoted to Lance Corporal a few months later. This was a transport company and the photograph below shows trucks of No. 11 Company, Australian Army Service Corps loading goods at No. 31 Forward Area canteen point at Homs in Syria for further distribution to canteens of units engaged in the desert manoeuvres of the 9th Australian Division. Approximately 100 tons of canteen stores were issued from this point daily.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

024413

No. 11 Company, Australian Army Service Corps in Homs, Syria – June 1942.

Noel returned to Australia in August 1943. His next overseas service was in New Guinea with 2/156th Australian General Transport Company. He embarked from Cairns aboard USS *Henry T. Allen* (APA-15) for Milne Bay, New Guinea (date unknown but late 1943 or early 1944). He contracted malaria and was hospitalised during this time. In May 1945 he was sent to Morotai and, a week later, to Borneo. He returned to Morotai in early August from where he was emplaned to Australia – arriving home on 7 August 1945. He was discharged later that month.

Noel married Dawn Curran in 1947.

After the war Noel became heavily involved in Legacy supporting the families of Australian service personnel who have lost their life or health during the wars.

Noel commenced with the CRB in the soil testing laboratory at Kew and later worked in various regions in Victoria (including Orbost) before retiring and settling in Benalla. Noel died there in February 2003.

Noel's name is on the Honour Roll of the Rats of Tobruk – along with three other CRB men mentioned in this chapter - Bob Eastick, Charlie Robinson and Bill Carpenter.

I am proud to renew my acquaintanceship with Noel.

Private Hercules Raymond (Ray) Kilpatrick, NX16464

Hercules was born in Alexandra although he enlisted at Paddington in NSW. He was born in 1901 and enlisted in May 1940 meaning that he was 39 years old. He married Catherine Pickens in 1923 and his occupation was stated to be 'labourer'. This implies that he was a roadworker but his history with the CRB is now lost. At the time of his discharge in November 1945 he was attached to the 2/2nd Machine Gun Battalion.



Hercules Raymond (Ray) Kilpatrick – enlistment photo 1940.

Looking at his record, I think the Army should never have enlisted him because of his ill health. In 1940 he was hospitalised in Ingleburn, Randwick, Ingleburn (again), Randwick (again), Manly, Ingleburn (again) and Cowra. They all merely stated that he was sick, except for the second admission, which said 'circumcision'. This occurred in his first six months of service and in December 1940 he disembarked for Ismailia in Egypt arriving in late January 1941.

His Battalion saw action against German and Italian forces in the First and Second Battles of El Alamein and later, garrison duties in Syria. Ray survived this campaign without injury but he contracted infectious hepatitis in August 1942, requiring further hospitalisation. The unit was withdrawn to Sydney in February 1943. Ray was sent to the 2nd Australian Corps Reception Camp in Queensland for reallotment. His medical classification was assessed by the Medical Board as "*Medically fit to carry out certain duties which only require restricted medical fitness*". In June 1944 he had

another assessment which said “B2 – *Constitutional P*” and in January 1945 he was hospitalised with influenza.

In April 1945 he embarked for Morotai. He remained there for six months and returned in MV *Duntroon* to Sydney late the following October. He was discharged in November 1945. In the Proceedings for Discharge there is a small note that said “*Slight cardio-vascular insufficiency, very mild arthritis of knee joints and chronic pharyngitis.*” Pharyngitis is a sore throat caused by upper respiratory tract infection.

Ray died in Richmond (NSW) in 1955 at the early age of 54.

Lieutenant Edmund (Ted) James King, V83311, 3123210

Ted was from Wycheproof in north western Victoria. He was born in 1915 and enlisted in the CMF in March 1940 but he was discharged in the following May to join the RAAF. He had been originally posted to the Infantry Training Battalion as a Staff Sergeant.

Unfortunately, I cannot locate Ted’s archive showing his experience in the RAAAF.

After the war, in 1946, Ted married Gabrielle Christiana Doyle.

Early in his career, in the 1940s and 50s, Ted was the Personal Assistant to the then Chief Engineer, Caleb Roberts. He also carried out the same duties for the following Chief Engineer, Paddy O'Donnell. When the CRB established the Depot at Syndal in the early 1960s, Ted was appointed the Controller of Stores.

Bill Sagers (an ex Traffic and Planning Engineer) remembers Ted as a popular member of the committee of Hareland’s Legacy Hostel, at 1 Princess St Kew. Bill was a resident there between 1957 and 1959 while he was attending university, and he recalls the residents looking forward to Ted’s visits. This was during the time Paddy was Chief Engineer and Ted arranged Bill’s successful interview with Paddy to join the CRB.

Ted was a larger than life character. Whenever he visited Bairnsdale Division, he stayed with Bob Baade. On one occasion, Bob had run out of beer so Ted hopped in his Board car and went down to the pub to buy some beer. The following morning, Bob looked out the window and noticed a

strange car in the driveway. Ted suddenly realized that he'd driven the wrong car home the night before. He took it back and surreptitiously parked it before finding the right car.

Another story involved his love of cricket. In his early days working with the CRB he had to work Saturday mornings. One day he came to work dressed in his cricketing whites but he was told in no uncertain manner by the Secretary, Rolf Jansen, to go home and change into something more appropriate.

Ted was also the foundation President of the VicRoads Association.

Ted died in January 1994.

Sergeant Albert (Albie) Richard Kyle, VX 126130

Albert Kyle was nearly 25, and married, when he enlisted in 1942. He married Pauline Clarice Ayres in 1938. Albie was an A Grade carpenter and joiner but was working as a grocer at the time. He was a member of the 33rd Australian Works Company in the AIF. This unit is also referred to as the 33rd Australian Employment Company.

During the Second World War, the Australian Army formed 39th Works Companies (or Employment Companies) to provide logistical support for their units in the field. They provided essential labouring tasks needed to support fighting forces and to maintain the war effort. Their task was to keep the soldiers in the field supplied with all the goods, weapons, ammunition, food, and fuel necessary for them to operate effectively.

These companies often served in the field and eleven of them were established using mainly alien or non-British citizens – including Chinese, Timorese and Javanese. In Australia, some of the Alien Employment Companies used internees, that is to say, 'aliens' of Axis countries such as Germany, Italy and Japan. They were unarmed – soldiers without guns – and to demonstrate the xenophobia in Australia at that time, the RSL would not admit them as members because they had not served overseas.

Refugee aliens included European refugees who had been driven from their own countries by Nazi religious or political persecution. They should not have been treated as enemy aliens. But in the climate and culture of the time, these distinctions were not always appreciated. Quite apart from

the absurdity of assuming that nationality equals political allegiance – leading in the early years of the war to the internment of Italian anti-fascists and of Jews escaping Nazi terror – there is ample evidence in official files of ongoing surveillance of supposedly friendly aliens in the Employment Companies, particularly the Chinese. Race as well as nationality appears to have played a role in the assessment of loyalty and reliability.



Members of 33rd Australian Employment Company unloading drums of petrol in Melbourne for transport to operational areas.

After enlisting Albert Kyle spent some time in Melbourne at Watsonia, before transferring to Townsville in June 1943. After four days there he was shipped off to New Guinea until June 1944 after which he returned to Townsville. He returned to New Guinea in February 1945 and was sent to Morotai (Indonesia) a month later and in July he moved to North Borneo. He returned to Australia in November 1945.

After the war he became a Bridge Overseer and Clerk of Works in Bairnsdale Division.

Albert died in October 2007.

Sergeant Theodore (Theo) Charles Lester, VX16379

Theo was a foundation member of the committee of the VicRoads Association. He was born in Ballarat in 1906 and enlisted in June 1940. He married Lorna Bell in 1933 and they lived in Camberwell. Early in 1925, Theo commenced serving under articles with a Licensed Surveyor, P.

D. McKenzie and completed them under R. J. Mitchell L.S. There followed a period of over 22 years on the staff of the Survey Branch, Office of Titles, of which five and a half years was spent in a survey unit of the 2nd AIF serving in the Middle East, New Guinea and Borneo.



Theo Lester – 1940.

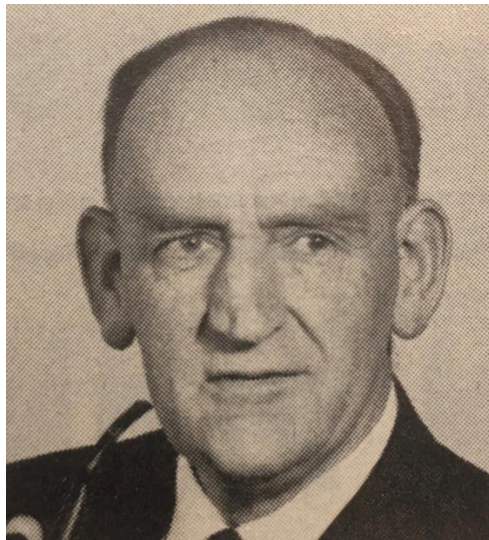
He was posted to the 2/1st Australian Survey Regiment. Theo served in Syria in 1941 as a Lance Bombardier before returning to Australia aboard the U.S.S *West Point*. Throughout his service he was transferred between regiments. In addition to the 2/1st, he served in the 2/2nd, 2/12th and the 2/7th. He served in New Guinea – between November 1942 and November 1943, and in the Dutch Indies (Morotai) between June and September 1945.

On the Australian War Memorial website entitled ‘2/7th Australian Survey Battery RAA’ reference is made to Theo’s work. It refers to a diary written by a Lieutenant and Sergeant between August 1942 and February 1943. It shows surveying for position and azimuth, gun locations, targets and traversing tracks especially during the Buna, Gona, Sanananda campaign from December 1942 to February 1943. There is a register of trigs and fixed points mostly compiled by Bombardier Theo C. Lester showing control points fixed in Queensland and the Southern New Guinea Zone. There is also a register of survey computations for extension of 3rd order triangulation: Port Moresby - Vanupa area.

In common with many of his comrades in these theatres, he suffered from both malaria and dengue fever. Theo was discharged in October 1945 with the rank of Sergeant. At discharge he was with the 2/7th Survey Regiment.

He returned to the Titles Office and early in 1946 commenced a course of study to qualify as a Licensed Surveyor. He obtained his license on 8 April 1948 and in September 1950 obtained a position as a Title Surveyor with the CRB.

Following the death of Sid Atkinson (see above) Theo was appointed to the position of Principal Title Survey Officer at the CRB in May 1965.



Theo Lester – Principal Title Survey Officer, 1965.

Private Ernest Lingenberg, V128221

Ernest was born in Lismore in the Western District and enlisted at Cressy in July 1941. He was 31 years old when he enlisted. He stated in his papers that he was a labourer with the CRB.

His service file is heart-breakingly short - just one page. He was posted to the 39th Australian Infantry Battalion. It states that he landed at Port Moresby in New Guinea on 3 January 1942. The next entry is on 31 August 1942 – “*Died of wounds received in action.*” He was 32.

The last entry is “*Buried at Eora Creek Hospital*”. This is somewhat misleading as there is no known grave for Ernest. Ernest is commemorated at the Bomana Cemetery on the outskirts of Port Moresby.

