

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 ill-equipped, Militia. In September 1939, the Government authorised the establishment of the Second Australian Imperial Force (2 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.

Throughout the narrative, I refer to the divisions, units, brigades or battalions that the people served in – sometimes to the extent that it becomes confusing or a bit boring. During World War 2, the main Australian fighting force was the Second Australian Imperial Force. I often refer to it as 2 AIF. This distinguishes it from the army of the First World War which was the First Australian Imperial Force (1 AIF).

The 2 AIF was structured around a Corps Headquarters and four infantry divisions (the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th) and the 1st Armoured Division. Earlier divisions were raised during the First World War. A Corps comprises two or more divisions of about 30,000 people commanded by a Lieutenant General, a division comprises 10,000 to 20,000 people commanded by a Major General, and a brigade comprises 2,500 to 5,000 personnel commanded by a Brigadier General.

A regiment is more difficult to define. They usually have specialised roles such as special forces (commandos) and motorised infantry. Their size is determined by the number and types of its sub-units which can include battalions, companies and squadrons such as signals or engineer squadrons. The size of a regiment could vary from 500 to 3,000 soldiers and is commanded by a colonel.

Further down the hierarchy, a battalion of 550 to 1,000 personnel has four companies and is commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel, a company has 100 to 225 personnel in three platoons and

is commanded by a Major, a platoon has three sections of between 30 and 60 soldiers from three sections and each section of 10 to 20 people is commanded by a Corporal or Sergeant.

There are also sub-units and specialist units too numerous to mention here but there is a full breakdown given in the Australian War Memorial website under 'Structure'.

Typically, each infantry division consisted of three brigades, and each brigade was broken down into three battalions. Support services to the infantry such as artillery, transport, and engineers, were integrated into each division. Units of the 2 AIF were distinguished by the prefix '2/', highlighting their status as a separate, all-volunteer force for service abroad. The '2/' prefix distinguished them from the part-time Citizen Military Forces (Militia) units. The number after the '/' refers to the precedence of the formation of the unit.

So, using this protocol, let us look at a soldier in the 2nd/2nd Pioneer Battalion. Pioneer Battalions were light military combat engineer units attached to infantry divisions, performing tasks like building roads, breaching defences, constructing fortifications, and providing mobility for their supported infantry. The '2nd/2nd' indicates the battalion was part of the 2 AIF and was the second such pioneer battalion formed.

The Citizen Military Forces (CMF) was a militia comprising part time soldiers who primarily looked after home defence and logistics. Many soldiers enlisted into the 2 AIF from the CMF. When Japan entered the war, members of the CMF were posted to New Guinea with the 2 AIF where most of them eventually enlisted in the 2 AIF.

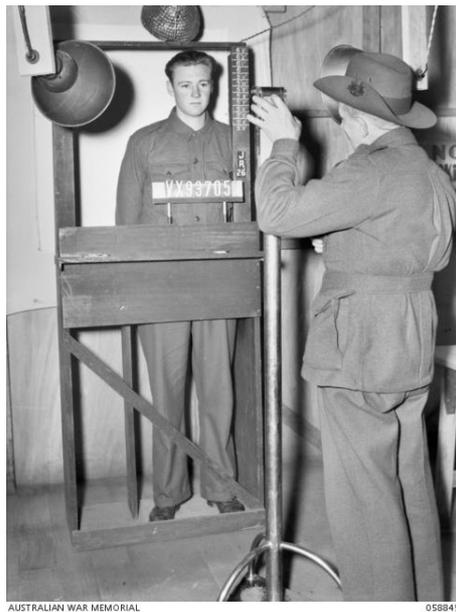
The 6th, 7th, and 9th Divisions served in North Africa, Greece, and Syria. The 8th Division was decimated during the fighting against the Japanese in Malaya and Singapore. The 1st Armoured Division was initially held in Australia for continental defence.

Australia did not possess a stock of modern weapons and equipment at the outbreak of the Second World 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 2 AIF, like the Militia, made do with the weapons that the 1 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. 2 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.

In writing these stories, I refer to enlistment photographs or pay book photographs. These photographs were taken of 2 AIF recruits at enlistment – the first time such photographs were taken. The quality of some of them is poor - but I have included them in any case - and some are missing from the archives.



An AIF recruit being photographed at enlistment.

Most of the men mentioned in this Chapter fought in the New Guinea Campaign against the Japanese. The map below shows the locations of the battles fought in this campaign.



Also, many of the people mentioned in the following chapters – in all branches of the armed forces who fought in the Pacific theatre - were stationed in or passed through Morotai.

Morotai is a small island located in the Halmahera group of eastern Indonesia's Maluku Islands. Most of the island's interior is rugged and covered in thick jungle. The Doroeba Plain in Morotai's south-west corner is the largest of the island's few lowland areas. Prior to the outbreak of war, Morotai had a population of 9,000 and had not been commercially developed. It formed part of the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) and was ruled by the Dutch. The Japanese occupied Morotai in early 1942 but did not garrison or develop it.



The Battle of Morotai, part of the Pacific War, began on 15 September 1944, and continued until the end of the war in August/September 1945. The fighting started when United States and Australian forces landed on the southwest corner of Morotai which the Allies needed as a base to support the liberation of the Philippines later that year. The invading forces greatly outnumbered the island's Japanese defenders and secured their objectives in two weeks. Japanese reinforcements landed on the island between September and November 1944, but lacked the supplies needed to effectively attack the Allied defensive perimeter. Intermittent fighting continued until the end of the war, with the Japanese troops suffering heavy loss of life from disease and starvation.

Morotai's development into an Allied base began shortly after the landing, and two major airfields were ready for use in October 1944. These and other base facilities played an important role in the liberation of the Philippines during 1944 and 1945. Torpedo boats and aircraft based at Morotai also harassed Japanese positions in the NEI. The island's base facilities were further expanded in 1945 to support the Australian-led Borneo Campaign and Morotai remained an important logistical hub and command centre until the Dutch re-established their colonial rule in the NEI.

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 2nd/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.

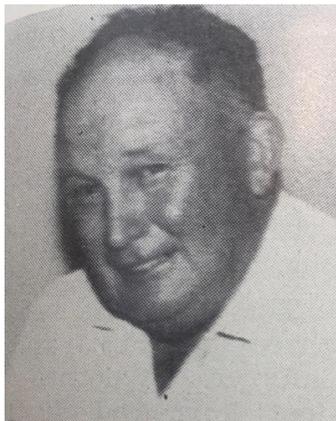
He spent time in NSW, Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory (to what they describe as Lines of Communications Areas). He embarked from Townsville in May 1943 aboard the SS *Taroona* and landed in Port Moresby in New Guinea. In March 1944, he injured his right hand again. The report stated that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

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.

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.

Scotty married Edna Pearl Stott in 1946 and he died in July 1991.

Craftsman Ronald (Ron) Ralph Arkley, TX8483

Ron started work at the CRB as a labourer on the Phillip Island suspension bridge at San Remo. He claimed that he was the first person to have reached the island by the suspension cable bridge in July 1940.

Ron was born in Launceston, Tasmania in February 1918 and enlisted in December 1941. There is confusion in the archives about the place of his enlistment. Some papers say Brighton in Tasmania and others say Euroa in Victoria. I think the former is correct because of his service number. His occupation was cited as 'winch driver with the CRB'. He was allocated to the 6th Field Regiment.



Ron Arkley's paybook photograph – 1941.

Ron's army career got off to a bad start in that he was fined twice for being absent without leave within the first three months of service. In March 1942, he was transferred to 110th Anti-Tank Regiment. His file still continued to be littered with entries in red ink – indicating disobedience. Another four entries for absent without leave and one for disobeying an order from Sergeant Gray to stop throwing a medicine ball. He also failed to appear on parade one day. However, his last misdemeanour was in September 1942 and he did not infringe again during the rest of his service.

He undertook extensive trade training and did well as he continued to be recommended for further advanced training. From December 1942 to February 1943, he attended Adelaide Technical College after which he did another 12 weeks of training in motor vehicle mechanics. In May 1943, he qualified as 'Mechanic MT' (presumably Motor Transport) Grade 2. His rank was Craftsman. This rank applies to any soldier who has a particular trade skill.

All of his service was in Australia – mostly in Victoria, but from March to October 1945, Ron served north of parallel 14.5 deg. south latitude in the Northern Territory. He was transferred to the 10th Australian Base Workshop AEMA and discharged from the Army in late 1945.

Ron married Mart Ellen McNamara in 1949.

After the war, Ron returned to the Board to carry out bridge works at Yinnar, Wye River, Swan Street, Richmond, and various other construction projects in Benalla, Horsham and Dandenong Divisions – before taking a temporary posting to Bairnsdale Division in 1953. For the next 30 years, Ron constructed, repaired and inspected every bridge and culvert structure in Bairnsdale Division. His work took him from Bendoc to Marlo, Licola to Wallagaraugh and all places in between. His duties were not confined to CRB projects. All the shires in Bairnsdale Division sought his expertise and services to manage their bridge assets.

Ron's wealth of experience was used over the years in the training of supervising engineers in the practical aspects of bridge construction. He also trained many bridge contractors with mutual benefit to the contractor and the Board.



Ron Arkley being farewelled on his retirement by Bairnsdale Divisional Engineer, Neil Jephcott - 1983

Ron died on 25 February 2008.

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.

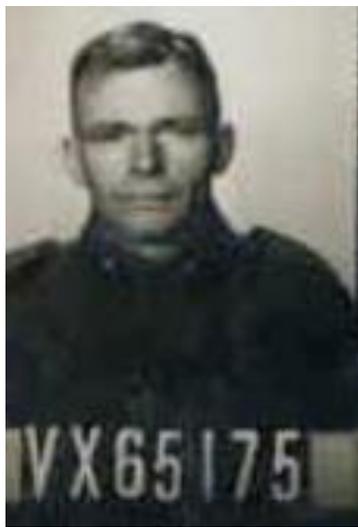
He married Vivienne Caughey in 1928.

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

Acting Corporal Frederick Auger, V16567, VX65175

Frederick was born in Wheatfield, Oxfordshire, in England on 2 August 1900. On his Mobilization Attestation Form he cited his occupation as a 'Patrolman C.R.B.'. He enlisted in the Militia in June 1941 when he was nearly 40 years of age. He was married with three children and lived in Winchelsea. He also stated that he had served in the British Expeditionary Force for three years.

He was attached to the 3rd Garrison Brigade but he spent his short Militia service in Melbourne. He was discharged on 25 October 1941 to join the 2nd AIF.



Frederick Auger – October 1941.

He was taken on strength and transferred to "Ships Staff" after which he was attached to "R.D.D. Quarters and Rations". I have not been able to confirm these abbreviations – although these allocations were only for the first few days of his service. His Service and Casualty Form states that his unit was the Australian Sea Transport Guard.

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) – and other Australian forces - played a critical role in sea transport and coastal defence. This involved escorting merchant ships, transporting troops, and occasionally, carrying out bombardments. They also guarded vital infrastructure like wharves and oil installations. I presume these were the sorts of activities that Frederick was involved in.

Just a week after joining up, Frederick embarked aboard a ship named HMT 'L.L'. This is an unusual identifier but I suggest it refers to a ship that was hired by the military for troop transport, and identified with the designation "LL". After embarking from Melbourne on 2 November 1941, it eventually arrived in Sydney on 17 December 1941 – some 45 days later. Because the ship was on the high seas, Frederick's archive does not identify where it went and what task it was involved in – but I suspect it was carrying out duties in waters north of Australia. His discharge papers credit him with 46 days of service abroad which entitled him to be awarded a War Medal.

After returning to Sydney, he was transferred to Eastern Command and on 6 October 1943 he was promoted to Acting Corporal.

He was discharged in August 1943 on the grounds of being required for a Reserved Occupation. I have no evidence that he returned to the CRB but his work there would come under his requirement. I also presume his age and family responsibility would have been a factor.

Frederick died in 1963. There is a letter in his archive seeking particulars of the will that he made during his service.

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 RMS *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, during 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.

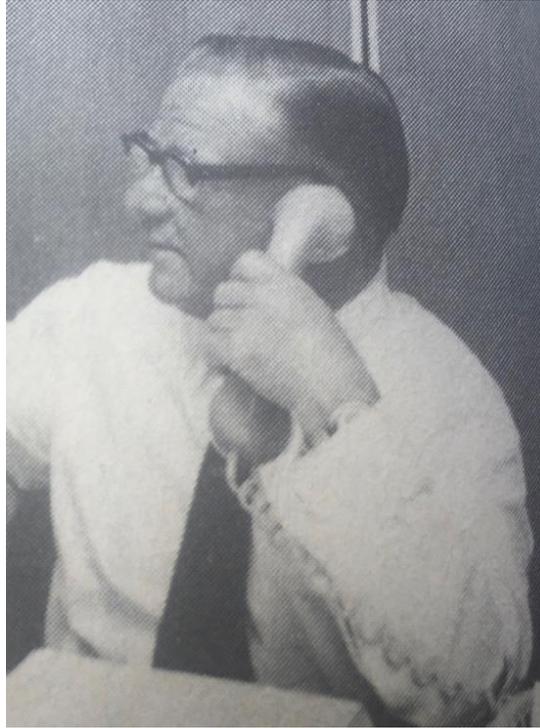
Gunner Mervyn (Merv) Ernest Bailey, VX18385

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 may have been 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.

Private Stuart Banks-Smith, V290390

Stuart enlisted in the Army on 9 March 1942. He was born at Springvale on 2 December 1924 and he described himself as an Engineering Assistant. His next of kin was Robert Banks-Smith – his father – who also worked for the Country Roads Board. I have not been able to find out anything of Stuart's career – where he worked and what sort of work he was involved in.

Somewhat ironically, I know a lot more of his father who worked in the Mechanical Branch in South Melbourne. Apparently, Bob was a bit of a grumpy old man but it was agreed by all that he was a brilliant designer. The drawings for the old plant – line-markers, brooms, aggregate loaders, sprayers and the like, are all initialled, 'RBS'. In the Drawing Office was a fireplace stoked with

coal and coke. Bob was in charge of the fire and when he got it roaring, he put a very large tea pot on and the put in a handful of tea, kept the water level replenished and let it boil all day. He never tipped out the tea leaves until the teapot was full of them.

One example of his grumpiness became legend. During the war, when Mr. Dale was Chairman of the Board, Bob refused to shake his hand before Christmas saying, "If you come down every week and held out your hand, I would shake it, but I am not going to do it if you come down once a year." Dale apparently said, "You are a funny old man, Mr. Banks-Smith."

Stuart's Mobilization Attestation Form records that Stuart was an employee of the CRB. He was educated to Leaving Certificate level with Honours in English and British History. He did initial training in Rowville and Langwarrin with the 22nd Field Regiment but he was discharged in July 1942 to join the Royal Australian Navy. His army career lasted 120 days.

His career in the RAN is described in Chapter 8.

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. 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 broke his collar bone, 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 Bombardier 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 serious 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 married Meral Glen Boyd in 1944. He retired from the Chief Accountant's Branch of the CRB in 1980 with 33 years of service and he died in June 2004.

Sergeant Guy Morehead Baxter, VX6730

Guy was born in Camberwell on 13 January 1914 and he enlisted in Seymour on 3 November 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. His Attestation Form lists him as a farmer. He married Violet Muriel Bridger on 27 April 1942.

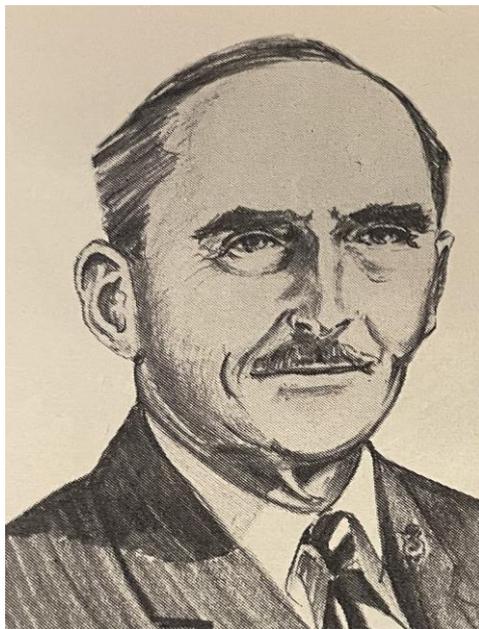
He trained in Seymour and embarked for the Middle East aboard HMAT *U3* on 10 January 1940 – just two months after enlistment. He disembarked in Egypt and attended a Drivers, Mechanics and Motor Maintenance School at an unnamed location. He was promoted to Corporal.

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. However, Guy did not participate in the New Guinea campaign.

Guy left the Middle East on 2 March 1942 aboard the USS *Westpoint* for Sydney via Adelaide. He was transferred to the Northern Territory in August 1942 and undertook further training courses in map reading and gunnery. He was assessed as 'very good' and suitable as a tank gunner instructor and crew commander.

In June 1944, Guy's wife gave birth to twins and he remained in Victoria until his discharge in April 1945.

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 Baxter – artist unknown – circa late 1960s.

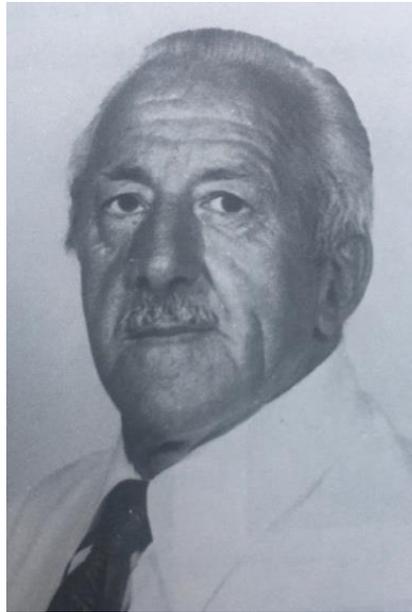
Guy also served a term as President of the Head Office Social Association.

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.

Private Geoffrey Duncan Black, NX51249

Geoff is a conundrum to me as I worked fairly close to him for quite a while and I never knew that he served in the Australian Army during the war.

Geoff, who retired on 26 September 1986, has a special affinity for Ginger Meggs. Their association goes back to the late 1930s. This was when Geoff came to Australia through the Big Brother Movement, a migration scheme which helped young Britons migrate and settle in Australia. Groups arrived monthly from the UK and were usually allocated work on farms. The scheme arranged for Australians to act as advisors for young migrants, and Geoff arrived to find his mentor was the late Jimmy Bancks, creator of Ginger Meggs. Geoff arrived in August 1939

just before the outbreak of the Second World War, and soon found himself in the back of Bourke, literally.

He began working on a sheep station in the far west of New South Wales and he remained there for two years. He said he was taught a lot about Australian customs from the amiable Jimmy.

His life took another direction when he joined the Armoured Division of the AIF and ended up as a radio operator. He enlisted as a 20-year-old on 1 October 1941. His Attestation Form indicates that he was born in Halifax, Yorkshire on 27 September 1921, that he was a jackaroo and that he came to Australia via the Big Brother Movement.



Geoff Black's paybook photograph – 1941.

He was allocated to the 2nd/7th Australian Armoured Regiment. His initial training was conducted in Sydney, Greta and Tamworth. In early 1943 he undertook a course for Tank Wireless Operators and received a distinguished pass. He received 87% for the written exam, 86% for the practical exam and 100% for the oral. He was recommended for promotion to Lance Corporal. There are many entries referring to him being 'in the field' but no mention of location.

In July 1944 he was transferred to 13th Australian Small Ships Company and joined the barge AV 1361 *Poolta* as crew detachment and sailed to New Guinea where he disembarked in December 1944. He was sent to Solomon Islands and other locations north of Australia. The *Poolta* was a stores carrier, and transported much needed stores around the Pacific Islands. From the war diary it could be seen that these small ships were the lifeline that connected the Australian bases spread around the islands. In one of them, it stated that their cargo was Japanese prisoners of war. I can only assume that Geoff worked as a wireless operator. The picture below was taken on the 13th Small Ships Company vessel *Neena* at Sipai, Bougainville Island on 1 August 1945.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

078299

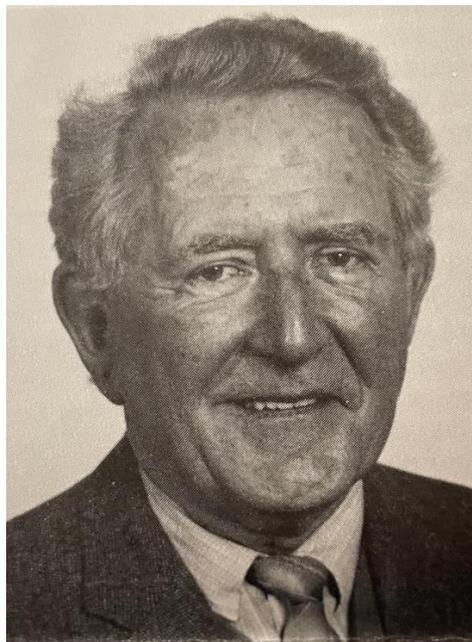
Sapper Geoffrey Black NX51249 is identified as the person on the extreme right in the middle row.

He was discharged from 13th Small Ships Company on 15 May 1946 with the rank of Private. Geoff returned from the war with malaria which laid him low for a number of months. He did a six-month crash course to get his Matriculation, then enrolled at the Faculty of Engineering at Sydney University. He qualified after four years and joined the Department of Main Roads in Sydney, then the Snowy Mountains Authority, followed by 12 months in the USA, three years in

Canberra, several years with a Sydney-based consulting firm, and finally to the CRB. He joined Bridge Branch in 1969.

In 1974 he became the Assistant Bridge Construction Engineer working on projects such as the approaches to the West Gate Freeway, Mulgrave Freeway (now Monash) and the Wallan-Broadford Section of the Hume Freeway.

I remember Geoff as a quiet, perceptive man with a cheeky sense of humour. He retired in September 1986.



Geoff Black in the year of his retirement – 1986.

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 but having researched his history, I suspect he must have done field work for the CRB in the Beechworth area.

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. In 1942, Luigi's occupation was as a brick layer as was his brother Giovanni, who lived at the same address in Beechworth.

Luigi left Genoa in Italy and arrived in Melbourne aboard the SS *Re D'Italia* in October 1924. It is recorded that he travelled with only one family member, Guerrino. I think this is an error. It should read Giovanni. Their first address in Australia on arrival was in Moorabool but soon after, the brothers moved north to Beechworth.

On enlistment, 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 – more likely - 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. He died in Heidelberg so it is possible that he died in the Repatriation Hospital which provided care for ex-servicemen and women.

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

According to his Attestation Form, Bill was born in Camberwell² in 1923 and enlisted in the Australian Army in February 1945.



Bill Brake at enlistment – 1945.

² Bill's parents, John and Grace Brake, were dairy farmers on the banks of the Yarra River at Tarrawarra in the Yarra Valley. After experiencing a third flood of their farm, in December 1923, they sold up and shifted to Mont Albert and John took up a job with the Victorian Department of Agriculture. Bill was seven months old when this shift took place leading me to think that probably, he was not born in Camberwell.

Bill attended Mont Albert Central School until 1936 after which he attended Scotch College until the end of 1941. At Scotch College, Bill was appointed House Captain of Monash House and Hockey Captain. He also joined the cadets.



Bill as a cadet at Scotch College – circa late 1930s.,

He commenced studying civil engineering at the University of Melbourne in 1942 and continued playing hockey for which he received a University Blue. At the end of his first year, he decided to join the Royal Australian Navy. He enlisted in December 1942, completed his medical and was awaiting call up when, on Boxing Day 1942, someone from the Manpower Directorate rang him to say that his enlistment was voided and that he had to continue his engineering studies.

