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The Battle of Crete 20th May - 1st June 1941

Presented to the people of Crete on the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Crete by the families of Australian soldiers who fought alongside Greek servicemen, Cretan resistance groups and British and New Zealand servicemen in the short but heroic battle.

The sacrifices made by all sides will not be forgotten.

Lest We Forget

Η Μάχη της Κρήτης
20^η Μαΐου – 1^η Ιουνίου, 1941

Αφιερώνεται στο λαό της Κρήτης στην 75η επέτειο της Μάχης της Κρήτης από τις οικογένειες των Αυστραλών στρατιωτών που πολέμησαν στο πλευρό των Ελλήνων στρατιωτών, των ομάδων της Κρητικής αντίστασης και των Βρετανών και Νεοζηλανδών στρατιωτών στη σύντομη αλλά ηρωική μάχη.
Οι θυσίες που έγιναν από όλες τις πλευρές δεν θα ξεχαστούν.
Δεν ξεχνάμε

THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY HISTORICAL SOCIETY WESTERN AUSTRALIA (INC.)

(See article page 9)



Warrant Officer Scott Caswell, Gunnery instructor with the 3rd Light Battery, and Lieutenant Colonel Bob Colligan, Commander of the 1/28th Battalion Battle Group, with a replica of ammunition used in the gun.

NOTICE BOARD

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Artillery WA 



ARTILLERY WA **PRODUCTION DEADLINES**

Edition	Collation Period	Deadline to Editor	Editing and Preparation	Final Edition	Deadline to Printer	Mail Out	In Time For
3	3/6—5/9/16	5/9/16	2/6—14/9/16	14/9/16	14/9/16	24/9/16	Gunners Day
4	15/9/16	19/11/16	20/9/16 to 7/12/16	7/12/16	7/12/16	17/12/16	Xmas

RAAHS BUSY BEES FOR 2016

25 June 30 July 27 August 24 September
29 October 26 November 31 December

LEIGHTON BATTERY OPEN DAYS

Leighton Battery Heritage Site is open on a regular basis every Sunday of every month from 10 AM to 3 PM with tours of the tunnels commencing every half hour.

BEREAVEMENT

WILLIAM (BILL) ALFRED RITCHIE - 15TH SEPTEMBER 1943 – 31ST MARCH 2016

In 1959, Bill joined the Shell Company as a Finance Trainee and in 1960 enlisted as a Gunner in 3rd Field Regiment RAA Citizen Military Forces. He progressed through the ranks and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in 1964.

Having acquired a taste for soldiering, Bill resigned from Shell and took his discharge from the CMF, joining the Regular Army to attend Officer Cadet School at Portsea in January 1965.

On graduation in December 1965 he was allotted to Artillery and after completing the young officers' course in March 1966, was posted to 4 Field Regiment as Gun Position Officer 108 Field Battery, an appointment he retained during his 12 month's tour of duty in South Vietnam.

A host of appointments and promotions followed including a Long Gunnery Course at Larkhill UK and Staff College in 1979. Bill was promoted Major in 1976. He took his discharge in December 1985 and with his wife Michele established a very successful Fabric and Sewing Centre at Southlands WA.

Bill was appointed Colonel Commandant RAA Western Region on 1st May 2007 until 3rd December 2010.

Unfortunately, Bill contracted Motor Neuron Disease in 2014 and, despite his positive attitude, passed away on 31st March 2016 and was cremated at Fremantle Cemetery. The Service was well attended by Bill's Army Colleagues, some of whom had travelled from Eastern States to pay their respects.

Bill is survived by his wife Michele, daughter Danielle and son Michael.

UBIQUE

THE AIMING POST

The Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society Of Western Australia (Inc)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A warm welcome to all members to your winter Aiming Post edition. Have you turned your electric blanket on ?

The AGM in March was yet another well attended and enjoyable event. I congratulate all members who achieved long-service badge recognition. To the organizers- well done.

Your Tunnels openings have continued to attract pleasing numbers.

2016 marks the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Crete. The Society donated a commemorative plaque inscribed in English and Greek text acknowledging the historic link between the citizens of Crete and members of the 2nd A.I.F. who battled German air-borne forces in 1941.

Members of the Bessell-Browne family took the plaque to Crete on our behalf for the ceremony on the 25th of May. We have since received grateful acknowledgement of the Society's donation from the family and the Cretan Division of the Greek Army.

Don Rae and I will be meeting soon with the C.E.O. of the Town of Mosman Park, to formally arrange the mechanics of the Council's decision to undertake the extensive heavy maintenance identified by them in and around the Tunnels.