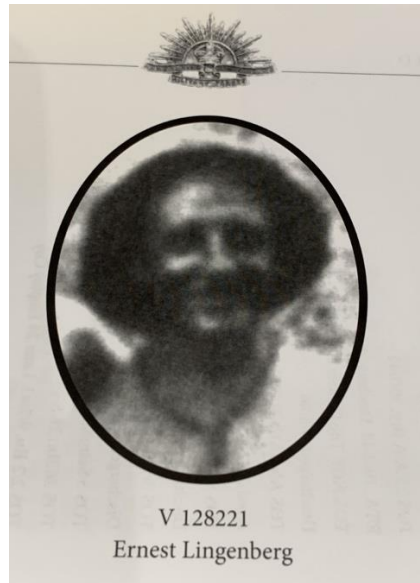
The archive does not reveal the real story of Ernest’s sacrifice. The 39th Battalion was sent to New Guinea to defend the territory against a Japanese attack. Between July and August of that year the unit was heavily engaged in the defence of Port Moresby, fighting along the Kokoda Track. It was here that Ernest perished. The 39th fought several desperate actions against the Japanese as they attempted to hold out until further reinforcements could be brought up from Port Moresby. They were also later involved in the fighting around Buna – Gona. Such was their involvement in the battle that by the time they were withdrawn they could only muster 32 men and following its return to Australia, the unit was disbanded in early July 1943.



The Kokoda Memorial at Bomana consists of a rotunda of cylindrical pillars enclosing a circle of square pillars bearing on their inside bronze panels upon which the names of the dead are engraved.

In Carl Johnson’s book about the Kokoda campaign, “*Mud Over Blood Revisited*”, there is the following entry:

Ernest Lingenberg, 39Bn D Coy, Pte., V128221, DoW (Died of Wounds) Aged 32 probably on the Kokoda Track (no known grave) (possibly July-Sept). Foxbow Victoria Residence.



This photograph of Ernest is from Carl Johnson's "*Mud Over Blood Revisited*".

It is a shame that Ernest is not on the CRB Roll of Honour.

Private Thomas Albert Lukins, VX113177 (V325678)

Thomas worked for the CRB prior to enlisting for the Second World War but I have not been able to find any record of him other than on the list provided in the Annual Report of the CRB in 1952. Thomas initially joined the CMF in March 1942 where he served until 12 October 1942. On the following day, he was enlisted in the Australian Army between until August 1946.

He was born in Granya, up near the Murray River about 40 km east of Wodonga. It is an old gold mining village and in the electoral roll he was described as a diamond driller. He was barely 18 when he enlisted in 1942. He was posted to the 2/31st Australian Infantry Battalion.

The 2/31st Infantry Battalion was one of three formed in the United Kingdom in 1940 to create the 25th Infantry Brigade. The battalion's personnel were drawn from the Australian force that had arrived in Britain early in 1940. It left Britain in January 1941 and disembarked in Egypt. Upon arrival, the 2/31st moved to Palestine for training. It then occupied positions at Mersa Matruh in Egypt to bolster the defences along the Libyan frontier against an expected German attack.

In late May 1941, the battalion returned to Palestine to take part in its first offensive operation -

the invasion of Syria and Lebanon. A truce was declared with the Vichy French in July 1941 and they remained in Lebanon as part of the Allied garrison until January 1942.

The battalion returned to Australia in March 1942. In September 1942 it reinforced the battered Australian units on the Kokoda Track. It participated in the advance back along the track when the Japanese retreated. On 1 November it was the first battalion to re-enter Kokoda, and played a key role in smashing the last Japanese defensive position on the trail at Gorar. It eventually returned to Australia in January 1943. This would have been about the time when Thomas Lukins joined the battalion.

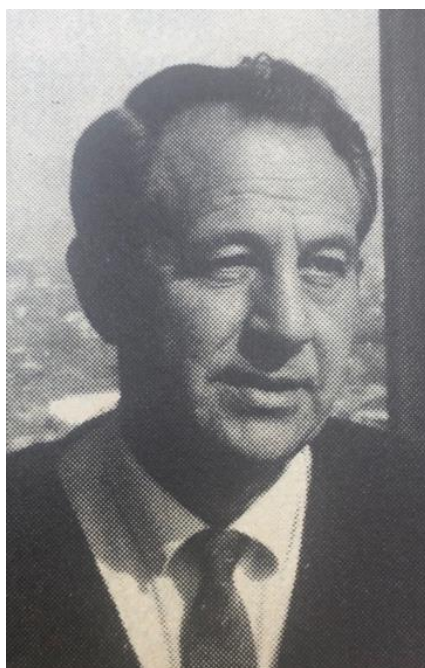
The 2/31st returned to Port Moresby in July 1943 in preparation for the advance on the Japanese base at Lae. It flew into Nadzab on 12 September and, after a hurried advance, joined the fighting east of Lae, which fell on 16 September. On 29 September the 2/31st was flown from Nadzab to Kaipit and spent the rest of the year principally engaged in patrol actions in the Ramu Valley and the foothills of the Finisterre Range. It returned to Australia on 16 February 1944.

Like most of the AIF battalions, the 2/31st spent over a year training in Australia prior to its final operation of the war. It departed Australia on 2 June 1945 and landed at Balikpapan in Borneo on 2 July. The 2/31st's operations were concentrated around the Milford Highway - the site of the most determined Japanese resistance - and it suffered the heaviest casualties of any unit involved in the campaign. It was withdrawn to rest on 26 July. The war ended on 15 August and from October, drafts of long-service personnel began returning to Australia. However Thomas did not serve in the Borneo campaign.

After the war, Thomas returned to Granya where he became a farmer. He died in Adelaide in 1983.

Signalman Harold Edward Masters, VX109474 (V310488)

Harold was an Experimental Officer in Materials Research Division. He was born in St Kilda in October, 1922 and he listed his occupation as 'salesman'. Initially, he enlisted in the Army Reserve in January 1942 and was assigned to Signals in the 3rd Australian Division. Harold trained as a Signalman in Seymour and as a Radio Operator in Bonegilla.



Harold Masters – 1973.

In August 1942 he was called up to the Australian Army and he served as a Signaller in the 3rd Australian Division until his discharge in November 1946. After his transfer to the AIF he did further training at the Marconi School of Wireless in Sydney.

The 3rd Division was mobilised for war in December 1941 and initially undertook defensive duties in Australia before being deployed to New Guinea in March 1943. Harold disembarked in Port Moresby from the M.V. *Duntroon*. During his time in New Guinea, the 3rd Division took part in the Salamaua–Lae campaign against the Japanese. Harold departed from Lae in February 1944 aboard the M.V. *Katoomba* and disembarked in Bowen in Queensland. For the next seven months, the division rested and reorganised.

In September 1944, the division was sent to Bougainville via Lae to take part in their final campaign of the war. They undertook a series of advances across the island before the war came to an end in August 1945.

Harold died in November 1978.

Private Frank Mau, VX94370

Born in Ivanhoe in May 1925, Frank enlisted in the 2/23rd Australian Infantry Battalion in February 1944. He gave his occupation as ‘civil engineering’.



Frank Mau at enlistment – 1944.

Frank left school in 1941 and joined the Lands Department to become a surveyor on ten shillings a week. Then in April 1942 he joined the CRB as an Engineering Assistant in the Plans and Survey Division. He was asked if he would like to join two other 17 year-olds – Keith Moody (later CRB Chief Engineer) and Tom Russell (later Chairman of the Board) – to work on the North-South Road in the Northern Territory. His parents were relieved because they thought it was a way of him avoiding joining the army.



CRB Survey party in the Northern Territory – circa 1944.

Left to right: Frank Mau, Stan Jutson, George Bennett, Keith Moody, Ian Mather and Mac Wilkinson.

(Photo from Oral History - Construction of the North-South Road, Northern Territory by the Country Roads Board (VicRoads 2007)

When he was 19 he joined the army. He said his experience in the Northern Territory made him self-sufficient and he was able to take orders without much trouble. He embarked for Morotai on the '*City of Philadelphia*' and then to Tarakan (off Borneo) with the 9th Division. He served in Tarakan from May to November 1945.

The CRB wrote to the Army seeking his release to return to his 'important work' so he was released by Christmas. After the war, Frank spent a lot of time in Horsham Division. He went back to night school in the 1960s and qualified as a Licensed Surveyor.

He was discharged in November 1945 and died in 2007 in Gisborne.

Major Charles Brandum Metzner, VX114189 (V10407)

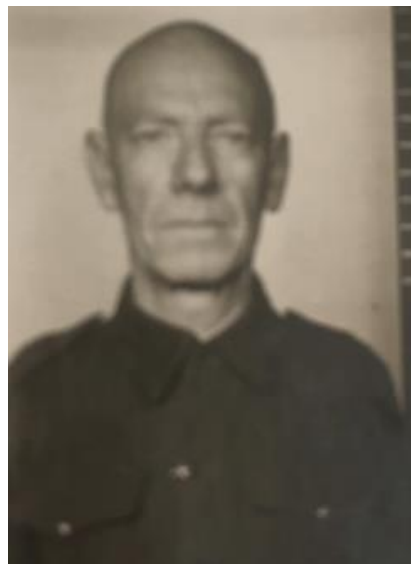
Charles was born in Baringhup which is a small community west of Maldon on the Loddon River. He was born in 1907 and his occupation was cited as 'civil engineer' on his Attestation Form. He married Kathleen (Kitty) Wrigley in 1935. At the time of enlistment he was a commissioned Lieutenant in the Reserve of Officers (Engineers) – appointed on 17 July 1940.

He commenced full time service on 10 January 1941 and was posted to 5th Army Troops Company, Royal Australian Engineers (RAE). He was taken on strength of Headquarters RAE, Northern Territory, Darwin in 20 June 1942.

Charles transferred to the 2nd AIF in July 1942 and was promoted to Captain on 15 June 1943. He returned to Victoria in May 1943 and was posted to the 5th Australian Command Engineers (Works). Charles was promoted to Major on 2 August 1943 and a fortnight later, he arrived at Port Moresby in New Guinea.

He returned to Australia on 30 May 1944 and was posted to Morotai in March 1945. He returned to Australia on 30 August 1945 and was transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 3 November 1945.

The Command Engineer (Works) companies were part of the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) which planned, designed and implemented infrastructure works to support the Australian Army across its field operations. The only CE (Works) still operating – the 19th – provides these sorts of services and currently manages infrastructure in Australia, the South West Pacific and the Middle East. These works support Australia's foreign aid program and keep Australia's expertise at the ready in case of emergency.



Charles Metzner at enlistment in 1941.

Charles' file in the archives is fairly scant and there is an anomaly. It states that he was discharged in November 1945 but his service record states that he was still serving in the Dutch East Indies at that time – up until May 1946. I think the latter date is an error.

The electoral roles of 1931 and 1936 describe him as a draftsman but those after 1949 describe him as an engineer. I suspect he qualified as an engineer before enlisting. His name is on the list included at Appendix 2 but I have no information about Charles' career in the CRB.

He died in Fitzroy at the age of 55.

Driver William (Bill) Edward Miles VX 30505

Bill was taken Prisoner of War by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Lieutenant Eric John Moncrieff MBE, VX47482

Eric was born in Numurkah in 1916 and enlisted in July 1940. He retired in February 1948 as a Lieutenant in the 3 MD Provost Company. I take this to mean the 3rd Military District military police. The 3rd Military District covers Victoria and southern NSW. Eric described his occupation as 'Farmer'.



Eric Moncrieff at enlistment.