Labour controls were introduced in 1942 to deal with the needs of the armed services and industry. Manpower regulations affected individual liberties and touched the day-to-day activities of Australians perhaps more than any other executive operations of government throughout this period. The first significant regulation introduced during the first two years of the war was to

reserve occupations from military service. Occupations reserved were those which were essential for the production of equipment and supplies for the war effort. From the first of April 1942 engagement of all 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.

Such is the necessity of war, and young Bill Brake's destiny was set in history by these regulations. Likewise, at the end of 1944, Bill's engineering studies were interrupted by the Directorate when he was ordered to enlist in the Army – which he did in February 1945.

He joined the Royal Australian Engineers and trained in Cowra for three months and then he went to Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga, in NSW to do combat training and emergency bridging. He was there in May 1945 at the time of what has now become known as the Kapooka Tragedy. It is etched deep in his memory. Twenty-six recruits lost their lives in a bunker where they were being trained in the use of explosives. The cause of the explosion is not known. The tragedy of the loss is compounded by the fact that the war was drawing to a close - the Germans had surrendered and momentum was with the Allies in the Pacific.



Thousands of people lined the streets of Wagga Wagga to watch the funeral procession.

At the war's end, Bill had nearly completed his training while working on the construction of the bridge over the Murrumbidgee River in Wagga Wagga. It was a Bailey Bridge supported on pontoons. He lived in a tent by the river. He recalled that in the winter, the still water in the river used to freeze over.

After his discharge in January 1946, Bill went back to university to complete his degree. In his cohort were other CRB stalwarts such as Tom Russell, Keith Moody, Laurie Jones and Max McPherson. He completed his studies at the end of 1948 and in 1949, he married Mona (Noni) Lesley McDonald.



Bill and Nona on their wedding day – 1949.

Bill had a stellar career at the CRB. In 1949, the newlyweds went to Bairnsdale Division where Bill Dolamore was the Divisional Engineer. Bill was given responsibility for all the roads west of Nowa Nowa while Les Starling looked after those to the east. At that time, most of the roads were unsealed and they passed through some of the remotest parts in the State of Victoria. Bill had to travel up into mountains and often had to stay out of the office for days on end. He recalled once.

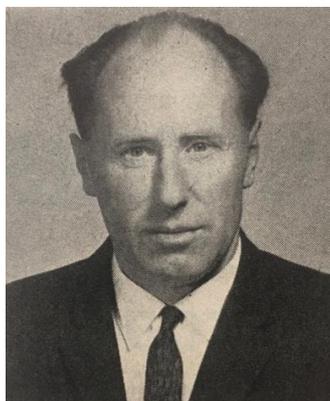
staying at a remote hotel in the high country where the hotelkeeper opened a tin of Irish Stew for his dinner. He didn't return.

In the entry for Frank Jackson in Chapter 9, I mentioned how Frank and Les Starling carried the cash wages – and a pistol – to the remote camps in their area of responsibility. Bill also did this for his area. He said he often carried up to £2,000 in a dilly bag on the seat of the car with the pistol in it. He would often have a line of detonators in the car to give to the road gangs he was visiting. At the hotel where he was staying, he would place the bag in the bottom of the wardrobe and go down for dinner with never a worry about it. In winter, he drained the radiator of his car as there was no anti-freeze available in those days.

Bill was transferred to Benalla Division in June 1953 where he was responsible for the management of the Hume Highway, the Murray Valley Highway, and the Midland Highway. His last Divisional appointment was to Dandenong Division in November 1955 as Assistant Divisional Engineer to Frank Docking.

In February 1966, Bill became Deputy Chief Engineer Road Design. In August 1970, he was appointed Deputy Chief Engineer and then Chief Engineer in 1974. He became a Board Member in January 1975 and served as Deputy Chairman from December 1978 till June 1983.

In his final 10 years with the CRB, he was appointed to the Grain Elevators Board which oversaw the loading of grain onto ships for export. He was also a member of the Transport Regulation Board with other representatives from the Police, Motor Registration Branch and Treasury, to ensure that all monies received from vehicle registration was allocated to the CRB for future road construction and maintenance.



Bill Brake – circa 1960s.

Bill retired in 1983 after 34 years of service with the CRB. There were only a handful of people who contributed so much to the welfare of the road users of Victoria,

Much of this information was gleaned from an interview with Bill in October 2022 when Bill was 99 years old. Although he had become very deaf, his memory was razor sharp – as ever. His fellow Board member, Tom Russell, once said to me that if ever I needed to know where a place in Victoria was – provided it was connected to a road – just ask Bill Brake. It was most appropriate then, that the song of farewell at his funeral was *'I've been everywhere'* sung by the Sunny Cowgirls.



Bill Brake at 100 years.

Bill died on 24 April 2025 just 18 days shy of his 102nd birthday.

Corporal Leo George Brauer, VX36024

Leo lived in Lavers Hill in the Otway Ranges of Victoria. He was born in 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's enlistment photograph.

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 MV *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 aboard the *Thomas 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 HMAS *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.

However, I have found out that Bill was born in Williamstown in 1910 and died in Wantirna in 2003 at the age of 93.

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.

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.

The 2nd/12th Field Regiment was an artillery regiment recruited in Victoria in early 1940. It was initially formed as a medium artillery regiment, but was later converted to a field regiment due to a lack of medium guns. As a field regiment, the 2nd/12th deployed to the Middle East where they supported several battles during the North African Campaign in 1941–42, and undertook garrison duty in Lebanon. In early 1943, the regiment returned to Australia and subsequently fought in New Guinea against the Japanese during the Huon Peninsula Campaign in 1943–44 and then the Borneo Campaign in 1945.

I have written – under the entry for Noel Keil later in this chapter – about the Rats of Tobruk so shall say no more here.

There is a record of a man called Bill Carpenter marrying a woman called Josephine Patricia Curran in 1943 but I can't be sure this is our Bill.

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 in 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 2nd/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 Bena 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, Russell recovered and 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.

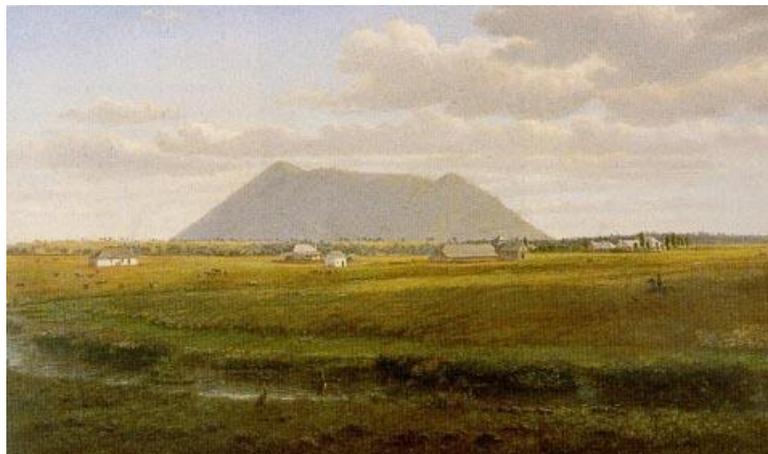
One final word about Russell. He was an excellent public speaker with a great sense of humour and his farewell speeches to members of staff were always memorable.

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

He died in October 2006 at the age of 84.

Lance Corporal Ivor John Coventry, VX2975

Ivor was born in September 1913 in Zeehan, Tasmania. He enlisted in November 1939 and joined the 2/32nd Battalion. He was married (to Joyce) and 26 years old at enlistment. He gave his occupation as 'motor driver'. He was, in fact, a chauffeur at Larra Station at Derrinallum in the Western District of Victoria. Larra Homestead was established by emigrant Scottish farmer J L Currie following acquisition of the Mt Elephant pastoral run in 1884. The single storey basalt homestead was erected in 1875.



Larra Homestead by Eugene Von Guerard.
Mount Elephant is in the background.

There are no major towns in the vicinity of Larra leading me to speculate Ivor's family were in service to the station owners.



Ivor Coventry's paybook photograph.

The 2nd/32nd Battalion was formed in June 1940 from surplus Australian troops who had been sent to the United Kingdom shortly after the fall of France. After completing training in the United Kingdom, the 2nd/32nd served in North Africa in 1941–1942. In early 1943, the battalion returned to Australia and later took part in campaigns against the Japanese in New Guinea and Borneo.

After joining up, Ivor was initially billeted at the Melbourne Showgrounds and was posted to the 2nd/1st Field Workshop. In early May 1940, he embarked on HMT X5 from Melbourne. HMT stands for Hired Military Transport. He disembarked six weeks later at Greenock in Scotland where he transferred to the 71st Battalion. The archive mentions him being in Tidworth and Colchester. He was promoted to Lance Corporal but reverted to Private as a result of some offences – one of which was for being in Ipswich without a leave pass or written authority.

In January 1941, he embarked on HMT J19 for the Middle East. He was treated in the ship's hospital for adenoids. He attended the Australian Corps School of Signals and became a Group II Signaller. He had a few stints in hospital – pyelitis (urinary tract infection) and heat distress. The file does not mention where he was in the Middle East but the history of the 2nd/32nd shows that they joined the fighting in the Western Desert. After the Allies were pushed back to Tobruk, the 2nd/32nd was moved forward by train to Mersa Matruh and then by ship to the encircled port of Tobruk. They remained there until September 1941 when most of the Australians were withdrawn to Palestine and Lebanon. In July 1942, the battalion joined the two major battles at El Alamein to stem the flow of the German and Italian advances. Ivor was somewhere in all of this but it is definite that he was back in Australia in February 1943.

In July 1943, Ivor embarked from Brisbane on a ship called HMS *Anhui* for New Guinea. They disembarked at Puna. Within a month, Ivor had developed an upper respiratory tract infection which hospitalised him. He was restricted to light duties that required only restricted physical effort. He was flown from Port Moresby to Townsville and eventually down to Caulfield Hospital in Melbourne for further investigation.

He was discharged from the army at Caulfield Hospital in November 1943 as unfit for service.

He joined the Country Roads Board in 1947 and worked on road construction in Dandenong Division and, in 1963, he commenced patrol work.

He retired from the CRB in September 1978 and died in 1987.

Lieutenant Jack Neville Crebbin, VX62490

Jack came from Ballarat. He was born in January 1912 and enlisted in August 1941. He was a draftsman 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 21st 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 surmise the Army deferred his enlistment until after he had completed his Diploma.

His name is on the list in Appendix 1 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 between

completion of his studies and enlistment. There is an entry on his Attestation Form that said he was a 'Civil Engineering draftsman'.



David Davies' paybook photograph.

On enlistment in April 1943, David was immediately sent to Wagga Wagga in NSW where much of the Army's military engineering training was done. He was discharged in October 1943 and immediately commissioned with the rank of Lieutenant and allotted to the Royal Australian Engineers Reinforcements.

On 10 December 1943, he embarked from Townsville on the MS *Gorgon* and disembarked on 26 December at Lae in New Guinea. There, he joined the 21st Australian Field Company. There is no clue in the archive about where he was stationed in New Guinea but it must have been on the north coast because he arrived in Lae and departed (in August 1944) from Buna. Nor is there mention of the type of work he was doing although it does mention regimental duties which usually involves administrative tasks designed to keep the regiment functioning.

He embarked from Buna to Townsville on the SS *Alfred C True* – an American Liberty ship. Back in Australia he attended a number of courses in bomb disposal. He also served in the Netherlands East Indies – Morotai and Balikpapan – from May 1945 to May 1946.

He was discharged in October 1946. The electoral rolls from 1968 to 1977 show that he lived in Canberra but there is correspondence on file that shows he was living in Western Australia in 1981.

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.

Lieutenant Max Hamlyn Dolamore, VX40217

Max was an accountant at the Transport Regulation Board (TRB) in Carlton. The TRB merged with the CRB at the formation of VicRoads.

Max was born in in West Richmond in October 1910 and he enlisted on 1 July 1940. He was the younger brother of Wilfred (Bill) Dolamore whose story is told in Chapter 9.



Max Dolamore's enlistment photo – 1940.

Max was married to Norma Woodruffe Dolamore and they were living in Richmond when he enlisted.

He was immediately attached to the Australian Army Pay Corps (AAPC). The role of the AAPC is to provide finance and pay services essential for the day-to-day management of the Army and its soldiers. To contribute to morale, it is important that soldiers in the field are paid regularly and reliably and this would have been one of Max's main tasks. Also, paying soldiers in the field promoted loyalty and provided compensation for the hardships they endured, thus contributing to the stability and success of the military.

In August 1940, Max was transferred to the 2nd/23rd Battalion and the following November he embarked for the Middle East aboard the transport *Strathmore*. There is no mention of where Max was located but the battalion – as part of the 26th Brigade - served in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria and Palestine.

There is an entry that he was attached for duty at the HQ AIF Base area which I assume was the AIF's head office in the Middle East based in Cairo in Egypt. In February 1942, Max was promoted to Staff Sergeant. He disembarked from the Middle East on 1 March 1943 and arrived home in Melbourne three weeks later. He was absent without leave by arriving late to a posting at Murchison for which his daily subsistence was reduced from five shillings to three shillings but, at the same time, he was promoted to Warrant Officer.

For the rest of the war, he remained in Melbourne and on 30 June 1944, he was promoted to Lieutenant. Max was discharged in August 1944.

Max died on 14 February 1986 and is buried at Springvale Cemetery.

Captain Wilfred (Bill) Dolamore, VX 27638

Bill was brother to Max (see above) and he was taken as a Prisoner of War by the Japanese. His story is told in Chapter 9.

Captain Robert Edward (Ted or REV) Vaughan Donaldson, VX39020 (297981)

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 Bombardier 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.



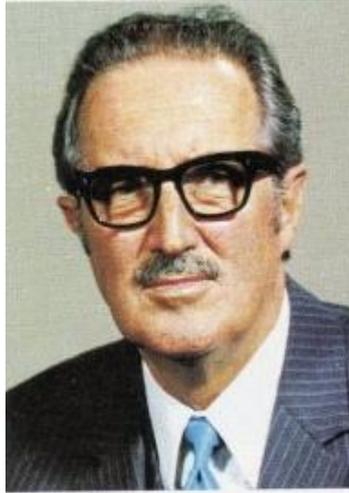
Ted Donaldson's paybook photograph - 1940.

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 2nd/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 2nd/14th briefly undertook garrison duties on Rabaul before returning to Australia and disbanding.

Ted's file has a lot of jargon that I can't decipher but I was able to ascertain that on 10 December 1943 – when he was appointed Captain – he was located at Lae Headquarters as 'S.C. "Q"'. A few weeks later he was appointed 'S.C. "A"'. He was sent to hospital in Port Moresby during 1944 and 1945 with dengue fever.

He returned to Australia aboard the MV *Charon* - embarking at Port Moresby on 9 February 1945 and arriving at Sydney six days later.

He was discharged from the Army on 7 September 1945.

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 the CRB 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 meetings used to have 300 items on their 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 make 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 (3137200)

Bob was born in Nhill in 1913 and enlisted in the AIF in January 1941. Bob was attached to the 9th Division Australian Engineers. His Attestation Form gives his unit as 2nd/3rd Field Company and states that he was employed at the Country Roads Board as a civil engineer. He had a Diploma

of Civil Engineering and a Municipal Surveyor's Certificate. He was nearly 28 years old when he enlisted and the form shows that he was single at the time of enlistment although, this has been crossed out and replaced with 'Married' and his mother's name has been crossed out for his next of kin. In fact, he married his wife, Margaret, on 27 February 1945 and they lived at 56 Warburton Road, Canterbury, Victoria - just around the corner from where I lived for 40 years.

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.



Bob Eastick's paybook photograph – 1941.

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.

After enlisting, Bob was soon appointed Lieutenant. He did initial training in Melbourne for a month and on 5 February 1941 he embarked for the Middle East aboard a ship named 'MX3'. He disembarked – probably in Egypt – on 23 March. He was wounded in action in October 1942. It was a gunshot wound in his right arm and he spent nearly a month in the 2nd/3rd Field Ambulance in Tobruk. Bob also suffered from other afflictions including dysentery and “mild balanitis” for which he was hospitalised. I noticed in the files of some other men who served in the Middle East mention of balanitis. Balanitis is an inflammation of the penis and is most common in uncircumcised men. Its causes include skin disorders, infection, poor hygiene, uncontrolled diabetes and harsh soaps. It is not sexually transmitted. It is a very painful condition and treatment depends on the cause, but may require antibiotics, steroid creams or antifungal creams. In extreme cases, it requires circumcision.

The importance of preventing recurrent balanitis and secondary phimosis in arid, sandy regions was confirmed by the Australian army medical corps in two world wars. During both wars, Australian soldiers stationed in North Africa and the Middle East, had a high incidence of recurrent balanitis caused by sand under the foreskin reaching “epidemic” proportions, leading to large numbers of soldiers requiring circumcision. Bob was one of these men.

He returned to Australia in January 1943. He was appointed Temporary Captain in June 1943 and a month later aboard the MV *Van Heutz* he arrived at Milne Bay in New Guinea. His appointment of Captain was confirmed on 24 July 1943 and it must have been one of the shortest tenures in Australian Army history as he was promoted to Major four days later. The next entry in the archive has him leaving New Guinea from Finschhafen in February 1944 on the USAT *Sea Snipe* bound for Brisbane. While back in Australia he was hospitalised for severe stomach pains and appendicitis – probably one and the same.

He emplaned for Morotai in April 1945 and from there, aboard LSM 225, he landed in British North Borneo. An LSM is a type of military landing craft. According to the citation for the award

of his MBE, Bob commanded his company for both the assault on the beachheads and the land advances at Brooketon, Miri, and Brunei – as well as for his service at Tobruk in Libya. Quite coincidentally, the Japanese forces in the Kuching area in Borneo surrendered on 11 September 1945 to Brigadier Thomas Eastick aboard the Australian corvette, HMAS *Kapunda*. I don't know whether Bob was related to him.

Bob left Borneo from Labuan on the HMAS *Manoora* in October 1945 bound for Brisbane. He was awarded an MBE in 1947 for meritorious service in Brooketon, Brunei, and Miri (all in Borneo) and Tobruk (in Libya). The citation states:

“During the operations mounted to capture the area BROOKETON, BRUNEI, MIRI this officer commanded 2/3 Aus Fd Coy RAE both for the assault on the initial beachheads and during the land advances.

This officer was responsible for all the detailed engineering planning for these operations and it was due to his organizing ability and untiring efforts that the engineer(ing) plan was so efficiently implemented.

During the operation this officer by his outstanding appreciation of engineer tasks and his personal drive and leadership overcame all obstacles and established and maintained a land L and C (Line of Communication) over the entire area of operations.

Subsequent to the conclusion of operations Maj R.F. EASTICK has diligently applied himself to the task of restoration and development of these areas with the same outstanding success and devotion to duty that characterized his work during operations.

This officer has at all times been an inspiration to the men serving under him and has shown that same great devotion to duty in earlier campaigns of TOBRUK, EL ALAMEIN, LAE and FINSCHHAFEN.”

NAME EASTICK, Robert Frank
Award M. B. E. Reg.No. VX 39192 Rank MAJOR Service A. M. F.
 Recommended by Governor-General on 24/6/46. }
 Promulgated in *London Gazette* on 6/3/47. } G. H. File A. M. F. O/A 41(2)
 Promulgated in *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette* on 6/3/47. }
 Citation (G. H. File AM: O/A 41(1) Meritorious service BROOKETON, BRUNEI, MIRI, TOBRUK &C
 Insignia received from London 24/5/48. FN LONDON. 1/6/49. G. H. File L/141.
 Insignia presented by Registered Post,
 At - On 7/3/49. G. H. File R/P E/308.
 Address of recipient on presentation date 51 Highfield Road,
CANTERBURY, E. 7. VICTORIA.
 Remarks

Other Awards

2376.

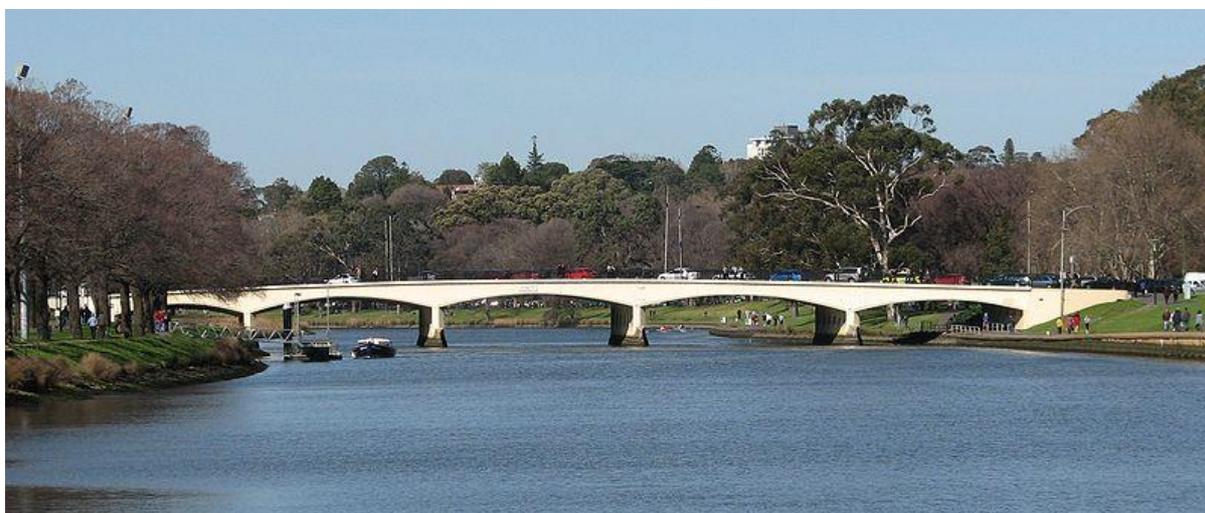
AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

RC DIG 1068968

Bob's official notice of the award of M.B.E.

At the end of the war, Bob's rank was Major. However, he continued his career in the Army and achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in 1958 and retired in October 1962.

Bob's career at the CRB was in bridge construction. Among others, he supervised the construction of the Swan Street Bridge across the Yarra River in the early 1950s.



Swan Street Bridge - Richmond.

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 the construction of the Swan Street Bridge. 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 in Victoria 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 saw the funny side to it.

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 from the *Canberra* 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 retired in December 1977 and died in Bendigo on 6 April 2000.

Private Alfred George Eyre, VX33022

On the list of the Board’s personnel who served – as shown in Appendix 2 – is A. J. Eyre. He was listed as an employee as distinct from a member of staff – which means he was likely to be a field worker rather than an office worker.

There are three servicemen on the Nominal Roll for the Second World War with a family name of Eyre and who had the initial of the first name of 'A'. They were Alexander Hamlet, Alfred George and Alfred. There was not an 'A. J.'. The latter was from Queensland, so I eliminated him from my consideration. The other two were Victorians and both had occupations which were more likely. Alexander Hamlet was a crane driver and Alfred George was a transport driver. I discounted Alexander Hamlet because his enlistment forms showed that he drove a crane for McPherson's for the 15 years prior to enlistment, thus leading me to think that Alfred George was likely to be the one who worked for the CRB at some time. However, there will always be some doubt about this entry because of the disparity between the initials of the first names.

Alfred was born in Heathcote in 1901 and was married to Annie Jean when he enlisted in June 1940. Initially, he was attached to the 2nd/4th Australian Field Workshops. He spent about nine months training in Victoria before being transferred to Sydney and, on 10 April 1941, he embarked for the Middle East – arriving there on 14 May. Prior to his departure, he did a Graded Group III training course in motor transport and was assessed Dux 1st Class.

He served in the 9th Australian Division Cavalry which fought in the Syrian Campaign. In mid-November 1941, he was detached for Special Duties for a fortnight but I don't know the nature of these.



