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Lest We Forget

THE BRIBIE "BUGLE"

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In this edition—The Fighting 9th Final Story.

This will be the last "Bugle" until maybe sometime next year as I just need to give it a rest for awhile. I hope you all enjoyed the 29 editions which are on the Sub-Branch website. —Regards, Graham Bradshaw.

The first few months of **1918** were occupied with training and sports. Unfortunately, on the **6th of March**, the battalion suffered, in one short afternoon, a greater number of casualties than at any comparable time during the unit's active service. Enemy artillery had been relatively quiet when—at 4pm a heavy bombardment of gas shell, which lasted for four hours, fell around B.H.Q. and on 'D' Company's position. As the air was very still, the fumes laid about in the low ground, and when the men took off their respirators after the shelling had stopped, most of them were gassed. Casualties were heavy and 13 Officers, including the C.O. were evacuated along with 150 other ranks. Two Officers and several men later died from the effects of the gas. By the **23rd of March** the 9th was back in the line at Hollebeke where skirmishes occurred in No-Man's Land. In early April the 1st Division was transferred to General Rawlinson's Fourth Army on the Somme to prepare to meet the new threat created by the launch of the new German offensive launched suddenly on **21 March** on the northern Arras-St. Quentin front where the Germans broke through and began their headlong advance down the old Somme battlefields towards Amiens. The battle for the Amiens railhead put the first 'nail in the coffin' of the German plan. At this time the battle for Villers-Bretonneux was raging fiercely, however, by the **6th of April** the town was still in British hands. Major J.A. Milne, an original company commander at Gallipoli, and now a Lieutenant Colonel, commanded the 39th Battalion in its successful counter attack at Villers-Bretonneux. The Bishop of Amiens said: "*We intend today in Amiens, to express to you and the Commonwealth of Australia our gratitude... Our aspirations and our will had to be agreed; they could not be too closely allied. Although our task was never easy, it was made less difficult by the patriotism and passionate valour of the Australians which served as an example to the whole world. That wonderful attack of yours at Villers-Bretonneux was the final proof if any was needed, that the real task of the High Command was to show itself equal to its soldiers. You saved France; You saved Amiens; Our gratitude will remain ever and always to Australia*".

General Ludendorff's "Michael" offensive which had kicked off on the **21st of March 1918** launched 64 Divisions against the 3rd and 5th British Armies, until brought to a standstill in front of Amiens. For the next couple of months the Division's task was to secure and defend the railheads in the Hazebruck and Meteren sectors. Although the German forces were down and demoralized they were still not beaten and were still capable of inflicting serious damage and casualties on their opposing Allied Armies. By **early August** all five Australian Divisions had been assigned to General Monash's Australian Corp ready for "The big push", The Battle of Amiens, about to begin on the **8th of August**. Preparations involved another move from Flanders back to the Somme (again). On their departure the G.O.C., Second British Army, General Plumer, paid this tribute: "*You are leaving my Army. I am sorry that I cannot inform you of where you are going or what you are going to do. I am sorry to lose you, but I wish you success. You know Gentlemen, that it is not my practice to make eulogistic speeches—there will be plenty of time for that after the war. At the same time I would like to tell you that there is no Division, certainly in my Army, perhaps the whole British Army, which has done more to destroy the morale of the enemy than the 1st Australian Division*". For the first time in the history of the Australian Corps all five Divisions would engage in battle together, commencing on the 9th as they teamed up with the Canadian Corps and two British Divisions. Supported by British tanks, 200 guns and aircraft the advance encountered little resistance. The advance was the most bloodless ever made by Australian infantry in battle. The outstanding success of the operation saw the capture of 17,000 German prisoners and 500 guns taken on the first day. Now that they were out of the trenches and moving forward they, and General Monash, were keen to keep the momentum going and push the enemy all the way to Germany.

After the German losses at Mont St. Quentin and Peronne, General Ludendorff's exhausted and demoralized troops began to retire from their positions on the Somme. The "Big Push" by the allies continued non stop as the war was now quickly coming to a close. Although things were going well for the Australian Corps, significant casualties were still being taken due to the stiff resistances from some enemy strongholds. Multiple machine gun positions, which were causing most of the casualties, needed to be eliminated as the advance progressed. In mid September, 60 Officers and 740 men from the original 1914 batch embarked on a ship bound for leave in Australia. The War Office and many Generals thought that the war would not end until mid 1919, and therefore battle weary troops need rest and recuperation. Around the **23rd of September** the Aus-



trian Brigade still on the line had been relieved by the 27 American Division (better late than never?). Advice had been received that personnel to proceed to Australia in the second batch, would at once leave the line and proceed to Peronne. A cruel fate befell No. 964 Private Peter Cloherty whose name had not appeared on the list but who was advised on the day the battalion was relieved from the line that he was also to go. However, as he was collecting his gear a shell burst in the entrance of his dugout and he was blown to pieces. After leaving the line the 9th Battalion arrived at Gorenflos on the **26th of September** where they would remain for seven weeks. This was to be their reward for six months of shuttling between Flanders and the Somme and the "Big Push" until the final battles at Crepey Wood and Villeret. It was from Gorenflos that the commanding officer, Lt. Col. Mullen D.S.O. was sent to England for