The small community of Waaia, where Eric lived, gave their favourite son a farewell on Saturday, 10 September 1940. It was reported by the Numurkah Leader. The function was held in the local hall and Eric was to leave for Sydney on the following Monday. The farewell was organised by the local farewell committee and it took the form of a social and dance with songs being rendered by Misses Lynch and Marshall and Messrs Thornton and Fowler. Shortly before the supper break, Eric was escorted to the stage where the Chairman, Mr E. Brensing, said that they had met to honour one of their local lads who had offered his services to King and Empire, and he was pleased that so many had turned up to honour Eric. He said that Eric had been one of their footballers, was an excellent farmer and popular with all. He was given gifts by the Committee (a wallet) and the Football Club (an 'eversharp' pencil) and was wished the best of luck and a safe return. Eric responded and the audience rose to sing 'For He's a Jolly Good Fellow' and the National Anthem.

The role of the Australian Army Military Police is to maintain law and provide specialist security across army activities including high-threat situations. This includes security and protection of personnel, crime prevention and deterrence, traffic control, maintenance of general law and order, and protection of buildings and critical army infrastructure. Military policing also has a combat support role in the field and, Eric served in the New Guinea campaign in this capacity.

Eric embarked for the Middle East in October 1940 but *en route*, he was evacuated to the British General Hospital in Bombay with an unnamed illness. He re-embarked from Colombo in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and re-joined his unit in the Middle East on 31 January 1941. His name is not on the Honour Roll of the Rats of Tobruk leading me to the conclusion that he served in Palestine.

He returned to Adelaide on 25 March 1942 and shortly after, he was promoted to Sergeant.

He was sent to Brisbane in August 1942 and on to Port Moresby in January 1943. Some time afterwards he was sent back to Melbourne and was hospitalised at Heidelberg and Caulfield with Malaria. He returned to New Guinea in July 1943 until October 1943 when he returned to Australia to attend an Officer's Training Unit in Adelaide.

Eric attended a Provost Training School (date unspecified) where he achieved exceptional results – he achieved 80% for his written test, 92.50% for his practical test and 100% for his oral test. For Psychology he was rated 'A'. His report noted that he should prove successful in a Commissioned Rank. He was discharged in February 1944 and was appointed Lieutenant. From October 1944 he

again served in New Guinea until September 1945. During this time, he was a member of 13 Australian Independent Brigade Group Pro P1.

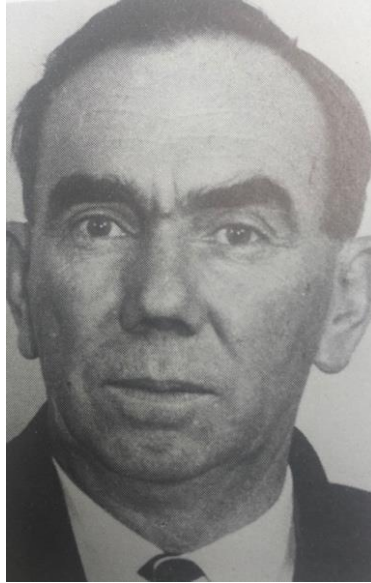
He was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in February 1946. This was for meritorious service in the South-West Pacific area of combat, in particular his organizing capability in Lae.

His citation for the award said:

“During the last six months this officer with a platoon which appeared quite inadequate in numbers has, by his organising ability and devotion to duty, been able to perform the tasks required of him with a high degree of efficiency. His control of transport in the area has been at a very high standard. His alertness has reduced black-market activities and indiscipline to a minimum. This has relieved Commanders of many troubles and has had considerable influence on morale.

He landed with forward troops on Nadzab and worked with them during the assault on Lae. His work in the Middle East was often under fire. At all times he has shown a devotion to duty quite regardless of the risks involved, which has been of high value to those conducting operations.”

After the war Eric applied his policing skills as a traffic officer in the CRB. He started at Stawell and Ballarat immediately after discharge from the army, and in 1951 he was appointed Assistant Senior Traffic Officer. When he retired in 1977, he was the Principal Traffic Officer. He worked closely with the Police forces in Victoria and NSW in investigating infringements – such as overloading, speeding, non-registration and licensing, and illegal movement of goods without permits - and the payment of fines.



Eric Moncrieff MBE – 1977.

In 1952, Eric re-enlisted in the Citizens Military Force (CMF) as an officer. He was involved in air portability and land transport and gained experience that assisted him in his work with the CRB. He retired from the CMF in 1960.

In his capacity as Traffic Officer, Eric had many tales to tell. I will only relate one of them. Eric worked very closely with the police and, for a time, he operated out of Russell Street Police HQ – working with Senior Constable Earl Gwyther investigating outstanding fines from transport drivers. Earl was over six feet tall and he dressed immaculately with a bowler hat and a red carnation in his lapel. His cigarette holder was about nine inches long. Many of their enquiries extended to Sydney and beyond. Sydneysiders were very impressed to see Earl striding along Broadway (from their hotel) to Central Police Station each morning. Heads turned and no one would have guessed he was a policeman.

One transport operator had a long record with the law and he worried the life out of every traffic officer on the Hume Highway. Eric described him ‘a nasty little man’ and he was known to be armed most of the time. He owed the CRB something like £1,000 in unpaid fines so Eric, Earl and a Sergeant from Sydney Police paid him a visit early one night. They were invited in and they walked through the house to an open veranda at the back where about 20 of the Sydney mafia were opening oysters and drinking wine. As soon as his ‘client’ saw Eric he invited him with a flashing grin, to join him in a drink. Eric refused and invited him to come out to their car. The Sergeant put the ‘client’ into the back seat of the car and his fines were explained to him. This made him very excited and he screamed out and the car was surrounded by his henchmen. Eric

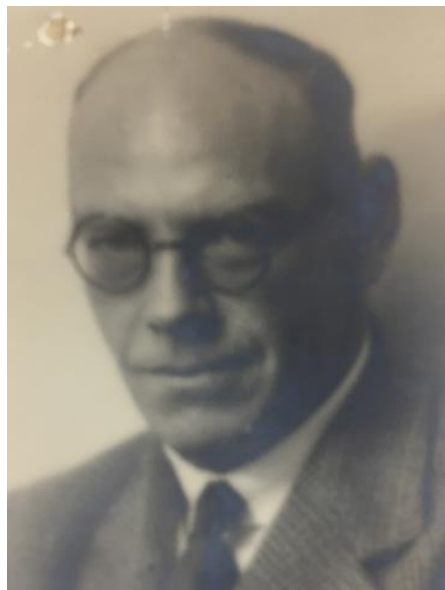
said the noise was deafening and only subsided when someone put a hand in the back door clutching £1,000 in cash – to at last settle the fines.

Eric was the foundation Honorary Secretary of the VicRoads Association. After 28 years of service with the CRB, Eric retired in 1977 and died in August 1992.

Robert Stirling Moore MC, 54985 (V502594, 5547)

Robert served with distinction in the AIF during the First World War and was awarded a Military Cross in 1917 for an action near Ypres. Refer to his entry in Chapter 2.

At the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, Robert was the Shire Engineer at Yea in north central Victoria. He enlisted in May 1940 at the age of 49 in the Citizen Air Force as a Trainee Officer at the School of Administration.



Robert Moore – 1942.

He was discharged in June 1942 on being granted a commission in the Administration and Special Duties Branch where he served for the remainder of the war.

Robert lived at Ringwood and died in 1960.

Captain William (Bill) Francis Neville, VX62316

This William F. Neville should not be confused with the William H. Neville who served in the First World War. I don't think they were related.

Bill Neville's wife, Ina, was a loyal member of the VicRoads Association after Bill died. I used to pick her up and drop her home so that she could attend our VicRoads Association functions. She was a kind, intelligent and elegant woman who lived well into her nineties. I was always a bit saddened because she and Bill had no family but she told me that she had a wide circle of friends and was not lonely.



Bill Neville – 1977.

It took considerable research to find Bill's records. There is an entry for him in the Department of Veteran Affairs Nominal Roll but there is no entry in the Australian Archives. Bill was born in Ballarat in January 1914 and he enlisted in August 1941 while living in Warrnambool. He was 27 years old at enlistment and I suspect he was employed by the CRB at that time.

He joined the 2nd Field Company and rose to the rank of Captain. He was discharged in October 1945. All these data are in the Veteran Affairs database but, so far, I have not been able to find anything else. There is another conundrum. The 2nd Field Company served only in the First World War. I wonder if it is 2nd/2nd Field Regiment which saw action in the Western Desert, Crete and Greece in 1941 and later – in 1944 and 1945 – in New Guinea?

Bill was the Assistant Divisional Engineer at Horsham when that Division was first formed. In the late 1950s he transferred to Geelong as Divisional Engineer where he served for about nine years before transferring to Head Office as Assistant Chief Works Engineer.

Bill was by all accounts a great boss with a wicked sense of humour. Bob Swift told me that when Bill was at Horsham he ordered in a couple of dozen bottles of beer so that the staff could celebrate Christmas. The Divisional Accountant came into his office after Christmas. He was quite perplexed as to what cost item they could allocate the cost of the beer. Bill said to put it on to filling on the Western Highway. He explained that they were all full and the office was on the Western Highway!

Bill served the CRB for 36 years and retired in 1977.

He died in February 1994.

Lieutenant Andrew (Andy) Morden Noble, SX33972

Born in Adelaide in 1923, Andrew enlisted in January 1945 and was assigned to the Royal Australian Engineers Reinforcements. He was an engineering student at the time of his enlistment. Andrew did not serve overseas. All his service was in Australia.

He was discharged in November 1945 with the rank of Lieutenant.



Andrew Noble's paybook photograph.

After the war, Andrew worked for the Borough of Willesden (in London) and Glamorgan County Council (in Wales). While in London, he met his wife-to-be, Nesta from Derwen in North Wales. He was earning £8 per week and Nesta – a fully trained nurse – was earning £5 per week. They married in Wrexham in North Wales on 26 February 1949 and not long after they came out to Australia. Andrew had to hire a morning suit for the wedding – for the princely sum of two guineas!

Andrew commenced with the CRB in Geelong Division and moved to Head Office to become the Board's first Right-of-Way Engineer. Later, he became the Plans and Survey Engineer before being promoted to Assistant Chief Road Design Engineer. Andrew was a modest man and a thorough gentleman with impeccable manners. He was highly respected by his peers as an excellent engineer.



Andrew Noble – circa 1980s.

After he retired, he went to live on Raymond Island in the Gippsland Lakes.

Andy died in 2018 aged 95 years.

Lieutenant Colonel Ian (Paddy) John O'Donnell OBE, VX43938

Paddy was taken Prisoner of War by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Corporal Jack Joseph O'Keefe, VX 5869

Jack was taken Prisoner of War by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Lieutenant Clement (Clem) Charles Perrin, V390980

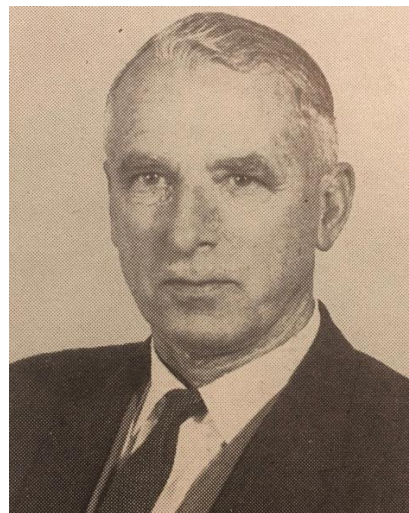
Clement was born in Brunswick in 1904 and he enlisted in May 1942 at the age of 38. He enlisted in Benalla. The electoral roll for 1931 indicates that Clem was living in Benalla where he may have been working for the CRB. That was also the year that he married Christina Mary Joske.

