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Produced and edited by Graham Bradshaw
email: ggbrad@bigpond.com

In this edition—The Fighting 9th and The Kokoda Bone Man

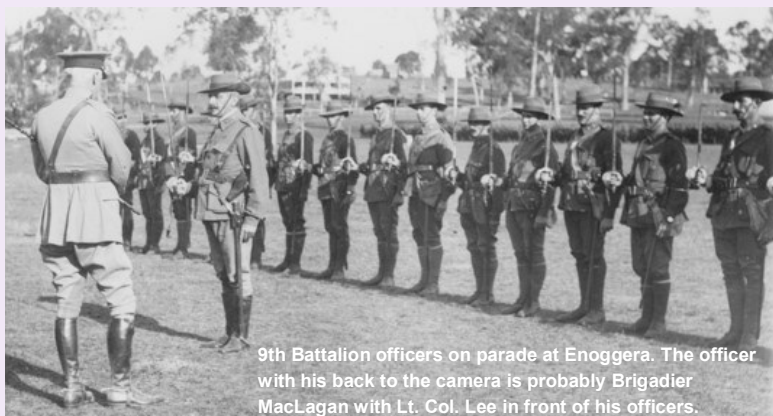
"The Fighting 9th."

Queensland's Own Battalion

Queensland's long association with the Australian Army Battalions designated number "9" began 110 years ago, **August 1914**, when Lt. Col. Lee began assembling his new command near Enoggera on land known as Bell's paddock, (now the Brisbane suburbs of Enoggera and Gaythorne). The new battalion, raised quickly at the outbreak of WWI with officer volunteers from Militia Units around South East Queensland, formed part of the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division AIF. Unbeknown to those men at that time was the future selection of the 3rd Brigade designated make the first beach landing at Gallipoli eight months later. Events moved swiftly and the influx of keen young volunteers soon filled the ranks of the new battalion destined to become famous and honoured by all.

The Australian Army commander, General Bridges, chose his Brigade commanders and left it to the Brigadiers to select their Regimental commanders who then selected officers to form their Battalions. Bridges chose Brigadier MacLagan to command the 3rd Brigade. MacLagan then chose Lt. Col. Lee to command the 9th Battalion and so the future began to take shape. Lee received his appointment on the **15th of August 1914** and by the **18th** was at Enoggera organizing his staffing requirements. Just five weeks later, on the **23th of September** and with a strength of 32 Officers and 1009 Men, the newly formed 9th Battalion embarked at Pinkenba on the "SS Omrah". The Battalion arrived in Port Phillip Bay on the **28th** and quickly commenced training before leaving Port Melbourne on the **17th of October** to meet up with the other transports in Albany W.A. on the **21st**. The whole fleet convoy comprising 36 transports including 10 from New Zealand, left Albany for Europe on the **1st of November 1914**. You notice I said Europe as this was the original destination. On Monday, the **9th of November**, the Cruiser HMAS *Sydney*, suddenly steamed away from the convoy. News was later received that the *Sydney* had intercepted and destroyed the German raider, the S.S. *Emden* off the Cocos Islands.

It appears that the destruction of the *Emden* may have saved the convoy because Captain Von Muller stated that his ship was only 52 miles from the convoy the evening before the *Sydney* caught the *Emden*. Other German Officers stated that had they been able to attack the convoy they would have sunk as many transports as possible. We can only surmise how the loss of half the transports would have changed the whole aspect of Australian history. The S.S. *Omrah* picked up Germany prisoners.



AWM Photo: AO3078 August 1914



AWM Photo: PO1235.003

The Australian High Commissioner in London, Sir George Reid, did not want the to see the Australian contingent go through to England and suffer bleak and cold conditions on the Salisbury Plain. Reid asked Lord Kitchener to have the Australians landed in Egypt. Kitchener agreed to his request and the Australian 1st. Division disembarked at Alexandria on the **4th of December 1914**. It was then decided that the division would remain in Egypt at the huge base camp which had been established at Mena and they would continue training. Intense training molded the 3rd Brigade into a practiced fighting unit highly praised by the British and French officers who saw them.