Lt. Col. Mullen D.S.O.

a much needed rest. He was succeeded by Lt. Col. C.F. Ross MC, the former O.C. 'A' Company, having been wounded at Crepey Wood and evacuated to England, was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel to rejoin the Battalion. At the conclusion of their respite at Gorenflos that Battalion was to move to Tincourt on the **7th of November 1918**. Although the men were hoping that the War would be over by Christmas, one can only imagine the relief they felt when the War actually ended on the **11th of November** when

they were all keyed up for a return to the front line. The transition from War to Peace happened quickly as by 8pm on Monday the **11th of November** the Battalion was in Mazinghien enroute to Belgium only one day after the Germans had left the village. Many villagers had been seized by the Germans for forced labour. Here they found very timid people, afraid even to speak, and when approached they cowered like beaten animals. The children were very frightened, and when spoken to they ran into the buildings and hid, like rabbits. For two days at Mazinghien the battalion fed the villagers and buried the dead horses and German troops still lying around the area. The next village was called Bohain and the battalion's first cooked meal was shared with the civilians as soon as the canteen sergeant (Ned Hanlon) - later the Honourable E.M. Hanlon, M.L.A., Premier of Queensland. How many of you knew that one? While still moving through France the 9th battalion was greatly honoured to be selected



Ned Hanlon, 9th Battalion

to supply The King's Guard for King George V who was in the Corps area. Finally, on the **19th of December** the 3rd Brigade arrived in Belgium to be billeted in the town of Chatelet. Christmas 1918 at Chatelet was a joyous occasion for all. Nearing the end of **January 1919** the preparation of rolls for the repatriation of personnel had commenced. The first draft would comprise those who have done some of the hardest fighting and by their gallantry and soldier-like bearing have been a large factor in assisting the administration, and making for the general efficiency of the unit. Due to the depletion of numbers by recent departures on repatriation and non-military employment, the 9th and 10th Battalions were merged on the **5th of February** into the 910th Australian Infantry Battalion under the command of Lt. Col. M. Wilder Neligan G.M.C., D.S.O., (and bar), D.C.M. Now, nearing the end of May, they were homeward bound via England. The 9th Battalion (Quota 56) sailed from Plymouth on the **19th of July 1919** on board H.M.A.T. Takada and after disembarking men at Fremantle and Adelaide the ship berthed at Port Melbourne where the NSW and Queensland men headed for the special train and entrained immediately. The NSW members detrained in Sydney and on arrival in Brisbane the men of "The Fighting 9th" were given a heroes welcome. Sadly, the true heroes were missing for they were among the 66,000 Australians who were destined not to return to their homes. In **May 1919** there were 70,000 men in camp on Salisbury Plain waiting to be organized into drafts for the return to Australia when transports became available.

We Will Remember Them

**Awarded the Victoria Cross for Australia –
Private Richard Norden**

Killed in action: Officers 32, OR's 746 = 778

Died of wounds: Officers 11, OR's 233 = 244

Wounded: Officers 79, OR's 2,014 = 2,093

Gassed: Officers 21, OR's 308 = 329

Prisoners of War: Officers 1, OR's 8 = 9

Total casualties: Officers 144, OR's 3,309 = 3,453

Died of Disease: Officers: 2, OR's 70 = 72

TOTAL: Officers 146, OR's 3,379 = 3,525

Lest We Forget

Decorations

V.C.	1	Albert Medal	1
C.B.	1	D.C.M.	35
C.M.G.	1	M.M.	158
D.S.O.	5	1 bar to M.M.	10
M.V.O	1	2 bars to M.M.	1
M.C.	36	M.S.M.	4
1 bar to M.C.	2	M.I.D.	52
2 bars to M.C.	1	Hon. Mentions	20
Medaille Militaire	1	Croix de Guerre	3
Medaille d'Honneur avec Glaives	1		

And so ends this insight into "The Fighting Ninth". Much of this story was extracted from the pages of the book, "Campaigning with the Fighting Ninth" written by, C.M. Wrench M.C.. He was a company commander who was there from day one in August 1914 until their return to Brisbane in 1919. The 9th Battalion legacy was continued through WWII with the 9th Australian Infantry Battalion (Moreton Regiment), and then with the 9th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, in Vietnam and the 9th Battalion Royal Queensland Regiment. I hope you enjoyed the journey through the pages of history with me.

For most conspicuous acts of gallantry in action in the presence of the enemy in the 'AO Surfers' Area of Operations in the Bien Hoa province, Vietnam, on 14 May 1968 during the Battle of Fire Support Base Coral.

During Operation Toan Thang, 5th Platoon, B Company were ambushed and came under heavy fire from an estimated squad of seven to ten North Vietnamese Army regular soldiers. Private Norden, a member of the leading section, ran forward under heavy enemy fire to the Section Commander and forward scout who were wounded during the initial contact.