He was a Lieutenant in 22nd Battalion Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC).

The VDC was an Australian part-time volunteer military force of the Second World War modelled on the British Home Guard. It was established in July 1940 by the Returned and Services League of Australia (RSL) and was initially composed of ex-servicemen who had served in the First World War. The Australian Government took over control of the VDC in May 1941, and gave the organisation the role of training for guerrilla warfare, collecting local intelligence and providing static defence of each unit's home area. General Harry Chauvel, who had retired in 1930, was recalled to duty in 1940 and appointed Inspector-General of the VDC.

Following the outbreak of war in the Pacific, the Government expanded the VDC in 1942. Membership was open to men aged between 18 and 60, including those working in reserved occupations. As a result, there were, by 1944, nearly 100,000 men in the VDC, organized into 111 battalions consisting of about 1,500 full-time personnel, over 30,000 part-time active members and over 43,000 part-time reserve members of the VDC.

As the perceived threat to Australia declined the VDC's role changed from static defence to operating anti-aircraft artillery, coastal artillery and searchlights. Members of inland VDC units were freed from having to attend regular training in May 1944 and the VDC was officially disbanded on 24 August 1945.



Clem Perrin – 1969.

Clem attended University High School and joined the CRB in 1921 as a junior clerk. Two years later he became a Pupil Engineer. He was appointed Assistant Divisional Engineer in Benalla in

1936, Divisional Engineer in Horsham in 1948 and Asphalt Engineer at Head Office in 1955, and Deputy Chief Engineer Works in 1969.

Clem was, by all accounts, a very fine engineer. Harry George (Location Engineer, Traffic and Location Engineer, Divisional Engineer Dandenong, Deputy Chief Engineer Works, and Deputy Chief Engineer) said of Clem:

“Clem Perrin, my life-long friend, was with the organisation for 48 years. I was present when he first met his wife and was best man at his wedding. Apart from his outstanding skill as an engineer, first as a Divisional Engineer and later as Asphalt Engineer and finally, Deputy Chief Engineer Works, he had great ability as a musician, being able to produce on the piano not only melody but also faithful representation of the harmonic fabric of anything he heard played. Veritably, he was in step and in tune with road engineering.”

Clem died in 1990 in Hartwell, Melbourne.

Corporal James Primose, VX27765

James was born in Glasgow in Scotland in 1901, so he was 39 when he enlisted in June 1940. His name was on the CRB's list as J Primrose, and while there were 26 others of that same name, he was the only one with the initial 'J'. He was listed on the CRB Employees list - but his enlistment form says that he was “in charge of oil fireheaters”. It leads me to wonder if he was a member of a bituminous sealing gang.



Corporal James Primose.

Between 1917 and 1919 he served in the Royal Navy as a seaman, so he had already experienced war service. Like any self-respecting ex-sailor, it was noted that he had a tattoo on his left forearm. His next of kin (mother) was in Scotland and John gave his address as the Commercial Club Hotel, Nicholson Street, Fitzroy. At enlistment he was single but in 1943, he married Emma Finlayson.

After enlistment he was shuffled around various units in Colac, Seymour and finally, Wangaratta. He had been posted to the 2nd/24th Battalion. The 2nd/24th Battalion was a unit of the all-volunteer 2nd AIF. It was formed in July 1940 from primarily **Victorian** volunteers and was known as "Wangaratta's Own" because of the time the battalion spent in the town during its formative period prior to deployment overseas. It served in North Africa in 1941–1942 and in early 1943, the battalion returned to Australia and later took part in campaigns against the Japanese in New Guinea in 1943–1944 and Borneo in 1945. The 2nd/24th suffered the highest number of battle casualties of any 2nd AIF infantry battalion.

James disembarked upon the H.M.T. *Strathmore* in November 1940. After arriving in the Middle East, the battalion undertook further training in Cyrenaica, and subsequently saw action for the first time around the besieged town of **Tobruk** in April 1941. Tobruk was a strategically important port. The battalion remained there for eight months, occupying various positions around the perimeter before they were withdrawn by sea in late October 1941. A period of garrison duties followed in Palestine and Syria before it was hastily moved to El Alamein in response to a German advance through the desert towards Egypt. The 2nd/24th was heavily involved in both the First and Second Battles of El Alamein between July and November 1942. During the first battle, the battalion fought to secure Tel el Eisa where they captured a German intelligence unit. During the second battle, the 2nd/24th advanced from Tel el Eisa towards the sea, amidst fierce fighting around a position dubbed the "Saucer".

James had a number of periods in hospital at Dimra (near Gaza) in Palestine during the garrison duty in October, November and December 1941. The reasons for hospitalisation are not stated. In January 1943, the battalion embarked for Australia arriving in Sydney six weeks later. It remained in Australia for the rest of the year but James had one spell in hospital in Queensland with dyspepsia.

In April 1944, the battalion was on the move again to New Guinea. Leaving Townsville on the *Katoomba*, they disembarked in Lae on the north coast. Five months later, James left Madang for Townsville. It seems that this was the end of James' war. He was sent back to Victoria. This was when he met Emma and got married. There is an entry in his archive dated January 1945 which stated "Next of kin. Change of address – wife."

He was discharged in October 1945. The Army had a system for determining demobilization priority and James' assessment of normal priority was calculated as follows:

1. Length of service in months	63 x 2 (males) or x 1 (females)	126
2. Age of enlistment in years	39 x 2 (males) or x 3 (females)	78
3. Dependency status (males only) – one point for each month of service		63
	Total	267

This was enough to enable James to be demobilised ahead of many of his mates and start living his new life with Emma. It was a good one. James died in June 2002 a few months short of his 102nd birthday.

Sergeant David George Proudfoot, VX13984

David was born in 1918 in Surrey Hills. He became a Sergeant in the 2/8th Field Regiment. He enlisted in May 1940 as a 21-year old and described himself as a gardener. Prior to his enlistment he had spent 3 ½ years in the Militia.



David Proudfoot's paybook photograph.

The 2/8th Field Regiment was a field artillery regiment composed mainly of soldiers from Victoria and Tasmania. It was one of three field artillery regiments that were assigned to the Australian 9th Division during the war, and during its service it saw action in North Africa in 1941 - 1942, being heavily involved in the First and Second Battles of El Alamein before returning to Australia in 1943, as the Australian government rebalanced its land forces to face the threat in the Pacific. It did not see action again until mid-1945 when it was committed to the brief Borneo Campaign.

David spent the first five months of his service at Puckapunyal and, in November 1940, he embarked for the Middle East. Initially, he was a Bombadier, but he was promoted to Sergeant in June 1943. He was hospitalised in the Middle East for sores on his legs, hepatitis, a boil on his left knee and impetigo (skin rash) on his face. All of these can be attributed to infection caused by the conditions under which they experienced. I cannot tell from the archive, exactly where David served in the Middle east.

He embarked to Australia in January 1943. He undertook a Weapon Trainers Instructor's course in September 1944 which he passed and qualified to destroy 'blind' grenades and mortar bombs. In May 1945, he embarked from Townsville on the SS David Shanks and disembarked in Morotai

from where he was transferred to Borneo. He returned to Australia in November 1945 and was discharged in Melbourne on 6 December 1945.

After the war, David started his career as an accountant in Bairnsdale Division before moving to Head Office Accounts Branch. He later succeeded Ted King as Controller of Stores at the Syndal Depot. Some of his colleagues said that his war service lay heavily on his soul and he never spoke of his experiences.

David retired in 1979 after 30 years with the CRB and he died in May 1982 aged 63.

Flying Officer Wilfred James Quonoey, 3138413 (32325, V326443, VX112446, VX503902)

Wilfred initially served in the army but after seven months, he transferred to the RAAF and most of his career was spent in that service. He was an overseer with the CRB in Benalla Division. He enlisted in the Army in May 1942 at the age of 18. Initially, he served as a Private in the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Company, but he was discharged from the Army in December 1942 to join the RAAF where he achieved the rank of Flying Officer in July 1945.

I cannot find a record of his service in the Army nor do I understand why he has so many service numbers. His service in the RAAF is described in Chapter 7.

In 1949, he married Elaine Margaret Barton. Elaine is the sister of Edward (Ted) Barton who had a long and stellar career with the CRB, RCA and VicRoads as a traffic engineer. Elaine and Wilfred divorced and he later remarried.

Wilfred died in 2004 aged 79.

Colonel Caleb Grafton Roberts MC

Caleb served with the British Army during the First World War where he was awarded a Military Cross as a Lieutenant at the Battle of St Quentin Canal – refer to Chapter 6.

He arrived in Melbourne in 1925 and joined the Country Roads Board and at the outbreak of the Second World War he had risen to the position of Chief Engineer. In 1931 he joined the Citizen

Military Forces as an engineer officer. He was gazetted acting Major in 1939 and called up for full-time duty. He was offered the post of Second in Command of the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion and he was upset because the offer was withdrawn when he was declared unfit because of his health.

However he was transferred to the Australian Intelligence Corps and, while serving at Army Headquarters, Melbourne, he was promoted to temporary Colonel and made Director of Military Intelligence in February 1942.

He was appointed controller of the Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) at General Douglas MacArthur's Headquarters, South-West Pacific Area. The AIB spread propaganda and conducted espionage, sabotage, infiltration and guerrilla operations in enemy-held territory. By 1944 Roberts had charge of an organization comprising some 2,000 men from Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, the United States of America and countries occupied by the Japanese. It was a daunting job and he had to reconcile the aims and allegiances of the various national groups, and to deal with some highly individualistic and temperamental members of his staff.



Colonel C. G. Roberts MC – circa 1943.
Controller Allied Intelligence Bureau.
South West Pacific Command.

Official statistics credit the AIB with a total of 264 missions. Commando and other para-military operations accounted for more than 7,000 enemy killed, whilst nearly 1,000 surrendered following propaganda efforts by the Bureau. It also rescued more than 1,000 individuals of different allied

services where it operated. The US Army Deputy Controller of the Bureau, in the book *“Spy Ring, Pacific”*, said that Colonel Roberts was regarded by General McArthur’s Headquarters as a man of “integrity, tremendous energy and fearless loyalty”.



Caleb Roberts – Chairman of the Country Roads Board – 1962.

After the war, Caleb resumed his position as Chief Engineer of the CRB. Following a study tour in America and Britain, he recommended the formation of a permanent road research agency which led to the establishment of the Australian Road Research Board in 1959. He was appointed as a member of the Board in 1956 and became Chairman in 1962.

Ted King worked as an assistant to Caleb for many years and admired him greatly. He said that he had an ability to do many things at once. He said, *“On one particular occasion I was discussing a problem with him and Paddy O’Donnell came in needing an urgent decision on a bridge problem. Just as he finished, in rushed Harry Gray with another problem on bituminous work. He dealt with that, and immediately turned to me, and gave me his decision. He wrote marvellous reports, the essence of clarity and simplicity. He was the clearest thinking man I ever worked with.”* Ted once saw a citation for Roberts for an award recommended by the American army. *“It was the highest award that the Americans could give a non-American. The Labor Government would not agree to any of these awards. Not bad for a man who was considered to be medically unfit.”*

He retired in 1963 and died in 1965 at the age of 67 of a rheumatic condition he acquired during the First World War.