Our meeting will be the last between the CEO, Kevin Poynton and R.A.A.H.S. Kevin has been a terrific supporter of our operations and we wish him well in his new job.

Your Committee will certainly introduce itself to the incoming CEO, Mr Mark Goodlet, to ensure a continuing positive relationship continues between our two organizations.

I reported last issue on the 6" gun and shield profile project. The heavy duty cement foundations have now cured and the steel fabrication is underway on-site. I would like to thank Member Stan Davies for driving this task along.

On 25th of May the Society hosted a simple hand over ceremony of the 6" Shield. Present were representatives of BAE Systems (Aust.) Williamstown Vic the Henderson WA Branch, Officers of 13 Brigade, the CEO Town of Mosman Park and a number of Society members and the local press. Morning tea was followed by a tunnel tour.

A panel detailing the shield's history and the logos of the co-operating bodies who assisted in its refurbishment and transport across the continent was unveiled.

Mr Peter Anning - Technical Services Manager, Maritime Division, presented the Society with a captioned, framed photo of a current RAN 5" gun mount.

I believe that BAE and RAAHS has further enhanced our relationship for the future.

Thank you to all members who helped on the day- it does not work without you!

I would now like to conclude with an update on two items. Firstly, beside the 6" barrel/shield, is a raised brick unit with a cement top. In response to suggestions that perhaps another tunnel linked the gun floor to the knoll across the Highway, we dug into it only to find that its narrowness probably meant that it was a war-time cable duct. There goes an urban myth!

My final item involves the 5.25" project. We now have engineering drawings for the roofing of the pit, produced by Maitland Heritage Engineering. We have also sent to State Heritage Office notice of our intent. We have access to a Project Manager. Approaches are before Lotterywest for funding. Watch this space.

As a p.s. to the 5.25" site- we had a visit recently from Mr Murray Charnley a former National Service WO2 who was at Leighton in the late 1950's. He detailed how the weapon system worked- no wonder deafness was the result for many gunners. He also amazed those present by stating that the 80 pound shells were carried on the shoulders of the young gunners from the ammunition trucks down the steps to the shell bays!

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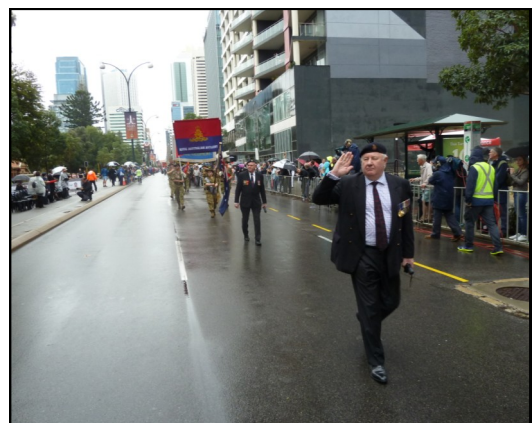
Brig A.G. Warner followed by Bob Farrelly



Keith Smith (Lane Cove, NSW) Ron Cutten



Craig Machin and Robert Steadman



Brig A.G. Warner "Eyes Right" Saluting Dais



Phil Rowson, Peter Rowles and Ross Knapp



Gunner Associations

ANZAC Day Hockey Tournament

WA Hockey's annual ANZAC Day tournament was held this year at Melville Hockey Club ground at Kardinia. RAAHSWA Members Ronnie Roach and Phil Rowson attended to present the ANZAC Day Trophy to the Perth Wasps, they defeated Victoria Park Xavier Panthers 7-1. The men have played off for this shield for the past five years and Wasps have yet to be defeated.

The Women's Competition plays for The Ronnie Roach Shield and this year was won by the Vic Park Girls for the first time in four years who beat Wasps 4-1



(3)



(1)



(2)

LEGEND

1. Ronnie with the girls of Victoria Park Xavier Panthers.

2. Phil Rowson RAAHSWA with Hayley Gardner, President of Wesley South Perth Wasps and the ANZAC Day Trophy.

3. Ronnie Roach with the Ronnie Roach ANZAC Day Shield

GUN SHIELD CEREMONY

The President's Report has described the handover of the Gun Shield to the Society by BAE Services Australia Pty Ltd on Wednesday 25th May 2016. Here are some pictures taken on the occasion:



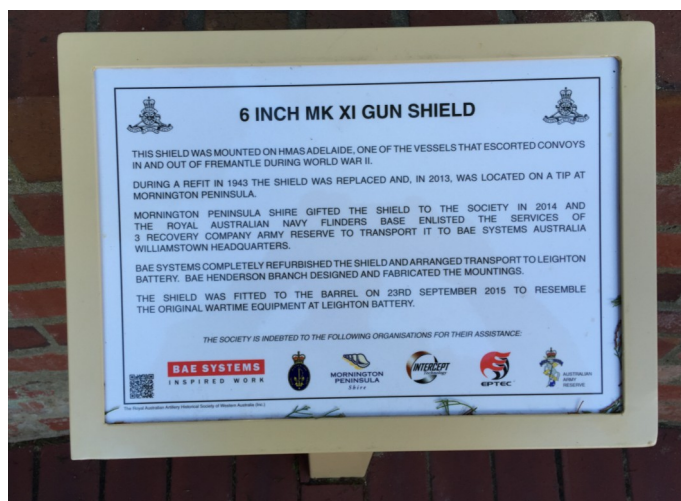
The shield arrives November 2014



The Official Handing Over of the Shield



WO2 Scott Caswell 3 Light Battery RAA



The Interpretive Plaque

POINT PERON REHABILITATION COMMITTEE

The Point Peron Rehabilitation Committee (PPRC) is preparing to restore the K Battery site at Cape Peron near Rockingham in Perth's South. K Battery was the southernmost establishment in the Fortress Fremantle Organisation formed during World War II to protect the Fremantle Harbour complex and the shipping using it and at anchor in Gage Roads and Cockburn Sound.

The PPRC recently held a fund raising Gala Dinner followed by a week-long exhibition of displays, artefacts and memorabilia. The dinner was attended by 150 people including politicians, senior military personnel and guests of honour RAAHSWA member Ronnie Roach and former WWII Air Defence Gunner Peter Hackett. RAAHSWA member Phil Rowson who sits on the PPRC committee attended on behalf of the RAAHSWA. During the dinner three short films were shown; The Battle for Australia, owned by Fairfax and produced by the History Channel for Foxtel covers the broader scope of Australia's defence from 1942 – 45. The Forgotten Battlefield is a short documentary commissioned by the PPRC to highlight the Peron Battery restoration project and features interviews with Ronnie Roach and Peter Hackett.

The Secret Fleets is a 55 minute documentary detailing the history of

the submarine flotilla that operated from Fremantle and shows stunning colour film of Fremantle and Perth in the 1940s as well as illuminating interviews with sub mariners and locals highlighting the sometimes very shady goings-on in sleepy W.A. Copies of these last two films are available from the PPRC for a modest fee, all proceeds which go back to the project.

There was also a wide range of static displays of the crowd to peruse. The exhibition which was free to the public opened the next morning and ran through the following week. The Exhibition was later moved to the W.A. Museum in Perth for a fortnight's hearing by the public through the middle of May.

The dinner and exhibition have so far raised almost \$20,000 and the PPRC is now preparing to embark on the next phase of the project which includes restoring and securing the standing buildings and emplacements at Cape Peron, creating a memorial to the Battle for Australia and rebuilding the Camp Kennedy Facility on the shore of Mangles Bay which was the original barracks accommodation constructed in the 1940s and demolished in the 1980s.



Secret Fleets – The untold story of the Fremantle submarine base during World War II

Secret Fleets tells the story of how the sleepy port of Fremantle, in isolated Western Australia, was transformed into a top secret submarine base for one of the most successful campaigns of World War II against Imperial Japan.”

This fascinating documentary features remarkable colour film shot on the American submarines that were based in Fremantle harbour and uncovers the dramatic effect that this submarine base had on Western Australia.

Copies are being sold to raise money for the Point Peron Rehabilitation ANZAC Day Hockey Tournament.

The BL 6 inch Gun Profile now at Buckland Hill



For some time now I have been giving thought to the advertising of the Tunnel Complex and fortuitously some two years ago whilst on the road from Exmouth I saw at the base of the new Potshot Memorial a steel profile of a gun detachment. I had been considering placing an artillery piece on the grassed area adjacent to Stirling highway. This would have provided 24 hour advertising of the World War 2 Tunnels, but I soon accepted that this was not a practical proposition and we were never going to be able to mount a gun at the envisaged Stirling highway location. My thoughts then turned to the Potshot Memorial and I decided to investigate this further. I obtained the information from the Shire of Exmouth of who designed, constructed and installed the detachment profile. We then approached Pat Bell a member of the RAAHS of WA to prepare drawings to enable the Society to apply for permission to construct and install a BL 6 inch Gun Profile on the area adjacent to Stirling highway. Application was then made, in November 2014, through the Town of Mosman Park, to the Department of Regional Development and Plans for which approval was received in February 2015.