Alfred Eyre's enlistment photograph – June 1940.

He transferred to the 2nd/4th Australian Field Workshops after the 'special duties' and on 24 June 1942 he embarked from the Middle East for Australia on MV *Waipawa*, arriving in Melbourne on 18 July. On his arrival he was transferred to hospital in Caulfield and on 27 July he was transferred to Royal Park. In September, he was regraded to Fitter M. V. Group 1. I assume that the initials mean Motor Vehicle. In February 1943, Alfred was – in the Army jargon – evacuated to report to hospital in Caulfield. In brackets it stated – Psychosis Nervosa. This is a psychotic condition where a person's thoughts become confused and disrupted and they have difficulty in recognizing what is real and what is not.

The dates in his archive are somewhat confusing but my interpretation is that he returned to his unit on 25 March 1943. He was transferred to Bandiana on 10 April and was appointed Corporal but he reverted to Private at his own request on 19 May. He was granted five days of leave without pay on compassionate grounds in June 1943 and for the rest of his service, he was stationed at Bandiana. He was discharged on 13 January 1944 on compassionate grounds.

I am not sure this is the man whose name appears on the C.R.B. list, and if it is, I don't know where he worked. But whoever he was, he served his country for 463 days in the Middle East and 546 days in Australia and, at 42 years of age, he thoroughly deserves our respect. I hope he led a happy life at his home in Nathalia

Signalman Peter Norman Fletcher, V101772

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

Gunner Bruce Carey Genat, VX131746 (V255574)

Bruce first enlisted in the CMF on 31 December 1941 when he was 18 years old. Two years later he was called up and 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 114th 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 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.



A 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun on in Townsville.

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.

Sergeant William (Bill) Clarence Gill, WX28914 (W37113)

Bill was born in Subiaco in Western Australia in February 1921. He joined the CMF in January 1942 and joined the Army on 11 July 1942. At enlistment, he was single and worked as a telegraphist in training. He was attached to Signals 11th Australian Division AIF.

He served in New Guinea from 12 August 1942 to 12 June 1944 and in New Britain from 6 September 1945 to 13 December 1945. He was hospitalised a number of times for malaria and influenza and attended an NCO's Refresher Course at the NG School of Signals where he received a Distinction (96.7%).

He was promoted to Sergeant when he went to New Britain in September 1945 and was discharged from Signals in January 1946.

After discharge, he chose to stay on in the Army. 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 used to verify the initial velocity of projectiles leaving a gun barrel. This information was then used 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 Malaya/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 Gill (right) with Deputy Secretary Cliff Liddell and Win Drury – at Win's retirement lunch in October 1977.

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

Corporal Harold Godkin, VX27520

Harold was born in Mildura in April 1916 and enlisted at Red Cliffs in June 1940. He had trained as a surveyor so it was logical that he would be allocated to a survey unit, in his case, the 2nd/1st Corps Field Survey Company RAE. He was 24 years old and single at the time of his enlistment.

In early 1941, 2nd/1st Corps Field Survey Company RAE, sailed with the 2nd AIF to provide survey and mapping to the Army in the Middle East theatre. Over the next four years Corps units 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, and Borneo.

Harold did his initial training in Greta and Cowra in NSW and during this time injured his left ankle when climbing a fence. His file states that he was not to blame. He left for the Middle East on 9 April 1941 and disembarked there on 3 May 1941. There is no clue where he was in the Middle East but the 2nd/1st Corps Field Survey Company provided mapping and survey to the Army in Greece, Egypt, Cyrenaica (Libya), Palestine, Syria, and Trans-Jordan. However, it is most

likely that he was in Syria - because he was fined there. I suspect Harold had a mind of his own as he seemed to cop a few more fines than the usual. Most of the soldiers had a fine or two - mainly for being absent without leave. It seemed to be less prevalent among the sailors and airmen. In Harold's case he was fined for malicious damage to private property to the value of 30 Syrian pounds, absent without leave, being beyond the limits of camp fixed by a general order, and neglecting to obey a general order.



Harold Godkin's paybook photograph – 1941.

In response to the Japanese offensives in South-East Asia and the Pacific late in 1941, many Australian units withdrew home early in 1942. Harold embarked for Sydney from the Middle East aboard the USS *West Point* in March 1942. Three months later, he married Edith Lorraine Brace of Brunswick in May 1942. His archive describes this as 'Change of marital condition'.

A month later he was admitted to 2nd/11th Australian General Hospital with a fracture of the little finger on his right hand. It doesn't record how this happened. He was transferred to the 'X' list which means he was temporarily out of action. He was declared fit in August but in September 1942 he relinquished his Group I Surveyor status and he joined the 113th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment stationed in north Queensland – with the rank of Bombardier.

He left Cairns in December 1943 for Red Island Point off the tip of Cape York Peninsula in the Torres Straits, near Thursday Island. It is now known as Seisia. He came back to Australia in March 1944 and undertook various training courses achieving very good results. He remained in north

Queensland but visited Thursday Island briefly. The archive does not provide any clue as to what he was doing during this period other than he was discharged from the Army at the end of 1945.

Harold joined the CRB in 1946 and worked in the Title Survey Division. He upgraded his survey qualifications and was admitted an Associate Member of the Institution of Surveyors in 1969.

He retired after 32 years of service with the Board in September 1978 and died in May 1983.

Lance Sergeant William (Bill) Egbert Golding, V15321

Although the nominal roll states that Bill was born in Willesden in London in January 1900, his early life was spent in Rise, Yorkshire, and later in Cardiff, Wales. He 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 *Melita*. 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 Australia to work with the Marconi Company of England, and this period of his 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.

Bill married Ada Doris Dobell in 1925 and they had one son, Donalds Kingsley Golding (1930-2001).

In the *Roadlines* magazine of March 1965, it states that Bill was posted to the Singapore and Rabaul areas working on signal installations. I don't think this is correct. There is no mention of it 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. He is buried in the Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

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 of the Vice Regal inspection of roads in Bairnsdale Division shown later in Chapter 9. Howard was born in Warracknabeal in 1919 and was 23, and married, when he joined up. His wife was Elizabeth Olive Hall. He described himself as a textile worker.



Howard Goudie's enlistment photograph – 1942.

He served in New Guinea with the 29th/46th Australian Infantry Battalion from 21 February 1943 to August 1944 and in new Britain from 6 January 1945 to 22 January 1946.

His initial training was in Victoria (in Bonegilla) but, in July 1942, he was transferred to Queensland for further training before embarking for Milne Bay where he arrived on 1 March 1943. During his service in New Guinea, he was evacuated to hospital a number of times with malaria and dermatitis. The file mentions two names where Howard was located – Lae and Finschhafen – and for a fortnight in March 1944 he was involved in 'Beach defence'.

There is one puzzle in his file. He embarked from Finschhafen on 4 April 1944 on the SS *Katoomba*³ and arrived in Townsville on 12 April. He then returned to Lae on the MS *Gorgon* arriving on 24 June and on 19 August, via SS *Katoomba*, he left Madang for Brisbane. There is no explanation of his activity over this period. There is no mention of illness, or training, or leave.

On a broader scale, the 29th/46th Battalion – of which Howard was a member - spent 16 months in the islands. While at Milne Bay the battalion carried out intensive jungle training, conducted patrols, and was used as a source of labour for work parties.

³ The designation of the ships vary depending on the source of the information. *Katoomba* is sometimes referred to as 'SS' and sometimes as 'HMAS' or 'HMT'. It is the same for other vessels.

In September 1943 the 29th/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, it followed the coast from Gusika to Lakona and captured Fortification Point. Between April and August, the brigade garrisoned the Madang area and carried out numerous patrols.

In September 1944 the 29th/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. Howard departed on 6 January 1945 and served there continuously to 22 January 1946.

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 discharged at the end of 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

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 the School of Military Engineering 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 as an Assistant Engineer. In 1956, he was appointed Assistant Highway Engineer. He became 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.

On his retirement, Bob moved to Merimbula NSW where he died in October 2000.

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 in November 1939 when he was nearly 33 years old. He married Helen Purvis Buchanan in 1932.



Private Cecil Haylock – 1939.

Cecil was posted to the 2nd/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.

Acting Corporal Murray Clark Heffernan, NX174814 (N463595)

Murray was born in Bathurst, NSW, on 30 March 1915. He obtained a Bachelor of Engineering degree from Sydney University and was working as an Assistant Engineer at the time of his enlistment – but his employer is not mentioned. He enlisted in the AIF on 2 August 1943 but prior to this, he was a Sapper (N463595) in the CMF – in the 2nd Australian R.A.E. Training Battalion.



Sapper Murray Heffernan at enlistment in the CMF – September 1941.

He was single when he joined the CMF in 1941 but by the time he enlisted in August 1943, he had married Heather Strachan Heffernan.

Murray's military career was brief. He was appointed Acting Corporal a fortnight after joining up but he was discharged on 22 December 1943. The reason for his discharge stated "Being required for employment in an essential occupation." His Medical Examination stated that he was fit for Class II duties rather than Class I, indicating that his health was not robust. Another mitigating factor may have been his slightly older age than most recruits.

His discharge papers were sent to him at the Army Post Office, Adelaide River, Northern Territory.

I don't know when Murray joined the CRB, but he worked in Dandenong Division's Municipal Section in the 1970s with Bill Kendall and 'Short Jack' Ryan – both of whom are included in this history.

Murray died in 1980.

Sapper John William Heid, VX120894 (V165669)

John was a third-year engineering student when he enlisted in the CMF in Geelong on 3 February 1942. He was born in December 1923 meaning he had just turned 19 at the time of his enlistment. He was born in Sunshine according to his Attestation Form but at the time of enlistment his address was in Geelong. Presumably, he was studying engineering at the Gordon Institute of Technology.

He was deployed to the 3rd Field Survey Company. He undertook training at Yarram and Colac after which he was transferred to Townsville in Queensland where he joined the AIF on 28 July 1942.

On 30 February 1943 he embarked in Townsville on the SS *Swarthenbout*⁴ bound for New Guinea where he disembarked at Oro Bay on 8 February. In September, he was evacuated for four days to a Casualty Clearing Station with a fever but he rejoined his unit four days later.

On 22 July 1944, he returned to Brisbane aboard SS *Lurline*. It appears that he remained in Queensland until 26 May 1945 when he embarked for Morotai on the USAT *Mani*. He stayed there for a month before boarding LST 753 for Balikpapan in Borneo.

On 25 January 1946 he returned to Brisbane on the HMAS *Kanimbla* arriving there on 4 February. He was discharged on 9 April 1946.

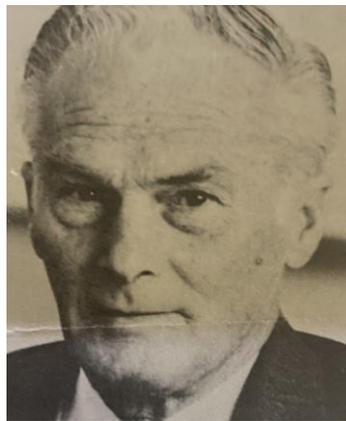
John completed his engineering studies and then joined the Shire of Portland where he became the Deputy Engineer. In 1949, he joined the CRB and commenced work in Geelong Division as

⁴ This name is doubtful. The handwriting in his Service and Casualty Form is illegible and I have done my best to interpret it. I could find no record of a ship bearing this name.

a Grade 3 Engineer supervising general road works in the Division – including the Great Ocean Road.

In 1966, he was promoted to Bairnsdale Division as Assistant Divisional Engineer under W. H. (Bill) Dolamore. In Bairnsdale, he quickly established himself as a mountain road engineer.

In 1971, John became Divisional Engineer in Horsham – a position he held until his retirement in 1982. During his career, John won the respect of many people in and outside the Road Construction Authority.



John Heid on his retirement in 1982.

John died in Horsham on 7 July 1996.

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 CRB'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.



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 of his 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.

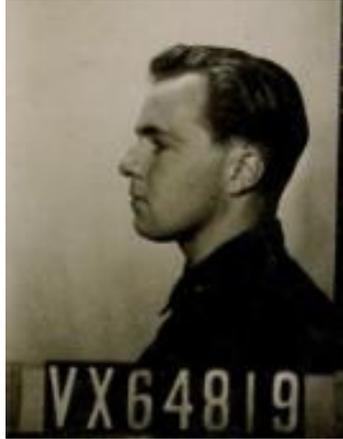
Sapper Donald Maurice Horner, VX64819 (V10024)

There are two files in the National Australian Archives regarding Donald Horner – one for each of his service numbers. The details are slightly different but I am sure they are for the same man. Both state that he was born in Warrnambool and his next of kin was his father, John Horner of ‘Cassidy’s Bridge’. I will nit-pick here because the correct spelling should be ‘Cassady’s Bridge’. My great great grandfather was John Cassady, a pioneer settler on the Merri River near Warrnambool, and it was he who built the first bridge to be called Cassady’s Bridge. There have been two more since.

The difference between the files is his date of birth. One says 16 August 1922 and the other 16 May 1922.

He enlisted in January 1941 at Royal Park as a nineteen-year-old and his occupation was given as ‘surveyor’. At the time of his enlistment, he was living in Warrnambool but there is no mention of the CRB in his archive.

He was attached to the 3rd Field Surveyor's Company. He trained at Woodend for nine months and was then transferred to Caulfield from where he was discharged on 21 October 1941. The file ends abruptly but the other file shows his enlistment in the Army on that same date.



Sapper Donald Horner - 1941

In November 1941, he embarked from Sydney aboard HMT *LL* Convoy 13 for the Middle East. He was transferred to the 1st Australian Railway Survey Company. I have not been able to find much specific information about this company other than it supported the role of railways in military operations in Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Donald returned to Australia from the Middle East in February 1943 and the company was disbanded not long after – in July 1943. I surmise it was formed only for service in the Middle East.

Donald was hospitalised for over a fortnight in early April 1943 with urethritis and again, in October 1943, with Cervical Adenitis – an inflammation or infection of the lymph nodes in the neck. They play a crucial role in immune function and fluid balance in the body. This was the start of an ordeal for Donald which led to his medical classification being downgraded to 'B' with a number of afflictions including bilateral papilledema (swollen optic nerve), raised intracranial pressure, and cerebral tumour. For much of this time he was placed on the DI (Dangerously Ill) list. He was shifted from hospital to hospital and discharged as medically unfit in May 1945.

When he returned to Australia from the Middle East, he was moved to the 2nd Australian Railway Construction Company. The War Diary of this company indicates that it served in the Northern Territory for the duration of the war. One interesting record from the diary was the procedure for

malarial control using Atebrin as a suppressant – which was to be taken regularly and, apparently, had no harmful effects with continuous doses. It said, in part:

“Atebrin will be administered on platoon parades prior to morning Mess Parade. NCOs will attend this parade prior to going to the NCO’s Mess.

Each platoon will parade under the Platoon Sergeant ... and march to the cookhouse. A bucket of drinking water will be placed at the head of each parade, from which men may obtain water in their pannikins. The Platoon Sergeant will hand each man the correct dosage of Atebrin and ensure the recipient places it in his mouth. Recipient will then swallow a drink of water and call out his name in a loud voice to demonstrate that the tablet had been swallowed.’

The correct dose was two tablets per day for the first seven days and one tablet per day thereafter. Three men were named as being exempt from the procedure.

After the war, Donald returned to Warrnambool and worked as an assistant in the CRB laboratory in Warrnambool Division. One colleague thought he suffered from a psychological condition brought about by his war service.

Donald married Lesley Joyce and he died on New Year’s Day in 1987.

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.

In the First World War, an officer who commanded an Infantry Brigade had the title Brigadier General. In the Second World War, the title was simply Brigadier.

Frank commanded the 10th Brigade in 1942 (V38038), and the 15th Brigade in 1942-43 (VX1018279). The 10th Brigade was a Victorian Militia unit which served between the wars. Its members could not be sent overseas. It was mobilised for full-time garrison service on 8 December 1941 and disbanded on 2 September 1942. The 15th Brigade was also an inter-war Victorian Militia unit. In 1942 it was reformed in Queensland as an AIF volunteer unit with Frank in command. Hence Frank being assigned a VX number, and his enlistment date shown as 22 July 1942. In the second half of 1942 the Brigade deployed to New Guinea.

By 22 June 1943, a Colonel Quin was in temporary command of the Brigade. On that day he issued the Brigade's first operation order which had been drawn up by Frank on 19 June.⁵ However, Frank did not see the operation through. In a later order, Colonel Guin, previously mentioned as Quin, had been summoned to 3rd Division Headquarters on 19 June 1943 and was given a sealed envelope, and ordered to deliver it to Frank, and to take temporary command of 15th Brigade, and to carry on with the planning and execution of the forthcoming operation. He took over the Brigade on 21 June. The operation began the following day. Brigadier Heathcote (Tack) Hammer (later Major General) took over the Brigade on 4 July 1943.

There is no mention of Frank anywhere after that, except for the Veterans Affairs nominal roll which shows that he was discharged on 14 December 1945, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel (two ranks below Brigadier), and his posting was 15th Infantry Brigade.

⁵ A couple of these orders drafted by Frank are contained in *Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, Vol vi, in the Australian War Memorial. They were labelled 'Most Secret' and there were six copies of each, two of which were allocated to the War Diaries. They are very detailed, taking into account directions for soldiers to rest, to mute communications and to stay out of visible range

He resumed working at the CRB. In 1956 he was awarded the Efficiency Decoration. 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. He was also President of the Public Service Sub-branch of the RSL for 14 years.



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 (see 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.

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, VX36505

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 2nd/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, 2nd/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 (Libya) 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 2nd/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, Labuan and British North Borneo. He was also mentioned in dispatches.



Len Izard at enlistment – 1940.

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 gives 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/construction. He had a great flair for drafting and was very quick in producing details of alternative treatments for consideration. Ray was also interested in 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 57th/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 Tsilli Tsilli before joining the Finisterre Range campaign in early 1944. After the capture of the Kankiryo 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.

Corporal Reginald (Reg) Cecil Jones, VX74689

Reg was born in Natimuck in January 1915 and enlisted at Nhill in February 1942 at nearly 27 years of age. He married Sciebuda Ann Eastwell in 1937 and they lived in Nhill. He gave his occupation as 'Assistant patrolman – Country Roads Board'. He commenced with the CRB on the Nhill Patrol in December 1938. He joined the Army in 1942 and served with the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion in New Guinea and Borneo.



Reg Jones' paybook photograph – 1942.

Reg's initial training with the 2/2nd Pioneer Battalion was peripatetic. In Victoria – which was 3 Military District (3MD) - he trained or attended courses in Balcombe, Caulfield, Wantirna, Watsonia and Wagga. But he also trained in 5MD (Western Australia) and 1MD (Queensland). In fact, the battalion was in a rebuilding stage. It had fought in Syria and Palestine but on its return to Australia in early 1942, it was diverted to Java where it suffered heavy losses before being ordered to surrender. Over 800 men were captured of whom over 250 perished in the forced labour camps along the Thai-Burma Railway. It was decided in 1943 to reconstitute the battalion and Reg Jones was part of it.

In June 1943, the 2nd/2nd Pioneers commenced deployment to New Guinea to undertake both traditional infantry and engineering tasks. Assigned to the 7th Division, they saw combat in the Markham–Ramu Valley, advancing overland from Tsili Tsili, and constructing an airfield after the landing at Nadzab. They were then redeployed as infantry and joined the drive on Lae. They remained in New Guinea, taking part in the advance into the Finisterres, including the fighting around Shaggy Ridge, until early 1944 when they returned to Australia for rest and reorganisation.

Reg embarked from Townsville on 25 July 1943 for Port Moresby. In August 1943, he was evacuated to the 2nd/4th Field Ambulance (hospital) suffering from malaria. Later, in December

1943, he was admitted to 2nd/1st Australian General Hospital in Port Moresby with malaria and dysentery.



Nadzab, New Guinea – September 1943. The admission centre of the 2nd/4th Australian Field Ambulance main dressing station, 7th Australian Division. This building was formerly a Lutheran mission church. Reg was admitted here with his first bout of malaria.



A portion of Ward 19, 2nd/1st Australian General Hospital, Port Moresby, viewed from the road which ran through the hospital.

On 8 February 1944, Reg embarked from Port Moresby on the HMT *Katoomba* for Townsville. Reg's final involvement in the war came in mid-1945 when the 2nd/2nd Pioneers deployed to support both the 7th and 9th Divisions in both the Battle of Tarakan and the Battle of Balikpapan during the Borneo Campaign. During this campaign, the battalion was used primarily as a labour force around the beachhead, unloading stores and equipment, maintaining defensive positions and guarding prisoners. Reg embarked from Brisbane on the MS *Van Heutz* on 28 April 1945 bound for Morotai and he arrived back in Australia on 3 December 1945. Following the end of hostilities in August 1945, the battalion was disbanded in late 1945.

After being discharged from the Army in 1946, Reg returned to the Board firstly in Horsham Division, and then, in 1948, he was appointed Patrolman in Charge of the Sale Patrol. In February 1962 Reg was appointed Roadmaster in Benalla Division operating out of Wodonga. In 1969 he became Roadmaster southern section in Horsham Division where he remained until his retirement in February 1980. His total length of service to the Board was 42 years. Reg's service in the CRB epitomizes the dedication and importance that the road patrols were to the safe and efficient operation of the Victorian road network.

Reg died in August 1989 at the age of 74.

Private John (Jack) Alfred Joseph, VX105985 (V38588)

Jack was born in Richmond in February 1919 and enlisted in the field in Queensland in July 1942. He was married at the time (to Ethel Merle) and he gave his occupation as 'Salesman'.

Previously, he had joined the CMF in April 1940 (V38588) and was serving in Queensland with the 29th Battalion when he was called up to join the Army. He served overseas twice - in Papua and New Guinea⁶ from 15 February 1943 to 19 July 1944, and in New Britain⁷ from 19 February 1945 to 23 December 1945. In an application for a review of his medal entitlements, Jack listed

⁶ His service record describes it thus – as two separate territories – but after the war the two territories were combined into the country now known as Papua New Guinea. The area known as Papua encompasses the western part of New Guinea and the Indonesian province of Irian Jaya.

⁷ New Britain is the largest island in the Bismarck Archipelago, part of the Islands Region of Papua New Guinea. It is separated from New Guinea by a northwest corner of the Solomon Sea and from New Ireland by St. George's Channel. The main town of New Britain is Rabaul.

his places of service as Victoria, Queensland, Papua New Guinea, Milne Bay, Lae, Finschhafen, New Britain, Jacquinot Bay and Open Bay.



Jack Joseph's enlistment photograph – 1940.

There is a mystery about Jack's enlistment photograph. It is an extract from his service record but shows him holding a name card with 'Jamieson' on it – but the service number, 38558, is Jack's original service number with the CMF.

Jack's father – his next of kin - was also called John Alfred Joseph.

Jack initially trained in the CMF at Bonegilla in Victoria and he must have had an accident because it is recorded that he dislocated his left elbow in January 1942 with a note saying 'Soldier not to blame'. He married before his enlistment in the Army because he changed his next of kin from his father to his wife, Ethel Merle, in February 1942. He transferred to Brisbane in February 1943 and embarked for Port Moresby on the USAT *Both* and soon after, he disembarked in Milne Bay, New Guinea. He was notified of the birth of his daughter on 30 August 1943.

Jack had been posted to the 29th/4th Battalion, 4th Brigade in Brisbane before his departure to New Guinea and, on his arrival there, he was graded for Group II Intelligence Duties. I am not sure what Jack did in this capacity but intelligence support usually requires gaining a knowledge of the enemy and the area of operations that commanders need to prosecute their missions. It may also include the active and passive measures undertaken to prevent the enemy from acquiring intelligence about friendly forces and their intentions.