Caleb and his wife Nora (nee Watson) circa 1941.

Norah's father, William Watson, was the Curator of the Kew Gardens in London from 1901 to 1922.

Lance Sergeant Charles (Charlie) Frederick Robinson, VX26779

Charlie was the Board's Title Survey Officer and later, the Assistant Principal Surveyor. He was born in Chiltern in Northern Victoria in July 1920. At the time of his enlistment in May 1940 (at Corowa) he described his occupation as 'Labourer'. His home address was in the small town of Wahgunyah.



Charlie's enlistment photo.

Charlie was a member of the 2nd/24th Infantry Battalion. This was a Victorian Battalion which was raised in Wangaratta in July 1940. The 2nd/24th trained at Bonegilla before sailing for the Middle East in November 1940. Despite the successes of the British offensive early in 1941, the German Afrika Korps counter-attacked and the Allied Forces fell back to Tobruk. The 2nd/24th entered Tobruk on 10 April and helped defend the "fortress" for the next eight months.

The battalion saw extensive service at Tobruk, manning the Red Line at a number of different locations and participating in the bitter fighting in the Salient. The Red Line was Tobruk's outer line of defence and consisted of a series of concrete pillboxes forming a semi-circle around the town. In October the majority of the Allied forces (the 9th Division), was evacuated by sea. The 2nd/24th was evacuated on the night of 20 October, sailing to Alexandria. The division was transferred to Palestine and Syria for rest and garrison duties.

By July 1942 German and Italian forces had reached El Alamein in Egypt, about seventy miles from Alexandria. The war in North Africa had become critical for the British Eighth Army. The 9th Division (of which the 2nd/24th was a part) consequently rushed from Syria to the Alamein area and held the northern sector for almost four months as the Eighth Army was reinforced for an offensive under new a commander.

Alamein was a great, although bloody, success for the Allies and by November, Axis forces were retreating. But the 9th Division was needed elsewhere and with the battle over it returned to Australia to face a new enemy - the Japanese. The 2nd/24th left Alamein during the first week of December and went to Gaza in Palestine. The battalion left its camp in Palestine in January 1943 for the Suez Canal and the return voyage to Australia. It reached Melbourne on 25 February.

Reorganised for jungle operations, in September 1943 the 2nd/24th participated in the division's amphibious landing at Red Beach, north-west of Lae. After fighting in the battles around Lae, Finschhafen, and Sattelberg, the battalion returned to Australia in March 1944.

After some leave, the 2nd/24th reformed in Queensland at Ravenshoe on the Atherton Tablelands, for what proved to be an extensive training period. Indeed the war was almost over before the battalion went into action again.

In April 1945 the 9th Division was transported to Morotai, which was being used as a staging in

area in preparation for the amphibious landings on Borneo. After the massive pre-invasion air and naval bombardment, there was little opposition on the beaches. The 2nd/24th was ordered to push through and capture the airfield the next day. However, the Japanese stubbornly fought back and the airfield was not taken for some time. Tougher fighting was still to come.

The mountain ridges behind the town were the scene of difficult fighting. In the area of tangled hills and jungle-covered ridges the Japanese used mines, booby traps, and suicide raids to delay the Australian advance. The 2nd/24th fought along Crazy Ridge. On 20 June it captured the Australians' last main objective, Hill 90, after the hill had been hit by 21,000 artillery rounds and 600 mortar bombs.

Following the end of the war in August and Japan's surrender, the ranks of the 2nd/24th thinned, as men were discharged, transferred, or volunteered for the occupation force for Japan. Those who remained in the battalion returned to Australia in December 1945.

Charlie wrote to Melbourne Legacy in May 1970 seeking to join that organisation. Legacy wrote to the Army requesting a statement of his overseas service, and the Army responded as follows:

Amboina	13 December 1941	27 May 1942
Middle East	23 August 1942	25 February 1943
New Guinea	1 August 1943	16 September 1945
Borneo	8 April 1945	16 September 1945
Darwin	3 April 1941	12 December 1941

There are a few anomalies between this record and the history of the 2nd /24th Battalion given above but I think it can be explained as follows. All his records show him as a member of the 2nd/24th but he actually started in the 2nd/21st Battalion.

The 2nd/21st Battalion was raised in July 1940 at Trawool in central Victoria as part of the 23rd Brigade of the 8th Division. It was subsequently deployed to Ambon as part of Gull Force in December 1941 following the Japanese invasion of Malaya; however, with the defence of the island considered untenable due to the limited military resources available and overwhelming Japanese strength it was subsequently captured despite determined resistance, surrendering on 3 February

1942. Most members of the battalion became prisoners of war, and a large number died in captivity.

But Charlie survived to fight another day. I don't know how, but he was reported missing in April 1942 but in the following August it stated that he was not missing and that he had returned to Australia. The Gull Force nominal roll states that Charlie escaped before capture. The original strength of Gull Force was 1,131 men. Only 52 escaped and Charlie was one of them. 779 men perished through military action, execution or died as prisoners. 300 survivors were repatriated to Australia after the war.

The ill-fated 2nd/21st Battalion all but disappeared in their first action of the war. Another CRB man, Donald Neave, was also in the 2nd/21st but he did not survive as a prisoner of war. In the entry for him in Chapter 5 above, I have written more extensively about the tragedy that befell Gull Force.

In October 1942 Charlie embarked for the Middle East. He had been promoted from a Private to a Corporal but there is no clue in his file of where he was stationed. Tobruk, the most iconic Middle Eastern location in Australia's history of the war, is not mentioned anywhere in his file that I can see. However Charlie is mentioned in the Roll of Honour for the Rats of Tobruk and in that roll, his rank is cited as Lance Sergeant. Three other CRB men in this book were Rats of Tobruk – Bob Eastick, Noel Keil and Bill Carpenter.

But there is yet another anomaly. In R.P. Serle's History of the 2nd/24th Battalion, Corporal Keith Jones cites an account of how he and Lance Corporal Robinson (VX26779) had repaired a gap in the perimeter wire at Tobruk. He said:

'On the afternoon of the 30 April 1941 a wave of German Stuka dive-bombers flew over our position on the perimeter. They peeled off and dive-bombed our position for half an hour. Whilst the thick dust from the exploding bombs still lay heavily around us, a violent artillery bombardment commenced. The dive-bombers had shattered a gap about a chain wide in our minefield and barbed wire apron.

I reported this damage to headquarters and at about sundown Lance-Corporal Robinson and I went out and repaired this wire. We hung empty tins with a stone in each on the few strands of wire that we were able to tie together. We hoped that this might warn us of any enemy attempt to infiltrate during the night. The barrage from

the German artillery on the escarpment went on throughout the night. During this time we could hear tanks advancing to the front of us and I sent a message via Private Walpole, company runner, requesting help from the engineers to repair the damage to the minefield and also some artillery support.

At the back of the book, it identifies this Lance Corporal as Charlie Robinson, VX26779. The 2nd/24th became involved in the defence of Tobruk more or less from the start – about 10 April 1941 – meaning that Charlie was there before he went to Ambon in December 1941.

However, his archive is very clear in that he arrived back in Melbourne in March 1943. Not long after he was sent to Cairns – I suspect to undergo jungle warfare training. In August he arrived at Milne Bay in New Guinea and it was while here, that he was promoted to Acting Lance Corporal. The file does not record his whereabouts but in February 1944 he departed Finschhafen aboard the *Sea Snipe* and disembarked in Brisbane six days later. While he was in Brisbane he copped a two day fine of confined to barracks punishment for being absent without leave for a day. Good on you Charlie! He'd escaped from Ambon and had been a Rat of Tobruk and the Army nicks him for wanting a day off.

He was hospitalised twice in Queensland with malaria from June to August 1944, and in March 1945 he was sent on a course for map reading and field sketching. I suspect that this was a life-changing experience for this young labourer from Wahgunyah. The course report said that Charlie was cheerful and intelligent. Anyone who knew him would support these comments. It went on to say “*Although this student possessed little knowledge of the subject he applied himself diligently to all phases of the course and made very good progress in field work and theory*”. Was this the first seed planted for Charlie's future career as a Licensed Surveyor?

Charlie's war was not quite over. He was despatched to Morotai in NEI (Netherlands East Indies) in May 1945. His promotion to Lance Sergeant had just been confirmed. In June he was wounded in action with a shrapnel wound to his leg but the archive does not identify his location. I suspect it was in Borneo because he was evacuated to a Hospital Ship which landed at Tarakan (just off the coast of Borneo) and then took him on to Morotai, from where he was flown back to the mainland. The file calls it 'emplaned' and when he got off he 'deplaned'. He was flown to Townsville via Lae. During the next three months, Charlie was shifted by air ambulance and train ambulance from hospital to hospital till he eventually arrived in Ballarat.

It was his left leg that was wounded - his calf and his tibia. He seemed to have spent the best part of nine months in hospital and he finished up in Heidelberg. He was discharged in August 1946.



Charlie Robinson,
Assistant Principal Surveyor – CRB – 1970.

Charlie began with the CRB in 1946 as a chainman. He was discharged from the Army and walked into the Exhibition Building and asked for a job. A fortnight later he was in South Gippsland working on the Bass highway – surrounded by mosquitoes and dense tea tree scrub. He thought at the time that he might have done better had he stayed in Borneo. He became a surveyor in 1950 when he obtained his Licensed Surveyor qualification under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme for ex-service personnel. He rose through the surveying ranks from Assistant Senior Engineering Surveyor to the Title Survey Officer and finally, the Assistant Principal Surveyor.

He had a long career in surveying and was an extremely popular character. He was friendly and down-to-earth. He was an avid supporter of Freedom From Hunger and Austcare and, sadly, the Fitzroy Football Club. He was also active in the Municipal Officers' Association at State and Federal levels. Charlie was also a committee member and President of the VicRoads Association.

Charlie died in July 2002.

Sergeant Ronald (Ron) Herbert Simpson, VX100765

Ron was born in Wycheproof in 1923 and enlisted in Townsville in July 1942 following his qualification as a surveyor. He was attached to the 3rd Field Survey Company. He was initially posted to Yarram and then Colac. He was promoted to Acting Corporal in September 1942.



Ron Simpson's enlistment photograph – 1942.

The 3rd Field Survey Company (totalling 18 men including Ron) was sent from Brisbane to the 8th Military District (8 MD) in November 1942 aboard the SS *Taroona*. The 8th Military District was an administrative district of the Australian Army covering the Territory of New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides, with its headquarters firstly at Rabaul and later at Port Moresby.

The arrival of the Survey Company was soon after the amphibious landing attempted by the Japanese in August-September that had ended in defeat for them, but the area was still subjected to periodic air raids and the surveyors sometimes found bombs landing dangerously close to their quarters.

In mid-February 1943, the Company reached Port Moresby and were joined by the 2/1 Army Topographical Survey Company. Field parties spread out from Port Moresby on mapping tasks over a wide area. One party was employed on surveys needed for the construction of the Bulldog-

Wau Road, an engineering undertaking of epic proportions. Another detachment carried out surveys in the Ramu Valley and Finisterre Range to produce a series of 1:25,000 scale combat maps for I Australian Corps. Part of this detachment was on Shaggy Ridge and they made observations within days of its capture in January 1944. Many of the maps of New Guinea for which the Company was responsible had been produced while the unit was in New Guinea, but others were completed after its return to Australia.

