

Tobruk Bush Artillery

A visit to the R.G.H., Concord, recently by Bob McGregor and Max Herron to see R.S.M. Talberg prompts "Tal" to write the following memoirs of early days in North Africa.

"You will recall we three discussed the televised attack on Bardia and Tobruk, and we all agreed that the narrator should have made reference to all branches of the services — Navy, Army and R.A.A.F.

No one disputes that the 17th, 13th and 48th Battalions did a wonderful job, but so did many more, and I am of the opinion that the most interesting incidents have been overlooked by the War Correspondents, so called authors, and historians. Why? Because they were not there! I am sure that all the originals will bear me out when I say that "Jock" McAdam, George Gee and myself were the founders of the "Bush" Artillery, and what a wealth of stories could be written about this alone.

Then, again, our unit was turned from a semi-engineering battalion to an infantry battalion overnight. Those boys concerned will recall that every other unit in the perimeter had to hand over to us one bren-carrier each, and I can assure you that the machines handed over to us were not the best. But our lads soon overcame the carriers' eccentricities, particularly the Grafton boys, and it was not very long before they assisted in supporting the strongposts, etc. It can be said that in the heaviest attack by Rommel our boys stood their ground, and I have a copy of the letter Brigadier (later Major-General) John Murray sent to Colonel Brown, eulogising the defence put up by the battalion. I forget the sector, but I have it in my diary at home.

Coming back to the bush artillery. Quite a few will remember the Oxford accented Queen's Own Regiment captain (his name is in my diary) who used to carry a horsehair fly swat. When his C.O. heard of us, he sent him over to stop our indiscriminate fire towards the enemy by laying our "Iti" guns (without sights), by orders similar to this.

We used to climb a telegraph pole and through field glasses observe the bursts. "Telephone pole middle distance, trajectory telephone pole high. One round, Fire!" Three-quarter pole lower or higher, whatever was required, then 20 degrees right or left, and so on, until the target of the Bardia Road was found. Then, when we were satisfied, we would order that the guns be fixed by tying or blocking until orders were given when a staff was on. I understand that the Hun thought were were a properly constituted battery.

We fired the guns so much that we ran out of shells and we used to refill the brass cases. We found the formula and I used to make successful searches among the numerous "ammo" dumps and send it out to George Gee. He used to refill the cases, and this was done so often that a lot of cases became dented and would not go into the breach.

I have a very interesting story about our Queen's Own captain which I will relate some other time.

Then there are the funny and true sidelights of the "Benghazi Derby," and we must not forget our association with H.M. Navy, not only in Tobruk itself, but at Derna and other places.

"Ginger Whiskers" and "Capt. Kettle" were some of the names the boys used to call the liaison officer, but his real name was Commander Duff and he used to dress immaculately in white shorts, shirt, stockings, cap and shoes, with the customary splash of gold, but this did not render him inefficient in the demolishing and other delaying tactics.

Then there were:—

The duties of the Intell. sections in all the units;

The valuable work done by the platoon who struck the "Rats" first medal and who used to make motor springs with the "Iti" workshop pinched by "Pop-eye" from the engineers right under their noses;

The cheroots, cigarettes and stores we sold in Barce;

The bank robbery in the same town; Our swimming exploits in Tobruk and the staging camp, the asps and the pythons;

Our bringing down the Stuka and the capture of the pilot and observer and their interrogation;

The improvised foreign ack-ack weapons;

Our exploit with starting an old gramophone on "Fritz's" wire, forcing him to expend his ammunition;

The Divisional catacombs;

The calico tanks;

The bakery and iceworks;

The 30,000 prisoners we held;

Our "Itie" servants;

Good grog and bad grog;

The wonderful job our M.C. doctor did;

The fig tree caves;

The tank traps and the days we chased them.

So I could go on. What a wonderful script this and other units could make. I think the powers that be should be told that they have only touched the surface when they have told the story of Tobruk."

CONTRIBUTIONS INVITED

Members of this Association are invited to submit letters, constructive criticism or news for publication in "Pioneer News."

REMEMBER . . .

THIS IS YOUR PAPER — YOUR VOICE — USE IT!

JOHN HARNETTY — "PIONEER NEWS"

It is with pleasure that we welcome John Harnetty to the Editorial Staff of the "Pioneer News," for, as you all know, John is an Editor with the "Sun-Herald," and it is a shame for such talent to go wasted on just one newspaper.

The change of face with the "Pioneer News" is due to John's vast experience in the world of journalism and we are indeed very grateful to him for his services and the very fine articles he has written for this issue and past issues.

THANK YOU, JOHN.

—Vic Whiteley and Max Herron.

HOSPITAL VISITATIONS

● **ROY BOUNDS**, of Islington, Newcastle, H.Q. Coy., 2/1, had a short stay in Concord Repatriation Hospital recently and when Jack Collis visited him, you can imagine the topic of conversation, seeing they were both in R.A.P.

● **CEC. WHITE**, 2/1, is on the improvement list at Concord Hospital after suffering a stroke. Visited by Jack Collis, Jack Westwood, Vic. Whiteley and Max Herron.

● **R.S.M. TALBERG**, H.Q. Coy., 2/1, of Bathurst, had another stay in the Repatriation Hospital, Concord, and rang to apologise for non-attendance on Anzac Day. He sent his regards to Major Neale and all his mates. "Tal" was visited by John Harnetty.

● **ROBERT BUCKLEY**, D Coy, 2/1, of Corrimal, is at Repat., Concord, for treatment of stomach ulcers. Bob was a cook in D Coy., in Tobruk. Bob was visited by Jack Westwood, Vic. Whiteley and Max Herron.

The above members were issued with parcels from the Ladies' Auxiliary.

SUBS. NOW DUE

THE ASSOCIATION'S FINANCIAL YEAR COMMENCES ON 1st APRIL AND ALL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE ON THAT DATE.

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