The Society then approached Ian Maitland, who had been involved with the Fremantle Fortress Project, with a view to him providing the detailed construction drawings from the work that Pat Bell had done to allow the Society to determine the companies qualified to tender for the construction and installation of the BL 6 inch Gun Profile. After investigation with a handful of companies Atkinson Steel was selected for the steel work and Colgan Industries selected for the laying of the concrete base and the project management in placing the 6 inch Gun Profile on the selected area adjacent to Stirling highway.

The Agreement to Construct was signed on 14 April 2016, the concrete work commenced on 12 May 2016 and the steel profile was installed on-site on 1 June 2016

Stan Davies

CRETE

75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF CRETE

Following the disastrous campaign in Greece, survivors from the 6th Australian Division with British and New Zealand troops were transferred to the island of Crete to defend it from an anticipated invasion by Axis Forces. Desperately short of personal weapons and relying on captured Italian artillery pieces hastily shipped to the island from North Africa (minus sights and limited ammunition) this force was spread from Heraklion to Rethymon, Suda Bay and at the Maleme Airfield.

Included in the Australian force were survivors from 6 Battery 2/3rd Field Regiment, comprising mainly West Australians, commanded by Major Ian Bessell-Browne. Also prominently involved was the West Australian 2/11th Battalion. When the island was over-run by German Paratroops Allied Forces capitulated and many were captured, including Major Bessell-Browne, spending the next four years incarcerated as Prisoners of War (POW).

Thousands of Allied Troops were successfully evacuated from the island and, in the case of the Australians, returned home to bolster mainland forces in preparation of the Japanese invasion of Papua and New Guinea.

to the Society on their return to Perth. It is from the 5th Cretan Division Greek Army General Staff, coloured red and blue and depicting MINOTAUR of the MINOAN Period.

LTCOL Michelakis has extended a warm welcome to any Society Member travelling to Crete to contact him for a personalised tour of the battlefields in which the Australians were involved. It is also suggested that the Rethymon Museum and our Society form a "twinning" relationship.

The following transcript in English is the address by LTCOL Emmanuel Michelakis at the Commemorative Ceremony:

"Dear visitors from distant Australia and New Zealand, Honourable Members of the Association of Victims of the Nazi occupation, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Your presence today is a special honour both for the Military museum and even more for all those who fought in the Battle of Crete, exactly 75 years ago, against the Nazi invasion in May, 1941, and either died on the battlefield or luckily survived, many of whom were then captured by the Germans.

Among those heroic fighters, was Australian Corporal Geoff

Casualties sustained during the Battle that lasted from 23rd of May to 1st June 1941 were:

UNIT	Killed in Action	Wounded in Action	POW
2/3rd Field Regiment	20	30	126
2/11th Battalion	53	126	423

The President's Report described the approach to the Society by the Bessell-Browne family, who were travelling to Crete for the Commemorative Services, suggesting that we may care to acknowledge the part played by the 2nd/3rd Field Regiment in the Battle for Crete. A most impressive Stainless Steel Plaque mounted on polished Jarrah, engraved in English and Greek, was commissioned by the Society and handed to the Bessell-Browne family to be presented to Lieutenant Colonel Emmanuel Michelakis, Director of the Rethymon Museum, on Wednesday, 25th May 2016.

In a spontaneous gesture LTCOL Michelakis handed the Family a Plaque to be presented

Angove, who served in Rethymno and whose nephew Ross we have the honour to have here with us today, New Zealand Lance Corporal Lindsay Parker Hays, whose son Kevin is also with us. and Artillery Major Ian Bessell-Browne, who served in Rethymno and whose son Guy and daughter Susanna are with us as well.

In April, 1941, about 10,000 Australian and New Zealand servicemen arrived in Crete to defend freedom on the island. Although their homeland is thousands of kilometers away, these soldiers remained loyal to their oath and, under the supreme command of the British Commonwealth, they defended Crete with all their strength and available means.

It is well known that, before they arrived in Crete, the Australian and New Zealand soldiers had defended the Greek territory on the northern border in April, 1941. It is therefore easy to understand the strength and the courage they had in the Battle of Crete.