Ron was promoted to Acting Sergeant in March 1943 and this appointment was confirmed three months later. But from 26 March 1943 to 9 July 1943, Ron's file has been heavily redacted. It noted his confirmation as Sergeant and then from 17 September 1943 until his discharge in January 1944, his file was again redacted – although there is a note to say he was transferred to Heidelberg Hospital.

The reason for his discharge was given as “Being medically unfit”. It also stated “Schizophrenia”. I can only surmise that Ron suffered from what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD.

Ron joined the CRB in 1944 as a surveyor in the Title Survey Division but later, he undertook field survey work on the Kiewa Valley Highway in the early 1950s. He later became an engineering assistant, and then an engineer. He resigned from the CRB in 1955 and, after a short period in private practice, he was appointed Shire Engineer in the Shire of Pyalong. He was a committee member of the VicRoads Association up to the early 2000s.

Ron died in December 2005.

Private Harold (Harry) John Stein, VX17525

Harry was born in Caradoc (near Ballarat) in February 1908 and he enlisted in Cardross (near Mildura) in May 1940. He was allocated to the 15th Australian Field Baking platoon. His rank was Private.

An empty concrete slab on a vacant allotment in Grigg Street, Ravenshoe, opposite the railway station, was the site of an Australian Army field bakery. During 1944, the bakery was operated by the bakers of 15th Australian Field Baking Platoon of the Australian Army Service Corps, 9th

Division AIF. The Ravenshoe Australian Army field bakery was one of a number of field bakeries in the Ravenshoe area that supplied fresh bread daily to the thousands of troops in the nearby encampments. The bakery originally occupied a much larger area than the surviving slab. The allotment of the present service station alongside, was used for the storage of cordwood for the ovens.



Members of the 15th Field Bakers Platoon at work.

Harry was discharged in December 1945. He was an odd job man back in the 'Old Tin Shed' days at the Exhibition Building. One of his tasks was to distribute a CRB hand towel every week, to each member of staff, and to collect the old ones for laundering.

Harry died in Warrnambool in 1956.

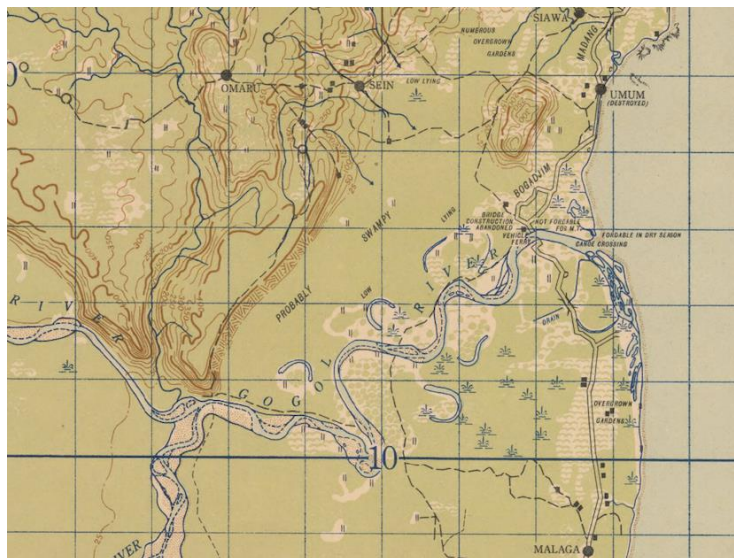
Maxwell (Max) Charles Stuart

There are 376 entries for the surname 'Stuart' in the DVA Nominal Roll for the Army in the Second World War. Only one has 'Maxwell' as a first name but his second name was 'William'.

The following details were obtained from the CRB Interchange magazine of March 1966. Max joined the staff of the CRB as a Survey Draughtsman in April 1955, after service in the Titles Offices in Melbourne and Brisbane. Early in 1940, Max enlisted in the AIF and served in the Middle East with the 2nd/1st Field Survey Company. He later served with the Torres Strait Force on Thursday Island and the 1st Australian Lithographic Company at Morotai.

The Torres Strait Force was a military command unit consisting of infantry, artillery, anti-aircraft, engineers, medical and logistics units responsible for the defence of the islands of the Torres Strait, to the north of the Australian mainland. The 1st Australian Lithographic Company would have been involved in topographical and contour mapping in the area with the aid of aerial photography.

I searched all 376 names in the roll and none of them were attached to the units cited above.



Extract of a typical Second World War topographic survey in Madang Province in New Guinea.

Max died of a sudden heart attack on Christmas Day 1965, the day after he continuously played his beloved bagpipes at the Board's Christmas party.



Max Stuart playing his bagpipes.

Bombardier Robert (Bob) Stenton Swift, VX 89696, V210842

Bob was born in August 1922 and was not quite 20 when he enlisted in the field in Queensland in 1942. His home address was 50 Carpenter Street, Middle Brighton – the house he lived in all his life except for his last years in Anzac House. Bob never married and he and his sister, Mary, lived in their family home. He gave his occupation as ‘Clerk, Country Roads Board’. Bob was a lovely man who was loyal to the CRB all his life. He was my predecessor as President of the VicRoads Association.

It is impossible to imagine anyone as gentle as Bob to be in the thick of battle. One of his fellow RSL members said at his funeral:

‘It always seemed to me, and others on our committee, that Bob was a gentleman in all respects – one who served Australia well in war and in peace. He was one of those thousands of young Australians who rallied to the cause to help defend Australia at a time when we were under dire threat of invasion. No doubt in common with all of those who were prepared to put their lives on the line for Australia – as Bob did, he had a strong and passionate

belief in the core values of Australian society – the freedom, the way of life and all those aspects that have made Australia great and distinctive. In other words he was a true Australian.

Bob felt he should do something about this situation and enlisted in the AIF in 1941 – and was posted to our regiment - the 4th Australian Field Regiment. After training in Australia – mainly up north – we entered the battle zone in New Guinea in 1943 at Lae – and from there up the Ramu Valley to Shaggy Ridge chasing the Japanese all the way. Then it was to Bongainville in 1944 slogging it out with the Japanese until August 1945. Bob can be justly proud of his service in some of the most treacherous and inhospitable places on earth.'



Bob Swift – his enlistment photo and in 2016.



Australian soldiers digging in at a newly occupied part of Shaggy Ridge on 23 January 1944.

Bob joined the CMF in December 1941 and trained at Bonegilla until he was transferred to the 1st Military District (Queensland) in March 1942 and drafted into the 2nd AIF five months later.

He served in the 4th Australian Field Regiment. The regiment was mobilised in January 1942, after Japan's entry into the war and their rapid advances through Malaya, Singapore, Rabaul and New Guinea. The regiment was moved to Warwick in Queensland in March 1941 and training exchanges took place with other regiments. After the restructure of the Army's jungle divisions, the 4th was moved to Helidon in July 1943, with orders to deploy to New Guinea later that year. The regiment originally relieved the 14th Regiment at Lae before moving forward and relieving the 2/4th Field Regiment in the Ramu Valley in February. The regiment redeployed to Bougainville with the 3rd Division, arriving at Torokina on 5 November 1944. Notable actions took place along the Numa Numa Trail and during the amphibious assault on Porton Plantation in June 1944. After the Japanese surrender, the regiment settled into recreation prior to departing Bougainville on 19 December 1945, arriving in Brisbane on Christmas Eve. On 31 December 1945, the regiment's war diary was closed and the regiment disbanded.

Bob was promoted to Bombadier when he first arrived in Queensland and he embarked from Townsville on SS *Katoomba* early in 1944 for New Guinea. He served in New Guinea and Bougainville for nearly two years.

Bob worked in the Mechanical Branch in South Melbourne and later in Syndal. He was heavily involved in providing earthmoving and road construction equipment to sites around the state, and he had an especially strong relationship with Ballarat and Horsham regions – where he regularly visited their Depots to ensure that they ran effectively.

Bob died in June 1916.

Captain Alan Ronald Thompson, VX134689 (V57330)

Alan was an engineering assistant in Benalla Division who always signed his reports with a flourish as 'Captain Alan Thompson'. I cannot be sure that Alan Thompson VX134689 is the right one but he is the only Captain of all the Alan Thompsons in the Australian Archives, so I think I have found him.

Alan was born in Merbein in 1915 and served in the CMF from November 1936 to July 1942, and then in the AIF from July 1942 to December 1945. In his papers there are two occupations listed – labourer and horticulturalist. He was born in 1915 so that he was 30 when he was discharged. Alan had a rank of Lieutenant in the CMF and his identification number was then V57330.

He was attached to the 4th Australian Labour Group HQ. The archive indicates that he served a total of 267 days overseas but there appear to be gaps in his records. He did serve in the Northern Territory and service in Morotai in Dutch New Guinea is also mentioned. But perhaps Alan's wife may have the answer. In March 1988, soon after Alan's death, his wife wrote to the Army seeking details of Alan's army career. She said: *"Before he died he made mention of service in Darwin, Bougainville and Morotai. He also spoke of assisting in the return of some allied POWs from the Singapore surrender towards the end of the war and we note a leaflet in his kit which confirms he may have been in Morotai when General Blamey accepted the Japanese surrender on the island."*

Unfortunately, there is no response to this letter in the archive.

Alan retired from the CRB in 1974 after 41 years of service meaning that he commenced work in 1935.

Major John (Jack) Douglas Thorpe, VX 80990 (V52746)

Jack Thorpe was appointed to the Board of the CRB in 1968 and became Deputy Chairman in 1971. He joined the Board as a junior clerk in 1926 but transferred to the engineering staff as a junior engineering assistant the following year. In 1929 he became an engineering assistant and after qualifying as an engineer in 1933, he was promoted to Assistant Engineer in 1935. From 1938 to 1941 he was the Assistant Asphalt Engineer. After his war service, Jack resumed with the Board in 1946 as Assistant Divisional Engineer at Dandenong Division and as Assistant Highways Engineer in 1948.



Jack Thorpe – from the CRB staff photograph 1930.

He was Chairman of the Traffic Commission for 12 years and played a prominent role in developing the Victorian Road Traffic Regulations, the setting up of the State Accident Record System, the Metropolitan route Marking System and the Clearway System as well as in the preparation of standards for the design and use of the traffic control signals and road signs now in use in Victoria.

Jack was born in January 1910. He joined the Militia in the late 1920s before enlisting in the CMF in August 1941 – where he became a Major in the 2nd Survey Regiment. While in the Militia he completed a course at the Army School of Artillery where he received the following commendation: *“Probably the most earnest student on the course – attained a very fair standard from little initial knowledge.”* While in the Militia, he was promoted to Lieutenant in 1933 and Captain in 1939.

He joined the 2nd AIF in June 1942 and was promoted to Major in September 1942 – barely three months after joining up. He was appointed Officer Commanding the 2/1st Flash Spotting Battery, Royal Australian Artillery.

Flash spotting is a method of detecting the position of enemy guns at long range where the guns cannot be observed directly. The flashes can be observed at night as reflections from the sky. The purpose was then to call up friendly guns to destroy the enemy guns position. Theoretically this could be achieved by several observers spotting the flash from a particular gun and then plotting the intersection of the bearings.