In April 1943, he was admitted to the 7th Field Ambulance with infected cellular tissue. He left Madang for Townsville aboard the SS *Ormiston* in July 1944 and eventually ended up in Victoria at the Stonnington Convalescent Home in Melbourne for treatment. He transferred to 37th/52nd Battalion and after his recuperation, he was posted to New Britain aboard the HMAS *Katoomba*, disembarking at Jacquinet Bay in February 1945.

He was hospitalised again for an infection of his right leg and was sent back to a hospital in Finschhafen aboard a landing Craft designated 'OL 3A'. After three weeks there, he returned to New Britain but his leg continued to trouble him. The writing on his service record is difficult to read but I think it states 'Chronic abscess, right leg'. In another entry it mentions 'Traumatic ulcer'.

On Christmas Day 1945, Jack flew out of New Britain to 102 Holland Park Military Hospital in Brisbane for treatment and then by Ambulance Train to 115 Military Hospital (the Austin) at Heidelberg in Victoria. Jack was discharged on 13 February 1946.

After the First World War the defence of the Australian mainland lay with the part-time soldiers of the Citizens Military Force (CMF), also known as the Militia. The Militia was organized to maintain the structure of the First 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". 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 the 4th Brigade – of which Jack as a member - was sent to Queensland. In August the 29th merged with the 46th, thus forming the 29th/46th Infantry Battalion.

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

In September the 29th/46th and the rest of the 4th Brigade left Milne Bay for Lae. 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, from December to April 1944, the 4th Brigade followed the coast from Gusika to Lakona and the 29th/46th captured Fortification Point. Between April and August, the brigade garrisoned the Madang area and carried out numerous patrols.

In September the 29th/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.

In New Britain, Jack was posted to the 37th/52nd Battalion landing at Wunung Bay, on the southern shore of Jacquinot Bay, where it was based for the next 12 months. By that time the campaign on the island had devolved into mainly a holding action and as a result the 37th/52nd remained at Wunung Bay, largely occupying itself with conducting jungle training. Some patrols were undertaken and in May the battalion relieved the 36th Battalion at Open Bay, where they engaged in combat with the Japanese. 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.



Soldiers of the 37th/52nd Battalion's A Company crossing the Mevalu River in New Britain during May 1945.



Japanese amphibious tanks captured by troops of 37th/52nd Battalion near Rabaul – September 1945.

In August 1945 the war came to an end and the battalion was moved to Rabaul to guard Japanese prisoners of war and restore law and order. As demobilisation began, members of the 37th/52nd were repatriated to Australia for discharge, while others were transferred to other units for subsequent service. Jack was discharged in February 1946.

Jack joined the CRB as an Assistant Patrolman in 1950. When he retired from the Board in April 1976, he was in charge of the Avoca Patrol in Ballarat Division. He was a diligent patrolman who carried out his duties in a capable and efficient manner which earned him the respect of his colleagues and that of people living along the roads he patrolled – namely the Pyrenees and Sunraysia Highways.

He completed 27 years of service with the CRB/RCA/VicRoads.

Sergeant Dudley Keith Keats, VX12827

Dudley was born in Yambuk, near Port Fairy, in Western Victoria in August 1917 and he enlisted in the Army on 27 March 1940. His occupation was 'labourer'.

He served in the 2nd/11th Australian Field Ambulance in the Middle East, New Guinea and Borneo – for a total of 1,440 days (nearly four years) – in addition to 583 days of active service in Australia. He also served for a short time in England.



Dudley Keats' pay book photograph – 1940.

When he was taken on strength he was initially posted to 'No. 3 Aust. Spec. Hosp'. I interpret this as No. 3 Australian Special Hospital but I can find no reference to such a hospital. However, the archive is quite clear that he embarked on 15 May 1940 – barely six weeks after enlistment – aboard HMT X5 and arrived in Gourock, Scotland on 19 June. It was here that he transferred to 2/11 Field Ambulance.

A field ambulance is the name used by the Army to describe a mobile medical unit that treats wounded soldiers very close to the combat zone. The Field Ambulances formed an intermediate level in the casualty evacuation chain that stretched from the regimental aid posts near the front line and the casualty clearing stations located outside the range of the enemy's artillery.

Dudley's file mentions him training at Tidworth and Colchester (in England) and Glasgow (Scotland). He was admitted to his own hospital in November 1940 with a fractured clavicle (collarbone). He arrived in the Middle East on 3 March 1941. During his period in the Middle East, he was transferred to other field ambulances (the 2nd/8th) and general hospitals (2nd, 4th, 11th). During this time, he was accidentally injured with second degree burns to his left arm and

chest. In November 1941 he was admitted to 7th General Hospital with a fractured wrist. The archive mentions that he also carried out 'Special Duties' a number of times when he was a batman to the senior officers.

There are no clues in the archive to indicate exactly where Dudley served in the Middle East although it is definite that he was in Tobruk as his name is on the Rats of Tobruk Honour Roll. The 2nd/11th Field Ambulance was transferred to Palestine and then in March 1941 to Egypt as part of the 9th Division. By the end of March 1941, the 9th Division was spread along the north coast of Cyrenaica with the German forces pushing the Allies westward. At this time, 2nd/11th Field Ambulance was in depth at Tobruk. The unit was to remain in the Tobruk area for the next seven months and endure the siege of Tobruk, being relieved on 20 October 1941. After leaving Tobruk the entire 9th Division was granted a period of rest and then commenced training for their next operation.



22 July 1942 - Egypt - Tented wards of 2nd/11th Field Ambulance.

The 9th Division was then sent to relieve the 7th Division in Syria, with 2/11th Field Ambulance relieving the 2nd/4th Field Ambulance in January 1942. Duty in Syria was generally quieter than it had been in Cyrenaica with non-battle rather than battle casualties predominating. Of these, malaria was the most significant. The Division moved south to the Western Desert in June 1942.

By early July 1942 the bulk of the 9th Division had moved into position in the vicinity of El Alamein. 2nd/11th Field Ambulance, having been reinforced by a mobile team and vehicles from

the 2nd/8th Field Ambulance had the responsibility of operating the active Main Dressing Station for the divisional front from 10 to 25 July 1942. During this time there were a number of hectic periods as a result of major battles and a total of 1,157 casualties were treated. The Unit was actively involved in the battle of Alamein treating a stream of casualties.



Walking wounded and members of the 2nd/11th Field Ambulance at the Advance Dressing Station, El Alamein, 1942.

Dudley was evacuated back to Sydney in February 1943. The unit reassembled at Kairi in North Queensland during April 1943, and they then moved to Milne Bay during August to prepare for the landings at Lae. When the Brigade moved to Finschhafen in October, Advanced Dressing Stations supported troops moving to Kumawa and Zab, while the Mobile Dressing Station was established at Heldsbach Plantation. In March 1944 the 2nd/11th Australian Field Ambulance was withdrawn to Ravenshoe in Queensland. In early 1945 they were part of 1st Australian Corps that was given the task of liberating Borneo. In March 1945 they moved to Morotai which was acting as the staging point and landed on Tarakan Island in May where they remained until the war concluded.

Dudley was discharged on 16 November 1945.

He joined the Board on 6 June 1946 and worked in Warrnambool Division as a Cost Clerk. Tragically, Dudley died on 6 June 1974 as the result of a car crash near Woodford – a few kilometres outside Warrnambool.

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 8th Division Petrol Company which was one of the companies that kept supply of fuel to the army – both at home and in the field. In fact, 8th Division 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 their aggressive raiding tactics.

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.



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 2nd/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 had 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.

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 given as ‘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 2nd/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, VX14528 (V83311, 329732, 44951)

Ted King started his long career with the CRB in the South Melbourne Depot in October 1934. He nearly left after his first week there. It was a time when any plant which was to be issued to a country area had to be escorted out of the city. A man had to walk in front of it holding a red flag – supposedly to warn people riding or driving horses. Soon after commencing work, a steamroller left the yard but its escort had not arrived. Ted was asked to do it instead, decked out in his new suit and hat. The escort was to catch up with them and take over from Ted. They started out along Montague Street, and Ted was so embarrassed with his role that he decided if the escort did not catch up by the time he reached Spencer Street Station, he would get on the train and go home. Fortunately, the escort did catch up.

When Ted was interviewed for the job by Rolf Jansen (the Board Secretary), he was told that he would have wear a suit and hat. Ted was asked why this was so and Jansen responded that it helped keep hatters in business – especially if all public servants wore hats. Ted wore a hat until war's end but never since.

Ted was from Wycheproof in north western Victoria. He was born on 2 October 1916 and enlisted in the 2nd/4th Field Regiment on 8 May 1940. He was single at the time but the Attestation Form has a note to say he married on 8 April 1942. His occupation is cited as 'Clerk'. Throughout his file there are four different birth dates – 1915, 1916, 1917 and 1918 – reasons for which I try to explain below.



Ted King's paybook photograph – 1940.

His record of service shows that he was in the Middle East between 20 October 1940 and 25 March 1942 and in Borneo between 8 June 1945 and 10 August 1945.

Ted had a long association with the Australian Military Forces. He first joined the Militia as an 18-year-old student in 1933 for a period of three years. His service number was 44591 and he joined the 2nd Heavy Brigade Australian Garrison Artillery. There is a hand-written letter from Ted towards the end of the file – dated 20 November 1992 – in which Ted admitted that he put his age up three years in order to enlist. In the same letter he gave his date of birth as 21 October 1917 meaning that it was two years and not three, that he cribbed. Whatever the truth, it is incontestable that he was underage when he first joined the Militia. He enlisted at the same time as a future colleague at the CRB, Cliff Liddell, who was to become the Deputy Secretary of the Board.

They trained at Sandringham Town Hall, Sandringham Yacht Club and Williamstown Drill Hall. He was a gunner and he attended two Annual Camps at Queenscliff in 1933 and 1934. At the expiry of this term, he re-enlisted in the 14th Battalion Militia on 19 September 1939 – although his date of birth, given as 1916, was crossed out and replaced by 1915. He signed up for a period of three years to be served in any State or Territory of the Commonwealth of Australia. It also recorded that he worked for the CRB in the Exhibition Buildings. His service number in the Militia was 329732. Again, there was a coincidence of fate during this term of service. His Commanding Officer was Major Frank Hosking (later to become Brigadier Hosking) who eventually became the Ted's colleague as the Advance Planning Engineer at the CRB.

After enlistment in the Second Australian Imperial Force in May 1940, Ted was taken on strength in the 2nd/4th Field Regiment as Acting Sergeant. He trained in Caulfield and Puckapunyal, had a spell in hospital with the flu, and disembarked for the Middle East on 20 October 1940 aboard HMT *Mauritania*. His ship docked in Bombay for a week and he arrived in the Middle East near the end of November. He was admitted to hospital aboard the ship for an unspecified period.

He was promoted to Sergeant on 2 December 1940 and Acting Warrant Officer Class 2 on 4 June 1941. This promotion was confirmed in December 1941. Although not stated in the archives, it can be concluded that he was located in Palestine because he was hospitalised in Dimra (near Gaza) a couple of times in June 1941 with malaria. His regiment was involved in campaigns in North Africa and Syria – Lebanon. After being deployed in the defence of Mersa Matruh in Egypt

in early 1941, the regiment took part in the fighting against the Vichy French in Syria and Lebanon, before undertaking garrison duties there. Ted embarked from the Middle East on SS *Ile de France* on 30 January 1942 bound for Bombay where he was transhipped to SS *Eastern Prince* for the last passage to Sydney. In April 1942, he was granted leave to return to Melbourne to get married. His wife was Marjorie Ellen. For some reason, this marriage did not last. After the war, in 1946, it is recorded that Ted married Gabrielle Christiana Doyle who was on the nursing staff at Brisbane General Hospital.

Ted was appointed to a Commission (Lieutenant) on 7 September 1943 and served with the 26th Field Regiment. Later, he transferred to HQ Royal Australian Artillery Division and embarked for service in Balikpapan, Borneo, via Morotai, on 9 June 1945. This appointment was terminated on 26 November 1945 and he was then placed on Reserve of Officers. He continued in the Army Reserve where he achieved the rank of Captain until he retired in 1958.

There is an entry in Ted's archive which I have not seen in any other. It states, "*Security Grading. Undertaking to preserve official secrets*". I am not sure of the context in regard to Ted's service.

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 Paddy O'Donnell when he succeeded Caleb. When the CRB established the Depot at Syndal in the early 1960s, Ted was appointed the Controller of Stores.

Bill Saggars (a 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 O'Donnell 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 the first President of the CRB's sub-branch of the Municipal Officers Association – from 1962 to 1973. Ted was also the foundation President of the VicRoads Association. He 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.

After enlisting, Albie 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 aboard the HMT *Taroona* where he remained until June 1944 when he returned to Townsville on the HMAS *Canberra*. He returned to New Guinea in February 1945 and was sent to Morotai (Indonesia) a month later and in July he moved into North Borneo. He returned to Australia in November 1945.



Albert Kyle's enlistment photograph – 1942.

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

Albert died in October 2007.

Sapper Louis (Lou) Mervyn Lehmann, VX86417 (V225019)

Lou was a senior draftsman in the CRB's Warrnambool Division. He came from Hopetoun in Western Victoria. Lou was born on 4 February 1922 and enlisted in the Australian Army at Williamstown Racecourse on 15 July 1942. At the time of his enlistment, he was a Gunner in the 31st Anti-Aircraft Battery (CMF) with service number V225019. His occupation was 'Junior Clerk'.

There is no paybook photograph of Lou on file. His initial service in the CMF was spent in Williamstown. About a month after his enlistment, he embarked for New Guinea from Brisbane aboard MV *Anshun* arriving in Milne Bay on 6 June 1942 where he transferred to another Anti-Aircraft Battery – the 33rd. In February 1943 Lou was evacuated to a field hospital citing PUO. This is an acronym for pyrexia (fever) of unknown origin. Unsurprisingly, his fever turned out to be malaria. I can't remember one serviceman in this narrative who avoided malaria or dengue while serving in New Guinea.

Lou served continuously in New Guinea until 17 March 1944 when he embarked from Milne Bay aboard the SS *Taroona* bound for Townsville. He took some well-earned leave after which, he returned to NSW where he must have undertaken training in surveying because he was graded as a Group 1 Surveyor before he transferred up to Queensland. There, he embarked from Townsville on USNS *David Shanks* to Morotai on 6 May 1945. Then, on 21 June 1945, aboard LST 937, he landed in British North Borneo.

LST is an acronym for Landing Ship, Tank. An LST is a naval vessel specially designed to transport troops, vehicles, and supplies onto foreign shores for offensive military operations. LSTs were designed during the Second World War to disembark military forces without the use of dock facilities or the various cranes and lifts necessary to unload merchant ships. They gave the Army the ability to conduct amphibious invasions at any location on a foreign shore that had a gradually sloping beach. This ability permitted troops to assault poorly defended sectors, thereby achieving operational surprise and, in some cases, even tactical surprise.



LST 937 offloading RAAF trucks on Labuan Island 10 days before transporting Lou to British North Borneo.

On 16 July 1945 he was evacuated to 2nd/4th Australian General Hospital and transferred to the X list – i.e. admitted to hospital or evacuated on medical grounds beyond the Regimental Aid Post. The file stated that his condition was NYD (not yet determined) but in a later entry it mentions ‘Anxiety state’. However, he was taken on strength back to his Company and disembarked from Labuan and arrived back in Brisbane on 12 February 1946. He returned to Melbourne and was discharged on 8 August 1946.

His training as a surveyor in the Army obviously influenced a change in the direction of his career. Instead of pursuing clerical employment – as was his experience before the war - Lou steered towards engineering/surveying enjoying a long career in the Warrnambool Division of the CRB.



Lou Lehmann on his retirement – 1981.



Lou Lehmann (right) and Max Irwin (ex RAAF) at work in the design office in Warrnambool – 1978.

Lou Lehmann died of a stroke in January 1992 just before his 70th birthday.

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.

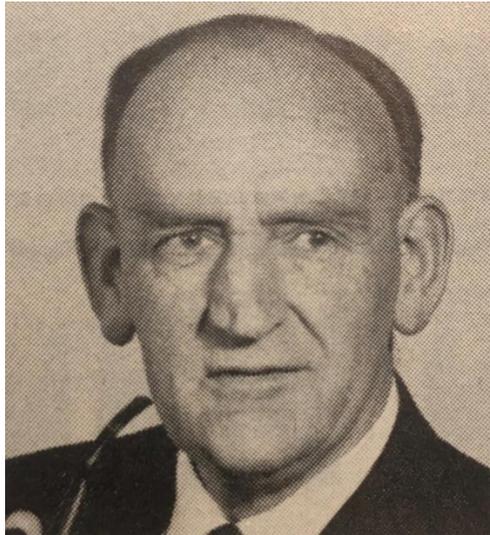
He was posted to the 2nd/1st Australian Survey Regiment. Theo served in Syria in 1941 as a Lance Bombardier before returning to Australia aboard the U.S.S *West Point*. Throughout his service he was transferred between regiments. In addition to the 2nd/1st he served in the 2nd/2nd, 2nd/12th and the 2nd/7th. 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 '2nd/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 2nd/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.

Theo died in March 1995.

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

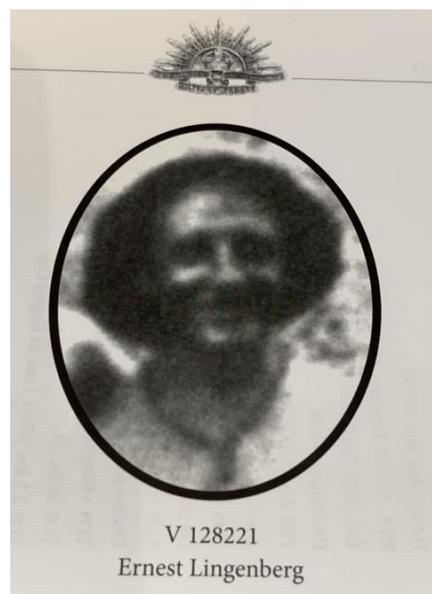
battle that by the time they were withdrawn they could only muster 32 men and following its return to Australia, the unit was disbanded in early July 1943.



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). Foxchow 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 and served 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 – but on his Mobilization Attestation Form he described himself as a dairy farmer. He was barely 18 when he enlisted in 1942. He was posted to the 2nd/31st Australian Infantry Battalion.

He served in New Guinea from 23 July 1943 until 21 January 1944.

His initial training was in Victoria - at Watsonia and Bendigo - and there is mention of him being attached to a Cartographic Company. In May 1943, he was transferred to Canungra in Queensland where he would have undergone jungle training and, on 23 July, he embarked on the HMAS *Katoomba* for Port Moresby in New Guinea. He was admitted to hospital in November suffering from scrub typhus. Scrub typhus infection is an acute fever found in South East Asia. The clinical effect is characterized by sudden onset fever with chills and non-specific symptoms that include headache, myalgia, sweating and vomiting.

The 2nd/31st flew into Nadzab on 12 September 1943 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. Thomas returned to Australia in January 1944 aboard the *Kanimbla* and saw no further action overseas.

The war severely affected Thomas' health. He suffered from hypertension and debility (anxiety) and he was hospitalised a number of times for treatment. In September 1945, Thomas was transferred to 38 Works Company in NSW. During this period, he was hospitalised with malaria

– no doubt contracted while he was in New Guinea. He was transferred to Southern Command (Melbourne) on 30 March 1946 and discharged on 15 August 1946.

After the war, Thomas returned to Granya where he became a farmer. He died in Adelaide on 10 April 1988.

Corporal Robert Arthur Stewart MacDowell, VX15747

Arthur MacDowell was taken Prisoner of War by the Germans and his story is told in Chapter 10.

Sergeant Oliver (Oddie) Herbert Maguire, VX119750 (V59772)

Oliver was born in Golden Square, Bendigo in February 1920 and joined the CRB in 1938 as a labourer. According to an undated reference in his archive, he was *“Called up under Part IV of the Defence Act and attested for service on 11 February 1940. He was mobilised for Full Time Duty on 31 October 1941 and after serving continuously from that date for a total effective period of 1,617 days which included Active Service outside Australia for 491 days, was honourably discharged on 4 April 1946.”*

On his discharge notice, it states that Oliver joined the Citizen Military Force (CMF) on 31 October 1941 where he served until 24 November 1942, at which time he joined the 2AIF. It also states that he served in New Guinea from 27 December 1941 until 9 February 1943 and in Morotai from 20 August 1945 to 8 November 1945.

This means that he joined the Reserve (Service No. V59772) in February 1940 when he was nearly 23 years old and, and while a member of the CMF, he was sent to New Guinea in December 1941. In November 1942, he was enlisted in the field to join the 2AIF (Service No. VX119750). In his Attestation Form he gave his occupation as ‘Motor driver’.

When Oliver joined the CMF, he was allocated to the 38th Infantry Battalion. This battalion had its roots in Bendigo. It was formed during the First World War (in 1916) at the racecourse in Bendigo but it had to shift to Campbellfield due to a severe outbreak of cerebro-spinal meningitis. During the Second World War it performed garrison duties in Australia and Oliver’s archive mentions places such as Bendigo, Seymour and Balcombe. Presumably it carried out similar duties

in New Guinea because Oliver embarked for Port Moresby on 27 December 1941, arriving there 3 January 1942. It was still 10 months or so before he transferred to the 2AIF.

He was hospitalised in May 1942 with dengue fever.

His file is difficult to interpret and it may be that he joined the 30th Australian Infantry Brigade Head Quarters after his transfer to New Guinea. This battalion was also raised during the First World War. At any rate, he transferred from the brigade on 2 November 1942 to the 6th Division Concert Unit and he remained there - in New Guinea - until embarking on the HMAS *Canberra* in Port Moresby on 7 February 1943 bound for Cairns. He entrained from Cairns to Sydney and in July 1943, he was transferred to the Australian Army Amenities Service.

At the outset of the Second World War, the Australian Army Amenities Service (AAAS) mobilised travelling Cinema Units to screen popular 'flicks' of the day to Australian troops wherever they were stationed. Soon after, in November 1939, the first Concert Party, the 6th Division Concert Party was formed. Other Divisional and Unit Concert Parties soon followed providing entertainment for the troops under the control and guidance of the Australian Armies Amenities Service. It was almost the end of the war, 1945, before the official order came through designating them as the 1st Australian Entertainment Unit. By the end of the war over twenty Concert Parties of the 1st Australian Entertainment Unit had toured in Australia, Europe, the Middle East and New Guinea giving more than 12,000 performances to Australian and Allied Forces, relieving the tedium of hours off duty. Amongst the Australian talent which featured in their shows were George Wallace, Michael Pate, Gladys Moncrieff, Bebe Scott, Jenny Howard, and Colin Croft.

Perhaps one of the most famous Second World War Concert Parties was the Changi Prisoner of War, 8th Division Concert Party, which was formed only two days after the POWs arrived at Selarang barracks. The first show was a simple variety show in which anyone who wanted could get up and perform. Soon after, the Japanese gave permission for a permanent Concert Party of 30 men to be set up. These men spent three years of their captivity putting on shows for their fellow POWs. There was a new show every two weeks, and over the years they included variety shows, musical dramas, pantomime and serious drama. On top of that, a 30-piece orchestra could be heard every Sunday evening. For three years it was the only entertainment on Singapore Island.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

026044

New Guinea, July 1942.

The photograph above shows a concert party which was formed from among the troops of an Australian Infantry Brigade serving in the area for the entertainment of Australian and American troops - known as the Port Moresby Concert Party. This picture shows the company busy erecting curtains, lights, and setting the stage for their opening performance. Most of the material used was from bomb-wrecked buildings in Port Moresby.