The epic Battle of Crete lasted a total of 11 days, which were written in the history of WW II as the Battle which delayed the German Intervention in Russia and contributed to the upcoming German defeat.

It was the same battle that made Hitler himself declare that:

"The days of the paratroopers have finished" and postpone a lot of future airborne operations. It was also the battle which made the German General Kurt Student accept that "Crete was the tomb of the German paratroopers". In Crete, the Germans encountered the unexpected resistance of the unarmed Cretans and this made them commit atrocities, like the first execution of civilians, which took place in Rethymno on 23-24 May, where approximately 85 innocent un-armed people were gathered, in order to be executed by the Nazis. Among the civilians were people, who are with us today. Mr. Vasilis Papadopoulos and Mrs. Evangelia Marouli from Rethymno came face to face with death, but were able to escape, due to a last minute operation by the Australians, who shot at the execution team. It is very likely that the mandate for the operation was given by the Australian Major Ian Bessel-Brown, Commander of 6th Artillery Battery of the 2nd/3rd Artillery Regiment whose mission was to support by fire the Australian frontline forces.

Please, allow me to make a brief reference to the Australian forces, who defended Rethymnon in the Battle of Crete.

Senior commander of the frontline forces was Lt Col Ian Campbell and Commander of the Artillery was Major Ian Bessel-Brown, father of Guy and Susan. Major Ian Bessel-Browne was an officer, whose top priority was always to care for his men and therefore he was fully respected by his subordinates.

He was honoured for outstanding bravery on the battlefield, both in Greece with the medal given by King of Greece, George II, and in Australia with many war medals. Like all Australian forces who defended Rethymnon, he fought until the last moment, even though he knew about the upcoming entry of the German forces from Hania. The Battle of Crete in Rethymno did not have a deserving outcome, since the Germans, thanks to the heroic resistance of the Australian and Greek forces and of the unarmed and armed civilians, failed to occupy the city of Rethymnon and the airport.

Unfortunately, mistakes in the tactical level in the area of Chania, gave the German invaders the chance to dominate and it is widely known that if the allied forces in Chania had fought with the same war tactics as those of the Allied forces, under the command of Lt Col Ian Campbell, Major Ray Sandover, Major Ian Bessel-Browne, and of the

rest of the Greek forces, then it is a certainty that the Battle of Crete would have been victorious for the allies. Besides, it is widely known that the Battle of Crete in Rethymno is also known as "The Lost Win"

The fighting spirit and heroism of the Australian servicemen was so great, that they remained on the battlefield until the last day, and that was the reason why many of them were captured. Among them was Major Ian Bessel-Browne, who was then imprisoned for 4 years, as a prisoner of war. The generosity and the spirit of the Australian servicemen are also known from the famous truce made with the Germans on 23 May, when they nursed the wounded German soldiers in the Australian facility they had installed, which served as a hospital. Ladies and gentlemen, today's event is a homage and an act of gratitude to the Australian and the New Zealand forces who defended the island of Crete, and especially to the Australians of the 19 Australian Brigade, who defended Rethymno.

By honouring the heroic Major Ian Bessel-Browne we honour all the Australian servicemen.

The Military Museum would like to express their deepest gratitude to the **Royal Australian Artillery Historical Society of Western Australia**, who took the initiative to honour today, through this ceremony, all the Allied and Greek forces that resisted the Nazis in Rethymnon. The military museum would like to express their deepest gratitude to the family of the heroic Major Ian Bessel-Browne, who today donated relics from the personal collection of their father and we promise that we will preserve their precious historical memory. The sacrifices of those who fought will not be forgotten and all our future visitors will surely have the chance to learn even more about the heroic resistance of the Australians, the New Zealanders and the Greek forces in the heroic Battle of Crete.

Thank you very much.

Lt. Col. Emmanuel Michelakis

Director

A number of photos taken at the Ceremony appear on the following page.



LTCOL Michelakis accepts the Society Plaque from Susanna and Guy Bessell-Browne



Susanna , Nicola and Guy Bessell -Browne during the Ceremony



Nicola delivers Susana's address in Greek



LTCOL Michelakis delivering his address at the Ceremony 25th May 2016

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RAPID RUBY

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Then you are welcome to join our team of guides who volunteer their time for a few hours, on a roster basis once a month on a Sunday, to conduct public tours.

This historic site is the World War II Gun complex built as a part of Fortress Fremantle Defence located at Buckland Hill in Mosman Park.

- You will be trained and coached
- You will be part of a friendly team
- You need to be able to climb steps
- Vacancies for Guides and Cashiers

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