This was extremely difficult with multiple guns firing since several observers could not be sure they were all looking at the same particular gun. This was solved by using a flashboard located at a central point fitted with a combination of buzzers and signal lights connected to the observers by telephone wires, which operated in such a way that after a sequence of observations, all observers could be sure they were looking at the same gun flashing and its position could then be determined by triangulation.

All of Jack's service was in Australia.



Jack Thorpe - Deputy Chairman of the CRB, 1971.

Jack served the CRB for 49 years and retired in 1975. He died in April 1987.

Warrant Officer John Edward Turnbull, VX24240

John was the Chief Engineering Surveyor with the CRB from 1945 until his retirement in 1974. He joined up with the 2/1st Australian Topographical Survey Company, enlisting on 8 June 1940. He was a Warrant Officer Class 2 and served in New Guinea. He was Mentioned in Despatches for Distinguished Services in the South West Pacific area - as promulgated in the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette No. 45 of 6 March 1947. He was congratulated by the CRB Secretary Rolf Jansen (himself a returned serviceman) in a letter dated 6 March, 1947. He was discharged from the Army on 24 August 1945.



John Turnbull at enlistment – 1940.

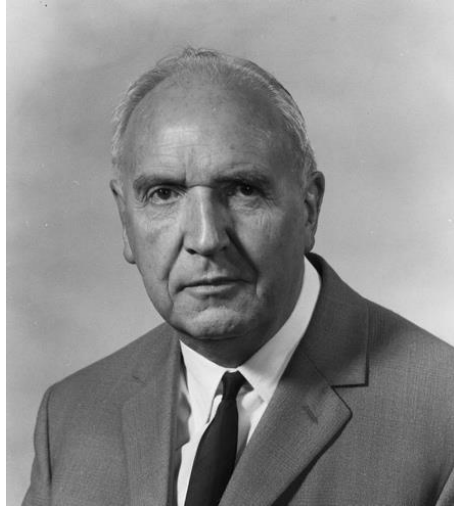
John was born in August 1913 in Corowa and, like Bill Neville, he joined up while living in Warrnambool. I suspect that he too was employed by the CRB at that time. At enlistment, he was a licensed surveyor.

His initial training was conducted at Balcombe and Puckapunyal. He was admitted to hospital twice – with laryngitis and a coronary occlusion. I can only conclude that the latter affliction was mild. John then embarked on a ship named MX3 in February 1941 and arrived in the Middle East six weeks later. The 2/1st Survey Company provided survey and mapping to the Australian Corps in the Middle East theatre including Greece, Egypt, Cyrenaica and the border zones of Palestine, Syria, Trans-Jordan and Turkey. In February 1942, John returned to Australia on the RMS *Andes* arriving in Sydney on 16 March 1942.

John had three stints in New Guinea – from December 1942 to October 1943, from December 1943 to April 1944, and from April 1945 to August 1945. Combined with his Middle East service, John served a total of 973 days overseas. He was hospitalised in New Guinea with malaria and dengue fever. While he was in New Guinea, he must have travelled to various places as his Mentioned in Dispatches was awarded to him for services in Morotai which is in the Dutch East Indies.

He was discharged on 24 August 1945 and a note in his archive stated that he had returned to “Employment in industry – Country Roads Board at Carlton as surveyor”.

John was a thorough gentleman and never mentioned his war service to anyone. He married later in life to Aileen Moore, a teacher at Scotch College. After Aileen died from cancer John eventually went to live with his sister Joyce in the Blue Mountains.



John Turnbull,
Chief Engineering Surveyor, CRB, 1970.

John served in the CRB for 36 years and retired in 1975.

Lance Corporal Leonard (Len) Upton, VX32022

Also Flight Lieutenant, 252706

Len came from Ballarat. He was born in July 1916 and enlisted in June 1940 after completing his civil engineering studies. He had gained experience as an assistant engineer/draughtsman at Colac, Otway and Woorayl Shires and the City of Camberwell.



Len's enlistment photo.

For the first three months of his service Len was located at Royal Park, Puckapunyal, and Seymour. He was then posted to RAE 8th Division Eastern Command at Ingleburn. This was the ill-fated Division that was destroyed as a fighting force from which many of the CRB men in this narrative became prisoners of war of the Japanese.

He remained in the Division for two months when his file abruptly states: "*Discharged medically unfit for service not occasioned by his own default.*" He was discharged from the army in November 1940. There was no further information. Ironically, Len's ill health may possibly have saved him from a far worse fate.

But his war was not over. He joined the RAAF and became a Flight Lieutenant. The nominal roll says he was in 9 Works M U at the time of discharge. I am uncertain about this acronym but it is likely to be a unit involved in field construction of airstrips and the like. He was discharged in October 1945.

It was well known in the CRB that Len had a heart condition which severely affected his stamina. His career with the CRB involved the construction aspects of road engineering, especially in the regional divisions of Victoria. He probably holds the record for the number of Divisions served as Assistant Divisional Engineer (ADE) and Divisional Engineer (DE) in the CRB. He was ADE at Traralgon, Ballarat and Bendigo.

In January 1958, Len was appointed DE at Bendigo and in late 1969, DE at Ballarat. However, his deteriorating health meant that he only served intermittently in this latter position (for about a year and a half) and he was forced to retire early due to ill health.

Len died in November 1973 at the age of 57.

Gunner Thomas Allen Wade, V255036, 428281

Thomas was a draughtsman at the CRB when he enlisted in September 1941. He was born in Surrey Hills, Victoria, in 1922 and he was assigned to the 2nd Survey Regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery.

There is documented consultation in the archive between the Army and the CRB about Thomas' enlistment. The Board stated: "*The Board is carrying out drafting required for Commonwealth works and at a later stage may desire some exemption.*"

However this did not transpire but Thomas was subsequently discharged from the Army in October 1942 in order to join the RAAF. Refer to Chapter 7 for details about his air crew experience.

Lance Sergeant Frank Eric Watts, VX47550

Frank was taken Prisoner of War by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Sergeant William Hector (Hec) Waugh, VX46401

Hec was a Staff Officer in the Personnel Section at the CRB. He was born in Castlemaine in 1916 and enlisted into the 2/11th Field Regiment in July 1940 when he was 24. He gave his occupation as clerk and, at the time, he was engaged to be married.

The 2/11th Field Regiment was an artillery regiment formed in Victoria in mid-1940. In February 1941 the regiment moved to the Sea Lake area of Mallee country, Victoria, where it carried out exercises in the desert. It was the first time an artillery regiment received desert training in Australia.

The exercises emulated the conditions of the Libyan desert and in April the regiment embarked for overseas service.



Hec Waugh's paybook photograph.

Hec left Sydney for the Middle East on 10 April 1941 arriving at Suez, Egypt, on 13 May 1941. He immediately transferred by train to Palestine where the regiment undertook further training. In June, the Allies - British, Australian, Indian, and Free French forces - invaded Syria and encountered heavier-than-expected resistance from the Vichy French. The campaign continued for several weeks, but the Vichy French surrendered on 12 July.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

008715

The 2/11th on the move in the Syrian Desert - 1941.

In early 1942, they were brought back to Australia in response to Japan's entry into the war, and in 1943 joined the garrison in Darwin. Hec came back to Australia on the SS *Andes* – embarking on 8 February 1942 and arriving in Sydney on 16 March. He was posted to the Northern Territory from April 1943 to September 1944. Hec transferred from Darwin to Lae, New Guinea, aboard the SS *Katoomba* in September 1944. He left Lae in November 1944 for Townsville where he remained for the rest of the war. Throughout 1944 and 1945, the regiment was deployed to New Guinea before supporting the campaign on Bougainville.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

053587

Darwin, 1943. Battle Headquarters of the 2/11th Australian Field Regiment showing Sergeant Waugh handing a message to a despatch rider.

Hec was discharged in December 1945 and it was noted on the discharge notice that he was married.

Hec joined the CRB in 1956 as a Staff Officer in the Human Resources Branch and was noted for his happy disposition. He retired in 1974 after 18 years of service.



Hec Waugh – circa 1970s.

He died in 1976 at the age of 60.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert (Bob) Mace Webber, VX28662

Bob was taken prisoner of war in Greece and his story is told in Chapter 10.

Sergeant Richard (Dick) Vernon Whitehead, VX107419, V57032

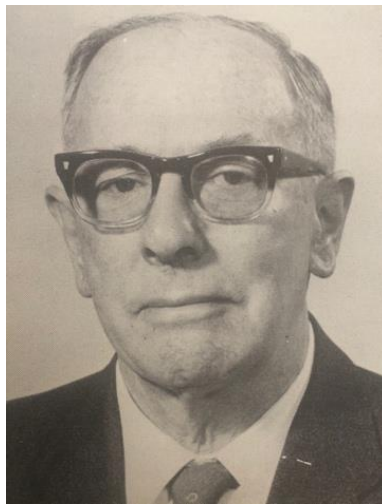
Dick was born in 1908 in Williamstown and enlisted in the Army in September 1942. He enlisted in in the field at Northam in Western Australia. His file has not been digitised but I suspect he was serving with the CMF in Western Australia when he was drafted into the 2nd AIF.

Dick was the son of the Board's first Legal Officer and Estates Officer, Vernon Whitehead, who held these positions from 1918 to 1939. Vernon served in the First World War and his story is included in Chapter 3.

Before enlisting in the 2nd AIF Dick had served in the CMF from July 1941 to September 1942 - as a Sergeant in the 4th Australian Artillery Regiment, as a Lance Sergeant in the 10th Australian Field Regiment and as a Sergeant in the 107th Australian Anti-tank Regiment. Apart from a week in Merauke (in the Dutch East Indies) in August 1944, all of Dick's service was in Australia.

Merauke is located in Indonesia on the southern coast of New Guinea near the border of Papua New Guinea.

Dick initially joined the CRB as a timekeeper in the South Melbourne store yard in 1938. He qualified as a Municipal Clerk and Auditor and spent most of his years, except for the war, as an Allocations Officer in the Secretary's Branch from 1958 to 1970. From 1970 to 1973 he was engaged on special duties relating to indexing information relating to the Board's Annual Reports.



Dick Whitehead 1973.

He retired from the CRB in 1973 having served the Board for 35 years.

He was discharged in December 1945 and died in June 1983.

Gunner Andrew (Andy) James Wilson VX47352

Andy was taken Prisoner of War by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

Lieutenant Cecil (Cec) Alexander Wilson, VX90890

Cec had completed his BCE (Hons) at the University of Melbourne before he enlisted in December 1942. He was born in Bendigo in 1916 and married Moira Curtain in 1940. He joined the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) and was appointed Lieutenant soon after enlistment.



Cec's paybook photograph - 1942.

He spent his first year at Wagga – presumably in various training programs - and was then deployed in the 2nd/14th Field Company to New Guinea. He embarked from Townsville on the *Katoomba* and disembarked in Port Moresby on 15 November 1943. There, he transferred to the RAE New Guinea Force.