On the Australian War Memorial website relating to the AAAS, biographical details are provided for ten men who served in the service. Some had special skills such as a vocalist, a film projectionist and a musician but most had more mundane occupations.

Oliver was promoted to Lance Sergeant in November 1943 and was transferred to Victoria. In June 1944, he was admitted twice to hospital with tenosynovitis in the right arm and in April 1945 he transferred to the Australian Cinema Unit. In August 1945 he embarked on the *SS River Clarence* for Morotai. The war was over at this stage but he spent three months there – presumably showing pictures to the troops before returning to Australia. He was promoted to Sergeant in October 1945.

He was discharged from the Army in April 1946 and returned to Bendigo. In 1947, Oliver married Thelma Elaine McCallum. He returned to the CRB as a driver.

Oliver died in Bendigo in November 2009.

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 Signalman 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. On 1 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 remained in Bougainville and returned home after a short (unspecified) spell in Rabaul in April 1946. He was discharged in November 1946.

Harold died in November 1978. In 1979, his wife applied for assistance from Legacy.

Private Frank Mau, VX94370

Born in Ivanhoe in May 1925, Frank enlisted in the 2nd/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 for the Allied Works Council. His parents were relieved because they thought it was a way of him avoiding joining the army.

The team also included two chainmen, three truck drivers, and a cook. They established a base at Connors Well, north of Alice Springs and their first objective was to survey the stretch of highway between Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, a distance of 500 km. During their time there, they

shifted camp as they progressed north and they were diverted on a few occasions to work on aerodromes.



CRB Survey party in the Northern Territory – circa 1944.

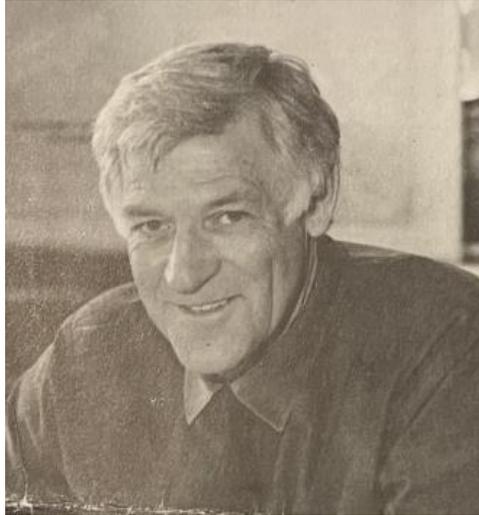
Left to right: Frank Mau, Stan Jutson, George Bennett, Keith Moody, Ian Mather and Mac Wilkinson (RAAF).

(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 SS *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 1945.

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. Frank eventually became the Assistant Principal Surveyor.



Frank Mau – Assistant Principal Surveyor – circa 1974.

Frank died in 2007 in Gisborne.

Major Charles Brandum Metzner, VX114189 (V10407)

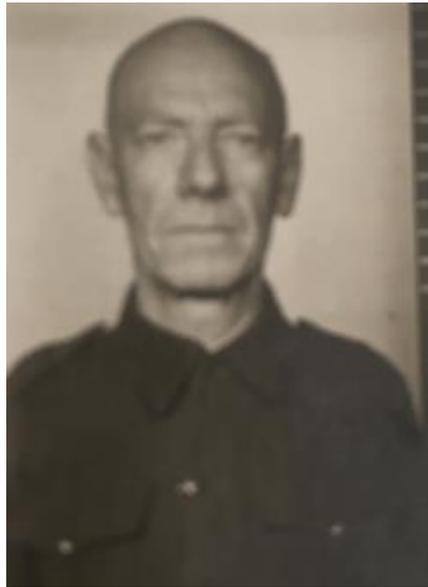
Charles was born in Baringhup which is a small community west of Maldon on the Loddon River. He was born in 1907 and his occupation was cited as ‘civil engineer’ on his Attestation Form. He married Kathleen (Kitty) Wrigley in 1935. At the time of enlistment, he was a commissioned Lieutenant in the Reserve 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 1 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 3MD 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. Sometime 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 Provost Platoon 1.

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.

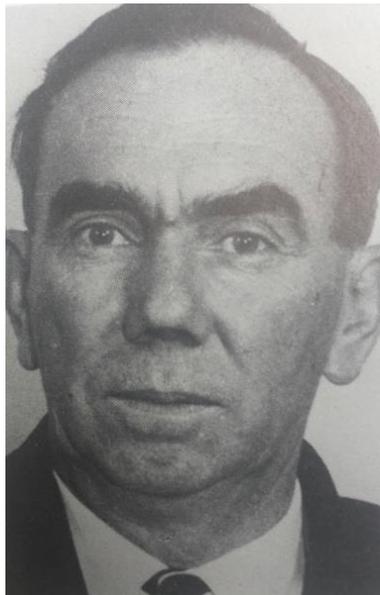
His citation for the award said:

“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.

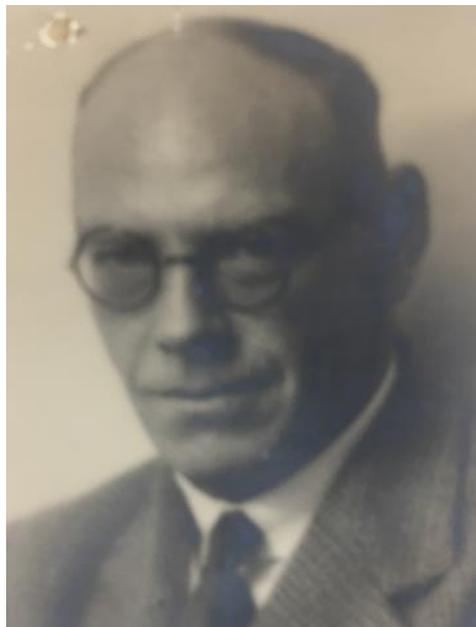


Eric Moncrieff (left rear) with John Molnar and in front, Charlie Robinson (ex-2AIF), Ted King (ex-2AIF) and Harold Eicke (ex-2AIF) - AGM of the Retired Persons Association (now VicRoads Association) March 1983.

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.

Lieutenant Colonel Merton Conroy Morgan, VX38985 (3166)

Merton was taken prisoner of war by the Japanese and his story is told in Chapter 9.

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 file in the National Australian Archives. However, I was able to retrieve his service record from the Department of Defence.

Bill was born in Ballarat in January 1914 and he enlisted in August 1941 while living in Warrnambool. He obtained a Diploma of Civil Engineering from the Ballarat School of Mines and he gained a Municipal Engineer's Certificate prior to enlistment. He had worked as a draughtsman for the City of Ballarat for nine months and worked on road design and construction for the Shire of Buninyong for two and a half years. At the time of his enlistment, he was working with the CRB – 15 months on design and three months on construction works.



Bill Neville at enlistment – August 1941.

Bill was taken on strength with the rank of Lieutenant and posted to Group Reinforcements Engineers at Bonegilla. He was detached to the School of Military Engineering Course No. 31 (Field) within a few days and continued training at Echuca and Liverpool in NSW. This training included administration, road/bridge design and construction, water supply and demolition. He was found to have a very good knowledge of all topics, but his report writing, while technically sound, lacked good presentation. I suspect Bill's handwriting was not too flash.

In June 1942 he transferred to the 3rd Australian Engineers Corps and was sent to 5MD (the Military District in Queensland). He did more technical training in signals operations and tactics, and in October 1943, he was allotted to RAE 2nd Australian Corps Troops where he was promoted to Captain. I think Bill may have married around this time. He was single when he enlisted but he changed his next of kin to his wife, Elizabeth, early in 1944.

With the 2nd Field Company RAE, he flew from Townsville to Hollandia⁸ in New Guinea on 5 December 1944 and on 1 March he flew on to Morotai. He spent time in the Philippines and Borneo and was evacuated back to Morotai in May 1945 suffering from battle fatigue. He spent time in Australian Hospital Ship *Manunda* with an infection and was eventually evacuated by air to

⁸ Hollandia was a port on the north coast of New Guinea, part of the Netherland East Indies.

the 2nd/14th Australian General Hospital in Townsville on 25 June 1945. On 13 July 1945 he was transferred to 102nd Australian General Hospital in Melbourne.

He was discharged from the army on 25 October 1945.

He re-joined the CRB and became 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 (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 Allan Owen, VX50695

Allan enlisted in the Australian Army on 17 March 1941 at Brunswick. He was born in June 1915 in Terang in the Western District of Victoria. Prior to enlisting, Allan was working in the building trade which was classified as an essential service. On his Attestation Form he described himself as a 'Roofing Fixer'. He worked on projects at the University of Melbourne, Puckapunyal barracks, Somers and Yallourn camps and the Ammunition Factory in Footscray.

Immediately after enlisting, Allan was transferred to the Signals Training Depot at Balcombe. Signallers were soldiers specializing in military communications, mainly operating wireless communication systems and equipment, to keep commanders informed of troop movements,

battle progress, supply lines and the like. They also conveyed information from the front to the command line and the field headquarters.



Allan Owen's enlistment photograph – 1941.

On completion of four month's training in Balcombe, Allan was transferred back to Royal Park and soon after he embarked for the Middle East in September 1941. He was attached to the 1st Australian Corps of Signals. His archive does not provide any indication of where he served in the Middle East but the Corp's memorial in Rocky Creek, Queensland states that it served in Egypt, Libya, Tobruk, Cyrenaica, Palestine and Syria.

His name is not on the Honour Roll of the Rats of Tobruk but it is certain that he served in Egypt at some stage because he and his comrades often told stories of them riding a donkey down one of the main streets of Cairo. During his army years he had the nickname of 'Spud' and one of his mates drew a portrait of him – which Allan kept for life. Unfortunately, the artist's name has been lost.



Pencil portrait of Spud Owen – date unknown.

Family collection.

He served in the Middle East from September 1941 until April 1942 when he returned to Adelaide on the Dutch steamer MV *Ittersum*. He arrived back home on 6 April 1942 and four months later, on MS *Sea Witch*, he embarked for Port Moresby in New Guinea.

In New Guinea, he was classified as a Group III Driver Mechanic and it appears that he worked in this capacity (and as a storeman) until he was evacuated back to Australia aboard the MV *Duntroon* in June 1943. He disembarked in Townsville. In October 1943 he was admitted to hospital for renal investigation but he was discharged after a few days only. It must have been a false alarm.

In 1944, he did a refresher course of four weeks duration at the First Australian Army School of Signals and emerged with the classification of 'Distinguished'. It was cited that "*He displayed a sound all round knowledge on entry and has shown marked keenness, and put much hard work into the Course. He is reliable and shows initiative.*"

He was sent to Morotai in Netherlands East Indies in April 1945. He was hospitalised there in September 1945 with otitis externa – a swelling and inflammation of the external ear canal. In January 1946 he returned to Australia on the SS *Georgetown Victory* and disembarked in Brisbane. Incidentally, this ship was built in Baltimore in the USA and was launched in April 1945. On 20 April 1946, she ran aground at Killard Point, County Down in Ireland with 1,400 British naval

rating and RAF personnel aboard. Fortunately, all hands were saved but the ship completely broke up. The ship had a service life of barely one year.



Corporal Allan Owen – date unknown.

Family collection.

There is an entry in his archive which barely draws attention. It simply states that Allan was transferred to Victoria in early January 1946. It doesn't mention the importance of this because in February 1946, Allan married his sweetheart, Eileen May Stewart. Allan and Eileen had met through Allan's army buddy, Bob Mitchell, who was courting Eileen's sister. Allan and Bob were to become brothers-in-law.

Allan was discharged in April 1946.

Allan became a Soldier Settler after the war. As newlyweds, Allan and Eileen first settled in Warrnambool, Allan's home base. They then moved to a bush block near Timboon where Allan cleared their land, established a small dairy herd and also drove the school bus. They then took up a Soldier Settlement block at Alanvale in 1954 and shifted there with four small children. Alanvale is located about half way between Warrnambool and Hamilton in Western Victoria.

Like other settlers, the family lived for about a year in a tin garage while their house was being built. The site was barren, and the orchard that was planted struggled to grow in the strong winds

and without constant water. Shelter belts were planted and in time they helped immensely. Living conditions were primitive for everyone in the early days. Families depended on cast iron stoves for heating and cooking, wood burning coppers for hot water, and oil lamps. Tank water was rationed in dry spells. Eventually, the purchase of a generator enabled powered lighting in each room of the house until electricity was finally connected to the district. The large diesel engine that originally powered the milking plant in the dairy was still relied upon for some years during periodic 'brown-outs' and 'black-outs'. Power supply was not overly reliable in those days.

The first 200 sheep purchased by Allan and Eileen died overnight in a cold snap and times were initially tough as they battled to establish themselves. Their 12 years at Alanvale consisted of mixed farming – dairy, sheep and cropping - which meant they were always busy. Twice daily milking, along with crutching, marking, dipping and shearing sheep and annual ploughing, sowing, fertilizer spreading and harvesting of crops made for a huge workload, but Allan and Eileen always believed that “being your own boss was worth at least 10 quid a week”. The children also pitched in by collecting the eggs and the kindling, progressing to helping with milking, rounding up sheep, helping in the shearing shed, schooling the horses, feeding the dogs and so on. Often work became a game, such as racing each other when turning the haybales – first to the middle of the paddock was the winner. They made a sled for the pony in order to gather timber from the plantations for their annual bonfires.

Allan was a lover of horses and dogs. He always preferred a horse and cart to tractor when it came to feeding livestock and patrolling the farm. He kept a draught horse and several riding horses. When the children grew, he bought and broke in many Moyne Falls ponies for constant use by his children. For a time, he and Eileen bred Labradors, some of which became guide dogs, and he kept several faithful working dogs. His dogs were all well trained and sought after by other farmers.

But when the big drought of 1967 hit, Allan had to find work elsewhere. He came to the Country Roads Board on the Regional Economic Development Scheme (REDS). This was a scheme to assist struggling farmers to support their families. In the Western District, REDS was used to clean up highway reserves and make them more accessible for fire-fighting units.

Allan was a top worker and stayed on in Warrnambool Division as a bridge worker until he retired in the 1980s. He was the relief overseer when the normal precast yard overseer was on leave.

I received great assistance from Glyn Jones (ex-Bridge Engineer Warrnambool) and Allan's son, David – who also worked for VicRoads. Glyn said that “*Whilst the records are factual, they cannot express the respect and affection that we who worked with him felt.*”

Allan died in Warrnambool in 2008 aged 93.

Lieutenant Clement (Clem) Charles Perrin, V390980

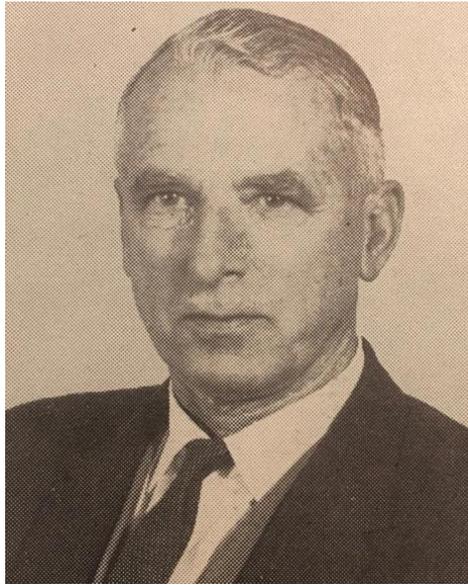
Clement was born in Brunswick in 1904 and he enlisted in May 1942 at the age of 38. He enlisted in Benalla. The electoral roll for 1931 indicates that Clem was living in Benalla where he may have been working for the CRB. That was also the year that he married Christina Mary Joske.

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 fire heaters". 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 embarked on HMT *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 S.S. *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 three and a half years in the Militia.



David Proudfoot's paybook photograph.

The 2nd/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 Bombardier, 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, but the regiment is recorded as having served in Egypt, Palestine, Lebanon and Syria.

He returned 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. 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.

Corporal Keith Thomas Pullin, VX23150

Keith was taken as a prisoner of war by the Germans and his story is told in Chapter 10.

Sapper Wilfred James Quonoey, VX1124466 (V326443, 428658, VX503902, 3/45163, 3/2325)

Wilfred had more service numbers than any other person that I investigated and I am not sure how to interpret it all. The first Attestation Form in May 1942 states that Wilfred joined the 65th Anti-Aircraft Company of the Royal Australian Engineers and was allocated a service number of VX1124466. It also shows that Wilfred had previously joined the Army Reserve where his service number was V326443.

In a later Attestation Form (dated 31 December 1946) recording Wilfred's application to re-enlist in the Interim Army after the war, it shows he served as a Sapper in the Army (V326443 and VX112446) in the 65th Anti-Aircraft Company and as a Flying Officer in the RAAF (428658). On this form, a new service number of VX503902 was recorded.

In yet a later Attestation Form (dated 6 December 1949) Wilfred applied to join the permanent military forces and his service number was 3/2325. On this form he was asked if he was still serving and he replied in the affirmative with a service number of 3/45163 as a Sergeant Signaller in 1 Battalion Royal Australian Regiment.

This can be simplified as follows. Wilfred joined the Army Reserve as a young man and then enlisted in the 2nd AIF. After seven months in the army, he sought and received a transfer to the RAAF. After discharge from the RAAF, Wilfred re-enlisted in Australia's Interim Army. After the war, Australia's wartime military structures were demobilised and the 2nd AIF was disbanded, although a small cadre of its personnel became part of the Interim Army that was established in 1947, from which the Australian Regular Army was formed in 1948.

Wilfred was born in Wodonga on 23 April 1924 and enlisted on 11 May 1942. He spent all of his first army service training in Victoria before joining the RAAF in December 1942.

His service in the RAAF is described in Chapter 7.

After the war, he re-enlisted in December 1946 in the Interim Army.



Wilfred Quonoey's paybook photograph – 1946.

In his second stint in the army, Wilfred served in the AIF from 7 January 1947 to 30 June 1947 and in the Interim Army – serving in Japan - from 1 July 1947 to 28 October 1948. He was discharged from Eastern Command in March 1950 on compassionate grounds. His brother, who was the Airport Manager at Kingsford Smith Aerodrome, wrote to General Perryman seeking Wilfred's discharge. He explained that, at the end of the war, his father assisted Wilfred's other three brothers in setting them up on farms in the Kiewa district. Wilfred, the youngest son had recently been discharged from the RAAF and decided to put in time with the Army and went to Japan. While he was there a property came up for sale and while nothing was finalised, they hoped to purchase it. He noted that the property was on the Kiewa River only a few miles from the Kiewa Hydro Electric Scheme and all available labour had been swallowed up by the State Electricity Commission because of the high wages and amenities offering.

Apparently, the sale did not go through so Wilfred joined the CRB as a clerk. He eventually became a road construction overseer with the CRB in Benalla Division. 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 subsequently divorced and he later remarried.

However, while working with the CRB, Wilfred kept his connection to the Army alive by joining 22nd Construction Regiment. In 1950, the CRB, State Rivers and Water Supply Commission and the Metropolitan Board of Works, raised this regiment which was the first in the Supplementary Reserve of the Royal Australian Engineers. The Chairman of the CRB, Lieutenant Colonel I. J. O'Donnell was its first Commanding Officer. He served in the regiment until February 1962.

Wilfred died in 2004 aged 79.

Lance Corporal Ernst (Ernie) Fritz Albert Renz, V516640

Ernie was the Specifications Engineer in Bridge Branch in the 1960s and it was widely known that he was born into a famous German circus family. Circus Renz was established in Berlin in 1842 by Ernst Jakob Renz. It existed until 1897. It was not a travelling circus but it operated in buildings in Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen, Breslau and Vienna. Today several circus companies in Germany

still use the family name Renz. Among them are Circus Universal Renz and Zirkus Renz Manege – the two biggest.

I was told by one of his colleagues, Ozzie Kayak, that Ernie had been in Africa and that he had said that he had never fired a shot at any time during the war. Ernie had a severe limp which caused him to walk with an exaggerated rocking motion. He told Ozzie that he broke his leg when he fell from a truck.

I found Lance Corporal Ernst Renz on the DVA nominal roll. He was born on 23 November 1904 and when he enlisted in the Australian Army in September 1944, he gave his home address as Berlin, Germany. You can imagine how that would be received. It was crossed out in pencil and overwritten by '77 Little Flinders Street, Melbourne'. The DVA nominal roll said that he was born in BLN⁹-Charlottenburg in Germany in 1904 and that he enlisted in the 8th Employment Company. His next of kin was Mathilda Pickenbach. She was probably his mother as no one had ever heard of Ernie being married.

I also found a record of Ernst Renz – born in 1904 - who departed from Hamburg in Germany in 1933 bound for Lagos, Nigeria, aboard the *Reggestroom*. The passenger list stated that he was an engineer. I am certain it is our Ernie.

Ernie's full story is contained in his file at the National Archives of Australia. Apart from the details already mentioned, it showed that his occupation was 'engineer' and his religion was 'Church of England'. This latter claim, I suggest, is false. I think it is more likely that he was Jewish – for reasons explained below. His health was poor. During his service, he was medically classified as 'D' – which is the least healthy category in the army – and it states 'coronary sclerosis'.

The archive also contains his Certificate of Registration of Alien issued by Special Branch. It was issued on 12 September 1940. It gives the date of his arrival in Australia as 3 September 1940 and his former place of abode as '6 Labuyot (?) Street, Lagos, Nigeria'. His nationality was stateless (formerly Germany) and he arrived in Melbourne on 3 September 1940 aboard the SS *Dunera*¹⁰. His current place of abode was 'No. 2 Internment Camp Tatura'. On the back of the card were listed changes of address. They were all Internment Camps.

⁹ BLN is an abbreviation for Berlin.

¹⁰ The Certificate of Registration incorrectly named the ship SS *Dunera* where the prefix stands for Steam Ship. However the correct prefix is HMT – meaning Hired Military Transport.



Ernie Renz's portrait in his Certificate of Registration of Alien – September 1940.

His internment number is draped around his neck.

This record shows that Ernie disembarked in Melbourne whereas the majority of the refugees went on to Sydney arriving there three days later¹¹. He was then entrained to Tatura in Northern Victoria.

HMT *Dunera* was a British passenger ship which became notorious for the controversial transportation of thousands of 'enemy aliens' to Australia. The British government had set up processes to investigate these aliens in order to distinguish Nazi sympathisers from refugees who had fled Europe from Nazism and Fascism. About 65,000 were regarded as 'friendly', another 6,800 had restrictions placed on them but were left at liberty, and about 600 were declared 'unreliable'. However, when the war reached the stage where Britain stood alone against the Axis powers, fears arose about the possibility of invasion. The British press howled for all aliens to be interned, regardless of their status, and Winston Churchill decided they should be deported. He was concerned that they may help the Germans to plan the invasion of Britain. Australia agreed

¹¹ Ernie was one of 94 men who disembarked in Melbourne. These were mainly the politically active Category 'A' German Nazis and Italian Fascists but also included other 'doubtful' refugees. Some of the most remarkable of all the Dunera Boys were in this group of men and nobody knows for sure why they were put off in Melbourne. They may have been chosen at random knowing that there was not room for everyone in the final destination of Hay Camp, which was still under construction.

to take some, turning back the clock over a hundred and fifty years to receive unwanted people from Britain to be gaoled on the other side of the world.

The *Dunera* left Liverpool in July 1940 with 2,562 enemy aliens – including 450 German and Italian prisoners of war and about 20 Nazi sympathisers. The remainder were German and Italian civilians who were anti-Nazi and mostly Jewish refugees. This is why I suggest that Ernie was most likely Jewish rather than Church of England as stated later in his enlistment papers for the Australian Army. I doubt there would be many Anglicans in Germany at that time – if ever. A few of the refugees were making a second voyage. Their first attempt on the SS *Arandora Star* was a disaster. The ship was torpedoed *en route* to Canada resulting in a great loss of life. The *Dunera* set sail a week later.