Eventually, orders came for the Brigade to move to Lemnos and the men were relieved to see the last of Mena and its sand leaving on the **28th of February 1915**. The 3rd Brigade sailed from Alexandria on the **1st of March** and arrived at Lemnos on the afternoon of the **5th**. Training in embarking and disembarking began in earnest and continued through March and into April. Unbeknown to the men, the landing at Gallipoli had been scheduled for the **23rd of April**. Because of the foul, unfavorable weather, the date was changed to the **24th**, however, the bad weather was still a problem until, finally, Sunday the **25th of April 1915** became the date for the landing. A date and a name which would go down in Australian history for time immemorial:



25th of April 1915 - ANZAC DAY

On the afternoon of the 24th the Brigade was divided into two sections for the dawn landing. The first section comprising 'A' & 'B' Companies of the 9th Battalion embarked on the Destroyer *Scourge* and from there to the Battleship *Queen* to be convoyed to the rendezvous opposite the landing beach. They were accompanied by 'B' & 'C' Companies of the 10th Battalion and 'A' & 'C' Companies of the 12th Battalion on the Battleships *London* and *Prince of Wales*. The second section comprising 'C' & 'D' Companies of the 9th Battalion along the remaining Companies of the other two battalions were embarked on seven Destroyers. Preparations for the landing included inspections by Platoon commanders to ensure that each man had two sandbags rolled around his entrenching tool handle, 200 rounds of ammunition in his pouches, and that the rifle magazines were empty (NO SHOTS WERE TO BE FIRED BEFORE DAYLIGHT). The water bottles were filled and each man carried behind him two little sacks containing two days rations.

With zero hour imminent, two rows each of three rowing boats were placed on either side of the troop carrying Battleships. By 2.30am on the **25th** the troops had swiftly and silently felt their way down the rope ladders and filled the row boats. A steam tow-boats headed each row. The seven Destroyers joined the rendezvous and arranged their tows likewise. Each row boat held 30 to 40 soldiers and 5 seamen boat handlers. The warships moved towards the shore drawing their tows until they stopped at 3.30am. It was now completely dark (the moon had sunk) and the order was given for the tows to go ahead and land. In the darkness the travel direction and speed of some tows led to future confusion on shore

a strong current had carried the tows off course so that the landing actually occurred at Ari Burnu about a mile to the north. On reaching the shore the men jumped from the boats, fixed bayonets and stormed the hill. This charge pushed the Turks back about a mile and a half. The men then had to make their way back to the relative safety of the Turkish trenches. After a few days heavy fighting the 9th Battalion had lost heavily. They were relieved by a force of British Marines and retired to the beach area to rest. The parade state of the Battalion as at the **30th of April** was 10 officers and 419 other ranks out of an original complement of 1,100 men. By 3am on the **26th** 1,700 wounded had been evacuated to transports lying offshore.

Late on the night of the **25th** General Birdwood suggested in a note to Sir Ian Hamilton that men should re-embark as the situation seemed too dire and untenable. As it was not really possible to re-embark so many troops quickly Birdie was told to dig in and stick it out. "You need to dig, dig, dig until you are safe." For the 9th the most challenging event since the landing occurred on the **19th of May** when the Turks launched a great attack along the whole of the Anzac front with the object of throwing the Anzacs back into the sea. The 9th lost 16 killed and 25 wounded, mostly from shellfire. 200 Turks lay dead in front and a total of around 600 in front of the 3rd Brigade. A truce, requested by the Turks, was observed next day to bury the dead. Much has been written about the various serious battles which took place at Gallipoli during the following months and many need to be subjects in their own right.