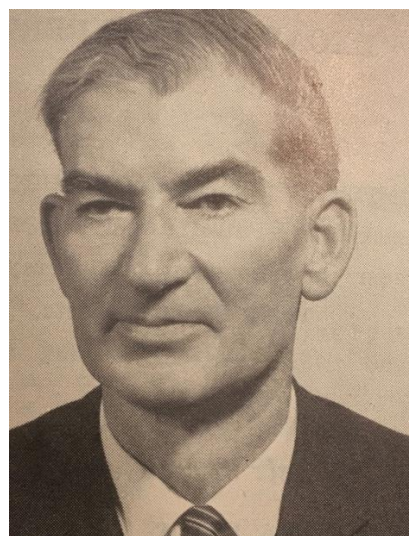
New Guinea Force was a military command unit for Australian, United States and native troops from New Guinea. It was formed in April 1942, when the Australian 1 Corps returned from the Middle East. The Force was responsible for planning and directing all operations within the New Guinea up until October 1944. General Douglas MacArthur, placed all Australian and US Army, Air Force and Navy Forces in the Port Moresby Area under the control of New Guinea Force. Over the course of its existence, New Guinea Force was commanded by some of the [Australian Army](#)'s most notable commanders, including Sydney Rowell, Sir Edmund Herring and Sir Leslie Morshead.

Apart from Port Moresby and Lae, there is also mention in the file of Aitape, Wewak and Rabaul. In all, he served 574 days in New Guinea. He was never hospitalised.

In late February 1944, Cec disembarked from Lae aboard the SS *Swartonhardt* bound for Brisbane – a journey that took 10 days - to do a one-month bomb disposal course. He was ranked first. He was graded very good in theory and his practical work was excellent. He was rated a keen, conscientious student capable of instructing bomb disposal. He also did a course in mechanisation and became involved in a Mobile Bomb Disposal Wing in Australia.

He returned to New Guinea via the SS *Jane Adams* (An American Liberty Ship), departing Cairns in December 1944 for Aitape. He remained in New Guinea but shifted between units – 2/8th Field Company, 2/14th Australian Field Company, Headquarters RAE 6th Australian Division, 2/2nd Australian Field Company/ 6th Australian Army Troops Company and finally, 51st Australian Field Park Company. He was discharged in April 1946.

Cec commenced with the Board in 1946 as an Assistant Engineer, and apart from a period of 18 months as Assistant Divisional Engineer, Dandenong, the rest of his career at the CRB was involved in design and construction of bridges. He supervised the construction of the bridge at Bonnie Doon but he was mainly occupied in the design of urban bridges. Cec was closely associated with the process for the construction of Kings Bridge. It was procured using a design and construct contract and Cec was responsible for assessing the tenders. The successful tender was submitted by the Utah Construction Company using welded, high-tensile steel. This type of construction was hitherto unknown in Australia and its choice proved fateful as it was the main cause of the partial failure of the bridge in 1961 – only six months after it was opened to traffic.



Cec Wilson – circa 1960s.

Cec's career took another fateful turn when he left the CRB to become the General Manager for the West Gate Bridge Authority. That bridge also collapsed with the loss of 35 lives. The Royal Commission established to investigate the collapse, attributed the failure of the bridge to two causes: the structural design by designers Freeman Fox and Partners (UK) and the unusual method of construction adopted by the contractor, World Services and Constructions. There are many references in the final report of the Royal Commission of Cec's concerns about the inadequacy of the design which were ignored or overridden by other parties. It was a sad conclusion to Cec's career.

He died in 1981 at the age of 65.

Warrant Officer Gordon Stanley Wilson, 3516, VX15691

Gordon was an Experimental Officer in Materials Research Division.

The only record in the Australian Archives for Gordon Stanley Wilson has not been digitised and its access status is marked 'Open with exception'. I don't know what this means.

Gordon was born in 1918 in Newcastle NSW. He enlisted in May 1940 in Caulfield. Gordon served with the 2nd/12th Field Regiment, AIF, in the Middle East and Southwest Pacific Area. He enlisted in May 1940 and, at war's end, continued to serve in the Regular Army until 1967. During the latter period he served in Malaya at the time of the Indonesian Confrontation. He held the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 at discharge.

The 2nd/12th Field Regiment was formed as part of the Second Australian Imperial Force during World War 2. Recruited in the state of Victoria in early 1940, the 2nd/12th was deployed to the Middle East where they fought during the North African Campaign in 1941 and 1942. Gordon is on the Honour roll of the Rats of Tobruk.

In early 1943, the regiment returned to Australia and subsequently fought in New Guinea, seeing action against the Japanese during the Huon Peninsula Campaign in 1943 and 1944 and then the Borneo Campaign in 1945.

After his discharge in 1947, it appears that Gordon settled for a time in Ballarat and became a farmer.

Gordon married Jean Fife Cameron in 1949.

He died in 1977 at the age of 69.

Corporal Arthur Victor Wood, VX21490

Arthur was a draughtsman at the CRB. He was born in Elsternwick in 1908 and enlisted in June 1940 at the age of 32. He married Christina Johanna Nel in 1931. The 1936 electoral roll shows them living in Armadale – he was a salesman and she a designer. He must have joined the CRB between 1936 and 1940.

At enlistment Arthur was attached to the 2nd/1st Corps Field Survey Company, Royal Army Engineers. In early 1941, 2nd/1st Corps Field Survey Company RAE, sailed with the 2nd Australian Imperial Force, to provide survey and mapping to the Australian Corps in the Middle East theatre including Greece, Egypt, Cyrenaica and the border zones of Palestine, Syria, Trans-Jordan and Turkey. In response to the Japanese late-1941 and early-1942 offensives in South-East Asia and the Pacific the 2nd/1st Corps Field Survey Company RAE returned to Australia in early 1942. Over the next four years fifteen survey units with various roles relating to production of topographic maps provided survey and mapping support to military operations in the South West Pacific Area theatre of the war including Northern Territory, Papua, New Guinea, New Britain, New Ireland, Bougainville, Dutch New Guinea, Borneo and the States of Australia in particular northern Australia.

In February 1941, Arthur embarked from Melbourne for the Middle East aboard H.M.T. *MX3*. The archive does not reveal where he disembarked or the area in the Middle East where he served. On the Company's return to Australia in 1942, Arthur was discharged on the grounds of "being required for service in a reserved occupation". He had served for 775 days including 542 days abroad when he was discharged in July 1942.

In early 1942, during the crisis of the Japanese advance in the Pacific, more than 100,000 men were called up for full-time service. The list of reserved occupations was not strong enough to

administrate the demands of the services against the demands of industry and a labour crisis began to emerge.

So, in January 1942 a Manpower Directorate was established and took over responsibility for the *List of reserved occupations*. From the first of April 1942 all engagement of male labour was controlled and a national registration of both male and female labour was completed. The government had the power to say what every man should do whether in the armed services, war industry or civilian industry. The powers under the Manpower Regulations included:

- Power to exempt a person from service or prohibit their enlistment
- Prevent employers from engaging labour not authorised by the directorate
- Restrict the right of employees to engage in the employment of their choice
- Prevent employees from leaving their employment
- Restrict the right of the employer to dismiss his employees
- Power to direct any person to leave one employment and engage in another
- And compel individuals to register and provide information about themselves.

It is not known whether Arthur returned to the CRB after his discharge or in what type of work he was engaged.

Arthur died in December 1983 in Prahran.

Sergeant Keith Dinsmore Yardy, VX24323

Keith was born in Albury, NSW, in December 1917. He enlisted in June 1940 and like many of his CRB colleagues, he was posted to the 2/1st Corps Field Survey Company. He cited his occupation as 'Engineering Survey Assistant' and gave his address as Country Roads Board, Carlton.



Keith Yardy's paybook photograph – 1940.

Keith trained initially at Puckapunyal and in February 1941 he embarked from Melbourne to the Middle East.

The role of the survey companies was to provide the maps, charts and geodetic and control survey data required for combat operations such as artillery, naval gunfire, air support, navigation systems, communications, intelligence, reconnaissance and surveillance.

In February 1941, 2/1st Corps Field Survey Company, sailed with the 2nd Australian Imperial Force to provide survey and mapping in the Middle East theatre including Greece, Egypt, Cyrenaica and the border zones of Palestine, Syria, Trans-Jordan and Turkey. Keith served there until February 1942 when he returned to Sydney aboard RMS *Andes*.

He was promoted to Corporal in October 1942 and in the following December, he embarked for Port Moresby on the SS *Taroona*. He returned to Australia from New Guinea in August 1943 on the SS *Duntroon* and, on 14 September 1943 he married Mary Helen Whitson at the Wesley Church in Melbourne. Keith was promoted to Acting Sergeant in October and returned again to serve in New Guinea between October 1943 and April 1944. In September 1944 he was confirmed as Sergeant. He spent the last stretch of his service in Queensland and in September 1945, he was transferred back to Victoria and was discharged on 28 September 1945.



Keith Dinsmore Hardy – date unknown.

There is no record of him ever returning to the Country Roads Board. In a Commonwealth Gazette in 1948, Keith was listed as a Licensed Surveyor and his address was given as c/o Sarawak Oilfields, Seria, Brunei State, Borneo.

Keith died in 2011, aged 93 years.

Staff Sergeant Cecil Ambrose Yeoman, V81439

Cecil was a clerk at the CRB. He was born in London in 1890 and migrated to Australia with his wife, Gladys, and their son aboard the SS Berrima – arriving in Melbourne on 21 March 1926. He joined up at the age of 49. He said that he had served on active service in South Africa – presumably with the British Army. His entire service was in Melbourne in the 3rd District Accounts Office.

In 1944 he was medically assessed as follows:

“S/Sgt Yeoman, who is 54 years of age, appears more than his age, and his reposting in present or lower rank would not be recommended. In any case, he firmly indicated that he would not care to accept reposting in a lower rank. In view of the foregoing it is considered that this N.C.O.’s retention in the army would not be recommended.”

In fact Cecil's birth date of 1890 was wrong. His birth date according to the English archives was 1887 so he had every right to look older than 54. He was 57.

Cecil was discharged in September 1944. He died in Beaumaris in 1960 at the age of 73.

Corporal Geoffrey (Geoff) Lloyd Zierk, VX20781

Geoff was the Divisional Engineer's Clerk in Geelong Division. He was born in Geelong in 1920 and he enlisted in May 1940. When he enlisted he described his occupation as rope and cordage worker. He served in the Middle East from October 1940 to March 1942 and in New Guinea from March 1943 to March 1944.

Geoff's brother, Keith Lorne Zierk, enlisted in the 2nd AIF 2/9 Australian Field Company but before this unit embarked for overseas service, he was transferred to RAAF aircrew and served overseas. In correspondence on the file it is stated that the brothers came from the only family in Australia named 'Zierk'.

Geoff was posted to the 2nd/4th Field Regiment and trained in Puckapunyal. On the way to the Middle East his ship stopped in Bombay for five days – for no stated reason - and then went on to Alexandria in Egypt. It appears that Geoff started his clerical career in the Army while in the Middle East. After arriving in there he undertook a number of training courses relating to signals and clerical. He was transferred to Head Quarters Artillery 7 Australian Division and saw out his service there until the division's repatriation to Australia aboard the SS *Mendoza* to Colombo where they transferred to the SS *Orcades* for Australia. After his return, he was upgraded to a Group III Clerk.



Geoff's enlistment photograph.

Geoff spent some time in hospital with a hernia and, in March 1943, he embarked in the MV *Duntroo* from Townsville bound for Port Moresby. From this period on his file is almost impossible to read although I can see that he returned to Australia in March 1944 and married Thelma Howard in May. Later the file notes that a daughter – Elizabeth Diane - was born in March 1945.

He was discharged in September 1945 and obviously used the skills he had developed as a clerk in the Army to gain a job with the CRB in Geelong. Geoffrey retired from the CRB after 29 years of service in 1980.

Geoffrey died in May 1997 at the age of 77.