Despite the horrors of the persecution of Jewish people by the Nazis, xenophobia existed in some parts of Australian society at that time. In a letter written to the Prime Minister in 1940¹² the correspondent stated, ‘... *we have enough of the scum here already, too many in fact. I am not a vindictive woman - these Aliens are God’s creatures just the same as we are. All the same I sincerely trust that U-boats get every one of them.*’ So much for Australian Christian values!

The voyage of the *Dunera* rivalled the original convict ships to New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land in terms of overcrowding and ill treatment of its passengers. Over 300 poorly trained members of the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps and the ship’s crew swelled the complement on board to almost twice the *Dunera*’s capacity as a troop carrier of 1,600. The passengers were not informed of their destination and it was not until the ship first docked in Africa, that they had an inkling they were headed for Australia.

The commander of the escort troop was Lieutenant-Colonel William Scott – a veteran of the First World War. He was promoted from Major to Lieutenant-Colonel on his appointment to the *Dunera* command. First Lieutenant John O’Neill VC MM was Scott’s assistant. As a Sergeant, he was awarded the VC in 1918 in France for conspicuous gallantry. Scott remained aloof from his scruffy prisoners, leaving O’Neill to do most of the dirty work. Many of the troops under their command were ‘Soldiers of the King’s Pardon’ who had been released from [prison](#) to help in the war effort, but others were regular soldiers from other regiments.

¹² Refer to ‘*Soldiers and Aliens: Men in the Australian Army’s Employment Companies during World War II*’ by June Factor.



Lieutenant-Colonel Scott (left) parading his men at Sydney Showgrounds in September 1940 and First Lieutenant John O'Neill VC MM.

The ship was grossly overcrowded. Toilet and bathing facilities were inadequate and dysentery was rampant. Many had to sleep on the floor or on tables. Beatings from the soldiers was a daily occurrence and one prisoner was bayoneted in the stomach when he attempted to go to the toilet on deck – which was out of bounds to the internees. The British guards robbed the internees of any valuables and threw most of their baggage overboard.

Using the tune “My bonnie flew over the ocean ...” learned from their British warders, internees regularly sang *“My luggage went into the ocean, My luggage went into the sea, My luggage was thrown in the ocean, Oh, bring back my luggage to me!”*⁴. Most internees were kept below decks throughout the voyage, except for daily 10-minute exercise periods, during which internees would walk around the deck under heavy guard; during one such period, a guard smashed beer bottles on the deck so that the internees would have to walk on the shards. In contrast to the Army personnel, the ship's crew and officers showed kindness to the internees, and some later testified at the soldiers' courts martial.

One shining light among the British was the medical officer aboard, Lieutenant A. Brooks. He said; “The first thing that struck me on the wharf at Liverpool was a colonel- it was Scott – standing on the brig like Nelson, or some other admiral, taking the salute, supervising a crowd of civilians with battered suitcases as they trooped on board.” Brooks' wonderment increased when he

witnessed the treatment of the passengers. Brooks had a 100-bed hospital on board but only one assistant – a sergeant – but he was able to recruit three doctors from the internees one of whom was a distinguished heart specialist. He also recruited a few medical students. It was a tribute to his dedication that only three internees died on the voyage. One committed suicide (by jumping overboard), one as the result of a fall (although some thought he had received a beating) and one from a pre-existing condition (died from cardiac arrest). Brooks also arranged for a chute to be rigged up to force fresh air down to the internees below deck.

Because their luggage had been jettisoned, the refugees did not change their clothing for the entire eight weeks of the journey – much of it through tropical climes. As a result of washing in salt water, the clothing became ragged and Brooks was prevented from finding fresh clothing by one of the Army captains.



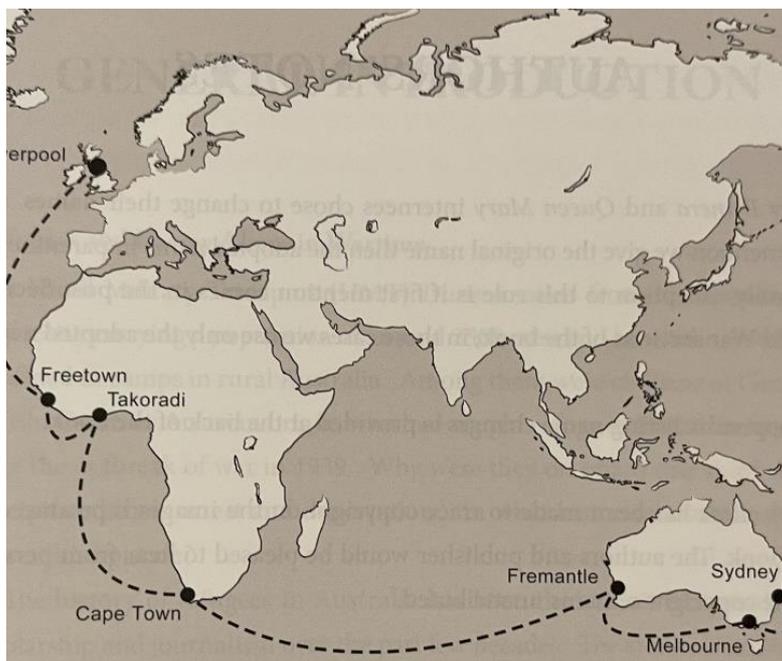
A drawing by an internee, Hans Rothe, of a fellow traveller on the Dunera.

To illustrate Lieutenant-Colonel Scott's attitude towards his charges, at the end of the voyage, he recorded his views thus:

"I would now like to give my personal views on (a) Nazi Germans, (b) Italians and (c) German and Austrian Jews.

- (a) *Having warned this group prior to sailing of my methods should trouble arise through them, their behaviour has been exemplary. They are of a fine type, honest and straightforward, and extremely well-disciplined. I am quite prepared to admit however, that they are highly dangerous.*
- (b) *Italians. This group are filthy in their habits, without a vestige of discipline, and are cowards to a degree.*
- (c) *Can only be described as subversive liars, demanding and arrogant, and I have taken steps to bring them into my line of thought. They will quote any person from a prime minister to the President of the United States as personal references, and they are certainly not to be trusted in word or deed.”*

I don't know the circumstances of Ernst Renz boarding the *Dunera*. The ship stopped at three places in Africa – Freetown (Sierra Leone), Takadori (Ghana) and Cape Town (South Africa). Takadori is 600 kilometres from Lagos but there are two countries in between – Togo and Benin. His card cites his previous place of residence as Nigeria so I doubt if Ernie went to England before joining the ship. Of the three African stop overs, Takadori is the most likely place he boarded ship, solely because it was the closest to Nigeria. However, if this was the case, there are many questions unanswered. How did he know that the *Dunera* was on its way? How did he get aboard seeing that the ship was dangerously overloaded and the plight of its passengers was so deplorable? How did he talk his way aboard? Perhaps I am wrong. He may have left Africa earlier to seek refuge in England where he became an enemy alien.



The route of the HMT *Dunera* – 1940.

When the *Dunera* arrived in Sydney in September 1940, the first Australian to board the ship was an army medical officer, Alan Frost. He was appalled at what he saw and submitted a damning report to the British authorities.

After disembarking the ship, the wretched refugees were put on a train to travel the 750 kilometres to the rural town of Hay in central New South Wales. Their treatment on the train was in stark contrast to the horrors of the *Dunera*. They were given food and fruit, and Australian soldiers offered them cigarettes. There was even one story of a soldier asking one of the internees to hold his rifle while he rolled his cigarette.

Meanwhile, Lt-Col William Scott and his seven officers were lauded by the press and public officialdom in Sydney, attending parties and *soirées* as the guests of honour. The British soldiers were offered free public transport and entry into cinemas: they were also taken on excursions to the Blue Mountains. This largesse was to change dramatically on their return to England.

News of the dreadful voyage gradually leaked back to Britain and heated exchanges were conducted in the House of Commons. Colonel Victor Cazalet said: "*Frankly I shall not feel happy, either as an Englishman or as a supporter of this government, until this bespattered page of our history has been cleaned up and rewritten.*" Churchill also came to regret the hasty deportations and he established a fund to compensate the *Dunera* passengers for the loss of their belongings.

A secret court of enquiry was held in Chelsea on 20 May 1941 but an embargo of 100 years before the release of details means that it is far too late for justice and no one will care about it. The reports of the Australian Medical Officer Alan Frost, and from Australian Quakers led to a court martial for Scott and two of his officers. Not one other officer responsible for the cruel treatment on board the *Dunera* faced any charges.

Lt-Col William Scott was found guilty on just the one charge, that of failing to hold a proper enquiry into the violent treatment of one internee (just the one). His punishment was a 'severe reprimand'. No other charges were ever brought against Scott or his men.

Regimental Sergeant Major Albert Bowles was the most brutal officer aboard. Twenty one charges were brought against him mainly relating to the theft of property. Not one charge of assault was

laid. He was found guilty of only two charges and was reduced to the ranks, jailed for a year and then dismissed from the army.

Another, Sergeant Helliwell faced four charges, two of assault, one of failing to safeguard internees from ill treatment and one of disobeying orders by failing to supply blankets and water. He was found guilty only of disobeying orders, and received a severe reprimand.

Not one internee was summoned as a witness for the victims of theft and violence, or to relate their own experiences to the court. This farce of a court martial was described by members of the House of Commons as “*a hushing-up operation*”, and “*a complete cover-up*” of the true facts.

In Hay, the internees set up and administered their own township with ‘Hay’ currency (which is now a valuable collectors’ item) and an unofficial university. When Japan entered the war in 1941, the prisoners were reclassified as ‘friendly aliens’ and released by the Australian Government. About a thousand volunteered to join the Australian Military Forces and, having shown themselves to be loyal, were offered residency at the end of the war. Some returned to Britain, many of them joining the armed forces there. Others were recruited as interpreters or into the intelligence services. Not all of them suffered the barbs of prejudice mentioned above. Many of them expressed appreciation of the Australian families who welcomed them into their homes and the kindness extended to them. They were able to attend the local dances and some enjoyed assignations with local girls.



‘Hay’ currency – two shillings.

I have not exaggerated this brief history of the Dunera Boys for dramatic effect. In fact, I have been deliberately restrained in describing these events. The book by Cyril Pearl mentioned in the bibliography is a thoroughly researched history. Another, also in the bibliography, is a more modest work but it provides an excellent potted history of the saga. It was written by Roy Wilcock for the Quakers.

As mentioned earlier, Ernie was interned in Tatura in northern Victoria, and it was from here that he enlisted in the 8th Employment Company. The Employment Companies were not armed. They were sometimes referred to as soldiers without guns. Some were located on the border of New South Wales and Victorian, where the folly of 19th Century state rivalry led to the stupidity of different rail gauges between the states. Employment Company soldiers worked on the trains at the border off-loading and re-loading military supplies including food, fuel, armaments and ammunition. Across the country, parties of Employment Company men worked in factories and on the wharves, repaired roads, drove trucks and undertook all the other tasks required to support the Army. But the Employment Companies barely rate a mention in the history of the war, and the 15,000 men who worked in them have been forgotten in history.



An 8th Employment Company working party unloading goods at a military warehouse in Melbourne.

Ernie Renz, a German engineer born in Berlin, worked in this company and was later to become a respected servant of the Country Roads Board. He lived a contented life in a single-fronted cottage in Johnson Street, Hawthorn where he indulged his passion in growing roses.

He certainly would not have fired a gun in the 8th Australian Employment Company. This was one of 39 Employment Companies raised during the war, comprising about 15,000 men. The 8th worked in Victoria and Southern NSW. The men in these companies carried out the hard physical labour on the home front to support the national war effort. Sometimes they were called Labour Companies or Works Companies. Eleven of these companies comprised 'aliens' or non-British citizens.

The 8th Employment Company was probably the best-known of these companies because of its connection to the 'Dunera Boys'. The companies were considered to be part of the Citizen Military Force (CMF) and Ernie served 870 days up to his discharge in February 1947. His archive is only two pages long. It shows him being 'attached to strength' on 19 September 1944. It shows a few brief periods of hospitalisation. One of these – a broken finger - was caused during duty when a brass rod fell on his hand. Another, more ominous, was when he was admitted to hospital for cardio-vascular treatment and his health status was down-graded to 'D'.



Members of the 8th Employment Company
Albury, 1942. Ernie could be one of them.

Ernie was discharged on 5 February 1947 and I presume that he was also discharged from internment at about the same time. I am not sure when he joined the CRB but it is certain that Ernie was working in the drafting office of the Bridge Division of the CRB in 1949. Stan Hodgson met him there when he joined the CRB. Ernie was a Clerk of Works (serving under Bill Brake) on

the widening of the bridges on the Midland Highway between Shepparton and Nalinga in late 1953.

It is also certain that he was involved in the raising of the Bethanga Bridge in 1961. The Bethanga Bridge is a steel truss road bridge that carries the Riverina Highway across Lake Hume, an artificial lake on the Murray River. It crosses the border between NSW and Victoria linking the towns of Bellbridge and Bethanga in Victoria with the city of Albury in NSW. It was built between 1927 and 1930 as a joint venture between NSW and Victoria as part of the Hume Dam project. It consists of nine spans of 82 metres, with each span supported between double reinforced concrete pylons by a riveted steel camel back Pratt truss - plus a 14-metre approach span on the Albury side.

The bridge is also unusual in that it was a major bridge built by other than a state road or rail authority. It was erected by the water authorities of Victoria and NSW, organisations which otherwise were only responsible for smaller bridges needed to cross the drainage and irrigation channels in their jurisdictions.

In 1961, the bridge deck and truss structure were raised 300 mm in response to the upgrading of Hume Dam to increase its storage capacity. Because of its unique location, over the waters of a dam with the border running down the centre of the body of water, the Bethanga Bridge is the only built structure shared by both NSW and Victoria - all the other Murray River bridges are in NSW. Ernie played an on-site role in this process when the Country Roads Board was allocated this work on behalf of the Victorian State Rivers and Water Supply Commission.



Bethanga Bridge in 2007 during the drought.

He died on 15 August 1969 in the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital after a long illness.

By the end of the war, of the 2,562 refugees deported on *Dunera*, 913 remained in Australia – settling mostly in Melbourne. Ernie was one of them. Thirteen had died and the remainder were repatriated to England or elsewhere. Their contribution to Australian society is significantly over-represented in fields such as music, art, mathematics, academia, photography, writing, history, engineering, philosophy, film, sport, education and politics. But most made their way through life doing the best they could for their families and their new homeland. The influence on Australia of that one ship of poorly-treated refugees was enormous.

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.

Caleb was born in Australia (the only child of Australia's famous impressionist painter, Tom Roberts) but had spent most of his life living in England where he was educated at St Paul's School in London and The Royal Military Academy in Woolwich. After his First World War service with

the British Army and, after working for the British Ministry of Transport, he arrived back in Melbourne and joined the Country Roads Board as Assistant Highways Engineer. This was 1925. Three years later he was appointed Highways 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 2nd/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 with the CRB as Chief Engineer. 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.

Nora'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 on 26 May 1940, he described his occupation as 'Labourer'. His home address was in the small town of Wahgunyah.

I had some difficulty in reading Charlie's archive. Some of the hand writing is difficult to read and it is not in chronological order.



Charlie's enlistment photo - 1940.

Charlie served in four overseas campaigns – Ambon (from 13 December 1941 to 27 May 1942), the Middle East (from 23 August 1942 to 25 February 1943), New Guinea (from 1 August 1943 to 4 March 1944¹³) and Borneo (from 8 April 1945 to 16 September 1945). He also spent time in Darwin (from 3 April 1941 to 12 December 1941) which the Army considered as military-like conditions in respect of the award of medals.

Charlie enlisted in the 2nd/21st Battalion and undertook initial training at Shepparton, Seymour and Bonegilla. From April 1941 to December 1941, he was stationed at Darwin. 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 from Darwin to Ambon as part of 'Gull Force' in December 1941 following the Japanese invasion of Malaya.

The Australian military command should never have committed to this campaign. They realised from the start that the defence of the island was a lost cause. Our army was ill-equipped with no battle experience or significant air and naval support – against an enemy force that was overwhelming. The only rationale was to delay the rapid southerly advance of the Japanese Imperial Army. Unsurprisingly, Ambon was captured by the Japanese in just a few days despite determined resistance. The surrender occurred on 3 February 1942. The battle casualties were

¹³ A letter in his archive incorrectly states this date to be 16 September 1945.

fairly moderate. It was what happened afterwards that makes Ambon one of the darkest chapters in Australia's military history.

For a fortnight after the surrender by Australian and Dutch troops, the Japanese randomly chose more than 300 prisoners and summarily executed them at the airfield. They were bayoneted, clubbed to death or beheaded. None survived. Some prisoners were transported to Hainan Island in China and of the 582 who remained on Ambon, 405 died of malnutrition, disease and exhaustion from overwork.

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.

After the Armistice, many of the Japanese commanders were found guilty of war crimes. Four officers were executed and one was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. Many others received lighter sentences.

In the entry for Charlie in the Honour Roll for Gull Force it states that he 'Escaped before capture'.

His archive for this part of his service is scant. It said:

Embarked for overseas service	13/12/41
Disembarked	17/12/41 Ambon
Missing	2/2/42
Not missing – returned to Australia	22/5/42

The original strength of Gull Force was 1,131 men. Only about 30 escaped and Charlie was one of them. About 300 survivors were repatriated to Australia after the war.

I am not sure how Charlie evaded capture and made his way back to Australia but it is certain that it would have to been in small boats – aided by Indonesian sailors. This was a perilous task involving navigating under the constant threat of Japanese patrols and in flimsy crafts – probably island hopping and travelling at night to avoid detection. It is recorded that some used canoes.

They hid on small islands during the day and then resumed their island hopping under the cover of darkness.

Escaping from Ambon required courage, improvisation and luck. Dutch naval personnel and Indonesian boatmen risked their lives ferrying soldiers between the islands. The Australian soldiers themselves displayed heroism in their attempts to evade capture. Some did not make it. Australia owes a huge debt of gratitude to the Indonesian people who guided our men home at this terrible time.

Ambon is a small island just south of a bigger island, Seram (formerly called Ceram). The escapees probably aimed to get to Ceram first from where they were assisted to get to Timor or the north coast of Australia. As you can see on the map below, it would take considerable skill to negotiate these hostile waters – especially in primitive vessels.



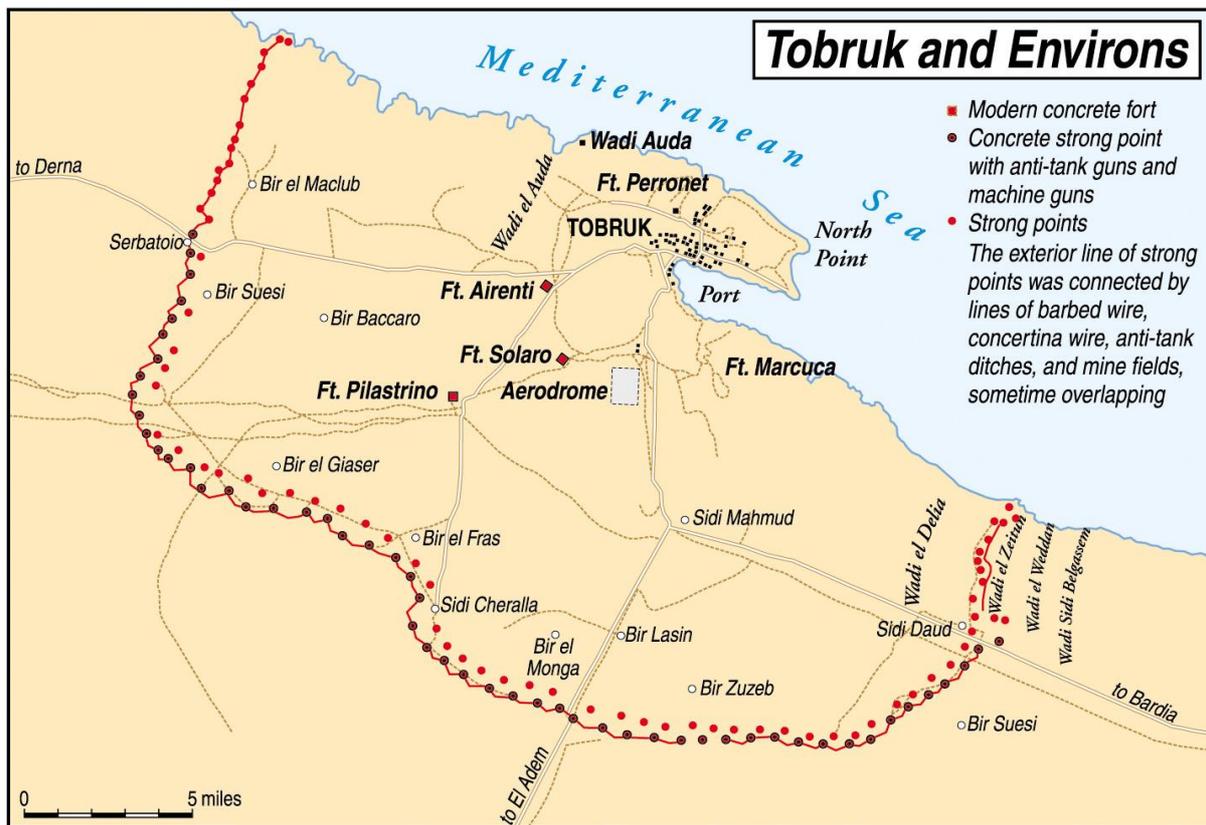
So, Charlie survived to fight another day. Nothing was heard of him for nearly four months. I remember him as a cheerful and easy-going character and when I was researching his story, I was plagued with thoughts of how gut-wrenching this must have been for an innocent 20-year-old lad from the sleepy settlement of Wahgunyah.

After his return to Australia, Charlie was drafted into the 2nd/24th Infantry Battalion. This was a Victorian Battalion – first raised in Wangaratta in July 1940. Little did Charlie suspect then that the 2/24th went on to suffer the highest number of battle casualties of any 2nd AIF infantry battalion.

Charlie departed Sydney on 23 August 1942 arriving in the Middle East on 8 October 1942. This is a fairly lengthy transit time and I suspect that the ship may have had a stopover in Bombay – as was often the case. At the time of his embarkation, Charlie had been promoted from a Private to a Corporal but there is no clue in his file as to where he was stationed in the Middle East. However, it is recorded that his battalion was in Syria before deployment to Tobruk. Charlie is mentioned in the Roll of Honour for the Rats of Tobruk and in that roll, his rank is cited as Lance Sergeant.

Despite the successes of the British offensive in north Africa early in 1941, the German Afrika Korps counter-attacked and the Allied Forces fell back to Tobruk. 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, Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery – promoted to General in November 1942.

The battalion saw extensive service at Tobruk, manning the Red Line at a number of different locations. The Red Line was Tobruk's outer line of defence and consisted of anti-tank ditches, concrete pillboxes, barbed wire barriers and mines. More than 45 kilometres long, it formed a semi-circle around the town – as shown in the map below. In October 1943 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.



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. This is confusing in that on the night of this incident – 30 April 1941 – Charlie was in Australia some

months before his departure to Ambon. He did not arrive in the Middle East until October 1942 and by April 1943, he was already back in Australia. I cannot explain this anomaly.

Alamein was an uplifting but bloody success for the Allies and by November 1942, 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 battalion left Alamein during the first week of December and moved to Gaza in Palestine. It left its camp in Palestine in January 1943 for the Suez Canal on the return voyage to Australia. The archive shows Charlie disembarking on 1 February 1943 aboard a ship named '*L4*' arriving in Melbourne on 25 February 1943. On his arrival home, his rank reverted to Private.