The Battalion had been on Gallipoli for nearly seven months when time came round for the 3rd Brigade to given a rest on Lemnos. On the night of **16/17 November** the 9th Battalion embarked for Lemnos on the *Albassa* not knowing then that there was to be no return to the peninsula and that a complete evacuation would take place a month later. By the **26th** the 3rd Brigade was in camp at Sapri. The Anzac legend, born and nurtured on the rugged dangerous slopes of Gallipoli, now lives on. To get the Division out of the unforgiving climate on Lemnos the decision was made to transfer back to Egypt. To this end the 9th Battalion boarded the S.S. 'Grampian' on the **1st of January 1916** for the short trip back to Alexandria. A new site for the 1st Division was chosen at Tel el Kebir on the edge of the desert some 70 miles from Cairo where training commenced until the next phase of operations saw the Division moved to defend the Suez canal. **TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.**

The Bone Man of Kokoda

This is part of the remarkable story of a Japanese soldier named Kokichi Nishimura who returned to the battlefields of New Guinea to search for the remains of his fallen comrades. It was his promise to all those friends he left behind who lay in the unmarked jungles graves along the Kokoda Track. For 25 years he lived a spartan life in New Guinea, did charitable work for the locals and searched for the remains in the jungle to collect and send them home to Japan and their families.

His wartime experience: In **1942** Corporal Nishimura was a member of the 2nd Battalion, 144th Regiment of the Japanese Imperial Army. He fought along the Kokoda Track as Japanese forces attempted to take Port Moresby and after the Battle of Brigade Hill was the only member of his platoon to survive the campaign. During the Kokoda campaign he was shot three times. He evaded capture



and almost starved to death before being eventually evacuated Rabaul weighing only 28 Kg. He recuperated there and later boarded a ship which was then sunk by the Americans. He was injured and ended up back in hospital. Late in **1942** he was sent to Burma and fought against the British where he was wounded again and caught malaria. In **1944** Nishimura was sent to Singapore and eventually back to Japan in **January 1945**. He was in hospital with a bout of malaria when the war ended.

Postwar: In 1945 Nishimura married, had three sons and a daughter, became a successful businessman and founded the Nishimura Machinery Research Institute. All these years he had been thinking about the New Guinea war years and in 1979 made the momentous decision to leave it all behind and fulfill his promise to his fallen comrades. He gave most of his possession to his wife and never saw her or his two surviving sons ever again. Nishimura built a house at Ponondetta in the northern New Guinea Oro Province and set about looking for the soldier's remains. Over the years he found and recovered hundreds of bodies but was devastated to learn the bodies of his platoon members killed at the Battle of Brigade Hill were burned and only ashes remained. He collected a portion of ashes and sent them to the Gokoku Shinto shrine in Kochi. Having been unable to retrieve his comrades bodies, he arranged for a memorial monument to be built on the site. This was completed in **July 1989**. Nishimura continued his search through the 1990s and he often helped families find the location of the place where their loved ones had died. As the 50th anniversary of the war's end approached, the Japanese government wanted to collect bones and Nishimura was under the impression that they would try to identify the remains

and pass them on to their families. To his great disappointment this did not happen and the remains were burnt and placed in the Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery. This infuriated Nishimura immensely. Nishimura tended to operate outside official sanctions and would do things his way without permission or further consultation. He was even banned from his own 144th Regiment Association because they did not agree with his method of operation. He did not even get official permission or co-operation to build his Kokoda Track Memorial. This was the way he operated and it caused many problems with the government although he was supported by a number of rich and influential Japanese businessmen who often supplied him with money, goods and equipment for his New Guinea charitable work. He also had problems dealing with the Government of New Guinea mainly because they declared that all bones and remains were the property of the New Guinea Government. Local villagers dug up bones and other war relics and used them as a tourist attractions. Nishimura was disgusted with this use of the sacred remains of his friends.