Private Norden killed one North Vietnamese Army soldier whilst moving forward and, having expended his ammunition, recovered that enemy's automatic weapon which he used against further North Vietnamese Army soldiers. He then half-carried, half-dragged the severely wounded Section Commander back to the section.

Private Norden, seriously wounded, again advanced to the forward scout. He pressed forward under enemy fire and reached the scout, killing the North Vietnamese Army soldier who had been using the scout as a shield. Having determined that the scout was dead, Private Norden returned to the section to collect grenades and moved forward for a third time. He cleared the area to enable the body of the scout to be recovered.

Private Norden showed a complete disregard for his own personal safety, and his courage and selfless acts resulted in the enemy position being secured and likely saved the lives of other members of the platoon.

2412437 Private Richard Leslie Norden

'B' Company, 1st. Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, was born on the 24th of August 1948 at Gundagai, NSW. He died on the 30th of October 1972 from injuries received in a motorcycle accident while serving on duty with the ACT Police Force.



New Zealand VC Winners Final List

Second Lieutenant Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Ngarimu, 28th (Maori) Battalion, 2NZEF.

Date of action: 26 March 1943 (Tebaga Gap, Tunisia)

Date of award: 4 June 1943 (posthumous award)



Moana-nui-a-Kiwa Ngārimu was the first Māori soldier to win the VC. A second lieutenant in the 28th (Maori) Battalion's C Company, he took part in the assault at Tebaga Gap, Tunisia, in March 1943. The battalion's objective was a strategically important hill known as Point 209. The first task was to take high ground below the summit. Ngārimu

led his platoon up one of these lower hills on 26 March, personally knocking out several machine-gun posts. After capturing the crest, his men repelled a number of fierce German counter-attacks during the night. Despite wounds to his shoulder and leg, Ngārimu refused to leave his position. He was killed the next morning fighting off another enemy attack. His VC was presented to his parents at a hui at Ruatōria on 6 October 1943.

Lance-Corporal Bill (Willie) Henry Apiata, NZSAS.

Date of action: circa May–September 2004 (Afghanistan)

Date of award: 2 July 2007

Bill (Willie) Apiata is the first and only recipient to date of the Victoria Cross (VC) for New Zealand. Apiata was part of a New Zealand Special Air Service (NZSAS) Troop in Afghanistan in 2004 that was attacked by about 20 enemy fighters while camped for the night in a rural area. Rocket-propelled grenades destroyed one of the troop's vehicles and immobilised another. Apiata was blown off the bonnet of the vehicle he had been sleeping on, while two other soldiers in or near the vehicle were wounded by shrapnel, one of them seriously. After finding cover and assessing the soldier's injuries, Apiata carried him across 70 m of exposed ground to reach the troop's main position. He then helped fight off the attackers. Corporal Apiata received his VC on 26 July 2007 at Government House in Wellington. He is also the only recipient of the Victoria Cross since WWII.



Captain Charles Hazlitt Upham, 20th Battalion, 2NZEF.

Date of actions: 22–30 May 1941 (Crete) and 14–15 July 1942 (North Africa).

Date of awards: 14 October 1941 and 26 September 1945.

Charles Upham is probably New Zealand's most famous soldier. His actions during the Second World War led to him becoming one of only three people — and the only combat soldier — to have been awarded the Victoria Cross twice. Upham earned the VC for outstanding gallantry and leadership in Crete in May 1941, and his Bar at Ruweisat Ridge, Egypt, in July 1942. After being severely wounded in the latter engagement, Upham was captured by the Germans. After a failed escape attempt while recuperating in an Italian hospital, he was transferred to Germany in September 1943. A particularly audacious solo attempt to scale his camp's barbed-wire fences in broad daylight saw Upham become the only New Zealand combatant officer sent to the infamous Colditz camp for habitual escapers in 1944. Upham was fiercely loyal to his comrades and shunned the limelight. When informed of his first VC he was genuinely distressed at being singled out. He believed that others deserved it more than he did. Only by seeing it as recognition of the bravery and service of his unit could Upham accept the award and the unwanted attention that went with it. Upham was presented with his first VC at Buckingham Palace on 11 May 1945. After Upham's capture officers of 2NZEF had begun collecting evidence to support the award of a bar to his Victoria Cross. The British authorities considered it unlikely that a bar would be awarded. It was decided to leave the matter until his release. In July 1945 Bernard Freyberg revived the question. The British thought Upham should be made a DSO. But further evidence was gathered by Major-General Howard Kippenberger and it was decided that his actions at Minqâr Qaim and Ruweisat Ridge merited the highest recognition possible. When the recommendation for his second VC was made later in 1945 King George VI said to Kippenberger that a Bar to the cross would be 'very unusual indeed'. The king inquired, 'Does he deserve it?' — to which Kippenberger replied, 'In my respectful opinion sir Upham won the VC several times over'.