Although not mentioned in his archive, Charlie undertook jungle warfare training in the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland - preparing the battalion for the forthcoming New Guinea campaign. It was from near here (Cairns) that Charlie embarked aboard HMAS *Westralia* on 1 August 1943 and disembarked in Milne Bay in New Guinea three days later. He was promoted to Acting Lance Corporal. The file does not provide specific details about his whereabouts in New Guinea but it shows that in February 1944 he departed Finschhafen aboard the USS *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 the horrors of Ambon and Tobruk and served in the tropical heat of New Guinea, and yet the Army nicks him for wanting a day off.

A history of the campaign of the 2nd/24th Battalion in New Guinea showed that it participated in the amphibious landing at Red Beach, north-west of Lae, and fought battles around Lae, Finschhafen, and Sattelberg before returning to Australia. Charlie was involved somewhere in this theatre.

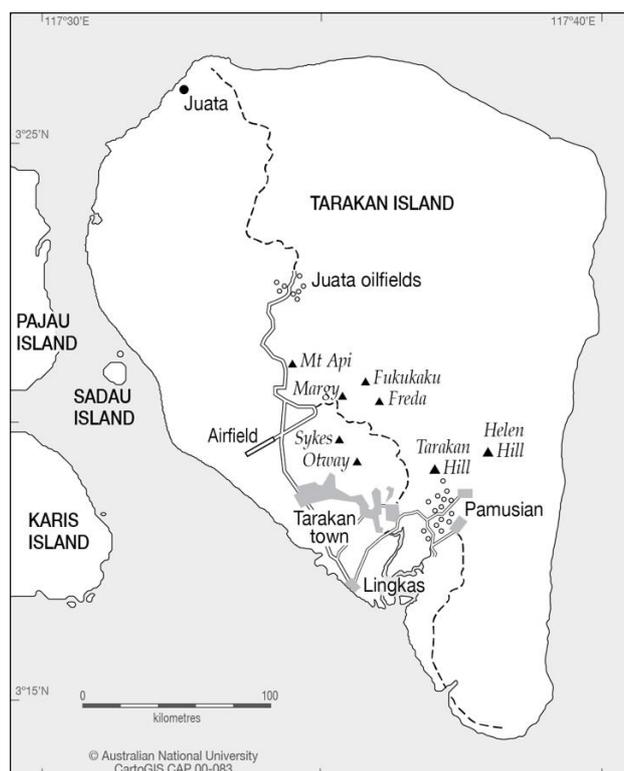
After some leave, the 2nd/24th reformed in Queensland at Ravenshoe for what proved to be an extensive training period. Despite the war drawing to a close, the battalion had one last campaign to complete.

Charlie was hospitalised twice 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?

In April 1945 the 9th Division – including the 2nd/24th - was transported to Morotai in Netherlands East Indies. Morotai was the staging point for all Australian and allied operations in Netherlands East Indies including the proposed amphibious landings on Borneo – part of Operation Oboe. This campaign was a joint operation between Australian and Dutch forces. The objective was to attack the island of Tarakan off the north east coast of Borneo to capture the airfield so that it could be used as a base to support further allied offensives in Borneo. The map below shows the layout of Tarakan Island.

After his arrival in Morotai, Charlie’s promotion to Lance Sergeant was confirmed.



This was to be Charlie’s fourth campaign of the war - after Ambon, the Middle East and New Guinea. After the massive pre-invasion air and naval bombardment of the beaches at the southern end of the island near the town of Tarakan, there was little opposition to the beach landings. 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. They fought along Crazy Ridge and, on 20 June 1945, the Australians captured their last main objective, Hill 90 – although small-scale skirmishes continued. This was only achieved after the hill had been hit by 21,000 artillery rounds and 600 mortar bombs. All that was left to do was to clear Japanese stragglers from the oil fields to the north.

The damage to the airfield at Tarakan was so heavy that it took eight weeks to prepare, by which time the war was over. It could be argued that the casualties suffered by the Allies in this battle – including 225 Australians killed and 669 wounded – were in vain. Japanese casualties were even higher with 1,540 killed and 252 captured. There are many such stories in war.

On 21 June 1945, Charlie was wounded in action with a shrapnel wound to his left leg. This was terrible luck as it occurred a day after the taking of Hill 90. It must have been during one of the skirmishes mentioned above. The archive does not record where this happened but he was evacuated to a Hospital Ship at Tarakan which transported him back to Morotai. From there, he was flown back to Australia. 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.

His wound was in his calf and tibia. He spent the best part of 14 months in hospital and he finished up in Heidelberg in Melbourne. He was discharged from hospital on 30 August 1946.

Following Japan's surrender and the end of the war in August 1945, 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 Robinson,
Assistant Principal Surveyor – CRB – 1970.

After his discharge from the Army on 5 September 1946, he walked into the Exhibition Building and asked for a job. He started as a Chainman in a survey party. 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 the Fitzroy Football Club. He was also active in the Municipal Officers' Association at State and Federal levels. Charlie was a Life Member of the RSL, Life Governor of the Box Hill and District Hospital, and a Life Governor of the Victorian Blind Institute. He was also a committee member and President of the VicRoads Association. Not bad for a labourer from Wahgunyah!

Charlie died in July 2002.

Private Edward (Ted) Thomas Roe, VX112313, V146357

Ted was born in Benalla in November 1909 and enlisted in October 1942. He was a carpenter and at the time of his enlistment, he was nearly 33 years old. He was not married.

He served in Darwin from 16 February 1943 to 12 April 1944 and in North Borneo between 19 January 1945 and 25 January 1946. The trade group in which he was employed was Group I Shipwright.

Ted initially joined the CMF on 18 February 1942 (V146357), serving in the 59th Battalion, until he was enlisted into the Army on 21 October 1942 (VX112313). He was classed as fit for Class II duties which meant that there were limitations placed on his service – possibly due to his age. During his service with the CMF, Ted seemed to be involved in the maritime aspects of the Army. He served for some time in the 5th Docks Operation Company and there is mention of him as a Group III Stevedore. Immediately after his enlistment, Ted moved out to the Northern Territory Forces and later, in April 1944, he was transferred back to South Australia to the 1st Australian Maintenance Company RAE. He was graded as a Group II Carpenter and in December 1943, he was re-graded to a Group I Shipwright.

Ted was attached to 1st Australian Port Maintenance Company, 9th Platoon which operated at Port Moresby, Buna, Lae and Finschhafen in New Guinea. In May 1944, the unit was restructured as the 1st Port Construction Company and in August 1944, it was withdrawn to Queensland to prepare for its role in liberating Borneo. Ted left for Mototai aboard the SS *Duntroon* in April 1945 for Hollandia and Morotai and landed in Balikpapan in July on landing craft LST 613. He remained there until after the war and returned to Australia at the end of January 1946.

As the name implies the Port Maintenance Company was involved in the maintenance and construction of wharves and jetties required for the war effort. Looking through the war diary for the 9th Platoon there were many trades and disciplines in the platoon such as divers, boilermakers, riggers, carpenter/joiners, shipwrights, storemen, painters, drivers, mechanics and the like. Ted's extensive experience in bridge building was probably key to him being placed in this Company.



Balikpapan, Borneo. August 1945. Members of 1st Port Construction Company using a pile driving rig mounted on a floating barge during the construction of a new northern approach to No. 5 Jetty.

He was discharged from the Army in March 1946.

Ted commenced with the CRB in 1947 as a carpenter after working many years in the Benalla area as a bridge contractor. During this time, he built many bridges for the CRB. He was appointed as a bridge overseer for the CRB in charge of bridge construction in the district. He was better known as the overseer in charge of the Benalla precast concrete yard, a position he held for many years before his appointment as Superintendent of Works – Bridges in 1971. His standard of work was perfection and he was renowned for the diligence of his workmanship.

Ted died suddenly in September 1974 having completed 27 years of service with the Board.

Sergeant Lindsay Russell Sibbett, VX2597

Lindsay was born in Richmond in October 1919 and he cited his occupation as ‘optician’s assistant’.

He enlisted on 15 December 1939 at the age of 20. Like every other serviceman, he underwent a medical examination as part of the enlistment process. In his case, he was passed fit for Class I, which is the highest level in the forces.



Lindsay Sibbett's paybook photograph – 1939.

Lindsay was immediately posted to 2/2nd AGH (Australian General Hospital) and was temporarily taken on strength at Puckapunyal and, a few days after joining up he was promoted to Corporal. He returned to Fairfield Hospital for a short stint and then returned to Puckapunyal where he trained as a nursing orderly and field ambulance officer. In March 1940, he was promoted to Temporary Sergeant.

On 15 April 1940, he embarked via HMT Y4 from Melbourne to the Middle East. There is some confusion as to where he disembarked. There is an entry that states Port Said in Egypt but a few entries later there is a corrigendum deleting this entry. At any rate, his rank of Sergeant was confirmed and he was attached to 61 General Hospital for two months. This was a British Military Hospital which was located from July 1940 to July 1941 at Nazareth in Palestine.

From September to December, 1940, he was attached to the 4th New Zealand General Hospital in Palestine – not to be confused with its majestic successor in Helwan, Egypt which opened in July 1941. He re-joined his unit on 10 December 1940 and the next entry shows him being

admitted – in May 1941 – to the 2nd General Hospital in Dimra, Palestine, as a patient. The Medical Board assessed him as temporarily unfit for service.

He embarked from Palestine for another destination in the Middle East (presumably somewhere in Egypt) on 18 August 1941 and from there, on 15 September, back to Melbourne. He was admitted to Caulfield Hospital and later, Heidelberg. He was discharged from the Army in October 1941 as “*Being medically unfit for service, not occasioned by his own default.*” In his discharge paper, it states that he suffered from cerebrospinal meningitis and classified him as a ‘Repat case’.

Cerebrospinal meningitis is an acute inflammation of the meninges of the brain and spinal cord, caused by a specific organism, accompanied by fever and occasionally red spots on the skin. The meninges are the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord. Once infection starts, it can spread rapidly through the body. Without treatment it can cause brain damage in a matter of hours and can be fatal within 24 hours.

It can be caused by specific viruses, bacteria, or fungi that gets transmitted from person to person by sneezing, talking, kissing, or sharing food or drinks. The military, for many reasons, has always been selected as one of the principal occupational classes on which the disease falls most heavily.

I imagine that living and working in hospitals in war zones would be high risk.

Patients with bacterial meningitis have at least two of the four following symptoms: fever, headache, stiff neck, or altered mental status. Other symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, confusion, irritability, delirium, and coma. Even with early diagnosis and adequate treatment, 5% to 10% of patients die, typically within 24 to 48 hours after the onset of symptoms. Bacterial meningitis may result in brain damage, hearing loss or a learning disability in 10% to 20% of survivors.

One serendipitous outcome of Lindsay’s affliction with meningitis is that he married the nurse who cared for him – a shining light in the darkness of suffering.

After the war, Lindsay became a member of the CRB’s Traffic Enforcement Section. Officers working in this section were essentially policemen who enforced transport regulations to ensure safe use of the roads and the preservation of road assets. They were responsible for ensuring that

load limits and vehicle dimensions were respected by the transport industry and that over-weight and over-dimensional loads were transported with appropriate provisions to ensure asset preservation and safety. He worked in the Horsham Division in Western Victoria.

Lindsay was held in great regard by his colleagues. One of them, Ken Sinclair, said he was a great bloke to work with and he was very knowledgeable.

Lindsay died in June 1987 and is buried in the Stawell Cemetery.

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 2nd/1st 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.

Redactions in the Service Files are usually sealed sections deemed to contain information that the person would not like to be placed on the public record. These include a variety of criteria such as illnesses, marital issues, security, criminal offences – to name a few. Some of them have a time limit placed on them before they can be revealed, presumably after the death of the person.

The reason for Ron's discharge was given as "Being medically unfit". But there was a hand written word that stated "Schizophrenia". I surmise that this is the reason that the file was closed. Schizophrenia is not to be confused with shell shock or what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder. Schizophrenia is a mental disorder characterized by hallucinations (typically

hearing voices), delusions and disorganised thinking and behaviour. Symptoms develop gradually and typically begin during young adulthood and rarely resolve.

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 Ernest (Ernie) Henry Smith, V505043

Ernie Smith was Patrolman in Charge in Bairnsdale Patrol. He retired in March 1983 and the following details were provided in Interchange magazine of June 1983. He had 43 years of service with the CRB. After starting in Bairnsdale Division in December 1941, Ernie spent 33 months with a specialist unit in New Guinea during the war.

Assuming he retired at around 65 years of age, his date of birth would be 1918 or thereabouts. If he was born in 1918, and enlisted in 1941, he would have been 22 or 23 years old when he joined the Army. Furthermore, it is likely that he lived in Gippsland.

I think I have found the right Ernie Smith among the 361 Smiths (with a first or second name of Ernest and who enlisted in the Australian Army during the Second World War) – and that is Ernest Henry Smith. He was born on 23 March 1918 in Newmerella in East Gippsland. He married Lorna Elsie Curtis in 1941 and they lived at 8 Swan Street, Bairnsdale. He was over 23 years of age when he joined up and he gave his occupation as 'labourer'. He enlisted at Bairnsdale late in 1941 and passed his medical on 7 January 1942 which meant his early career at the CRB was barely a month.

Ernest Henry Smith served in New Guinea – in two stints between June 1943 and July 1944 and October 1944 and November 1945 – which equates with the report in the Interchange magazine and provides further confidence that he is the right person.

He was attached to the 33rd Works Company and trained initially in Watsonia in Victoria before

transferring to Queensland in May 1943. He embarked in Townsville aboard the SS *Taroona* on 2 June 1943 and disembarked in Port Moresby four days later. There are no further entries in his record until his return to Australia aboard the *Canberra* – leaving Port Moresby on 6 July 1944.

Back in Australia. He transferred to 17 Works Company and embarked on the *Katoomba* in October 1944 and disembarked at Aitape in New Guinea a week later.



Ernie Smith's enlistment photograph – 1942.

He flew back to Australia from Madang in November 1945 and was discharged from the Army in December 1945.

Employment and Works Companies were assembled and deployed to build the infrastructure needed to support military operations. In New Guinea, roads and remote facilities were rudimentary at best and, in some cases, non-existent at the outbreak of war. Ports, railheads, supply dumps, transshipment and handling facilities, roads, transit camps and all manner of temporary accommodation had to be built maintained, moved and rebuilt throughout the war.

Ernie's war time training and experience would have been a great training ground for his role as a road patrolman where he was required to work through floods, storms and fires at all hours to keep the roads safe for the public.

In 1997, Ernie was still living in Swan Street, Bairnsdale, at Number 16, four houses up from his original address at Number 8. He applied for a War Service Pension at that time.

I can't explain why Ernie was never issued with a VX Army number.

Ernie died in June 2017.

Corporal Russell (Russ) Sydney Smith, VX70614

Russell was employed by the CRB as a timekeeper in 1937 and enlisted in the AIF in January 1942 when he was 26 years old. He was born in Heyfield in January 1918 and gave his occupation as 'Ganger'.



Russell Smith's paybook photograph – 1942.

He gave his mother's name as his next of kin but on his Attestation paper this was crossed out and replaced by 'Wife Joan'. Near the end of his archive, it records his marriage to Joan Anderson on 3 November 1945.

Russell was allocated to 2/4th Australian Armoured Regiment Workshops. He was initially located at Broadmeadows and Puckapunyal and in June 1942, he was transferred to Ballarat. As the name implies, the workshops supported the armoured regiment comprising mainly tanks. Russell was then deployed to NSW and Southport in Queensland where the regiment received orders to move to New Guinea. He embarked on SS *Duntroon* on 25 August 1944 for Madang where his regiment provided support to infantry operations against the Japanese. There were two squadrons in the Regiment. B Squadron moved to Bougainville and C Squadron to Aitape. I think Russell was in the latter because there is no mention in the archive of him ever being in Bougainville. It is likely that he took part in the advance towards Wewak and the capture of Niap in January 1945. The tanks assisted in taking Wewak in May but Russell did not participate in this because on 15 January he was admitted to the 2/5th Field Ambulance (a field hospital) suffering from dengue fever – a condition which was to dog him for some time.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne viral disease occurring in tropical and sub-tropical areas such as New Guinea. Symptoms are high fever, rash, muscle and joint pain, headache, pain behind the eyes, bleeding and nausea. Those who become infected a second time are seriously at risk of developing severe disease and shock which can be life threatening. There is no specific medical treatment and victims are usually treated with fluids and pain relief.

In Russell's case, he was evacuated back to Victoria by plane, and he did not return to New Guinea. It was in November 1945 that he married but the archive shows he was hospitalised a number of times towards the end of 1945. No specific causes were mentioned but I suspect it may have been related to dengue.

He was discharged in April 1946. After the war, Russ returned to the Board as an Overseer and remained in that position until being reclassified to Superintendent of Works in Benalla Division in 1964. He retired from the CRB in August 1977.



The Chairman, R.E.V. Donaldson, presenting Russell Smith with his 40 years of service award in 1977.

Russell died in Shepparton in October 1987.

Lieutenant William Henry (Harry) Smith, V60407

Harry Smith commenced work at the CRB in 1928 at the Old Montague Storeyard in South Melbourne. He later became Yard Foreman there.

He was born in North Melbourne on 14 July 1903 and was 37 years old when he enlisted in the Australian Army Service Corps (AASC) Southern Command (Militia). On his Mobilization Enrolment Form he nominated that he was an overseer and that his wife was Ivy Lorna and they lived in Williamstown.

There are only four sheets in his archive. The first two are his Mobilization Enrolment Form. The third is a scribbled hand-written note that says 'Seen Smith who claims exemption as a married man with family. This is correct.' It is addressed to Lt Dallard (?) and is undated.

The fourth is an Application for a Commission in the AASC(M) 3 MD. This is dated 11 December 1941 and Harry described himself as Foreman Country Roads Board. He also states that he had previous military service of 1.5 years with the 3rd Division Signals and 1.5 years with AASC(M). It also shows him then living in Hampton. The Commanding Officer recommended his promotion to Lieutenant and a posting to 2nd Bridge Company.



Harry Smith's enlistment photograph – 1940.

There was no further information. I don't know when he was discharged but, after the war, he worked as plant inspector with the CRB until the early fifties, when he went to Traralgon to set up the new depot under the then Divisional Engineer, Frank Docking.

I could not find a date of his death.

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. His rank was Private. He listed his occupation as 'Labourer' and was 32 years old when he joined up. One unusual entry on his Attestation Form was the nomination of a friend as his next of kin – Alan Douglas Goulburn of Block 625, Cardross. I can't recall anyone else nominating a friend – they always nominated a relative, even those who were born overseas. I notice too that Goulburn's name was crossed out later in the file and the name of Mrs Millar was overwritten on it. It might be that Harry had no living family.

He was an odd jobs man after the war back in the 'Old Tin Shed' days at the Exhibition Building¹⁴. 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.

¹⁴ The CRB was located in tin sheds behind the Exhibition Building in Melbourne from 1927 to 1961.

From his enlistment in May through to September 1940, Harry was stationed at Puckapunyal. He was admitted three times to hospital in this period – once with flu and bronchitis, once with scabies and once with mumps. He was allocated to the 7th Division Supply Column of the Australian Army Service Corps (AASC).



Harold Stein's enlistment photograph – 1940.

The 7th Division Supply Column was formed at Puckapunyal in May 1940, so Harry was in the unit at its inception. He embarked on 18 October 1940 for the Middle East and, in November, the unit was deployed to Barbara¹⁵ in Palestine. It was intended that the unit would move to Greece in April 1941 but the German advance in Libya put paid to that. Instead, they moved to Mersa Matruh which is on the Mediterranean coast of Egypt about half way between Tobruk in the west and Cairo in the east. They then joined the 9th Division in Tobruk in time to be involved in the famous siege.

When they were relieved in August 1941 they moved back to Palestine and then Syria. At this time, Harry was detached for duty to the Petrol Company. He was not altogether a good boy. He was punished twice for failing to appear at the place of parade appointed by his CO. In January 1942 he was transferred to the 1st Australian Field Bakery and graded as a Class II Baker. He embarked from the Middle East in early February 1942 - landing at Port Adelaide in March. Even on the way

¹⁵ Barbara was a small, coastal village in the Gaza district.

home, Harry couldn't keep out of trouble. He was absent without leave for six hours in Bombay for which he was fined.

In October 1942, in response to the Japanese advance in New Guinea, Harry re-joined the 7th Division which deployed to Port Moresby. He embarked in Townsville on the MS *Cremer* – a Dutch ship – and disembarked in Port Moresby. Harry had further health problems in the tropical climates of New Guinea. He suffered otitis (itchy ears), malaria, and inflamed cellular tissue in the right leg (twice). During his time in New Guinea, he spent most of his service attached to the 2/2nd Field Bakery. The file does not specify where Harry was stationed, but the company provided detachments to Wanigela, Buna, and Goodenough Island - while the HQ remained at Milne Bay. It was most likely Buna because, on 18 December 1943, Harry embarked from there on the SS *Duntroon* and disembarked in Sydney.

He was detached for duty with the 2/1st Field Bakery Platoon. Illness still dogged him and he had further spells in hospital with malaria and influenza. By this time, Harry appears to have served fairly continuously in various Bakery Platoons. He was to have one more overseas stint. On 11 April 1945, he embarked from Brisbane for Labuan, Borneo via Morotai aboard the USAT *Sea Ray*. He worked there until 30 October 1945 when he returned to Australia.

In September 1945 while in Borneo, he relinquished his Trade Group pay as a baker seeking more general duties as he felt 'more capable of doing these duties than the more strenuous duties attached to baking'. This was granted and he was discharged on 4 December 1945.



Members of a Field Bakers Platoon at work.

Harry died in Warrnambool in 1956.

Sapper Maxwell (Max) Charles Stewart, VX31073

Max remained elusive for some time. I found an article about him in the CRB Interchange magazine of March 1966 - however his name was misspelt as 'Stuart'¹⁶. The article stated that Max joined the staff of the CRB as a Survey Draftsman 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 (Australian Survey Corps). He later served with the Torres Strait Force on Thursday Island and the 1st Australian Mobile Lithographic Company at Morotai.

Max was born in Coburg on 12 April 1920 and enlisted on 23 May 1940. He was a Survey Draughtsman (E Class) and was a serving Lance Corporal in the Volunteer Service Reserve of the CMF.

Max's Discharge Form indicates that he served in the Middle East from 5 February 1941 to 15 March 1942 and in Morotai from 3 April 1945 to 28 November 1945. He also served from 10 July 1943 to 27 March 1944 in the Torres Strait and 4 June 1944 to 17 December 1944 on Thursday Island.



Max Stewart's enlistment photograph – 1940.

On enlistment, Max was posted to 2nd/1st Field Survey in Puckapunyal as a Draughtsman Trade Group 1. On 5 February 1941 he embarked for the Middle East from Melbourne aboard a ship

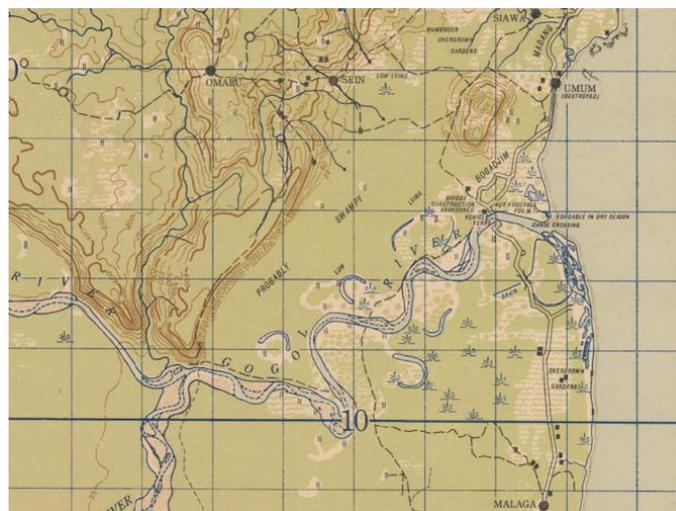
¹⁶ In fact, this is correct. Max changed the spelling of his name from Stewart to Stuart after the war.

designated *MX3*. The 2nd/1st Field Survey Company accompanied the 2nd AIF to provide survey and mapping data in the Middle East theatre including Greece, Egypt, Cyrenaica and the border zones of Palestine, Syria, Trans-Jordan and Turkey. There is no clue in his archive that I could see to indicate exactly where Max served.