By **2005**, now in poor health, Kokichi Nishimura left New Guinea for the last time and returned Japan where he lived out his retirement years with his daughter. All the members of his old Regiment had long passed and so the tough old warrior was the only one left. He passed away in **October 2015** a few weeks short from his 98th. birthday. It is amazing that after all he had been through he did survive to such a great age. The only real blemish on his remarkable life occurred in the jungles of coastal New Guinea where he and other Japanese soldiers who had survived thus far, resorted to cannibalism to survive after their supplies ran out and they were left to fend for themselves. Unfortunately, sadly, the flesh of Australian soldiers and local New Guineans was cut from the bones and eaten.

The reference for this story is a book entitled *"The Bone Man of Kokoda"* by Charles Happell.

On August the 18th we honoured and remembered all those who served and died during the Vietnam War. It is also eighty years since the Cowra Breakout when 1,100 Japanese prisoners rush the barbed wire fences and set fire to the camp buildings. Four Australian guards and 234 Japanese prisoners died during and after the breakout.

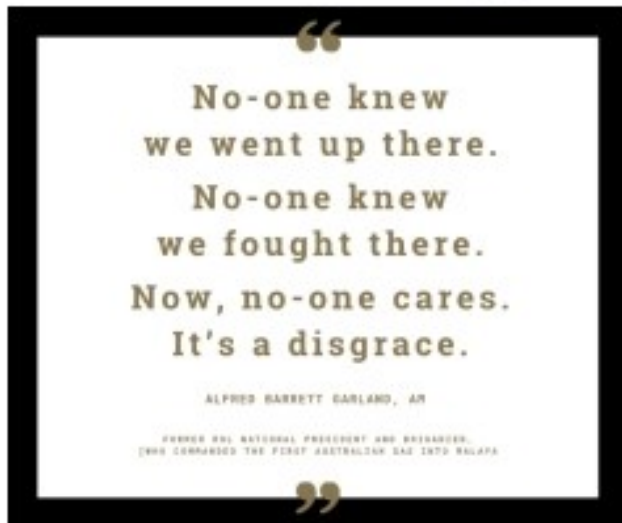
August the 31st is Malaya and Borneo Veteran's Day when we remember those who lost their lives In the Malaya Emergency from 1948 until 1960 and the Indonesian Confrontation from 1962 until 1966. A new Canberra memorial is proposed and planning is under way. I have attached a couple of pages which provide further information about the proposed memorial.



Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) War Memorial Foundation Inc.

National Patron: Vice Admiral Ray Griggs AO, CSC (Retd)

About the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR)



Overview of the Conflicts

- **Malayan Emergency 1948-1960**
- **Indonesian Confrontation 1962-1966**

During the 1950s and 1960s, Australian forces were engaged in two conflicts involving Malaya (now Malaysia). British Commonwealth forces played a key role in combatting a twelve-year long Communist insurgency, known as the Malayan Emergency. From 1964, Australians served in support of the newly federated state of Malaysia.

This second conflict, known as the Indonesian Confrontation, ended in 1966, by which time Australians had engaged in operations in Indonesian territory and on the Malayan peninsula.



Australia's commitment to operations fell within the context of its membership of the Commonwealth FESR. National Service was introduced in Australia to commence in 1965.

The first "Nasho" to serve in an Active Service area did so with 21 Construction Squadron RAE in Sabah in early 1966.

The Secret War

Never heard of the FESR, the Malayan Emergency, or the Indonesian Confrontation? You're not alone.

We are determined to make the unknown, known, and ensure our mates who served and died during the Emergency and Confrontation are not forgotten

The Indonesian Confrontation is referred to by many of those who were involved as the Unknown War. Usually overlooked and sadly tucked away in a corner between WW2 and Vietnam, overshadowed even by Korea, the 'Forgotten War'.

It was an 'undeclared war': the rubber plantations and tin-mining industries urged the use of the term 'emergency' since their losses would not have been covered by Lloyd's insurers if it had been termed a 'war'. Amazingly, the battle was never branded a war due to insurance purposes.



See our website for more FESR information
<http://fesrmemorial.org.au>

Donate via our website. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible where donor details are provided.

e. fesr.memorial@gmail.com | w. <http://fesrmemorial.org.au> | a. PO Box 670 Jamison Centre ACT 2614 | t. @FESRWarMemorial

Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) War Memorial Foundation Inc.. Images from Australian War Memorial.

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FESR War Memorial Foundation

The FESR War Memorial Foundation Inc. has been established to raise funds through donations to facilitate the construction and installation of a permanent memorial on the Australian War Memorial grounds in Canberra.



The Memorial will acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the men and women who served in the FESR during these conflicts.

The FESR WMF Committee are working to help raise awareness & funds through the stages (pictured).

**We thank you for considering
our request for financial support**

Australian Casualties

The Australian War Memorial records the following numbers of Australian Defence Force personnel killed whilst serving in the respective theatres:



Malayan Emergency

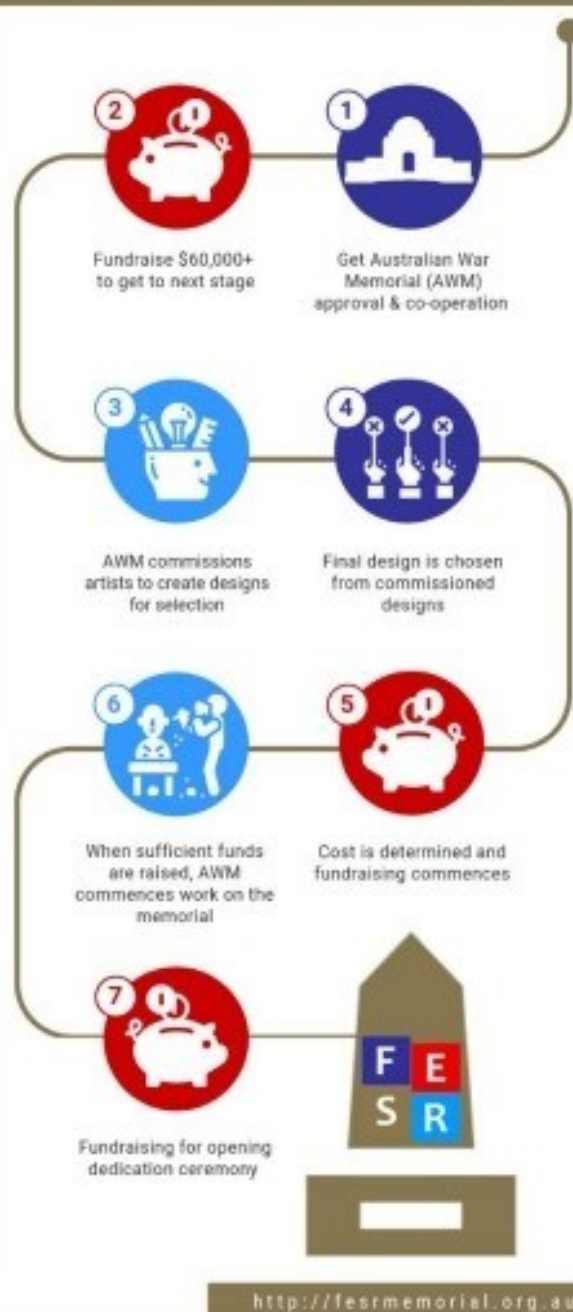
44 (RAN: 7, Army: 27, RAAF: 10)

Indonesian Confrontation

22 (Army: 21, RAAF: 1)

The numbers injured from, or disabled by, active service in both theatres is known to be considerable, and many have since died from medical legacies of their service over 50 years ago.

Towards the Far East Strategic Reserve War Memorial



Donate via our website. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible where donor details are provided.

e. fesr.memorial@gmail.com | w. <http://fesrmemorial.org.au> | a. PO Box 670 Jamison Centre ACT 2614 | t. @FESRWarMemorial
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