Like so many of his comrades in this theatre, he was hospitalised a number of times - for dysentery and mumps. The archive mentions two hospitals – the 1st Australian General Hospital and the 4th Australian General Hospital. The latter could have been the 2/4th Hospital that was located at Tobruk but Max is not on the honour Roll of the Rats of Tobruk – although there are over 30 men named Stewart on the Roll. Besides, this can be definitely discounted as told in the rather long story – or saga – documented below which further confuses his whereabouts in the Middle East.

He embarked from Port Suez in Egypt on 4 February 1942 and disembarked in Adelaide. He was transferred to a number of posts in Australia and, on 10 June 1943, he was transferred to the Torres Strait Force.

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. Although there is no mention of the nature of Max's work there, it probably involved topographical and contour mapping in the area with the aid of aerial photography to produce maps similar to that shown below.



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

Max returned to Queensland in December 1944 and was transferred to the 1st Australian Mobile Lithographic Section which embarked on the MV *Duntroon* from Brisbane for Morotai on 3 April 1945.

At Morotai, the 1st Mobile Lithographic Section was given the privilege of preparing the Instrument of Surrender signed by Commander, Second Japanese Army and countersigned by General Blamey, Commander-in-Chief, Australian Military Forces. The unit then printed thousands of copies of the surrender document for souvenirs. At the end of the war more than half of the Corps strength of 1,700 were on active service outside Australia. It was noted by one of its commanders, Colonel Fitzgerald, that *'One of the most satisfying tasks followed immediately after the cessation of hostilities. It was the preparation of maps to assist in the recovery of our prisoners of war in South West Pacific Area. It was an urgent commitment readily undertaken.'*

Max returned to Australia on the HMAS *Kanimbla* on 20 November 1945 and was discharged from the army on 19 December 1945.

The achievements of the Corps during the Second World War were its greatest contributions to the nation than at any other time during its existence. This was duly recognised in 1948 when King George VI granted the title 'Royal' to the Australian Survey Corps.

Max's archive is quite large – comprising 41 pages. Most of the file is taken up with correspondence regarding his medal entitlements. A lot of this correspondence occurred in the mid to late 1950s when Max was working with the CRB. I won't try to tell the story in detail but will mention only the salient points. Max's correspondence is hand written and is hard to decipher.

For some reason Max changed the spelling of his name around 1956. He wrote a letter dated 29 February 1956 to the Army from the CRB in Carlton under the name Stewart but a bureaucrat has circled it in red pencil and said 'Now Stuart'.

One of his complaints was that he was not awarded the 1939/45 and African Stars. The Army responded that in order to qualify for the 1939/45 Star, a member is required to have served at least six months in an operational command overseas, which, in the Middle East was west of the Suez Canal. Service in Palestine is excluded, but this qualifies service towards the Defence Medal. This indicates that Max must have served in Palestine in the Middle East.

The Army letter went on to say the Africa Star is awarded for entry into operational services on the posted strength of a unit performing an operational function in the specified area which was also west of the Suez Canal. It concluded that *'As there is no record of your having served west of the Suez Canal, the service you rendered in the Middle East was not qualifying service towards either the 1939/45 and Africa Stars.'* To add further injury to Max, it said *'Your operational service in the Pacific Area from 3 April to 2 September 1945, was less than the six months required for the 1939/45 Star.'*

Max persisted and, at the Army's request, submitted a Statutory Declaration of where he was stationed and the names of his commanding officers. The Army still refused his request stating that his service west of the Suez Canal was not operational as the unit was in transit from Palestine to Greece – which didn't eventuate.

Max then listed other soldiers from his unit who received the Stars, including John Turnbull below. This really threw a spanner in the works because apparently John and another soldier were issued with the Stars in error. There is a note on the file written by an army bureaucrat that says: *'It is felt that the time for diplomacy is well past and consequently permission is sought to reply to Stuart, refusing his claim and fully explaining the error by which Turnbull and McNaught were issued with the award.'* The Army wrote a letter to that effect and sought Stuart's cooperation in providing their addresses of Turnbull and McNaught.

Max really did not know when to stop. He wrote another letter asking the Army to reissue the medals he was awarded engraved with the new spelling of his name. For the record, Max was awarded the Pacific Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1939/45, and Australian Service Medal 1939/45. There is no record of the Army's response to this request.

In 1996, the Army wrote to Max's widow saying that the conditions for the 1939/45 Star for service in the Pacific had changed and that Max was now eligible to receive it. It is a pity that Max was not alive to receive it. He 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 – the day before he died.

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 Bougainville 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. It 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 Bombardier 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.

Sergeant Clarence Roy Taylor, VX69530

Clarence (known as Roy) was born in Nar Nar Goon in April 1913. He started work with the CRB in November 1930 when he was employed on the re-sheeting of the Pakenham-Woori Yallock Road.

In December 1941, Roy joined the 2nd/1st Australian Mechanical Equipment Company. Early in the Second World War the authorities realised there would be a need to have earth moving

machines and equipment with experienced operators to be used in various war zones including the Middle East and the Pacific. The Australian Army had little in the way of mechanical equipment and most heavy plant work was done by civilian contractors.

It was decided in October 1941 to form a specialist unit to supply the expertise and equipment that would be needed and so the 2nd/1st Australian Mechanical Equipment Company was formed. Recruitment began in all states and the men selected came from shires, state road departments, water boards, rural tractor operators and men with experience and fitting qualifications. The unit consisted of a Headquarters unit and four sections, with an ex-Commissioner for Main Roads, Colonel A. Toyrer in charge.

The railway construction companies returning from the Middle East were converted to mechanical equipment companies and later, in 1944, several field companies were also converted as more mechanical equipment became available.

Roy Taylor was a member of Australia's first Mechanical Equipment Company.



Roy Taylor's paybook photograph – 1941.

Roy's initial training was in Melbourne and Liverpool, NSW. In May 1942 he transferred to Adelaide River (near Darwin) and 12 months later he embarked from Townsville aboard MV *Duntroon* bound for New Guinea. He served there until August 1944 when he embarked from Madang on MS *Van Heutz* for Queensland. After rest and retraining, he embarked on 10 March

1945 for Morotai and two months later, aboard LST 574, he landed on British North Borneo (now Sabah, Malaysia).



A power shovel loading coral into trucks for use at Labuan airstrip.
Labuan Island, North West Borneo – September 1945 – 2nd/1st Mechanical Equipment Company.

He was discharged in February 1946 and re-employed by the CRB as a Patrol Assistant with the Pakenham Patrol in Dandenong Division. In November 1966 he was appointed Patrolman in Charge of the Princes Highway East from Springvale to Beaconsfield, and he also assumed maintenance of the freeways in the Division as they came on stream.

Roy was awarded an Imperial Service Medal in 1980 in recognition of faithful and meritorious service to the community as a public servant.

He retired from the CRB in April 1977 after 47 years of service and died in 1979.

Captain Alan Geoffrey Thompson, VX80995 (V52564)

Alan was born in Brighton but he lived in Benalla with his wife, Patricia, at the time of his enlistment in July 1942. He was born in November 1908 making him 33 years old when he joined the Army. However, he had joined the C.M.F. a year earlier where he was a Bombardier in the 2nd Survey Regiment (Royal Australian Artillery). He described himself as a surveyor and civil engineer. He was promoted to Sergeant almost immediately and four months later, to Lieutenant.

After enlisting in the 2AIF he was attached to the 2nd Australian Survey Company. In his Attestation Form, he described himself as a surveyor although he noted that he attended night school for five years studying civil engineering. He never completed his engineering studies.

His file is difficult to interpret. For example, most of his service was in Australia but it is not specific about where he was – except that Townsville and Melbourne are mentioned in some entries. Western Australia is also mentioned. However, his progress in rank is clear. He was a Lieutenant when he enlisted and he was appointed Temporary Captain in May 1942 and then Captain in September of that year.

He had a brief stint overseas. In early August 1945, he was sent to New Britain for a period of 97 days. He was discharged on 4 December 1945. Alan returned to the CRB after the war and was involved in road construction on the Kiewa Valley Highway.

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 one of only two Captains of all the Alan Thompsons in the Australian Archives, so I think I have found him. The other one is Alan Geoffrey Thompson in the entry above. It is quite coincidental that they both worked in Benalla Division.

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 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.

I could not find the date of his death.

Major John (Jack) Douglas Thorpe, VX80990 (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.

In the 1950s, he attended the Bureau of Highway Traffic at Yale University in America to study traffic engineering.

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 2nd/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 in the Army 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.

Jack's son also worked in the Traffic Engineering Group of the CRB for a short period.

Driver Mervyn John (Jack) Townsend, VX117966 (V76707)

Jack was born in Warrnambool in August 1920 and he enlisted in the Army in September 1942. He was a bridge builder's labourer and worked on bridges in the Warrnambool region and later in the Divisional precast yard, but at the time of his enlistment, he was a baker and pastrycook.

All of Jack's service was in transport companies in Australia. Places mentioned are Broadmeadows, Fishermen's Bend, and Albury. It is also recorded that he married Dorothy May Edwards on 29 May 1943 in Garvoc near Warrnambool.

He was discharged from 148 General Transport Company on 14 November 1945.

Jack died in Warrnambool in November 1944.

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 2nd/1st Australian Topographical Survey Company, enlisting on 8 June

1940. He was a Warrant Officer Class 2 and served in the Middle East and 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 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.



John Turnbull's enlistment photograph – 1940.

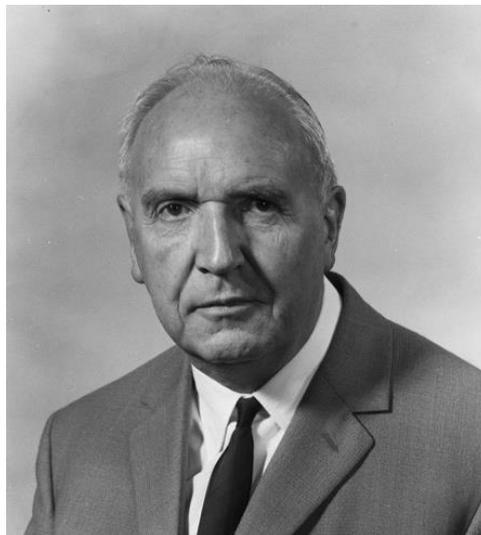
His initial training was conducted at Balcombe and Puckapunyal. He was admitted to hospital twice – with laryngitis and a coronary occlusion. I can only conclude that the latter affliction was mild. John then embarked on a ship named MX3 in February 1941 and arrived in the Middle East six weeks later. The 2nd/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. From the evidence gained in the story of Maxwell Stewart (Stuart) above, it can be concluded that John served in Palestine in the Middle East.

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 in the then Netherlands 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/draftsman at the Shires of Colac, Otway and Woorayl and the City of Camberwell.

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.



Len's enlistment photo.

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 draftsman 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.

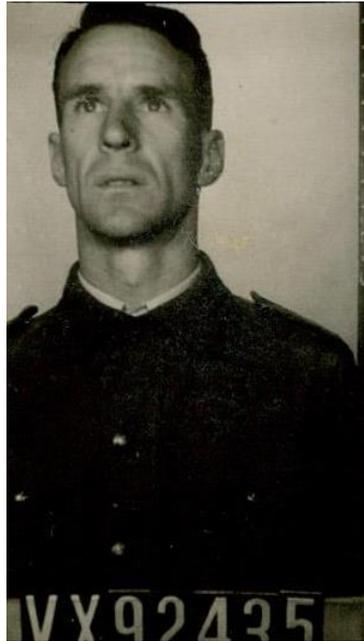
There is documented consultation in the archive between the Army and the CRB about Thomas' enlistment. The Board stated: "*The Board is carrying out drafting required for Commonwealth works and at a later stage may desire some exemption.*"

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.

Corporal Frederick (Fred) Albert Wallace, VX92435

Fred Wallace was a highly respected Road Master in CRB's Dandenong Division. He was an overseer in Benalla and Traralgon Divisions before transferring to Dandenong Division.

Fred was born in South Melbourne on 5 July 1909 and he enlisted in Stawell in May 1943. He was married with four children when he enlisted and gave his occupation as 'Contractor'. On another form he gave his occupation as 'Truck owner and driver'. He was attached to the 2nd/1st Australian Railway Construction Company which was to become the 2nd/1st Australian Mechanical Equipment Company. Roy Taylor was a member of same company and I described its formation in the entry for him above.



Fred Wallace's enlistment photograph – 1943.

Fred served in New Guinea and Solomon Islands from 3 August 1943 to 2 July 1945.

In March 1942, the company started embarkation of men and plant to Port Moresby where it immediately went to work on the aerodromes and roads that were being damaged by enemy bombing. The Japanese had occupied Lae and Allied air transport to Bulolo had almost ceased, so it became urgent that an escape route be surveyed to enable the evacuation of Bulolo.

Two officers, a corporal and a sapper walked a survey route that started from Bulldog, 80 miles up the Lakakamu River, to follow the Eloa River, and thence up the Owen Stanleys to a height of 8,000 feet to finish at Edie Creek, a distance of 58 miles. Work began on this road in January 1943.

They worked on the road under trying conditions from extreme heat to intense cold and rain, coupled with high rates of malaria infection. On 22 August 1943, a convoy of jeeps led by a Mechanical Equipment Company bulldozer, made the trip between Wau and Bulldog. The mighty Owen Stanleys had been conquered - a feat described by General Blamey as one of the finest engineering achievements in the Pacific war zone. About 33,000 troops and local workers and carriers took part in the project.

The War Diary of this company shows it was occupied in road construction and maintenance in New Guinea at least from 1943 through to the end of the war – the period that Fred served. Places

named include Port Moresby, Lae, Wau, Bulolo, Sunshine, and Madang. In the diary for October-December 1944, I found Fred's name and number on the nominal roll of the company and it states he was an operator of an excavator. The diaries also indicate that they were also involved in construction of airstrips.

Looking at these diaries through the eyes of an engineer, the level and detail of planning of works and the recording of construction, resources and equipment is of the highest of standards.

However, there was one telling comment as follows: "*The general health of the company is improving regarding malaria, dengue and skin infections but the personnel are becoming tired owing to the length of time in New Guinea.*"

Fred's initial training after enlistment was with the Royal Australian Engineers in Wagga Wagga. He became an excavator operator. He embarked from Sydney on 31 August 1943 on the SS *Montoro* and disembarked in Port Moresby. He had a number of stints in hospital with diarrhoea and enteritis but the only place mentioned in the entry of his service record is Madang where he emplaned for Townsville on 25 November 1944. On 22 February 1945 he embarked per SS *Shawnee* and disembarked in Bougainville. The archive also mentions Solomon Islands. Bougainville is only a short distance from Solomon Islands – only a few kilometres to the smallest, outlying islands – so if Fred did work there, I can only presume he travelled by small boat. His file is quite clear though that he left Torokina on Bougainville on 21 May 1945 on HMAS *Katoomba* bound for Sydney.

Back in NSW he was allocated to 1st Battalion RAE Training Centre until 20 March 1946 when he was transferred to Melbourne. He entered hospital in Heidelberg and then to Rockingham Convalescent Home suffering a state of anxiety.

He was discharged in September 1946.

Fred had a reputation for making sure that the men under his control earned their money. If they slacked, it didn't matter how tough they were, Fred gave them their marching orders. There is a story relating to Fred in *Reminiscences of Life in the Country Roads Board*. Fred was an overseer in charge of roadworks at Glenmaggie. Head Office had sent down some labourers who had just been released from Pentridge Gaol. Four of them got drunk during working hours and Fred decided to

sack them. They were very nasty about it. When they were paid off, they demanded to be driven back to the railway station. Fred agreed and sent Reg Marslen with them – in a tip truck to make sure they did not misbehave. Reg sat in the front with the driver while the four miscreants were in the back. When they got to Heyfield Station they refused to get out. Reg told the driver to lock his door and raise the hoist. They tumbled out of the truck with all their baggage and the truck sped off.

But there was another side to Fred. He was well known by the children of staff at Dandenong Region for the part he played every year as Santa Claus. He endeared himself to the mothers and children as he placed each child on his knee, chatting with them and answering their questions. He even answered a letter that one of the children wrote to him.

Fred's CRB car had never been known to exceed 40 mph and apparently third gear was never used.

I have no record of his death.

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 2nd/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 2nd/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 1941.



The 2nd/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.



Darwin, 1943. Battle Headquarters of the 2nd/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 October 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 the field at Northam in Western Australia. He was serving with the CMF in Western Australia when he was drafted into the 2nd AIF. He was married to Dorothy and his occupation was 'Clerk at the Country Roads Board'.

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 New Guinea in August 1944, all of Dick's service was in Australia. Merauke is located in Indonesia on the southern coast near the border of Papua New Guinea.

Dick was discharged in December 1945 from the 112th Tank Attack Regiment – Unit Stores Account Section. The CRB may have had an influence on this timing. The reason given for his discharge was 'Occupational'.

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 HMAS *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.

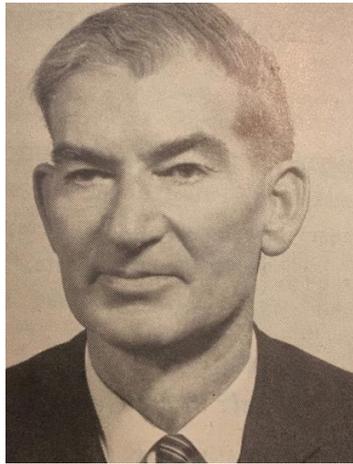
Apart from Port Moresby and Lae, there is also mention in the file of Aitape, Wewak and Rabaul. In all, he served 574 days in New Guinea. He was never hospitalised.

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 – 2nd/8th Field Company, 2nd/14th Australian Field Company, Headquarters RAE 6th Australian Division, 2nd/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 Street 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 of America 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 regarding 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 of the CRB.

At the time of my research on Gordon, the only record in the National Australian Archives for Gordon Stanley Wilson had not been digitized and its access status was marked 'Open with

exception?. I don't know what this means. However, I eventually found his service records in the Department of Defence. I later found out that the archives of servicemen and women who remained in the army after the war were retained by the Department of Defence and not National Australia Archives.

Gordon was born on 15 June 1918 in Newcastle NSW. He was single and described his occupation as a 'Machine Assistant'. He was a member of the Permanent Military Forces from 27 September 1939 to 15 May 1940 as a Gunner and with the AIF from 16 May 1940 to 30 June 1947 as a Sergeant. His number was VX15691. From 1 July 1947 to 28 May 1951, he served in the Australian Regular Army as Warrant Officer Class 2. His service number was 3516.



Gordon Wilson's enlistment photograph – May 1940.

He enlisted in the AIF in May 1940 in Caulfield. Gordon served with the 2nd/12th Field Regiment – an artillery regiment - and embarked for the Middle East from Adelaide on HMT "*Stratheden*" on 17 November 1940. He disembarked in Palestine on 17 December 1940. Gordon was stationed at the Kilo 89 Camp on the Gaza Ridge in Palestine.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

050177

Kilo 89 Camp in Palestine - 1940. The tents are troop accommodation and the buildings in the background comprise the administration block.

While in the Middle East, Gordon was moved to various staging camps – to Egypt in April 1941, to Tobruk and El Alamein (unspecified), Palestine in October 1941, Syria in January 1942, Egypt again in July 1942 and back to Palestine in December 1942. While in Palestine, he was admitted to 2nd/6th Australian General Hospital (AGH) suffering from hepatitis. In early 1942 the 2nd/6th AGH moved to Gaza Ridge to relieve the 2nd/1st Australian General Hospital. They stayed at Gaza Ridge as the main base hospital for the 9th Infantry Division. The 9th Infantry Division was withdrawn after the victory at El Alamein and the 2nd/6th AGH then departed for Australia in January 1943.

Gordon embarked from Suez on 28 January 1943 and disembarked in Sydney a month later. He remained in NSW and then shifted to Queensland where, on 1 August 1943 he left Cairns for Milne Bay in New Guinea. In January 1944 he was hospitalised with dengue.

He disembarked from Finschhafen in New Guinea and returned to Brisbane – arriving there on 7 March 1944. He took leave in Victoria but fell ill with malaria and was admitted to the Military Hospital at Heidelberg. Gordon returned to Queensland in September 1944 and on 26 April 1945 he embarked for Morotai on the “*Frederick Sykes*”. He remained on Morotai for a month before transferring to British North Borneo and he finally returned to Brisbane at the end of December 1945. It was while he was in Borneo that the war in the Pacific ended.

He chose to remain in the Army and served until 1967. During the latter period he served in Malaya and Borneo at the time of the Indonesian Confrontation which took place between 1963 and 1966. He held the rank of Warrant Officer Class 1 at discharge. He continued to suffer with bouts of malaria

Gordon married Jean Fife Cameron in 1949.

Gordon retired from the Army in March 1967 and joined the CRB as an Experimental Officer in the Materials Research Division. Two of his sons followed in his footsteps doing similar work in the Division.



Gordon Wilson on the right – at work in the laboratory with Peter Sloan.

Gordon died in 1977 at the age of 69.

Corporal Arthur Victor Wood, VX21490

Arthur was a draftsman 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 they

lived in Armadale – he was a salesman and she a designer. He must have joined the CRB between 1936 and 1940.



Arthur Woods' enlistment photograph – 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. 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 HMT *MX3*. The archive does not reveal where he disembarked or the area in the Middle East where he served – but from evidence gleaned from archives of other members of the unit, it was most likely Palestine. On the Company's return to Australia in 1942, Arthur was discharged on the grounds of “being required for service in a reserved occupation”. This exemption is described in detail under the

entry for Bill Brake (above). He had served for 775 days including 542 days abroad when he was discharged in July 1942.

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 2nd/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, 2nd/1st Corps Field Survey Company, sailed with the 2nd Australian Imperial Force. 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 Yardy – 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 2nd/9th 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’.

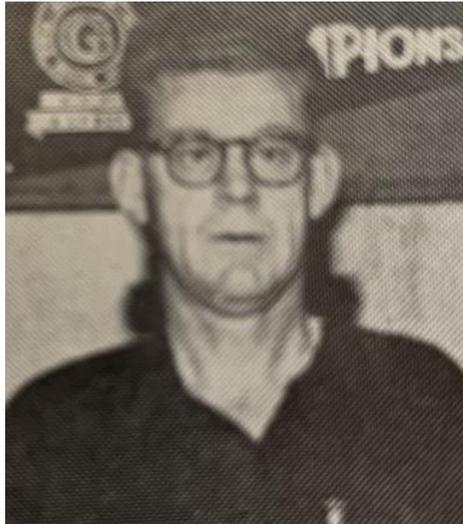


Geoff Zierk's enlistment photograph – May 1940.

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 7th 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 spent some time in hospital with a hernia and, in March 1943, he embarked in the MV *Duntroon* 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.



Geoff Zierk in 1967 – a member of the CRB's table tennis team in the Geelong Pennant competition.

Geoffrey died in May 1997 at the age of 77.